# THE JEWISH COMMUNITY AND THE SYNAGOGUE IN PERSPECTIVE*

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IT is no great revelation to point out that there are differences in Jewish group life and in Jewish philosophical premises. This is not new. But what is especially novel is the decreasing competence of the discussants from the point of view of their knowledge of Jewish group life, its history, literature, beliefs and practices. Every teacher, and every group worker to the extent that he is an educator, knows that no discussion is worthwhile where there is no essential understanding of the subject by the participants and where there is no opportunity for participants or audience to acquire data. And yet, in the discussions of the role of the rabbis, their relationship to the total Jewish community, the position of the non-religious institutions and their staffs, in all these areas there is little attempt on the part of the rabbis as well as the laity to delve into the available data and judgments that throw light upon the present problem.

My first criticism of the quality of the present argument is in terms of inadequate understanding of the issue. I cite the statement of the English philosopher John Macmurray: "*All thought presupposes knowledge.* It is not possible to think about something that you do not already know. It may be true that some things that we know cannot be understood or even described. But it is certain that nothing that is unknown can be described or understood. This is a principle which is frequently overlooked in philosophical discussion. We construct theories of knowledge which imply that knowledge is the result of thinking, and that it is, therefore, essentially bound up with the processes of reflective activity. The simple observation that you must know something before you can think about it completely upsets the equilibrium of all such theories. It is because we know things and are interested in them that we think about them at all. And the reason why we think about them cannot be in order to know them but at the most in order to know them better."

Consider this statement within the Jewish context! Who among the Jews finds himself unable to think and to express his thoughts about Jewish affairs despite the absence of knowledge about Jewish matters? How many of us today, subjected to the light touch of Jewish education in this country, if any, have acquired sufficient knowledge to arrive at conclusions and opinions about

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Jewish life, by the same standards that we apply to other areas of knowledge? We do not hesitate to declare ourselves incompetent in areas of the natural and physical sciences in which we have had no training, nor to admit our limitations in other specialized areas of the social sciences or the humanities into which our education has not extended. Yet by some perversity we do not restrict ourselves in assuming competence in the Jewish area which is weighted with the span of its years and the involutions of its adaptations through the centuries.

I regard it as especially significant that the growth of synagogue membership has been concurrent with the de-intellectualization of Jewish life, and in turn, many rabbis have condoned the absence of Jewish knowledge. The very increase in the enrollment in Jewish schools is concurrent with reduced curricula and limited schedules. I am less impressed by the thousands of students in the Sunday schools, the magnificence of the facilities, and the pageants, than by the sterility of curricula and the limited time spent by the child at the school. The community school, which in the past was non-synagogal, reflected the desire of an entire community to perpetuate itself, and which insisted upon the inclusion of the wide variety of Jewish cultural experience requiring a wide curriculum and many hours of attendance, has fallen before the congregational school's slashing attacks for congregational centrality and limited learning.

If what I am saying seems severe, then I must assure you that this is the prevailing opinion of the most responsible rabbis and Jewish educators, who for obvious reasons constantly make these evaluations privately but seldom state them publicly. I am not in agreement with my sincere friends in the rabbinate and in the field of Jewish education who believe that to deal with this openly is not politic, and I question the abdication from leadership by those who are best qualified to testify to the validity of this challenge.

In some of the discussions of this topic within our program committees, I was surprised to find that among the members there was an honest belief that such conditions were characteristic of the Jewish past, especially of eastern Europe. One individual in venting his irritation with the growing dominance of the rabbis in Jewish communal affairs, said: "Where do they think they are? This is America, a democracy, not the *shtetl* of eastern Europe!" Let me explain to him and to others in our present company that this is to misunderstand the European Jewish background and that the phenomenon of the rabbis in America is peculiarly American and contradictory to rabbinical tradition.

The rabbi in eastern Europe existed in an informed, and frequently learned, Jewish community. Let me quote from the recent work of Robert Gordis, a rabbi: "Closely associated with the appearance of the synagogue in a new form in America has been the transformation in the function and significance of the rabbi. It is true that in the process much of great value was lost, or at least submerged. The traditional Rav was a venerable figure, the symbol of scholarship and piety in the community. He spent his days preeminently in the study of the Torah, and performed judicial functions upon request. Jewish life was so deeply rooted in each community that it was not dependent upon him for stimulation or even for direction—it sufficed that he was its crowning glory, the living symbol of Torah." The active, directive rabbi is an American phenomenon.

A recent article by Rabbi Emanuel Rackman further emphasizes this fact. He says: "The synagogue was once a





building where men met to pray and study; today it is an 'institution,' often more social than religious. The rabbi was once a scholar-saint; now he is usually a 'professional,' a clergyman." May I point out that I am quoting rabbis of standing and distinction in the Jewish community so that it is clear that there are rabbis who appreciate the changes in the situation in this country and are themselves working towards its correction.

Let it be clear that in the eastern European Jewish community, the average Jew had learned sufficiently to know what was expected of him as a Jew and could answer most of his questions out of his own learning. The *sheeloth* and *teshubot,* the Responsa literature, do not reveal an uninformed Jewish population turning to the rabbi for direction at every step of the way on matters of Jewish religious practice or a view of life from a Jewish vantage point. The questions arose at those moments, and on such issues, where the learning of the layman, which was frequently no less than that of the rabbi, was unable to incorporate into the practice or the viewpoint some new circumstance of the surrounding life. What is important is that because of his learning, the layman knew at what point to turn to the rabbi who then delved and pondered and was in turn, checked and perhaps corrected by the layman in defining a position. Compare this with our own situation!

Rabbi Rackman adds weight to this description when he says: "Rabbis derive their authority as interpreters of the law from the people, but this authority can only be conferred by a public literate enough to recognize who is worthy of it."

How many people affiliated with the synagogue are able to deal with the questions of practice and observance on their own, without the directive of the rabbi? How many know when to ask a question? Reducing the matter to its simplest terms, let us take the example of *kashruth.* When my grandmother opened a chicken, she knew when there was a doubt about its *kashruth,* and when to seek advice. How many Jewish women, I ask, maintaining *Kosher* homes, have any basis on which to question the chicken in the kitchen because it may be of doubtful *kashruth?* Of course, there are those who never concern themselves with the meat they purchase at the kosher butcher, assured thereby of its *kashruth,* but only *kasher* the meat they purchase in the non-*kosher* butcher shop.

The degree of ludicrousness is reaching fantastic proportions. One woman told me how kosher is the hotel she goes to on vacation. "It is so kosher," she explained, "that on fast days they serve only dairy meals." Another person explained to me how one acquires a Jewish name *officially* for a new born child. One goes to the *shamosh* of a synagogue, he said, and pays five dollars to the *shamosh* who then writes out a name on a piece of paper making it official. It may be true that a given individual asked the help of a *shamosh,* and requested him to write the name out and rewarded him with five dollars for his trouble, but how nonsensical can one get about official Jewish practice. Of course, the non-practicing Jew avoids these *faux pas,* with no greater knowledge. You can add additional examples by yourself on your own time.

The severity of the above criticism is a reaction to Jewish intellectual pauperism and the fact that it is aided and abetted by the synagogue and the rabbi to the extent that there are no standards of discrimination for Jewishness. On the contrary, the synagogue has become the cover of ignorance, for once affiliated, the individual is no longer questioned on Jewish identification and no longer

requires the thoughts and convictions that must be derived only out of understanding. Jewish thought was ever the baggage which the Jew carried into his home, the marketplace, and the surrounding society. Wherever he required its reassurance or wisdom, he had it at his disposal and command. We have not repeated the eastern European pattern in this country, except perhaps in the case of the village of Chelm, renowned in story for its fools. In Chelm, it is told, the inhabitants realized how difficult it was to search for something lost in the dark. Accustomed to deal with all problems that presented themselves, they finally decided to hang a large sign on the synagogue, boldly illuminated at night, on which was inscribed in big letters: "All searching done here." In this way, when anyone lost something in the dark at night, he found it much more comfortable to do his seeking by the light of the synagogue. I fear that our synagogues here are not assisting the individual members with the resources and tools to face the questions which arise in the home and in the office and on the street but rather call out, "All searching done here, in the synagogue." There the rabbi sits with the answers. Our problem in this area is to give the Jew the Jewish resources and outlook which will permit him to function Jewishly wherever he finds himself and on whatever terms he has formulated his Jewishness.

And for those who make the mistake of thinking that the rabbis of America are unaware of this situation, I must stress that it is the preoccupation of the best of them. In a recent issue of the Reconstructionist, Rabbi Edward E. Klein had this to say: "How pathetic this ignorance of the ideologies of modern Judaism. How many of our laymen understand the work, the struggles, the contributions of Abraham Geiger, Samson Raphael Hirsch, Secharias Frankel, Isaac M. Wise, Stephen S. Wise, Mordecai M. Kaplan? How many of our people choose their synagogue affiliation on the basis of ideology? Too often it is merely a matter of habit, propinquity, or convenience."

My first point, therefore, is that there is an absence of knowledge and that the increase in enrollment in Jewish schools, in synagogue and temple affiliation, and in rabbinical direction has not, and is not a symbol of, increased Jewish knowledge.

I would like to deal now with a second fallacious association of our topic with the eastern European past. It is said that because this is democracy, there is no room for the primacy of the rabbinate or the synagogue in Jewish communal affairs. The implication is that the eastern European Jewish community was other than democratic. The facts belie this assertion. It may come as a surprise to some to learn that in the pre-war Jewish communities of Poland, for example, there were democratically structured Jewish communities with elections, and platforms and positions put forth for the electorate. Of greatest significance is the fact that so strong was the sense of *total community* that when the Bund party won a community election, despite the fact that it was anti-religious and anti-Zionist, it was obligated to carry out communal responsibilities to all segments of the community. That Bundist leadership had to provide the *matzoh* for Passover, assist in the maintenance of the synagogues and the rabbis, and support the Jewish schools whose orientations were religious and Zionist. That was democratic!

In the United States of America, we have not yet demonstrated that type of democratic Jewish community with responsibility to the whole and to the variety, to the majority and to the minority





of Jewish orientations. One of the underlying bases of the present conflict with the synagogues is that the religious leadership has begun to construct a definition of Jewishness which limits its attributes to those who are religiously oriented, or at least affiliated. This is an interruption of the continuous recognition in Jewish history that the Jewish community contained, and existed with, non-conformists and even heretics. There is no wish to limit the effort of the synagogue to propagate the faith or to argue that in its view Judaism is essentially a religious experience. My point is that it is not for the synagogue to rule out of the Jewish community, those who have a different view of the essentiality of Jewishness. By arrogating to itself the right to define who is a Jew, the religious leadership is excluding from the Jewish community people, ideas, movements, and cultural records that have given dynamic and creative impetus to Jewish life in the modern era. I could easily proceed to a listing of names of people who have carried a great weight of cultural, intellectual, and philanthropic Jewish endeavor in our lifetime and who have not been affiliated with a synagogue or are not religiously oriented. The definition of a Jew is not the province of any segment of the Jewish community, despite the fact that there will always be those who regard their own view of Jewishness as the true revelation and the others as benighted.

But this question of community requires even further examination. It may be shocking to some to realize that there is no difference between the American Council for Judaism and any other synagogue or temple that may be Zionistically inclined, so long as they all adopt as their basic tenet that Judaism is a religious faith and nothing more. The synagogues and temples outside the ambit of the Council may say that Judaism is more than religious practice by assisting the development of the Jewish State for such as seek to live in it. Leaving Zionism aside, the essential question about the breadth of their view of Judaism is their readiness to conceive a Jewish community which is secular as well as religious, Yiddish as well as English speaking, socialistically oriented as well as capitalistically grounded, intellectual as well as ritualistic. I do not see the possibility for the present of the successful advocacy of such a broad-based concept.

And yet, the greatest single distinguishing characteristic of Judaism, which sets it off from the other great faiths, is the concept of community. In our times, our systems of ethics find their formulation in Catholicism, Protestantism, and Judaism. From my observations, Judaism is moving in two directions simultaneously, towards the Protestant and Catholic concepts and away from the established Jewish historical position. This trend is discernible most in the area of our present discussion and picks up the area of the social, or communal, services.

For Catholicism, social service is primarily an instrument for binding the individual to the church. In this sense, the bolder entrance of the synagogue into the area of social service is essentially a Catholic pattern. It seeks to make the church and the priest central in the life of the individual parishioner. The very nature of the assistance is so formulated and so rendered as to make the individual dependent upon and bound to the church. It asserts that salvation is possible within the church alone.

Protestantism accepts the individualization of salvation and its philosophic motivation of social service is to give the individual every opportunity and facility for maintaining an independent existence, and by the quality of his per-

sonal human behavior to exhibit himself as the creature of God. This Protestant way, I submit, is the approach of the Jewish social worker. All the many programs of our several services strive mainly to free the individual and to make him an independently functioning individual without pre- or post-commitments to the institution and to the community. It should be said that of late, Protestantism has been broadening its concept of the church to give it more semblance of Christian community than Christian rite.

The Jewish position, historically and ethically, was never Christian in this sense, Protestant or Catholic. To the Jew it was the Jewish community in which he functioned, by which he was nourished, and to which he was loyal. Even when the Jewish community ceased to be the limit of his life's experience, his Jewish identification was with the Jewish community as a totality. He surely chose for himself one or another form of activity and philosophy among the varied offerings but the table from which he made his selections was set in the household of the Jewish community.

Thus, while the present pressure of the rabbi and the synagogue is Catholic in its quest to tie the Jew to the church, the tradition of Jewish social service has tended to be conceptually Protestant. The social worker may justifiably maintain that the position of the synagogue is not the traditional Jewish one, but the Jewish social worker is at least as vulnerable in his failure to further and follow the Jewish concept of community. May I also remind the Jewish social worker in America that he is quite wrong when he imputes to his profession the discovery of social services. The earlier Jewish community of which I spoke, not the synagogue, maintained almost all the known Jewish services. Called by different names and maintained by different standards reflective of the social and economic circumstances, the Jewish community dispensed cash relief, gave counsel and guidance, provided medical aid and facilities, cared for the aged and the orphans, and furthered child and adult education. Community organization was unrecognized as a profession because it was practiced, and required neither propaganda nor administration in the modern sense. The lesson is that a Jewish community maintained communal and social services, and it does not follow that social services create or foster community.

My second point, in summary, is that the traditional Jewish concept of group identity was communal in nature, democratic in structure, and varied in the types of its services. The synagogue was an integral part of the Jewish community but so also were the secular institutions and the leadership was the laity and the rabbi was its learned pastor. We are now following unknowingly patterns which are foreign and unrelated to our Jewish past not because it is irrelevant but because we are not prepared to act democratically, concede rights to others, and undertake a broad commitment to the Jewish community in recognition that the elimination of any phase or segment of it by fiat represents a diminution of the whole. It probably bears emphasis that here and throughout I do not argue that Jewish life is not religious nor that there is no place for the synagogue, but only urge the broader conception of Judaism to include with religion every other conscious orientation defined by its holders as Jewish.

I am attempting to convey the message that it is unfair and incorrect to regard the eastern European Jewish community as the root of the present social worker's difficulties with the rabbis. The trouble is rather with the loss of the context of community, with the lack of commitment on the part of the Jewish social worker to Jewish life, and the quick maneuver





of the rabbi to utilize his specialized Jewish learning to acquire the position of Jewish leader. Those who are so heatedly democratic must reassert their democratic convictions about Jewish life as well as about desegregation. Those who are found wanting when Jewish knowledge is requested as the entry card for Jewish leadership must acquire the facts and data of Jewish life.

I hope that we have laid to rest the unfounded charges of the pernicious influence of eastern European Jewish communal life upon our own situation. I would like to proceed now to the consideration of a unique aspect of American Jewish life which is simple and obvious, but too often overlooked. I refer to the fact that living Jewishly is less a matter of the home, the neighborhood, or the economic area of life, but increasingly is an institutional matter. The Jew is less frequently Jewish when alone, or even in social relationships with neighbors or friends. He is consciously Jewish within his participation in or affiliation with a particular Jewish institution or organization. He tends, therefore, to equate membership in a particular organization with the whole of Jewish life. Part of the struggle which we are discussing relates to this interpretation of Jewish community.

It is not only the synagogue which is tending towards defining itself as the Jewish community, but in given situations, a chapter of a national organization, a Jewish Community Center, a Jewish school, or any other single unit moves towards defining itself as the whole of Jewish community. If the synagogue is swift in the race, we should not overlook the other starters. This development is not so much a drive for power and control, as a limited understanding of the variety of Jewish life and the American pursuit of efficiency whose hallmark is simplicity.

Each of the groupings has its committed adherents whose passion may be derived out of genuine beliefs and convictions or out of lesser considerations. These, in turn, set out to attract and convince the uncommitted of the merits of their position and of their particular affiliation. It is natural that to attract Jews to Jewishness requires that the organization be able to display its basic Jewish position for obviously, it would be entirely irrational to argue that a certain Jewish affiliation is "better" because its Jewishness is the lesser. In the last two decades, as a result of general social and economic upheaval and the singling out of the Jew for the extremes of persecution and harassment, there has been a vast reservoir of uncommitted Jews who have been ready to reconnect their ties with Jewish life. There are no adequate statistics for this assertion, but I venture a guess that the increased affiliation with Jewish life in the last twenty years is determined in a great measure by the desire of the individual to avow Jewishness. The greatest beneficiaries of this increased affiliation have therefore been those institutions or groups who have been most ready to declare themselves to be essentially Jewish in program and purpose. Herbert J. Gans in a recent article in "Commentary" stated: "Closer observation will show that the 'Jewish Revival' is not a return to the observance of traditional Judaism, but a manifestation in the main of the new symbolic Judaism . . . the people who flock to the synagogues go there not so much to practice the traditional Judaic religion, as to feel and express their Jewishness both for themselves and their children."

The synagogue, clearly, is in affirmation avowedly Jewish. To avoid any possible misinterpretation by my listeners that this contradicts my earlier position, I point out that even where the Jew knows little of Jewishness and even

where he derives little learning from his synagogue affiliation, he nevertheless finds reassurance from the learning of the rabbi. The rabbi may be more or less successful in enlightening his congregants, but they associate themselves with *his* Jewish learning. Someone, it seems, must be actively Jewish, and if the member is not, or cannot be, he at least derives satisfaction from the paid employee who is, on his behalf. My point is that the competition by Jewish institutions for adherents is in a great measure influenced by the degree of Jewish affirmation of the group.

It is strange indeed that the issue of competition arises at all. How much more rational it would be to view the whole of Jewish life as a cooperative relationship of all Jews and all orientations. How much greater is the social horizon of those who are prepared to sustain the whole in the belief that the loss of any idea, however unacceptable to a particular individual, is a diminution of the whole, than of those who seek the elimination of everything that is not their own in order to declare to the surrounding world their dissociation with those of other views!

The institutional rather than the personal pattern of Jewish life leads to further problems. In the area of Jewish education, we have tended for over a generation to accept the "progressive" doctrine of "learning by doing." We have never had insight enough to question the validity of progressive education in the Jewish field where the issue was the transmission and absorption of a culture. When once we realize that we do not "do culture," we can recognize the limitation of the doctrine of "learning by doing."

On the other hand, if the doctrine is "education for living" and Jewish living is institutional, then Jewish education or training is for participation in Jewish organizational life. If, furthermore, the individual is entitled to choose the nature of his youthful and adult adherence to Jewish groups, then the training process must provide acquaintanceship for the variety of which choices can be made. The responsible educator is therefore not one propagandizing for a particular identification but committed to displaying the wide variety of Jewish experience. It is here that the Jewish communal services, the services of the total community, come into their own, as well as the point at which all Jewish communal workers become Jewish educators.

The synagogue, for example, represents pre-commitment. Its audience is made up of those who are affiliated. Whatever light it may cast on other positions, it may be assumed that the interpretation of other positions will be made so as to give credence to the notion of the centrality of the synagogue. And if this is true for the synagogue, it is not much different in other organizations.

Here is a great challenge to the Jewish Community Center and to the practice of group work. By its name and its shingle, it represents one of the only possible loci for the common activity of Jews with a variety of Jewish orientations, provided, however, that it is Jewish and communal and a center. The challenge of the group worker to the synagogue cannot be that Jews are affiliated with the synagogue or that the synagogue conducts activities for its members that conflict with its own programs. It is in the nature of the program and the methods of its conduct that group work and the Jewish Center have status of their own. A Jewish Community Center which is committed to the furtherance of Jewish group life, that reflects the variety of its members' commitments or gropings about Jewish life, and that is unrestricted to the service of the few but democratically organ-





ized for the participation of all, cannot be challenged nor diminished.

The Jewish group worker in his preoccupation with the development of club programs in the synagogue has failed to challenge the philosophic and methodologic bases of such programs but has appeared to be concerned with the narrow vested interests of his profession. The real issue is that an accumulated body of theory and practice in the group work field is being casually discarded without challenge. Is it group work when every member of a group is precommitted to tenets and precepts which do not bear challenge or discussion? Is it group work when leadership knows and transmits the answers rather than initiates for its members a process of questing, in confidence that under supervision and with the weight of valid data, the individual will arrive at conclusions of worth? But is it group work when the center is unaware of, or ignores tenets and precepts held by Jews? Is it group work when the leadership is unable to bring to bear the data of Jewish life on those who seek to understand?

The center, however, is only one of the interested parties among the several Jewish communal services. Whether we are concerned with child care, care of the aged, care of the sick, guidance and counseling, community relations, or community organization, it is necessary at all times to apply the skill of the practice within a context of Jewish community. If there is no Jewish context to any of our services, I hope that you will agree that they are not Jewish communal services. Jewish communal services are not identifiable by their service to Jews, for that makes the doctor, the psychiatrist, the barber, the theatre, the manicurist, and taxi driver a Jewish communal worker at the moment that these serve Jewish clientele. Jewish communal services are what they are called, only when they serve the Jewish client in the context of his Jewishness and on behalf of a Jewish community. When these requirements are satisfied, then even the doctor, the psychiatrist, etc., can be included within the area of Jewish communal services.

I find that there is much concern with the growth of suburbia and its implications for the entire field of Jewish communal services and its special relevance to the subject under discussion here. The point is made that in a smaller suburban community the primary institution is becoming the synagogue and necessarily the leading "professional," the rabbi. It is perhaps understandable that a new and small community should place priority on the construction of a religious center and the availability of a rabbi who can perform a variety of services for the community in its Jewish aspirations. Such a community, if it does not progress into the provision of the additional disciplines and skills required for Jewish communal living, will necessarily diminish the concept of Jewishness and its quality. To the extent that the problem is a financial one, and an array of buildings is beyond the means of that community, the synagogue can be a true center by recognizing that its synagogal functions are directed by the rabbi but as an edifice it can include group work under a group worker's supervision, counseling under a trained counselor, community organization under the direction of trained personnel, etc. In this way, we may substitute for our present edifice complex, a complex edifice; and complexity is generally associated by the anthropologist and sociologist with more specialized communal organization.

This paper is being prepared with the assumption that Mr. Isidore Sobeloff will be discussing the need to re-evaluate the needs of the clientele of Jewish communal service as well as a re-evaluation of the nature of our services. Obviously,

changing conditions of life by American Jewry requires such reassessment. I therefore assume that it is unnecessary for me to deal in any detail with such questions as the validity of particular Jewish communal services which are no longer distinguishable as Jewish. As a matter of fact, one of the larger questions in this entire area is whether or not Jewish funds should be applied to existing services that no longer serve a clientele within a Jewish context.

Assuming the above, I believe that there is still one other aspect of the general field of Jewish communal services to consider. I refer to the underlying cultural basis of our work. It is an oversimplification to ground the origin of our services in economic conditions, in isolation from the cultural. Outside the Jewish area, a considerable literature has been accumulated by practitioners in the fields of social service and public health, demonstrating that the efficacy of scientific practice is dependent upon the cultural acceptability of the practice. In this anthropological approach, it is pointed out that western medicine can be introduced into a Chinese cultural context when it is treated as magic, and conversely, magic can become accepted by the American, if it is made out to be scientific.*

The importance of this approach is that it sets up a framework for a definition of Jewish communal services which is more valid than the economic. If the Jewish group maintains hospital services, for example, it is not because it can provide the needy with a service which under other auspices would be more costly to the client, but because the culture of the Jews requires such service by its attitude to health, medicine, and any other attendant aspects of the illness. Take any one of our multitudinous services and subject them to the cultural demands of our Jewish group life to find its validity for Jewish community maintenance. Our Jewish culture has changed and understandably so, and our Jewish communal services require parallel changes. For those who hold with the notion that social services are based on poverty, it would be well to heed Prof. Horace Kallen's comment that "ignorance is a form of poverty."

This topic begs for a course rather than a paper, but I would like to comment on this question of culture briefly, before concluding. The Jews, upon settling in this country, generally were the products of a culture that was palpably Jewish. So also did other immigrant groups arriving here maintain distinct cultures brought out of the context of their former lives. This is obvious, but it is less appreciated that the entire pattern of public education in America, at least in its urban areas, was a program designed to sever the immigrant child from his previous culture. This is thoroughly demonstrated by Margaret Mead in her paper on the concept of the American School delivered as an Inglis Lecture at Harvard University. Our present American Jewish community is increasingly the product of these public schools where subtly and painlessly we have been severed from the nourishment of a previous Jewish culture. Add to this the urge to be integrated in the total society, especially strong in an immigrant group, and we can see how far we have come from a pre-dominating Jewish cultural pattern.

Today, therefore, any discussion of Jewish culture invariably suggests something of the past, something irrelevant, something unknown. To mention Jewish culture is to summon up a picture of Jewishness drawn out of another social and economic context, and I have already dealt with the false face put upon the

* For many other such examples, I refer you to an interesting volume entitled: "Health, Culture, and Community" published by the Russell Sage Foundation.





eastern European Jewish community by American Jews. As a matter of fact, one of the least developed of our intellectual disciplines in Jewish life is this anthropological-sociological evaluation of Jewish culture. Furthermore, our language is so poor in the terms and expressions of culture, for we are numbed to its significance. The richness of a language on any given item is itself reflective of the meaning of that item in the lives of the people.

Howells has pointed out: "Eskimo has twenty or more precise words for conditions of snow; and the Tokelau Islanders have nine names for distinct stages of ripeness in a coconut, their main food." Obviously, snow is important to the Eskimos and coconuts to the Islanders. Yet the term Jewish culture as it is used by American Jews today has few refinements and ancillary forms.

Our Jewish culture can only be presented adequately with the full spate of its nuances and facets; language, religion, literature, morality, ethics, law, justice, philanthropy, democracy, group aspiration, family life, personal pursuits, and universal associations are aspects of the Jewish culture. The Jewish culture is not rigid or arbitrary, for the fact is that despite the orthodox argument that Jewish law is immutable, only the constant changes in that law made survival possible. From the wealth of what Jewish culture can mean, we have endless resources for living Jewishly and being integrated in the whole of the society in which we find ourselves. I can do no more than mention the concept of Jewish culture here, for to delve deeper would take me beyond the confines of the allotted time, though not beyond the scope of this paper.

It is the successful search of a meaning in Jewish culture that can hopefully establish such goals and values which can govern Jewish communal services by re-establishing a cultural concept of community. We must recognize that the community council, or cooperative association, is "a device that can operate successfully only where certain assumptions, values, and goals prevail." In a cooperative relationship, and in broad cultural context, the synagogue and the community cannot be antagonistic but complementary.

I have said nothing new in this paper, and much of what I have argued I realize has been put forth in another era by the Jewish philosopher and essayist, Ahad Ha'am. He, too, maintained that an understanding of Jewishness required the blending of reason and morality, and that the source of morality may or may not be derived from religion. He was not anti-religious, not against Jewish nationalism, but convinced that what was essentially Jewish was the concept of community and the continuity of its culture.