

- 9 Ibid., p. 24.
 10 Ibid., p. 27.
 11 Ibid., p. 28.
 12 Ibid., p. 36.
 13 Kamienny, 'Na posterunku', *Rola*, (1893), no. 14, p. 234. Similar 'discoveries' were made by many people with whom I spoke during research for my MA thesis. They also did not see the Jews as being total people. They discovered their humanity only when they became witnesses to their suffering and extermination during the Second World War. And then they discovered 'The Jews after all were also people, who wanted to live.' (A. Cała, 'Stosunek swój-obcy w kulturze ludowej', *Etnografia Polska*, vol. 26, (1983), no. 2, pp. 204-14.
 14 L. Oberlaender 'Ewolucja poglądów narodowej demokracji na sprawy żydowskie', *Miesięcznik Żydowski*, 1934, no. 2, p. 11.
 15 Ibid., p. 12.
 16 A. Hertz, *Żydzi w kulturze polskiej*, (Paris, 1960), p. 245, 248.
 17 Ibid., p. 249.
 18 L. Oberlaender, *Ewolucja . . .*, op. cit., pp. 16-18.
 19 The old generation of peasants still thinks in this manner today, understanding it in traditional categories. The extermination of the Jews during the Second World War was an interference in the order of the world created by God (and such interference was impossible without his cooperation). It was for many proof of an impending apocalypse (see A. Cała, 'Stosunek swój-obcy . . .', op. cit.).

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THE SECULAR APPROPRIATION OF HASIDISM BY AN EAST EUROPEAN JEWISH INTELLECTUAL: DUBNOW, RENAN, AND THE BESHT

Robert M. Seltzer

A survey of the changing attitude of modernized Jews to Hasidism might begin with Solomon Maimon, that 18th-century Kantian, who in his youth had personal contact with the Hasidic movement at a time when it was beginning its spectacular growth in the southern districts of Poland and the Ukraine. Maimon provides information of great historical value about Hasidism and offers some acute speculations concerning its appeal. But there is no gainsaying his disdain for a pietism so contrary to the canons of reason, as reason was understood by the 18th-century Enlightenment. In the chapter of his autobiography dealing with the attractiveness of the movement and its leadership, Maimon writes:

The fact that this sect spread so rapidly, and that the new doctrine met with so much approbation, may be very easily explained. The natural inclination to idleness and a life of speculation on the part of the majority, who are destined from birth to study, the dryness and unfruitfulness of rabbinical studies, the great burden of the ceremonial law which the new doctrine promised to lighten, the tendency to fanaticism and the love of the marvellous, which are nourished by this doctrine, these are sufficient to make this phenomenon intelligible.¹

It is an overstatement to say that the *Haskalah* attitude to Hasidism was totally vitriolic, as I shall show later, but denunciation of the *Hasidim* as superstitious obscurantists and of the rebbes as charlatans and scoundrels was certainly the norm in maskilic circles. Another example of a critic of the Hasidic movement, who knew something of it at first hand, was the well-known Galician *maskil* Joseph Perl, whose in-laws were *Hasidim*.

Around 1816 Perl took up the cudgels of the *Kulturkampf*, of the sons of light versus the sons of darkness, by writing an influential anti-Hasidic work, *Über das Wesen der Sekte Chassidim*.² In 1819 Perl wrote his well-known satire, *Megalleh Temirin* (The Revealer of Secrets), one of the most delightful and cruel works of *Haskalah* literature. In *Megalleh Temirin*, Israel Zinberg notes, the *Hasidim* of Volhynia and Galicia and their rabbis are portrayed in only one colour – ‘pitch black’.³ In these writings, and in Perl’s later satire *Bohen Tsaddik* (The Test of the Righteous), the founders of the Hasidic movement are depicted as cheats and frauds and the movement portrayed as the main obstacle to the beneficent spread of the bright rays of modern knowledge over the benighted Jewish Pale of Settlement. Similar anti-Hasidic views were expressed by another Galician Hebrew satirist, Isaac Erter, for whom the Hasidic movement is merely an exercise in folly and falsehood, its leaders being vile swindlers and avaricious deceivers.⁴

There was, however, a minority of *maskilim* who showed a certain degree of sympathetic insight into the contribution of *Hasidim* to the spiritual well-being of the Jewish people in Eastern Europe. Jacob Samuel Bick of Brody, a Galician merchant and *maskil* of the early 19th century, criticized the enlightened for refusing to recognize that Hasidic leaders had effected a spiritual revolution among thousands of Jews. For Bick, some of the Hasidic leaders were true ‘lovers of Israel’, devoting themselves to the service of their poor brethren.⁵ Also willing to admit that there were positive aspects of the Hasidic movement was Abraham Kohn, who became district rabbi of Lwów in 1844. In his *Briefe aus Galizien*, written in 1847–8, Kohn viewed Hasidism as a justified protest against the arrogance of those scholars who despised the masses and were concerned only with their talmudic expertise. Hasidism’s very childlikeness was meritorious, because simple trust in God served to make bearable the all too miserable life of the Jewish people in Eastern Europe. And, Kohn concludes, Hasidism’s precedent as a popular reform movement did eventually pave the way for more rational projects of Jewish reform that the enlightened sought to inspire.⁶

Similar examples could be cited from the Russian *Haskalah*. Bitterly critical of Hasidism were Isaac Baer Levinsohn’s anti-Hasidic pamphlets,⁷ Isaac Joel Linetski’s novel *Dos Poylishe Yingl* (The Polish Lad),⁸ and Abraham Baer Gottlober’s assertion that Hasidism was the greatest enemy of Enlightenment and progress for the Jews of Eastern Europe.⁹ Quite different was Eliezer Zweifel’s pioneering study, *Shalom al Yisrael* (Peace on Israel). Zweifel, who taught the Talmud for many years at the Zhitomir rabbinical seminary, was a moderate *maskil* who wanted to effect peace between the *Hasidim* and the non-Hasidic traditionalists, the Mitnaggdim. Although disjointed because of lengthy extracts from Hasidic and other writings, Zweifel’s book is the first serious historical

investigation of Hasidism; it stands out as a bold effort to appreciate the movement for what it actually stood for, rather than for its being the opposite of what its critics stood for.¹⁰

Before turning to the main figure who revolutionized the treatment of Hasidism in Jewish historiography – Simon Dubnow – we should glance in passing at Heinrich Graetz’s views on the subject, because they epitomize the negative image of the movement in 19th-century Jewish historical writing. According to Graetz:

It seems remarkable that, at the time when Mendelssohn declared rational thought to be the essence of Judaism, and founded, as it were, a widely-extended order of enlightened men, another banner was unfurled, whose adherents announced the grossest superstition to be the fundamental principle of Judaism and formed an order of wonder-seeking confederates. . . . History in its generative power is as manifold and puzzling as nature. It produces healing herbs and poisonous plants, lovely flowers and hideous parasites in close proximity. Reason and unreason seemed to have entered into a covenant to shatter the gigantic structure of Talmudic Judaism.¹¹

Yet Graetz does assign a certain legitimacy to Hasidism in the dialectic of Jewish history. Earlier in the same paragraph he remarks that Hasidism perhaps ‘hides within itself a germ of a peculiar kind which, still developing cannot be defined’. This enigmatic Hegelian allusion can serve as a prophetic oracle for the role that Hasidism was to play in the thought of the modernized Jewish intelligentsia of Eastern Europe toward the end of the 19th century. And Simon Dubnow played a pivotal role in the emergence of this new image of Hasidism.

Dubnow’s first version of his lifelong interest in reconstructing the early stages of the movement was published in the Russian-Jewish periodical *Voskhod* in instalments between 1888 and 1893.¹² (A much revised version was completed by Dubnow in 1930 and published soon after in German by the Jüdische Verlag in Berlin and in Hebrew by Dvir in Tel Aviv.¹³) He was in his late twenties and early thirties when he produced the Russian version; much of the purple prose, so indicative of Dubnow’s state of mind in the late 1880s and early 1890s, was eliminated by him as youthful excess in the later editions.¹⁴ When he undertook this project, Dubnow was far from being a professional historian. He wrote essays, book reviews, and social criticism for the Russian-language Jewish press, primarily the monthly *Voskhod*, perhaps the most influential of serious Jewish 19th-century journals in the Russian language. In his pieces of the early 1880s he expressed the typically negative *Haskalah* opinion that the *Hasidim* were

a major obstacle to the satisfactory modernization of the Jewish masses. But in the mid-eighties he came increasingly to see himself as a historian, not a journalist. Thus in 1891 he published his well-known call for a Russian-Jewish historical society (the Hebrew version was published in 1892), and soon after he formulated his first attempt at a philosophy of Jewish history which departs in significant ways from the model of his distant mentor, Heinrich Graetz.¹⁵ His first serious historical undertaking was to assemble primary sources on the origins of the Hasidic movement. His idea of research was modelled on Graetz and the other figures of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*; his ideal of synthesis was modelled on the writings of Leo Tolstoy and above all Ernest Renan.

In his autobiography, Dubnow describes in some detail the influence on him at that time of Leo Tolstoy and Ernest Renan. His attraction to them was a result, he said, of his disenchantment with Comtean Positivism, whose Russian version he had absorbed during his period of rebellion in late adolescence. Tolstoy and Renan represented for him a fusion of the complex and refined with the simple and elemental.¹⁶ In Tolstoy, Dubnow thought he found a soul searching for a new faith that would link the finite and the infinite through an awareness of the life process expressed in all humanity, a pantheism not just of physical nature but of human history. Dubnow called this position 'historism'.¹⁷

The impact of Renan on Dubnow was even more decisive. In his autobiography, Dubnow explains that, like himself, Renan was raised in a traditional milieu, made the transition to 'scientific philosophy' (i.e. Positivism) at a certain stage in his life, and then became disenchanted with it.¹⁸ Dubnow labelled the mature Renan 'the Ecclesiastes of the nineteenth century' because of his yearning for lost faith, his disillusioned agnosticism and the painful struggle in his soul between doubt and the demands of reason – agonies that resounded in Dubnow's heart.¹⁹ In the mid-1880s, Dubnow read the first volume of Renan's *History of the Jewish People*, which brought him to 'ecstasy'. He found especial solace in Renan's dictum that 'Religion and philosophical systems may lie, but religion and philosophy do not lie in themselves. . . . They have lived in the hearts of men and you cannot drive them out from there.'²⁰ Dubnow decided there was no need to drive them out from there, because they were not to be viewed as true or false in themselves but as ways of providing truthful insight into men's needs and feelings. Armed with this doctrine, Dubnow found he could remain aloof from positive religion and Jewish observance, yet could appreciate the value and beauties of religion. Specifically, after passing through this Koheleth-like phase in his development, he could contemplate Hasidism from sufficient historical distance so that it no longer threatened his hard-won freedom to develop his own individuality.

In 1888 Dubnow was still living in his home town of Mstislavl, where he

enjoyed a dubious reputation as a free-thinker who did not observe Jewish ritual on principle. Known throughout the district, he was visited that year by the father-superior of a nearby monastery who sought to convert the Jewish doubter to Christianity. Dubnow claimed in his autobiography that he told the priest, 'I relate to all religions as an investigator and not as a participant.'²¹ Such neutrality constituted a hard-won resolution of the inner conflict between 'mind' and 'heart', inasmuch as it enabled him to hold on to a secular, rationalist world view and acknowledge the loyalty felt to Yiddishkeit. This resolution enabled him to examine a profoundly religious figure such as the Besht with sympathy and even a certain admiration. Thus Renan provided Dubnow with the key to how Hasidism could be acknowledged as a movement of positive value in Jewish history, a subject of special interest to free-thinking Jews who saw themselves as cultured Europeans of modern mien.

The influence of Renan's *History of Christianity* is quite evident in the structure of Dubnow's *History of Hasidism* as well as in some of Dubnow's solutions to problems of interpretation. Like Renan, Dubnow opened with a discussion of the social and intellectual background of a movement that can be traced to a founder known only for a long time through oral sources which retained the character of legend or saga. Applying Renan's statement that such pious biographies have a historical core, Dubnow stripped the life of the Baal Shem Tov, as recorded in the *Shivhei ha-Besht*, of its supernatural elements to reveal a simple, humble man who loved nature, especially the forests of the Carpathian mountains; a man who had immense affection for the common people and disdain for the proud, aloof scholars of his time and who preached a lofty doctrine of religious pantheism and universal brotherhood.²² (Incidentally, love of the forest and mountains was another reason that the Besht appealed to Dubnow.) Dubnow's Besht, like Renan's Jesus, believed that the purpose of religion was individual self-perfection; that the moral, rather than the intellectual, was the essence of Judaism.²³ Renan and Dubnow assumed that the founders of their respective religions were rebels against dry formalism and over-abundant custom: that Jesus and the Besht were men for whom simple faith was a living emotion, not a cognitive or dogmatic stance.²⁴ To be sure, the founder had gained notoriety in his time as a worker of miracles but (Dubnow again concurred with Renan) he was guilty of no deliberate fraud or conscious deception in this because he and his followers were naively unaware of scientific laws.²⁵ Both Renan and Dubnow thus dismissed the charges of charlatanism and cunning priestcraft that Enlightenment critics of religion (and Graetz) were prone to raise. In Dubnow's interpretation, Hasidism was a protest against two elements of the Judaism of his time: the sterile rigours of the talmudic method as taught in the *yeshivot* of 18th-century Poland-Lithuania and the growing ascetic mysticism of the decades after the Chmielnicki massacres.

The 'dry scholasticism' of the East European rabbis had been concerned only with 'dead books', providing little in the way of spiritual guidance for the masses trapped in a never-ending search for material sustenance. The pre-Beshtian Jewish mystics of the 17th and 18th centuries had been obsessed by 'negative doctrines' of human sinfulness which were to be atoned for mainly by physical mortification. In contrast, the Besht, according to Dubnow, advocated a 'positive' spirituality.²⁶ Beshtian Hasidism was an anti-intellectual movement appealing to simple people, advocating fervent prayer and enthusiastic worship and expressing a heartfelt conviction that the world was full of God: 'There is no place empty of Him', as the often quoted Hasidic maxim says.

In this portrait of the founder, Renan and Dubnow overcame the debunking attitude toward traditional religion that they themselves had internalized in their youth. They accomplished this by dissociating the early from the later phases of the tradition they were studying, and by presenting the earlier phase in a romantic, even dreamy, light, laced with defiance and rebelliousness. Reappropriation of the movement, however, stopped short of the later phases, which were presented as a betrayal of the pristine spirit of its beginnings. Dubnow ominously warned the reader that 'the law of progress', inherent in the expansion of scientific knowledge, was unfortunately not true for religion, and that in religion the pure reformist idea becomes contaminated in time with other considerations, for, brought down to earth, it produces 'a new chemical compound' having little in common with the original intent of the founder.²⁷ Dubnow averred that the Hasidic movement had followed this inevitable cycle until in his day it had become encrusted with ignorance and superstition. Strong traces, therefore, remain in Dubnow's presentation of the earlier, negative maskilic view of Hasidism.²⁸ Here again there is a parallel with Renan. The Besht's disciple Dov Baer, like Jesus' apostle Paul, are portrayed as having imposed their own views and personalities on teachings attributed to the founder. (Dubnow believed that Dov Baer was responsible for the idea that the *tsaddik* had unlimited power as an intermediary between God and man.²⁹) The *History of Hasidism* and the *Origins of Christianity* continue to narrate the transition from the pristine origins to inevitable sociological denouement. The new sect grows in militancy, defies the outdated authority of its opponents, survives persecution, assembles its sacred literature, and eventually proliferates into a welter of splinter groups. Both Dubnow and Renan complete their epic with a retrospective summary of the social and religious structure and the ambiguous moral legacy of the mature movement.

Dubnow's conception of early Hasidism, decisively affected by his reading of Ernest Renan, enabled him to create a positive, secularized bond to the traditional Judaism of Eastern Europe. During the 1880s he had opposed

Hibbat Zion, the early Zionist movement, but by the end of the decade he was showing signs of disenchantment with the hopes for legal emancipation and social integration on the Western model in Russia that had marked his early essays. By the early 1890s he was beginning to express an attitude toward the Jewish masses that can only be called populist.³⁰ Dubnow was in the process of becoming a folkist figuratively, long before he became one literally, by founding the Jewish political party known as the *Folkspartei*. At his own pace and in his own way he was responding to the pogroms, the anti-Jewish governmental measures, and the increase in anti-semitism of the years when Jewish nationalism in Eastern Europe became a conspicuous ideological force in the Jewish community. One can ask, therefore, if traces can be found of this changing response to the idea of Jewish national self-assertion in the *History of Hasidism*. Is Dubnow's new conception of Hasidism a barometer of this transition in his attitude toward the Jewish people and its future in Russia?

There is 'folkism' in Dubnow's frequent allusion to the Besht's concern for the untutored Jewish masses and his desire to alleviate their burden psychologically. Additionally, Hasidism represented a decidedly 'eastern' Jewish phenomenon, not present in the 'western' (i.e. German-Jewish) model of Jewish modernization to which Dubnow had earlier clung. Dubnow's investigations in the history of Hasidism expressed his conviction that Russian-Jewish history was still a *terra incognita*. The concern for the history of the Jewish people in Russia reflected a desire to assemble an account of Russian Jewry that could be used to forge a new secular Jewish ideology in line with the conditions and possibilities regnant in tsarist Russia after the Great Reforms. Looked at from this perspective, early Hasidism was an intriguing example of a successful anti-establishment movement of Jewish renewal that provided a new leadership for the Jewish folk; like Jewish nationalism, Hasidism de-emphasized theology, talmudic study and ceremonial observance, shifting the ground to other traditional and societal resources better suited for coping directly with violent animosity toward the Jews and actual material distress in the streets.

Support for this sociological interpretation of Dubnow's historiography of early Hasidism can be found in the efforts by several other Jewish writers soon afterwards to take up the task of converting Hasidism from an intellectual scandal into an attractive aspect of Jewish history. In 1899 Micah Yosef Berdichevsky published his *Nishmat Hasidim*, in which this Jewish rebel against Judaism speaks with much nostalgia of his Hasidic upbringing and expresses the opinion that the early *Hasidim* had successfully reversed excessive Jewish intellectuality and insensitivity to nature. Hasidism appeared to him to be one of the great epochs in the history of Jewish renewal, the coming of a 'new life', a divine outpouring of 'the dew of a new youthfulness':

Those were days when Orthodoxy was at one extreme, preserving all legal minutiae, turning only to the past, adding laws but never diminishing them. At the other extreme there was a powerful tendency to abandon the products of both history and Judaism, to seek a new life as men whose humanity took precedence over all traditional or national culture. Hasidism, without regard for either of these mutually contradictory extremes, paved a new road in life and Judaism, a Hebrew humanism which is new in its very essence but does not intentionally uproot the old.³¹

There is a similarly romantic interpretation of early Hasidism in the tales of Isaac Leib Peretz, with an admixture of his characteristic irony and concern for the abject.³² Toward the end of 'Between Two Peaks', the Bialer *Hasidim* walk in the fields at the end of the day and sing their melodies of loving sweetness, accompanied by the music of the celestial spheres and the spirit of the world. Abruptly the Brisker Rov pulls the veil of ordinary sight down over their eyes by fiercely reminding them that it was time for evening prayer.³³ Peretz confessed in a letter of 1911 that he had no direct personal knowledge at all of *Hasidim*, indicating that Hasidism served Peretz mainly as a convenient peg on which to hang his romantic yearnings.³⁴ As Israel Zinberg points out, to Berdichevsky and Peretz an idealized Hasidism embodied a haunting vision of a lost world. The Hasid was

a whole personality, intimately bound to the past and to the future as well. Uneducated and profoundly superstitious, he possesses an inner sanctum that blends his thoughts, his feelings, and his will into one harmonious whole, thus rendering him a person of remarkable spiritual beauty.³⁵

That which had earlier been ridiculed as obscurantist and obsolete had become an emblem of spiritual wholeness and authenticity.

The so-called Neo-Hasidism of Berdichevsky, and also that of the young Martin Buber was already sharply criticized in 1909 by the Zionist writer Shai Ish-Hurwitz (incidentally, Dubnow's cousin) in his 'Ha-Hasidut ve-ha-Haskalah'.³⁶ To Hurwitz Hasidism was by no means a humanistic movement of revolt but a prime instance of the 'ghetto mentality' which Zionism aspired to negate. More recently, Gershom Scholem criticized Buber's existentialist Hasidism on the grounds that the Kabbalistic element in the movement that Buber interpreted as the hallowing of the 'here and now' had in fact sought to annihilate present existence rather than to sanctify it.³⁷ Buber wrote out of a different cultural situation from that of Dubnow, leading him to appropriate Hasidism in quite a different

way. And Hasidic theology in and of itself is a scholarly subject separate from the mutable image of Hasidism in modern Jewish thought and literature – a symbolic image which has taken on a life of its own, so that Hasidism will doubtless continue to be a subject of exasperation, fascination and controversy for quite a while longer.

NOTES

- 1 *The Autobiography of Solomon Maimon*, translated by J. Clark Murray (London, 1954), p. 172.
- 2 On Perl: Israel Zinberg, *A History of Jewish Literature*, 12 volumes, translated by Bernard Martin (Cincinnati and New York, 1972–8), vol. 9, pp. 238–42 and vol. 10, pp. 87–92. Also Abraham Sha'an'an, *Ha-Sifrut ha-ivrit ha-hadasha le-zrameiha*, 4 volumes (Tel Aviv, 1962–7), vol. 1, pp. 169–75. Perl's main writings are available in S. Werses and Ch. Shmeruk (eds.), *Yosef Perl: Ma'asiyyot ve-iggerot me-tsaddikim amitiyyim* (Jerusalem, 1969). On the relation of the *maskilim* to the Hasidic movement see Raphael Mahler, *Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment: Their Confrontation in Galicia and Poland in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, translated from the Yiddish by Eugene Orenstein and from the Hebrew by Aaron Klein and Jenny Machlowitz Klein (Philadelphia, 1985). (Perl's anti-Hasidic activities and pro-Haskalah propaganda is described on pp. 121–68.) For a brief overview of changing attitudes to Hasidism, from early opponents (including the *maskilim*) to recent scholarship, see Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer, 'Interpretations of Hasidism', *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 7 (Jerusalem, 1971), cols. 1416–19.
- 3 Zinberg, vol. 9, p. 241.
- 4 On Erter, see Zinberg, vol. 10, pp. 92–100 and 108–10 and Sha'an'an, vol. 1, pp. 175–82. Erter's most important anti-Hasidic writings were his 'Hasidut ve-hokhmah', published in *Kerem Hemed*, vol. 2, in 1834; his satire '*Telunat sani ve-sansani ve-samankaluf*' in *Kerem Hemed*, vol. 3; and his *Gilgul Nefesh* of 1845.
- 5 Zinberg, vol. 9, p. 221.
- 6 Zinberg, vol. 10, pp. 102–3.
- 7 Zinberg, vol. 11, pp. 34, 137.
- 8 Zinberg, vol. 12, pp. 176–86. Linetski's satirical novel, which was very popular in its day, has been translated into English by Moshe Spiegel (Philadelphia, 1975).
- 9 Zinberg, vol. 11, p. 160.
- 10 Zweifel's book has been edited by Abraham Rubinstein and published in two volumes by Mosad Bialik in Sifriyat Dorot, 1972. Also see Sha'an'an, vol. 2, pp. 108–11.
- 11 Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews* translated by Bella Löwy in 6 volumes (Philadelphia, 1956), vol. 5, pp. 374–5.
- 12 It never appeared in Russian in book form.
- 13 Dubnow composed the Hebrew version in fulfilment of a promise to Ahad Ha-Am to write one scholarly work in that language.
- 14 I will be addressing myself to an interpretation of this work as signifying an important transition in his life and symbolic of a transition among his generation of Russian-Jewish intellectuals, but I wish to note that my treatment is not meant to diminish the importance of Dubnow's contribution to Jewish scholarship. His work is still valuable because he carefully collected rare and scattered Hasidic and anti-Hasidic manuscripts and pamphlets, the analysis of which constituted an important

- step in the establishment of the history of Hasidism on a more secure and scientific basis.
- 15 The essay later appeared in several languages. A German translation by Israel Friedlaender became the basis for an English version by Henrietta Szold, published by the Jewish Publication Society of America as *Jewish History: An Essay in the Philosophy of History* (1903). The Russian original, entitled 'What is Jewish history? An attempt at a philosophical characterization' was published in *Voskhod*, (1893), nos. 10–12.
 - 16 *Kniga Zhizni*, (Book of Life: Reminiscences and Reflections, Material for the History of My Time), vol. 1 (Riga, 1934), pp. 221–2.
 - 17 Traces of the influence of this reading of Tolstoy can be found in Dubnow's pantheistic interpretation of the doctrines of the Besht; according to young Dubnow the Besht loved nature and sensed God's presence everywhere. See *Kniga Zhizni*, vol. 3 (Riga, 1940), pp. 160–1 and Dubnow's article on Tolstoy, 'Yesod ha-Yahadut she-betorat Tolstoy', *Ha-Shiloah* (1911), pp. 627–8.
 - 18 *Kniga Zhizni*, vol. 1, p. 221.
 - 19 *Voskhod* (April 1894), p. 31.
 - 20 *Kniga Zhizni*, vol. 1, p. 222.
 - 21 *Kniga Zhizni*, vol. 1, p. 230.
 - 22 The first two sections of Dubnow's history of Hasidism are entitled 'Introduction to the History of Hasidism', *Voskhod*, nos. 1–2, (1888); 'The rise of Hasidism: Life and work of the Besht', *Voskhod*, nos. 5–10, (1888). The romantic portrait of the Besht is especially prominent in *Voskhod*, (May–June 1888), pp. 120, 127–8, 136–7. Ernest Renan's *Vie de Jésus* was published in 1863 and translated several times into English; the present citation is from *The Life of Jesus* (New York, 1927), p. 306. Ernest Cassirer praises Renan for his ability to make the world of myth intelligible (*The Problem of Knowledge: Philosophy, Science and History Since Hegel* [New Haven, Connecticut, 1950], pp. 301–8). H. W. Wardman suggests that Renan's portrait of Jesus is in many ways a portrait of Renan (*Ernest Renan: A Critical Biography* [London, 1964], p. 86). Apropos of Renan's appeal, Albert Schweitzer remarks 'He offered his readers a Jesus who was alive, whom he, with his artistic imagination, had met under the blue heaven of Galilee, and whose lineaments his inspired pencil had seized. Men's attention was arrested, and they thought to see Jesus, because Renan had the skill to make them see blue skies, seas of waving corn, distant mountains, gleaming lilies.' (*The Quest for the Historical Jesus* [New York, 1968], pp. 180–92.) Dubnow refers to the influence of Renan in his portrayal of the Besht in *Kniga Zhizni*, vol. 1, p. 221.
 - 23 *Ibid.*, *Voskhod*, (September 1888), p. 12; Renan, *Life of Jesus*, pp. 122, 129.
 - 24 *Ibid.*, *Voskhod*, (September 1888), p. 4; also (March 1888), p. 13; Renan, *Life of Jesus*, pp. 214, 227.
 - 25 *Voskhod*, (July 1888), p. 85; Renan, *Life of Jesus*, p. 242.
 - 26 Protest against the Talmud: *Voskhod*, (September 1888), pp. 3–6. Against asceticism: *Voskhod*, (March 1888), p. 11. 'Dead books': *Voskhod*, (January–February 1888), p. 96. The Besht's positive spirituality: *Voskhod*, (September 1888), pp. 4–6. A summary of the Besht's teachings: *Ibid.*, pp. 12–14.
 - 27 Part three of Dubnow's study of Hasidism, entitled 'The rise of Tsaddikim: Baer of Mezhirech and other disciples of the Besht', appeared in *Voskhod* in nos. 9 through 12 of 1889 and no. 1 of 1890. The contrast of Dov Baer with the Besht is in *Voskhod*, (September 1889), pp. 3–4.
 - 28 Dubnow's impatience in his treatment of Hasidism for the advent of the critical spirit of the Enlightenment: *Voskhod*, (May 1893), pp. 14–26. The remaining articles in this series of essays on Hasidism are part four, 'The history of the Hasidic schism', covering the years from 1766 to 1797, which ran in *Voskhod* in 1890 in nos. 2 through 12 and in 1891 in nos. 1, 2, 10, 11, and 12; and part five, 'The religious war among Russian Jews at the end of the last century', covering 1797 to 1800, which ran in *Voskhod* in 1892 in issues 11 and 12 and in 1893 in issues 1 through 5. Renan's *Vie de Jésus* was the first in his *Histoire des origines du christianisme* published between 1863–83; succeeding volumes were entitled *Les Apôtres*, *Saint Paul*, *L'Antéchrist* (on the empire of Nero), *Les Évangiles et la Seconde Génération Chrétienne*, and *Marc-Aurèle et la fin du monde antique*. Renan went on to publish a five volume *Histoire du peuple d'Israël* between 1887–93 that entranced Dubnow. Renan also wrote on a wide range of other subjects, including a history of Semitic languages, studies of Job, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs, a book on Averroes and Averroism, two studies of medieval French rabbinic writers, a work in the spirit of Comtean positivism entitled *L'Avenir de la Science* (written in 1848 but published in 1890), as well as volumes of philosophical dialogues, philosophical dramas, and personal memoirs. A useful study of Renan's complex relation to the Jewish question is Shmuel Almog's 'The racial motif in Renan's attitude toward Judaism and the Jews', *Zion*, vol. 32 (1967), nos. 3–4 pp. 175–200.
 - 29 *Voskhod*, (October 1889), p. 4; (November–December 1889), pp. 47–9. On Renan's attitude toward Paul, see Edmund Wilson, *To the Finland Station* (Garden City, New York, 1955), p. 41.
 - 30 There are decided traces in some of his writings of the influence of Russian populists such as Peter Lavrov and Nicholas Mikhailovsky. The notion of an East European Jewish literary populism at the end of the 19th century is discussed in Sha'an'an, vol. 2, chapter 12.
 - 31 As quoted in Samuel Z. Fishman, 'The Dimensions and Uses of Jewish History in the Essays of Micha Yosef Berdichevsky (Bin-Gorion)', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation UCLA, 1969, pp. 160–1. Berdichevsky's essay was originally published in vol. 4 of *Mi-mizrah u-mi-ma'arav* in 1899. A comprehensive study of Berdichevsky's complex, changing attitude to Hasidism is S. Werses, 'Ha-hasidut be-olamo shel Berdichevsky', *Molad*, new series, vol. 1, (February–March 1968), no. 4, pp. 465–75. Sha'an'an (vol. 3, pp. 74–111) concentrates on the ideological contrast with Ahad Ha-Am and on the main literary influences on Berdichevsky. For Berdichevsky's fascination with Hasidism in the context of his notion of Jewish history, see David Biale, *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter History* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), pp. 39–43.
 - 32 Jacob Glatstein, 'Peretz and the Jewish Nineteenth Century', in Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg (eds), *Voices from the Yiddish: Essays, Memoirs, Diaries* (Ann Arbor, 1972), pp. 51–63. Also Nahman Meisel, *Y. L. Peretz ve-sofrei dor* (Merhavayah, 1960), pp. 110–11.
 - 33 A recent translation of Peretz's story, by Nathan Halpern, is found in I. L. Peretz, *Selected Stories*, edited by Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg (New York, 1974), pp. 83–95.
 - 34 G. Kressel, *Leksikon ha-sifrut ha-Ivrit be-dorot ha-aharonim* (Merhavayah, 1967), vol. 2, p. 698.
 - 35 Israel Zinberg, 'Two philosophies in Jewish life', in *The Faith of Secular Jews*, edited by Saul L. Goodman (New York, 1976), p. 203.
 - 36 See Stanley Nash's comprehensive study *In Search of Hebraism: Shai Hurwitz and His Polemics in the Hebrew Press* (Leiden, 1980). 'Ha-Hasidut ve-ha-Haskalah' is discussed on pp. 214–17 and especially on 244–54.
 - 37 Gershom Scholem, 'Martin Buber's interpretation of Hasidism', originally published in *Commentary* in October 1961 and reprinted in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* (New York, 1971), pp. 228–50.

Buber's response, 'Interpreting Hasidism', is found in *Commentary*, (September 1963). More recent studies of Hasidism in the popular vein include Elie Wiesel, *Souls on Fire* (New York, 1972) which, significantly, was originally published in France under the title *Célébration Hassidique*; and Lis Harris, *Holy Days: The World of a Hasidic Family* (New York, 1985).

SOME METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS OF THE STUDY OF JEWISH HISTORY IN POLAND BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS*

Jerzy Tomaszewski

The growing public interest in the history of Polish Jews between the wars has been the reason for the publication of many books and articles. Some are based on only a superficial survey, others present a deep and penetrating analysis of specific problems. This body of literature deserves methodological consideration, together with a critical review of the most important sources, so that some queries, doubts and suggestions can be raised.

During at least the past hundred years, a tradition developed in some Jewish and Polish political circles of treating the Jews as a kind of alien body within Polish society. This attitude can also often be observed in contemporary historical studies, despite the authors' declared intentions. This can partly be explained in terms of the distant past, when Jews constituted a distinctly different class of people with its own legal status and institutions, but there is no reason to maintain such an approach when investigating the history of the twentieth century.

In every country, especially in Poland with its complex social and ethnic structure, different classes and groups (ethnic groups among them) have their specific interests. But there are also other interests, common to some or even all of these groups and classes. A good example of such an interest, common to almost all Polish citizens, was resistance against the Third Reich in September 1939. Even some Polish citizens of German origin volunteered to defend Warsaw against the *Wehrmacht*. If we consider the Polish Jews to be an important part of Polish society and not an alien body inside it, we must discuss those common as well as particular interests, having full regard for the differentiated structure of the Jewish population. In some cases those particular interests separated Jews from Poles, from Ukrainians, and from other groups. In other cases, there were common interests that united, for example, workers, shopkeepers, or other professional and social groups, regardless of their ethnic divisions. A good