

One wonders, to what extent the obverse of this exists among Jews, to what extent they too, under fearful emotional pressure, are conjuring up other capitalized abstractions. The editor of this volume, not content with letting the Gentile mind convict itself, wrote a preface, an epilogue, and a post-epilogue—"The Voice of the Jew," in which he succeeds in formulating a picture of a persecuted people united in their hunger for Zion, and universally imbued with the conviction that they are God's chosen race. One can't believe that this stereotype has any broad validity, and one wonders if he too should not discover that Jews are people.

### Building a Language

PHILOSOPHICAL CLASSICS. Vols. 1-22.  
Jerusalem, Hebrew University Press.  
\$.75 and \$1.00 per volume.

Reviewed by LEON ROTH

THE publication in Hebrew of the famous first book ("Of the Understanding") of David Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* sets the seal on an enterprise of considerable educational and philological interest. It is no less than that of making an ancient language grow into modern needs.

How the necessity arose and how it was met is the particular subject of the present review; but it would be ungrateful not to signalize, however briefly, the merits of the translation last published. It is the work of Joseph Ur, M.A. of the Hebrew University, and is marked by a limpidity and simplicity worthy of the original. The student is embarrassed by no distressing neologisms, and only the most necessary notes (and these on points of major philosophical interest) are allowed to obtrude on his attention; and even these are placed modestly at the end. The care with which the work has been done is evidenced by the list of terms added in a short appendix and by the brief illuminating references to parallel doctrines of other thinkers given as footnotes to the text.

This version of Hume appears as Volumes 21 and 22 in a series of *Philosophical Classics* issued by the Hebrew University Press, a series which so far includes some of the works of Aristotle (*Metaphysics*, Books I and XI; *Politics*, I-II), Berkeley (*Principles*), Descartes (*Discourse on Method*; *Meditations*), Fichte (*Vocation of Man*), Hume (*Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*), Kant (*Metaphysic of Ethics*; *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysic*), Leibnitz (*New System and Other Writings*), Locke (*Essay Concerning Human Understanding*), Maimonides (*Introduction to*

*Logic*), Mill (*Utilitarianism*), Plato (*Theaetetus*; *Protagoras*; *Meno*), Rousseau (*Social Contract*).

With one or two exceptions (Maimonides' *Introduction to Logic* and possibly the eleventh book of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*), the books named are those normally used in university teaching. But the labor involved in their production was not undertaken for this purpose only—nor was the problem approached haphazardly. There was a specific difficulty which had to be surmounted, and the series of *Philosophical Classics* is its deliberate solution.

THE difficulty was this. The Hebrew language had passed through certain stages in its evolution and then stopped. In the medieval period it had shown itself adequate to all the needs of the time, and the vast translational activity for which it is justly famous succeeded in taking over from the Arabic, and afterwards from the Latin and the vernaculars, all that was best in the thought of the age. Mathematics, medicine, astronomy, alchemy, physics, psychology, folklore, even the *Romance of Amadis of Gaul* and the *Round Table of King Arthur*, found their expression in Hebrew. In particular, the Provençal school of translators made it their business to make the language a vehicle for philosophy, and a comparatively short time saw in Hebrew standard philosophical treatises both of Jews and of non-Jews from Aristotle to Maimonides, Aquinas, and Averroes.

But at this point, so far as philosophy is concerned, the Hebrew language stuck. In other subjects it progressed naturally, and the poets and the rabbinical writers developed an instrument which, with some further adaptation, was adequate to modern needs. But in philosophy this was not so. When Solomon Maimon, the contemporary and critic of Kant, wrote his Hebrew commentary on Maimonides' *Guide*, he wrote it in the language of the 13th-century translators. When Krochmal (1785-1840), the last Hebrew-writing classic philosopher, wrote his *Guide to the Perplexed of These Times*, it was so much in the medieval style and idiom as to be incomprehensible to anyone unaccustomed to the latter. This book, a series of inquiries into problems of history, metaphysics, and religion, was published in 1851 (eight years after Mill's *Logic!*), at a period when Emerson and Macaulay were already established writers, and Spencer, Sainte-Beuve, Taine, and Renan were beginning, when Grote had published most of his history of Greece, and Cardinal Newman his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*—and yet Krochmal is bound fast in a terminology fixed by medieval scholasticism. His Hebrew is the

Hebrew of the Tibbonidae of the 13th and 14th centuries. There is a gap of five hundred years!

It was thus patent that philosophy had to be taught Hebrew afresh, or rather, that Hebrew had to be taught modern philosophy. And the only way to teach it was the systematic way. Hebrew had to be put through the same stages of philosophical development as had any other modern language. Other languages had been made to abandon the medieval idiom (Latin in their cases), and to adopt modern speech. Hebrew had to be forced to do the same. And the way was obvious, to start with the first modern expressions of philosophical thought, make Hebrew assimilate them, and then pass on to the more recent.

A START was therefore made with Descartes, the great progenitor of the rationalist school who, as is well known, abandoned the language of the learned, Latin, and wrote his *Discourse on Method* in the vulgar tongue, French. When his two essential books had been translated (that is to say, when Hebrew had been induced to digest Descartes), we turned to Locke, the great progenitor of the empiricists. Locke's *Essay* is a huge book; but the Delegates of the Clarendon Press had recently published an abridgement which reduced it to about one half of its original bulk, and they were generous enough to allow us to use the shorter form. Thus we were able to grapple with this remarkable encyclopedia of philosophical thought in the 17th century with comparative ease. (Even so, our version when finally printed covered more than nine hundred pages of our small volumes). After Hebrew had assimilated these giants, it had no difficulty with their successors—Leibnitz, Berkeley, Hume, Rousseau. Hebrew was thus carried to the threshold of the later philosophical development; and at the cost of a special effort, the two streams of Continental rationalism and English empiricism were brought together in Hebrew by versions of two of the smaller although central works of Kant.

An essential part of all this labor was the testing of the medieval vocabulary itself. This was done largely by a novel use of a small treatise of Maimonides, the well-known *Introduction to Logic*. This work offers a clear conspectus not only of Aristotelian logic but of medieval Aristotelianism as a whole, and it has the additional advantages of having been a favorite book for centuries and having been translated from the original Arabic and edited many times. The edition published by our Press, while carefully watched by a competent philologist, has the unique distinction of being devoted to severely practical ends. We asked

ourselves how far each Hebrew word used was adequate to its purpose. If it was adequate, it was left, a translation into Latin or a modern language being given below; if for any reason it was inadequate, a substitute was suggested, while another meaning was offered for the rejected word itself. In this way a systematic attempt was made—within the limits offered by this small treatise—to standardize Hebrew philosophical vocabulary. How far it was successful, others will judge. It is interesting, however, to observe that during many years of lecturing on ordinary logic I have found no reason to depart from the usage laid down.

AND this brings me to the rest of the translations published, those from the Greek. In a teaching university one of the principal problems is the provision of standard textbooks (it is no use lecturing on books that are not easily available); and an essential part of any sound philosophical education is the study of Plato and Aristotle. Apart from any considerations of language, therefore, it was imperative to provide our students with Hebrew versions of some of their more important works. A good deal of Plato has been made available to Hebrew readers in recent times, notably by the efforts of Professor Klausner and the late Professor Diesendruck, and we only had to call in the services of that veteran translator, Mr. Leon Simon, in order to fill in a few of the more obvious gaps. Aristotle was a more difficult problem. The medieval versions are hopelessly inadequate, and such modern ones as exist are no better; and in any case no existing versions seem to have been made directly from the Greek. So a new start had to be made by us. There have appeared in print: the first book of the *Metaphysics*, containing Aristotle's account of his predecessors—and we use it for what it is, the best summary introduction to the history of Greek philosophy; the first two books of the *Politics*, containing the imperishable groundwork of all succeeding inquiries into politics and sociology; and that book of the *Metaphysics* containing Aristotle's doctrine of God which was of such transcendental importance in the framing of the whole of medieval philosophy and within it, of course, Jewish philosophy. The work as a whole is being continued now by a version of some books of the *Ethics*.

It may be of interest to add that we are not and have not been in a hurry to print. Every one of these versions has been tried out, and many of them many times, in classwork. They are mimeographed and distributed, and then read and reread in classes and seminars till we feel they are as adequate as we can make them.

It is true we are now getting more confident, and some of the forthcoming volumes will not be read first in class. But they will be read and reread in manuscript, in typescript, and in successive proofs, by those who have been engaged in the work from the first and know what has been done and what can be done. If I say that the forthcoming volumes include the *Dialogues of Berkeley* and the scientific essays of Pascal, it will be seen that we are keeping within our original plan of teaching the Hebrew language to think with the best.

ONE final word. In case anyone fears we are so wrapped up in the classics that we have no time for anything alive, I may add that a parallel series to the *Philosophical Classics* contains more modern aids to the student. This second series is to comprise a number of translations of modern standard works which have a general as well as a professional value—good instances are the two volumes which have al-

ready appeared, Muirhead's *Elements of Ethics* and Russell's *Problems of Philosophy*. The former is a favorite handbook which has weathered the storms of well-nigh fifty years' use in university class rooms and extension lectures; the latter is an introduction to the problems of philosophy which is as interesting to the layman as it is stimulating to the student. Together with the original works in Hebrew produced by members of the University's philosophy department, which include Professor Bergmann's *Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge* and Professor Roth's *Guide to the Study of Ancient Philosophy* and *Guide to the Study of Modern Philosophy*, these supplementary volumes will soon suffice to give the student at the Hebrew University all the help needed for the rational study of philosophy through the medium of the Hebrew language, and thus the work undertaken in the publication of the *Philosophical Classics* will reach its full consummation.

### BOOK REVIEWERS IN THIS ISSUE

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### CURRENT BOOKS ON JEWISH SUBJECTS

FROM GENEVA TO SAN FRANCISCO. By NORMAN BENTWICH. London, Gollancz, 1946. 111 pp. 8s. 6d.

*A continuation of his autobiography, "Wanderer Between Two Worlds."*

ODYSSEY THROUGH HELL. By RAYMOND ARTHUR DAVIS. New York, L. B. Fischer, 1946. 235 pp. \$2.50.

*The Jewish situation in Eastern Europe.*

HAD GADYA. By EFRAIM M. ROSENZWEIG and TODROS GELLER. Chicago, L. M. Stein, 1946. \$2.00.

*A traditional Jewish children's tale.*

AN HONORABLE TITAN. By GERALD W. JOHNSON. New York, Harper, 1946. 313 pp. \$3.50.

*A biography of Adolph S. Ochs, publisher of the New York Times.*

REBELLION IN PALESTINE. By JOHN MARLOWE. London, Cresset Press, 1946. 269 pp. 12s. 6d.

*An objective analysis of the British administration in Palestine and the conflict between Jews and Arabs.*

THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS OF ITALY. By CECIL ROTH. Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society of America, 1946. xiv, 575 pp. \$3.00.

HABIBI AND YOW; A LITTLE BOY AND HIS DOG. By Mrs. ALTHEA OSHER. New York, Bloch, 1946. 108 pp. \$2.00.

*How a little boy grows up, learning the traditions of Judaism.*

IN SEARCH OF THE PERMANENT. By ALEXANDER ALAN STEINBACH. Wings Press, 1946. 160 pp. \$2.00.

*Essays by a rabbi.*

PATHWAYS THROUGH THE BIBLE. By MORTIMER J. COHEN. Illus. by ARTHUR SZYK. Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society of America, 1946. 540 pp.