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TO THE EDITOR OF *TRADITION*:

Irwin Mansdorf's critical review (Vol. 16, No. 4) of Abraham Am-sel's "Rational Irrational Man: Torah Psychology," is highly to be commended. Psychological practice has progressed considerably since Freud and most psychologists and psychoanalysts, as well, are more eclectic than dogmatic. To extol Torah Judaism by pitting it against the strawman of Freudian Orthodoxy is a triumph too easily achieved.

Early psychologists regarded morals, ethics and values as irrelevant to their discipline. Modelling themselves after the physical sciences, they defined their task to describe, classify and explain the facts of mental and social life in a manner similar to the way physics and chemistry deal with the data of the material world. Freud, therefore, prescribed for the analyst the posture of the faceless couch listener, a technician of sorts, to help patients release their instinctually-bound energies from the strictures of the super-ego. The cultivation of valid ethical values was outside his realm. His task was to cure, not

to improve; his role was non-normative.

Freud's rationale was predicated on several premises. He regarded the "should" and "ought" which emanate from parents and society as strangling and oppressive to the psyche; he fatalistically regarded man as irredeemably imperfect and he was skeptical whether evil could be eradicated; he defined man anthropologically, as being on a high rung of evolutionary development, but not possessed of any transcendental dimension. Since the God concept was no more than a projection of man's infantile view of the family, with the powerful protective father at the head, there could be no absolute moral imperatives. As Jean Paul Sartre expressed pithily, "If God does not exist, we find no values or commands to legitimize our conduct."

The insoluble paradox is that since psychology deals with life, it cannot escape the human struggle with values and ethical choices which are at the very heart of the human experience. Also, Freud's biological image of man limits man's primary concerns unto himself and disengages him from so-

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ciety, religion or philosophy. This is a one-dimensional view of man which recent humanistic psychologists have sought to revise. Prominent names amongst these are Erich Fromm, Gordon Allport, Abraham Maslow, Nathan Ackerman, O. Hobart Mowrer, Rollo May and Victor Frankl. The latter, in particular, in my opinion, formulates a psychological system which is most in consonance with Torah Judaism.

We will cite several such reformulations. Religious experiences, to Maslow, are signs of health, not neurosis. Guilt feelings, according to Ackerman, do not "highlight an imbalance" but, rather, "are a genuine emotion of remorse for actual wrong-doing; it is both appropriate and necessary." Mowrer emphasizes that "each person *does* have both the knowledge and the option of choosing right and wrong." Critical of recent encounter psychology, which his own theories helped to launch, Rollo May writes, "I would like to deny the importance of touch when it is isolated at the expense of the brain, or concept or thinking." Rather than Freud's emphasis on the unconscious, man's biological background, his unnatural, repressed and hostile anger, his childhood experience, May emphasizes that the "here and now" is primary.

Neo-Freudians have shifted the emphasis from ruthless ego-centrally oriented competitiveness and the drive for mastery to a recognition of the common bond, the need to share satisfactions and the sense of fulfillment in higher levels of co-operation. There is a growing trend

to join sex with tenderness, with an emphasis on the context of a love relation and a reciprocal sensitivity of the partners. A tendency is emerging of regarding moral questions and life's meaning as primary in psychotherapy, with neurosis viewed by Frankl, in particular, as a deficiency of conscience. Therapy, therefore, would involve confronting moral weakness and structuring a more responsible conscience. Fromm boldly declares, "the psychiatrist is the physician of the soul."

The inherent limitation in classical psychology is that it regards the "psyche" as the essential core of men. To Judaism, this "psyche" is no more than a tool or, at best, a fragment of the larger soul whose reality Freud denied. It is an instrument of the *neshamah*, as the neuro-muscular system is of our sensory motor system. The *tselem Elokim* which is inherent in the immortal soul is self-contained and is not imprisoned by physical causality or psychological determinism. It is a free agent, a wonder of creation, a transcendent spark unlike all else in the universe. In his determination to make of psychology a science which will allow predictability and control, and influenced by Darwinian evolution which rendered man a sophisticated anthropoid, it was inevitable that Freud would not perceive the spiritual capacity and dimension of man.

B. F. Skinner's behaviorist theories which have recently captured the popular imagination, are, in my view, a retrogression to an earlier Pavlovian conditioning. Skinner's

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article of faith is that man, too, is no more than a sophisticated animal, devoid of human freedom and dignity. He, therefore, prescribed a societal Skinner-box in which men would be motivated as dogs in a kennel. Who would be the kennel-keeper to prescribe desirable ends is the Achilles-heel of the entire theory, with its implications of repressive authoritarianism.

The Torah's view of man's spiritual singularity is being vindicated in many branches of contemporary psychology. To the challenge of "what is man that thou takest knowledge of him?", the Psalmist responds, "for thou hast made him but little lower than the angels and hast crowned him with glory and honor" (Ps. 8).

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TO THE EDITOR OF *TRADITION*:

The letter of Mr. Moshe Kohn (Spring, '77), an editor of the *Jerusalem Post*, prompts me to write, since, much to my horror, he manages to associate me with a position I have never espoused and do not hold. Mr. Kohn refers to the notion that "America is Yavneh." No one holds that position. I have argued that all of us, there and here, live in the *age* of Yavneh. But that is a different matter. Mr. Kohn does not read very carefully. Mr. Kohn refers then to "the tendentious interpretation of one of the leading mentors of the 'America is Yavneh' school and of the 'if Israel dies' Breira movement,"

namely, this writer. Neither characterization is accurate. In my book on R. Yohanan b. Zakkai I interpret matters exactly as does Allon, whom I quote, with reference to the attitude of the Pharisees toward the Temple before and after 70. But Mr. Kohn is interested in polemics, whether or not they are based on fact. So he cannot be bothered to check and see whether the position he imputes to me — on what is, after all, a matter of historical interpretation, not contemporary politics — is in fact held by me. Rather he simply assumes that the person he wants to destroy takes up the position he wants to smash, and the rest follows. There is a word for this in Hebrew, which we do not have in English, and it is *lehashmid*. Mr. Kohn is an expert on that.

It is self-evident that R. Yohanan b. Zakkai and all those associated with him mourned the destruction of the Temple and wanted to see it rebuilt. Why should the rabbis have created the two vast *sedarim* on cultic rite and requirement, *Oodoshim* and *Tohorot*, if they did not propose to legislate for that prayed-for eventuality? Why should the kind of Judaism emergent after 70 have included the *musaf*-prayers, the many rituals in memory of the Temple (as Mr. Kohn himself points out), if it were not because they sorely missed and wanted the Temple and its cult? True, we do have sayings which suggest that R. Yohanan regarded something other than the Temple as an end in itself, namely, the study of Torah, to do which we were created. But that is of no

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consequence for the issue at hand.

Mr. Kohn further alludes to one of the death-bed stories told about Yohanan and to Rabbi Soloveitchik's interpretation of that story that R. Yohanan was "tortured by the thought that the path he had chosen with regard to the revolt against the Romans may have been wrong." That is, of course, a lovely *midrash*. When stories are so opaque as this one, we can say anything we want about them. But it has no place in the present discussion. Mr. Kohn proceeds to insist that Torah-piety will perish without "the Jewish People's nationhood and landhood in *Erets Yisrael*." But Torah-piety has always encompassed the nationhood of Israel and the Holy Land, so he is either ignorant or dishonest in this matter too. So much for the substance of his *hashmadah*. I hope his newspaper is more accurate and better informed.

As to Miss Deborah Weissman's

allegation that this writer is "a Conservative spokesman" (cited in support of "Diaspora Orthodoxy," whatever that might be!), may I record the fact that I am not only not a spokesman for anyone, but also that I am not even a member of the Rabbinical Assembly. So far as I associate myself with any organized movement in modern Judaism, I *daven* at an Orthodox *minyan* and regard myself as part of those many who are unobservant, or in my instance, insufficiently-observant, 'God-fearers' on the fringes of Orthodoxy.

I think the real issue, and the one Professor Epstein proposed to analyze, is not whether Judaism will survive the demise of the State but whether Judaism in the *Golah* is now surviving the centrality of the State. I think Professor Epstein has asked that question and proved that the negative reply is called for.

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