

The Anti-Zionist Ruppin

Early in the last decade of the 19th century, Ruppin began to sense a gradually increasing atmosphere of anti-Semitism and there began to appear in his diaries an increasing number of reports depicting incidents of anti-Semitic rejection.

It was in those years that Ruppin became acquainted with Zionism. The first encounter mentioned in his diary took place when he attended one of the assemblies of the local Graetzverein in Magdeburg, with the intention of arguing that the Jews must stop their greediness and "Prozenhaftigkeit" (purse-pride.) (in: Penslar 1991, 84). Although he felt attracted to the idea, he dismissed the Zionist option on the threshold since he felt completely German:

"the thought interests me ...(declining Zionism) ...because **I feel fully German**"

Ruppin wrote in his diary that he left the Graetzverein in 1893, because its members were humiliating him and even sent him an anonymous letter in that spirit (Bein 1968, I, 201). This rejection by the German Zionists indicates Ruppin's social position and may explain his later relations with them. Although later in his life he would become an important figure in German Zionism, it seems that his attitude towards them would always be marked by this experience of rejection, which coincided with the anti-Semitic rejection.

During the last decade of the nineteenth century, he adopted the Protestant criticism of religion and God. Although he still defined himself as a Jew, **he universalized the meaning of Judaism**: "Ich denke, daß man nicht dadurch ein Jude ist, daß man an einen einzigen, allmächtigen und ewigen Got glaubt" ("**I think that one is not a Jew by the fact that one believes in a single, almighty and eternal God**") (Korolik 1981, 114), and he did not accept its practical aspects: "Ich bin mit der Art, wie der jüdische Gottesdienst abgehalten wird, durchaus nicht einverstanden" ("**I do not agree at all with the way Jewish worship is held**") (ibid.). He gradually stopped observing even the already lax mitzvahs (precepts) he used to keep and, in 1892 he ate, for the first time, food forbidden to Jews and commented: "I don't even feel sorry about it" (Bein 1968, I, 194).

As the end of the century approached and as soon as he began his studies at the universities of Berlin and Halle, **Ruppin began to lose even his universal belief in the "one God" and the "immortality of the soul"** (Bein 1968, I, 195), and replaced this quite secular religiosity with a **new weltanschauung that lacked the concept or belief in God**. As already discussed, the theory concerning the "immortality of the soul" seemed to him, after he read Nietzsche, a "metaphysical solace," to be replaced with a new positivistic one; religious emotions had to be abandoned or transformed, and Man's beliefs centered on the state and the Vaterland (**Fatherland**).

In April 1903 he recorded in his diary that:

“ “For the first time in my life I believe I have developed a coherent Weltanschauung. This Weltanschauung culminates in the idea that human individuals as such are worthless, that only as part of a nation can they be said to be worth something, and that the nation is the means to the higher breeding or cultivation [Züchtung] of humanity. Work for one’s nation is the metaphysical purpose of human beings and must replace the false dream of individual immortality [...] Jewry only has a justification for its existence if it can exist as a nation and has in itself the power to acquire the basis for the survival of a nation - a territory. Otherwise it deserves to die out. Zionism or assimilation - tertium non datum [a third is not given]”.

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