

Jewish Survival and the Jewish Cultural Arts*

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Introduction

MY comments which follow are based on convictions formulated during my 22 years of service at the 92nd Street "Y", an institution whose image as a cultural center has undoubtedly influenced many Jewish agencies across the country, and may have had an impact in Birmingham, too. The experience of the Y has proved that the Jewish cultural arts cannot stand alone, but must be coupled with the universal arts. It is not feasible to offer the Jewish without the universal. The converse is equally true. To offer the universal arts without the Jewish is to make the Center an anachronism stripped of its unique, central purpose as a Jewish survivalist institution.

We all live in a dual world, the universal and the Jewish, and the greatest majority of us find that most of our life space is filled principally by the universal environment of which we are a part. Our daily discourse, our entertainments, the media of communication through which we are bombarded, the broad society that envelops us, the causes of America's people and their destiny, the institutions of learning of which we are products; these are the all pervasive influences that start governing our lives from the earliest age. Nevertheless, the Jewish cultural arts can be made to become an important element in the life style we fashion for ourselves and our children.

The entire organized Jewish Community must increasingly face the stubborn question as to what will be the content of our Jewish life tomorrow. What will Jewish civilization be like in the future? The measure of any civilization depends upon the extent, quality and content of its artistic and cultural expression.

The Jewish cultural arts can make us wiser and happier—inwardly healthier, outwardly more alive, because the arts are a source of enjoyment and delight, of refreshment and renewal. They are educating and civilizing influences, providing us with a sense of the grace, power, enchantment, and beauty of which the creative impulse of man is capable. At their greatest, the arts are exalting, even possessing religious, moral and mystical power.

When President John F. Kennedy dedicated a new library at Amherst College in 1963, he said: "I see little of more importance to the future of our country and our civilization than full recognition of the place of the artist. If art is to nourish the roots of our culture, society must set the artist free to follow his vision wherever it takes him . . . art is not a form of propaganda, it is a form of truth."¹

Mordecai Kaplan, one of the great philosophers of American Jewry, has said of the Jewish cultural arts:

"The notion that Judaism has not and need not have significant and characteristic art, is

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¹"Rockefeller Panel Report on the Failure of Theatre, Dance, and Music in America," *The Performing Arts: Problems and Prospects*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1965, p. 4.

an illusion. The facts of the Jewish past confirm this, and the logic of civilization, in general, makes it clear that the illusion is dangerous to the perpetuation of Judaism. A civilization implies a specific aesthetic mood, and a unique content of sensuous and imaginative beauty. The art of a civilization is its individual interpretation of the world in color, sound and image, an interpretation that is familiar and profoundly interesting to the people of that civilization.²

Importance of the Problem

Each summer the 92nd Street Y sends two groups of teenagers to perform a community service, one to Israel and another to an American Indian reservation. Several years ago one of our groups organized a day camp on the reservation of the impoverished Pima Indians. That tribe had almost completely lost its culture—language, art, folklore, dances, music, painting, and religion. Our children found a cultural skeleton there, and the significance of this eroded cultural symbol was deeply engraved on their Jewish consciousness.

The creative perpetuation of group cultures is not only a worry particular to Jews. The subject of cultural loss haunts even the United Nations, as whole civilizations have been affected by the shrinking globe and the disorganizing influences of one culture upon another. Margaret Mead, who did a study for the United Nations on cultural patterns, was distressed by the erosive process of assimilation and the resulting cultural loss to the world. She asks, "What will be the cost in terms of the human spirit? How much destruction must there be of old values, disintegration of personality, alienation of parents from children, of husbands from wives, of students from teachers, of neighbor from neighbor, of the spirit of man from the faith and style

of his traditional culture?"³ Those questions may apply to the Indian tribes of America, to the peoples of Tibet and Thailand, to the Taiwanans, Laplanders, Jews and Eskimos.

Definition

How often have we heard the skeptical question asked: "Is there a Jewish art?" I shall attempt a definition of the term *Jewish Cultural Arts*, and relate it to the arts in general.

While the thematic content of the arts may be conceived as flowing from the whole human experience in all its universal ramifications, the undeniable fact is that the breeding ground of the arts is to be found in the daily conditions of life. No art form is capable of birth anywhere except within the context of the group experience and culture of a given people. The artist who creates, in whatever the art form, must emerge from the fertile soil of his own people. His personal experiences are inevitably influenced by all that has happened to him within his own cultural milieu. Even Toynbee no longer denies that Jews have had and continue to have a unique group life, with a past and present. Just as a particular group experience produced a Spanish, Italian or French Art, so did our specific Jewish group experience produce a Jewish art.

We have heard it suggested that the artist deals with the universal and not the particular. That is like saying that an artist must be bent on turning the whole of life into something so cosmic, that he must possess at once the powers of a universal despot and a universal genius—a Goethe, a Beethoven, a Newton, and Einstein all rolled into one. On the contrary, the artist has always had to deal

² Mordecai M. Kaplan: *Judaism As a Civilization*. The Reconstructionist Press, New York, 1957, p. 205.

³ Margaret Mead, Ed. *Cultural Patterns and Technical Change*. The New American Library, New York, 1955, Preface.

with segments of his own experience, at once particular, personal, subjective, and also arising from within his own cultural milieu.⁴

The function of Jewish art, as of all art forms, is to intensify and clarify the human experience. From all we know about our own personal life, we are aware that the human experience may sometimes seem capricious and confused, lacking form or direction. But this same experience becomes meaningful and clear in the hands of the artist who helps us develop new insights into the whole panorama of our existence, edifying our understanding with vividness, intensity, and depth.

The rabbis of old were convinced that there are 100 different ways to approach the study of the Torah. The same applies to the study of the Jewish arts. The scope of the subject is enormous. Considering my human limitations, and the limitations of time, we shall not attempt tonight to detail all the forms of Jewish artistic expression. But suffice it to say the Jewish art is a reality. The magnificent objects of ritual which were wrought by centuries of nameless craftsmen for the synagogue and the Jewish home may be viewed in museums the world over. In some countries they are the last remnants of all that our enemies have sought to destroy and obliterate. The costumes of the Jews of Bukhara, the delicate filigree designs of Yemenite jewelry, the primitively beautiful menorahs and Kamayot of the Jews of Morocco and Persia and the illuminated manuscripts of Germany and Italy are testimony to the beauty wrought by Jewish craftsmen everywhere.⁵ The dance, the folk song, Hebrew and Yiddish poetry

and literature, mosaic and ceramic arts—these need no eloquent words from me.

In 1968, my wife and I spent a month at the Hebrew University. One Sabbath morning we attended services at the Italian Synagogue on Hillel Street in Jerusalem. This sanctuary had been transported in toto from Coteladano Veneto near Venice. This is a beautiful synagogue with intricate carvings, calligraphy and filigree work in steel and wood. The president of the synagogue showed us the brocades owned by his congregation. We shall never forget the magnificent hand-brocaded fabrics that were shown us, some dating back to the Italian Renaissance. Brocades in silver, gold and many colors adorned Torah Mantels, Ark curtains and table covers. This art was a daily fireside occupation of Italian Jewish women through the centuries. Is it too unrealistic to believe that present-day groups of Jewish women could undertake a project to revive this lost art form? The Jewish Museum of New York could help them in their research. Why shouldn't the sisterhoods brocade, embroider, and sew their own synagogal adornments? They certainly are capable of organizing workshops to make original objects of beauty instead of buying them commercially.

Could we not also organize an atelier in each city where anyone eager to find artistic expression along the lines of the Jewish theme or idiom could paint and sculpt and build?

The Center's championing of Jewish cultural arts could become a significant element of its ideology. No other single movement in America — religious or secular — has as yet moved into the cultural vacuum which the Jewish community is ready to see filled. Let no one underestimate the significance of the nostalgic outpouring of emotion to the genre of plays, whatever their weaknesses, like: *The World of Sholom Aleichem*; *The Tenth Man*; *The Zulu and the Zayde*; *Fiddler*

⁴ Irwin Edman, *The World, The Arts and the Artist*, W. W. Norton & Co., Inc. New York, 1928.

⁵ Cecil Roth, *Jewish Art, an Illustrated History*, McGraw-Hill, Inc., New York, 1961, p. 86.

on the Roof; Gideon; Mirele Efros; The Megillah of Itzik Manger; The Wall; In My Father's Court; . . . or the emotional reactions to the songs of Theodore Bikel, Jan Pierce and Robert Merrill; to the novels of Isaac Bashevis Singer, I. J. Singer, Opatashu, Sholem Asch, Malamud and Saul Bellow; to the paintings of Rubin, Ben Shahn, Arthur Czik, Chagall, Manyeh Katz, Levanon and Ardon, to the sound of old-time Yiddish, or to the poetic readings of the Bible.

There is a climate of respectability and acceptance of the Jew that pervades the arts of America today.

The Jewish writer in the United States, who is Jewish by virtue of Ludwig Lewisoohn's definition — "he knows he is a Jew and looks into Jewish hearts in order to describe his fellow Jews" — is contributing to and having a profound impact upon American literature.

This has also had its impact on the way Jews react to the Jewish theme, idiom, and to the Jewish writer and poet in American literature.

There was a major break-through in the popularity of Jewish themes when Laura Z. Hobson published *Gentlemen's Agreement* in 1947, which became a national best seller. From the vantage point of current literature that book was trivial, but it demonstrated to major publishers that a book about Jews need not be limited to Jewish readers alone. It is therefore not surprising that within a decade Jewish writers gained general acceptability as "American" writers. And within two decades, Jewish writers and their themes have become part of the wealth of American culture. I shall cite such familiar names as: Herman Wouk, Leon Uris and Harry Golden. Leslie A. Fiedler, a teacher and critic, started to review books by Jews and to lecture about Jewish novelists. So did such influential critics as Irving Howe, Alfred Kazan,

Maxwell Geismar and David Boroff. The era of indifference to the Jewish book, as encountered by Henry Roth, Daniel F. Sachs, Maurice Samuel, and Ludwig Lewisoohn, has come to an end.

Bernard Malamud's novel, *The Assistant*, was a candidate for the National Book Award and his short stories about Jews, *The Magic Barrel*, actually won that award.

There are other writers who have used their Jewish background to stereotype the Jewish mother and to poke horrible fun at Jewish folkways. I do not include such authors in this context.

Henry Roth's book, *Call It Sleep* was republished in 1960 after decades of oblivion, and it became a classic in American fiction.

Saul Bellow is ranked by many critics as the foremost American novelist of our time. He, Herbert Gold, Harvey Swados, and James Yaffe have all written in a fashion that identifies them as Jews concerned with morality, ethics and American behavior. They are able to speak to Jews and to the broadest society, and feel secure and artistic in doing so.⁶

Bruce Jay Friedman, born in 1930, and Norman Fruchter, born in 1937, are brilliant, sensitively Jewish, and widely read. Chaim Potok's *The Chosen* has found its place in the mainstream of American literature.

All of which leads me to say that there are new, forceful images of the Jew emerging in this literature, with which sentient members of our community may conjure with the greatest seriousness. The time will come when our young people will not be able to overlook this literature as a significant Jewish expression. Cyn-

⁶ Harold W. Ribalow: "The Jewish Side of American Life", *Ramparts, The Catholic Layman's Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Autumn, 1963), p. 23.

thia Ozik has even suggested that such writing in the English language may be called the "New Yiddish" of the future in America.

Study

The act of study in the Jewish tradition is an act of piety.⁷ In the *Mishnah* we learn that so overriding was the act of study to Rabbi Judah ben Ilai that he rarely permitted any other *mitzvah* or commandment to take priority over it.⁸

And yet, "Jewish education has been among the lowest funding priorities of the Jewish establishment."⁹

I blame the predicament of Jewish education on the debasement to which our values have been subjected from the Middle Ages to the present day. Most of us are products of the American educational system in which we learned much about the contributions of the Greeks, Romans, Christians, and Moslems, but we learned nothing about the Hebrew contribution.

This has led generations of Jews to believe that, "if they don't teach it in school, it's unimportant." In all the educational systems of the western world we have been represented for hundreds of years as a purposeless people, lacking in a group personality, devoid of thinkers, languages, literature, books, ideals or culture. Many Jews have been conditioned to accept such negative attitudes and beliefs.

But it is encouraging to note that Federations across the country are beginning to change their priorities in favor of Jewish education.

There is a significant development on some 60 campuses across the country, where Jewish scholars have been summoned to fill chairs in Judaica because of the growing demands of students for deeper Jewish learning. Rabbi Jacob Neusner, who teaches Jewish studies at Brown University, recently said in that regard:

Disciplined, serious scholarship, careful and demanding teaching — these will have their impact on the cultural life of American Jewry, as on American society at large. We shall create the worthwhile sector of the coming generation of Jews, and that group — its numbers are growing — will be formed and educated on the campus.¹⁰

The Bible, Hebrew and Yiddish

Jewish culture is inextricably bound up with the Bible, and with the Hebrew and Yiddish languages. We may not have produced a Beethoven, Haydn or Mozart, but we have produced a literature that brought the benign spirit of humanism into the world, and this was achieved through the power of the Biblical word: *Shalom, Tzdakkah, Kodesh, Adonoi-Alohim, Torah, Shabbat, Rachmanut, Kavod*. These words and their message are ideals toward which civilized man is still striving. Long after the materialism of certain states and systems has failed, the Godliness of man, peace, loving-kindness, charity, will remain the basic hopes of humanity. No people has yet produced a book like the Bible, a book which has lived so long, which has had such power to move, or which has possessed such great literary beauty.

Alfred North Whitehead once observed:

And they (the Jews) don't get credit for their enormous achievement, the influence they have had on the development of Europe.

¹⁰ Jacob Neusner: "In A University, Free Means Frivolous," *Shma*, Vol. 3, No. 41 (Nov. 10, 1972), p. 2.

⁷ *Ketubot*, 17a.

⁸ Joseph Polak, "The Professors Do Not Own The Torah," *Shma*, Vol. 3, No. 41 (Nov. 10, 1972), p. 3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

Allowing for three centuries to get going, the Bible has been a best seller for 1500 years, and is still. But the Jews get no credit for having produced the most influential book on earth.¹¹

This book has perhaps been so close to us that we may have overlooked its infinite program potential: a) The Bible could figure in poetry readings — because it is a great poetic resource: b) It could figure in painting and sculpture, considering its beautiful thematic content. For example:

4:2 *Micah*: And they shall beat their swords
into plough-shares
And their spears into pruning-hooks;
Nation shall not lift sword against nation
Neither shall they learn war any more.
But they shall sit every man under his own
vine and fig-tree;
And none shall make them afraid.

The musical choruses of our Centers should include the great non-Christological oratorios in their repertoire, considering their Biblical content.

The drama, the dance, poetry, the story, the ethic, the pictorial and plastic arts can each be employed to enliven the Bible for the knowing as well as for those who know it not.

It has been my dream some day to project the flavor and impart knowledge of the Bible through the arts. What a revolutionary change that would make in the old and unimaginative systems of Jewish education. Is it far-fetched to suggest that rabbis, group workers, and art specialists could meet regularly to plan an annual Biblical arts festival in the Jewish community? The Center could play a coordinating role.

We need an Academy for the translation of Hebrew and Yiddish poetry in each major city, in order to unlock the

treasures of both cultures. Is it far-fetched to expect that literary talents could be organized to work on these translations? The Center, The Farband, the Workmen's Circle, the American Jewish Congress, B'nai B'rith and the American Jewish Committee might all be asked to join in support of this effort.

I could not possibly cover in one written effort, the flavor of the contemporary Hebrew poetry of such greats as: Bialik, Tchernichowsky, Shneior, Lamdon, Uri Z. Greenberg, Shimonovitch and others. But I cite a brief poetic example of the hidden Yiddish literature. In 1950 the poet, H. Leivik, was deeply moved during his visit at the Seder table of Rivkah Gover in Kfar Warburg, Israel. She had lost two sons in the War of Liberation, and the poet poured out his compassion for her in his poem "*Zvei Silberne Becher*" (Two Silver Goblets), which I have attempted to translate.

For Rivkah Gover of Kfar Warburg, in Israel:

On two silver goblets are engraved
the names of two fallen brothers.
Once there raged a war in Israel —
But now, nothing but the mute silence of
unsung songs.

The brothers sleep in Warburg Village —
Hush, lower your voice, and note
How their mother bears her inner anguish
Ministering near and round about two silver
goblets

The goblets make poignant her sons' memory;
One aged seventeen, and twenty the other,
They were willing to die in their springtime.
Each fell in the battle for Israel's survival

Their self-sacrifice flashed furiously
From bunker, hill, and rooftop —
But now — in thinnest finest writ, their names
Are scratched, engraved on two silver goblets

The mother could overflow each brimming
cup with tears,
But it is Passover time; she stifles them.
In honor of Passover let the goblets glow and
gleam!

¹¹ Lucien Price, Recorder. *Dialogues of Alfred North Whitehead*. The New American Library, New York, 1954, p. 93.

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During the Seder, when Elijah arrives
To purify the Jews from their defilers,
Let him not taste tears, but wine
From the pure goblets of her sons.

She chokes back her tears
Let no eye pity their flow.
She often sits beneath the shading tree
Seeking forgiveness for her pain

The lawn, the tree are her partners in
mourning.
Demanding answers to a pitiful question.
Everyone knows how deep this mother's
struggle
To offer — not tears, but wine — in two
silver goblets.¹²

Issues

There is a school of thought that there is nothing more futile in a social agency than such things as poetry, chamber music, the modern dance or the fine arts. After all, can Bible study or a Beethoven sonata produce changes in the inner city, or help produce peace in Viet Nam? What do the Jewish cultural arts have to do with the racial crisis, or school desegregation? That point of view suggests that it is better to expose the individual to the world around him than to aesthetic sights and sounds. Well, the arts may not offer programmed solutions to the tribulations of our world, but they do make us more human, compassionate, sensitive. The arts may not offer the precise formula for improving the decaying city, but they scale the barriers that divide people, and bridge their differences. If there are tensions abroad in the world, we need the shelter and security of experiences that promote contemplation, and configurations of beauty.

I began this presentation with the premise that the Jewish cultural arts cannot stand alone, but must be coupled

with the universal arts. In my view this is the only approach that will succeed. Our conception of the arts in the Jewish community must almost be architectural in form. The foundation is of greatest importance, and it must rest on the bedrock of Jewish civilization, of which the Jewish cultural arts are an integral part. Rising about this base are the general and universal cultural expressions. Throughout their four thousand year history, Jews have been sensitive to the culture that surrounded them. Yet Jews exist today as an entity, because, at the same time, they never ceased developing their own uniqueness in the face of the general ambience.

We must be able to demonstrate that an organization like the Center can be Jewishly and universally creative at the same time. The essence of the mood of our institutions must lie in this synthesis. The ambience of an agency is created by the Hebrew symbolism on the walls of its lobby, by the attitudes of its board and staff, by the ritual that takes place within it.

Judaism is a way of life that can only become part of us through practice and participation. In a free society each of us has the choice to taste its profundity and beauty. The Jewish cultural arts afford such an opportunity in our individual lives and in our homes. There are depth and style in a home where the family members read the Jewish book and enjoy the Jewish recording, ritual, art objects, and paintings. In a word this is the meaning of *Yiddishkayt*. Zborowski and Herzog define this all encompassing term:

The word *Yiddishkayt* carries all the associations that make it good. The joy of the Sabbath, brightly cleaving the drab world of the week — candles gleaming over a white cloth, the lordly Sabbath loaf, the clean clothes, the holy peace. The ecstasy of the Passover with its springtime purification, the household made new and beautiful. The proud festivity of the boy's Bar Mitzvah, the

¹² H. Leivik, "Tzvei Zilbern Becher", poem, *Kiyom*, Revue Mensuelle Literature No. 6-7, (30-31) Juin-Juillet, Paris, 1950. (Translation from *Yiddish*—Carl Urbont).

"pleasure of children"; and of family, the warm sense of belonging and participating with one's own — all are blended into the syllables of Yiddishkayt. The "melody of learning", chanted over books that spread back through the centuries and out across the miles, to touch all Jews of all time.¹³

The quality of excellence must permeate the arts, especially the Jewish arts. Anything we do in the context of Jewish civilization should be consistent with the tradition of *Heedur Hamitzvah*, the "sanctification of the mitzvah through beauty."

It is almost too obvious to state that the quality of the leadership of an arts program has direct bearing on the stature of the end product. Superlative taste and great cultural erudition are only half the necessary qualifications of the over-all Arts Director. Scholarship and Jewish idealism must be part of his personality amalgam to assure the Center a balanced contribution between the Jewish and universal cultural arts. The need for such a balance is not unique to the Center. I quote Avram Kampf:

But the future of the Jewish Museum does not lie solely in its unique collection. There is no doubt that it needs a vital modern program too. But such a program must not preempt the specialized Jewish area. The future success of the Museum can lie only in the maintenance of a most subtle balance; on the one hand, there must be active participation in the contemporary scene; on the other hand, careful and knowledgeable cultivation of the Museum's uniqueness. The ultimate test will be its capacity to fuse the two programs into a new configuration.¹⁴

The City

The repository of urban civilization in America is still the city, and its de-

mise may well spell the disintegration of our greatest cultural institutions. The Jewish cultural arts face similar dangers because they are rooted in urban society. Jewish population shifts have always precipitated cultural loss and cultural anemia.

In the last 20 years we have been witnessing a major shift of the Jewish population away from their familiar neighborhoods and into suburbia, and yes, into rural areas also. This shift has been speeded up due to the financial attainments of the Jewish community and to the increasing instabilities that have affected the quality of life of our major cities.

This preference for non-urban living corresponds with a trend in general American society, where the once magnetic appeal of the great American cities has all but lost its power. Even the appeal of the suburbs is giving way to a hunger for the rural life.

A Gallup Poll, issued on December 16, 1972, showed that only 13 percent of a cross-section of Americans said that the city was an ideal place to live, while as recently as 1966, 36 percent had preferred city life.¹⁵

We have a profound stake in the destiny of the cities of America, where our theological seminaries, venerable synagogues, orchestras, great public libraries, theaters, art galleries and concert halls are all situated. I am hopeful that we shall see a positive change in the destinies of America's cities, when peace finally comes in Vietnam. Yet, if Jewish culture loses out in the cities, it must be recreated in the new places of Jewish concentration.

Issues

This presentation has dealt primarily with content and not with the process

¹³ Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog, *Life is with People*, International Universities Press, p. 428.

¹⁴ Avram Kampf, "The Jewish Museum: An Institution Adrift". *Judaism*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Summer 1968), p. 298

¹⁵ *New York Times*, December 17, 1972, p. 31

that many social workers believe must go into program development. The democratic involvement of board, staff and membership is often regarded as the road to the evolution of a program. It is further argued that program must come from within the group and be responsive to its needs.

While I have no argument with that general premise, I submit that it is not the only road to achieve a Jewish cultural content in the program. There has been an ample body of experience in Centers which tends to show that the group is not necessarily the most viable vehicle for planning its own program.

I see no conflict between the goals of the social worker and the goals of the arts director. I once asked a painting teacher in one of our centers to explain why she was so successful in attracting children to her class. She said simply, "I try to get the child to do the best he can, in terms of his potential." That, after all, is also the goal of the Center worker employing the group work method.

The Jewish cultural arts carry the goal of deepening Jewish identification, and that is justification enough for it. Whether the response is large or small, it is essential to recognize that neither the Jewish cultural arts nor the universal arts will ever be self-supporting. William Schuman, once president of Lincoln Center, has repeatedly said this about the arts. Culture costs money, no matter where your point of contact may be — the school, the synagogue, the university, the theater, the Center or the concert hall.

Conclusion

In the three decades since World War II the Jewish Community has achieved material advances almost beyond belief in the days of our immigrant parents. The new prosperity has enabled us to

mount a network of services of vast complexity, and our material strength has led to the establishment of synagogues, temples, day schools, Jewish local and national organizations. Even the survival of the State of Israel has been fortified by American Jewry.

Yet, a significant ingredient has been missing despite this impressive record. We increasingly realize that the meeting of our basic social, physical and health needs falls short of attaining the lofty end objectives of life — the emotional, intellectual, and aesthetic satisfactions that constitute man's higher needs. The Jewish cultural arts, no less than the universal arts, are the satisfaction imperatives of the human mind and spirit. In history's final analysis, we shall be judged by the quality of the civilization we have achieved, and not by our material well-being.

An extremely vigorous and diversified artistic life is in evidence in Israel today. There are museums large and small, art galleries, an impressive and growing array of fine painters, and sculptors, artists' villages, theaters, orchestras, poets and writers — a profusion of culture that might be thought almost disproportionate in so small a country. But that small country will have a profound effect upon our future communal life. The opportunities are infinite for deepening Jewish identification through sending our art classes to Israel to paint the landscapes, seascapes, and personalities of the land, to reproduce the ceramics and jewelry of the Bible, to learn the art of Hebrew calligraphy, and the cultural and ethnic treasures of Jews from seventy different countries.

I now come to my concluding statement. What appears to be the ultimate truth to young people today is likely to undergo the vicissitudes of change tomorrow. This has been axiomatic throughout time. There are surely many

people in this room whose allegiances during the depression years were greatly different from those to which they show loyalty today.

There is a significant change that seems to be developing today among Jewish students on the college campus. Joseph Polak says:

The counter-culture as anyone who works with young adults can tell you, is over; the Free University, on the other hand is flourishing. What is happening in it, however, is of considerable interest. The counter-culture courses ("Jews and Revolution", "The Jewish Mystical Experience", "Uncle Jake and Your Federation", "Arabs and Jews") suddenly have empty classes. Hebrew, Halacha, Basic Judaism, and Basic Bible, in contrast, now require multiple sections and additional instructors.¹⁶

There is a growing realization in the Jewish community that materialism alone cannot permanently satisfy our society, that political and economic progress alone cannot satisfy our spiritual hunger, that the cheap, vulgar entertainment of the Jewish hotel which makes no demand upon the mind or spirit offers neither a permanent enrichment of our life nor a full measure of our greatness. On the con-

trary it bores us and depresses our future.

Throughout time man has developed tribal arts that he has preserved across the ages as the precious heritage of the past. Every Jew is entitled to his inheritance of the treasures of his people's past. The least we can do is afford the individual optimal opportunities for knowledge and enjoyment of his heritage, and this is the underpinning of a Jewish Cultural Arts program. Through the arts we can inspire loyalty to Judaism. For us who are involved in the Jewish vineyard to have tried and failed is excusable; but for us not to have tried energetically will surely be questioned by history.

. . . we are surrounded by possibilities that are infinite, and the purpose of human life is to grasp as much as we can out of that infinitude. I wish I could convey this sense I have of the infinity of the possibilities that confront us — the limitless variations of choice, the possibility of novel and untried combinations, the happy turn of experiment, the endless horizons opening up. As long as we experiment, as long as we keep this possibility of progressiveness, we and our societies shall live.¹⁷

¹⁶ Joseph Polak, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

¹⁷ Lucien Price, *op. cit.*, pp. 134, 135.