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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF BERDYCZEWSKI AND AHAD HA-AM  
WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE IMPORTANCE OF THE  
INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

by

ALAN DAVID FUCHS

Thesis submitted in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements  
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## DIGEST

Berdyczewski and Ahad ha-Am both were interested in the problem of the survival of the Jews. Each approaches the problem differently. Berdyczewski is convinced that the survival of the Jews only can be accomplished by means of the salvation of the individual through his own efforts. Ahad ha-Am, on the other hand, believes that the salvation of the individual Jew can be found only through the salvation of the nation.

Ahad ha-Am assumed that the individual is established for the sake of the community and the nation. The nation, however, is not established for the sake of the individual alone. It is developed in order that it be a spiritual center from which would emanate the cultural and moral patterns of the people. His concept of "spiritual Zionism" is built around the notion that the land would be a "model for imitation" for the people of Jewish stock in all the lands of the Diaspora. The individual is not justified in interfering with the work of the community or the nation because it is responsible for the maintenance and development of "Judaism".

Micha Josef Berdyczewski was the rebel. He was defiant of the past, of its traditions and its authority. Using the philosophy of Nietzsche as a guide he arrived at an attitude concerning the individual and society. He feared that the

individual would be stifled by the group. In order to argue conclusively against the notion of the dominance of the past or the society he questioned the validity of the former and the very existence of the latter. He believed that the individual has ultimate freedom, that "Judaism" is not a definitive term and that the religion which is known as "Judaism" is totally individual in nature. One may speak of a "group feeling", but this is developed for the sake of convenience and is not real.

It is our contention that the general tenor of "Reform Judaism" is more in consonance with the above thinking of Berdyczewski, than with that of Ahad ha-Am.

## INTRODUCTION

Men are most influential by virtue of the ideas they express. Often these ideas appear to be radical and so are opposed by similarly radical views of the opposite nature. In any discussion there are many positions possible within a variety of degrees of interpretation. Rarely are those views which we would call the "fundamental" position and the "liberal" position lacking. Approaching these two extreme positions are the views of the two authors being examined in this work with reference to the relative importance of the society and the individual. Ahad ha-Am, the traditionalist, confronts Micha Josef Berdyczewski, the cold liberal, the rebel. Ahad ha-Am wages his battle with both heart and mind. Berdyczewski stretches reason to its farthest limits, declaring the heart to be an invalid instrument for logic and argumentation. The position of each has left its mark on the thinking of Jews of later ages. The serious student must take a stand on the question of the relation between the society and the individual. Some insights may be found through an examination of the positions of Ahad ha-Am and Berdyczewski.

This, basically, is the scope of the work - an examination of the philosophies of Ahad ha-Am and Micha Josef Berdyczewski with regard to their views on the importance

of the individual and/or the society. This stated scope needs some explanation. An examination of the philosophies of each is not possible in the sense that one might examine the philosophic system of Aristotle, or any other systematic philosopher. Ahad ha-Am does approach systematization, but Berdyczewski cannot be called a systematic philosopher. We can examine the works of each to cull from them their attitudes with regard to the stated subject matter. We can systematize this selection, but no such order can be attributed to these writers themselves which they did not develop. For that reason it may appear at times that there are contradictions within the thinking of one or the other writer. If it is remembered that we are examining philosophies and not philosophic systems we will realize that neither writer commits himself to logical consistency. Thus, we cannot expect that there might not be contradiction. This work will show such contradictions, but any attempt at resolution is not necessary.

The method of the work, then, will be to examine portions of the writings of each author, showing important themes which bear on the stated scope of the paper. We have attempted to read the major contributions of each author in order to gain a general understanding of his approach. The development herein is based on this selected examination of the works of Ahad ha-Am and Berdyczewski.

Both Ahad ha-Am and Berdyczewski were concerned with

the same problem, the survival of Jews. Their methodology and conclusions were very different. They complemented each other in the sense that they offered to their age two extreme positions. Pairs of this type are not uncommon in history.

In every age pairs such as these were found, Rousseau and Voltaire, Goethe and Schiller, Turgenev and Dostoyevsky - these pairs complement each other, the one being easy-going and the other intense, the one being the defense attorney and the other the prosecuting attorney. Ahad ha-Am is the former and Berdyczewski the latter.<sup>1</sup>

Ahad ha-Am believes that the salvation of the individual Jew can be found only through the salvation of the nation. Berdyczewski finds the opposite to be the case. The salvation of the individual occurs through the efforts of the individual alone.

We can only guess at the events, conditions, ideas and environmental factors which would influence such thinkers as these. Certainly conditions of boyhood play an important role. The ideas which come from study and personal meetings must inevitably leave their mark. Any event might be of import. We can only discuss certain conditions which obviously must have been of significance.

From early childhood Ahad ha-Am was taught the importance of tradition and its thinking. The fact that his father was a wealthy Hasid brought into his life a deep contact with a most fundamental and emotional type of Judaism. The fact that he was reared in Russia in 1856 during a period of turmoil in Jewry of western Europe,<sup>2</sup>



forced him to develop attitudes toward a liberalization of Judaism. His contacts with the Hovevei Zion in Odessa solidified in him a great love for the Land of Israel and the ideal that it represented. His burning desire to develop the attitude of the Hovevei Zion in all the Diaspora is expressed in his writings.

We should not be unduly impatient in our attempt to achieve, through appeal to self-interest, things which have not reached their proper time for achievement by strength of the ideal itself, for so long as the 'Hibbat Zion' has not become a living and burning feeling in the heart of the people we lack the only foundation upon which the land might be built. Therefore we must strive, with all our strength, to increase our love for our people and our esteem for the land of our fathers.<sup>3</sup>

The love that was developed in his childhood grew into a burning passion.

That love could not understand the liberalism of man Jews in the West and elsewhere. It could not accept the premise that the tradition and its emphases were invalid. It could not accept the philosophic notions which were running rampant. It could not agree that popular philosophic notions necessarily opposed Judaism and fostered destruction.

Ahad ha-Am was fully aware of the influences of those rebels who tried to make of Judaism a completely individual religion. There was no doubt in his mind that these "youths" (Berdyczewski and his followers) were misguided, that they misunderstood their master, Nietzsche.

If our "Nietzscheans" would have done so [analyze] they would have found the teachings of their master contains in truth 'two different points', one universally humanistic and one Aryan only, and that the former not only does not oppose Judaism but adds to its strength.<sup>4</sup>

These "Nietzscheans" have taken the wrong element out of his(Nietzsche's) philosophy. They have not dwelled on the aspect which allows for the freedom of the superior type from the suppression of the masses. On the contrary, they have dwelt on the freedom of the physical life from the limitations of the spirit. This type of notion could never be in consonance with Judaism, which for so many years has protested against the use of force in favor of the rights of the spirit. This people would not possibly accept a notion which would debase it to idolatry when it spent so much time building the temple and the ideals which it represented.<sup>5</sup>

The rights of the spirit were important to Ahad ha-Am, that aspect being carried over into his emphasis on spiritual Zionism. A connection may be found between the spiritual approach of other writers, particularly Hess and Smolenskin, and this approach.

His "spiritual" approach to Zionism had been anticipated by other nineteenth-century Jews, and most notably by Moses Hess in his . . . Rome and Jerusalem, . . . published in 1862, and by Peter Smolenskin in his articles in his monthly Ha-Shahar and in his . . . book Am Olam, The Eternal People (1873) and other works. Both Hess and Smolenskin wrote before the emergence of any kind of organized Zionist activity.<sup>6</sup>

His Hasidic family life, his attitude toward tradition

and Bible, his involvement with the "Hibbath Zion" and his view of the world as influenced by other writers, all contributed to his reverence for the group. His Hasidic background gave to him a warmth which was dependent on the group. The tradition and the Bible contributed the idea of the "mission" of the people. The "Hibbath Zion" fostered his budding love of Zion. His anti-western feeling caused him to be repelled by the philosophy which influenced the rebels of the west. Such writers as Hess and Smolenskin influenced him, as they did so many others, because he found in them an emphasis on the spirit rather than on the material. We will see that this spiritualism pervades his thought in every aspect.

The spiritual was not so strong in the writing of Micha Josef Berdyczewski. He has been considered a rebel, openly defiant of the tradition of the past, openly rebellious against authority. On the surface it might appear that the environmental conditions of his boyhood were similar to those of Ahad ha-Am. He too was born in Russia, but nine years later. His father too was a Hasid. His family life might have been much like that of his antagonist except for the fact that his writings do not indicate that such was the case. It is evident to even an amateur psychologist that any given event in the life of an individual may have either a positive or negative effect. The authoritarian system which Berdyczewski knew in his home was not pleasant to him. He viewed it

more as a yoke than an emotional experience. He wished that this yoke be removed. The personification of that burden was his father,

Then I imagined to myself that my father too had died, that I was freed from the yoke of the Cheder, and that I was learning to swing the hammer upon the heated iron at the blacksmith's, whither I used to steal away to watch him at his work. . . .<sup>7</sup>

We might conjecture that this is wish-fulfillment. The strong feeling against his father may have caused him to rebel against any father figure, God being the projection of that image onto the world. His rebellion against the authority of the tradition and of God very well could have been caused by such feelings from his youth.

This hatred for authority would lead to his attitude toward the Bible. For him it could not be a book which in any way described the best of all possible worlds. The life of the ancient Hebrews before the time of Scripture was to be considered worthy as well as life after it. The authority which the Bible held for many, necessarily was rejected because of his rejection of authority in general.

This attitude of rebellion undoubtedly led him to search for a new form of expression for his radicalism.

This form could be found in the thought of Nietzsche.

Ahad ha-Am gives an adequate review of that philosophy.<sup>8</sup>

He [Nietzsche] said that the purpose of the species of man, like all the rest of the species of creatures, is: to nurture and expand incessantly the powers which nature gave to him, in order that the specific type might develop to the highest level to which it is capable of attaining.

Since the perfection of a specific type is possible only by means of the "struggle for existence" between individuals of the species, so that the strong becomes stronger and advances higher and higher and does not pay attention if for this he must step on the heads of the weak and crush them underfoot, it follows that it is with great error that we are mired in the moral law in order to support the premise that it is the "good" which contributes to the welfare of men in general and lessens suffering in the world, and that it is the "evil" which introduces and increases suffering amongst men.<sup>9</sup>

The perfection of the individual is to be the goal in life. Continuing in his explanation of the Nietzschean philosophy, Ahad ha-Am shows how this individual becomes the "superman".

Good is the strong man who has the power to expand and complete his life, and also has the will to be a ruler in the world, without considering at all the loss which will result from this to the great mass of weak and lesser men. Accordingly it is only he, this "superman", who is the essence and goal of the human race, and the rest were only created to serve him and to be his ladder on which he would go up and climb to the level which is proper to him . . . . The moral and cultural value of any age is not dependent then, as customarily is thought, on the level of happiness and culture of the majority of men of the age, but rather, on the contrary, on the extent of the exaltation of the specific type in one or more individuals above the general level of the great majority.<sup>10</sup>

Here Berdyczewski found a type of individualism which knew no compromise. The world was created for the sake of the "superman". No group interest could interfere with the maturation of the person. Berdyczewski constantly expressed the fear that the individual would be stifled by the group. Both his mention of Nietzsche and his

emphasis on a philosophic attitude which was in consonance with the "superman" philosophy would lead to the conclusion that the influence was very direct. It would appear that Berdyczewski did not go as far as Nietzsche in his development. His thought retained a place for group "feeling". It is in emphasis that the two greatly resemble each other.

While Nietzsche and Berdyczewski are similar in emphasis Ahad ha-Am and Berdyczewski appear to be fundamentally opposed one to another. Before we can make any definitive statement the evidence must be examined, however. We must attempt to understand the nature of their differences - whether they involve content or merely emphasis and approach. The true nature of their differences will become apparent after we have made our examination. It is not our primary concern, however, to discover the essence of their differences from any other than a philosophic point of view, and that only with respect to Reform Judaism. We are primarily interested in the question: What can the group-conscious philosophy of Ahad ha-Am and the individual-conscious thinking of Berdyczewski contribute to the development of Reform Judaism? Incidentally we will be interested to see which philosophy has come closest to realization in world Jewry and to discover the place of the State of Israel in the thought of each. Our primary question concerning Reform Judaism can be answered only after our examination of selected writings of Ahad ha-Am and Berdyczewski respectively is completed.

## CHAPTER I

The view of Ahad ha-Am that the individual is and must be subordinate to the society is derived from premises. There can be developed from his work a coherent and cohesive system. His position may be discovered as a conclusion rather than a presupposition. That conclusion rests on his view of Judaism in the past and the role that the individual played in the development of the Jewish people. For Ahad ha-Am there is a tension between the people and the individual, a tension which is resolved best by the strengthening of the people. This tension is found in the past. He sees the Jewish problem arising out of this tension.

The basic conflict is caused by the struggle of the individual against certain factors inherent in Judaism itself. These factors, according to Ahad ha-Am, are necessary to the survival of Judaism as a people. The continuance of these factors will insure the survival of the people. Because their continuance is important Ahad ha-Am takes time to point out these factors at length and to describe their merit.

### Prophecy

The prophets gave to Ahad ha-Am a Biblical and thus

traditional basis for his contention that the group is of utmost importance. This traditional proof was important for him inasmuch as his Hasidic upbringing engraved upon his thinking the importance of tradition and its literature. This thinking, which is discussed above,<sup>1</sup> required that he connect his arguments to the past. This he was able to do partially through the prophets.

As regards historic Judaism, Ahad ha-Am found its loftiest expression in the teachings of the prophets; but to endow these teachings with vitality there is a need for a human community as a living protagonist of the idea of absolute justice. The Jewish people have long cherished this mission and they cling to the hope of its fulfillment.<sup>2</sup>

The ideal was given by the prophets. The practical application of that ideal could be found in the community of Israel.

Ahad ha-Am shows the rigor of logic working here. An ideal, that of absolute justice, cannot work without a people to carry it out. Whether this ideal "subsisted" in the Platonic sense or whether it did not even "exist" without the mind of man, it needed man for its implementation. The ideal he could find in the prophets.

The fundamental ideal of the Hebrew Prophets was the universal dominion of absolute justice. In heaven it rules through the eternal Righteous "who holds in His right hand the attribute of judgement," and righteously judges all His creatures; and on earth through man, on whom, created in God's image, lies his duty of cherishing the attribute of his Maker, and helping Him, to the best of his meagre power, to guide His work in the path of Righteousness. This Idea, with all its religious and moral corollaries, was the breath of life to the Hebrew Prophets.<sup>3</sup>



The Idea can only be carried out by man, to the best of his ability. In this way does man help God in His work on earth.

Though Ahad ha-Am is able to find the ideal in the prophets he finds its necessary implementation only in the nation.

These Prophets of Righteousness transcended in spirit political and national boundaries, and preached the gospel of justice and charity for the whole human race. Yet they remained true to their people Israel; they too see in it the chosen people; and from their words it might appear that Israel is their whole world. But their devotion to the universal ideal had its effects on their national feeling. Their nationalism became a kind of corollary to their fundamental feeling. . . . They knew, also, that such work as this could not be done by scattered individuals, approaching it sporadically, each man for himself, at different times and in different places; but that it needed a whole community, which should be continuously, throughout all generations, the standard-bearer of the force of Righteousness against all the other forces that rule the world.<sup>4</sup>

Against this argument, that the prophetic ideal can be best carried out by a people or a community Ahad ha-Am had to contend with the argument that a people or a nation in a loose sense of the term might be able to remain scattered and still remain a people. The notion of

כלל ישראל might be used as an argument against the development of any state or country for the Jewish people. Ahad ha-Am was able to deal with the argument on practical grounds, just as he had established the argument that the ideal only could survive in a community.

The ideal of the Prophets is to influence practical life in the direction of absolute Righteousness - an ideal for which there can never be a complete victory. . . . This influence, a thing practical and not theoretical, demands, as a necessary condition of its existence, not the complete dispersion of Israel among the nations, but, on the contrary, a union and concentration, at least partial, of all its forces, in the place where it will be possible for the nation to direct its life in accordance with its own character.<sup>5</sup>

The last sentence of this argument is the key to any argument for a nation being concentrated in one area. One may argue that dispersion would cause a weakening of the ideal which is found in the prophets. It would become diluted by association with other peoples of different ideals. In order to implement this ideal best, - and this is Ahad ha-Am's only hope, for he realized that it could not be implemented in any complete sense - the community had to seek partial concentration. This concentration, then, becomes an inherent factor in Judaism as a means of carrying out the prophetic ideal, which in itself is inherent to it. The prophets continued, throughout generations, to give to the nation its basis.

Other nations have at various times had their Prophets, men whose life was the life of an embodied Idea; who had their effect, smaller or greater, on their people's history, and left the results of their work in charge of the Priests till the end of time. But it is pre-eminently among the ancient Hebrews that Prophecy is found, not as an accidental or temporary phenomenon, but continuously through many generations. Prophecy is, as it were, the hall-mark of the Hebrew national spirit.<sup>6</sup>

### Group Cohesion

A second factor inherent in Judaism is group cohesion. This is a corollary of the prophetic ideal, but is not the same. It may be a development from the ideal but it is more than the ideal. It is that "something" which is intangible, which is a feeling amongst people. Because it is a feeling reasons can be given for its development, arguments can be used against it, but no one can point to it and no one can disprove its existence.

This feeling often has been used as an argument to prove that Judaism is more than a religion. Judaism is a religion plus, that plus being sometimes a nation, sometimes a race, sometimes a civilization. Ahad ha-Am felt that plus to be a feeling which is intuitive to its people.

Why are we so different from any other nation or language group? Are those of our brothers right who say that we already have ceased being a nation and that we are not connected one to another except by the bonds of religion alone? But those who say this are only able to speak for themselves, for surely there is nothing common between us except a religious bond and the hatred of our enemies; but we, who feel in our hearts our Jewish nationality, rightfully rebuke all who come to destroy, by means of reason, our feeling which to us is intuitive.

This feeling, being the consequence of the spiritual ideal, is in all people of Israel wherever they may be found.

For now that the religious ideal had conquered the national (in exile), the nation could no longer be satisfied with little, or be content

to see in the return to Zion merely its own salvation. "The land of Israel must be spread over all the lands," in order "to set the world right by the kingdom of the Eternal," in order that "all that have breath in their nostrils might say, The Lord God of Israel is King." And so, hoping for more than it could possibly achieve, the nation ceased gradually to do even what it could achieve; and the idea of the return to Zion, wrapped in a cloud of phantasies and visions, withdrew from the world of action, and could no longer be a direct stimulus to practical actions. Yet even so, it never ceased to live and to exert a spiritual influence; and hence it had sometimes an effect even on practical life, although insensibly and indirectly.<sup>8</sup>

The notion that Israel attempted to become a world-wide influence as a people because it could not become a simple nation within national boundaries gives to Ahad ha-Am a crucial argument for the continuance of the feeling that Israel is in some way a special people, that as a group it had a mission in some sense. Here he becomes a quasi-psychologist, examining the group mind and seeing that it created for itself a world of fantasy to sublimate that which it could not have. It could not have its land so it made believe that it could have much more than that - the world. They built castles in the sand, thinking that the sand was theirs and that the castles were real and eternal.

The fact that the idea of the election of Israel, commonly called "the Chosen People concept", could last for so long in spite of the pitiable state of the Jews throughout the ages may be explained by just such a fantasy. The notion certainly did not develop as such, having its roots

in Biblical literature. More amazing than its inception is its development. Ahad ha-Am however, does not place the notion in the fantasy world. He believes it to be an inherent part of Judaism. He, indeed, believes that the notion of "mission" is inherent to Judaism, and that Jews are people whose mission it is to serve their God.

Israel was chosen for moral development by God. The awareness of this election has been preserved throughout history by the Jews. The Jews never have tried to convert, because it is a characteristic of a superior person to be exclusive. The Jew is distinguished from the rest of the world by the fact that he has stricter obligations. Only since the French revolution, when the idea of equality became so important, did the idea of "mission" arise in the sense that the Jews' goodness and ethical standard should be spread throughout the world. This latter interpretation is wrong, for the Jewish "mission" always has been interpreted as being within the group. If the rest of the world benefits it is because they choose to benefit, not because the Jews actively attempt to bring the message to the world. In this sense Judaism might be considered to be a supnation.<sup>9</sup>

The Jews, then, consider themselves to be an exclusive group. They do not actively attempt to expand this group nor do they actively try to spread its ideals to the rest of the world. There is a group cohesion which the Jew will not give up even for the sake of spreading those values to the rest of the world. This is due to the fact that the

group was chosen by God and every individual in the group was chosen by God. Under those circumstances it would be impossible for man to expand the group.

Every individual in the group carries with him the obligations set upon him by the fact of his "chosenness". The individual is destined to carry with him any stigma (as well as any praise) which the group may place upon him. He is part of the group and cannot escape that fact. He carries the group around with him wherever he goes. If the group is accused of being of a certain character then every individual in the group carries that stigma with him. If the Jews were accused of being liars, or of using the blood of the Gentiles for Passover, then every Jew in the group is accused of that by mere fact of his association with the group.<sup>10</sup>

This interesting sociological notion would force every Jew to be a member of the group whether to his liking or not. If this fact is inherent in Judaism then the fact of marginality also would be inherent. Marginality would lead to that notion called "self hatred" which too would be inherent. Judaism, then would be a closed society of positive and negative Jews, all of whom would be inherent to the group. Though Ahad ha-Am does not carry his notion of the stigma of the chosen people that far, this could be an extension of this thought. He did think that such stigma was possible and the individual could do nothing to escape.

The idea of the chosen people, then, is part and parcel of Judaism, whether it be taken negatively or positively.

For Ahad ha-Am it is inherent and thus is permanent.

### Individual Ego

The fact that Judaism is made up of individuals allows for a third inherent factor in Judaism. This is the individual Ego. It is defined by Shalom Spiegel as, "the sum of memory plus will, the inner union of impression in the past with wishes for the future - an organized, spiritual form which grows and develops simultaneously with the body."<sup>11</sup> This Ego is important to our discussion because it is a combination of the past and the future.

When a man says "I", he is not thinking of his hair and his nails, which are here today and tossed on the dust-heap tomorrow; nor of his hands and feet, or the other parts of his anatomy of flesh and blood, which are constantly changing. He is thinking of that inner spirit, or force, which in some hidden manner unites all the impressions and memories of the past with all his desires and hopes for the future, and makes of the whole one single, complete, organic entity.<sup>12</sup>

That part of the Ego which looks to the future often is called "will". It is this will of the individual which is cause for great concern, for it can go against the will of the group or the society.<sup>13</sup> This individual will concerns Ahad ha-Am in his quest for a nation consisting of individuals but not superseded by them. When the individual will comes into conflict with the group will great difficulty can arise. Ahad ha-Am sees the normal periods of history as those in which the group will is dominant.

In normal periods - that is, when society is proceeding in all matters along the path marked out by the preceding generations - past and present join forces in a single task: they repeat the tale of social commands to the individual in the same language and the same words. At such a time, therefore, the individual is able to live in peace and quiet in his condition of hypnotic slumber; he can move all his life long in the narrow circle described around him by the past and the present and yet consider himself a free man, knowing and feeling nothing of the iron chains which bind him.<sup>14</sup>

It is in times when the society does not so dominate, when the past and the present are not made so relevant, that conflict arises. Then the individual Ego is allowed to dominate. This Ego may be free and may be able to follow its own choice, and so it often tries to dominate the national will with its freedom.

Far more dangerous, therefore, is that other section which seeks salvation in a Future not connected with our Past, and believes that after a history extending over thousands of years a people can begin all over again, as though it were a newborn child, and create for itself a new national land, a new national life and aims. This section forgets that it is the nation - that is, the national Ego in the form given it by history - that desires to live: not some other nation, but just this one, with all its essentials, and all its memories, and all its hopes. If this nation could have become another, it would long since have found many ways to its salvation. There is, indeed, another Ego, the particular temporary Ego of each individual Jew. The individual whose existence is endangered is certainly at liberty to seek and escape by any means, and to find a refuge in any place; . . .<sup>15</sup>

The individual Ego, then, is natural in the individual, but it only remains natural if it remains subserviant to the national or folk Ego. The Ego of society, then, becomes so much a part of the individual that it nearly replaces the



individual Ego. This process is so unconscious that what the individual considers to be his own private Ego is in essence a collection of external Egos which have become his. This is the natural process with the individual Ego.

Society, however, which influences the individual, is not a thing apart, external to the individual. Its whole existence and activity are in and through individuals, who transmit its command one to another, and influence one another, by word and deed, in ways determined by the spirit of society. It may, therefore be said with justice that every individual member of society carries in his own being thousands of hidden hypnotic agents, whose commands are stern and peremptory. . . . The individual obeys, unconsciously. . . . He is not conscious that it is the spirit of other men that thinks in his brain and actuates his hand, while his own essential spirit, his inner Ego, is sometimes utterly at variance with the resulting ideas and actions, but cannot make its voice heard because of the thousand tongues of the external Ego. . . .<sup>16</sup>

The inner Ego or the individual Ego remains natural to the individual and thus remains an inherent part of Judaism. Its subjugation also is an inherent part of Judaism. The individual Ego is subservient to the national Ego, the external Ego of society.

### National Ego

The national Ego or folk Ego is that which gives the group its inner character and unity and at the same time is that which develops from the aggregate of individuals in the group. It, essentially, is the character of the group. It may be defined as "a spiritual structure, an amalgam of past and future, pervading the individual units of the group

with a common heritage of memories and aspirations".<sup>17</sup> The difference between this Ego and the individual Ego is that this is common to all members of the group.

The national self also, has been made the subject of subtle inquiry and profound reasoning. But here, too, some philosophers. . . have come to recognize that in essence and principle this idea is nothing but a combination of past and future - a combination, that is, of memories and impressions with hopes and desires, all closely interwoven, and common to all the individual members of the nation.<sup>18</sup>

This national Ego is fed by the people themselves. Because it is a combination of the past and the future specific types of individuals are able to make it grow and develop. The individuals responsible for the preservation of the past are the sages, those men who keep alive the memories of past ages. The men responsible for looking to the future are the Prophets who bring what they believe to be the work of God to the people.

By all means let the sages strengthen the Past and at the expense of the Future. The "Prophets" will follow, and will build a strong Future on the foundations of the Past. From this combination the national Ego will derive fulness and strength.<sup>19</sup>

It is mainly by looking to the future that the national Ego manages to stay alive. Through hopes and desires, expressions of will and striving is the common Ego of a people kept alive. The future is concerned with the continued existence of the people. The past only studies that existence. Study was not enough to keep the people alive. The Prophets, who were able to talk about future hope, were responsible for

the continued existence of the group.

But, fortunately for itself, the nation did not look to the wise men for a solution of the question of its existence, but to the Prophets; and the Prophets gave the solution required. They made the future live again and so completed the self.<sup>20</sup>

In Babylon, then, when the nation was beginning, under the stress of sudden disaster, to despair of the future, the wise men saved what they could of the national Ego, and the Prophets completed their work, and saved the whole people.<sup>21</sup>

The salvation of the national Ego meant the salvation of the nation. Ahad ha-Am never doubted that the two were so closely allied. He never doubted that this Ego was inherent in Judaism. This Ego may be made analogous then to the individual Ego in that it grows and develops, flourishes and dies in much the same manner. In the youth of a nation the Ego has no past, no memories. It has only the future with hopes and aspirations. Then it grows and reaches maturity. It is here that the amalgam of the past and the future takes place. It is in this adult stage that the past is used to further the future, that a nation goes forth with the wisdom of the ages. Then the strength of the nation dwindles. It grows old and degenerates. It is during this period that the nation has only the past, that it looks back and not forward, that the sages become more important than the prophets. There is the possibility that the nation will regain some of its lost strength by means of faith. This faith sustains the national Ego.<sup>22</sup>

The continuance of this Ego is for Ahad ha-Am tantamount

to the continuance of the nation. Without it the nation becomes merely a group of individuals and dies as a nation. The death of the nation would ring the death knoll of Judaism for Ahad ha-Am. Such disaster could come about given certain necessary conditions.

The problems which arise in Judaism, as we might assume, are due to the inherent factors themselves. When, in the course of time, these inherent factors become weakened for one reason or another, Judaism is in danger of extinction, since each one of these factors is vital. Of the four inherent factors mentioned above (Prophecy, Group Cohension, Individual Ego and National Ego) only three are important for our purposes. It may be true that the voice of the prophets is an important part of Judaism. The fact that it plays an ideal rather than a practical role necessarily leaves it out of consideration here, for Ahad ha-Am is more concerned with the practical establishment of the nation than with the ideal which may be its base.

#### Breakdown of Group Cohesion

It might happen in the course of time that the Jewish people will no longer be one people, but, as at the beginning of its national existence, be split up into many single tribes. There would then be not one, but many Jewries, each with a different character and different tendencies according to the land of domicile. In the inner and outer estrangement of the unrelated communities, the oneness of the people would gradually be lost.<sup>23</sup>

The oneness of the people depends upon the national existence. This national existence as well as this oneness is threatened when the Jews are forced to live amongst the non-Jewish world. It is easier to keep alive the national spirit when the Jews are living together.

One period in Jewish history which so threatened the oneness of Judaism was the time when the Jews were emancipated from the Ghetto. Ahad ha-Am feels that Judaism departed from the ghetto along with the Jew. This emancipation caused the division of character of Judaism which endangered its very existence.

It is not only the Jews who have left the ghetto, but also Judaism. The Jews were exiled into certain countries only, due to their national tolerance. But Judaism has done this (or is doing it) of itself in every place wherein it comes into contact with the new culture. The stream of this culture, when it comes into proximity, overturns the defenses from within, so that it no longer is able to be closed and to live a life separate unto itself. This spirit of our people yearns to develop, to assimilate the bases of the general culture which comes to it from outside, to consume them and to regurgitate them as part of its essence, as it already has done in various ages. But the conditions of life in the Diaspora are not suitable for this. In our time the culture is dressed in every place in the national spirit of the people of the land, and any stranger who would approach it must suspend his essence and be consumed by the ruling spirit. Therefor, Judaism in the Diaspora is not able to develop itself in its own way, and when it leaves the walls of the ghetto it is in danger of destroying its essential life, or more important - its national unity: to be split into many kinds of Judaism, to each there being a different character and a different life, according to the number of lands in which Jews are dispersed.

The Jews, when they become dispersed among the nations, tend

to become similar to the dominant culture. This causes loss of identity which Ahad ha-Am fears.

He does not fear this loss of identity so much in the form of assimilation as he does in the form of division of the people. He believes it possible that the people, engaging in competition in foreign lands, will become divided in character due to the character of the lands in which they live.

Our nation does not need to fear assimilation, either now or in the future, but it most certainly needs to fear being divided. For the potential of the individuals of our people to perfect their national existence depends in every place upon the quality of the foreign spiritual forces which prevail in that place and which arouse them to competitive imitation. There is cause to fear lest this potential breaks up into various directions, according to the variety of spiritual strengths in the various lands, so that in the future Israel will no longer be one nation but many separate tribes, as it was at its inception.<sup>25</sup>

The most crushing blow which Ahad ha-Am sees this emancipation bringing to the Jewish people is through the intellectual trick of rationalization. The Jews have been emancipated and they must learn to cope with the developments of the world. They must learn to reconcile their beliefs with the common notions of the world around them. They, for example, face the challenge of science. Darwin confronts them with the theory of evolution. This theory denies purpose and goal in the world. It speaks of a world which is neutral, which cares little about the individual, but only speaks of the survival of the fittest. In this kind of a world is the Jew forced to live with his belief in the mission of Israel. Mission implies some sort of purpose

but the theory of evolution speaks of a world totally void of teleology. In order to avoid contradiction the emancipated Jews have stagnated or even regressed in their thinking. In all other areas they are able to live in their own age, but in this one area they have looked to their ancestors for ideas.

Thus this intellectual slavery also is a result of political freedom. If not for this freedom, emancipated Jews would not deny the existence of the Jewish nation; they would not have to climb to Heaven on an old and rickety ladder, to seek there what they might have found on earth. It might be maintained, indeed, that even then there would have been thinkers who inclined to look for some mission . . . But the truth is that if western Jews were not slaves to their emancipation, it would never have entered their heads to consecrate their people to spiritual missions or aims before it had fulfilled that physical, natural mission which belongs to every organism - before it had created for itself conditions suitable to its character, in which it could develop its latent powers and aptitudes, its own particular form of life, in a normal manner, and in obedience to the demands of its nature.<sup>26</sup>

The division of the character of Judaism, then, leads to notions which are false solutions to old problems. Because the emancipated Jew is unable to find group cohesion which leads to notions coherent with the group thinking, he must find notions coherent with his experience. His experience is divided, partly within the non-Jewish world, partly in the realm of tradition and religion. The conflicts which arise due to this dual existence lead either to denial of the one or the other aspect of his life. Ahad ha-Am feels that this denial would not be necessary if the individual were able to live as part of a group experience.

### Disruption of National Ego

The breakdown of group cohesion brings with it the downfall of the national Ego.

The kernel of the Jewish problem lies in the dangers to which this Jewish folk-Ego is exposed - not in the economic distress of the Jewish masses, dangerous as that may be to the national group, and urgently as relief is required; not even in the moral distress of the people, however seriously sections of it might be imperiled by anti-Semitism. The canker at the roots of the Jewish people is the menace to the integrity of its spiritual life, the progressive dissolution of the Jewish Ego.<sup>27</sup>

Once the national Ego is disrupted the entire unified spiritual life of the people will be disrupted. There then will be no group spirit to which the individual might turn. He would only be able to turn within. The need to turn within, rather than without, destroys the group.

The degeneration of the national Ego can take place for two basic reasons. Either there is too much emphasis placed on the past without reference to the future, or else there is complete reference to the future with no looking backward to the past.<sup>28</sup> The former method stultifies while the latter causes a complete break with anything familiar. The proper solution is a union of the two, having an eye on the past while striving toward the future.

### Importance Placed on Individual

The degeneration of the national Ego has a natural corollary. If there is no group cohesion leading to a breakdown of the group Ego then the individual has recourse



to one source, himself. The result of the breakdown of the group is the strengthening of the individual. This strengthening leads to a further weakening of the group. In this manner a circular motion is set up, the starting point of which becomes blurred in the passage of time. It may be that the emphasis on the individual completely causes the breakdown of the group or it may be that the breakdown of the group, caused by other factors, creates a situation in which the individual can rely upon himself alone and thus must become strong. Either extreme probably is not correct. The most likely process is the circular motion described above. In this case the emphasis on the individual is a cause for the breakdown of the group. This Ahad ha-Am believed to be the case.

At that time after the dispersion our people began to be more concerned about the fate of the righteous individual who perishes in spite of his righteousness . . . Many men who were not intellectually satisfied by all these answers in the Bible came to the conclusion that "it is vanity to serve God" and that "to serve the Master without expectation of reward" is a deed which has no value. Only then, when the welfare of the community could no longer inspire and exalt the heart, suddenly man remembered the individual, remembering that besides the life of the community there is another life which is unique unto itself, and that also this life has wants of pleasure and happiness, and if he the individual is a righteous person then righteousness will be his.<sup>29</sup>

This concern with the righteous individual became more a spiritual matter than a nationalistic feeling. This was a religious feeling. The individual involved himself with the fate of his own soul rather than with the fate of any national

existence. They were not able to be satisfied with the hope for a future which they would not see, a national redemption which would come long after their death. If that national redemption could save them then it would be satisfactory, but they were much more concerned with their own salvation than with national redemption.

But since the political life grew weaker continually, the religious life grew correspondingly stronger. The individualistic element in the soul of the individual of the nation then prevailed more and more over the nationalistic element, driving the nation from its last nationalistic stronghold - the hope of future redemption. This hope . . . in time stopped reaching the heart in its original form, which accordingly said that there is no "difference between this work and the time of the Messiah except with respect to freedom from servitude." For the living people of the time no longer found comfort in all the goodness which would grace their nation in the end of days when their eyes no longer would see. Rather, each individual sought his own very personal share of the hoped for general happiness. Even this religion did not withhold satisfaction from them, making redemption of secondary importance as compared to the resurrection of the dead.<sup>30</sup>

The Ego of the individual, strengthened by this search for individual salvation, interfered with any attempts at national feeling. In this stable condition the individual is unable to become part of a social movement which limits his individualism to even the slightest extent.

The events which came afterward . . . helped further to weaken the national feeling, to limit the concentration of interest in the inner life and thereupon in the life of the congregation (in which the needs of the individual find satisfaction). There hardly remained a national life for the whole people. Even those individuals who were prepared to feel even an occasional

inclination toward work for the nation are not able for the most part to rise above their individualism sufficiently, to subdue before the needs of the nation the love of self honor, the desires of family or community. This devil, the "I" (Ego) of the individual of the community rears its head among us in all that we do for our people and it extinguishes the national love when it occasionally reveals itself.<sup>31</sup>

In this sense the individual is not able to control the individual Ego, for it seems to interfere with the national feeling even when the individual consciously attempts to overcome it.

Ahad ha-Am, by giving reasons for the growth of individualism, shows that the arguments of his opponents are without foundation. They would claim that Judaism has destroyed the individual. Ahad ha-Am argues, rather, that it is individualism which partly is responsible for the destruction of Judaism, which he sees as interconnected with the nation. His adversaries would claim that the individual Jew has been subdued before the abstract moral law and that he has become unimportant before it. Ahad ha-Am claims that even this is not true, though the individual is meant to be of secondary importance.

Throughout the history of Judaism, his claim is, the individual is important. The Tsadik is the example of the individual who is above all else. He is the "superman" of Nietzsche, the all-important individual of the individualists of the age. He is the living disproof of the claim that Judaism never exalted the individual.

Judaism never has completely subordinated the individual to the masses. All know the value of the "Tsadik" in our ethical literature. From the Talmud and Midrash to the literature of "Hasidism" we learn that the "Tsadik" is not created for the sake of others, but rather, on the contrary, "the whole world was only created for his sake, and he is an end in himself."<sup>32</sup>

This Tsadik is an important person for Ahad ha-Am, for he arms him with the necessary immunity to show that Judaism is not a crass society caring not at all for the individual. It is not the individual which Ahad ha-Am abhors so much as it is self interest. Pure self interest can only lead to the disintegration of society. The importance of the individual alone is not an evil, but placing this importance above all else is fatal. This argument - that the individual is worthy but not at the expense of the total community - is central for Ahad ha-Am.

The "language of self interest", which is the language of the struggle for survival, speaks to each and every man in a style peculiar to him, in accordance with his position and ambitions, allowing no man to communicate with his neighbor. As for me, my understanding is too limited to discern how this language can remain for us in place of the general appeal of the nationalistic feeling which united all hearts toward one objective and one desire. . . . But all acknowledge that on the basis of self-interest alone, there cannot be established any kind of organized society or great general effort.<sup>33</sup>

The fact of pure self interest will disrupt the building of any kind of society.

These are the reasons for the emphasis on the individual in Ahad ha-Am's analysis. The problem of theodicy raised

by the destruction of the temple caused the individual to question the merit of the group. The subsequent weakening of the nation placed the individual in a position where he had little else to which he might turn except to himself. His own Ego then grew strong and interfered with any attempts to rebuild some sort of national unity. Even with this, however the individual remained important in the form of the Tsadik. On a moral level man never lost his importance in Judaism. Yet on the level of self-interest he is abhorred by organized social Judaism, which Ahad ha-Am advocates.

### Nationalism

The solution to the breakdown of the inherent factors in Judaism is found, for Ahad ha-Am, in the revival of the nation. He sees this revival as being based on history as well as historical necessity. In ancient times the individual was subordinate to the nation. Then came a turning point in Jewish history, the destruction of the Temple. After this time the individual grew stronger. This fact may be seen by the rising emphasis on personal immortality and resurrection of the dead, exemplified in the late Biblical books such as Daniel. Individual reward was now a common notion. In later history the nation was weakened and the individual strengthened. Thus the argument arose that the Jews already had forsaken nationhood for religion.

Truly there are those of our brothers who say that we already have stopped being a nation and that we have only a religious connection with each other. They feel nothing between us except a religion and common hatred. If that is so why is it that their feeling has not spurred us to great heights?<sup>34</sup>

Ahad ha-Am recognizes the view of others but does not agree that theirs is the solution, due to the fact that it has not worked.

This individualism has led the people to become like their surroundings for a very special reason. The Jews have a tendency to imitate and to imitate well. Before long the individual takes on the foreign spiritual powers which have made him subserviant. Thus, his genius for imitation leads to assimilation unless directed. He loses his uniqueness by means of his great genius.<sup>35</sup> There is a solution to this problem, and that lies in a central place of common interest.

But there is one salvation from this danger /Loss of uniqueness via imitation/. Just as in the position of stability the group was molded in- to a cohesive whole, despite individual tendencies, by means of a central individual in its midst - thus also in the position of breakdown the nation will be able to attain the unification of its parts, in spite of its local interests, by means of a central place, which by its own right, not because of some accidental or temporal relation, will be a great force to draw to it all hearts, to gather all the dispersed people who are subserviant to some fixed loyalty, in a manner that the results of the competitive imitation of all of them will produce for them through it a purifying fire and a unifying bond. . . therefor, all who desire the unity of the nation will bow down in the end before historical necessity and will lift their eyes to the East, to the center of the pattern of our former days.<sup>36</sup>

It is a center which Ahad ha-Am is seeking, a center around

which the Jewish nation can be rebuilt. He looks to a specific center, to the east, to Palestine, not to any nation as Herzl. His hope was bound to the past in argument and in aspiration.

His entire argument for the reestablishment of the nation is historically based, Biblically based. He sees in the Bible a group which is people centered, not individual centered. He sees any success which developed out of this people a result of that peoplehood, not a result of pure individual effort. The people needed a central guide-post, but they never lost their cohesion.

This love (that is, the devotion of the individual to the welfare of the community) is no stranger to our people. . . . In all the commandments and the statutes, the blessings and the curses which the Law of Moses put before us there is one a priori, eternal goal: the welfare of the nation as a whole in the land of its inheritance. It does not pay attention to the happiness of the individual. Each individual of Israel is only the limb of the people of Israel, and the good to which the community will attain is the reward of the actions of the individual. One long chain joins together all the generations, from the time of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob until the end of time; the covenant which God made with their fathers He keeps with their sons after them, and if the fathers will eat sour grapes the teeth of the children will be set on edge. For it is one people in all generation, the individuals who come and go in each generation are only as those small parts of a living body, which are renewed daily without significantly changing the character of the organic unity of the whole body.<sup>37</sup>

Since this national sentiment existed in the time of Moses it is reasonable to assume that this national sentiment can be revived in our time. The critics say that this national sentiment is not innate to the Jewish group. The Jews were bound to their tribe even if they were not bound to a nation.

This shows that they can be tied to something larger than themselves. Patriotism is possible.<sup>38</sup>

The summary of his argument places the burden of proof upon his adversaries. He asks that all who would claim that no national feeling is found amongst the Jews bring more definite proof for their argument. Until that time he calls for an increase of devotion to the people and the land.<sup>39</sup>

### Spiritual Zionism

In spite of the fact that Ahad ha-Am worked for the building of the land he realized that it would be impossible for vast numbers of Jews to migrate to Israel as soon as it would be built.

Modern economic life is composed of so many different principles, and the development of any one of its economic branches depends on so many conditions, that there is no possibility for any nation, even the strongest and the richest, to create in such a short time in any land new sources of income sufficient for myriads of men. . . . Thus only a fantasy close to insanity could believe that immediately upon the establishment of the state would there come to it millions of Jews, and that the land would provide for them adequate sustenance.<sup>40</sup>

Because of the complexity of modern life it would be impossible to build a land which would be a place of refuge for all people. The land will be built, however. It will not be built as a place for all Jews as a homeland, but as a place from which will emanate a spirit which all Jews will receive. It will be built by men who are not able to bear the surroundings of the Diaspora. They will influence others in



the Diaspora to the point that they will want to participate in the spirit and perfection of the land. This land will bring together all those of one spirit. The national spirit will then be renewed in the hearts of those both in the land and those far away. The feeling of national brotherhood will be strengthened by means of the influence of the center upon all the points of the circle.<sup>41</sup>

The total migration to Palestine is not only impractical but also not necessary. The Jewish state as a spiritual and cultural center is the only necessary type of establishment. Its spirit and culture would emanate to the Jews of the Diaspora. Only a small settlement in the country itself would be necessary. In that settlement the few would develop all the arts for the sake of the many. By allowing only a small migration the Jews would make certain that their contribution to the general culture would be a success. Failure would face a mass movement.<sup>42</sup> Any political ideas about the land would rest on a national culture if to be successful.

But a political idea which does not rest on the national culture is apt to turn back the heart of the people from the spiritual power which is in it and to bear in its midst a tendency to seek "its own glory" in the attainment of material power and political rule. Because of this the thread which binds us with the past will be broken and the historical basis will be pushed out from under us.<sup>43</sup>

Pure political Zionism would be deadly for those in the

Jewish state. It would cause them to abandon their spiritual outlook, to abandon their culture in favor of a political dream. If this dream is shown to be fantasy then they would be left with nothing. In the East a cultural Zionism must be cultivated to ascertain a true love of Zion, for it is there that this love finds its last resting place.

The land, then, will be a spiritual and cultural center to which every Jew must go, not necessarily to dwell but to be influenced. Every Jew will have a desire to see the land and will bring back its message to his brothers in the Diaspora.

In this manner the center will grow slowly and its influence will increase. When the influence of a thing increases it too will grow. In this manner there will be created in the Land of Israel a miniature replica of the people of Israel, as must necessarily be, until each Jew in the Diaspora would consider himself fortunate to see the Jewish center with his own eyes, and when he returns home he would say to his friend, "Do you wish to see the archetype of Jewish man in his archetypal image, whether rabbi, scholar, scribe, farmer, artisan, or merchant? Go to the Land of Israel and see him."<sup>44</sup>

This is the great dream of Ahad ha-Am concerning the practical future as opposed to the ideal future of the people of Israel. The land will be established as a beacon to all those who search for its spirit and its culture, for what it has to offer. No mass political movement would take place. A mass spiritual movement would be the effect of the establishment of the Land of Israel. All individuals would look to the land and the people for support and refuge, for guidance and inspiration.

The breakdown of the inherent factors in Judaism cause the problem to which Ahad ha-Am speaks, the loss of the identity of the group. The breakdown of group cohesion, the weakening of the national Ego and the resultant stress placed on the individual cause this loss of group identity. The solution to the problem for Ahad ha-Am is a type of nationalism, a spiritual Zionism. From the Jewish State there would emanate an influence to all Jews of the Diaspora. The Diaspora Jew would look to that State for spiritual and cultural guidance.

In the development of his philosophy Ahad ha-Am makes at least one assumption - that there is some entity which we may call "Judaism" in which we can find inherent factors. That assumption is not necessarily a self-evident truth. If one were to deny its validity the problem and the solutions would be very different. That difference is seen in the thinking of an opponent of Ahad ha-Am, Micha Josef Berdyzcewski.

## CHAPTER II

The fact that Berdyczewski does not have a consistently developed philosophic system makes any construction of such a system purely subjective. As we will discover, Berdyczewski does have a consistent attitude concerning the place of the individual within society. This attitude is found, however, only after piecing together bits and fragments from his thought. If this attitude appears, in any way, to be fully developed it is only because the development is ours, not his.

In spite of the fact that Berdyczewski does not construct a philosophic system, the following observation will allow us to advance in this examination. Berdyczewski held a basic attitude toward "Judaism", as the word commonly is used, and toward the place of the individual within this entity "Judaism". We might guess that his attitude toward the latter was based on his attitude toward the former, but this is only conjecture. That these attitudes do exist will be shown. That they are logically connected is very likely, though this connection is not developed by Berdyczewski to any extent.

"Judaism" and the individual, then, are the antagonists. If "Judaism" refers to some whole which in any way thwarts

the freedom and rights of the individual then we might label it an evil. If it refers to some abstraction which cannot be known directly, then we may not have to worry about it.

"Judaism" may be the opponent of the individual Jew. For that reason we will start our investigation with a discussion of it.

The term "Judaism" is used loosely to refer to some form which many would claim exists in reality. Not only is such an entity thought to exist, but it is assumed that this entity is continuous throughout the ages. Commonly it is assumed that there is a "stream of Jewish thought" which may be traced back to Biblical days. This stream would be used to show our common ground with the prophets, the rabbis, or a period in Jewish history. If this stream of Jewish thought can be seen to exist in any sense more tangible than purely emotional, then some entity called "Judaism", referring to a monolithic system, can be used and would be consistent with reality. Unfortunately, those who use the term rarely use it carefully and would not care to attempt to trace such a system or such a stream of thought.

Berdyczewski did think seriously about this term "Judaism". He violently disagreed that Jewish thought was a continuous uniform stream.<sup>1</sup> He disagreed, not merely because this thought was to his disliking, but because the evidence at which he looked indicated that his position was so.

Judaism is not common to all generations. We recognize the beginning of Israel and primitivism only from the book of the teachings and ideas which were perpetuated in Israel after a long drawn out battle, and these taught us to say that Israel sinned and its deeds were evil; but we must trace for ourselves the life of the Jews who were complete rebels in their strength and natural feeling, and this life before the giving of the Writings, how beautiful, how exalted it was, how exalted and how strong! How goodly are thy tents O Jacob. . . There is no Judaism common to all generations. The difference is great between the God of the Sea and the God for whose exaltation one puts on tefillin. . . The God who cries and says: "Every soul will not be revived." This is not a merciful and compassionate God. The God of the Torah is not the God of the Prophets, and the God of the Prophets is not the God of the Writings; and the God of Isaiah is not the God of Ecclesiastes. It is necessary to say that the God of the Song of Songs is not the God of Ben Sirah and that the God of Deborah is not the God of Beruriah?<sup>2</sup>

Berdyczewski recognized a development in the God concept. He saw that there were basic and radical differences during the ages in the God concept alone. Since this is so fundamental to all other developments in any religion it must have occurred to him that other changes of a basic nature would have taken place also.

How can one use the term "Judaism" then if that term does not refer to anything. We say that we follow "Judaism". Some say that they follow the laws of "Judaism" and are influenced by the past in "Judaism". But what past and what "Judaism"? What God are those people hearing and what literature are they reading? Were they to read the literature of the prophets surely they would not find the same "Judaism" as they would discover in the Talmud.

If we have a strong song whose voice is as the voice of God over the many waters, and if along with it we have a song whose beauty and nature are as the Song of Songs, then which influences us today? What connection is there between our forefathers and their sons? What do we have now from the days of old? And also what is in the works of the Talmud and the Shulchan Aruch which is in common with the Torah of the prophets? Which one rules us and our generation, the seers and the visionaries or the priests and the scribes?<sup>3</sup>

The important question is asked. Which age is that which influences us today, which writer, which thought? If the answer to that question is vague and ambiguous then one would have difficulty tracing a stream of thought through Jewish history. If all ages influence us then we must show how. Berdyczewski would argue that indeed all ages do influence us, but differently. Certainly the prophets influence our thinking today, but so does the thought of Spinoza. They are worlds and generations apart, but both have left their imprint. Though both have played a part in our development it would appear that there are no essential similarities between them in thought. The stream, if it does exist, becomes nearly dry.

Berdyczewski would agree with Nietzsche whom he quotes.

To the generations of Israel there is no continuum; in setting up a prototype from the various generations there is a disregard for the natural order. . . .<sup>4</sup>

That natural order would be change rather than stagnation. He would argue that the "Jewish man" does not exist, because that man is different in every age and may not be given limits by definition or deliniation of character and

personality.

This fact leads to the contention that no definition of "Judaism" is possible. Due to the fact that it is different in every age and due to the fact that there is no continuum of essential thought or character either in concept or in persons no definition would be adequate.

They ~~who~~ would argue for a definition of "Judaism" have forgotten that the ancient Hebrews preceded the revelation of Judaism and that their ways were different from Judaism. Also later Judaism does not stand exclusively on the fear of heaven. . .

Judaism is only an abstract term. There is no basic Judaism; there are only Jewish men who think and act in different times and different ages.<sup>2</sup>

The argument that the only element continuous in "Judaism" is the individual who happens to be born a Jew is here advanced. That individual certainly is different in every age with reference to thought and scope of outlook. That individual thinks and acts in each age, but his thoughts and actions are different. Thus no abstract thought, no basic principle, no consistent philosophy or theology is common to all these individuals in all ages. Only the existence of individuals in each age is evident, not the existence of any notion common to all of them.

This lack of any abstract continuum minimizes the importance of the group. What is the group? If there is no continuum then certainly there is no group which can exist through the ages. The only possible group then would be that which would exist in one given age. Even if one would allow



the existence of such a group one would have difficulty ascribing any *raison d'être* to it. Purpose would be lacking if one could not argue that the group continued to exist, at least theoretically, in the future as well as in the present. People have argued that the Jewish group existed to bring hope into the world. Berdyczewski rejects this notion, showing that Ecclesiastes is the contradiction of it.<sup>6</sup> He thus does away with even the slightest inkling that the Jewish group could exist for any reason. It does not exist and it does not need to exist in an absolute form.

The group then becomes of minimal importance. Basically the argument that the Jewish group is a myth, a fantasy which has no basis in reality, is the key argument for Berdyczewski. If there is no entity "Judaism" then the only entity which can be of any importance is the individual Jew. The individual is important and is entitled to his rights. Berdyczewski battled for the rights of the individual Jew. Judaism tends to stifle this individual with the traditions of dead generations.<sup>7</sup> Man is an individual who exists for himself. While it seems that the group exists all around him and while it seems that he exists in that group, basically he is concerned with his individuality alone. That is his very being, his very self.<sup>8</sup> He is concerned with it rather than with anything else because he can only be concerned with that which exists. It is the individual alone which exists.

The idea of the people and group is only a sterile and illusory concept. I even argue and say: the truth is that there is nothing in existence except individual people, people living only in the confinement of their body and their spirit.<sup>9</sup>

This concerned Berdyczewski because he believed that the illusion of the group would be able to suppress the rights of the individual. Even though this group does not exist in reality, still individuals fall prey to its myth. That is why he contended so vehemently that there is no group - not merely because this was consistent with his evidence, but because any claim to the contrary would stifle the individual. This is why he argued that no fundamental principles of Judaism exist which may be held binding on every Jew. His view was that "Judaism" was different in every age, that the people of Israel is a living, changing reality. That is why he asked "Which Judaism?" when confronted with the view that the group existed and dictated to the individual. He feared that the type of existence which many proposed was stifling to any creativity, to any development. It was too narrow. It did not allow for any maturation of the individual in any but a fixed direction. He showed this by pointing to Greek culture. A basic difference between the Greeks and the Jews is not merely that the Jews contributed the ethical ideal to the world and the Greeks contributed an appreciation for the arts. There is a more significant difference which is not so evident. That difference lies in the fact that the Jews "put all their eggs in one basket", building only the ethical ideal

and considering everything other than it vanity. The Greeks on the other hand searched all areas of life wherever it lead them. The Jews, in this way, missed many of the rich sides of life and became narrow. This narrow existence is stultifying.<sup>10</sup> It is this type of existence against which Berdyczewski fights. The spirit of any group, even if merely an abstract feeling amongst individuals, would not be so narrow. Even in a country the national spirit, if to be creative, must grant full rights to the individual so that he might retain his creativity.

The national spirit is the totality of the group, the totality of him who joins all the individual works of individual men into one culture including a special form; and therefor its first and essential principle, the principle of its unique existence, is to create the possibility to preserve all the dynamic potentials in its egis and in its possession, to keep and to retain in it whatever the individual makes and creates.<sup>11</sup>

Any person attempting to have any group of people work and develop to its fullest capability must allow the individual freedom to develop his own potential in whatever direction that potential might bring him. This advice he gives to a group of people he accuses of not having done this. The Jewish past, he would argue, is one of restriction rather than freedom.

That past cannot help the Jew of the present or the future to any appreciable degree if the Jew remains mired in it. The past is stultifying partly because of the character of the Jewish past as described above and partly because of

the principle that any past, if overemphasized, will hinder rather than help. For Berdyczewski the emphasis is on the present. The four thousand years of Jewish culture were for Berdyczewski a mere abstraction, a mental sum of many single centuries and generations, each of which was as solid and as real as our own century and generation, but the latter, just because they are ours, have for us more meaning, more reality. It is as though Berdyczewski wishes to say: for each man the world in which he lives is - to speak with Leibniz - the best of all possible worlds simply because he himself lives in it.<sup>12</sup> That past is not important. Indeed it is dangerous. The great danger with the past is that it may be worshipped. Very often we tend to value highly that which is old merely because it is old. The ancient takes on a hint of sanctity. There is something sacred about an old book or an old ideal. In the same sense there seems to be something sacred about the Jewish past, the literature and the experience. Such an attitude is dangerous because it does not allow the individual the freedom for individual development. A break with that past is not only desirable but is necessary.

The breaking of the yoke of the past is a necessary and prior condition for individuals to free themselves from the fetters of discipline and tradition, from the bonds of accepted falsehoods and acceptable customary truths.<sup>13</sup>

If the individual is to judge for himself, if he is to break with that which is believed simply because it is popular to do so then he must break with the past and live in the present, live within his own thoughts and notions.

Living in the past restricts our thoughts and our actions. It makes us mechanical men living by tradition and worn out modes rather than with any degree of creativity. It does not allow us to build with any degree of individuality. We follow one another with no thought and no questioning. We may be compared to an army of ants, not thinking and not caring to think.

We are some kind of ants, not men; some kind of creatures who hearken in every generation to a singular command and to a religious statute which doesn't always touch upon life; all of us, in our youth and in our old age, in our manhood and in our womanhood, in our maturity and in our youth, all of us are slaves to the letter and to the writing, mostly to the letter. . . Do not look to heaven or earth, do not look at the world and its fullness, do not look at your souls and the conceptions of your spirit! Look at the writing which was given to you, and there is said what you must do and what you must not do.

All visions of the world, all dreams of life, all emotions of the soul and of the desires, every enrichment of man and his fulfillment is forbidden, is unfit, is rejected because a Jew is obligated to hearken to the voice of the text.

If some feeling comes to you, some desire, some inclination, some hope, drag yourself to the Beth Hamidrash, if you value your life, go and bow your ear to the scholars of the book and listen to their counsels and their words.

We are oppressed, we need air; and so we learn in the book, we learn, we learn. . .

We are ants or less than ants.<sup>14</sup>

He who is steeped in the past with no reference to the future or particularly the present is called an ant, or less. Bitter are the words which cry out against the past. Bitter is the denunciation of a life which seeks all answers in the

literature of the past with no reference to the present. Even those men who usually are considered sancta, the scholars, are not free from the biting sarcasm of the denunciation. No one, no matter what his status or learning, can remain with his head in the past and live a full and rich life in the present. We should hearken to that which has relevance, not to the past merely because it is the past. We discover relevance by looking around, not by burying our head in literature which represents the past. Our world becomes an anthill and our life a constant march in its dark recesses.

Berdyczewski continues his sermon style about the relationship of the individual to the present and the past:

The past ~~supercedes~~ the present; it takes from us the treasures of the present and makes us bearers of a burden. . .

We must stop being Jews of abstract Judaism. We must be substantial Jews, a vital and established people.<sup>15</sup>

It is for this reason that he so worries about the relationship of the past to the present. The individual, by becoming involved with the past rather than the present, tends to lose his "self" in that past. It is the present which affords him the opportunity to express himself. The past can only restrain. The efforts of the individual are restrained by those things which come to us from the past:

All that is among us, that is pertinent to us through the enlightenment of our souls, is the present, that which is our reality and our eternality. Not so is that which is given us, which comes to us from the past,

that which we already have done and have heard; it is strange to us at the time when we begin renewing our works and our efforts. . . in the time when we attempt to go by ourselves, we see in the past, in everything which is ours from bygone days, something restraining us and our efforts. Allow us, we say, to go by ourselves, by our own method. Give us a spirit to strive with our own breath, give us the first day of the week not the last. . . Allow us to attune our ears to our own Torah, to carve our path for life according to the vision of our own spirit and the yearning of our own soul.<sup>16</sup>

The thought expressed here makes the transition from the concern with the past to the concern with the individual. When we try to go on our own, when we attempt to be creative by virtue of our own talents, the restrictions of the past come forth to prevent us from doing so. Berdyczewski pleads to allow the individual to start with himself, to start where he may, rather than at the end of a long road which has been carved before him. If the past is to be the guide then the individual must follow that same path - he can begin no new road of his own. That is the kind of cultural determinism which he attempts to avoid.

There are basically two different fears which Berdyczewski shows here. The first is a fear of idolatry, worshipping the past. We tend to be ruled by, and totally involved with, that which we worship. Many Jews, he would claim, have allowed themselves to be governed by the legalistic system which the traditional literature of Judaism would require. There is an acceptance of this system, a blind acceptance. The Jews tend to ascribe value to this system alone and to no other. From this unwillingness to

consider any path other than that which is narrow and restricting comes the illusion that there is no other correct path. This illusion develops from rationalization. The line of thought would be something like this - I have a literature and a system which is old and thus is good. Yet there are other systems which are old which challenge mine. I am told to follow mine, and only mine. It must be then that mine is better than any other system. If my system is the best, or the most correct, then it is nonsensical to examine any other system. I, thus, will live in my own world at all times. This is the type of reasoning, or lack of reasoning, which Berdyczewski fears will stifle any effort to develop.

This first fear leads to his second consideration. If this monolithic system is thought to be right and good then nothing right and good which contradicts it can ever develop again. This type of logic can only lead to the conclusion that any efforts in the present are superfluous and ludicrous. The individual can have little or no motivation to act at all, for nothing new of any ultimate worth is possible. This is not natural, he would argue. Even the material objects of nature burn out eventually if not endowed with the capacity for self renewal. This is not the natural way to survive. It is not a means to any kind of survival. Though there are eternal forms, it must be the privilege of man to adapt these forms to his age on the basis of his existence.

The Tablets are the work of God and are established for the generations; the letters which are written on the Tablets may not be



blotted out as long as the luminaries do not cease. But allow us to renew them, just as the luminaries renew themselves; allow us to sing by means of our own spirit the song of our life and to shape from our present our existence. Allow us also to stand at the base of the mountain and to cry out, "We will do and we will listen", according to that which is revealed to us. . . . Allow us to envision with our own eyes the vision of God Almighty.<sup>17</sup>

Again, a sermonic form expressed the deep hope of a man deeply concerned.

The type of existence which many Jews have endured is not worthy of being called life. They are automatons, thinking and acting mechanically, predetermined by those formulae which have been built into their mechanism. There is no originality, no creativity. Movement in any direction is not an act of a free agent, capable of changing that direction if so desired. It is purposeless movement. This is not death, but neither is it life.

And it will be, if the people do not listen to the voice of the present, that it will continue, as it is accustomed to do until now, to live in the past and to cultivate only it; then, it also will not live, even if it does not die.<sup>18</sup>

The salvation of individuals or any group of individuals cannot come through such lack of concern for the realization of the vast potential within men.

Those who would argue for the supremacy of the group over the individual would be fighting against human nature. It is the obligation of individuals to recognize and work with the natural instincts of man, not ignore them. The salvation of any group, even Israel, will come not through

diplomats or through prophets, but through men working for themselves, who would thereby be paving the way for the whole people. In certain moments of exaltation, the individual will, it is true, ignore his private interests and concern himself with the public welfare; but daily life tends to run its natural course. Leaders and movements should reckon with human nature, not fight against it. They should try to set the strivings of the individual within a general framework in such a way that what he does for his own good will redound also to the good of the community.<sup>19</sup>

The individual is not able to endure a dualism between himself and the group, between his strivings and the good of the group as a whole. He sees his instincts as being consistent with nature. He is frustrated if made to believe that his thoughts and acts, his hopes and strivings are not consistent with nature around him. There is not such dualism in nature. Why should there be such a dualism in society?

'Return to Nature' - he calls - 'return to your mother, the mother of all life; remember that there is no dualism here, the world and man, God and man, but rather all is one, without end.'<sup>20</sup>

We should not deny that nature. Those who would make a fundamental distinction between the aspirations of the individual and those of the group attempt to posit such a dualism. This has been the custom of Jews in past generations. They have not paid enough attention to the basic nature of man, and indeed have fought against it. They have denied that such a nature existed, and where they found men who

affirmed their nature they forced them to deny it also.

'Our generations, our Book, our life, all teach us that they have forced the mountain /Mt. Sinai/ upon us, that is, they have forced us to overturn our nature.'<sup>21</sup>

The men of the past and the literature of the past both preach the same message - overthrow that which is natural to you.

This overthrow, this attitude, Berdyczewski finds to be unique to the Jews. He argues that this is not the influence of any nations which might have been in contact with the Jews in any given age. This attitude is new and different. Upon analysis he finds that it stems from a certain type of complacency. Because the Jews seem to find some measure of security in group unity they have not been interested in emphasizing the individual and his genius. In fact they probably would have feared to do so, for they might have disturbed the status quo.

But also this is true, "Since the Jews became happy as a nearly confirmed unity, they have never been entirely free; like all individuals who separate themselves from the general group; and by this criterion Israel is distinguished from those ancient nations which resemble it approximately."<sup>22</sup>

In order not to disturb that state of bliss the Jews have maintained the group unity at the expense of the individual.

The hopes and desires of the individual have been suppressed by this group unity, by this emphasis on the many and not the one. It is the one who has the potential. That potential is being inhibited by the oppressive nature of the many.

We must release from servitude to freedom the will and hopes, we must relate to the world and its fullness, to the spirit and its fullness by means of the uses of the will.

First we must be men who behave toward the world and life in a proper manner.<sup>23</sup>

The individual will must be made free. It must be freed so that the individual can better relate to the world. It is not freed so that the individual can act by means of caprice. This is not the function or the result of freedom. The ethical note which Berdyczewski adds above, concerning proper conduct, is evidence that he is aware of the dangers of freedom. He knows that freedom can lead to chaos, that liberty can be misused. This is not the intent of his notion concerning the proper place of the individual. He places responsibility upon the individual, responsibility for right conduct. He does not believe in any type of hedonistic individualism of which he might be accused. His is a responsible individualism. His ethics demand not something less from the individual, but something different and in reality something more - more earnestness, more wholeness, more honesty.<sup>24</sup>

Thus the individual does not act merely because he finds pleasure in his actions. The emphasis on his own merit gives him more worth and more real responsibility. He becomes totally responsible for his actions and his ideas. There is no group to which he can point to place blame. Neither is there a group which can remove from him his innate worth, the value of his thoughts and creations. This is not hedonism.

This is worthy individualism. The value of the individual is great, so great that self sacrifice is deemed foolish. Not only is it foolish but it is purposeless. The martyrdom Jews displayed was for the people as a whole. They found some mission in their actions, some purpose to death on the stake. They would rather have died than transgress the law, they would rather have destroyed the individual than betray the group.

We know that in the midst of our long history our soul betrayed us and sacrificed our lives on the altar of the existence of our people. And while this vision yet would fill our hearts with spiritual strength, our brothers in the west claimed to see in it only one single moral purpose, that it denoted the mission of Israel, or in their words, "the Jewish mission", that is, the people of Israel has come to the world solely for the purpose of Kiddush Hashem and to bequeath to the people of the earth a strong foundation in the ethical doctrine - "Be killed but do not transgress".<sup>25</sup>

That spirit has betrayed the individual. He has sacrificed himself for the welfare of the group, when in fact the group does not in turn protect the individual. Martyrdom is a one-way arrangement in these terms. The individual sacrifices himself for the sake of the group but has no guarantee prior to this that the group will not suppress his individualism. Thus Kiddush Hashem no longer is a noble concept. Indeed it is not even necessary, for the group is not worthy of such protection. Since it is the individual who is all-important, sacrifice of the individual would be tantamount to destruction of society as a whole. The individual must be protected. Kiddush Hashem is the

antithesis of the notion that the individual must be protected. Thus it is abhorred by Berdyczewski.

The group ethic for which men died is an illusion anyway. It is not real in the sense that the individual ethic is real. It is only a construction, invented by men, with no basis in reality.

But when I am for myself I don't know if this is our national ethic which aroused us in ancient times to conquer for ourselves the land by force, or if this is the national ethic which comes into our hearts with the confusion of our function. . .

The matter of the national ethic is only a principle invented by the heart, a principle as the rest of religious principles, which come and go, come and go. . . 26

That ethic is not real. We are not even sure what it is, for we see on the one hand that the ethic would have us conquer a land by force, killing and enslaving to do so, and on the other hand would tell us that we should not murder. That ethic seems to be different in different times, depending upon the convenience of the circumstances. We are not at all sure what it is, if it exists at all.

Yet we are forced to battle against that illusion. The individual constantly is fighting to establish himself as a unique personality within that illusion which many would refer to as a group personality. The evidence would not point to any body which might contain any group personality. Where is this entity called the group and where is its character?

Opposed to him /Ahad ha-Am/ is Berdyczewski, the individualist, who sees the personality as a complete unity, whose established worth is encased in it, in its inner creative powers, and not in bodies which are outside of itself. The opinion of the group does not have a biological body, it is not a chemical compound, but rather a joining of individuals and the work of individuals. . . . There is nothing in the group which is not in the individual.<sup>27</sup>

This is an important comment by Ben-Or - that there is nothing in the group that is not contained in the individual. The argument here is advanced that the group is not more than the sum of the individuals within it. It is equal to the totality of individual personalities. The group does not have any identity of its own, a personality, an ego which is unique to it and is not included in the individuals within it. Many would like to think that the group has some power, abstract and unknowable, which makes the group more than the sum of the individuals in it. This is not so.

Yet these people who try to make the group more important than the individual because it is said to contain within it something other than the sum of the people do not allow the people to recognize themselves. They burden the individual with the inheritances of the past ages.

We, the children of Israel, are an ancient people, burdened with many inheritances, thoughts, feelings and values which have been passed down from of old. . . . We are not ourselves, our dreams are not ours, our thoughts are not ours, our will is not that established within us. . . .

Everything is given in measures and weights, in particular statutes and in general principles, so that those of our people who want to recognize themselves are indecisive, for they are not able to find their 'I' /Ego/.<sup>28</sup>

The individual has lost the ability to find his own personality because it has been hidden by the illusion of the group Ego. In reality that is not the method which we use. We do not recognize the method, which essentially is that which we use with respect to all our associations.

In reality the individual allows the group to rule over him at times when it is convenient for him to do so. It is the individual who gives to the group the authority which the group then is able to exercise. The group, then, does not take the rights away from the individual, the individual surrenders these rights. He gives the group the right to rule over him in order that he might benefit from his association with the group.

'I essentially work for myself, and on the altar of my heart burns a great substantial love, but over that altar the flames of love of the group will rise, and I will make the group rule over me, making myself subserviant to the group and forcing myself to surrender my due lot. I am bound to my family, to my people, and I place upon myself the burden of my fathers in ancient days and the troubles of the many as though my own'<sup>29</sup>

The conclusion that is seen, then, is a realistic one. The evidence points to the fact that there is a group and that the individual in some ways is subserviant to it. That evidence cannot be denied. Berdyczewski argues, in effect, that the group is a configuration of the minds of men and that these men then give up certain of their freedoms for their mutual benefit.

This conclusion, which admits the existence of a group,



would seem to be inconsistent with the beginning stages of this development which argued that the group in fact does not exist. Though Berdyczewski does not worry about this problem it may be shown that there is no inconsistency here. There is no physical entity called the "group". There is no consistent whole known as "Judaism". Yet men act as though such a whole does in fact exist. They even surrender their freedoms to that illusory whole in order that they may benefit from each other. In reality the group is the sum total of the individuals within it and nothing more than that. Yet men act as though that group did have some personality of its own, some being outside of the individuals of which it is comprised.

There is no particular danger in acting in the above manner unless one were to claim that there is such a being known as the group and that that being does in fact have powers over the individual. Those who would claim that the group is not illusory, that it is not a configuration of the minds of men are to be feared, for they would restrain the potentials of the individual for self-development. We may speak of a group, but we must realize that we are speaking only in subjective terms, that there is no objective referend for our words. If we realize that then all danger is removed.

Berdyczewski would seem to refer to the "group" or to "Judaism" as such a subjective term, realizing that it has no objective reality. His quarrel is with those who would claim the opposite and then turn that reality against the

freedom of individual expression. For him the individual is only subordinate if he chooses to be subordinate. The right to choose belongs to the individual. Some would remove not only his power to choose but also his right. Those would be the great enemies of mankind, the enemies of substantial freedom and development.

## CONCLUSION

We have examined the thought of two writers with regard to the relative importance of the individual and/or the society. Each has used arguments to counteract the position of the other, for indeed each knew the nature of the philosophy of his opponent. We now are able to draw conclusions, evaluate and look to the future.

Ahad ha-Am assumed in his work that the individual is established for the sake of the community. In no way is the individual justified in interfering with the work of the community or society.

With what authority do certain private individuals, whoever they are, have the right to place stumbling blocks in the path of the whole nation?<sup>1</sup>

The individual is established for the sake of the nation, but not the nation for the sake of him alone.

Along with that notion goes his concept of "spiritual Zionism". Basically, as we have seen, "spiritual Zionism" allows for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine but does not hope that this country will become a homeland for all Jews. It will serve as a spiritual center, a beacon for Jews in the Diaspora. It would not be practical to hope that all Jews would be able to live within the national boundaries of Palestine. The land would be set in the center of Jewish life so that it might serve as a "model for

imitation" for the people of Jewish stock in all the lands of the Diaspora. This common focus of all the people will transform them from an amorphous mass into a circumferential group looking to the homeland-center.<sup>2</sup> This center will be a homeland for the few rather than the many but from it will emanate the cultural and moral patterns of the people.

Neither of these goals can be accomplished by exalting the individual over the society. Chaos, immorality, materialism and all evils which Judaism has attempted to eliminate would rule. In a bitter indictment of the position of Berdyczewski Ahad ha-Am restates his view.

For throughout all those generations Judaism has exalted the spiritual ideal, the abstract, above the material force, the real, the "book" over the sword. By means of this it estranged from the heart of the Jew the yearning to strengthen the power of the individual, it has subdued life itself before the shadow of life and the actual Jew has become like an appendage to an abstract moral law. In this state our people are no longer able to live amongst the nations, how much the more so to restore a national life in their land. . . we need, therefor, first of all, to change the moral laws which rule over us, to destroy without mercy all at once the entire historical structure which we have inherited from our fathers which was built on the basis of this dangerous idea of the superiority of the value of the spirit above matter and of the subordination of the individual life to abstract moral laws.<sup>3</sup>

The sarcasm of the passage is obvious. The view is significant. It makes of an individualist a materialist who places immorality above morality and reality over spirituality. His position becomes ignoble and base.

The establishment of a Jewish state was predicated in

part at least on such a philosophy. Palestine was to be a spiritual center as well as a refuge for the persecuted. It was to place the value of the state above the value of the individual. It was to be a beacon to the Jews of the Diaspora. It was to place value in the spiritual, in the abstract, in the "book". This goal partly has been achieved. By means of self sacrifice and self subordination was the State of Israel founded. The collective system, of which the "Kibbutz" is an example, enabled the country to survive economically. The exultation of the land and the group enabled growth and development to take place.

In the realization of Israel as a living and thriving country part of the vision of the thought of Ahad ha-Am has been brought to fruition. The fact that there is some culture of a unique fashion emanating from Israel is proof of the fact that in some way it is a center for Judaism. The interest which individual Jews have shown in Israel as a cultural center, if not as a spiritual center, is proof of the fact that it is having its effect upon Jews in the Diaspora. It is a center of sorts.

But what type of center is it? Can we say with any degree of certainty that Israel is the spiritual-religious center which Ahad ha-Am envisioned? Is there any beacon of religion which calls to the Jews of the Diaspora from its source? Is it not true that the magnetic attraction which Israel holds is only quasi-religious, religious in the sense of some nostalgia for the past? Religion within Israel

itself has lost its fervor. In its place a nationalism is arising which threatens to make extinct and unneeded the type of Judaism which the country itself ostensibly was formed to preserve. This nationalism is the political devil against which Ahad ha-Am warned. When the country would become secular and political in nature and lose its spiritual value then it would lose its *raison d'être* for Ahad ha-Am. This is happening in Israel. The warning which was given to the political Zionists of his day is not being heeded. Rather than becoming a spiritual beacon to all Jews in the world Israel is becoming another political entity in this secular system of national governments. Even the religious element is represented by a political party which in effect is secularizing that section of the society. Secularization in a political sub-division is causing the loss of spiritualism, just as Ahad ha-Am warned.

This nationalism which is felt so strongly in Israel is not felt in the Diaspora except by some Zionists who believe that Israel should be the homeland for all Jews - indeed they might argue that it is their rightful homeland in spite of the citizenship which they now happen to carry. The fact that the Jews of the Diaspora do not feel the national allegiance to Israel would be a partial fulfillment of the goal of Ahad ha-Am. This also would be somewhat consistent with Berdyczewski's thinking in light of his notion that the individual in the Diaspora is to be encouraged to develop his own potential. If Israel, by any indirect means, would

help the individual to that goal then it would receive his support. He would view Israel as a center to encourage the individual to fulfill himself and to lend his support to the nation only insofar as it aided that cause. The individual would give up his rights to the country in order to improve his own lot.

In the Diaspora the followers of Ahad ha-Am would lend support to the notion of "K'lal Yisrael". The adherents to this concept believe that there is some unifying force which binds Jew to Jew no matter what his nationality or station in life. That unity would be enhanced by the spiritual center which would give to it meaning and purpose. That unifying force takes many forms, such as peoplehood or civilization. Whatever its definition, it causes a number of individuals to find that "something" which makes a group. That "something" is the plus which the group contains in the thought of Ahad ha-Am.

Against this notion Berdyczewski would argue that there is not any cohesive content or fundamental principle which one could find to exist. When he would be charged by Ahad ha-Am that this thinking is foreign to Judaism he would answer: What Judaism? There is no common Judaism for all time. One is not able to define Judaism and then bind individuals to that definition, for such delineation does not exist. He would seriously question the notion of "K'lal Yisrael", asking what that binding force is in terms of reality. He probably would deny the existence of such a

concept were it not definable.

The above conclusions can be drawn and evaluations can be made. What is of more significance, perhaps, is the importance of the foregoing analysis of the thinking of Ahad ha-Am and Berdyczewski to Reform Judaism, since that movement is our major interest. The question we might ask is this: Can our examination of either or both of these authors help Reform Judaism in its quest for meaning and vitality? To find the answer to that question we must discover something about the tenor of the movement as it presently exists.

It is difficult to use the term "Reform Judaism" in terms of theology. We know what it means in terms of its institutions and its members, but not so clear is its meaning with reference to its "system of belief". Upon cursory glance it would appear that "Reform" has no one theology and no one system of beliefs. Most likely it has as many beliefs as it has members. For this reason we used the term "tenor" for it might be possible to arrive at conclusions through observation without making any commitments about systematic belief.

It would appear that the individual in Reform has ultimate freedom. There is no authority which governs the individual, no set of rules or regulations which is binding upon him. He is the source of his own freedom. There are guides, such as the rabbinical structure, but ultimately there is no authority external to the individual. For the sake of convenience and guidance the individual surrenders



his sovereignty to the group and to the rabbinical structure. He is free, however, to disassociate himself from these at any time. No amount of coercion or dogmatism is able to deny him that freedom.

One reason that the individual is able to declare his freedom is based upon an analysis of the past. He sees in the history of "Judaism" many different views expressed. It is evident that there have been many brands of "Judaism" throughout the ages. Any one of these seems as valid as any other for the Reform Jew since he has denied the revelatory character of the Bible and the Talmud. The entity "Judaism" may not exist. The word may be used as an emotive term without any objective reference. All one may say in way of definition may be that "Judaism" is that religion to which Jews adhere.

In these terms there would be only a religion "Judaism", not a nation or a civilization. This religion would be the aggregate system of beliefs of its adherents. One could not point to "Judaism" nor define it. All one might say about "Judaism" is that the individual bears his own religion and so bears his own "Judaism." It is different for each individual and each individual has the ultimate freedom to decide for himself about his "Judaism."

The religion of "Judaism" then is totally individual in nature. Its theology does not depend upon any central group, society or nation for Reform. Some may argue that Reform must depend upon tradition and a cultural center if it is to

retain the character of being "Jewish". Since Reform could not recognize the validity of that term as any other than subjective or emotive it would not know what being "Jewish" means, unless it meant the actions and ideas of a Jew. If it meant that then it once again would be characterized by the individual and not by the nature of any group or society.

There is nothing in the tenor of Reform Judaism which we could not find in our presentation of the thinking of Berdyczewski. We thus would argue that the present and future of Reform Judaism lies with Berdyczewski more so than with Ahad ha-Am. His beliefs that the individual has ultimate freedom, that "Judaism" is not a definitive term, and that Judaism is a religion only which is totally individual in nature agree fundamentally with the tenor of Reform Judaism.

There are qualifications, however. It is true that the individual has and must have ultimate freedom in a liberal system. This freedom cannot be equated with chaos. A danger inherent in any liberalism is a result of freedom - lack of unity, lack of system. The individual who uses his liberty in a manner destructive to other individuals might cause impassioned chaos. To prevent this type of existence the individual surrenders his authority to the group, a fictitious concept which is formed for the convenience of the individuals. The concept of the group which Ahad ha-Am finds to be all important takes on a fictitious character of its own. The result is, on a purely conceptual level, the group, which Ahad ha-Am envisioned on the level of reality.

To this group Ahad ha-Am assigned a mission. From the spiritual center there would emanate to the individuals in the Diaspora a sense of this mission, though the mission would be effected not through their efforts but by virtue of the existence of the country. Berdyczewski could not assign such a mission to the group for it did not exist, except on a convenient, conceptual level. If there was any mission to be carried out it would have to be through the individuals themselves. Even "K'lal Yisrael" could not be responsible for carrying out the mission, for it too would be difficult to define.

Reform Jews have varied attitudes toward the idea of mission and "K'lal Yisrael". That many Reform Jews would argue that "K'lal Yisrael" (probably meaning a community of Israel in this context) is a reality with a mission is undeniable. Many too would deny its existence. This fact would lead us to believe that the notions of mission and "K'lal Yisrael" have a place within Reform Judaism since they have meaning for Reform Jews. On the other hand they are not necessary. The only necessary element in Reform is that Jews who would affiliate with Reform temples grant to every individual so affiliated complete autonomy. They must recognize that the individual is ruled by the fictitious group only to the extent which he allows himself to be governed. Beyond that point no authority can be granted. The notions of mission and "K'lal Yisrael" then can have a place in Reform Judaism but any argument about them is

irrelevant, for such an argument does not recognize the fundamental issue, that of individualism.

It is with reference to this fundamental issue that Reform finds a friend in Micha Josef Berdyczewski. His views are most consistent with the basic philosophy of Reform Jews. On this one issue Ahad ha-Am would not suffice. The group is not allowed to dominate the individual to the point of suppression for that would be allowing a creation of the individual to turn upon him. Reform Jews can look to Berdyczewski for sympathy with that philosophy. The question of the group versus the individual finds no real resolution here. A total synthesis is not possible. Some secondary issues in the thinking of Ahad ha-Am and Berdyczewski can be reconciled in Reform. But the individualism of Berdyczewski reigns supreme in the final analysis.

## FOOTNOTES

Introduction

1. יעקב פייכמן, "אחד-העם וברדיצבסקי", מאזנים, ה' (שבט, תרצ"ז), ע' ע"ח.
2. Development of Reform Judaism in Germany.
3. אחד העם, "לא זה הדרך", כל כתבי אחד העם, (חל-אביב: דביר, תשכ"א), ע' י"ד.
4. "דרך הרוח", שם, ע' קנ"ה.
5. שם, ע' קנ"ז.
6. Leon Simon, Ahad ha-Am (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1960), p. 288.
7. Shalom Spiegel, Hebrew Reborn (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1962), p. 334, quoting "Beyn ha-Pattish voha-Saddan".
8. Ahad ha-Am uses this review to fight Berdyczewski with his own statements.
9. אחד העם, כל כתביו . . . , "דרך הרוח", ע' קנ"ד.
10. שם, ע' קנ"ד-קנ"ה.

# Chapter I

1. See above, p. 5 ff.
2. Louis Rittenberg, "Ahad ha-Am," Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, ed. Isaac Landman, I (1930), p. 136.
3. Ahad ha-Am, Selected Essays, translated by Leon Simon (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1912), p. 133. (Hereafter noted as "Ahad ha-Am, op. cit.")
4. Ibid., p. 134.
5. Ibid., p. 137.
6. Ibid., p. 132.
7. אחד העם, "לא זה הדרך", כל כתבי אחד העם, ע' י"א.
8. Ahad ha-Am, Selected Essays, op. cit., pp. 77-78.
9. אחד העם, כל כתבי... , "דרך הרוח", ע' קנ"ז.
10. שם, "חצי נחמה" ע' ע-ע"ג.
11. Shalom Spiegel, Hebrew Reborn, op. cit., p. 286.
12. Ahad ha-Am, Selected Essays, op. cit., p. 80.
13. See below, p. 20.
14. Ahad ha-Am, op. cit., p. 94.
15. Ibid., pp. 89-90.

16. Ibid., p. 92.
17. Shalom Spiegel, op. cit., p. 286.
18. Ahad ha-Am, op. cit., p. 82.
19. Ibid., p. 89.
20. Ibid., p. 85.
21. Ibid., p. 87.
22. Ibid., p. 83.
23. Shalom Spiegel, op. cit., p. 287.
24. אחד העם, כל כתביו . . . , "הציוניות המדינית", ע' קל"ז.
25. שם, "פרורים", ע' פ"ט.
26. Ahad ha-Am, Selected Essays, op. cit., pp. 191-192.
27. Shalom Spiegel, op. cit., pp. 286-287.
28. Ahad ha-Am, op. cit., p. 88.
29. אחד העם, כל כתביו . . . , "לא זה הדרך", ע' י"ב.
30. שם, ע' י"ג.
31. שם.
32. שם, "דרך הרוח", ע' קנ"ו.
33. שם, "לא זה הדרך", ע' י"ד.

- שם, ע' י"א.
- 34.
- שם, "פרורים, ע' פ"ח.
- 35.
- שם, ע' פ"ט.
- 36.
- שם, "לא זה הדרך, ע' י"ב.
- 37.
- שם, ע' ט"ז.
- 38.
- שם.
- 39.
- שם, "הציוניות המדינית, ע' קל"ו.
- 40.
- פ. לחובר, אחד-העם (וורשא: ספרות, תרע"א), ע' ל"ג-ל"ד.
- 41.
- אחד העם, כל כתביו . . . , "הציוניות המדינית, ע' קל"ח.
- 42.
- שם.
- 43.
- לחובר, אחד-העם, ע' ל"ג.
- 44.

## Chapter II

1. Chaim Schneid, "Berdyczewski," Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, II, p. 194.
2. מיכה-יוסף בן-גריון (ברדיצ'בסקי), "שנוי ערכיו, כל מאמרי מיכה-יוסף בן-גריון (חל-אביב: עם עובד, תשי"ב), ע' מ"ז.
3. שם, ע' מ"ח.
4. שם.



5. שם, ע' נ"א.
6. שם, "עם וארץ", ע' צ"ד.
7. Shalom Spiegel, Hebrew Reborn, p. 331.
8. Ibid., p. 343.
9. מיכה-יוסף בן-גריון, כל מאמרי..., "דברי חזיון", ע' ט"ז.
10. שם, "שנוי ערכין", ע' ל"ג-ל"ד.
11. שם, ע' מ"א.
12. Shalom Spiegel, op. cit., p. 352.
13. אהרון בן-אור (א. אורינובסקי), תולדות הספרות העברית החדשה (תל-אביב: יזרעאל, חשי"ט), ב', ע' קפ"ג.
14. מיכה-יוסף בן-גריון, כל מאמרי..., "שנוי ערכין", ע' מ"ד.
15. שם, ע' ל"ו.
16. שם, ע' מ"ב.
17. שם.
18. שם, ע' מ"ז.
19. Shalom Spiegel, op. cit., p. 357.
20. אהרון בן-אור, תולדות הספרות..., ע' קפ"ד.

Quoting Berdyczewski without giving the source.

21. Quoting Berdyczewski without giving the source. שם, ע' קפ"ה.-

22. מיכה-יוסף בן-גריון, כל מאמרי..., "שנוי ערכין", ע' ל"ג.

23. שם, ע' מ'.

24. Shalom Spiegel, op. cit., p. 356.

25. מיכה-יוסף בן-גריון, כל מאמרי..., "עם וארץ", ע' צ"ד.

26. שם, "שנוי ערכין", ע' ל"ח.

27. אהרון בן-אור, תולדות הספרות..., ע' קפ"ז.

28. מיכה-יוסף בן-גריון, כל מאמרי..., "שנוי ערכין", ע' ל"ה.

29. אהרון בן-אור, תולדות הספרות..., ע' קפ"ז.

Quoting Berdyczewski without giving the source.

### Conclusion

1. אחד העם, כל כתבי..., "לא זה הדרך", ע' י"א.

2. Shalom Spiegel, Hebrew Reborn, p. 388.

3. אחד העם, כל כתבי..., "דרך הרוח", ע' קנ"ד.

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