

THE INDIVIDUAL IN HISTORY

Essays in Honor of Jehuda Reinharz

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Thomas Carlyle versus Henry Thomas Buckle

*“Great Man” versus
“Historical Laws”*

YAACOV SHAVIT



The historian and essayist Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881) accused his contemporary, the Victorian historian Henry Thomas Buckle (1821–1862), author of *Introduction to the History of Civilization in England, France, Spain and Scotland* (1857), of shallow dogmatism, inordinate conceit, and of forcing the facts to fit his theory. However, when asked if he had read Buckle’s book, Carlyle replied that he had not, but that he had read extracts from it in the papers.¹ It is only fair to Carlyle, writes St. Aubyn, one of Buckle’s biographers and admirers, to state that his opinion was privately expressed, and that he did not voice his criticism publicly, as many others did. They too, in St. Aubyn’s view, did not properly read Buckle’s book, or they read it and did not understand it. St. Aubyn also gave Carlyle credit, stating that if he had reviewed the work, he presumably would have taken more trouble to discover what it contained. Nevertheless, a devoted admirer who shared Buckle’s view of it, St. Aubyn also was generous enough to write that “Ignorant as was Carlyle’s comment on Buckle, it contained a germ of truth . . . in the nature of things no historian can avoid imposing a priori upon the past certain ideas which his study of history may verify but which it has not in the first place suggested.”²

It appears that this biographer-disciple of Buckle was deluding himself. Even if Carlyle had taken the time to read the two volumes of Buckle’s

hefty work, he would not have changed his negative a priori opinion about it. Carlyle was unaware of the great impact that Buckle's historical-sociological theory had or how popular Buckle was outside the borders of England, including in tsarist Russia. Consequently, he would not have known that Buckle's critics often referred to the collection of his own lectures, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (1841),³ and found support in it for their opposition to Buckle's theory, according to which the historical development of the various civilizations was determined by "objective" not subjective laws, namely, not by great men.

At the beginning of the first lecture, Carlyle wrote: "Universal History, the history of what man accomplished in this world, is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here. They were the leaders of men, these great ones; the modellers, patterns, and in a wide sense creators, of whatsoever the general mass of men contrived to do or to attain; all things that we see standing accomplished in the world are properly the outer material result, the practical realization and embodiment of Thought that dwelt in the Great Men sent into the world; to the soul of the whole world's history, it may justly be considered, were the history of these."

In the view of his critics, Carlyle did indeed exaggerate in the exclusivity he granted to "great men" as the force that creates and leads historical processes; nonetheless, his opinion was regarded as a reaction to Buckle's "historical determinism" and his tendency to ignore the role played by a genius personality in human history and the weight that a historian ought to attribute to human actions motivated by free choice, desires, plans, imagination, character traits, and the like.⁴

Buckle described his historical view as the absolute opposite of Carlyle's, which placed the great personality at the center of historical development. "In the long run," Buckle wrote, "or on the general average of affairs individuals count for nothing . . . such men, useful as they were, are only tools by which that work was done which the force and accumulation of preceding circumstances had determined should be done. . . . They are like meteors which dazzle the vulgar by their brilliancy, and then pass away, leaving no mark behind."⁵

The fundamental clash between these two British writers of the Victorian period—one of whom (Buckle) is a forgotten historian—is a clash between two totally disparate approaches to the writing of history. Car-

lyle believed that historical writing was an art, while Buckle thought it was a science. He did not believe in universal historical laws, and “spoke with great contempt,” asserts Ernst Cassirer, “of all logical methods.”⁶ He thought as a transcendentalist, believing that the “great man” is an emissary of God, and his appearance is a “revelation,” not subject to any law or system. At the same time, the two men advocated two completely different political views, regarding the mutual relations between the public and the leader, or between the personality and his generation. In Carlyle’s eyes, as I noted, the “great man” is the creator and shaper of “history,” among other things, owing to his power to lead the masses on a new path, while Buckle did not attribute any importance to the individual and his biography. For him, the main driving power of progress was the activity of the intellectual class and the diffusion of knowledge.

The tension between these two approaches also appeared in the context of Jewish historiography in general and modern Jewish historiography, namely of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in particular.⁷ In the first context, a time when Jews began writing general histories, historians discussed at length whether Jewish history is subject to universal “historical laws” or follows its own laws, and also what roles are played by different individuals in that history. In the second context, a time when the Jewish public underwent a process of “politicization,” or in other words, when Jews joined non-Jewish political movements or organized into Jewish political movements and parties, the essence of the interrelationships between a public organized in a political ideological movement with common interests, on the one hand, and a charismatic leader, on the other, became not only a theoretical, historical question but a practical, topical one as well.

I do not intend to argue that Buckle and Carlyle were authorities on these questions, or that others found a source of inspiration in their works. I do mean to depict them as two historians who present two alternatives, or even two extremes, which emerged in Jewish historical and political thought from the second half of the nineteenth century.

In the chapter entitled “Henry Thomas Buckle, Prince of the Sages: Environment, Culture, Civilization and Progress” in our joint book, *Darwin and Some of His Kind*, we reviewed Buckle’s theory and described its influence on the historical view of several Jewish historians and men

of letters, in particular in Eastern Europe.⁸ I will cite only one example. Simon Dubnov (1860–1941) wrote that in his youth he read the first chapters of Buckle’s book (in a Russian translation) “on the advantage of intellectual over moral elements in the dynamics of history.”⁹ Thomas Carlyle is mentioned only incidentally in that chapter as one of the British intellectuals and men of letters who influenced the East European intelligentsia in general, and the Jewish intelligentsia in particular. The author only hints at the fact that he appears as Buckle’s antithesis. Now I have the opportunity to complete the picture by a brief discussion of the subject, which certainly is not unfamiliar to the celebrant of the jubilee, who, in his biography of Chaim Weizmann, dealt with the nature of Weizmann’s greatness as a leader, as well as with the interrelationship between him and the Zionist movement and the Jewish public.

By 1928, the book *On Heroes and Hero-Worship and the Heroes in History* (1841) had been printed in twenty-eight editions in England, in twenty-five in the United States, in six translations into German (the first in 1853), into Polish in 1892, and into many other languages.¹⁰ Parts of the book were translated into Russian in 1856 and appeared in the periodical *Sovremennik* (The Contemporary), and the entire book was translated by the economist Valentin Ivanovich Yakovenko in 1891. Prior to the translation he published an article on Carlyle and his influence in Europe. Editions of this translation were printed in 1898 and 1908. The translation was censored in order to delete excerpts that “were offensive to religion.” However, apparently Carlyle’s book made far less of an impression on the Jewish intelligentsia in Eastern Europe, including Jewish historians, than Buckle’s seminal work. I did not find many mentions of Carlyle in Jewish publications on current events, but he sometimes is referred to as the “great [English] author and scholar.” I found quotations of his words, for example, in relation to the Dreyfus Affair: “How great is the force of the voices of people when they are united—said the English scholar Carlyle—this is the acknowledgement of their emotions, which have more power than an acknowledgement of their opinions.”¹¹ However, the fact that Carlyle’s name was not on the reading list of Jewish men of letters does not mean (as I will show later) that they did not read his *On Heroes*, and certainly does not prove they were not influenced by him, either directly or indirectly.

In studies on modern Jewish historiography, Carlyle and his book hardly are mentioned as having influenced contemporary historians or the writers of Jewish history. Possibly this is because writing about remarkable men in Jewish history and the role played by various people in that history did not need Carlyle's inspiration, since hagiography was not foreign to the Jewish tradition of historical writing.¹² Nevertheless, Carlyle's book enhanced the tendency to discuss the role of the "great man" in shaping Jewry and the history of the Jews, and in the modern age, drew attention to the status and role of the "personality" in political movements in general, and in the Zionist movement in particular.

I do not intend to describe here the development of Carlyle's historical view and attitude toward the historical character, which were given expression not only in his *On Heroes*,¹³ but even more so in his biographies of Frederick the Great (1858–1865) and Oliver Cromwell (1845), in his book on the French Revolution (1837), and in many other biographies. I also am not interested here in surveying the various—and contradictory—interpretations of Carlyle in several works by historians and men of letters¹⁴ as a moralist, a mystic,¹⁵ a conservative who hoped to introduce order into chaos,¹⁶ even as a protofascist enemy of democracy, "the father of British Imperialism," or an admirer of the power (*Kraft, Tatkraft*) of "heroes." I am interested here in his reception by the Jews.

As I noted, Carlyle's book gained "unparalleled success in stimulating countless readers,"¹⁷ and many who had read none of his books "came to associate him exclusively with dictatorial views"¹⁸—that is how they understood the book.¹⁹ However, it was Carlyle's didactic, subjective, and emotional approach,²⁰ and the dramatization of the lives of the people he wrote about, that brought him so many admiring followers (needless to say, similar to the popularity that quite a few contemporary biographies enjoy). And perhaps the book was popular because people crave "heroes," on whom they can pin their hopes and by whom they can expect to be led and guided. The "adoration of heroes" did not vanish after Napoleon—the last political "hero" that Carlyle wrote about. On the contrary, Napoleon heralded the appearance of new "heroes" as well as the phenomenon of "hero worship" in the generations after him.

I found the first mention of *On Heroes* in the writings of Heinrich Graetz, when he dealt with the question of why humans need a cult of

heroes. In 1883 he wrote in the fourth letter in *The Correspondence of an English Lady on Judaism and Semitism* that “The gifted Thomas Carlyle has struck a powerful chord of the human keyboard: man’s need for hero-worship. He accounts for the great achievements of world history on the basis of this human inclination according to which men are readily amazed by and willing to submit to a figure who towers over ordinary and mediocre. When such a figure appears it naturally exerts an attractive force and the duly rendered homage transforms him into a historical world hero. His admirers overlook his faults and exaggerate still more his outstanding qualities. This inclination to hero-worship is rooted in the clearly noble side of human nature, in the need to wonder.” However, Graetz wrote, there always is skeptical criticism, which examines whether the figure is imbued with true, or rather false, greatness.²¹

Mentions of *On Heroes* begin to appear in Jewish literature from the last quarter of the nineteenth century, namely, nearly half a century after the publication of Carlyle’s book. They are dispersed here and there in the literature of the period and demonstrate that the book was known to the Jewish-Russian intelligentsia. Thus, for example, in the 1904 article “Moses,” Ahad Ha’am wrote: “It has been well said by Carlyle that every man can attain to the elevation of the Prophet by seeking truth but whereas the ordinary man is able to reach that plane by strength of will and enormous effort, the Prophet can stand on no other by reason of his very nature.”²² Ahad Ha’am did not acknowledge that he was quoting from Carlyle’s lecture on Muhammad. About three years later, the author, editor, and Orthodox public figure Rabbi Benjamin (Joshua Radler-Feldman, 1880–1957) published two articles on Carlyle in Y. H. Brenner’s periodical, *Hame’orer* (The Awakener). Brenner was enthused about the first part of the essay, “Idol Worshippers: Man as Divinity (from Carlyle’s theory),”²³ and wrote to R. Benjamin: “Blessed was the hour when I received your theory—Carlyle’s theory.” He added that he himself had translated, “with the help of a man who knows English,” the first chapter of *On Heroes*, and urged R. Benjamin: “Your lecture is so wonderful! Write the second chapter, write the second chapter.”²⁴ However, after he read and printed the second half of the essay,²⁵ he was far from enthusiastic about the mystification of the leader as a divinity. Although it is true, Brenner wrote to R. Benjamin, that “in the Jewish street . . . sacrifices are offered to the

masses and sacrificial lambs are brought to the proletariat,” and the term *heroism* is attributed to those adhering to “bourgeois ideologies,” how is it possible to describe the “murderer” Bismarck as a “hero”?²⁶ Like Graetz, Brenner, too, was apprehensive about the admiration of heroes, because those so-called heroes often are negative characters.

About eighty years after it appeared in 1919, *On Heroes* was translated into Hebrew by Isser Joseph Einhorn (1886–1925), an agronomist and writer on the natural sciences, and was published by the Steibel publishing house in Warsaw (with notes and a picture of the author and his biography, along with an introduction by Fischel Lachover [1883–1947]). It later was printed in two more editions (the third in 1922). An improved version of the introduction was printed in Lachover’s book *Betehum umi-hutz letehum: Masot ume’amarim al sofrei eiropah* (1953).²⁷ In his introduction, Lachover quoted from the book *Histoire de la littérature anglaise* by Hippolyte Taine (1828–1893) in which he wrote that if an Englishman, particularly one who had not reached the age of forty, was asked who was the most outstanding British thinker, he first would cite Carlyle, but immediately would suggest that he was not worth reading, because “you won’t understand any of it.”

Jewish intellectuals in Eastern Europe began to refer to Carlyle’s theories as Russian thinkers and men of letters from the 1860s on began to show interest. We may find it quite ironic that a conservative thinker such as Carlyle was a source of inspiration for both the radical and the conservative Jewish intelligentsia; however, that was also the case as far as the Russian intelligentsia was concerned. For example, the Jewish Orthodox literary critic and intellectual historian Mikhail Osipovich Gershenzon (1869–1925) wrote to his brother in February 1892: “I am writing to you under the impression left on me by the best of all books which I am now reading. From now on, this book is my gospel.”²⁸ And the religious thinker and Slavophile Nikolai Alexandrovich Berdyaev (1874–1948), who was exiled from Russia in 1922, called *On Heroes* “a fascinating work from both the literary and ethical standpoint. . . . We should acknowledge him as one of the greatest artists-thinkers of our time.” Berdyaev wrote that one would have to be narrow-minded to criticize Carlyle as a “shallow author” because he does not meet the criteria of those who speak in the name of “economic materialism.”²⁹ Toward the end of his life, Berdyaev

again related what a powerful effect his reading of Carlyle had on him.³⁰ In his last words, Berdyaev referred to Nikolai Mikhaylovsky (1842–1904), who wrote several essays on the mutual relations between a leader and the masses: “Heroes and Crowd” (*Geroi i tolpa*, 1882), “More on Heroes” (*Eshche o geroiakh*, 1891), “More on the Crowd” (*Eshche o tolpe*, 1893), and “Scientific Letters—On the Question of Heroes and the Crowd” (*K vo-prosu o geroiakh i tolpe*, 1884). Mikhaylovsky was of the opinion that “a hero cannot pave a new path in history, but he can dam up or augment its deep streams which exist in any case by virtue of the objective circumstances. There are moments in history when an individual—not necessarily a hero—can give substantial strength to a crowd, and thus imbue a certain event with more force.”³¹ “Mikhaylovsky,” Billington wrote, “had expressed admiration for many of Carlyle’s observations, but had refused to accept ‘the positive side of the program’ which can be expressed literally in two words: ‘find a hero.’ Mikhaylovsky sought only to describe dispassionately the behavior of demagogues and the general laws of mob psychology.”³² The radical *narodnik* (“populist”) and revolutionary Pyotr Lazarevich Lavrov (1823–1900) wrote a book about Carlyle and was influenced by his views, but reduced them in order to adapt them to the theories and practices of the Russian populist terrorists (*Narodiki*). I should also mention a book by the Marxist theoretician Valentinovich Plekhanov (1856–1918), author of *On the Question of the Individual’s Role in History* (1898),³³ which tried to present the “middle road” between the dynamic, inevitable force of the masses and the adoration of the (political and military) leader. He defined someone as a great leader not because he left an individual stamp on great historical events, but because his special traits made him an instrument that serves social needs. To support this definition, he uses Carlyle and writes that Carlyle called “great men” “beginners,” an extremely apt definition, since they see farther and have a stronger will than others. He carries out scientific tasks, which the prior development of society has placed on the agenda; he discovers new needs . . . he initiates the way to satisfy those needs. He is a hero, not, Heaven forbid, because he possesses the power to delay or change the course of events, but rather is a hero because his activity serves as a free, conscious expression of that vital, subconscious course. In other words, he is an instrument of the “nat-

ural ('objective') course of events." Not even a great personality, Plekhanov wrote, can impose on the society moves or relations that are not appropriate to the "objective" state of the social and economic forces.

These Russian thinkers, and others whom I have not mentioned, believed that no progress can be made without the conscious intervention of a historical personality in the course of events. Moreover, their opposition to historical determinism was based, among other things, on the view that the "historical personality" has the power (this also can be the active intervention of a group of people) to break down "determinism" or a "static situation" and move "history" in a new direction. In actual fact, they saw no contradiction between Carlyle and Buckle; in the latter they found not only a historical-scientific method that introduced order into historical processes, but also a view that regards intellect, free thought, and science as the forces that foster progress and lead to the creation of democratic institutions. At the same time, since leaders, who were such driving forces, did appear in reality, they were unable to ignore the role that Carlyle assigned to the individual leader. Against this background, Nahman Syrkin (1868–1924) was able to reject theories that suggested an all-inclusive and one-dimensional history and to view the historical personality as an important active and dynamic element. Jonathan Frankel writes that for Syrkin, "Thomas Carlyle, despite his many exaggerations, was nearer the truth than Herbert Spencer. The view that the great personalities are merely children of the time is false, for [such] personalities and geniuses stand in contradiction to their own time."³⁴

In his autobiography, the historian Joseph Klausner (1874–1958) writes that in preparation for the entrance examinations to the *gymnasium* in 1889, he learned to read Greek and Latin, French and English, and among other works, read Buckle. "And afterwards I remained attached to Carlyle, who influenced my entire world-view."³⁵ In fact, in his historiographical writings, Klausner wavered between Buckle and Carlyle. On the one hand, he stressed the influence of the national environment in shaping the character and culture of peoples; while on the other hand, he noted the role of the "one genius in a thousand, a prominent figure who stands above his time, and is free of the 'tyranny of the environment.'" In other words, man is the one who creates history and the great man leads it:

The greater a man is, the greater is the action of his mind, the more he excels in his spirit . . . consequently the greatest man helps the extraordinary events, the only ones we call history, to unfold. Thomas Carlyle says in his book, *On Heroes*, that the great man in history is in relation to the mediocre members of his generation like lightning that falls from the heavens and kindles a fire in the dry trees. According to this view, the great man is a sort of solitary spectacle, who has no connection with the lives around him nor does his own life depend on them or derive from them. It is difficult to accept such a view. The historical “hero” is also a product of his place and time. . . . However, we should not go from one extreme to the other. . . . The great man does not create something from total nothingness; the new idea or the need for a new deed are hovering in the air even before the great man’s birth, but they are not sufficiently clear to the “mediocre” masses. The “hero” properly clarifies them for himself, and he also has enough courage to express—clearly and explicitly—what the majority only senses, more or less. Such a man, if he has supporters, can do great things and create things that others regard as “beyond the boundary of historical possibility,” as violations of the “laws of history.”³⁶

In other words, Carlyle was perceived as the great protector of faith in the role of the “great man” in history, as the opponent of the trend of “reducing” his role, or showing him as “he really is,” a “small man.” He calls for the revival of faith in the “great man” and his mission: “I am well aware that in these days hero-worship, the thing I call hero-worship, professes to have gone out, and finally ceased. This, for reasons which it will be worth while some time to inquire into, is an age that as it were denies the existence of great men . . . not to worship him,” and regards him as a “creature of the Time,” not as the “indispensable savior of this epoch.”³⁷

At least in this regard, Carlyle was not a Prophet. The craving for a hero and worship of him did not vanish in the second half of the nineteenth century. On the contrary, it grew stronger. In the context of Zionist history, this yearning was given clear expression in the attitude toward Theodor Herzl and the various reactions to the “hero worship” of him.

One example that illustrates Carlyle’s influence, although his name

is not mentioned, is a piece published by Vladimir (Zeev) Jabotinsky in the *Odesskie Novosti* periodical on June 15, 1912, entitled “The Igniter” (*Podzhigatel*). The narrator is in the company of a young twenty-five-year-old man who is praising terror and harshly attacking those who claim that “the role of the personality in history is nil” and “history supposedly occurs of its own volition.” The truth is, he said, “that history is created by the genius” and without a leader, there is no progress. The young man went on to say that there are two types of ideological leaders. One type gives the movement an idea or ideas, but in order to fulfill them a leader of the second type is required: an “igniter,” namely someone in whom an inner fire is burning, with which he ignites the members of his generation. They do not notice his errors, contradictions, or faults: “They only feel his fire, *pantōn genetōr*, a divine fire, and from that fire a revolution begins, that fire makes history—and not those ‘wise men’ who with such a sharp eye knew how to read the needs of the society and so precisely embodied them in their social and political ideals. It is not those needs, not those ideas that drive history, but the personality of the leader. He is the fly-wheel of the social machine, without which that machine cannot move from the freezing point.”³⁸

These words clearly echo Carlyle’s, which he repeats again and again in his lecture: “The Great Man was always as lightning out of Heaven; the rest of the men waited for him like fuel, and then they too would flame,”³⁹ and elsewhere in the book he writes that great men are “the lightning, without which the fuel never would have burnt.”⁴⁰

In this story, Zabotinsky is referring to Herzl, but it can be read as a “prophecy” of the status he ultimately gained in the movement he founded and led, a movement he came to personify—this notwithstanding the fact that in personal letters, Jabotinsky rejected Carlyle’s version of the “myth of the leader.” For example, he wrote in August 1930 (in German): “I have an organic hatred for personality worship, and I am repulsed by it. Fascism has some good ideas, but I am simply physically unable to discuss them serenely and directly. I am repelled by the worship of the Duce, as I am by any public dishonesty. When something similar happens among us, I see it as a real danger.”⁴¹

And it is impossible not to say something about the fate of the two books—Buckle’s and Carlyle’s. As I said earlier, Buckle’s book was nearly

forgotten, and in the generations after its publication, it was mentioned only in works dealing with the development of writing about “universal history.” In contrast, the Jewish-German philosopher, Ernest Cassirer (1873–1945), whom I mentioned previously, attributed a far-reaching influence to *On Heroes*. He wrote that Carlyle’s lectures “created a sort of sensation; but nobody could have foreseen that this social event was pregnant with great political consequences . . . none of the hearers could think for a moment that the ideas expressed in these lectures contained a dangerous explosive . . . his lectures were also the beginning of a new revolution. A hundred years later these ideas had been turned into the most efficient weapon in the political struggle.”⁴²

I already have mentioned that Buckle regarded historical writing as a “science,” while Carlyle viewed it as art. In his view, the true historian ought to be the artist or the poet. Hence, he believed his fellow countryman Walter Scott was a consummate example of such a historian. In Scott’s novels, life “is actually filled by living men, not by protocols, state papers, controversies and abstractions of men. . . . History will henceforth have to take thought of it.”⁴³ As I noted, the turn to biographical writing in modern Jewish historiography did not begin with Carlyle’s influence or inspiration, and biographies were not written solely about “great men.” However, these biographies, without a word being said about them as art, namely, as “literature,” were consistent with Carlyle’s view that historical writing is not only writing about processes, discussions, decisions, or even events, but also about human beings, without which history lacks any human dimension. The biography—and perhaps only the biography—can give history that dimension.

The prominent Swiss historian Jakob Burckhardt (1818–1897) wrote, for example, that *Die historische Grösse* is a relative and ambiguous concept, and hence “we cannot hope to arrive at an absolute definition” or to propose a “scientific system.” “Real greatness,” he wrote, “is a mystery” (*Die wirkliche Grösse ist ein Mystorium*).⁴⁴ Nonetheless, Burckhardt too tried to make a typology of “greatness,” and to cite typical examples of great men, who are one of a kind: “Thus greatness has probably always been rare, and will be rare.” Those are the men who hold the fate of peoples and states in their hands, and at times history takes shape in them: “The great men are necessary to our life in order that the movement of history may

periodically wrest itself free from antiquated forms of life and empty argument.”⁴⁵ Carlyle is behind this essay, evidence that the attempt to decipher the conundrum of “greatness” and its influence on the masses continued even after him, actually expanding. In 1881 Nietzsche wrote in *Dawn* (*Morgenröte*) some rather harsh words about Carlyle’s “hero cult”: “It was the old muddled and surly-headed Carlyle, who spent a long life trying to make reason romantic for his fellow Englishmen, to no avail, and who supplied the nineteenth century with the formulas of the ‘hero cult.’”⁴⁶

Nietzsche, like Burckhardt, understood that a “personality cult” was an inseparable part of the “climate of the time” in the nineteenth century, and so it was impossible to avoid trying to clarify how “great men” appear, what the “signs of greatness” are, how they operate on the “masses,” and how and where they turn the wheels of history. It is possible that in the context of the British political culture, Nietzsche is right, and not only in the context of other European political cultures, including the one in which Nietzsche contributed his part with the myth of the *Übermensch*.

In actual fact, the total antithesis between Buckle and Carlyle does not do justice to Buckle. His interest was in the history of progress, and he believed that progress is not produced by one man, or by a group of men, but rather by society. A very exceptional individual can intervene in the operation of the general laws in special circumstances, but his success always depends on objective circumstances.

One could say that Jewish historiography in general and that of Zionist history in particular followed both Carlyle and Buckle. Quite a few biographies were written, not only of “heroes” of the stature that Carlyle referred to, and studies were written on mass movements and historical processes, sometimes with an apersonal approach. Weizmann is an example of a “hero” who earned his place in Zionist history because of the role he played in a formative historical event (the Balfour Declaration), but the “hero worship” of him was attended throughout his political life with criticism, even hostility. In any event, in contrast to Carlyle’s “heroes,” none of the Zionist leaders (except, perhaps, for Jabotinsky) was the subject of total, ongoing “hero worship.”

Even after having read Carlyle, and quite a few biographies of great leaders, we do not seem to have an answer to the question of how a leader is created and why he gains that position. It is only possible to describe

how he became a leader and how he rose to the position of leadership. Since we cannot transfer a “hero” who changed the face of “history” from one time period and one place to another, we never can know whether in that new place and time he would have been a “hero” and the subject of “hero worship.”

NOTES

1. Quoted from Sir Charles Gavan Duffy, *Conversations with Carlyle* (London: Sampson, Low, 1892), 107 in Giles Saint Aubyn, *A Victorian Eminence: The Life and Works of Henry Thomas Buckle* (Westford, Hertfordshire, UK: Barrie, 1958), 165.

2. Saint Aubyn, *A Victorian Eminence*, 169.

3. On the history of the various editions, see Carl Niemeyer’s introduction to the 1966 edition, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln.

4. See, for example, Johann Gostav Droysen, *Grundriss der Historik* (Outline of the Principles of History), trans. E. Benjamin Andrews (Boston: Ginn, 1893).

5. Quoted in Saint Aubyn, *A Victorian Eminence*, 168–69.

6. Ernst Cassirer, *The Myth of the State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), 193. For Carlyle, Cassirer writes, “[H]ero worship was the oldest and firmest element in man’s social and cultural life,” 189.

7. For another comparison between a British Victorian philosopher, who proposed a “systematic method,” and Carlyle, see A. Shpayer, “Tsvei weltshoyungen: a paralel tsvishn carlyle un Spenser,” *Di tsukunft* 2, (Feb. 1911): 82–84 and 3 (March 1911): 140–48.

8. Yaacov Shavit and Jehuda Reinharz, *Darvin vekama mibene mino: evoluzia, geza, seviva vetarbut—yehudim korim et darvin, spense, buckle verenan* (Darwin and Some of His Kind: Evolution, Race, Environment and Culture—Jews Read Darwin, Spencer, Buckle and Renan) (Tel Aviv: HaKibbutz Hameuchad, 2009), 153–90. In the meantime, a new study on the subject has been published: Ian Hesketh, *The Science of History in Victorian Britain: Making the Past Speak* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2001). Hesketh discusses Buckle’s theory in the first chapter: “The Enlarging Horizon: Henry Thomas Buckle’s Science of History.”

9. S. Dubnov, *Sefer hahaim*, trans. into Hebrew, M. Ben-Eliezer (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1936), 86.

10. See Niemeyer’s introduction, xxi fn. 3.

11. “Divrei hayamim, mi’afela le’or gadol,” *Hazefira*, May, 14, 1899. Earlier he was mentioned as a man with anti-Jewish views, and there he is called “one of the great scholars of the previous generation.” *Hazefira*, August 9, 1889.

12. In regard to historical writing in ancient times, there is the biography of Herod in Josephus’s books, *Jewish Antiquities* and *Wars of the Jews*, which also includes a psychological analysis of his personality and motivations. On biographical novels in Jewish literature in nineteenth-century Germany, see Nitsa Ben-Ari,

Roman im ha'avar (Tel Aviv: Dvir/Makhon Leo Baeck, 1997). She mentions the German author Luise Mülbach, who wrote hundreds of historical biographical novels and explained that her objective was to remove the great characters and their great deeds from the silence of the den into the market of life and to introduce them to the public at large (ibid., 32).

13. B. H. Lehman, *Carlyle's Theory of the Hero: Its Sources, Development, History, and Influence on Carlyle's Work: A Study of a Nineteenth Century Idea* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1928).

14. Gustav G. Cohen (1830–1906) of Hamburg, a merchant and Zionist activist and the father-in-law of Otto Warburg, wrote a philosophical work entitled *Über Thomas Carlyle*, which I was unable to obtain.

15. When Walicki compares the conservative romantic messianism of the Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz and that of Carlyle, he writes that “the English author made some concessions to rationalism. He stated, for instance, that the ‘hero as a prophet,’ as a direct messenger of God, was a product of an earlier age, who would not recur in the new age of scientific progress.” Andrzej Walicki, *Philosophy and Romantic Nationalism: The Case of Poland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 263. However, it is possible, of course, to attribute to the “leader” traits of a prophet in the “scientific” and “rationalist” age too.

16. See Eugen Oswald, *Thomas Carlyle: Ein Lebensbild und Goldkörner aus seinen Werken, dargestellt, ausgewählt, übergetragen durch Eugen Oswald Werken* (Leipzig: W. Friedrich, 1882), 8.

17. See Malcolm Harden, *Six Victorian Thinkers* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1991), 15–41.

18. Ibid., 35.

19. Crane Brinton, *English Political Thought in the 19th Century* (New York: Harper, 1962), 164–77.

20. David Newsome, *The Victorian World Picture: Perceptions and Introspections in an Age of Change* (London: J. Murray, 1997), 158–59.

21. Heinrich Graetz, *The Structure of Jewish History and Other Essays*, trans., ed., and intro. Ismar Schorsch (New York: Jewish Theological Society of America, 1975), 201.

22. Ahad Ha'am, “Moses,” in *Selected Essays by Ahad Ha'am*, trans. Leon Simon (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1917).

23. *Hame'orer* 2, no. 1 (January 1907), 42–49.

24. Y. H. Brenner letter, January 10, 1907, in Y. H. Brenner, *Kol kitvei Y. H. Brenner*, vol. 3 (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1957), 294.

25. Y. H. Brenner, February 1907, in Brenner, *Kol kitvei Y. H. Brenner*, 49–54.

26. Brenner, *Kol kitvei Y. H. Brenner*, 3:447.

27. Paul Philip Levertoff (1878–1954), a yeshiva graduate who converted to Christianity, published a pamphlet in Hebrew in London in 1907 entitled “Tomas karleil: haskafotav vede'otav, hashkafot bikorti'ot.” He also wrote in praise of Carlyle that he was innovative in every subject he wrote about and that his historical writing was

“history of the heart,” namely, of the man “possessed of a living soul,” and that he was opposed to any method that tried to rationalize human history. Fischel Lachover, *Betehum umihutz letehum: Masot umea'amarim al sofrei eiropah* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1953), 125–39.

28. Mikhail Osipovich Gershenzon, *Pis'ma k bratu: izbrannye mesta* (Leningrad: M. is. Sabashnikovoykh, 1927), 13.

29. Nikolai Berdyaev, “Subiektivizm I individualizm v obshchestvennoi filiosofii. Kriticheski etiiud o N. K. Mikhailovskom” (St. Petersburg: Izd-vo O. N. Popovoi, 1901), 205.

30. Nikolai Berdyaev, *Samopoznanie: opyt filosofskoi avtobiografii* (Moscow: DEN, 1990).

31. See N. K. Mikhaylovsky, 2 vols. (Russian) (St. Petersburg: Aleteya, 1998).

32. James H. Billington, *Mikhailovsky and Russian Populism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), 169.

33. *Kvoprosu o roli lichnosti v istorii* (Russian). (Consulted the Hebrew translation published by Sifri'at Hapoalim in 1944.)

34. Quoted from Nachman Syrkin's *Geschichtsphilosophische Betrachtungen* (Thoughts on the Philosophy of History) 118, in Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862–1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 295–96. And see there Syrkin's words at a meeting in New York in 1921, that Weizmann is “the greatest, emptiest good-for-nothing that I have ever met [but] All great leaders and men who created ideas and movements have to be *batlonim* . . . Practical. . . . men do not do those things,” 296.

35. Joseph Klausner, *Darki likrat hatehi'ah vehage'ulah: Otobiografia, 1944–1974* (Tel Aviv: Masada, 1946), 26.

36. Joseph Klausner, “Hamateri'alismus hahistori betenuah hale'umit-hatzionit” in *Yahadut ve'enoshut, kovetzma'amarim* (Warsaw, 1910), 148–70.

37. Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (London: Fraser, 1841), 16–17.

38. Trans. into Hebrew in a volume of stories (Tel Aviv, n.d.), 13–17.

39. Carlyle, *On Heroes*, 90.

40. *Ibid.*, 17.

41. Letter to Mrs. Miriam Lang, August 27, 1930, in *Haskalah-Umma* 3/4, no. 61/62 (September 1980): 332–37.

42. Cassirer, *The Myth of the State*, 189–90.

43. Quoted in A. Dwight Culler, *The Victorian Mirror of History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 44.

44. Jakob Burckhardt, *Reflections on History* (*Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen*), trans. by M.D.H. (London: Allan and Unwin, 1950), 172–203.

45. Burckhardt, “The Great Men in History,” in *Reflections on History*, 203.

46. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Dawn: Thoughts on the Presumptions of Morality*, trans. Keith Ansell-Pearson (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 187–88.

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