

Werkausgabe, by Isaac Breuer, eds. Matthias Morgenstern and Meir Hildesheimer. **Vol. 1: Frühe religionsphilosophische Schriften** (Texte und Studien zur deutsch-jüdischen Orthodoxie, vol. 4). Münster, Lit Verlag, 2017, XVI + 583 pp., €99.90 (hardcover), ISBN 978-3-643-13391-5. **Vol. 2: Schriften zum Zionismus und Agudismus** (Texte und Studien zur deutsch-jüdischen Orthodoxie, vol. 5), Münster, Lit Verlag, 2017, XIII + 584 pp., €99.90 (hardcover), ISBN 978-3-643-13392-2. **Vol. 3: Frühe literarische Texte** (Texte und Studien zur deutsch-jüdischen Orthodoxie, vol. 6), Münster, Lit Verlag, 2018, XI + 279 pp., €39.90 (hardcover), ISBN 978-3-643-13393-9.¹

Although we have witnessed some new interest in the thought of Isaac Breuer (1883–1946) in recent years, this religious philosopher and activist in the Agudat Israel world movement still receives only marginal attention from the scholarly community and the general public. One reason for this may be that the writings of this highly prolific author are difficult to access; after all, most of them are only available in antiquarian bookstores, while others were published in magazines and have fallen into obscurity. To remedy this situation, researchers at the University of Tübingen and Bar-Ilan University are now working together on an edition of Breuer's writings (Isaac Breuer Werkausgabe, IBWA). Three volumes have been published so far; a fourth volume is currently being prepared.

The *first volume* includes writings that are central to Breuer's philosophy of Judaism, namely the essays *Lehre, Gesetz und Nation* (1910), *Frauenrecht, Sklavenrecht und Fremdenrecht* (1910), *Der Begriff des Wunders im Judentum* (1916), which Breuer himself included in his anthology *Wegzeichen* (1923), the treatises *Judenproblem* (1918), *Messiasspuren* (1918) together with the accompanying *Selbstanzeige*, and *Die Welt als Schöpfung und Natur* (1926), along with essays on Hermann Cohen (*Was lässt Hermann Cohen von Judentum übrig?*, 1911), and on Werner Sombart (*Sombart und die Juden*, 1911; *Werner Sombart als zionistischer Apostel*, 1912). In these writings, Breuer lays the foundations for his philosophy of Judaism. He justifies Jewish Orthodoxy against the challenges posed by modernity and by other currents in modern Judaism, i.e. he philosophically underpins his assertion that Orthodox Judaism is the only legitimate current in modern Judaism. Breuer inquires after the essence of Judaism, and discusses the character of Jewish law and its contradictions to secular modern law. He deals with

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the conflict between faith and reason, or, more specifically, between science and revealed religion, and he engages with biblical criticism. Against liberal Judaism, Breuer conceives Judaism as a nation, but, against Zionism, he sees Judaism as a messianic nation based on divine law.

The *second volume* consists of Breuer's writing on political issues, namely Zionism, Breuer's counter-model Agudism, and the character of a Jewish state. It includes the anthology *Programm oder Testament* (1929), which comprises four essays from the end of the First World War to the end of the 1920s, his draft of an agudist party programme *Die Idee des Agudismus* (1921), the treatises *Das jüdische Nationalheim* (1925) and *Judaism and National Home* (1942/43), and several shorter works from the 1930s dealing with the political, religious, economic and social situation in Mandatory Palestine. The texts put Breuer's widespread image as a radical anti-Zionist into perspective. This perception is strongly based on Breuer's earlier writings, such as his polemical work *Das jüdische Nationalheim*, which is also included in this volume. Yet the writings in this volume illustrate Breuer's journey from radical anti-Zionism to an, albeit limited and forced, cooperation with Zionism. They show that Breuer's critique was directed not only against Zionism but also against an inertia he perceived in his own camp. Instead of rejecting Zionism in an abstract and passive way, Breuer aimed to actively oppose it and defend the claims of Orthodoxy. At the same time, these texts occasionally reveal Breuer's uncertainty in his attempt to understand the new reality without deviating from his own principles.

The *third volume* contains several shorter literary texts (*Neigung und Pflicht*, 1901; *Zwei Freunde*, 1902; *Ein Epilog zur Schillerfeier*, 1905; *Das Freiheitsproblem*, 1906; *Auf der Heimfahrt ins Philisterland*, 1907), the lecture *Rückblick auf das Jahr 5663* (1903), the essay *Epilog zum Tode Dr. Herzls* (1904), which is stylised as a eulogy, and the serial novel *Jerusalem* (1903), printed here in its entirety for the first time. The volume also includes poems written for various weddings, which are now being published for the first time ever. It is well known that Breuer produced not only theoretical, political and philosophical writings but also literary and fictional works. For example, at the end of the First World War he wrote the novels *Ein Kampf um Gott* (1920) and *Falk Nefts Heimkehr* (1923), which Franz Rosenzweig praised, and later *Der neue Kusari* (1934), which Gershom Scholem severely criticised. However, the texts collected in this volume show how important fiction writing was even in the early stages of Breuer's career, as Morgenstern emphasises (vol. 3, pp. VI-VII). In addition, it becomes clear how Breuer uses the literary form to advance philosophical, theoretical or political arguments. For example, the texts in

this volume address issues such as Jewish existence in the modern age, the conflict between the demands of Halakha and personal inclination, the difficulty of living in a non-Jewish environment and the resulting feeling of alienness, anti-Semitism, Zionism, the conflict between science and revealed religion, and biblical criticism. As pointed out by Asher D. Biemann, Breuer's *Jerusalem* is a 'theopolitical drama in which different views of history collide messianically' (vol. 3, p. 122, my translation).

In each volume, the texts are presented chronologically. Each text is accompanied by an editorial introduction that provides a history of its publication. Editorial footnotes list variants. Explanatory footnotes offer a wealth of historical background, references to the Bible, rabbinic literature and other Jewish religious works and to philosophical works, and cross-references to other writings by Breuer. Each text is followed by an introductory essay that explains the line of argument and the biographical and historical background, and also situates the text in Breuer's oeuvre. Finally, each text is accompanied by a bibliography which includes references to particularly relevant secondary literature and other sources. In addition, each volume includes an index of names and an index of Jewish sources, mainly the Bible, rabbinic literature and other Jewish religious works. The third volume provides a bibliography of Breuer's writings, including translations into Hebrew and Yiddish.

The IBWA is of great value, not only for scholars of Breuer and of Jewish Studies more generally, but for everyone interested in the intellectual history of the early 20th century. The mere fact that this edition makes Breuer's texts available again deserves great recognition. The selected texts convey a good overview of Breuer's philosophy. And since the edition includes not only more well-known but also lesser-known writings as well as previously unpublished material, a more profound engagement with Breuer's ideas is now possible. In addition, the commentary essays and the explanatory footnotes are all of high quality. They provide valuable information and contribute to a better understanding of the texts. The only regret is that the IBWA will presumably not meet the need for a complete edition of Breuer's works. Currently, a *fourth volume* containing Breuer's novel *Der neue Kusari* (1934) is being prepared, yet a number of other writings should also be considered for publication, which is unlikely to happen. However, this does not, of course, diminish the value of the volumes already published.

Denis Maier
University Library of Bern