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THE BLESSING AND THE CURSE

A SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL VIEW

OF THE GROWTH AND DISINTEGRATION OF THE SHTETL

DAVID B. KAPLAN

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for Ordination

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Referee: Prof. Stanley F. Chyet

To Terri, my closest companion and wife

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SYNOPSIS

A number of studies have been done concerning the disintegration of the shtetl, the Eastern European Village, and at least one anthropological study of the shtetl intact. The former works have concentrated mainly on the socioeconomic and historic aspects. It is my intent in this thesis to compare the shtetl while intact, the disintegration of that society, and the resulting problems of those who left that milieu with socio-psychological theory.

In Chapter One, I have reviewed selected theories of what constitutes a sane society and a healthy individual with a strong identity. In Chapter Two, I compared the general theory with the norms and goals, as well as the structures and systems of the shtetl, to find those strong points of shtetl life which would tend to make it a sane society.

In Chapter Three, I reviewed social theory which would help one understand the break-up of the shtetl. I have also included in this part, relevant socioeconomic information. In Chapter Four, I returned to the shtetl literature for examples of the propositions stated in the previous chapter.

In Chapter Five, I have described the concepts of anomie and alienation, citing also, other pertinent psychological terms which result from these conditions. Chapter Six is devoted to several brief character studies, taken from fictional shtetl material. Here I attempted to show the results of the Jew breaking away from his tradition, namely the conditions of anomia and alienation.

Chapter Seven is a non-fictional character study of Solomon Maimon; his autobiography contains the elements discussed in the previous six chapters. It is the story of a man who in the process of running away from dogmatic structure, loses Jewish tradition. The resulting anomia and alienation that he suffers, due to a lack of any type of viable structure, leads him to drink himself to death.

It is hoped that through this type of study, we may be better able to sift through the characteristics of the traditional life style of the shtetl inhabitants, and thereby find the strong points which may still be applicable to Jewish life today, without returning to the total institutional structure which drove many away from tradition.

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INTRODUCTION

"Today I offer you the choice of life and good, or death and evil. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I give you this day . . . then you will live and increase. . . . But if your heart turns away and you do not listen and you are lead on to bow down to other gods and worship them, I tell you this day that you will perish . . . I offer you the choice of life and death, blessing or curse. Choose life and then you and your descendants will live. . . ." (Deut. 30).

The subject of the above statement has been explored by various people in many ages; the methods of living a meaningful life--choosing the blessing--have been suggested by men in such areas as religion, philosophy, psychology and sociology, just to name a few. It is my intent in this paper to rely upon selected literature taken from sociology and psychology to examine the structure of the shtetl, the Eastern European Jewish Village, and the life style of its inhabitants for their ability to choose life. Using selected material from short stories, novels and memoirs concerned with shtetl life, I will review three phases of Jewish life: the rise and peak of shtetl development, the decline of and exodus from the shtetl, and the period of moral decay and psychological problems for those who left the shtetl milieu. These three periods are by no means distinctive nor are the literature cited or the results suggested limited to the shtetl.

CHAPTER I

REQUIREMENTS FOR A HEALTHY PERSONALITY AND A SANE SOCIETY

We begin, then, with a psychological definition of the individual who is capable of choosing life--the individual with a healthy personality. Marie Jahoda states that such a person evidences four characteristics: 1) He is able to perceive himself correctly. 2) He shows a certain unity of personality. 3) He is able to perceive the world correctly. 4) He actively masters his environment.[1] As a child begins to form concepts of himself and the world, he goes through a process of awakening in which, to a certain degree, he is separated from his first state of security in the womb, where perception is not necessary.[2] Through this awakening, he learns to differentiate between what is "I" and what is not "I."[3] He becomes comfortable in the body that he recognizes as his own, and at ease with the functions of his emotions and intellect. From this unity of character, he will be able to conduct himself in his surroundings, knowing where he is going and that his actions will secure proper recognition from the society around him.[4]

This process would be fairly simple were the factors involved static, but internally and externally, life is in constant flux. Internally, man is confronted with two opposing forces. One is the drive to return to the warmth and security of the womb--to be reunited with nature. The other is the drive to transcend his original state--to rise above nature.[5] Externally, man is confronted with the fact that life is a series of new situations which contain only a limited number of familiar variables along with a set of unknown factors. Therefore, "each step into his new human

existence is frightening. It always means to give up a secure state, which was relatively known, for one which is new, which one has not yet mastered."[6]

The changing external world tends to magnify the internal conflicts. Although one may wish to deny it, an adult needs warmth and protection much the same as a child does;[7] he feels also, the necessity to believe that there is some eternal higher principle involved in his life. "Hence any satisfying system of orientation contains not only intellectual elements but elements of feeling and sensing which are expressed in the relationship to an object of devotion . . . which gives meaning to his existence and to his position in the world."[8]

Once having achieved this security, the individual strives to be more than a passive recipient of circumstances. In some way, he must have an impact on his surroundings. He will try first to do this in a constructive way, to become a creative person. If this fails, he may turn to destructive methods, which, though not as satisfying, and even more so, harmful to the individual as well as his environment, still allows one to feel that he has "left his mark."[9]

If one can thus master his environment in a constructive manner, it will reinforce his identity. He will develop what may be termed "brotherly love" or "productive love." This process "always implies a syndrome of attitudes; that of care, responsibility, and knowledge."[10] The individual will know that he is united to all with whom he comes in contact, yet will still experience himself as a unique entity.[11]

This process of achieving equilibrium, as the person matures, becomes increasingly an unconscious procedure. The healthy personality will think less of himself, and thus his self-love will actually be ex-

pressed as "selflessness," where one, being absorbed in the world around him, is quite naturally unaware of his own ego.[12] This state of unself-consciousness, "akin to the normal unawareness of our breathing,"[13] allows one to achieve "an harmonious integration of the instinctual drives, the superego standards and restrictions, the ego perceptions and discriminative faculties, and the real possibilities offered by the environment."[14] When man reaches this state of growth, his decisions are made with little effort if they are minor, or if major, will be characterized by the feeling that "one can do no other."[15] These fairly unconscious actions which lead to creative or productive existence will then result in happiness.[16]

But the above is the ideal state, which, though present at times, cannot be permanent. "A sense of identity . . . is never gained nor maintained once and for all . . . it is constantly lost and regained."[17] Man reaches equilibrium, only once again to have unknown situations confront him. It may be that it is man's ability to reason which, on one hand a blessing, is, on the other hand, the cause of man's insecurity. For his ability to think causes the individual to "find ever-new solutions for the contradictions in his existence, to find ever higher forms of unity with nature, his fellow men and himself."[18] This search leads man to anxiety.

"Anxiety . . . may be experienced as a most unpleasant interference with thinking processes and concentration, as a diffuse, vague and frequently objectless feeling of apprehension or as a discomforting feeling of uncertainty and helplessness."[19] It is the result of having one's structure or scheme of order disrupted. Man normally depends on a given set of facts remaining stable; when these change, whether or not he is

aware of the change, there arises a feeling of discomfort which we call anxiety. Though one may perceive this feeling as being a fear of nothing, it is in fact the fear of otherness, rather than nothingness.[20]

"If anxiety is mild, it is stimulating and facilitates increased and efficient action or thought."[21] If anxiety, on the other hand, becomes overwhelming, it will have a paralyzing or destructive effect. Therefore, man needs to have valid defenses against anxiety for it to remain a normal constructive force leading to creativity.[22]

"How, then, can man tolerate this insecurity inherent in human existence? One way is to be rooted in the group in such a way that the feeling of identity is guaranteed by the membership to the group. . . ."[23] Durkheim, referring to religions as one type of group, says, "The essential thing is that they be capable of supporting a sufficiently intense collective life."[24]

This collective life is not only a deterrent to abnormal anxiety, but is also a requirement for the development of one's identity. Erikson emphasizes the community's role in the establishment of the individual's identity when he says, "We deal with a process 'located' in the core of the individual and yet also in the core of his communal culture, a process which establishes, in fact, the identity of these two identities."[25] The community must aid the adult, as well as the child, in his growth, giving each person a status of his own, a unique position in that society, as well as positive reinforcement and support.

It is not just that the individual has grave responsibilities to the community, but the community must assure the mental health of the individual. "Mental health cannot be defined in terms of the 'adjustment' of the individual to his society, but on the contrary . . . it must be de-

fined in terms of the adjustment of society to the needs of man. . . ."[26] In meeting these needs, "the human environment must permit and safeguard a series of more or less discontinuous and yet culturally and psychologically consistent steps, each extending further along the radius of expanding life tasks."[27] "The community supports such development to the extent which it permits the child, at each step, to orient himself toward a complete 'life plan' with a hierarchical order of roles. . . ."[28] Likewise, each man must be presented with a set of values of "conscience, while potentially present, requires the guidance of men and principle which develop only during the growth of culture. . . ."[29]

It is the community at large which establishes the status and values for the individual, but it is the family structure which has the "function of transmitting the requirements of society to the growing child,"[30] and which provides the most intimate support for the person throughout his life. It is, therefore, of utmost importance that the society provide for the possibility of a strong family unit.

It must be emphasized that an effective society, recognizing the need for man to develop his identity continually, will provide for the needs of the adult, as well as the child. Inherent in this idea is the need for adult education.[31] Furthermore, each adult must know that his position in life is important to the well-being of the community. Consequently, recognition by the society of the individual's occupation as being worthwhile is a necessity.

Since man cannot operate in a purely theoretical, non-concrete milieu, the structure must have adequate ritual and symbolism to concretize the system and values of the community. These must be not only at the level of community participation, but must also be present as family

expression in order to assure unity on the primary level, and as individual expression in order to assure the independence of each person.[32]

Lastly, the community must demonstrate its concern for each member of the group with appropriate systems to protect the physical, emotional, and intellectual well-being of its members. These may take the form of such groups as charitable or welfare organizations.

In summary, we might say that the healthy society must be one in which the aspects of a sense of affirmation of life, freedom and equality are present simultaneously with those of reason, discipline, conscience and individualism.[33] This may well have been the society that Karl Marx desired to establish, for "Socialisms, to Marx, meant a society which provides the material basis for the full development of the individual, for the unfolding of all his human powers, for his full independence."[34]

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

[1]Erik H. Erikson, Identity: Youth and Crisis. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1968), p. 92.

[2]Erich Fromm, The Sane Society. (Greenwich, Conn: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1955), p. 53.

[3]Ibid., p. 53.

[4]Erik H. Erikson, "The Problem of Ego Identity," Identity and Anxiety, eds. Maurice R. Stein, Arthur J. Vidich and David Manning White (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1962), p. 51.

[5]Fromm, Sane Society, p. 33.

[6]Ibid., p. 32.

[7]Ibid., p. 43.

[8]Ibid., p. 66.

[9]Ibid., pp. 41-2.

[10]Ibid., p. 38.

[11]Ibid., p. 37.

[12]Erikson, "Problem of Ego Identity," p. 47.

[13]Herbert Fingarette, "The Ego and Mystic Selflessness," Identity and Anxiety, pp. 580-1.

[14]Ibid., pp. 565-6.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Fromm, Sane Society, p. 179.

[17]Erikson, "Problem of Ego Identity," p. 51.

[18]Fromm, Sane Society, pp. 30-1.

[19]Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, "Psychiatric Aspects of Anxiety," Identity and Anxiety, p. 129.

[20]Kurt Riezler, "The Social Psychology of Fear," Identity and Anxiety, pp. 147-8.

[21]Fromm-Reichmann, p. 138.

[22]Ibid., p. 129.

[23]Fromm, Sane Society, p. 174.

[24]Emile Durkheim, Suicide: A Study in Sociology, trans. John A. Spaulding and George Simpson, ed. with an introduction by George Simpson, (New York: The Free Press, 1951), p. 70.

[25]Erikson, Youth, p. 22.

[26]Fromm, Sane Society, p. 71.

[27]Ibid., p. 77.

[28]Erikson, "Problem of Ego Identity," p. 48.

[29]Fromm, Sane Society, pp. 34-5.

[30]Ibid., p. 79.

[31]Ibid., p. 301.

[32]Ibid., p. 303.

[33]Ibid., pp. 48-50.

[34]Erich Fromm, Forword to Karl Marx: Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy, trans. T. B. Bottomore and Maximilien Rubel (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1956), p. xiv.

CHAPTER II

"SANE SOCIETY" CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SHTETL

Using the psychological and sociological literature cited in the first chapter as a guide, let us now examine the East European shtetl for characteristics which would contribute to the establishment of a sane society and the growth of healthy personalities. Some of the shtetl literature cited tends to be more theoretical than actual, but it is included, since, although not always practiced, it was an integral part of the value system and the set of cultural goals.

The shtetl, as we see in this chapter, began to take shape in the sixteenth century. It was formed from a mixture of two groups of Jews. One group entered directly from Near Eastern Asia; the other came from Western Europe.[1] These early Jewish settlers came by invitation of the Polish rulers under relatively favorable conditions, for it was believed that, due to their experience in commerce and industry, they would advance the Polish economy.[2]

They formed isolated communities where their culture, religion and values could remain intact, although they did assimilate something of the surrounding culture. "Officially the functions of the shtetl community had been confined to religious, educational, and welfare activities--those described in official parlance as 'cultural.' . . . In practice, a large measure of local autonomy had been granted to the shtetl."[3]

The Jew, in this setting, was aided in the formation of a healthy

personality by the fact that he had a strong identity: he knew he was Jewish, he belonged to, and had an integral part in, his community, and had Jewish values upon which he could depend for community recognition. Given the situation in which he lived, his anxiety level was not abnormal. "The ghetto Jew, under the weight of historical and often of personal experience, knew fear. This emotion may have been, in any given situation, a miscalculation out of proportion to the threat, but it was neither diffuse nor irrational. He was not anxious as a Jew, for he knew who he was."[4]

In Isaac B. Singer's novel The Estate, we find the example of the non-theistic Jew, who nonetheless continues to retain his Jewish identity: "The power, whatever it is, that has kept us alive for four thousand years is still with us. I can deny God, but I cannot stop being a Jew--contradictory and strange as the words may sound."[5]

There were those Jews who were learning to live in the world of modern inventions, yet, through tradition, held tightly to their identity. Such a man was Calman Jacoby in Isaac B. Singer's The Manor: "Like all pious Jews, he wore long sidelocks and close cropped hair. . . . On High Holy Days his sonorous voice led the congregation in the afternoon prayer. On weekdays he prayed at the first sign of dawn. . . . Although Calman employed modern methods in business, he refused to have his household tainted by current fashions."[6]

Abraham Cahan, in his autobiography, tells of his early recognition that he was a Jew, that there were non-Jews, and the way in which they differed: "I could understand that gentiles were not like us. Jews were one thing, they another. I don't remember when I first perceived this. They did not observe the Sabbath, they had no cheders and I know their

church considered us to be an evil people."[7]

Further demonstration of the healthy personality is witnessed through the fact that the Jew's identity was such that it took shape without conscious effort.[8] One of the main characters in Soma Morgenstern's novel In My Father's Pastures supplies evidence of this. At different times, Velvel's thoughts and gestures would "fall into the inner rhythm of Talmudic cantellation."[9] His life was so connected with Jewish study that every subject was related to a rabbinic proverb or story.[10]

Jewish identity was manifest even in childhood. Abraham Cahan writes of this experience: "My grandfather, Reb Yankele, was the pride of our family and the people of Podberezy. Distant relatives spoke of his name with reverence. And it was music to my ears. When my father was called to the reading of the Torah in the synagogue he was summoned as 'son of the rabbi.' I began to feel my own importance as the great man's grandson."[11]

Further, while playing, the children would identify with Jewish tradition as Cahan writes: "I would catch a fly and torture it as all boys do. . . . Once I had a fly that contained the soul of Pharaoh, another that had the soul of Haman and a third that represented the Russian governor who oppressed the Jews of Vilna. . . . I translated the historic stories my father told me. In my fantasies, butterflies, bees, and birds re-enacted the deeds of heroes."[12]

The Jewish identity would grow as the Jew gained strength from Bible stories. As Asch puts it in his novel Salvation: "The six-year-old boy got up, remembering the words of the Bible, 'fleeter than the eagle and stronger than the lion.' He had never yet seen a real lion except the one in his mother's Bible with whom Samson fought. But if 'the lion rises

up at morning in his might to serve God,' Yechiel could do it too."[13]

Similarly, childhood infatuation is characterized by Jewish tradition, for when Sholom Aleichem's ten-year-old Shimele falls in love, his mind turns to the Song of Songs to describe his feelings.[14]

The unconscious identity of the Jew was such that even time was judged by Jewish holidays: "A year," wrote Asch in one of his works, "is such a long time, one Passover to the next. . . . The festival of Purim came, the Passover was close at hand. . . . He came one Passover . . . By the time Passover arrived . . . ."[15]

Jewish identity was so strong that to relinquish it was considered by those who retained it one of life's major catastrophes: "To leave the great community of Klal Isroel, that is to renounce the faith of the fathers, is the ultimate sin, just as excommunication is the ultimate punishment."[16]

Pauline Wengeroff relates her feelings: "The baptism of my children was the hardest blow of my life. But the loving heart of a mother can bear a great deal. I forgave them; the blame was on us parents. My sorrow gradually lost its personal meaning, but ever more took on the character of a national misfortune. I mourn not only as a mother, but as a Jewess mourning for the Jewish people that has lost so many of its noblest sons."[17]

The pain of the Jewish community over apostasy was so great that one would mourn for the relative or friend as if he or she had died; one would go through all the rituals prescribed for a mourner after a funeral. Not only did a Jew not acknowledge the apostate's existence, but would in fact ignore one seen on the street.[18]

The Jew's identity followed him to the grave, for it was quite

common for him to die reciting the "Shema."[19] Even the apostate would often, in his final moment of decision--death--find the need to make his last commitment to Judaism with this recitation.[20]

How did the Jew develop this strong identity? Part of his growth was based on a strong value system which Erich Fromm suggests as a necessity in the development of a sane society.[21] But the model proposed in Chapter One, similar to Fromm's model, is based on normal conditions. As one evaluates shtetl life, he must bear in mind that certain conditions for the ghetto Jew were far from ideal. One large difference between the normal model and the shtetl situation was the existence of overwhelming poverty.

In practice, at times the Jew was able to cope with the lack of money quite well; at other times the pain and humiliation were too large a burden to overcome. Yet, the values of the shtetl were such that the literature reflects an optimistic view of the Jew's war with poverty. He was rarely defeated for more than the moment.

"According to the sociologists," observed I. B. Singer, "poverty was the cause, not only of sickness, but of crime. But these Jews were a living denial of all these theories . . . instead of becoming degenerate, sinking into melancholy, drunkenness, immorality--they celebrated, recited the Psalms, rejoiced with happiness that could only come from the soul."[22]

The Hasidim seemed to characterize this especially, for in the Hasidic community of Marchinov in The Estate, "there was joy. Eyes shone, faces glowed. The glory of God must have descended upon these Jews, the Talmudic scholars, the students of Hasidic study houses. Ezriel did not see in them the uncertainty, overindulgence, impatience."[23]

Shtetl literature often gives the impression that hunger, poverty, pogroms were to be endured, tolerated, adapted to, or ignored,[24] but they were not an excuse for being unhappy or melancholy.[25] One simply believed "in the divine principle of joyousness,[26] and was happy."[27] Though idealized, the Jew's reaction to poverty could be rated as healthy, especially when compared to that of the peasant.

These values were not an accident. As suggested in the previous chapter, man's ideals are a product of the communal structure in which he lives; the structure of the Jewish East European village was exceedingly strong. In terms of physical structure, every shtetl would endeavor to have a cemetery, a mikveh and a synagogue.[28]

It was the synagogue that characterized the life style of the community; the synagogue was the physical structure where one assembled for community action, studied the holy writings, and expressed his devotion and allegiance to God through prayer.

It was here in the synagogue, when the community assembled, that one could witness the qualities of freedom, equality, reason, discipline, conscience and individualism, which were stated as being signs of the sane society in the summary of Chapter One.

Though the principles of a quasi-democratic society served as a base for action and thought, majority rule did not exclude a person from fighting for his freedom of individual action. If someone felt that the community's decision was not reasonable, he could address the congregation with his complaint or grievance. Even the humblest man had the theoretical right to defend the dictates of his conscience. The community's administration--the officers, representatives and rabbi--were subject to the authority of the group at large.[29] It was here in the synagogue,

states Asch, that "the entire political activity of the town was reviewed, revised and remodeled, the rabbi dismissed, another inducted, this teacher demoted, another engaged. Here a cantor was conceded to have a voice, or a voice was denied him."[30] It should be noted that women were subservient to men and therefore had little authority in shtetl affairs.

We see the qualities of freedom, reason and equality leading to that of discipline and conscience. Since the "Rov"'s authority was not absolute in the sense that his ruling could not be questioned or appealed,[31] any decision which was accepted then took on the power of a community sanction. The result was that "the rabbi's decision will be enforced only by the pressure of public opinion . . . . It is taken for granted that the rabbi's judgements are not backed up by physical force. Words should rule, for they are the weapon of reason and all human behavior should be reasonable . . . ."[32]

As stated in Chapter One, for an individual to develop a healthy identity, his society must give him his own status and unique position. In the shtetl, the need for status was also combined with that of equality.

In his novel In My Father's Pastures, Morgenstern's Judko Segall traded in poultry; yet, because he gave inspiration to others when he prayed, he was regarded differently in the synagogue than when at work. "No wonder that at these words the plain and humble mortality of the little Levite of Dobropolia was dissolved as a rain drop is in the sun. Like a torrid wind his song swept through the shadowy coolness of this place of prayer . . . as though he were standing at that antique sanctuary as one of the mighty levitical chorus in Yerushalayim."[33]

Another of Morgenstern's characters, Lieb Kahane, the shtetl's only

subscriber to a Viennese daily newspaper, had his special place in all discussions of current events.[34] Even the beggar, who was held in contempt because he asked for donations, had his special function and status in the shtetl.[35]

As we saw in Chapter One, education for both adults and children is a requirement for a sane society to aid the individual in proper identity formation. Education, the second function of the synagogue, was integrated into shtetl life not just as a mere action, but rather as a respected value. To understand the place of value in the shtetl system, it is first necessary to understand the stratification system.

A person's status was determined by his yikhus which was dependent on three variables: learning, wealth and proper use of wealth, and lineage--the number of ancestors who were scholars and men of wealth.[36] A man's yikhus was reflected in the synagogue by his seat. The most prized seats--those near the eastern wall--were occupied by the men of greatest yikhus.[37]

In the theoretical value system, learning was the most important criterion for status. It was assumed that if a man was educated, his actions would be in accord with the laws he had studied; therefore the scholar would be the best example of the shtetl values. Though idealized, it was true that the talmid khokhem--the scholar--had special status. His status dictated that he act in a refined manner and that others show him greater respect than the uneducated person.[38] Because the educated man and his family were felt to possess attributes which were desirable, parents dreamt of marrying their daughter into such a family.[39] Ideally, study was not just a means, but a joyful end in itself.[40]

Though not always practiced, the shtetl value system reflects the

need for rational thinking, suggested as a prerequisite for a sane society in Chapter One. In Life is With People, we find an account of this value: Education cannot be a mere memorizing of laws and principles, of dogmas and beliefs, for in the world of the shtetl, it is believed that "behavior --human or devine--must also be rooted in reason, order and purpose. Any act must be rational, motivated and directed toward some goal. . . . Humans, if they are really 'people,' mentshen, are also rational and reasonable. To be beyond the reach of reason is to be dangerous."[41]

The shtetl literature has numerous examples that reflect these attitudes about education. Since the scholar was considered a highly respected person, it was a real blessing for parents to have a child who excelled in Jewish studies.[42] The best reward for Asch's Toibe, was to have her son studying intensely, becoming a scholar and respected by the rabbis.[43] And both family and town took great pleasure from Singer's Asa Heshel: "He quickly got the reputation of a prodigy. At five he was studying Talmud, at six he began the talmudic commentators, at eight the teacher had no more to give him. At the age of nine he delivered a discourse in the synagogue, and at twelve he was writing learned letters to rabbis in other towns . . . the townsfolk predicted that he was sure, in God's time to inherit his grandfather's rabbinical chair . . . ."[44]

As suggested above, those who were wealthy desired to be associated with the learned of the community as in the case of Singer's Calman Jacoby. Since Calman was wealthy, the logical match for his daughter was a learned son-in-law; therefore, an engagement was arranged with Mayer Joel, an advanced Talmud student.[45]

Though money was associated with education, even the poor could learn if they had the aptitude. Although Toibe could not afford Isaac's edu-

cation because her husband was dead, the community supplied his material needs in order that he could study.[46]

The ideal was to be well versed in Bible, Talmud, Codes, etc., but a minimum level of literacy was demanded of the least educated. "Even the 'ignorant' man is usually able to spell out, with whatever difficulty, the prayers in his prayerbook. He does not know Hebrew, the language of ritual and of learning; but he knows the alphabet that serves both for Hebrew and Yiddish, and he is able to pronounce words that may be incomprehensible to him. . . . The women are taught to read Yiddish."[47]

Education in the cheder is characterized first by discipline. Concerning this Abraham Cahan writes: "If I committed some infraction of school conduct, he [the teacher] would hang his leather belt directly behind me on a bed post and thus increase the intensity of my studying with the visible symbol of discipline."[48]

In some cheders, a frustrated melamed might vent his anger and disappointment on the children, but in others the atmosphere was warm and friendly. Cahan describes one of his teachers, Joshua Baltermantzer: "When it came to Gemara . . . we could feel our teacher's love and understanding. His explanations were clear, and I responded with interest and enthusiasm. His voice always sounded tired and his eyes always showed strain. But Joshua was an honest, hard working Melamed."[49]

For some, their lives became richer because they taught; in one sense, their teaching gave them their identity. "Yechiel practiced his vocation with zeal and love. His teaching of the children became a holy work. And to himself the true meaning of the alphabet now revealed itself in all its fullness."[50]

Within his studies, a child might find a tour guide of all time and

space, giving him a view that his physical eyes would never see.[51]

> Shloyme hadn't set one foot outside of town. How then did he manage to travel so far, to see and hear so much? Among Jews it is quite common for such a child to spend his life in one place but with no idea of what goes on around him, . . . instead such a child transports himself and his thoughts to another world, another age. There it is possible for a man to grant the past a priority over the present . . . and to occupy himself with things that existed long ago and that are accessible only to memory and imagination.[52]

Along with education, money played a role in gaining status, but the theoretical value structure demanded that wealth be used only as a criterion for yikhus if spent properly. If a man were a miser and neglected the community, he was considered in a worse light than the man without wealth. Mendele Mocher Sforim in his novella, "Of Bygone Days," compares the value system of the shtetl with those who left it: "There was a time in Lithuania . . . when the scholar was more respected than the rich man. An uncultured boor is an uncultured boor, no matter how much money he has . . . ."[53]

Money then, according to the value system, could only be used to achieve status if it were used to accomplish those things which the scholar had learned to be correct.[54] It was not the case that money was considered evil, on the contrary it was positive if one had money. The point is that money was thought of as a tool, rather than an end in itself--it was meant to be spent.[55] Thus, "the miser, who put money before all else and wants to hoard rather than spend, is called by one of the shtetl's most scathing epithets. He is called a pig, with all the disgust and hatred lavished on that animal."[56]

As stated in Chapter One, the healthy individual develops a pattern of thinking such that he is often more occupied with thoughts of others than himself. This is translated into the communal structure of the sane

society as a caring for other people. We see this value appear in shtetl life through the word "tsdokeh," the yiddish word for charity. "Life in the shtetl begins and ends with tsdokeh."[57] Births, deaths as well as marriages are marked by a donation to the community. Children know early in their lives that they must help others.[58] Even the reading from the Torah requires that a man make a donation to the community,[59] for many of the communal services depend "budgetarily" on tsdokeh.

Communal services are a second way that the principle of caring for others is evidenced. Among the groups established to insure the welfare of the shtetl members are groups to clothe the poor, collect dowries for poor brides, care for the aged, bury the dead, make emergency loans, and distribute matsos for passover to those who cannot afford to buy them. "Because earning a livelihood is so difficult, one of the best deeds a person can perform is to help another win parnosseh,"[60] a living.

Charity often began with the rabbi, as with Singer's Reb Jochanan in The Manor. Once when a man came to seek advice from him, Jochanan gave the man his prized watch that the man might have a dowry for his daughter.[61]

Charity was the way to repentance, as with Calman, who after pursuing much of what was not Jewish and being a slave to the drive for money, again found contentment and felt once again blessed by God when he began doing charitable deeds and studying.[62]

Sender Praguer, in I. J. Singer's The River Breaks Up, had for much of his life been lewd and taken advantage of women. On the day of his wedding, he decided to repent by feeding all the poor and hungry of the village.[63] As we shall see later, the concept of charity was replaced by greed as the shtetl deteriorated, but those who were in the generation

brought up in the shtetl ideology remembered tsdokeh. An example of this was Meshulam Moskat, who despite the fact that his children and grandchildren were driven by the lust for money, remained true to old values. Such was his nature that he would never evict a tenant because the man did not have the means to pay the rent.[64]

In the summary of Chapter One, it was stated that two of the aspects of the sane society were discipline and conscience. These enter the shtetl milieu through the concepts of "Yidishkeyt"--Jewishness--and "menshlikeyt" --humanness. These are translated into practice through the concepts of "Mitsvah" and "aveyrah." Originally, mitsvah meant the fulfillment of the commandments. This would include performing certain acts and avoiding others, all of which were considered to be God given. Aveyrah was the failure to fulfill these laws. However, with the passing of time, they were carried beyond this limited usage and came to stand for what is socially good (mitsvah) and what is socially unacceptable (aveyrah).[65]

Abraham Cahan cites an example of how the above concepts affected the children of the shtetl: "The four-and five-year-old boys of the neighborhood behaved gallantly toward our four- and five-year-old 'ladies.' We were aware of the fact that certain subjects were taboo, that there was a boundary beyond which we must not go. We didn't know the reason for the boundary but we certainly respected it . . . ."[66]

It was suggested in the previous chapter that for one to maintain a solid identity for any length of time, one must feel that one's work is worthwhile, and that the community is cognizant of a member's occupation, and reinforces the need in the community for such a vocation. In the shtetl, work was not considered bad, although study was on a higher level. The artisan was often respected for his high quality of work. Mendele

Mocher Sforim gives us one example: "Lipe Ruvens . . . was good at drawing, and he knew how to carve wood, engrave stone, and etch copper. He did these things not for pay, but for sheer pleasure and because he was driven by a compulsion to master a craft."[67] Sholom Aleichem cites another example: Shimmen-Eli was a well respected tailor, for he took his work seriously and was a fine artisan.[68] Asch also relates the fulfillment of this need: "Joel's mother . . . was as proud of her labor and of her making a livelihood as her husband was of his learning; and Joel knew that his father regarded it in the same light. 'Her labors and her suffering in the marketplace are as acceptable to God as our studies of his sacred books. She is a saint.'"[69]

But any position in life, as pointed out in Chapter One, may not be permanent. Life is constantly changing and the healthy personality must know how to adjust to change. This was a strong point among the Jews of this period, as Asch explains through the character of the non-Jewish ex-governor: "Ah, you're not like one of us. Where they fling us, there we lie. You Jews always manage to adapt yourselves. If it isn't Berlin, it's Paris. We ought to take lessons from you people in refugee technique. You've got it down to a fine art. You've been practicing for thousands of years. Not like us, ducks in the desert. You ought to teach us."[70]

Often the Jew would adapt to a new situation, or cope with a distasteful old one, through his understanding of tradition. One of the ways of coping is best represented by Sholom Aleichem's Tevye. He is constantly quoting from a traditional text, and although it is usually misquoted, it gives him the assurance that even misery has its purpose.[71]

Tevye had, as did most Jews of the shtetl, the secret that Fromm

speaks of; he had his non-idolic object of devotion, which gave "meaning to his existence and to his position in life."[72] "We have a great God and a mighty God who watches over His poor and sees to it that they continue to struggle a little longer on this earth."[73]

Morgenstern's character Velvel in his novel, In My Father's Pastures, describes this attitude well: "Our faith in God constitutes our courage. In that courage a certain arrogance can dwell side by side with true humility."[74]

One sees the Jew's dependency on God best in the reaction of those who, once having abandoned most of the traditional observances, again find the need for a religious life.[75] Singer's Ezriel was one such returnee. He observed "that misfortune drew people to religion and mysticism . . . man must continuously seek God. The entire history of man was one great search for God. But in addition man must also serve God. When he ceased to serve God, he served tyrants. Undoubtedly Judaism had come closest in the search for God."[76] As Adele, in The Family Moskat, lay in pain near the end of her preganancy, she said, "How pious one becomes in trouble!"[77]

The effects of prayer might even be visible on the Jew's face when he finished praying: "When Velvel emerged from the chapel . . . he looked fresher in body and spirit as though he had just come out of an invigorating bath."[78]

For some Jews, their prayer was a bit more loosely structured and might be recited outdoors. "Yechiel's heart was filled with a thousand blessings and good wishes for the world. Tears of joy started to his eyes. He could not believe that his world was the fleeting world of everyday . . . ."[79]

The Jew's trust in God was complete and internalized, as Tevye would say in his special way, "I am, as you know, a trusting person and I never question God's ways. Whatever He ordains is good. Besides, if you do complain, will it do you any good?"[80]

Although they had a fear and respect of God, it was such that the Jews knew He was always with them. Zachary "watched the poor Jews arriving from the evening service. . . . They had all come from work without making any preparations, without any show of reverence as if their God were one of themselves. With Him, there was no need for ceremony. He [the Jew] knew at once what one wanted of Him, and one very quickly settled one's business with Him too. . . . Their God was with them where ever they went."[81]

Such was the case with Yechiel for "though he could not picture to himself how God looked, he was firmly convinced of one thing: that God was everywhere and whoever wished could find him at any time."[82]

Faith in God went hand in hand with the belief in mankind and in life, and together, gave many something for which to live. "I have to believe in Man, and in almighty God, and in love and in the soul. If I didn't I simply would not be able to go on living."[83]

It was proposed in the previous chapter, that ritual could not be just a community activity, but that non-clerical, individual observance is necessary for a person to achieve independence. We see this principle operating in the shtetl. Despite the fact that there was a leader in shul, and that all pray the same prayers, each went according to his own speed, rhythm, sway and slightly different melody, only at certain points rising and/or chanting together.[84]

Morgenstern's Alfred spent his early years without Jewish tradition.

When he began to learn about his people, he was taught that "the Jews were a lay community . . . . To be sure everyone was integral to it. A cashier came forward and recited, as though the recitation of Torah were his calling."[85]

Yet with the Jew's belief in God, he still doubted. Fromm tells us that with the changing of situations and the development of an individual, he will doubt. "Life, in its mental and spiritual aspects, is by necessity insecure; thinking man by necessity uncertain."[86] Therefore, says Fromm, "The psychic task a person can and must set for himself, is not to feel secure, but to be able to tolerate insecurity, without panic and undue fear."[87] Those who were rooted and educated in shtetl tradition recognized this problem and learned to treat it as but a step in the perfection of man and his search for God.

As Alfred began to learn tradition, he was bothered by his doubts; he questioned God and felt he could not pray. Velvel had to explain to him that this was also Jewish; it was the first step in true prayer.[88]

Ezriel too had been bothered by his doubts of God. Taking his questions to the rabbi he was answered, "The saints also doubted. As long as the soul dwells in the body, it can never be sure of anything."[89] Likewise, "There are not total unbelievers. The body is blind. But the soul sees because it exists in this world and the other. Without the body, there can be no such thing as free will . . . ."[90]

Thus Ezriel sees that doubt is important and it is because of doubt that man has a great role to play in history. "God cannot reveal His purpose if good and evil, faith and denial are to remain hanging in the balance. Moral life depends on doubt. Man must discover God through temptation and suffering . . . ."[91]

Ezriel also understands the concept of selflessness, which is vital to the healthy personality: "The real difference between a saint and a wicked man suddenly came to Ezriel: both weigh everything morally, but the saint made demands on himself, whereas the rogue made demands on others."[92]

As suggested in Chapter One, the values and structure of the community as a whole are important, but it is the family structure which has the function of transmitting the community's ideals and systems to the growing child. We find that here again, the shtetl Jew had the advantage of a strong family life. Although parts of this system may not be unique to Jewish society, nonetheless, in order to understand the strong points of the shtetl, one must include even those characteristics which are not unique.

The value system of the family began with the concept that an adult Jew could only be complete if he or she married and raised a family. This family was closely knit and structured along traditional lines.[93] One may see the importance of marriage from the fact that in the shtetl, "A wedding is the most joyous and most elaborate festivity . . . . It represents the fulfillment of the individual, who becomes fully adult when he married, and the basis for the perpetuation of the Jewish people, according to the commandment of God."[94]

As in all areas of life, the wedding night has its structure, and the groom is well instructed in them. "Late in the night, [I. J. Singer's] David was conducted to the bride's chamber by his mother and one of his uncles . . . according to the custom, one on each side, supporting him. His uncle mumbled a great many things to him, all concerning the meritorious duty to be fruitful and multiply, elaborating his instructions

with numerous quotations from the sages, saints, and commentators and from the dark pages of the Kabbalah itself. He went into the details of the permissible and the impermissible . . . ."[95]

After the marriage, in family life, each person had his own particular status and role. "The man's area is the shule, as House of Study, as House of Prayer, and as House of Assembly. Here he rules supreme. The woman's area is the home and here she is relative if not absolute ruler."[96] If a man did not study, he worked, and it was known that it was the Jew's duty to deprive himself for his family.[97]

If a man was able to study, then the woman was required to support the family, but she knew that by supporting her husband so he could pursue his scholarly work, she too would share in his rewards.[98] She also knew that it was her duty and a blessing to "bring many souls from heaven to earth," to raise a large family.[99] Further, the woman always deferred to her husband's authority, such as not suggesting to him that it is time to arrange a marriage.[100]

"Children are always wanted in the shtetl, not only because it is so written, but also because no adult is whole without children . . . . A house without children is a gloomy place . . . . It is good to have many children . . . . It is common to say that people are blessed with children."[101]

Children are worth more than money: "A rich man, you understand, I'm not, but one thing I can really boast of--my children! In that respect I am wealthier than the wealthiest man in Kasrilevka."[102] This did not mean that it was easy to be parents, but the responsibility was accepted as well as the pleasure. "The Lord has given us the pain of bringing up children: which means that in raising children, you have to ac-

cept the bad with the good and count them as one."[103]

It should be further noted, that although not explicitly stated in shtetl literature, children served to strengthen the community and an individual adult in two more ways. First, children gave status to the family--the more children one had, the better one fulfilled the religious commandment. Second, if one had children, there was less chance that he would be abandoned in his old age. This security not only strengthened the identity of the elderly, but gave the adult with young children freedom from worrying about being deserted in his later years.

The concept that each man prayed by himself was not the only example of individualized ritual. The family was closely tied together with Jewish holidays. One can see in these festivals not only non-clerical ceremonies, but also the characteristics of rootedness in the family, ability to cope with the problems with which life confronts one, and the physical expression of connectedness with a non-idolic object of devotion. One begins with the Sabbath, the pinnacle of such celebrations.

"One lives from Sabbath to Sabbath, working all week to earn for it . . . . The Sabbath is a day of rest, joy and devotion to God. None must work, none must mourn . . . . It is remembered as a time of ecstasy . . . ."[104] "Often," Cahan recalled, "my father would tell me about the neshomah yeseroh, the supplementary soul which descends on Sabbath for each Jew. I would feel it in the service and afterwards at home . . . beauty for the eye and the ear and the throat."[105]

The soul of Shabbat had a particularly beautiful effect on the women. "All week she was an ordinary, everyday mother. But for a few short hours on Friday evening . . . she was transformed into another mother . . . . While she was reciting the prayer over the Sabbath candles a holy angel

must have . . . cast the glory of God over her face . . . ."[106]

"If the household can afford it there will surely be an oyrekh, for without a guest no Sabbath is truly complete . . . . Whoever he is, any stranger in need will come to the synagogue on Friday evening and at the end of the service he will expect to be invited to some home."[107] Such was the case with Sholom Aleichem's Rothschild, so nicknamed because of his poverty. He loved the Sabbath and its symbols more than the food, in fact, it was better for him to sit with other Jews for Sabbath than to have anything to eat. Of course, he was usually well fed on Sabbath.[108]

"The delicacies of Sabbath are enjoyed slowly, with time to appreciate each mouthful, and with pauses between each course . . . . Not only weekday acts but even weekday thoughts are forbidden on Sabbath . . . . On the Sabbath the shtetl feels most strongly and most gladly that it is good to be a Jew."[109]

Kopel finds special meaning in Simchas Torah. Normally he is pessimistic, gloomy, melancholy; "he sees everything in the worst possible light . . . . But on Simchas Torah . . . he is like a newborn soul, beside himself with joy mixed with happiness. . . ."[110]

For others, the High Holy Days had their special meaning. Although Singer's Zadok and his wife had become moderns, they still celebrated Rosh Hashona in the old way.[111] It was during the High Holy Days that Kapulie became a different town. Ordinarily deserted, its streets empty, and its life quiet as still water in a pond, it comes alive a few days before . . . with newcomers who flock in from the countryside. . . ."[112] During Yom Kippur one would see even the angriest and worst sinners of the town scurrying around to make amends to those they had offended during the year.[113]

"It's always hard for a Jew to make the transition from holiday to weekday, but leaving Passover behind is especially hard. When Passover is over, the freedom of the freed-man is also over and he becomes a slave once again."[114] Thus Passover was always one of the high points of the year for "at Passover . . . a Jew surrounded by his family is always king."[115]

Passover was so important that I. J. Singer's Hirsch Lieb met his death by drowning as he tried to cross a river that was beginning to thaw in order to be home for Passover.[116]

It is with this that our section is completed, for the story of the Jew who drowns crossing the ideological river from the shtetl to the outside world must now be told.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

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[6]Isaac Bashevis Singer, The Manor (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1968), p. 7.

[7]Abraham Cahan, The Education of Abraham Cahan, trans. Leon Stein, Abraham P. Conan and Lynn Davison (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1969), p. 11.

[8]Herbert Fingarette, "The Ego and Mystic Selflessness," Identity and Anxiety, pp. 565-81.

[9]Soma Morgenstern, In My Father's Pastures, trans. Ludwig Lewisohn (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1947), p. 79.

[10]Ibid., p. 203.

[11]Cahan, p. 5.

[12]Ibid., p. 23.

[13]Sholem Asch, Salvation, trans. Edwin Muir and Willa Muir (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1951), p. 7.

[14]Sholom Aleichem, Collected Stories of Sholom Aleichem: The Old Country, trans. Frances Butwin and Julius Butwin (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1946), pp. 42-50.

[15]Sholem Asch, Children of Abraham, trans. Maurice Samuel (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1942), pp. 116-22.

[16]Herzog, p. 38.

[17]Pauline Wengeroff, "Memoirs of a Grandmother," The Golden Tradition: Jewish Life and Thought in Eastern Europe, ed. Lucy S. Dawidowicz (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), p. 168.

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[19]Sholom Aleichem, Old Country, pp. 89-90.

[20]Soma Morgenstern, The Testament of the Lost Son, trans. Jacob Sloan and Maurice Samuel (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1950), p. 317.

[21]Erich Fromm, The Sane Society (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1955), pp. 34-5.

[22]I. B. Singer, Estate, p. 346.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Sholom Aleichem, Old Country, pp. 1-12.

[25]Asch, Children of Abraham, p. 25.

[26]Israel Joshua Singer, The River Breaks Up, trans. Maurice Samuel (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1938), p. 215.

[27]Sholem Asch, Three Cities, trans. Edwin Muir and Willa Muir (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1933), p. 462.

[28]Herzog, p. 63.

[29]Ibid., p. 217.

[30]Asch, Children of Abraham, p. 36.

[31]Herzog, p. 219.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Morgenstern, In My Father's Pastures, pp. 186-7.

[34]Ibid., p. 190.

[35]Herzog, p. 210.

[36]Ibid., pp. 74-7.

[37]Sholom Aleichem, Old Country, p. 14.

[38]Herzog, p. 19.

[39]Ibid., p. 81.

[40]Ibid., p. 71.

[41]Ibid., p. 409.

[42]Sholom Aleichem, Old Country, p. 348.

[43]Asch, Children of Abraham, pp. 62-74.

[44]Isaac Bashevis Singer, Family Moskat, trans. A. H. Gross (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1950), pp. 26-7.

[45]I. B. Singer, Manor, pp. 13-4.

[46]Asch, Children of Abraham, pp. 62-74.

[47]Herzog, p. 72.

[48]Cahan, p. 7.

[49]Ibid., p. 43.

[50]Asch, Salvation, p. 126.

[51]Asch, Three Cities, p. 492.

[52]Mendele Mocher Sforim, "Of Bygone Days," A Shtetl and Other Yiddish Novellas, ed. with introduction and notes by Ruth R. Wisse (New York: Behrman House, Inc., 1973), p. 303.

[53]Ibid., p. 284.

[54]Herzog, pp. 239-40.

[55]Ibid., pp. 261-5.

[56]Ibid., p. 265.

[57]Ibid., p. 193.

[58]Ibid.

[59]Ibid., p. 55.

[60]Ibid., p. 258.

[61]I. B. Singer, Manor, p. 258.

[62]I. B. Singer, Estate, p. 204.

[63]I. B. Singer, River Breaks Up, pp. 138-42.

[64]I. B. Singer, Family Moskat, p. 103.

[65]Herzog, p. 191.

[66]Cahan, p. 7.

[67]Mendele Mocher Sforim, p. 293.

[68]Sholom Aleichem, Old Country, p. 93.

[69]Asch, Children of Abraham, p. 5.

[70]Ibid., p. 303.

[71]Sholom Aleichem, Collected Stories of Sholom Aleichem: Tevye's Daughters, trans. Francis Butwin (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1949), pp. 4-5.

[72]Fromm, p. 66.

[73]Sholom Aleichem, Tevye's Daughters, p. 146.

[74]Morgenstern, In My Father's Pastures, p. 75.

[75]I. B. Singer, Manor, pp. 302-8.

[76]I. B. Singer, Estate, p. 246.

[77]I. B. Singer, Family Moskat, p. 340.

[78]Soma Morgenstern, The Son of the Lost Son, trans. Peter Gross and Joseph Leftwich (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1946), p. 10.

[79]Asch, Salvation, p. 124.

[80]Sholom Aleichem, Tevye's Daughters, p. 53.

[81]Asch, Three Cities, p. 469.

[82]Asch, Salvation, p. 16.

[83]I. B. Singer, Family Moskat, p. 160.

[84]Morgenstern, In My Father's Pastures, p. 176.

[85]Ibid., p. 171.

[86]Fromm, p. 174.

[87]Ibid.

[88]Morgenstern, Testament of the Lost Son, p. 76.

[89]I. B. Singer, Estate, p. 354.

[90] Ibid., p. 355.

[91] Ibid., p. 352.

[92] Ibid., p. 355.

[93] Herzog, p. 124.

[94] Ibid., p. 270.

[95] I. J. Singer, River Breaks Up, p. 234.

[96] Herzog, p. 26.

[97] Sholom Aleichem, Old Country, p. 96.

[98] Asch, Children of Abraham, p. 4.

[99] Asch, Salvation, p. 3.

[100] I. J. Singer, River Breaks Up, p. 277.

[101] Herzog, pp. 308-9.

[102] Sholom Aleichem, Old Country, p. 111.

[103] Ibid., p. 93.

[104] Morgenstern, In My Father's Pastures, p. 37.

[105] Cahan, p. 36.

[106] Asch, Salvation, pp. 18-9.

[107] Herzog, p. 44.

[108] Sholom Aleichem, Old Country, p. 57.

[109] Herzog, pp. 47-8.

[110] Sholom Aleichem, Tevye's Daughters, pp. 167-70.

[111] I. B. Singer, Estate, p. 337.

[112] Mendele Mocher Sforim, p. 298.

[113] Sholom Aleichem, Old Country, pp. 219-24.

[114] Mendele Mocher Sforim, p. 280.

[115] Sholom Aleichem, Old Country, p. 146.

[116] I. J. Singer, River Breaks Up, pp. 23-4.

CHAPTER III

THE THEORETICAL BASIS FOR THE BREAKDOWN OF THE SHTETL

In Chapters One and Two, we examined those strong points of the shtetl which tended to make it a sane society. But the shtetl, like most societies, possessed defects which tended to be obstacles in the development of a healthy personality. Similarly, we have also treated the shtetl as an isolated community, which though basically true in the seventeenth century, was not the case by the end of the eighteenth century. Therefore, it is necessary first to examine the greater society in which the shtetl was set.

The theoretical structure established in Chapter One assumed a fairly stable, slow changing society. Enlightenment and revolution, which led to rapid change, originated outside of the shtetl, but deeply affected the shtetl inhabitants. All of Europe, both east and west, was sooner or later in the midst of this rapid change. During the early middle ages, much of Europe had been intellectually asleep. As the new post-medieval era began, this civilization began to experiment with new philosophies, new ideas, new theories. Besides, it also moved from an agrarian-type structure into the capitalistic world of mechanized factories.

Theories of liberation were expounded and tried, but true freedom was slow in coming. An example of this was the liberation of the serf, not a true liberation at all, but a transfer of prisons. He was no longer the master-owned slave, but now became the landless peasant, who,

in order to earn a living, was forced to work in factories for the wealthy. Rather than being an improvement, it was often a greater strain; the peasant had lost the security of a recognizable system, a guaranteed income or livelihood, and now was exploited by the rich factory owner rather than the wealthy land owners and barons.

As we shall see in Chapter Four, this new oppression of the peasants led to revolution in which the Jews began to participate. The problems of the Tsarist government, brought on by a stagnant economy, were often blamed on the Jew; it was easy to divert the peasant's attention from the real problem to the existence of a people who were different than the majority. Thus anti-Jewish feeling increased and caused an old problem to take on new dimensions.

By the late seventeen hundreds, the Jewish community had lost much of its autonomy, both through the external pressure of the government and the internal pressure of those who wanted the advantages of being part of the majority. It is possible, that, had the external circumstances not been what they were, and had the shtetl been allowed to remain autonomous, the structure of the shtetl previously described in Chapter Two, might have changed slowly with the result being that the shtetl would have remained intact; one might predicate, that left to their own means, the shtetl members could have solved their problems in time and avoided the disintegration of that society, but the changes of the general society aggravated the existing shtetl problems as well as creating new ones.

We must recognize, then, that we are concerned here with a rapidly changing society in which "The outerworld appears atomized into meaningless units; the inner world also loses its structure and becomes frag-

mented and chaotic."[1] Though in a healthy society, "strain, tension, contradiction, or discrepancy between the component elements of social and cultural structure . . . may be instrumental in leading to change in that system,"[2] in the rapidly changing society, it may also prove to be "dysfunctional for the social system in its then existing form."[3]

Thus, there may be an attempt in the rapidly changing society--such as the shtetl itself was becoming--bombarded on all sides with new ideas and values, to try to maintain itself. The society is faced with an overwhelming fear of otherness as described in Chapter One. This fear of strange forms generates acute anxiety which in turn may produce ritualism, the state in which social means are more important than cultural goals.[4] This phenomenon is characterized by the "readiness to fortify one's territory of intimacy and solidarity and to view all outsiders with a fanatic overvaluation of small differences between the familiar and foreign."[5] Man loses his desire for change; aspirations to grow and advance diminish. The common feeling becomes, "I'm not going to stick my neck out."[6] Non-deviance from group sanctions becomes the overriding reason and method for action.

But such "strict and unquestioned adherence to all prevailing norms would be functional only in groups that never were . . . a group which is completely static and unchanging."[7] Thus a society, maintaining itself in this manner, takes on negative and destructive aspects. "Man is blocked from developing his individuality and his reason,"[8] and is subject to"hierarchy, oppression, inequality and submission."[9] In adjusting to this type of setting, man experiences a type of anxiety which is "tied up with the inner danger of unacceptable thoughts, feelings, urges or drives which elicit the expectation of loss of love

and approval or of punishment."[10] "If a person fails to attain freedom, spontaneity, a genuine expression of self, he may be considered to have a severe defect . . . . If such a goal is not attained by the majority of members of any given society, we deal with the phenomenon of socially patterned defect."[11]

One who cannot conform to such a system becomes alienated from it and "is under . . . pressure to establish his independence from pressures to conform [so] that he becomes unable to accept the essential normative conditions of a stable system. . . ."[12] This condition affected the shtetl Jew directly in that he felt compelled to escape from the ritualism and total institutionalism (as described below) which existed in the shtetl, and indirectly because he became associated with the alienated worker whose escape took the form of rebellion and revolution (also described below).

To understand the process of deterioration that took place in the shtetl, one must first be acquainted with the concept of the "stranger." He may be defined as an individual "who tried to be permanently accepted or at least tolerated by the group he approaches."[13] "When rejected by the group by which he desires to be accepted, he has to face the fact that he lacks any status as a member of the social group. . . . He is, therefore, no longer permitted to consider himself the center of his social environment, and this fact causes again a dislocation of his contour line of relevance . . . ."[14] In order to counterbalance this lack of status, the stranger may seek out his own group in which to establish himself. Once he finds a social environment in which he has status, he will look upon all those who rejected him as being the stranger, and generalize his category of stranger to all those who do not share with

him common language, customs, food, songs, etc.[15] He takes on these negative aspects of nationalism, not because he wants to be separated from others, but out of fear that if he does not, he will once again be without his status.

Thus, the Jew, treated in many ways as a stranger, was forced to treat others as strangers. He was forced into forming a "total institution" by external forces and later by internal forces. The external forces came in the form of being treated as a stranger and being forced to live in small, limited areas away from the rest of the population. Historically, this limited area of residence is referred to as the "pale of settlement." Irving Goffman in describing the total institution tells of a situation quite similar to that of the ghetto. He says that the total institution is "symbolized by the barrier to social intercourse with the outside that is often built right into the physical plant; locked doors, high walls, barbed wire . . . ."[16] It is characterized by the following:

> First, all aspects of life are conducted in the same place and under the same single authority. Second, each phase of the member's daily activity will be carried out in the immediate company of a large batch of others, all of whom are treated alike and required to do the same thing together. Third, all phases of the day's activities are tightly scheduled, with one activity leading at a prearranged time into the next, the whole circle of activities being imposed from above through a system of explicit formal rulings and a body of officials. Finally, the contents of the various enforced activities are brought together as parts of a single over-all rational plan purportedly designed to fulfill the official aims of the institution.[17]

One's life is totally engrossed and run by the institution such that "authority is directed to matters of dress, deportment, social intercourse, manners and the like."[18]

But the shtetl did not become a total institution only because of external forces. Throughout Jewish history, tradition had developed in

such a way that there was law and custom describing the proper action for most activities. In the early stages of shtetl life, it tended to increase one's identity and strengthen one's personality. With the increasing exposure to the outside world--although not necessarily acceptance by the general population--and with the volume of new ideas and philosophies, the structure became one of "ritualism" as described earlier. Those who had been earlier rejected by the non-Jew, those who were afraid of modern ideas destroying Jewish tradition, and those who were afraid of losing their status and structure for life, retreated into established ideas and rituals, thus formalizing internally the total institution.

There are two aspects of the total institution as it developed in the shtetl that deserve special attention. The first of these is that of education. A system for study had been established in the shtetl which for many years had appeared to satisfy tne needs of its members, but this system was not designed to equip one for all the needs of the capitalistic world, nor did it include such disciplines as the sciences. But the total institution type of mentality demanded that there be no deviation from established practices. There were many for whom this system was not satisfying, who desired to explore new worlds. Although they might not express themselves as well as George Bernard Shaw, their feelings were the same as his description of his own selective memory: "I cannot learn anything that does not interest me. My memory is not indiscriminate; it rejects and selects; and its selections are not academic . . . ."[19] Thus, those forced to accept the shtetl educational system form one group of dissidents.

The second aspect of the changing shtetl structure is based on the general economic shift from agrarian to capitalistic. Only a very few

of the Jews were able to acquire the means to become factory owners, but many of these few had already shifted their values from those of the shtetl to those based upon money. Rather than being concerned with the welfare of the community, their concern was with the increase of wealth. Thus, since they often oppressed rather than helped the poor Jews, those who were struggling for a living--the majority of the shtetl--could no longer accept the wealthy class with the same attitude that they once might have. They began to become what Karl Marx termed the alienated worker who "feels at home only during his leisure, whereas at work he feels homeless . . . [work] is not the satisfaction of a need [that of creativity], but only a means for satisfying other needs . . . . It is another's activity . . . [and it causes] a loss of spontaneity."[20] This lack of spontaneity, if one is involved in unsatisfying work for a major part of the day, will begin to characterize his whole life. He begins to feel a loss of much of life's meaning.[21]

We may see the importance of money as a problem when we consider the idea of the "release binge fantasy." In one's desire to escape from the total institution, one begins to fantasize having huge amounts of what he is now deprived of, when he is released or escapes from the institution.[22] Where money is the subject of the "release binge fantasy," if the opportunity presents itself to acquire large sums of money, the desire to earn a living overtakes other goals.[23] If this is taken to an extreme, the pursuit of wealth becomes more important than the social means. The only crime is that of getting caught.[24] The results of such an attitude will be discussed in Chapters Five and Six.

We see, then, the problem of the total institution, created by external pressure and change, and the resultant internal reaction. Those

faced with dissatisfaction of the institution will try to escape it and forget that for which it stood,[25] try to destroy it since he cannot create in that environment,[26] or rebel and try to change the society's cultural goals and the socially accepted means for achieving them.[27]

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

[1]Margaret Mead, "Culture Change and Character Structure," Idendity and Anxiety, eds. Maurice R. Stein, Arthur J. Vidich, and David Manning White (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1962), p. 51.

[2]Robert K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure, (New York: Free Press, 1968), p. 176.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid., p. 239.

[5]Erik H. Erikson, Identity: Youth and Crisis (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1968), p. 97.

[6]Merton, pp. 202-207.

[7]Ibid., p. 236.

[8]Erich Fromm, The Sane Society (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1955), p. 48.

[9]Ibid., p. 50.

[10]Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, "Psychiatric Aspects of Anxiety," Identity and Anxiety, p. 131.

[11]Fromm, p. 23.

[12]International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences (1964), s. v. "Alienation."

[13]Alfred Schuetz, "The Stranger," Identity and Anxiety, p. 99.

[14]Fromm, p. 20.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Erving Goffman, "Characteristics of Total Institutions," Identity and Anxiety, p. 450.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid., p. 455.

[19]George Bernard Shaw, Selected Prose (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1952), cited by Erik H. Erikson, "The Problem of Ego Identity," Identity and Anxiety, p. 39.

[20]Karl Marx, trans. T. B. Bottomore, eds., with an introduction and notes by T. B. Bottomore and Maximillien Rubel (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1956), p. 169.

[21]Martin Buber, "Productivity and Existence," Identity and Anxiety, p. 631.

[22]Goffman, p. 457.

[23]Richard A. Cloward and Lloyd E. Ohlin, Delinquency and Opportunity (New York: Freee Press, 1960), p. 101.

[24]Merton, pp. 195-203.

[25]International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences.

[26]Fromm, pp. 41-42.

[27]Merton, pp. 209-211.

CHAPTER IV

THE DETERIORATION OF THE SHTETL

With the theoretical structure now in mind, let us examine the process that occurred in the breakdown of the traditional shtetl pattern of life. We will try to follow some of the events that occurred in the lives of such people as Pauline Wengeroff who lived in Eastern Europe from 1833 to 1916. "In her life all the major currents affecting Russian Jews were played out: from rabbinic orthodoxy to hasidism, to haskala, to general education, Europeanization and complete secularization, until finally, the great tragedy of her life--the apostasy of her children."[1]

Neither the stalwarts of traditional Judaism, nor the advocators of modern reforms felt that change would be rapid in coming to the shtetl. "Yet time, as we know, did intrude on the shtetl, and with far greater rapidity than the reformers anticipated. A way of life that had seemed impregnable [appeared] suddenly . . . [to give] way, as though the institution they had set out to topple were touched by a cultural avalanche, leaving only ruin and memory behind."[2]

Part of the reason for the breakup of the shtetl was the fact that it became a "total institution." As suggested in Chapter Three, the roots of this problem lay in the area of rejection; the Jew always remained a "stranger." Although the Russian Jew accepted, tolerated, and adjusted to "Judeophobia," hate of Jews, in the end it contributed to the decay of Jewish society by helping to establish the "total institution" of the shtetl.

There were brief moments when the pressures lifted, but they always returned. Even the semi-freedom of others proved useless to the Jews. When Eastern Europe began to adopt policies of leniency and equality for the peasant and less powerful resident, the hopes of the shtetl member were raised. "But ironically, in most European parliamentary democracies where the franchise was universal, or nearly so, antisemitism became a matter of politics. All over Europe, decisions about the civic and economic status of Jews were being made by prejudiced masses and dishonorable politicians . . . antisemitism became a vehicle for political power . . . . The old notions about the rights of man gave way before the rights of nations."[3]

Many governments, in both Eastern and Western Europe, learned that when their policies and tactics did not satisfy the needs of the people, they could divert the attention of the populace by blaming the Jew for the national problems. Some Jews were exiled, some sent to prison, others had to suffer the pain and agony of the pogroms.[4] The government often claimed that the pogroms were spontaneous uprisings by the general population, but in fact in many towns the peasant was either not capable of such action or chose not to participate. In such cases ruffians were sent in to make sure the work was done properly.[5]

More and more there were new anti-Jewish edicts; increased taxes,[6] varieties of work forbidden, forced conscription into the army for a longer period than the rest of the population, and in numbers larger than their proportion of the total population, kidnapping of youth for the army and for baptism, and forced secular--sometimes Christian--education.[7]

We see evidence of the Jew being a "stranger" in his pursuit of education; he was often denied rights extended to others. Sholom Aleichem

learned he "was doing so exceptionally well at the school so that he was entitled by law to a scholarship consisting of full maintenance by the Government. However, since he was a Jew, all he would get was a cash prize amounting to about one hundred and twenty rubles a year."[8] In The Manor, I. B. Singer describes the difficulties one would incur if he tried to become a professional while still a Jew.[9]

As a "stranger," the Jew was accused of trying to avoid serving his country in the army, yet even when a Jew volunteered, he met with great resistance. In The Family Moskat, Asa Heshel was harassed by the soldiers on his way to be inducted. His food was taken and he was nearly beaten. Normally, it was the custom to allow new recruits to go home to their families between the swearing in and the final induction; Asa and the other Jews were forbidden to leave on the pretext that the Jews would try to escape.[10]

It was not uncommon for the Christian to pick up the banner of anti-semitism. If a Christian child were found dead, it was thought a fact that none but the Jews could have performed such an act, and often a whole Jewish village would be wiped out. Jacob Picard describes such an incident in The Marked One, in which after the inhabitants of a whole South German town are burned at the stake,[11] it is discovered that the child, for whose death they had been punished, had been accidentally smothered by his mother. The mother, afraid of her husband's wrath, blamed the Jews in order to escape her situation.[12]

If the peasant were drunk, his years of anti-Jewish indoctrination spewed forth from his mouth.[13] Yet even the sober peasant posed a problem to the shtetl. Since the Christian was the farmer, and the Jew, officially proscribed from owning land, was the merchant, "a sturdy business

relationship was built up between them. At the same time, each distrusts and fears the other. . . . It was no rare occurrence for the market day to end with violence."[14]

Nature's ills visited upon man were another source of discomfort. I. B. Singer describes this situation in The Manor: "The peasants blamed the drought on the Jews. How could there be plenty, when the Jews dried up the earths juices, drew turpentine from the trees, chopped down the forests, and fouled the air with smoke from lime kilns?"[15]

In his status of "stranger," the Jew's fear of the peasants often turned the most joyous and important occasions into misery, as Sholom Aleichem wrote: "Ah, if Pesach were over already. I hope it goes without any trouble. For my part it could have gone before it started."[16] Such was the attitude of many Jews in the spring, for it regularly happened that the Christians would blame the murder of one of their children on the Jews. In fact, such rumors were often instigated by the Tsarist government, knowing that the Jews would be accused of having killed the child in order to use its blood for the Passover matzah. Easter riots were just as common. Thus the spring was an anxiety-ridden time for the Jewish "stranger."

Fear of the non-Jew began early in a Jew's life. The children would desire to walk to the forest or fields but did so with hesitation. Sholom Aleichem describes how "they would wander far out of the village, beyond the mills, so long as the peasant brats did not attack them and sic their dogs on the 'damned Jews.'"[17]

It was not only the fear of daily life which haunted the Jews, but also the insecurity of not knowing where he would be living the following day.[18] "The history of the Ashkenasi communities is one of intermittent

flight and destruction. When governments frowned and violence grew frequent, there would be a new exodus to a new country, where a new rabbinical academy would be established and would flourish, until the next wave of destruction."[19] It should be noted that government oppression of Jews was not just a whim, but directly related to the socio-economic situation. If the economy was flourishing, Judeophobia declined; if the economy began to fail anti-Jewish attitudes increased.

Though only a mirage, it appeared to the Jew that all of Europe was being liberated. This illusion made the Jew feel even more that he was an alien.[20] Revolutions (discussed below) started by Jew and Christian together would in the end turn against the Jew.[21] Thus, we see that external pressures made the Jew feel that he was indeed a stranger and played a large role in the establishment of the "total institution" of the shtetl.

But the "total institution" had some roots inside of the shtetl, although the situation was aggravated by the external problems. We see in the area of education such problems. The cheder, the school for young boys, was a particular sore point. It was often just a broken down shack of a starving man. Everyone shouted; the place was chaotic. The studies frequently were an unbearable bore. The teacher's sermons were always of punishment, the gravest consequences for the smallest transgression. They were almost completely deprived of childish fancies such as those of nature.[22] Although there were some good cheders, more and more, the oppressive one became the mean.

Mendele Mocher Sforim describes his reaction in his early years to the advanced school, the yeshiva: "Stop pestering me about your Yeshiva and all other practical careers for Jewish boys! I've had enough of

that, eating charity meals at strangers' tables, groveling, wearing out my pants on yeshiva benches--why should I go back? There are enough rags in the Jewish world without me!"[23]

The educational system needed modernizing, but with the influx of vast amounts of new ideas and with the increased external pressure, the shtetl schools exhibited more and more of the "total institution" mentality. Shtetl members withdrew into their own world, quit the study of anything which was non-Talmudic and began to lose touch with reality. Samuel Adler describes it as follows: "The Bible and Talmud were the sphere in which our intellect moved; everything else was excluded. . . . So my thirteenth year arrived and found me fairly well above the usual level for my age in Bible and Talmud comprehension, but in other knowledge still at a childish age."[24] Superstition further clouded one's perception of reality: "Shloyme's mind was in a turmoil and nothing in the world seemed to him to be other than an illusion. Nothing was real, nothing what it seemed to be. At any given moment the evil spirit might enter this person or that, or perhaps they were long since possessed. They only seemed to be human, but in fact their soul was straw; perhaps he too was only a rag doll, straw and rope."[25]

At the same time, a new method of study was sneaking into the shtetl offering new thoughts to dissatisfied minds. A conflict arose pushing those who held onto tradition further into ritualism and deeper into the "total institution"; those who sought modern methods were pushed out of the shtetl. Sholem Aleichem describes it as follows:

> Something happened: in the last forty or fifty years a ray of worldly light has stolen into our corner of the earth and has reached even into our very synagogues, even where the impoverished lads sat with their tomes. There you found them secretly snatching their first appetizer, then swallowing--or

> choking over--a Russian Grammar, with maybe a few chapters of a novel for dessert. From studies like these, naturally, no Talmudic scholars or famous rabbis emerged. Instead, Jewish youths wandered off into the world and were ruined, became doctors, lawyers, writers of prose and verse, teachers--and plain non-believers. Not a single rabbi was worth anything. That is, there were a number of rabbis. But what kind? Crown Rabbis wished onto us by the Czar, whether we wanted them or not. As if he had said, 'Here is a loaded bomb; hold on to it.'[26]

There were some Jews who loved Judaism and hated to see the shtetl people remain so backward. "The emancipationists are right . . . . The fanaticism of Polish Jews is too preposterous for words. While . . . [Western] Europe is learning, creating, making progress, they remain bogged down in ignorance. . . . I must study. I must help these people emerge from darkness."[27] So says one of Singer's characters in The Manor. He was comparing the backwardness of the Polish Jew to the progressiveness of the German Jews, but the Russian Jew was only part of the larger ignorance of the general Eastern European setting.

An apostate Jew in The Manor gives his views on the Jewish position: "I'm no longer a Jew. I've been baptized. But blood is thicker than water and I can't stand seeing the Jews suffer. How can anyone move into someone else's home, live there in total isolation, and expect not to suffer by it? When you despise your host's god as a tin image, shun his wine as forbidden, condemn his daughter as unclean, aren't you asking to be treated as an unwelcome outsider?"[28] Perhaps it was this type of strong position, the one which represented assimilation, which made many observant Jews scared of any new type of education.

If education would lead to apostasy, then the orthodox man had much about which to worry. For children were beginning to ask strange questions: "Why are some rich and some poor?" "What was there before the universe?" And these children began to point to all the contradictions

in scripture, and worse, became interested in science.[29] Such was the case of Solomon Maimon, who will be discussed later.

Sholom Aleichem describes an awakening in Voronko: "But suddenly the pillars of the fortress began to shake, the palace toppled and all the charm of the happy village dissolved in an instant. The young 'prince' discovered that Voronko was not the navel of the globe--there were many other larger cities, and much wealthier men than the Rabinowitzes."[30] Such awakenings caused the Jew to run from the shtetl in order to escape the "total institution."

Mendele Mocher Sforim relates his mother's description of such a resulting change: "When he came here, at the beginning of winter, he kept an exact schedule every day: first thing in the morning he would study Talmud by himself, then later on he would teach the other children; how proud I was watching him. Now all of a sudden he's a different person. No more Talmud. He sits by himself all day, and all he does is write."[31]

The child was going to seek out the modern even if one tried to prevent him from doing so. There were a few cases where the parents accepted this fact. Abraham Cahan describes his search for secular knowledge, his fears, and his father's understanding attitude:

> When I was in my tenth year, I enrolled in a government public school without telling my parents. These government operated schools for Jewish children were financed by special taxes levied on Jews. . . . In the public school I entered the classrooom in which I found a tall grey-haired teacher wearing a blue frock coat with brass buttons. He spoke to me in Russian and gave me a thin Russian grammar. All around me boys sat without hats.
>
> Immediately, I became homesick. I knew this teacher was a Jew. But I feared his shaven face and his brass buttons and his Russian. I anticipated that my father would be angry with me for enrolling without his knowledge. Instead, when I returned home and told him what I had done, he was proud of me, saying I had shown noteworthy bravery for one so young.[32]

Singer describes the change in his character Asa: "He would start endless disputes with the others in the study house and criticize the rabbis. He prayed without putting on the customary prayer sash, scribbled on the margins of the sacred books, made mock of the pious. Instead of studying the Commentaries he delved into Maimonides's Guide for the Perplexed and Jehuda Halevi's Khuzari. Somewhere he got hold of the writings of the heretic Solomon Maimon. He went about with his coat unbuttoned, his earlocks unkempt, his hat pushed to one side . . . ."[33]

The "total institution" that had formed and was forming was characterized by more than just the inability to change educational methods. The Jewish woman had for many years taken a back seat to her husband, gaining her status from him, waiting for him to bring up certain subjects to be discussed, deferring to his decisions. It is not surprising then, to find that the domain of the wife, once used judiciously, now became the area for unleashing wrath. The Jew might be well respected in the community and considered to be a powerful man outside his home, but his wife simultaneously would domineer him at home.

Although Nissel Rabinowitz had much authority with Jew and gentile, was loved by all, his wife, Auntie Hodel, ruled him with an iron fist and he was quite scared of her.[34] Marriage then became a nightmare for the husband because the frustrated wife could only take her anger out on her spouse at home.[35]

The closeness of the shtetl, rather than being a matter for joy, deteriorated into another sign of the "total institution"--lack of privacy. The unhealthy symptom of a society not being able to act without the whole town knowing was the norm in the shtetl.[36] As Tevye put it, "I don't know how you are, but as for me, I dislike a person with secrets."[37]

Education was considered by many to be the antidote to the "total institution," so warnings were issued by the secularly educated to the stalwarts of orthodoxy. "Our educational methods must be reformed. The Jews must master German as well as Russian and Polish. The children must be taught trades, the long caftans abolished, and the beards shaved off or trimmed.[38]

"If parents understand me, they will not prevent their children from becoming educated out of fear they will be ruined nor marry them off prematurely . . . . Otherwise, their children will come to the same end as I . . . . Those who escape from Talmud run toward the chaos of the new literature . . . . Have we no other way except flight?"[39]

But, "the relentless spread of modernity had compelled Orthodoxy into a posture of obstinate resistance to all change and innovation . . . . The haskala's extreme demands for religious reform caused rabbinic Judaism to lean more heavily than ever on past authority and rendered the rabbis more fearful of exercising independence in interpreting the Law."[40]

Thus the war began to rage between traditional and modern thinkers. "Shekhtl . . . was only seventeen and he came from Mohilev where he had studied in the yeshiva until expelled on suspicion of heresy."[41] Uncles were appalled at their nephews' and brothers' behavior. "When Uncle Phinney learned that Nahum's children were to be taught by a teacher whose son attended the Country School, he was horrified . . . . It's not enough that this Lithuanian teaches grammar and stylistic niceties--but he's actually handed his own son over to the Gentiles for conversion."[42]

Both sides used similar analogies to describe their point of view. "The Jews of those days . . . did not include among 'the correct subjects' such worldly studies as science and foreign languages. If a person had

'filled his stomach with bread and meat,' i.e., Talmud and law codes, and has studied a little Bible, with grammar for dessert--that was all he needed . . . ."[43] "But to the clear-sighted, the Talmud was as preserving salt which helped safeguard the existence of Jewry, much as salt is used to preserve fatty meat for winter. But when mealtime comes, who would be so foolish as to serve the meat without rinsing the salt off, leaving only a trace to make it palatable?"[44]

Velvel describes the situation well in explaining to his nephew, the son of the convert what the problem was. "We all made mistakes . . . . My father's mistake was uncompromising strictness. Your father's mistake was impatience . . . . My mistake was prudence."[45] For indeed, "Had the time produced men of greater intellectual and moral stature, the introduction of science and secularism into traditional society inevitable as it was, might have been accomplished with less injury to the religious culture."[46] One does find examples here and there of a successful transition.[47,48,49]

For many the decision was not an easy one, for they were besieged on both sides with opposing forces, both of which made sense. "Tevye has been shaken from his moorings. He is a man in conflict with himself, he is not too sure that his way is always best; and so we find him aiding and abetting his daughters in spite of his better, that is more instinctive, judgement."[50]

Of Moses Mendelssohn it was written, "Inwardly he is torn between identification with the universal community of humanity, which now seems only a dream, and the more limited Jewish community, which has not for many years occupied the center of his interest and which has always harbored bitter resentment against Christianity."[51]

Mendele Mocher Sforim describes the conflict as follows: "These two forces are bickering within me like two shopkeepers . . . . One says: 'God save us from the new merchandize and baubles that are now fashionable among Jews! . . . Forget them: here you have fine antiques, everyone the work of our ancestors, and each with its own authentic value . . . .' The other one shouts: 'Come to me! Look at my merchandise--what do you want with outmoded things from an age that is dead and gone? . . . the present is . . . real life . . . .'"[52]

David Friedlander was another example of the confused modern Jew. Mendelssohn's philosophy had helped him escape from the shtetl ideals, but Friedlander never found a system to replace the one he left. Consequently, he was continually returning to Judaism only to leave again. Old age found him as a confused man, not the proud banner carrier of Mendelssohn he had wished to be.[53]

Many were lost in a maze, for "if the Jew was to retain his identity, purged of all national characteristics, a new religious identity had to emerge. Mendelssohn, the hero of the Maskilim, had laid no foundation for such identity, and the results were now everywhere manifest: "They have destroyed the old structure and built no new one in its stead. The child knows how to despise the old customs but does not know how to live a moral life . . . ."[54] "The product was a generation that simply could not see what it meant to be a Jew, once the ceremonial law was abandoned. The new generation was seen pleading in vain with the old; Father, give us a faith in something that we might know who we are."[55]

Thus, we see those who mainly, because of the "total institution," broke from the old ways. Some simply became assimilated Jews. "The famous Jewish writer Isaac Meyer Dick would stroll about the courtyard

in bedroom slippers, a flat hat on his head, a pipe in his mouth, a sardonic smile on his lips and a melancholy air all about him. His son was handsome and clean-shaven like a real gentile. And the oldest of his grandchildren attended a high school."[56]

There were those who were cast out. Joseph Krantz's father "was a distinguished rabbi and he had been raised in strictly orthodox surroundings. Yet somehow, by the age fifteen, Krantz had already become a fiery heretic, seized with the passion of the Enlightenment. One day in the synagogue . . . he publicly referred to the prophet Moses in a derogatory manner. The congregants were outraged . . . . People hurled themselves at the 'heretic' and he barely managed to escape the synagogue alive. He never returned home again."[57]

There were those who not only assimilated, but stopped short of conversion and forced others away from tradition. "Simcha Meyer . . . had definitely made up his mind that when he was a grown man he would sit in an office just like his father's. But he would sit there bareheaded and not wearing that silly skull-cap which his father, the pious Jew always had on his head. And he wouldn't admit the riffraff, the noisy merchants that his father dealt with. He would see only the big important people. And they would have to take off their hats when they came into his office. He wouldn't let them speak Yiddish either. They would have to speak to him in German."[58] Years later he fulfilled his promise and changed his name to Max.[59]

There were those too, who, due to being treated as the "stranger," converted to Christianity. Some left in order to further their careers as opera singer,[60] doctor[61] and college professor.[62] And there were those who left simply to be part of the majority.[63] In any case, the struggles

between modern and traditional ideas, along with the pressures of being a stranger or living in a "total institution" atmosphere, took a large toll. A great many were left without any orientation for life. They wandered aimlessly, with their problems increasing, their mental states declining, and their moral states becoming deplorable (as discussed in Chapters Six and Seven).

The breakup of the shtetl was also brought on by another factor, that of revolution. As stated earlier, Europe was changing from the agrarian society to a capitalistic structure. The shift caused many problems in the general society, which in turn affected the shtetl and served to aggravate already existing problems. For the Jew, the problem had its roots in years of poverty.

"Tevye's wife Golde . . . sees only what's in front of her and what she sees she doesn't like. Poverty, illness, and struggle have always been her lot. She wants something better for her daughters. To her, 'something better' means a pantry full of good food, a fur-lined cloak for weekdays, and a cloak with a ruffle for Saturday, shoes and stockings, linen and bedding."[64]

The Judennot, the poverty, was so ingrained that it affected one's philosophy. "In our town . . . no one steals anything for the single reason that there is nobody to steal from and nothing is worth stealing."[65] The poor, although scared of the police for many reasons, are not afraid because of monetary matters. "What can they take away from me? The holes in my pockets?"[66] Poverty was not limited to the shtetl, for many had left there to try to make a living in the big city. Instead of finding wealth, they often found more misery. Consequently, the city was filled with paupers, beggars, men and women peddlers struggling for a living but still ragged and starving.[67]

This poverty naturally led to hunger. "The poor Jewish peddlers of the little towns and villages scarcely knew how to escape the extremes of need and survive the long cold months. Their small peddling trade barely fed them and their numerous children."[68] It was commonplace for the children to go to bed because they had nothing to eat and it was easier to sleep than be hungry.[69] And although there were several fast days prescribed in tradition, many men fasted far more than these, not because they chose to do so, but because there was nothing to eat. Often this lead to death.[70]

Disease, too, took its toll on the poor Jews. Sholom Aleichem recalls, "More and more frequently you heard words like 'plague', 'epidemic', 'cholera'. The word 'cholera' was always accompanied by a curse. Terror swept the city."[71] Abraham Cahan remembers the cholera epidemic of 1871.[72] "It was the year of the cholera--a year of continuous Kaddish-saying. The whole congregation was saying Kaddish."[73]

Granted, not every Jew was poor, but the status of the shtetl and the way the poor were treated by the rich only added fuel to the fire. Sholom Aleichem was not allowed to play or associate with Avremel because Sholom was from an "excellent" family, and Avremel was from a pauper's family.[74]

Differentiation was made between the haves and have-nots in the synagogue and community. "The pillars of the community kept the craftsmen in their places, and discriminated against them in many ways. A laborer was not permitted to wear a silk caftan or a fur hat on the Sabbath. In the study house, his place was in the last row of benches behind the pulpit. If he were summoned to the Torah, the reader would call him by the name of 'friend', instead of the usual appellation of 'master';

then they would read only three verses, the absolute minimum . . . ."[75]

It must be stressed here, that had the shtetl remained isolated, the problems of poverty might not have led to revolutionaries in the shtetl; it was the outside influence of the general population's unhappiness which filtered into the ghetto that brought the idea of revolution to the minds of certain Jews. Nonetheless, the grounds for revolution did exist in the shtetl.

Not only was the status of the poor low, and kept low, but the rich often abused them: "Reb Berchye was the town banker. He did not lend cash, but goods. He credited the women dealers with the . . . commodities which they sold . . . . But although Reb Berchye was very pious . . . his piety did not hinder him from fleecing . . . all the poor women and . . . thanks to his piety, he perfectly understood the art of squaring his usury with his piety, so that both his pocket and the Law were satisfied."[76]

The resentment of the poor is best told by Berel, when due to special circumstances, he is able to clear his chest to Sholom, the town's richest man:

> It was hard for me to walk, but that too was nothing. What was worse was being called Limpy and being mimicked. And worst of all was the way you did it, Reb Sholom . . . you and others like you from the richer families, spoiled little brats . . . .
>
> But I could still not understand why a rich man's child could step on the toes of a poor man's child and the poor man's child could do nothing about it . . . . Ever since that time I have nothing but scorn for the rich and the children of the rich, and most of all I have scorned and hated you . . . .
>
> You were afraid I might greet you, and you might have to answer me . . . when I was married, I sent you an invitation, but you did not acknowledge it . . . . When my wife died, I sent my Uncle Yossi to tell you that I was alone with two small children, forlorn and helpless. Your answer was that you were a man who did not meddle in public affairs.[77]

As might be expected in the institutionalized type of society, we

have already suggested, many dreamt of riches as a release binge fantasy. Tevye was only one of many who imagined what it would be like to have money[78] or thought of how wonderful it would be in America.[79] where one could make a living.[80]

Children, too, had these dreams of wealth.[81] "If only I had the treasure . . . . Even if I didn't have all of it, only a tiny part . . . I'd fill the whole house with the treasure . . . . They'd just have to forget how bad they felt . . . ."[82]

As stated earlier, during this period there were rumblings among non-Jews in reaction to the oppression by all the rich of the poor. Because of anti-semitism and the unsympathetic attitude of the wealthy to the penniless, "Among Jews, too, a new proletariat had begun to emerge. Artisans, long before the factory system, skilled and sophisticated in the rational production of goods, they were nevertheless excluded from most government operated factories and other large industrial establishments, sometimes because of Sabbath observance and sometimes because of prejudice."[83] For some of these men, though their religious identity declined, their Jewish ethnic identity did not suffer. "These workers were natural Jews, an organic part of Jewish society, though they had broken radically from Jewish tradition. They lived totally within a Jewish milieu, spoke Yiddish, and could not conceive of themselves as other than Jews."[84]

The fight against the wealthy Jewish factory owners is described in I. J. Singer's novel <u>The Brothers Ashkenazi</u>: "Tevyeh and Nissan worked . . . on a proclamation to the workers of Lodz . . . they appealed to the workers not to permit themselves to be fooled by the trickery of the rich, whom from the fortunes they had squeezed out of the exploited and starving

masses detached an infinitesimal part and threw it back at those who were the producers of all wealth . . . . Nissan sent out a few of his fellow conspirators, and they stole into the synagogues and posted up the proclamations."[85] Through the streets were heard cries of "Down with capitalism! Long live socialism!"[86]

Although there were some who did retain their identification with the Jews, many tried to escape it: "These early Jewish populists had in common, besides the messianic complex, an obsessive urge to escape from the Jewish group and to obliterate their Jewish identity . . . . Their sense of Jewish inferiority was nourished by Russian literature on which they had been bred and from which they absorbed the seemingly ineradicable anti-Jewish attitudes of [many] Russian writers and thinkers . . . [whose] opinions, too, had a crippling effect on the youthful naive Jewish revolutionaries who uncritically accepted anti-Jewish prejudice as 'scientific' social and economic doctrine."[87]

Thus we see the sociological setting for the break-down of shtetl authority and life-style. A large group of those who left the milieu suffered greatly as we shall see in the following chapters.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

[1]Pauline Wengeroff, "Memoirs of a Grandmother," The Golden Tradition: Jewish Life and Thought in Eastern Europe, ed. Lucy S. Dawidowicz (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1967), p. 160.

[2]Ruth R. Wisse, A Shtetl and Other Yiddish Novellas (New York: Behrman House, Inc., 1973), p. 16.

[3]Dawidowicz, p. 69.

[4]Israel Joshua Singer, The Brothers Ashkenazi, trans. Maurice Samuel (New York: Alfred Knopf, Inc., 1936), p. 484.

[5]Sholom Aleichem, Collected Stories of Sholom Aleichem: Tevye's Daughters, trans. Francis Butwin (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1949), p. 78.

[6]Although taxes were increased for all people of Eastern Europe to support the wobbly economy, a disproportionate burden fell on the Jews.

[7]Dawidowicz, p. 28.

[8]Sholom Aleichem, The Great Fair: Scenes From My Childhood, trans. Tamara Kahana (New York: Noonday Press, 1955), p. 267.

[9]Isaac Bashevis Singer, The Manor (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1968), p. 202.

[10]Isaac Bashevis Singer, The Family Moskat, trans. A. H. Gross (New York: Alfred Knopf, Inc., 1950), pp. 333-336.

[11]Jacob Picard, The Marked One, trans. Ludwig Lewisohn (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1956), p. 242.

[12]Ibid., p. 267.

[13]Soma Morgenstern, In My Father's Pastures, trans. Ludwig Lewisohn (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1947), p. 241.

[14]Elizabeth Herzog and Mark Zborowski, Life Is With People: The Culture of the Shtetl, with a foreword by Margaret Mead (New York: Schocken Books, 1962), p. 241.

[15]I. B. Singer, Manor, pp. 297-298.

[16]Sholom Aleichem, Collected Stories of Sholom Aleichem: The Old Country, trans. Frances Butwin and Julius Butwin (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1946), p. 344.

[17]Sholom Aleichem, Great Fair, p. 25.

[18]Sholom Aleichem, Tevye's Daughters, p. 110.

[19]Herzog, p. 5.

[20]I. J. Singer, Brothers Ashkenazi, pp. 570-571.

[21]Ibid., pp. 314-320.

[22]Sholom Aleichem, Great Fair, p. 239.

[23]Mendele Mocher Sforim, "Of Bygone Days," The Golden Tradition, p. 279.

[24]Samuel Adler, "Prelude to America," Lives and Voices, ed. Stanley F. Chyet (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1972), p. 6.

[25]Mendele Mocher Sforim, p. 307.

[26]Sholom Aleichem, Old Country, p. 348.

[27]I. B. Singer, Manor, p. 35.

[28]Ibid., p. 37.

[29]Ibid., pp. 23-24.

[30]Sholom Aleichem, Great Fair, pp. 69-70.

[31]Mendele Mocher Sforim, p. 279.

[32]Abraham Cahan, The Education of Abraham Cahan, trans. Leon Stein, Abraham P. Conan and Lynn Davison (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1969), p. 41.

[33]I. B. Singer, Family Moskat, p. 27.

[34]Sholom Aleichem, Great Fair, pp. 63-65.

[35]Sholom Aleichem, Tevye's Daughters, p. 166.

[36]Sholom Aleichem, Old Country, p. 272.

[37]Sholom Aleichem, Tevye's Daughters, p. 57.

[38]I. B. Singer, Manor, p. 72.

[39]Moses Libe Lilienblum, "The Sins of My Youth," The Golden Tradition, p. 134.

[40]Dawidowicz, pp. 81-82.

[41]S. Ansky, "Behind A Mask," A Shtetl, p. 221.

[42]Sholom Aleichem, Great Fair, p. 139.

[43]Mendele Mocher Sforim, p. 294.

[44]Judah Lieb Gordon, "An Entry in My Diary," The Golden Tradition,

[45]Soma Morgenstern, The Son of the Lost Son, trans. Peter Gross and Joseph Leftwich (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1946), p. 207.

[46]Dawidowicz, p. 27.

[47]Cahan, pp. 106-107.

[48]Sholem Asch, Three Cities, trans. Edwin Muir and Willa Muir (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1933), pp. 305-306.

[49]Cahan, p. 54.

[50]Sholom Aleichem, Tevye's Daughters, p. xi.

[51]Michael A. Meyer, The Origins of the Modern Jew (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1967), p. 32.

[52]Mendele Mocher Sforim, p. 294.

[53]Meyer, p. 84.

[54]Judah Benzeev, Yesode ha-dat, first introduction, cited by Michael Meyer, Origins of the Modern Jew, p. 121.

[55]Eduard Kley, taken from a sermon, cited by Meyer.

[56]Cahan, p. 45.

[57]S. Ansky, p. 220.

[58]I. J. Singer, Brothers Ashkenazi, p. 60.

[59]Ibid., p. 243.

[60]Sholom Aleichem, Great Fair, p. 31.

[61]Sholem Asch, Children of Abraham, trans. Maurice Samuel (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1942), pp. 264-271.

[62]Soma Morgenstern, The Testament of the Lost Son, trans. Jacob Sloan and Maurice Samuel (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1950), p. 139.

[63]Sholom Aleichem, Great Fair, p. 302.

[64]Sholom Aleichem, Tevye's Daughters, p. xi.

[65]Sholom Aleichem, Old Country, p. 138.

[66]Ibid., p. 283.

[67]I. B. Singer, Family Moskat, pp. 5-6, 22-23.

[68]Picard, p. 46.

[69]Sholom Aleichem, Old Country, p. 255.

[70]Sholom Aleichem, Tevye's Daughters, p. 172.

[71]Sholom Aleichem Great Fair, pp. 165-166.

[72]Cahan, pp. 49-50.

[73]Ibid., p. 178.

[74]Sholom Aleichem, Great Fair, p. 280.

[75]Mendele Mocher Sforim, p. 334.

[76]Sholem Asch, Salvation, trans. Edwin Muir and Willa Muir (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1951), p. 51.

[77]Sholom Aleichem, Old Country, pp. 284-286.

[78]Sholom Aleichem, Tevye's Daughters, pp. 9-15.

[79]Sholom Aleichem, Old Country, p. 333.

[80]Sholom Aleichem, Great Fair, p. 27.

[81]Sholom Aleichem, Old Country, p. 187.

[82]Sholom Aleichem, Great Fair, p. 172.

[83]Dawidowicz, p. 58.

[84]Ibid.

[85]I. J. Singer, Brothers Ashkenazi, p. 281.

[86]I. M. Weissenberg, "A Shtetl," A Shtetl and Other Yiddish Novellas, p. 35.

[87]Dawidowicz, p. 45.

CHAPTER V

THE UNHEALTHY PERSONALITY

"The statement that man can live under almost any conditions is only half true; it must be supplemented by the other statement, that if he lives under conditions which are contrary to his nature and to the basic requirements for human growth and sanity, he cannot help reacting; he must either deteriorate and perish, or bring about conditions which are more in accordance with his needs."[1] Many in the shtetl were not able to find the latter path possible, so they did deteriorate and perish, if not physically, at least mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. To understand what happened to them sociologically and psychologically, we will need to examine the following concepts: anomie, anomia, alienation, identity diffusion and anxiety.

"When there is acute disjunction between the cultural norms and goals and the socially structured capacities of members of the group to act with them,"[2] the condition of "anomie" results. In this condition, there is "a lack of meaningful and structuralized social life . . . the individual follows more and more a restless movement, a planless self-development, an aim of living which has no criterion of value and in which happiness lies always in the future, and never in present achievement . . . . As a result, a genuine social order has disappeared . . . . The individual, free from all genuine social bonds, finds himself abandoned, isolated, and demoralized. Society becomes a 'disorganized dust of individuals.'"[3] Anomie is the term referring to a breakdown in the

society itself as a whole. This phenomenon in the individual is termed "anomia," or "anomy."

Anomy or anomia "signifies the state of mind of one who has been pulled up by his moral roots, who has no longer any standard but only disconnected urges, who has no longer any sense of continuity, of folk or obligation. The anomic man has become spiritually sterile, responsive only to himself, responsible to no one. He derides the values of other men. His only faith is the philosophy of denial. He lives on the thin line of sensation between no future and no past . . . the individual's sense of social cohesion--the mainspring of his morale--is broken or fatally weakened."[4] " . . . he becomes a mystery to himself, unable to escape the exasperating and agonizing question: to what purpose?"[5]

Related to and almost equal to anomia is the concept of alienation. Originally used by Marx in connection with the oppressed worker,[6] the term has been expanded by others such as Fromm, who says: "By alienation is meant a mode of experience in which the person experiences himself as an alien. He has become, one might say, estranged from himself. He does not experience himself as the center of his world, as the creator of his own acts--but his acts and their consequences have become his masters, whom he obeys, or whom he may even worship. The alienated person is out of touch with himself as he is out of touch with any other person."[7]

Anomia or alienation begins with a few dissatisfied people, the ones who are most discontent. They in turn will affect those around them. Thus, if left unchecked, anomia and alienation grow into mass dissatisfaction producing what we call anomie, characterizing the amoral and asocialized society.[8]

The anomic person will usually exhibit five attitudes: 1) Community leaders are indifferent to his needs. 2) Little can be accomplished in society, which is seen as basically unpredictable and lacking order. 3) Life goals are receding for him rather than being reached. 4) There is no one that can be depended on for social and psychological support. 5) Life is meaningless and futile.[9] The anomic and alienated man, feeling lonely, worthless as a person, and unable to love or receive love, resorts to other means to fill the vacuum left in his life.[10] Below are described some of the results of anomie.

Fromm suggests that "the middle-class life of prosperity, while satisfying our material needs, leaves us with a feeling of intense boredom, and that suicide and alcoholism are pathological ways of escape from this boredom . . . ."[11] Describing the alienated person, he says, "Dissatisfaction, apathy, boredom, lack of joy and happiness, a sense of futility and a vague feeling that life is meaningless are the unavoidable results of this situation. This socially patterned syndrome of pathology may not be in the awareness of people; it may be covered by a frantic flight into escape activities, or by a craving for more money, power, prestige. But the weight of the latter motivation is so great only because the alienated person cannot help seeking for such compensations for his inner vacuity, not because these desires are the 'natural' or most important incentives for work."[12]

Other escapes for alienated or anomic man may be laziness,[13] lack of inhibition--the feeling that every impulse and urge must be satisfied immediately,[14] and insatiability,[15] which may be seen as promiscuity,[16] compulsive gambling, compulsive overeating, or any number of compulsions.

Further, the individual will be caught either without an identity,

in between several identities, or in the struggle simultaneously to cast off and retain an identity. This is particularly true of the person in the following chapters, the modern emancipated Jew. "He does not fully know who he is, and much of what he does know he cannot accept. He is a stranger who does not wish to be a stranger. Perforce remaining the stranger, he knows not the why and wherefore. He retains the label of Jew, but has no identity acceptable to himself."[17] This phenomenon is known as identity diffusion.

Lastly, the man who has lost his rootedness and structure is apt to exhibit overwhelming anxiety. This anxiety, being unresolvable through normal healthy means, may lead to neurosis. "Mentally disturbed people try to dispel anxiety by developing mental symptoms."[18] As we examine examples of anomic and alienated people in Chapters Six and Seven, we should keep in mind that the condition of anomie does not have to be permanent, though often it is. If an individual is able to recognize the cause or causes of his problems and is willing to seek out a solution, he may once again achieve a healthy personality.

NOTES TO CHAPTER V

[1]Erich Fromm, The Sane Society (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1955), p. 25.

[2]Robert K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (New York: Free Press, 1968), p. 216.

[3]Fromm, p. 191.

[4]Merton, p. 215.

[5]Emile Durkheim, Suicide: A Study in Sociology, trans. John A. Spaulding and George Simpson, ed. with an introduction by George Simpson (New York: Free Press, 1951), p. 210.

[6]T. B. Bottomore, introduction to Karl Marx: Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1956), p. 27.

[7]Fromm, p. 111.

[8]Marshall B. Clinard, "The Theoretical Implications of Anomie and Deviant Behavior," Anomie and Deviant Behavior, ed. Marshall B. Clinard (New York: Free Press, 1964), pp. 19-20.

[9]Merton, p. 218.

[10]Rollo May, "Centrality of the Problems of Anxiety in Our Day," Identity and Anxiety, eds. Maurice R. Stein, Arthur J. Vidich and David Manning White (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1962), pp. 121-122.

[11]Fromm, p. 19.

[12]Ibid., p. 39.

[13]Ibid., p. 253.

[14]Ibid., p. 148.

[15]Ibid., p. 123.

[16]Erik H. Erikson, Identity: Youth and Crisis (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1968), p. 135.

[17]Aaron Antonovsky, "Identity, Anxiety and the Jew," Identity and Anxiety, p. 428.

[18]Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, "Psychiatric Aspects of Anxiety," Identity and Anxiety, p. 129.

CHAPTER VI

THE ALIENATED AND ANOMIC JEW

Before we examine shtetl literature for examples of the alienated and anomic man who broke out of the ghetto, it must be stated that the shtetl itself was not free of such problems. In most societies there are a few who cannot accept the structure of that community. Examples of such people may be found in the writings of Sholom Aleichem: In The Old Country one finds Chlavne the alcoholic,[1] Sholem-Ber who worshipped money,[2] and Rothschild, the beggar, who because of his low status in the shtetl, never developed a healthy identity, felt alienated from the shtetl, and afraid of most of its inhabitants.[3] In The Testament of the Lost Son, Soma Morgenstern describes Avram, the alcoholic,[4] and Shabse, a glutton and thief.[5] From the Dorf literature we have Jacob Picard's characters Izzie, who was also driven by the lust for food,[6] and Sender Frank, the mistreated orphan. Sender's status was that of an oppressed, downcast man. On a number of occasions he left the shtetl to acquire skills that would raise his position in the village, but with each return, he felt more alienated, until he was finally forced to leave his place of birth forever.[7]

Though we do have these above examples of the individuals who suffered from lack of structure while the shtetl or Dorf society was fairly intact, they were the exceptions. It was mainly among those Jews who broke out of that milieu and did not replace tradition with another meaningful way of life, that anomia and alienation were common.

Perhaps some of the most striking examples are found in I. B. Singer's The Family Moskat. The setting for the story is Warsaw; the family is living in the big city rather than the shtetl. They seem to be, for the most part, separated from a viable structure, and thus torn from their roots. The exception is Meshulam, who died still clinging to tradition. "Old Meshulam Moskat had been a king among Jews; and, with all their faults, his sons had managed to stay Jews [at least in name]. But the grandchildren had completely alienated themselves from the old ways. . . . More than twenty years had gone by since old Moskat had died, and the Jewish kingdom over which he had ruled on Gzhybov Place had long been in ruins."[8]

We see in most of the Moskats symptoms and results of anomie as suggested in Chapter Five: whether born into, or married into the family, the majority overindulged in food. Special vices belonged to Joel who had a passion for gambling; Dacha, the shrew, died alienated from the family, deserted by all; Esther and Saltsha took great pleasure in deprecating the pious. As one might expect of the anomic family, greed was quite prevalent. When Meshulam was dying, even before the period of mourning was ended, their thoughts had turned to plans for finding the hidden money, and obtaining the largest part of the inheritance.[9]

The most alienated and anomic man in the generation of old Moskat's children was Meshulam's son-in-law Abram. He was loud, vulgar, and could get along with neither his wife nor Meshulam.[10] He was an angry man, who on the one hand blamed others for their inability to tolerate him,[11] and on the other hand was constantly trying to stir up trouble in the family.[12] Not only did he tease everyone, but he was fond of tearing down Judaism.[13] His inability to earn a living[14] (life's goals receding)

was only matched by his bragging about his ability to collect wealth.[15]

Because he lacked structure and rootedness, he was overwhelmed with anxiety. To overcome this and fill the emptiness in his life, he tried several avenues. One of these was the pursuit of danger: "Abram . . . loved nothing so much as excitement, days and nights full of motion. He even enjoyed the knowledge that he did not have a grosz in his pocket and that the law might be at his very heels."[16] It is only the unhealthy personality, such as Abram displayed, that requires being in trouble to find status.

He exhibits the symptoms of the anomic man in that he was prone to the use of great amounts of alcohol in order to escape his worries,[17] got drunk on every available occasion,[18] and found it absurd that others did not;[19] further, he loved to eat to the point of gluttony,[20] and thought nothing of eating a large meal late at night after having just previously stuffed himself.[21]

As a typical alienated man, he was constantly searching for love, and being without structure or morals, he continually hurt those around him in his chase after women.[22] Though his wife threatened to leave him if he did not stop running around with other females, he persisted, until she finally did leave,[23] but even this did not stop him.[24] His most regular girlfriend was Ida,[25] but if she was not at home, he attacked the maid Zosia.[26] When Ida was in the hospital, rather than visit her, he went off to the ball, for pleasure came first with Abram.[27] There he met another conquest and woke up with her the next morning, though because of his drunken state the night before, he was not sure how he got there.[28] He pleasured himself by getting innocent girls pregnant,[29] and even lusted after his own niece, Hadassah.[30]

Due to his alienation and resulting anxiety, he was prone to periods of depression,[31] but only began to see the turmoil he had created in his life near the end. "Abram seemed to hear in the distance the blowing of a shofar, . . . 'The Day of Atonement is getting close, . . . what judgment will be inscribed for me for the things I've done this year? My God, the way I've been behaving, who would know that I'm a Jew? . . . Ah, how easy it is to do good. Dear God, why did I do nothing? I've given myself over altogether to material things. I've completely forgotten that a man has a soul. Dear Father in heaven, forgive me.'"[32]

In the healthy personality, the above statement would be a sign of change, but for the anomic man it is just a recognition that his compulsions are controlling him. Abram could not, nor did he wish to, change. His above repentance was far from genuine. He "stared into the darkness [held captive by anxiety]. Everything within him seemed to be hollow and hopeless. He longed to pray, but did not know what to say."[33] Instead, "he was overtaken with desire. 'To have an affair with another woman', he thought. 'Once more before I die.'"[34] Thus was the story of his life.

Of the generation of Meshulam's grandchildren, Asa Heshel, Adele Landau, and Hadassah Moskat were the most anomic and alienated characters. Asa first married Adele Landau, Meshulam's step daughter, then divorced her to marry Hadassah, Meshulam's granddaughter.

It is not surprising that Asa displayed anomia, for his early years had been difficult, with little guidance. While he was still quite young, his mother took ill and his father disappeared. A widower proposed marriage to Asa's mother, with the condition that Asa would have to leave. So Asa went to Warsaw, rejected by, and alienated from, his family and

town.[35] Here, by chance, he established contact with the Moskat family.

We see in Asa the anomic characteristic of life's goals seeming to recede. His dream was to be a scholar and earn a degree, "But years passed and little came of his undisciplined efforts. He began courses of study but never completed them . . . ."[36] His lack of structure would lead him to depression over his educational status, and he would think to himself: "What was he doing? Poring over children's primers, hoping that some day, maybe in ten years, he would manage to earn a diploma. Is this what had become of his youthful dreams? What was he but an inconsequential nobody, with inconsequential and futile notions."[37] Not only did he have a difficult time studying, but when he did, it was usually the wrong subjects to accomplish his goals.[38]

His anomic and alienated condition led him to great and unresolvable anxiety. His mind was in constant confusion, and "The eternal questions never gave him rest . . . ."[39] He could not come to a satisfactory conclusion about God, the soul, and man's responsibilities. Hadassah described Asa by saying that, "He is so full of contradictions, and he's so pessimistic. He says that the world is a jungle and that morally man is lower than the beasts,"[40] which one would expect of the anomic man who sees society as unpredictable, and life as meaningless and futile, as suggested in Chapter Five.

We further see him fulfilling the anomic attitude (described in the previous chapter) that there is no one that can be depended on for social and psychological support: "The crueler the tyrant, the greater the world's praise . . . . Mankind loves the murderer. . . . What sort of world was this where the order of things was continual murdering, looting and persecution and where at the same time the air was filled with phrases

about justice, freedom and love?"[41] Here, too, we see Asa's attitude that life is meaningless.

Because of his overwhelming anxiety, he sensed a void in himself which he did not know how to fill: "He felt a longing to pray--but to whom should he pray? The divine laws would not be altered for his sake."[42] Thus, we also see his inability to relate to an object of devotion which was suggested in Chapter One as a necessity for a healthy personality.

We see evidence of his normlessness in his inability to accept family responsibility. When his mother had to come to Warsaw, his grandfather wrote to him asking Asa to find lodging for her, but he ignored the letters, not wanting to help in any way.[43] Soon after he married Adele, he grew tired of her, and when she became pregnant, volunteered for the army, again to escape family responsibility.[44]

As suggested in Chapter Five, he is the anomic man who is isolated, demoralized, and lacks both social structure and cultural norms. Asa knew there was a set morality in which he had once believed, but could not seem to follow its precepts. "How many times had he sworn to hold fast to the ten commandments . . . . Instead he was carrying on a love affair with a married woman."[45] The married woman was Hadassah. After much fighting and pain, Adele gives Asa a divorce. But even marriage to Hadassah does not bring happiness to him,[46] for he becomes unfaithful to her and has an affair with yet another woman.[47] Finally Asa tells Abram that he realizes he isn't a family man and should never have married.[48]

For Asa Heshel, the story never changed; he remained the alienated and anomic man, not being able to change when he realized what his life was. His existence still consisted of "starvation, dingy rooms, idle

dreams, useless books. He still had neither profession, nor plans; neither real love for anybody, nor responsibility. He looked tired and sad. His eyes were red, as if he had spent sleepless nights . . . he was insane . . . without a God, without a goal, without a skill! It's all the same thing under different names: impatience, boredom, cruelty, bashfulness, laziness."[49]

Toward the end of the book, Asa realized his situation: "I'm killing myself . . . there's no doubt about it. But why, why? Because I have no faith. That minimum of faith without which one cannot exist."[50]

Adele, too, is alienated. Even before she marries Asa, she had been bored with life and regretted certain actions. "She was tired of reading books, tired of thinking of her father, who had died too soon, of the Brody love affair that she had broken off out of pride, and of her entire uneventful life. She regretted now that she had been so sharp with the homeless youth from Tereshpol Minor [Asa, whom she initially rejected] and that she needlessly irritated Abram and Dacha."[51]

But her life grew worse after her marriage to Asa. Adele wrote her mother that, in two years of marriage, she had little but misery. She lived in poverty and Asa would not allow her to have friends. His lack of ambition and his new affair with Hadassah had broken her.[52]

Hadassah, like Adele, exhibited the attitude that life was passing her by. She was also unhappy independently of Asa. She once wrote in her diary: "What is the purpose of my life? If I don't overcome my empty pride, I may just as well die. Dear God, teach me humility."[53]

It is not surprising that Hadassah could not find happiness in her first marriage to Fishel, for she was alienated from the system: "I'll never get married . . . . Marriage is a mockery. The whole thing is

false."[54] Against her will, Hadassah consents to marry Fishel, but feels that she has gone back on all her principles, and will henceforth be living a dead life.[55] Even her wedding is as she predicts--a farce.[56]

Hadassah eventually made contact with Asa,[57] began an affair which turned her family against her,[58] and forced Fishel to divorce her.[59] But being part of the anomic setting, she still looked forward to little, and even what she did anticipate with joy always turned out to be a disaster.[60]

Thus, we see the family Moskat filled with vice, aimlessness, agony, and despair. The family, and those related to the family, are for the most part lost souls, firmly rooted in nothing. The mood of the book is best summarized by the last line: "Death is the Messiah. That's the real truth."[61]

Similar to Isaac Bashevis Singer's The Family Moskat, is his two-volume work--in the original Yiddish, one novel--The Manor and The Estate. The main character, Calman Jacoby, was an average pious man at the beginning of the story, married to a pious wife. He was led away from the spiritual life to anomy and alienation by the lure of money. At first he was not aware of the change, but soon, he found his wife and daughters involved in playing the role of the wealthy man's family, and was soon caught in the pursuit of wealth, rather than God.

"Calman soon discovered that it is as difficult for a rich man to be parsimonious as it is for a poor man to be extravagant. . . . With a zeal that astounded him, Zelda [his wife] and the girls began to redecorate the house. . . . New clothes were needed too . . . Calman scarcely had time to reproach his family for the prodigality, however, for he went to bed late and was up at cockcrow."[62] His busy schedule, however, had

less and less to do with obeying God's laws, but more and more to do with principles of business. "Calman now understood the meaning of the Talmudic saying: The more property, the more anxiety. . . . On several occasions he missed his twilight prayers, but made up for his dereliction by repeating the Eighteen Benedictions during the evening prayer."[63]

We see Calman continue to grow away from a known, respectable system. He replaced God with money. His expression turned from concern with his family to trying to buy their love, but the family rejected this idea.[64] In anger his wife reprimanded him, "What good is your money to me? It won't bring me comfort on earth or grace later. . . . You think you're a husband. Are you ever here? You're always away."[65] Here we see the start of Calman's alienation from his family. He began to exhibit the phenomenon described in Chapter Six of becoming a mystery to himself, unable to answer the question: to what purpose? "The more Calman thought about it, the more he came to believe that he was the captive and not the master of his fortune. Actually, his wife was right. What good did his wealth do him?"[66]

His alienation increased while he continued to make the wrong moves. When his wife Zelda died, Calman decided that his sexual appetite had never been satisfied (another symptom of anomia), so he chose as his second wife Clara. She was far from religious or pious, but thoroughly excited him.[67] "Usually these men spoke to Calman with respect, for they . . . owed him their living. But now that he was about to become Clara's husband, he had fallen even in their eyes. From their frivolity, Calman guessed that they looked on the whole thing as a Purim prank."[68] Even Calman knew that he was wrong. He felt sure that his wife had not gone to the mikveh before the wedding, and was scared to eat the food at the ban-

quet because his wife had made the arrangements.[69]

The anomia continued to increase. Finally, he was overcome with guilt and disgust for his life. "'Father in heaven, what kind of filth am I walking in?' Calman cried clutching his head. 'How can this have happened? I am after all the son of God-fearing people.' He was unclean. His home was a bawdy house. No, he was not worthy to utter holy words. Calman put his phylacteries away."[70]

As might be expected with the anomic man, in the end, his life completely fell apart. He decided he had to divorce Clara.[71] He reflected back on his life. His one son had completely deserted tradition, was self-centered, and took advantage of all he could. He had buried two of his four daughters. He knew that his only chance for happiness was to return to the tradition: study, prayer and charity. But he was only partially able to accomplish his repentance.[72]

Clara was also alienated and felt that her life goals were receding. She was not only a creature in need of a structure, but a very lonely woman. Her life had never been pleasant before she met Calman; he was but a compromise for her. "Men would start off hot in pursuit of her and then suddenly lose interest. . . . When she attended the gymnasium she'd had crushes on her teachers and on a number of boys, but had always been rejected. It was these failures that accounted for her marriage to so crude a man as Calman [had become]. Not being able to get love, she had settled for money."[73]

Being anomic, she had only one thought, finally to find happiness, but it always seemed to be just around the corner. "Clara lay awake for a long time. The clock seemed to her to be ticking away at a feverish pace. Her pulse was beating just as quickly. She couldn't stop planning,

wanting, hoping. It was as if her blood were boiling within her. 'What's happening to me? Why am I so driven? And what am I afraid of?' she asked herself. She knew the answer; obstacles always littered the path to her happiness."[74] Her anxiety led her to compulsions to try to fill the void in her life, as suggested in Chapter Six.

Her search for happiness continued with other men, Mirkin[75] and Zipkin,[76] but each of these affairs ended with few positive results. In the end, she had to admit "that everything she did must meet with failure."[77] For although she does marry Zipkin, her life with him is also a disaster.

Alexander Zipkin was also on a mad search for happiness, as most people with such unhealthy personalities. He lacked structure, goals, morals, and responsibility. "He considers himself an atheist,"[78] and being normless, seemed to have little guilt over using people and making statements that he knew were outright lies. Being without a system or conscience, Alexander considered marriage "a barbaric rite and absolutely out of tune with the times. But that had not prevented him from telling Sabina that he looked forward to the day when they would stand together under the wedding canopy. He made promises he could not keep, had borrowed money he could not repay."[79] He was forced into marriage with Sabina, but continued an affair with Clara. He oscillated between the two, and eventually divorced Sabina to marry Clara.

At times, in his loneliness, he would realize what he was doing, but as many such ill-adjusted men, recognizing the symptoms of anomy and alienation was not enough. "Tears came to his eyes. It wasn't because he loved Clara. But someone still wanted him. . . . 'I am a deplorable egoist,' Zipkin confessed to himself. 'I don't think enough about other people. That's why things have turned out as they have.'"[80] His last

attempt at happiness was an escape to America, but there too, he failed miserably.[81]

Calman's children also displayed unhealthy traits. One daughter, Shaindel, spent the early part of her life in the pursuit of food to compensate for her unhappiness[82]--a characteristic of anomia as suggested earlier. Because she was unable to resolve her anxiety, she spent her later life in asylums for the mentally disturbed. Her anomic posture caused her unhappiness to become unbearable.[83]

Shaindel's husband, Ezriel, lost faith while he was attempting to get a secular education. He adopted the anomic philosophy that the world is "a play of blind forces . . . matter and energy . . . the survival of the fittest. Justice? No, justice is impossible in such a universe. If there is no God, there is no sin. It's all a jungle."[84]

Although Ezriel became a psychiatrist, he knew that his loss of belief in God in the academic chase had greatly harmed him,[85] and decreased his ability to accept anxiety. Despite the fact that he "allegedly cured others . . . he was obsessed with phobias, worries, superstitions."[86] He knew, too, that his anomia and other problems were due to his loss of structure and tradition. "To the Slavs, Christianity is progress. But where is our progress? We had a spiritual life, now we are spiritually naked."[87]

A second daughter of Calman, Miriam Liebe, converted to Christianity and ran off with a non-Jew, Lucian. But neither of them retained religious tradition of any sort, and thereby became alienated. Lucian treated Miriam Liebe poorly, and when Clara saw her years later, the results of her anomia were physically visible. "Yes, it was Miriam Liebe. But she was so changed that Clara had difficulty recognizing her. In a few years

she had become old and emaciated. Her cheeks were pale and hollow; her eyes, sunk deep in their sockets, were underlined with heavy shadows. Lusterless, they were the eyes of a person who has grown tired of life."[88]

The last of Calman's children, Sasha, had little choice but to grow up anomic, for besides being in the atmosphere of anomie, he was given no training, no guidance, no structure, and little love. Even while Sasha was a boy, Calman could not control him. "One afternoon he set fire to a haystack. That day Calman spanked him. The boy shrieked, 'You dirty Jew' and kicked his father."[89] As suggested in Chapter One, one who cannot create, will destroy; we see in the above quote such a problem. Sasha was without an object of devotion; he had no belief in God,[90] and had the typical anomic traits of abusing food, alcohol and women.[91] Family and marriage were out of the question for him; he had learned too well from his own family. "I'll never marry!" Sasha would say, "Rather than have someone sleep with my wife, I prefer to sleep with someone else's."[92] His life, too, was meaningless except for the excitement he found through danger.[93]

Israel Joshua Singer gives us a picture of the alienated man, who, as stated in Chapter Five, is involved in a frantic flight into escape activities, and who has a craving for more money, power, and prestige. Simcha Meyer Ashkenazi is Singer's main character in The Brothers Ashkenazi.

As a youth, Simcha had been brilliant, and often did not have to study. It was thought by all that he would become a great rabbi. But Simcha was a great deceiver. Underneath his pious façade was already growing his desire for riches. Although he was the student in the family, he resented his brother Jacob Bunim in the early years, for Jacob was tall, husky and well liked. All Simcha could do was study.

His life began to deteriorate emotionally and spiritually when he married Dinah. According to the custom of the day, it was a pre-arranged marriage. Despite the fact that she went along with tradition and married him, she hated Simcha and often showed him her contempt. True, she fed him, had his clothes ready, and submitted to sexual duties, but all without emotion, affection, and often without conversation. Even her pregnancy, which Simcha was sure would change everything, had no effect on their marriage.[94] This situation served only to further alienate Simcha, so that in later years, he had little to do with either Dinah or his son Ignatz.[95]

Simcha had only one goal, one pursuit in life. He wanted to be the dictator of the textile factories,[96] "king of the Lodz industrialists."[97] "Whatever he did was subservient to one aim, the acquisition of power, the concentration of wealth in his own hands . . . ."[98]

We see Simcha's moral structure give way as his goal of wealth became first in his life. An example of this is that Simcha forced out and replaced his father as manager of a factory.[99] His method of attack in climbing the ladder of success was to find unsuspecting business men and trap them into turning over their factories to him.[100] In this attack we see the anomic man, for he felt that any degradation and loss of self-respect was worth his goal.[101]

Simcha turned good factories into excellent money makers by decreasing the quality of workmanship, by oppressing the workers, and lowering the quality of materials in order to save money.[102] He even divorced one wife to marry another who could buy him a factory.[103] His business enterprise came first and the poor and wretched were only to be avoided, not helped.[104]

Having lost his rootedness and structure for a sane life, Judaism became a plague for Simcha. Before his father died, he changed his name to Max, shaved off his earlocks and beard, and avoided, as much as he could, any identification with Jewish tradition. He resented the fact that his passport carried his old name of Simcha Meyer, rather than Max, and that he was listed as Jewish, for he hated this reminder of his past.[105]

But as usually happens with the alienated, anomic man, all of Simcha's success never brought him happiness.[106] He began to feel the emptiness in his life, but it was not until the Russian revolution humbled him that he was struck with the turmoil he had created in his life. "During this time Max Ashkenazi underwent a [temporary] religious conversion, and remembered the God whom he had forgotten in the rush of business activities. He even went to synagogue every day, and at night, when he lay down to sleep, he said the night prayer which his father, and his father's father had said before him from time immemorial. It was only God who could help him now, for in His hand was the fate of every living being."[107] Simcha decided that he would once again be human, "It would be different from now on! A new life of love, comradeship, mutual help, joys shared together, and if it came to that, sorrow."[108] This was one of the few happy times in his life.

But Simcha could not fulfill his promise. His rooting and structure was too shallow. The family he had broken apart did not seem to want to be put together again, or at least not as fast as Simcha wished,[109] and once he found a new opportunity to be a booming businessman, the vows he had made became just so much wind.[110]

Sholem Asch's main character in Three Cities, Zachary Mirkin, was the product of a grandfather who assimilated to become rich, and a father

who converted to become secure.[111] Mirkin is also a good example of the alienated and anomic man. His mother died early in his life, so that he was raised by an alcoholic tutor and the maid. He developed an obsession to find a substitute mother to overcome his loneliness.[112] Only when Zachary was an adolescent, did he find out he was Jewish, but his father was angry that the maid had told him.[113]

Not only had he lost his mother through death, and his father because of business, but Zachary had a difficult time making friends.[114] This alienation led him to an abnormal affection for his boss's wife.[115] The pretext was that he was in love with the daughter, yet Olga, the mother, was his dream.[116] It eventually led to a sexual encounter over which he carried great guilt.[117] Later in the book, Mirkin again became entrapped in a similar incident, although with a non-sexual involvement; this became but a part of the larger pattern of his becoming dominated by women who gave him the love and security of a mother.[118]

In his attempt to establish an identity, Zachary moved from his home town and established a life-long pattern of migration.[119] Zachary did not consider himself wanted in the first place, a product of not having a positive status. "I regard myself as a gnat or a leaf cast into the world."[120] His opinion of not only himself, but of the world, reflected the anomic pessimism of a meaningless life: "I don't regard the wretched span of life as an end in itself, but simply as a short and narrow stream that issues in death, a stream that we happen to have fallen into and that flows into an infinite and eternal sea of nothingness."[121]

He was not able to overcome his anxiety, and in his periods of depression demonstrated the anomic characteristic of being driven: "Oh God, what dark powers there are within me! Whither am I being driven? I am a

sick man with sick visions; my body is saturated like a sponge with morbid fancies. A feeble sick creature, the heir of unknown forebears who have bequeathed me a morbid tendency towards all that is unsound and horrible. . . . I escape from one net by running away, only to entangle myself in another."[122]

Zachary wanted to feel like a Jew, but somehow could not find the path to identification. "He felt completely alien to them. So far as he was concerned, they were a book with seven seals. 'I am a complete stranger,' he said to himself, cursing his education, his past life, his isolation. It seemed as if he, Zachary Mirkin, were a nation in himself, unique and self-endangered; he had no kin. He had lost his own world, and the world into which he was now seeking to thrust himself would have none of him. For ever and a day, he seemed condemned to stand alone, to be attached to nothing, to belong nowhere."[123]

To fill his emptiness, this alienated, anomic man tried finding a mother, as discussed above, attempted suicide, but did not succeed,[124] and supported the revolution, which proved to be a false cause.[125] But Zachary was fortunate; unlike the others who could not climb out of the mire, in the end he did become rooted back in a small town in which he had lived during his travels, settled down, and found a system upon which he could depend. In this setting, he finally overcame most of his anomia and alienation.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VI

[1]Sholom Aleichem, Collected Stories of Sholom Aleichem: The Old Country, trans. Frances Butwin and Julius Butwin (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1946), pp. 51-63.

[2]Ibid., p. 271.

[3]Ibid., p. 57.

[4]Soma Morgenstern, The Testament of the Lost Son, trans. Jacob Sloan and Maurice Samuel (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1950), p. 78.

[5]Ibid., pp. 6-45.

[6]Jacob Picard, The Marked One, trans. Ludwig Lewisohn (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1956), pp. 85-99.

[7]Ibid., pp. 7-42.

[8]Isaac Bashevis Singer, The Family Moskat, trans. A. H. Gross (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1950), p. 551.

[9]Ibid., pp. 202-204.

[10]Ibid., p. 33.

[11]Ibid., p. 120.

[12]Ibid., pp. 104, 111, 138, 363.

[13]Ibid., pp. 51, 128.

[14]Ibid., p. 124.

[15]Ibid., p. 132.

[16]Ibid., p. 143.

[17]Ibid., p. 141.

[18]Ibid., p. 364.

[19]Ibid., p. 307.

[20]Ibid., p. 119.

[21]Ibid., p. 115.

[22]Ibid., p. 39.

[23]Ibid., p. 113.

[24]Ibid., p. 119.

[25]Ibid., p. 125.

[26]Ibid., pp. 155-156.

[27]Ibid., p. 488.

[28]Ibid., p. 498.

[29]Ibid., pp. 364-365.

[30]Ibid., p. 154.

[31]Ibid., pp. 194-196.

[32]Ibid., pp. 268-269.

[33]Ibid., p. 480.

[34]Ibid., p. 483.

[35]Ibid., p. 29.

[36]Ibid., p. 28.

[37]Ibid., p. 99.

[38]Ibid., p. 209.

[39]Ibid., p. 28.

[40]Ibid., p. 160.

[41]Ibid., pp. 98-99.

[42]Ibid., p. 39.

[43]Ibid., p. 275.

[44]Ibid., p. 332.

[45]Ibid., p. 231.

[46]Ibid., p. 470.

[47]Ibid., pp. 492-531.

[48]Ibid., p. 534.

[49]Ibid., pp. 417-418.

[50]Ibid., p. 536.

[51]Ibid., p. 52.

[52]Ibid., pp. 224-226.

[53]Ibid., p. 94.

[54]Ibid., p. 212.

[55]Ibid., p. 213.

[56]Ibid., p. 216.

[57]Ibid., p. 221.

[58]Ibid., p. 420.

[59]Ibid., p. 346.

[60]Ibid., p. 484.

[61]Ibid., p. 611.

[62]Isaac Bashevis Singer, The Manor (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1968), p. 15.

[63]Ibid., p. 16.

[64]Ibid., p. 50.

[65]Ibid.

[66]Ibid., p. 52.

[67]Ibid., pp. 133-134.

[68]Ibid., p. 184.

[69]Ibid., pp. 186-187.

[70]Ibid., p. 300.

[71]Ibid., p. 418.

[72]Isaac Bashevis Singer, The Estate (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969), p. 324.

[73]Singer, Manor, pp. 274-275.

[74]Ibid., pp. 265-266.

[75]Ibid., pp. 311-314.

[76]Singer, Estate, pp. 147-148.

[77]Ibid., p. 179.

[78]Singer, Manor, p. 318.

[79]Ibid.

[80]Ibid., p. 334.

[81]Singer, Estate, p. 105.

[82]Singer, Manor, p. 195.

[83]Singer, Estate, p. 195.

[84]Singer, Manor, p. 192.

[85]Ibid., p. 286.

[86]Singer, Estate, p. 39.

[87]Ibid., p. 39.

[88]Singer, Manor, p. 277.

[89]Ibid., p. 261.

[90]Singer, Estate, p. 84.

[91]Ibid., p. 87.

[92]Ibid., p. 91.

[93]Ibid., p. 155.

[94]Israel Joshua Singer, The Brothers Ashkenazi, trans. Maurice Samuel (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1936), pp. 171-175.

[95]Ibid., pp. 466-467.

[96]Ibid., p. 350.

[97]Ibid., p. 463.

[98]Ibid., p. 487.

[99]Ibid., pp. 237-242.

[100]Ibid., p. 219.

[101]Ibid.

[102]Ibid., p. 292.

[103]Ibid., pp. 399-402.

[104]Ibid., p. 404.

[105]Ibid., p. 337.

[106]Ibid., p. 466.

[107]Ibid., p. 548.

[108]Ibid., p. 112.

[109]Ibid., p. 628.

[110]Ibid., p. 625.

[111]Sholem Asch, Three Cities, trans. Edwin Muir and Willa Muir (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1933), pp. 51-55.

[112]Ibid., pp. 61-62.

[113]Ibid., pp. 62-67.

[114]Ibid., p. 72.

[115]Ibid., p. 95.

[116]Ibid., p. 127.

[117]Ibid., pp. 199-207.

[118]Ibid., pp. 766-769.

[119]Ibid., pp. 192-195.

[120]Ibid., p. 174.

[121]Ibid., p. 175.

[122]Ibid., pp. 325-327.

[123]Ibid., p. 328.

[124]Ibid., p. 329.

[125]Ibid., p. 451.

CHAPTER VII

SOLOMON MAIMON

In Chapter Five we developed the socio-psychological basis of the unhealthy personality. In Chapter Six we examined a number of fictional characters raised outside the shtetl milieu. In this chapter, we will briefly review the life of a non-fictitious work, the autobiography of the historic eighteenth-century philosopher, Solomon Maimon.

Maimon, born into the shtetl setting, was raised in a strong tradition that he could not accept. Exposed to poverty and prejudice, he fled the shtetl-type life and himself, only to bring himself down to destruction because of his resulting alienation and anomia.

In Chapter Three, it was suggested that poverty had an effect on the breakdown of shtetl values. Early in life, Maimon saw poverty, but felt that his family was at least partially responsible for the problem. "Grandfather should have been able not only to maintain his household but to accumulate wealth. But the inefficient organization of the country and his own lack of even rudimentary knowledge of the economic utilization of land put great obstacles in his way."[1] From this quotation we also see the backwardness of Eastern Europe.

Likewise, in Chapter Three, along with the suggestion that the general atmosphere of Eastern Europe contributed to the break-up of the shtetl, it was stated that the "total institution" feeling also affected it. In Maimon's autobiography, we see the "total institution" type of education. He discussed how his father thwarted his desire for the study

of art! "From childhood on I had inclination and skill for drawing. . . . My father admired my skill but at the same time rebuked me, saying: 'Do you wish to become a painter? You must study Talmud and become a rabbi. Whoso understands the Talmud understands all.'"[2] But it was not only art from which he was deterred, rather from all non-Talmudic study: "In his study my father had a cupboard filled with books, but he forbade me to read any but the Talmud. But prohibitions were of no avail. . . . I possessed a fair command of Hebrew, and found more pleasure was to be found in some of these books than in the Talmud."[3]

His education in the Jewish schools was not too pleasing to him either; one rabbi told him that "A youngster must not be too inquisitive; he must see to it merely that he understands his lesson, and not overwhelm his teacher with questions."[4] His brother was exposed to the wretched kind of teacher that every student despised. "This man was the terror of all young people, the scourge of God. He treated his charges with incredible cruetly, flogged them till blood came, even for the slightest offense, and not infrequently tore off their ears or beat their eyes out."[5]

It is understandable, then, that many of the youths wanted to escape this "total institution" environment. "Here the children are imprisoned from morning to night, and have not an hour to themselves, except only an afternoon on Fridays and at the New Moon. As the children are doomed in the bloom of youth to such an inferno of a school, it may be easily imagined with what joy and rapture they look forward to their release."[6] --a suggestion of the "release binge fantasy" described in Chapter Three.

We see Maimon experience the feeling of being a "stranger," for it was not only the poverty and poor education that affected him, but also the prejudice and poor treatment of the Jews. For his grandfather, the

situation became unbearable and unworkable. "My grandfather was therefore obliged to quit his dwelling-place in mid-winter with his whole family, and, without knowledge where he should settle again, to wander about from place to place."[7]

As Maimon began his own family, he came closer to the anomic and alienated state. The domineering wife, as suggested as a shtetl problem in Chapter Three, was encountered by Maimon. "But I was not only under the slipper of my wife, but--what was very much worse--under the lash of my mother-in-law."[8] His desire for secular knowledge was thwarted also. "My life in Poland from my marriage to my emigration, which period embraces the springtime of my existence, was a series of manifold miseries. All means for the promotion of my development were wanting, and as a necessary corollary, my potentialities were aimlessly dissipated."[9] --suggesting the anomic characteristic of life's goals receding.

He is a good example of Marx's alienated worker. "My temporal circumstances were disheartening. I was obliged to support a whole family by teaching, by correcting proofs of the Holy Scriptures, and by other work of a similar nature. For a long time I could only sigh in vain for the satisfaction of my natural inclination."[10]

He found those for whom he worked to be disgusting. "My first position as family tutor was an hour's distance from my home. The family was that of a miserable farmer in a still more miserable village; and my salary was five thalers in Polish money. The poverty, ignorance, and crudeness which prevailed in this house were indescribable. . . . It may be easily imagined how wretched my condition here must have been. Brandy became my sole comfort, and made me forget all my misery. . . . My other positions as tutor were more or less similar."[11] It is here that Maimon

shows the first symptom of alcoholism, an anomic characteristic.

Solomon Maimon found his life goals continuing to recede, for the prejudices of both Jews and non-Jews were an obstacle to his education. "In order to gratify my desire of scientific knowledge, the only means available was to learn foreign languages. But how was I to begin? To study Polish or Latin with a Catholic teacher was for me impossible, on the one hand, because the prejudices of my own people prohibited all languages but Hebrew and all sciences but the Talmud and the vast array of its commentators [total institution], and on the other hand, because prejudices of Catholics would not allow them to give instruction in such subjects to a Jew [stranger]."[12]

He became more alienated as his attachment to Judaism decreased. This deterioration, however, was present in his early life. "In my youth I possessed a religious disposition; and as I observed much pride, quarrelsomeness, and other evil traits in most of the rabbis, I grew to dislike them on that account."[13]

Maimon turned to the "new Hasidim" for help, for he had heard that they had the answers. "It was not long, however, before I began to qualify the high opinion I had formed of this . . . whole society. I observed that their ingenious exegesis was at bottom false, and, furthermore, limited strictly to their own extravagant principles, such as the doctrine of self annihilation. . . . The whole society also displeased me not a little by their cynical spirit and the excess of their merriment."[14]

He continued to find his home town setting unbearable and became more alienated from it. "My external circumstances were steadily becoming worse. I was unwilling to adapt myself to my ordinary occupations any longer, and hence found myself everywhere out of my sphere. On the other

hand, my town afforded little means to satisfy my yearning for study of the sciences."[15] Thus he set out on a basically aimless wandering that lasted most of his life.

His travels were usually marked by poverty and pain. "Since I left Koenigsberg, about seven weeks before, I had never had a clean shirt to put on; I had been obliged to lie in stables of inns on bare straw, on which who knows how many poor travellers had lain before. Now all at once I realized my misery in its appalling magnitude."[16]

His first arrival in Berlin did much to make permanent his anomia, for he was refused permission to reside there by the Jewish Elders. "The refusal of permission to stay in Berlin came upon me like a thunderclap. . . . The ultimate object of all my hopes and wishes was all at once removed beyond my reach, just when I had seen it so near. . . . Accordingly, I took the first road that I came upon, and surrendered myself to fate."[17]

When Maimon was finally allowed, some years later, to settle in Berlin, the friends he had made, mainly through Moses Mendelssohn, rejected him. "At last Mendelssohn asked me to come and see him, whereupon he informed me of their alienation, and pointed out its causes. They complained, firstly, that I had not made up my mind to any plan of life, and had thereby rendered fruitless all their exertions in my behalf; secondly that I was trying to spread dangerous opinions and systems; and thirdly, that I was rumored to be leading a loose life, and to be much addicted to sensual pleasures."[18] His friends' complaints about him suggest a man who severely suffers from anomia.

Looking for a group with whom to identify, in desperation, Maimon even tried to convert to Christianity, but here too, he failed, for the

priest told him, "You are too much of a philosopher . . . to be able to become a Christian. Reason has taken the upper hand with you, and faith must accommodate itself to reason."[19]

Solomon Maimon died an alienated and anomic man. "To achieve full spiritual freedom Maimon had deliberately to cut himself off from the Jewish as from the respectable community in general. . . . When his former patrons washed their hands of him, he was given shelter on the estate of the youthful Count Adolf von Kalckreuth in Silesia, and there he philosophized and drank until he succumbed."[20]

Thus we have the story of Solomon Maimon, a man like so many men, who due to the inability of the shtetl to meet their needs, suffered from alienation and anomy. These are the people who had lost the ability to choose the blessing, and therefore were doomed to exist with the curse.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VII

[1]Solomon Maimon: An Autobiography, ed., with a preface by Moses Hadas (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), p. 3.

[2]Ibid., p. 9.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid., p. 17.

[5]Ibid., p. 11.

[6]Ibid., p. 12.

[7]Ibid., p. 15.

[8]Ibid., p. 31.

[9]Ibid., p. 33.

[10]Ibid., p. 35.

[11]Ibid., pp. 48-49.

[12]Ibid., pp. 34-35.

[13]Ibid., p. 43.

[14]Ibid., pp. 54-55.

[15]Ibid., p. 56.

[16]Ibid., p. 59.

[17]Ibid., pp. 61-62.

[18]Ibid., p. 81.

[19]Ibid., p. 90.

[20]Moses Hadas, preface to Solomon Maimon, pp. xii-xiii.

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