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# The Sources of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook's Psychology of Nations

By Hagay Shtamler\*

Academic research has neglected to investigate the philosophy of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Hakohen Kook (Zaumel [today: Žeimelis] 1891–1982 Jerusalem) (hereafter: RZY). RZY was the head of the *Merkaẓ HaRav Yeshiva* in Jerusalem and the spiritual leader of “Gush Emunim” that was the ideological catalyser of the establishment of Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria as well as many Yeshivot and pre-army programs in the land of Israel.<sup>1</sup>

Many of Rav Kook's disciples as well as many researchers and academics are not aware that RZY was well versed in general philosophy and used to study the works of various thinkers in their original language. I found in his library a number of German philosophy books including hand written comments of RZY in his own handwriting written next to the text, as well as underlining and exclamation points. Prof. Aharon Shear-Yashuv, who served as the head of the philosophy department of the Bar Ilan University, recounted a discussion he had with RZY regarding philosophers such as Immanuel Kant (Königsberg 1724–1804 Königsberg), Friedrich Nietzsche (Röcken 1844–1900 Weimar), Franz Rosenzweig (Kassel 1886–1929 Frankfurt am Main) and Martin Buber (Wien 1878–1965 Jerusalem). He also writes: “Over the years I met many learned Jews and many rabbis, but I have no doubt that none of them knew so much general and Jewish Philosophy as RZY who was a spiritual giant and a unique person in our generation.”<sup>2</sup> One of the disciples of *Merkaẓ HarRav Yeshiva*, Moshe Bar Yehuda recalled that he used to learn with RZY in his house every Thursday night. Once he asked him whether he and his father had studied philosophy and read world literature? He recorded the answer he received:

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1 On RZY and his philosophy see: HAGAY SHTAMLER, ספר חדש על משנת 'עין בעין' – הרב צבי יהודה הכהן קוק, Eli: Binyan Hatorah, 2016.

2 HILAH WALBERSTEIN, SHALOM KLEIN and SIMCHA RAZ, לדמותו – משמיע ישועה – של הרב צבי יהודה הכהן קוק, Or Etzion: Merkaz Shapira, 2009/10.

After midnight [...] the bookcase, closed with glass doors full of Jewish wisdom: Talmud, Tur, Shulkhan Arukh, Maimonides, books of Rishonim and Akhronim, is behind the disciples' chair. Only now he notices that the cabinet is deeper than a regular bookcase. The Rosh Yeshiva gets up and goes to the bookcase, removes a few books, and behind them another row of books is revealed. The Rosh Yeshiva bends down some little puts in his hand, takes out two of them and puts them on the table. He presents them out loud: Descartes and Kant. His expression is one of amusement: maybe of victory, maybe sharing a secret – the disciple is not sure. Before he absorbs the occurrence, the Rosh Yeshiva sits in the disciples' chair and reads a few sentences in French. Then he goes back to his place, and honors him to read in the second book. “You know German,” he says.<sup>3</sup>

RZY used to say: “I, myself, feel married into the French and German culture.”<sup>4</sup> He was especially fond of “The Psychology of Nations” (*Völkerpsychologie*) of the two Jewish thinkers: Moritz Lazarus and Heymann Steinthal (Gröbzig/Anhalt 1823–1899 Berlin).

### I. Background

“The Psychology of Nations” was a discipline in German philosophy from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup>. After the Second World War, it waned together with other fundamentalist national philosophy that was perceived as the cause of the terrible war that brought death to tens of millions of people.

It is possible to see the traces of national psychology theory as early as the works of the Greek historians Herodotus of Halicarnassus (490/480–c. 424 BCE) and Thucydides (454–399/396 BCE) who differentiated between Greeks and “Barbarians”. Later, we find similar discussions in the works of Giambattista Vico (Naples 1668–1744 Naples), Montesquieu (Château La Brède 1689–1755 Paris), Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet; Paris 1694–1778 Paris), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Geneva 1712–1778 Ermenonville n. Paris), Auguste Comte (Montpellier 1798–1857 Paris), David Hume

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3 MOSHE BAR YEHUDA, צל עובר, Tel Aviv: Am Oved 2007, pp. 104-106.

4 RZY, במערכה הציבורית, Jerusalem: Agudat Zehav Ha'arezt, 1986, p. 124. On the other hand, it is important to emphasize that RZY described himself as firmly planted in the world of Torah, and even when he studied general studies he knew to differentiate between important and trivial knowledge. He stated: “All that extra knowledge that was added to me during that time in the area of general studies only came in a casual way and through connection to the main internal knowledge” (RZY's letter that was printed by Rabbi SHLOMO AVINER, צבי קודש – תולדות חייו של הרב צבי יהודה הכהן קוק, Jerusalem: Hava Library, 1985, p. 153.

(Edinburgh 1711–1776) Edinburgh), John Stuart Mill (Pentonville 1806–1873 Avignon), and others.<sup>5</sup>

The roots of the discipline “Psychology of Nations”, as it expressed itself in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in German philosophy, can be found in the German idealism, particularly Johann Gottfried Herder (Mohrungen 1744–1803 Weimar) who coined the term “spirit of the nation” (*Volksgeist*); he stated that language must be understood as a synthesis of nature and spirit, of bestial foundations accompanied with the capability to contemplate;<sup>6</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (Stuttgart 1770–1831 Berlin) claimed that the “spirit of the world” (*Weltgeist*) is the subject of “world history” (*Weltgeschichte*),<sup>7</sup> and the “objective spirit” (*Objektiver Geist*) is what is expressed in social and political institutions;<sup>8</sup> Johann Friedrich Herbart (Oldenburg 1776–1841 Göttingen) defined psychology as an empiric discipline and one of his positions was that “psychology will remain one sided as long as it takes into account only the individual himself” (On the other hand he objected to the idea of the “national spirit” and determined that the individual is the only spirit there is);<sup>9</sup> Wilhelm von Humboldt (Potsdam 1767–1835 Tegel n. Berlin) spoke of the “primary force” (*Urkraft*) that exists in the foundation of reality that all details are only an expression of it since there is a hierarchy of individuals from the individual to the nation and from there

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5 See EGBERT KLAUTKE, “The Mind of the Nation: The Debate about *Völkerpsychologie*, 1851-1900,” in: *Central Europe* 8 (2010), pp. 1-19, here pp. 3-4; cf. EGBERT KLAUTKE, *The Mind of the Nation: Völkerpsychologie in Germany, 1851–1955*, New York / Oxford: Berghahn Books 2013.

6 JOHANN GOTTFRIED HERDER, *Sprachphilosophie: Ausgewählte Schriften* (Philosophische Bibliothek, vol. 574), ed. by ERICH HEINTEL, with an introduction by ULRIKE ZEUCH, Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2005; GUSTAV KONRAD, *Herders Sprachproblem im Zusammenband der Geistesgeschichte*, Berlin: E. Ebering, 1937.

7 GEORG WILHELM FRIEDRICH HEGEL, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. by G. LASSON & J. HOFFMEISTER (Sämtliche Werke, vol. 2), Leipzig: Verlag der Dürschschen Buchhandlung, 1907 (<sup>2</sup>1921), S. 20.

8 HEGEL, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (note 7), p. CIX. See also RAINER DIRIWÄCHTER, “Völkerpsychologie: The Synthesis that never was,” in: *Culture & Psychology* 10 (2004), pp. 79-103, here p. 86; KLAUTKE, “The Mind of the Nation” (note 5), p. 5; WALTER TERENCE STACE, *The Philosophy of Hegel*, New York: Dover Publications, 1955, p. 374.

9 GUSTAV JAHODA, *Crossroads between Culture and Mind: Continuities and Change in Theories of Human Nature*, New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992, p. 142; IVAN KALMAR, “The Völkerpsychologie of Lazarus and Steinthal and the modern concept of Culture,” in: *Journal of the History of Ideas* 48 (1987), pp. 671-690, here pp. 676-678.

to the entire mankind, and the connection between these various levels is created by the languages that consist of a window to the national mentality of their spokesmen, and they develop not in a linear path rather from the complex relations between the nation and the various individuals of which the nation is unifying.<sup>10</sup>

The above philosophy was the background for the development of the *Völkerpsychologie* by the two Jewish researchers Moritz Lazarus (1824–1903 Meran), and Heymann Steinthal (1823–1899 Berlin). Lazarus, born in the city Filehne (today: Wieleń), which was in the Poznań district in Prussia, served as rector of the University of Bern (Switzerland) in 1864, was lecturer in the military academy of Berlin (1866), and a “guest lecturer” (*Professor extraordinarius, ausserordentlicher Professor*) in the University of Berlin (1866). Steinthal was born in Gröbzig which was in the principality of Anhalt, studied philosophy at the University of Berlin (1856) and the Beit Midrash of the *Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums* (*Higher Institute for Jewish Studies*) (1872). He married Lazarus’s younger sister Janet (1840–1925) in 1859.<sup>11</sup>

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10 See: ELSINA STUBB, *Wilhelm Von Humboldt's Philosophy of Language, its Sources and Influence*, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002; JAMES W. UNDERHILL, *Humboldt: Worldview and Language*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009; MORITZ LAZARUS & HEYMAN STEINTHAL, “Einleitende Gedanken über Völkerpsychologie als Einladung zu einer Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft,” in: *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft* 1 (1860), pp. 1-73, here p. 30.

11 On Lazarus, see: REUBEN BRAININ, כתבים נבחרים, Merhaviah: Sifriyat Hapoalim 1965; David Neumark, “Moshe Lazarus,” in: השילוח 11 (1903), pp. 451-458; INGRID BELKE, “Einleitung,” in: [MORITZ LAZARUS & HEYMAN STEINTHAL]: *Moritz Lazarus und Heymann Steinthal: Die Begründer der Völkerpsychologie in ihren Briefen*, mit einer Einleitung herausgegeben von INGRID BELKE, 2 vols. (Schriftenreihe Wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des LBI, vols. 21 and 44), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck Verlag, 1971–1986, vol. I, pp. XIII-CXLII; MORITZ LAZARUS, *Aus meiner Jugend – Autobiographie* (mit Vorwort und Anhang herausgegeben von NAHIDA LAZARUS), Frankfurt am Main: J. Kauffmann, 1913; NAHIDA RUTH LAZARUS, *Ein deutscher Professor in der Schweiz: nach Briefen und Dokumenten im Nachlass ihres Gatten von Nahida Lazarus*, Berlin: F. Dümmler, 1910; [NAHIDA LAZARUS & ALFRED LEICHT], *Moritz Lazarus' Lebenserinnerungen*, bearbeitet von Nahida Lazarus und Alfred Leicht, Berlin: G. Reimer, 1906. On Steinthal see: [REUBEN BRAININ], כל כתבי ראובן בן מרדכי בריינין, 3 vols. New York 1923, vol. III; WALTRAUD BUMANN, *Die Sprachtheorie Heymann Steinthals*, Meisenheim am Glan: Anton Hain, 1965; and the articles in: HARTWIG WIEDEBACH & ANNETTE WINKELMANN, *Chajim H. Steinthal: Sprachwissenschaftler und Philosoph im 19 Jahrhundert* (Studies in European Judaism, vol. 4), Leiden: Brill, 2002.

Steinthal met with Lazarus in 1848 at the lectures of the philologist Karl Wilhelm Ludwig Heyse (Oldenburg 1797–1855 Berlin). At the time Steinthal was writing his book *Die Sprachwissenschaft Wilhelm von Humboldts und die Hegel'sche Philosophie* (Wilhelm von Humboldt's Study of Languages and Hegel's Philosophy), in which he claimed that Hegel is wrong thinking that the spirit must know itself and not more, since if that happens there is no room for development and progress. He argues that it is clear that the world is constantly developing and progressing; the thoughts and theories are becoming more and more sophisticated. In response, Lazarus said to Steinthal that after he dismissed the philosophy of Hegel he needed to deal with the wisdom of the soul and to investigate how ideas and concepts actually develop.<sup>12</sup> Steinthal once remarked in a conversation with Reuven (Ruben b. Mordechai) Brainin (Lyady 1862–1939 New York):

I owe thanks to my friend and brother-in-law Lazarus for all my ideas and thoughts. He brought me to the philosophy of the soul of Herbart and to his moral teachings. He woke my mind and shook up my sleeping thoughts. Only after Lazarus presented to me in his crisp and beautiful style my own thoughts and opinions, only then did they crystalize and clarify for me.<sup>13</sup>

Nahida Ruth, Lazarus's wife, writes that the two researchers complimented each other in a perfect way.<sup>14</sup> She quotes the words of her husband about his friendship with Steinthal:

Die Glut der Freundschaft wird vielleicht nicht heisser, aber ihr Glanz wird heller, wenn bei gleichem Adel der Gesinnung und des Strebens zwei verschiedene

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12 BRAININ, כתבים נבחרים (note 11), pp. 222-224.

13 [BRAININ], כל כתיבי ראובן בן מרדכי בריינין, vol. III, p. 167.

14 On Nahida Ruth Lazarus, see her biography: *Ich suchte Dich*, Berlin: Cronbach, 1898. See also: JULIUS BRODNITZ, "Nahida Remy," in: *CV Zeitung* 20 (1928), pp. 28-29; JUTTA DICK & MARINA SASSENBERG, *Jüdische Frauen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert: Lexikon zu Leben und Werk*, Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1993, pp. 238-239; KATHARINA GERSTENBERGER, "Nahida Ruth Lazarus's *Ich suchte Dich*: A Female Autobiography from the Turn of the Century," in: *Monatshefte für deutschsprachige Literatur und Kultur* 86 (1994), pp. 525-542; KATHARINA GERSTENBERGER, *Truth to Tell: German Women's Autobiographies and Turn-of-the-Century Culture*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1961, pp. 25-63; BETTINA KRATZ-RITTER, "Konversion als Antwort auf den Berliner Antisemitismusstreit? Nahida Ruth Lazarus und ihr Weg zum Judentum," in: *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 46 (1994), pp. 15-30; ALAN LEVENSON, "An Adventure in Otherness: Nahida Remy-Ruth Lazarus," in: TAMAR RUDAVSKY (ed.), *Gender and Judaism: The Transformation of Tradition*, New York: New York University Press, 1995, pp. 99-111.

Charaktere sich in ihrer Zuneigung treffen; und wenn vollends beide schöpferischen Geistes sind, beide auf ein gemeinsames Ziel gerichtet, aber verschieden an Kraft und Kunst des Schaffens: Da ist jeder des andern Schüler und Lehrer zugleich.<sup>15</sup>

And Nahida adds that –

Das war ihm nicht bloss eine theoretische Erkenntnis, sondern eine warm pulsierende Erfahrung.<sup>16</sup>

## II. *The Psychology of Nations*

In 1859 Lazarus and Steinthal established the: *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft* (Journal of Psychology of Nations and Science of Language), that printed twenty volumes until 1890. They authored the first paper in the first volume (1 [1860], pp. 1-73) that was titled: *Einleitende Gedanken über Völkerpsychologie als Einladung zu einer Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft* (“Primary thoughts on the Psychology of Nations as an Invitation to the Journal of Psychology of Nations”). The assumption of the journal was that every nation has a *Volksg Geist* (“national spirit”) that should be researched and described. In a letter from 1 August 1845 to his cousin Johana Berendt (1822–1917), Lazarus writes that in research of the past the spirit was seen, *als sei der Geist, der Gesamtgeist der ganzen Menschheit Ein Geist* (“as if it, the collective spirit of all people, were One Spirit”).<sup>17</sup> In his first article *Über den Begriff und die Möglichkeit einer Völkerpsychologie* (“On the concept and possibility of a psychology of nations”), written in 1851, Lazarus claimed that individual psychology is not a sufficient explanation of the cultural creations of a people. It is necessary to understand the “spirit of the nation”. Nevertheless, Lazarus admitted that it is a field of research that does not yet exist.<sup>18</sup> He compared it to the field of botany that is capable of exploring the individual tree but not the entire forest and the interaction between the various trees that grow there:

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15 NAHIDA RUTH LAZARUS, *Ein deutscher Professor in der Schweiz: nach Briefen und Dokumenten im Nachlass ihres Gatten von Nahida Lazarus*, Berlin: F. Dümmler, 1910, p. 76.

16 LAZARUS, *Ein deutscher Professor in der Schweiz* (note 15), p. 76.

17 BELKE, “Einleitung” (note 11), vol. I, p. XLVI.

18 MORITZ LAZARUS, “Ueber den Begriff und die Möglichkeit einer Völkerpsychologie,” in: *Deutsches Museum: Zeitschrift für Literatur Kunst und öffentliches Leben* 1/2 (1851), pp. 112–126, here p. 112 = in: MORITZ LAZARUS, *Grundzüge der Völkerpsychologie und Kulturwissenschaft*, hrsg. und mit einer Einleitung versehen von KLAUS CHRISTIAN KÖHNKE (Philosophische Bibliothek, vol. 551), Hamburg: Felix Verlag Meiner, 2003, pp. 3-26.

Wie ein Baum, auch hundert Bäume sind Gegenstand der Pflanzenphysiologie; aber 50,000 Bäume etwa auf einer Quadratmeile stehend, sind ein Wald. Der Wald als solcher, als Ganzes, ist Gegenstand einer anderen, nämlich der Forstwirtschaft. Sie wird sich vielfach auf die Botanik und Psychologie beziehen und stützen, aber sie ist nach *Zweck und Mitteln* der Betrachtung eine andere Wissenschaft. Man kann und muss sagen, der Volksgeist besteht nur aus einzelnen Geistern, wenn man aber meint, der Volksgeist, dass der Volksgeist ebenso wie jeder andere Geist der Psychologie angehört und keiner besonderen Wissenschaft bedarf, dann, im strengen Sinne des Wortes, nach diesem Bilde, dann sieht man den Wald vor lauter Bäumen nicht.<sup>19</sup>

In essence, Lazarus and Steinthal saw the *Völkerpsychologie* as an extension of the psychology of the individual to that of the nation.<sup>20</sup> The same processes that take place in individual psychology take place in national psychology only they are more complex.<sup>21</sup> Just like emotional health of individual depends on his physical health, thus the emotional health of a nation depends on the health of its body – the country. The relations between individuals and the collective are described as an interaction (*Wechselwirkung*) since the individual is part of the collective and the collective is created by the individuals.<sup>22</sup> However, in contrast to the individual spirit, the national spirit is more than the sum total of the parts that make it up (*Das Ganze ist mehr als die Summe seiner Teile*),<sup>23</sup> therefore the collective is not made of individuals rather the individuals exist within the collective.<sup>24</sup> Since man is a *gesellschaftliches Wesen* (“social being”) who can exist only as part of a national community, and since the community is more than the sum total of its parts – the psychology of nations is a necessary expansion of individual psychology with the concept *Volksgeist* describing in a simple way the internal common activity of the individuals of the nation, as it is expressed

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19 MORITZ LAZARUS, “Ueber das Verhältniß des einzelnen zur Gesamtheit,” in: *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft* 2 (1862), pp. 393-453, here pp. 329-330 = in: LAZARUS, *Grundzüge der Völkerpsychologie und Kulturwissenschaft* (note 18), pp. 39-129, here p. 46.

20 LAZARUS & STEINTHAL, “Einleitende Gedanken” (note 10), p. 5.

21 LAZARUS & STEINTHAL, “Einleitende Gedanken” (note 10), p. 11.

22 LAZARUS & STEINTHAL, “Einleitende Gedanken” (note 10), p. 31.

23 SABINE SANDER, “Sprachdenken im Kontext von Moritz Lazarus' Völkerpsychologie,” in: *Nabaraim: Zeitschrift für deutsch-jüdische Literatur und Kulturgeschichte* 3 (2009), pp. 102-116, here p. 113.

24 LAZARUS, “Ueber das Verhältniß des einzelnen zur Gesamtheit” (note 19), p. 393 = in: LAZARUS, *Grundzüge der Völkerpsychologie und Kulturwissenschaft* (note 18), p. 39.

in language, myths, religion, practice, and folklore. All these were to be examined by the psychology of nations.<sup>25</sup>

In his article *Über den Begriff und die Möglichkeit einer Völkerpsychologie*, Lazarus developed the idea of the “objective spirit” (*Objektiver Geist*) or “general spirit” (*Gesamtgeist*) that he borrowed from Hegel.<sup>26</sup> He places the “objective spirit” as the spirit of the nation in contrast to the “subjective spirit that belongs to the individual”. The “objective spirit” constantly develops opinions, concepts, understanding and ideas differentiating the spirit of one nation from that of the other. Therefore, he defines man as a *gesellschaftliches Wesen* (“social being”)<sup>27</sup> whose life is surrounded by circles of views, concepts, ideas, motives, feelings, assumptions, aspirations, etc.: *Diese Summe alles geistigen Geschehens in einem Volke ohne Rücksicht auf die Subjecte, kann man sagen, ist der objective Geist desselben*,<sup>28</sup> through which every nation differs from the other.<sup>29</sup>

The objective spirit therefore defines the intellectual heritage of the nation. It includes all the knowledge that has been accumulated through the generations whether it be basic technical knowledge or more sophisticated information such as art and science.<sup>30</sup> In effect, there are two layers: the first is the emotional that includes thoughts feelings and tendencies. The second is the practical aspects that are expressed in literature, artistic creations, manufactured products, memorials, transportation vehicles, weapons, toys,

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25 LAZARUS & STEINTHAL, “Einleitende Gedanken” (note 10), p. 29.

26 GERHART VON GRAEVENITZ, “Das Kulturmodell der Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft,” in: ALEIDA ASSMANN, ULRICH GAIER and GISELA TROMMSDORFF (eds.), *Positionen der Kulturanthropologie* (Suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft, vol. 1724), Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004, pp. 148-171, here p. 154, points out that Lazarus significantly changed this concept. Hegel saw world history as an imminent logical process of the “spirit of the world” (*Weltgeist*), and the “objective spirit” (*Objektiver Geist*) that then creates certain nations. See also: BELKE, “Einleitung” (note 11), vol. I, p. XLIX; HANS ULRICH LESSING, “Bemerkungen zum Begriff des objektiven Geistes bei Hegel, Lazarus und Dilthey,” in: *Reports on Philosophy* 9 (1985), pp. 49-62.

27 LAZARUS & STEINTHAL, “Einleitende Gedanken” (note 10), p. 5.

28 MORITZ LAZARUS, “Einige synthetische Gedanken zur Völkerpsychologie,” in: *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft* 3 (1865), pp. 1-94, here p. 43 = in: LAZARUS, *Grundzüge der Völkerpsychologie und Kulturwissenschaft* (note 18), pp. 131-238, here p. 178.

29 LAZARUS, “Einige synthetische Gedanken” (note 28), p. 44 = in: LAZARUS, *Grundzüge der Völkerpsychologie und Kulturwissenschaft* (note 18), p. 178.

30 KLAUTKE, “The Mind of the Nation” (note 5), p. 5.

and similar things.<sup>31</sup> The purpose of the inquiry, according to Lazarus and Steinthal was, to distinguish between the natural things that exist in the world, and the general abstract laws that are their foundation.

Während die erste Reihe ein natürliches Leben und Sein, die vorhandenen Dinge, das Reich der Wirklichkeit nach den in ihm hervortretenden Formen beschreibt, entwickelt die andere Reihe die allgemeinen Gesetze, nach welchen diese Formen der Wirklichkeit entstehen und vergehen, sucht die abstrakten Urelemente und Elementar-Kräfte der Natur auf.<sup>32</sup>

This distinction will in turn lead to discovery of the objective spirit of the nation according to research of the language, myths, religion, folklore, art, science, law, culture and history of the nation.<sup>33</sup> Let it be said clearly: the national spirit is not merely one aspect of a nation, important as it may be; it is the catalysing force – the *causa causans* of national history; when the laws of the spirit are discovered, the development of the spirit throughout history will be understood.

Lazarus and Steinthal concentrated on investigating the languages and posited that since the language is the most primary expression of the nation, studying language is the preferred way to recognize the national spirit.<sup>34</sup> The varied thinking processes of the various nations manifest themselves in the language which the nation speaks.

Mit der Sprache hängen dann die logischen Formen des Denkens aufs Innigste zusammen, und Jeder, dem das Wesen der Sprache im wahren Lichte erscheint, wird erkennen, dass *grundverschiedene* Redeformen nur die Erscheinung grundverschiedener Denkformen sind.<sup>35</sup>

Language develops by individuals that share certain understandings expressing it first through subjective language which then influences the objective language and in that way the influence flows from individual to collective and back to the individual in an endless circular process.

Wo immer mehrere Menschen zusammenleben, ist dies das nothwendige Ergebniß ihres Zusammenlebens, daß aus der subjectiven geistigen Thätigkeit Derselben sich ein objectiver, geistiger Gehalt entwickelt, welcher dann zum *Inhalt*, zur *Norm* und zum *Organ* ihrer ferneren subjectiven Thätigkeit wird. So

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31 JAHODA, *Crossroads between Culture and Mind* (note 9), p. 148.

32 LAZARUS & STEINTHAL, “Einleitende Gedanken” (note 10), p. 19.

33 LAZARUS & STEINTHAL, “Einleitende Gedanken” (note 10), p. 2.

34 See: HEYMAN STEINTHAL, *Philologie, Geschichte und Psychologie in ihren gegenseitigen Beziehungen*, Berlin: F. Dümmler, 1864, p. 45.

35 LAZARUS & STEINTHAL, “Einleitende Gedanken” (note 10), p. 30; cf. LAZARUS, *Grundzüge der Völkerpsychologie und Kulturwissenschaft* (note 18), p. 13

entspringt aus der subjectiven Thätigkeit des Sprechens, indem sie von mehreren Individuen unter gleichen Antrieben und Bedingungen vollzogen wird und dadurch auch das Verstehen einschließt, eine objective Sprache. Diese Sprache steht dann den Individuen als ein objektiver Inhalt für die folgenden Sprechacte gegenüber [...].<sup>36</sup>

This is the reason why Lazarus and Steinthal paid much of their attention to the philological research and even named their journal *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft* – Journal for the Psychology of Nations and Philology.

### III. *Was heisst National?*

Lazarus repeated these ideas in his later essay published in 1880 under the title *Was heisst National?* He wrote it in the wake of the rise of antisemitism in Germany in the 1870s. In this essay, he combats the claims of the anti-Semite Heinrich Gotthard von Treitschke (Dresden 1834–1896 Berlin), who wrote in his essay *Unsere Aussichten* (“Our chances”):<sup>37</sup> *Die Juden sind unser Unglück!* (“the Jews are our misfortune!”), and they have nothing to contribute to the Christian German society.<sup>38</sup>

Lazarus opens by rejecting the assumption that nationality is defined by objective criteria such as: ancestry origin, morals, practices, territory, or religion. Nationality should be defined by personal belonging and identification with a certain nation that leads to cultural identification, not by racial or geographic criteria.<sup>39</sup> He rejects the assumption that Jews have a nationality different from the Germans:<sup>40</sup> *Aber wir sind Deutsche, als Deutsche müssen wir reden.*<sup>41</sup> He tries to prove that nationalism is independent of territory and religion, for example, from territories inhabited by many nations of the same religion, but differ from each other.<sup>42</sup> His argument: *Die wahre Natur*

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36 LAZARUS, “Einige synthetische Gedanken” (note 28), p. 41.

37 HEINRICH GOTTHARD VON TREITSCHKE, “Unsere Aussichten,” in: *Preussische Jahrbücher* 44 (1879), pp. 559-576.

38 See MICHAEL MEYER, *Judaism with Modernity*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press 2001, pp. 64-75.

39 SIMCHA BUNIM AUERBACH, “משה מוריץ לצרום,” in: SHIM‘ON FEDERBUSCH (ed.), *הכמת ישראל באירופה* 3 (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv: Ogen 1965), pp. 206-217, here p. 207.

40 MORITZ LAZARUS, *Was heisst National? Ein Vortrag*, Berlin: F. Dümmler, 1880, p. 6.

41 LAZARUS, *Was heisst National?* (note 40), p. 5.

42 LAZARUS, *Was heisst National?* (note 40), pp. 7-10.

*und das eigentliche Wesen der Nationalität ist nur aus dem Geiste zu verstehen.*<sup>43</sup> Thus, he saw the nation as a “spiritual product” (*geistiges Erzeugniß*)<sup>44</sup> of people belonging to it and “create it constantly”.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, the place of birth does not determine the nationality, since one can choose to detach oneself from one’s place of birth and join another nation. He wrote:

Nicht jeder Ort, wo man geboren ist, ist eine Heimath, nicht jedes Land der Väter auch ein Vaterland. Ich kann durch die Gemeinschaft von Staat und Recht an solche gekettet sein, deren Sprache ich nicht verstehe, deren Sitte, Bildung und Glauben mir fremd ist.

Die menschliche Freiheit steht wieder über allen diesen einzelnen Anziehungskräften; ich kann mich von allem losreißen, zu den Fremden gehen und mit König David’s Ahnfrau sprechen: Dein Volk sey mein Volk und Dein Gott sey mein Gott. Der Begriff des Volks ist nicht durch rein objective Merkmale fest umgrenzt, sondern er erfordert auch die subjective Empfindung. Mein Volk sind diejenigen, die ich als mein Volk ansehe, die ich die Meinen nenne, denen ich mich verbunden weiß durch unlösbare Bande.<sup>46</sup>

Lazarus claims that according to the subjective feeling one can feel attached to one nation for a while, and later feel that one belongs to a different nation.<sup>47</sup> Therefore,

Zu welcher Nation gehören wir? M. H. [Meine Herren] wir sind Deutsche, nichts als Deutsche, wenn vom Begriff der Nationalität die Rede ist, wir gehören nur einer Nation an, der deutschen. [...] wir sind’s, wollen, können auch nichts anderes seyn. Und nicht die Sprache allein macht uns zu Deutschen. Das Land, das wir bewohnen, der Staat, dem wir dienen, das Gesetz, dem wir gehorsamen, die Wissenschaft, die uns belehrt, die Bildung, die uns erleuchtet, die Kunst, die uns erhebt, sie sind alle deutsch.<sup>48</sup>

This article exposes a change in Lazarus’s position. Initially, he saw the nation as a harmonic organ which is a product of its spirit. Now, he sees it as

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43 LAZARUS, *Was heißt National?* (note 40), p. 12.

44 LAZARUS, *Was heißt National?* (note 40), p. 13.

45 LAZARUS, *Was heißt National?* (note 40), p. 13.

46 LAZARUS, *Was heißt National?* (note 40), pp. 16-17.

47 LAZARUS, *Was heißt National?* (note 40), pp. 19-21.

48 LAZARUS, *Was heißt National?* (note 40), p. 18-19. And Lazarus continues, *Muttersprache und Vaterland sind deutsch, beide Erzeuger unseres Innern; hier standen unsre Wiegen, hier sind die Gräber derer, von denen wir stammen, in vielen Geschlechtern; unser Anfang also und unser Ende des Lebens ist hier. Nur unsere Abstammung ist keine deutsche, wir sind keine Germanen; wir sind Juden, also Semiten. Aber auch die anderen Theile der deutschen Nation sind von Abstammung keineswegs alle, und keineswegs reine Deutsche; nicht einmal sind alle Germanen.* (ibidem p. 19)

a diverse unit that contains internal pluralism.<sup>49</sup> Nationalism is a result not of race but of spirit, it is a cultural historical process that unifies all those that participate; while each individual has a unique character, together they contribute to the national organism.<sup>50</sup>

Conclusively, Lazarus and Steinthal did not manage to develop *the Völkerpsychologie* in a systematic way, and their many declarations of intention did not materialize. Gustav Jahoda writes that their ambitious but vague program never really had a chance to be achieved [...].<sup>51</sup>

Nevertheless, the(ir) theory was picked up by Wilhelm Wundt (Neckarau 1832–1920 Grossbothen n. Leipzig), who published on the subject ten thick volumes, and Willi Hellpach (Oels/Silesia 1877–1955 Heidelberg), who delved into this discipline in order to adapt to the approach of the Third Reich and eventually became identified as one of the ideologists of the National-Socialist party.

The psychology of nations has been forgotten as well as the people who promoted it. At most, it is seen as a pseudo-scientific theory that served political ends in the racial atmosphere that prevailed in Germany of those times. Remnants of the approach can be found in sociology, anthropology and folklore studies, since the researchers of these areas were disciples of the founders of the “Psychology of Nations”.<sup>52</sup>

#### IV. *The Psychology of Nations in the Teachings of RZY*

Lazarus and Steinthal are forgotten; they are rarely mentioned in works that deal with Jewish philosophy, and when mentioned, it is usually the ethical aspect of their philosophy rather than their “Psychology of Nations”. Only

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49 KLAUTKE, “The Mind of the Nation” (note 5), p. 15; ELIEZER SCHWEID, תולדות הפילוסופיה היהודית מתקופת המקרא עד זמננו, 3 vols. Jerusalem: Am Oved, 1996–2007, vol. III, p. 103.

50 SCHWEID, תולדות הפילוסופיה היהודית (note 49), vol. III, p. 103.

51 JAHODA, *Crossroads between Culture and Mind* (note 9), p. 136. ULRICH SIEG, “Identification with National and Universal Values: Jewish Philosophers in the German Kieserite,” in: HENRY WASSERMANN (ed.), *The German-Jewish History we inherited: Young Germans write Jewish History*, Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1994, pp. 101–125, here p. 103, writes that the “life expectancy” of the Psychology of Nations could not have been long because the neo-Kantian philosophy replaced the philosophic paradigms that preceded it.

52 From among them, the following names should be mentioned here: Ernest Renan (Tréguier 1823–1898 Paris); David Émile Durkheim (Épinal 1858–1917 Paris); Martin Buber (Wien 1878–1965 Jerusalem); Franz Boas (Minden 1858–1942 New York); Georg Simmel (Berlin 1858–1918 Strasbourg) and others.

Moritz Lazarus' work on the prophet Jeremiah was translated into Hebrew by Reuben Brainin.<sup>53</sup> To the best of my knowledge, RZY was the only one interested in their theory in his time. RZY stated that the highest level of reality – beyond the regular division into objects, plants, animals and people, is the collective. The collective is not merely a collection of individuals rather than a divine abstract entity that existed first and is revealed through the individuals that make it up. It is not the individuals who make up society; it is the abstract concept that God created that brings the nation and its individuals into being. In his classes, he would present this theory and connect it to the psychology of nations that he studied in his youth when he was in Halberstadt in Germany. Again and again, he would mention Lazarus and Steinthal and state that just like there is an individual soul and psychology, thus there is a national soul and psychology. RZY posited that this idea of a “national spirit” is an ancient Jewish idea: our sages mention “ministers” of nations that serve in the divine court, “Angels of Nations”.<sup>54</sup> He said: “We always knew that there are angels, ministers, forces of personality that are specific to the nations.”<sup>55</sup>

RZY also saw a connection between the spirit of the nation and its language. “The language belongs to the public side [...]; it expresses the divine spiritual content of the nation;” and, “Just as the nations are divine creations, thus the languages are divine creations.”<sup>56</sup> Therefore, “The language is a revelation of the national ideal value, not a result of external agreement.”<sup>57</sup> As a result, RZY wrote that “The internal connection between the science of languages and of the spirit of nations is a result of the language, the treasure that reveals the spirit of the nation, is the foundation of its history the story of its life [...].” He elaborates:

The language is the word of the history, like history it is created by man it resides within him and grows and develops together with him, it is the life of his own soul (רוח ממללה) *ruah memallela*,<sup>58</sup> the order of the letters, the way they

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53 *Der Prophet Jeremias*, Breslau: S. Schottlaender; New York: G.E. Stechert, 1894.

54 See: Daniel 10:13, 20; bMakkot 12a; Midrash Shoher Tov *Tebilim* 150; MTanh *Mishpatim* 18; PRE 24; BerR 68:14; 77:3, and more.

55 RZY, שיחות הרב צבי יהודה הכהן קוק על התורה, vol. 1, Jerusalem: Sifriyat Hava 1993, p. 334.

56 RZY, שיחות הרב צבי יהודה הכהן קוק על התורה (note 55), pp. 461-462.

57 RZY, פעמים, Jerusalem: Gali Masekhta, 1997, p. 31.

58 This relates to what it said in Genesis 2:7 regarding the creation of man “Then *Adonai*, God, formed a person from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, so that he became a living being (According

are pronounced, according to his emotional and physical movements with his mind, senses, nerves and limbs (psychopathology); the word combinations and the logical construct of the sentences in which his natural attitude whether the bottom of the bottom or the lofty of the lofty is expressed and revealed through this from the action of the depth of his inner character and his essential wisdom it becomes dynamic and a blessing for generations.<sup>59</sup>

Despite all the above, there is a distinct difference between RZY and the *Völkerpsychologie* of Lazarus and Steinthal. According to them, the language does not define the nation because there are many nations that use the same language and there are nations that use a number of languages. Also, it is impossible to define nations based on ethnic origin because all the nations are mixed. They posited that a nation is the result of the will of the people to create it;<sup>60</sup> or in other words: the constant referendum.<sup>61</sup>

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to David H. Stern, *Complete Jewish Bible*, 1998). The Targum Onqelos translation renders the last words to mean: “a speaking soul”.

59 RZY, *צמח צבי*, Jerusalem, 1991, pp. 101-102. This is the reason Eliezer ben Yehuda, the restorer of the Jewish language, is so important; “Even though his belief and Jewish practice was spoilt, he did great for the restoration of the Hebrew language developing it in speech and literature” (RZY, manuscript dated 27 Adar 1978).

60 LAZARUS & STEINTHAL, “Einleitende Gedanken” (note 10), pp. 32-36.

61 The expression “constant referendum” is usually attributed to Ernest Renan, since in his *De la nation et du peuple juif*, he wrote, “Nation is a spirit, a spiritual principle. Two things that are in effect one constitute this spirit and spiritual principle: one is in the past and the other in the present. One is a commonly owned heritage rich with memories; the other depends on current agreement to aspire to live together, to continue the inheritance we received in its entirety” (Tel Aviv: Resling 1969 (Hebrew) *ibidem*, p. 67). “Nation is therefore based on a great solidarity that it created by the sacrifices we sacrificed in the past and those that we are willing to sacrifice in the future. It departs from the past and manifests itself in the present in a concrete fact: the agreement and will that is expressed clearly – to continue to live side by side. The existence of the nation is (excuse me for the metaphor) a daily referendum just as the existence of the individual is a constant declaration of life” (*ibidem*, p. 68). However, Lazarus, in his autobiography, claims that Renan copied this idea from his *Was heißt National?* and mentioned them in a lecture he gave at the Sorbonne on 11 March 1882 titled: *Qu'est-ce que une nation? (What is a nation?)*. One of Lazarus's disciples, Alfred Leicht (1861–1946) went as far as to blame Renan for plagiarism. See: ALFRED LEICHT, *Lazarus der Begründer der Völkerpsychologie*, Leipzig: Dürr'sche Buchhandlung, 1904, pp. 19-20: “Daß die Gedanken jener 20 Seiten, die Renan aufs sorgfältigste erwogen hat, die sein Glaubensbekenntnis enthalten, die er der Vergessenheit nicht anheimfallen lassen möchte, in allem Wesentlichen

In another quote, this principle is further elucidated:

The principle of the nation relies on the subjective opinions of the individuals themselves, on their common identity, and the feeling of belonging that they share... A Nation is a collection of people who see themselves as a nation, and count themselves as a nation.<sup>62</sup>

The above means that the national organism results from the subjective recognition of the individuals that constitute its individual organs. These individuals decide which nation they belong to, and by their decision they create the nation.<sup>63</sup>

RZY's approach seems to be diametrically opposed to the above. In his opinion "the spiritual expression of the collective does not begin from the individuals; it is a divine creation."<sup>64</sup> Certainly, if it is a divine creation it does not depend on the conviction and will of the individuals who make up the society?

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aus Lazarus geschöpft, Lazarus' Gedanken sind, hat Renan zu bekunden vergessen. Seinem Danke gab er nur dadurch Ausdruck, daß er ihm seinen Vortrag im ersten Druck nach Nizza sandte, wo sich Lazarus damals aufhielt, der ihm 2 Jahre zuvor seinen Vortrag gleichfalls zugeschickt hatte [...]. Man schrieb damals Lazarus aus Paris, ob er nicht seine Priorität für die Hauptgedanken in Renans Vortrage geltend machen wolle. Lazarus vermutete, daß diese Anregung von einem Feinde Renans ausgehe, und antwortete: Ich freue mich so sehr, daß Renan für meine Gedanken mit seinem Namen Propaganda gemacht, daß ich auf die Nennung meines Namens gern verzichte." This is also claimed by Egbert Klautke; see, KLAUTKE, "The Mind of the Nation" (note 5), p. 16. Another disciple, MANFRED VOIGTS, "Ernest Renan und Moritz Lazarus," in: *PaRDeS* 8 (2004), pp. 38-39, here p. 39, disagrees stating that Lazarus was happy that Renan was spreading his ideas even though he did not mention their source and origin: "Er freute sich, daß Renan Propaganda nicht für seinen Namen, sondern für seine Gedanken machte. Des deutschen Philosophen Selbstlosigkeit ließ keine Verstimmung aufkommen."

62 LAZARUS & STEINTHAL, "Einleitende Gedanken" (note 10), p. 35: "Der Begriff Volk beruht auf der subjectiven Ansicht der Glieder des Volkes selbst von sich selbst, von ihrer Gleichheit und Zusammengehörigkeit [...] so scheint uns nun die einzig mögliche Definition etwa folgende: ein Volk ist eine Menge von Menschen, welche sich für ein Volk ansehen, zu einem Volke rechnen."

63 Of interest are the words of Nathan Rotenstreich, *המחשבה היהודית בעת החדשה*, Tel Aviv: Am Oved 1987, p. 140: "This approach served essentially the ideology of assimilation. If the national identity is not an objective factor forced on the individual rather a product of his choice, then a Jew can decide to be of any nationality he chooses rejecting his Jewish origin and attaching himself to a different nation."

64 RZY, שיחות הרב צבי יהודה על המועדים, part 2, Jerusalem: Sifriyat Hava 1986, p. 31.

It can be said that RZY was actually in complete disagreement with Lazarus' and Steinthal's *Völkerpsychologie*, nevertheless he mentioned it again and again in order to show that general philosophy as well recognizes the existence of a collective psychology of a collective conscience that is beyond the sum total of the individuals. This was a development in philosophy that previously could not see beyond the individual, viewing the nations as a collection of people and not more. Starting from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century they started to identify a *Volksgeist* – a national spirit. That was the initial innovation of Lazarus and Steinthal. In that regard, RZY agreed with them though he completely disagreed regarding how that spirit is created.

However, it is also possible to suggest a different explanation. Egbert Klautke claimed that the definition of the *Völkerpsychologie* is circular. It is not clear what came first: the nation or the spirit of the nation: “The most basic terms of their approach, ‘nation’ or ‘folk’ (*Volk*) and ‘folk spirit’ (*Volksgeist*) were defined in a circular way; it remained unclear which came first: nation or folk spirit;”<sup>65</sup> “Folk Psychology had inherent weakness and contradictions, such as the circular definition of the Volk and the *Volksgeist*.”<sup>66</sup>

Indeed, Klautke argues further, if the individual chooses the nation, how does the spirit of the nation suddenly rest on him?<sup>67</sup> Lazarus and Steinthal also knew that it never happened that a large group of people choose to belong to the French, German, or English nations and suddenly they belonged – the French, German, or English spirit engulfed them. What did they mean when they spoke of the personal choice of the individuals?

Perhaps, they did not mean an actual action in which each person consciously chooses to belong to one nation or another; rather it is a spiritual compatibility between the individual and the nation to which he belongs. It is possible to compare this to the biblical description of Moses approaching the Jewish people and asking them to accept the Torah. They answer and say: “Everything that God has said we will do and hear.”<sup>68</sup> The Midrash describes how God went to the nations and offered them the Torah. Each nation refused to receive it. When he came to the Jewish people they immediately complied.<sup>69</sup> Here too it does not mean that every individual Jew

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65 KLAUTKE, “The Mind of the Nation” (note 5), p. 5.

66 KLAUTKE, “The Mind of the Nation” (note 5), p. 18.

67 KLAUTKE, “The Mind of the Nation” (note 5), p. 19.

68 Exodus 24:7 (based on CJB with necessary changes).

69 Pesiqta Rabbati, 21 (ed. Ish-Shalom, fol. 99b).

present thought about it and decided to comply; rather as Yehudah b. Bezal'el Loew of Prague, the MaHaRa"l (1520-1609) explains that it means that the nature of the Jewish people was conducive for accepting the Torah, this is considered their "choice".<sup>70</sup>

If that is the meaning of a "constant referendum" indeed, Klautke's criticism of Lazarus is not valid, for there is no circular definition here. It explains, however, that, and why, RZY mentioned Lazarus and Steinthal many times in his lessons because he agreed with them.

## V. *Conclusion*

We are living in a post-modern era in which there is a tendency to obliterate borders between the various nations and to focus on the individual without taking into account his or her interaction with the nation in which he or she dwells or belongs to. Consequently, it is the ethnic groups that are demanding recognition. Thus, future history will determine whether the theories of Lazarus and Steinthal will become relevant again or not.

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70 MaHaRa"l, תפארת ישראל, Bnei Brak: Yahadut 1980, chapters 1, 32.