

14 EKIM 1999

Oberman Julian Joel

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OBERMANN (J.)

Der philosophische und religiöse Subjektivismus Ghasalis. pp. xv, 344.

Wilhelm Braumüller: Wien und Leipzig, 1921.
8°.

OBERMANN, Julian, J.

JAOS, 77 (1957)

J. J. OBERMANN

(June 14, 1888 — October 17, 1956)

At the beginning of his retirement which he expected to be a fruitful period of research, study, and travel, Julian Joel OBERMANN died in a New Haven hospital. Only a few weeks later, his predecessor as Professor of Semitic Languages at Yale University, the Nestor of American Oriental studies, C. C. TORREY, was taken from us.

OBERMANN's career took him through different stages of Western civilization on a course not unlike that followed by many a searcher for a free and satisfactory life from a Europe now gone beyond recall. He was born in Warsaw and studied in Vienna where he took his doctorate in 1915. The years immediately following the first World War, he spent as Privatdozent in Hamburg (1919—23). A call from the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York (now merged with the Hebrew Union College) brought him to the United States. He served at the Institute as Professor of Semitics for eight years, with a one-year interruption when he was visiting professor in Jerusalem (1929 to 1930); this, I believe, was his only physical contact with the Near East. After a short period as visiting professor, he was appointed Professor of Semitic Languages at Yale University in 1933 and remained in this position up to the time of his retirement.

These bare facts briefly summarize his career. More precise data that would be significant and interesting are not available at this time. A retiring person, OBERMANN was not given to reminiscing about the past or to speaking about himself. A lifelong bachelor, he was fond of outdoor life, of hiking, swimming, and skiing. I met him only a few times. In personal contact, as in his letters, he was always courteous and most kind, in a correct, yet impersonal manner. He was filled with enthusiasm for his work and entirely devoted to it. Thus, he left a rich harvest of books and articles, seemingly on a variety of subjects, but almost always dominated by the theme of religion. It is my impression that he was not a deeply religious man, as the term is usually understood, but he was irresistibly drawn to the phenomenon of religion. Its role in the civilizations of the Near East and the wider implications religion held for human history were a source of constant fascination for him.

His doctoral dissertation was entitled *Prolegomena zu einer kritischen Darstellung der arabischen Philosophie*. It appears to have remained unpublished, but its substance was incorporated in his first two publications, *Das Problem der Kausalität bei den Arabern*¹⁾ and *Der philosophische und religiöse Subjektivismus Ghazālîs*²⁾. The latter was provided with the significant subtitle *Ein Beitrag zum Problem der Religion*. OBERMANN believed that "Arabic philosophy was guided by its own problems throughout its entire history; it was not, as is generally assumed, a mere repetition or elaboration of Greek ideas in Arabic letters." And further: "Basically, it was the product of problems originating in the Arabs' own intellectual center, the Qur'an"³⁾. In his *Subjektivismus*, he thus traced al-Ghazālî's thinking from his writings and his environment. For this purpose, he undertook a comprehensive study of all his works, as far as they were accessible at the time. Today, this may seem the obvious thing to do, but forty years ago, a haphazard approach was quite common among those few who studied Muslim philosophy and religion. As every true philosophical study must be, OBERMANN's analysis was determined by a certain amount of subjectivism on his own part; this was pointed out by H. H. SCHAEFER in a brilliantly penetrating and highly laudatory review of the work, which appeared in *Der Islam* XIII (1923), 121—32.

It is a matter of regret that OBERMANN was soon diverted from his work on the fundamental problems of Muslim religious and philosophical thought, though he came back later on to the problem of *qadar* in a discussion of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrî's correspondence with 'Abd-al-Malik⁴⁾. His attention, as far as the medieval period was concerned, was directed increasingly toward Jewish-Arabic relations. His main work in this field was the publication of the Arabic original of Ibn Shâhîn's *Book of Comfort*⁵⁾, a work ostensibly modeled on *adab* literature of the *faraj-ba'd-aš-šiddah* type but, because of the material used in it, to be classified rather as an edifying treatise on popular religious ethics. The characteristic subtitle of the edition, *Studies in Islam and Judaism*, promised further work in the field, but the *Book of Comfort* was not followed by other publications of the same magnitude. However, the subject was taken up again in a short article on *Two Elijah Stories in Judaeo-Arabic Transmission*⁶⁾, and the theme of Jewish-

¹⁾ WZKM XXIX, 323—50, XXX, 37—90 (1915—18).

²⁾ Vienna and Leipzig, 1921. ³⁾ Cf. WZKM XXIX, 324.

⁴⁾ *Political Theology in Early Islam*, in JAOS LV (1935), 138—62.

⁵⁾ New Haven and Paris, 1933 (*Yale Oriental Series — Researches* XVII).

⁶⁾ HUCA XXIII, 1 (1950—51), 387—404.

visited Africa, the Americas, and Turkey. Since 1938, he was a professor at Freiburg, Switzerland. His writings include *Der Mensch und die Vorzeit* (1912), and *Urgeschichte der Menschheit* (1931). He died in Freiburg, 12 November 1946. DIBE; DiBilnd (4); Master (2)

Obermann, Julian Joel, born 14 June 1889 at Warszawa, he took his Dr.phil. in 1915 at Wien for with a thesis entitled *Prolegomena zu einer kritischen Darstellung der arabischen Philosophie*. The years from 1919 to 1923 he spent as a lecturer at the Universität Hamburg. An invitation from the Institute of Religion brought him to N.Y.C, where he served for eight years, with a one-year interruption (1929/30) as visiting professor at Jerusalem. In 1933, he was appointed professor of Semitic languages at Yale University, a post which he held until his retirement. He was not given to reminiscing about the past or to speaking about himself. A lifelong bachelor, he was fond of outdoor life. In personal contact, as in his letters, he was always courteous and most kind, in a correct, yet impersonal manner. He was filled with enthusiasm for his work and entirely devoted to it. His writings include *Der philosophische und religiöse Subjektivismus Ghazzalis* (1921), *The Arabic original of Ibn Shâhîn's Book of comfort* (1933), and *Discoveries at Karatepe* (1948). He died in New Haven, 17 October 1956. CnDiAmJBI; *der Islam* 33 (1958), pp. 322-325; JüdLex; Kürschner, 1926, 1928/29, 1931; Schwarz; WhAm, 3

Obermeyer, Gerald Joseph, born 11 February 1935 at Altoona, Pa., he was a graduate of Penn State University, and received a Ph.D. in 1968 from the University of Michigan at Bloomington with a thesis entitled *Structure and authority in a Bedouin tribe; the 'Aishaibat of the Western Desert of Egypt*. He was a sometime professor of anthropology and sociology at AUB. AmM&WS, 1973

Obermeyer, Jacob, born 21 March 1845 at Steinhard, Bavaria., he travelled in 1868 to Damascus by way of North Africa. In 1869, he obtained a position at a school of the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Damascus. He later became the tutor of the Persian prince Mulk-Ara in Baghdad and accompanied him two years later to Tehran, where he served as director of a French school for two years. From 1880 to 1915, he was a professor of Arabic and Persian at the Lehranstalt für Orientalische Sprachen, Wien, and concurrently a court interpreter in the k.k. Landesgericht, Wien. He wrote *Modernes Judentum im Morgen- und Abendland* (1907), and *Die Landschaft Babylonien im Zeitalter des Talmuds und des Gaonats* (1929). He died in 1935. JüdLex; NUC, pre-1956; *Wer ist's*, 1909-1912; Wininger

Obermüller, Wilhelm, fl. 1866, he was an anthropologist whose writings include *Deutsch-keltisches, geschichtlich-geographisches Wörterbuch zur Erklärung der Fluss-, Orts-, Gau-, Völker- und Personennamen Europas, West-Asiens und Nordafrikas* (1872), *Amazonen, Sarmaten, Jazygen und Polen* (1873), and *Die Entstehung der Hebräer, Juden wie Israeliten, des Christentums und des Islam* (1877). NUC, pre-1956

Oberschall, Magda, 1905- see Bárány-Oberschall, Magda

Obicinus (Obizino/Obizzino) a Novaria, Thomas, Arabist at Roma, he died in 1633. Fück, p. 77; GAS IX

Obolenskii, Nikolai Gavrilovich, fl. 1971. His writings on international finance include *Кредитно-расчетные отношения социалистических стран* (1967). LC

Obrecht, Dean Hubert. He received a Ph.D. in 1961 from the University of Pennsylvania for his thesis, *Effects of the second formant in [sic] the perception of velarization in Lebanese Arabic*. His writings include *Effects of the second formant on [sic] the perception of velarization consonants in Arabic* (1968). NUC, 1968-1972; Selim

O'Brien, Audrey J., Major, C.I.E., fl. 1911, he was a deputy commissioner, Punjab Commission. Note

O'Brien, Donal Cruise, fl. 1970 see Cruise O'Brien, Donal

O'Brien, Patrick Karl, born 12 August 1932, he was a graduate of LSE, and received a D.Phil. in 1960 at Oxford. He was a sometime lecturer at SOAS, and in 1982, a lecturer in economic history at St. Antony's College, Oxford. His writings include *The revolution in Egypt's economic system; from private enterprise to socialism, 1952-1965* (1966), *Economic growth in Britain and France, 1780-1914* (1978), and *The economic effects of the American civil war* (1988). ConAu, 21-24; LC

O'Brien, William Vincent, born 9 July 1923 at Washington, D.C., he received a Ph.D. in 1948 from Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., for his thesis, *The classification of international organizations*. He was a sometime professor of international law at his university. His writings include *War and/or survival* (1969), *U.S. military intervention* (1979), *The conduct of just and limited war* (1981), and *Law and morality in Israel's war with the PLO* (1991). ConAu, 13-16 rev.; LC

Obruchev, Vladimir Afanasevich, born 28 September (10 October) 1863 at Klepenino, Russia, he was educated at Brest, Vilna, and the Mining Institute, St. Petersburg. During his first Transcasian expedition from 1886 to 1888 he showed outstanding abilities; the geology of Siberia subsequently remained his main field of study. He died in Moscow, 19 June 1956. Biotn, 4 (3), 5 (1); DcScB; GSE; Henze

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point of marrying Herod's sister, Salome. Syllaeus eventually became a bitter enemy of Herod. This aroused the Judean king to demand immediate repayment of 60 talents loaned to Obedas, through Syllaeus, with the claim that the time limit on the loan had expired. It is evident, however, that the feeble Obedas had little to say in the matter, and Syllaeus refused. With the death of Obedas his successor Aretas sent a letter to the Roman emperor Augustus, accusing Syllaeus of poisoning the king. This claim was probably correct, and it subsequently became known that most of Obedas' friends perished together with him (Jos., Wars, 1:487; Ant., 16:220, 279ff., 337). See *Nabateans.

Bibliography: OBEDAS I: Schuerer, Hist, 86f.; Klausner, Bayit Sheni, 3 (1950²), 150, 153. OBEDAS II: Schuerer, Hist, 154; Klausner, Bayit Sheni, 4 (1950²), 38; A. Schalit, *Koenig Herodes* (1969), 253, 599, 614f. [I.G.]

OBED-EDOM (עֲבֵד אֶדוֹם; "the servant of *Adam [the deity?]", the name of two biblical figures. (1) The Gittite to whose house the *Ark of the Lord was transferred after the death of Uzzah (II Sam. 6:10ff.; I Chron. 13:13-14). Uzzah had died after touching the Ark while it was being brought by David to Jerusalem. In order to prevent further calamities, the Ark was brought to the house of Obed-Edom, which was apparently situated between Kiriath-Jearim and Jerusalem. When it was reported to David three months later that the Lord had blessed Obed-Edom and his house, David brought the Ark up to Jerusalem with rejoicing. As a temple gatekeeper for the Ark, Obed-Edom is mentioned several times among the Levites (I Chron. 15:18, 21, 24; 16:5, 38), as are his descendants (I Chron. 26:8, 15). (2) A descendant of Obed-Edom the Gittite, who was in charge of the gold, the silver, and all the vessels in the Temple in Jerusalem in the days of Amaziah king of Judah (798-769 B.C.E.; II Chron. 25:24).

Bibliography: M. Dahood, in: CBQ, 35 (1963), 123-4; W. F. Albright, in: *Biblica*, 44 (1963), 292; idem, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan* (1968), 122. [Ed.]

OBERMANN, JULIAN JOËL (1888-1956), orientalist. Born in Warsaw, Obermann taught Semitic languages at the University of Hamburg from 1919 to 1922, achieving recognition with the publication of his work on the philosophy of Al-Ghazālī in 1921. He subsequently became professor of Semitic philology at the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York, where he taught from 1923 to 1931. From 1933 to 1935 Obermann was visiting professor of Semitic languages at Yale University; he became professor in 1935. He served as coeditor of the *Journal of Biblical Literature* (1933-36). In 1944 Obermann became director of Judaic research and editor of the Yale Judaica Series, in which capacity he served until his retirement.

In the course of his career, Obermann made contributions in Semitic philology and epigraphy, Old Testament and Ugaritic studies, Islamic culture, and Arabic philosophy. His works include: *Das Problem der Kausalitaet bei den Arabern* (1916); *Der philosophische und religioese Subjektivismus Ghazalis* (1921); *The Arabic Original of Ibn Shahin's Book of Comfort* (1933); and *Ugaritic Mythology* (1948). He also edited H. Gressman's *Tower of Babel* (1928) and Gandz's translation of Maimonides' *Sanctification of the New Moon* (1956) after the death of the authors.

Bibliography: *New York Times* (Oct. 18, 1956); *JAOS*, 77 (1957). [R.P.S.]

OBERMAYER, JACOB (1845-1935), traveler, scholar, and teacher. Obermayer was born in Steinhardt, Bavaria. He toured North Africa from Morocco to Egypt in 1868, proceeded to Palestine, and from there traveled to Damascus and Baghdad. He taught French at the Baghdad school of the Alliance Israélite Universelle during 1869-72, and

from 1872 to 1881 he was the teacher of Prince Naib Alsultana, contender to the throne of Persia, who had been compelled to flee his native country. With his student, Obermayer toured the whole of Mesopotamia and then accompanied the prince when he signed a peace treaty with his brother the king and returned to Persia. Obermayer's *Die Landschaft Babylonien . . .* (1929) is a standard work which includes his personal observations during his years of travel as well as the works of medieval Arab geographers and various Hebrew sources. From 1884 to 1915 Obermayer taught Arabic and Persian in Vienna.

Bibliography: S. Assaf, in: KS, 7 (1930), 60-62; Sassoon, *History of the Jews of Baghdad* (1949), 153-6. [Z.Av.]

OBERNAI (Ger. **Oberheim**), town in the department of Bas-Rhin, E. France. The first evidence for the presence of Jews in Obernai dates from 1215. In 1349 a Jewish woman who had been sentenced to death for coin clipping accused the Jews of propagating the *Black Death, whereupon all the Jews of Obernai were burned at the stake. Jews were recorded as living in Obernai again between 1437 and 1477 and from 1498 to 1507. Subsequently Jews were rarely even allowed to travel through Obernai or permitted to visit the local market. Only in 1647, when the town passed under French rule, where Jews again permitted to settle there. In 1784 the number of Jews in Obernai was 196. Many more were recorded as living there on the eve of World War II. About 60 lived there in 1970.

Bibliography: J. Gyss, *Histoire . . . d'Obernai* (1866); *Germ Jud.* 1 (1937), 93f.; 2 pt. 2 (1968), 614f. [B.Bl.]

OBERNIK, JUDAH (d. c. 1520), talmudist, rabbi of Mestre. Judah was a pupil of Israel Isserlein whose rulings and expositions, both heard directly and reported by others, he entered in his notebook, along with rulings of Jozman Katz, responsa of Sar Shalom of Vienna, expositions of Jacob *Moellin, glosses on the *Tashbaḥ* (Cremona, 1556) by *Perez b. Elijah of Corbeil and other material. *Joseph b. Moses, Judah Obernik's pupil, made abundant use of this notebook in his work *Leket Yosher* (ed. by J. Freimann, 2 vols., 1903-4), which he quotes at length. He conducted a halakhic correspondence with Isserlein and engaged in learned discussions with Judah *Muenz and Joseph *Colon. He was also the author of *Seder Pesah*.

Bibliography: Joseph b. Moses, *Leket Yosher*, ed. by J. Freimann, 2 (1904), xxx-xxxi. [Sh.A.H./Ed.]

OBLIGATIONS, LAW OF. This law is concerned with the rights of one person as against another (*jus in personam*), as distinguished from the law of property, which is concerned with a person's rights in a chattel or other property as against the world at large (*jus in rem*). Unlike Roman law, in Jewish law the mere existence of the obligation automatically creates in favor of the creditor a *lien (*shi'bud*) over his debtor's property, a real right attaching to the obligation, which for a very long time was regarded as stronger than the personal right afforded by the obligation. The term *hiyyuv* originates in the word *hov*, meaning both the obligation which is imposed on the debtor (e.g., BB 10:6) and the right to which the creditor is entitled (Bik. 3:12; Git. 8:3). However, *hov* generally refers to a pecuniary obligation only, whereas *hiyyuv* has come to be used in a wider sense to include also the duty to perform an act, etc., comparable to the Roman law concept of *obligatio*.

The two parties to an obligation are the debtor (*hayyav*, BM 12b)—on whom the duty of fulfilling the obligation is imposed—and the creditor (*ba'al hov*)—who has the right to claim that the obligation be fulfilled. The term *ba'al hov* is sometimes used in the sources to describe the debtor as well