
Book Review

Cervantes Would Have Been Impressed

by Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.

The Golem, and the Wondrous Deeds of the Maharal of Prague

by Yudl Rosenberg, Curt Leviant, transl.
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This book is, without the least bit of exaggeration, a gem! It is a joy to read; but, beware, there are deeper meanings of a certain importance, meanings which employ fictional irony to seek to render frightful realities harmless.

A certain amount of special, added credit for the beauty, which must capture the reader of the book as a whole, belongs to the translator, Curt Leviant, whose introduction impressed me as the work of a truly important contemporary mind, in whatever language his Preface might be translated. Even at that distance from the Hebrew text, the effect of the translation could not have been other than a reflection of the intent, and also the adducible authentic genius, and sense of humor of the author of the core work of this publication, Yudl Rosenberg. Rosenberg followed in the footsteps of Miguel Cervantes with such delightful, and truly creative insolence, and Curt Leviant succeeds in making the most of it in his setting of the stage. Since I do not read Hebrew, my comments are written at a certain distance from the original text of Yudl Rosenberg's work, but some meanings defy such barriers.

That defect of my role as reviewer taken duly into account, I am a seasoned American native with many relevant associations among adult American Jews of four generations, chiefly of respectively German and Eastern European descent, as from my own adolescence and adulthood in the greater Boston and New York City areas of the late 1930s through the 1960s and 1970s. I read that experience with aid of my special emphasis on Moses Mendelssohn's role in the great Classical revolution of the late Eighteenth Century, as contrasted with Heinrich Heine's struggle to resist and defeat an enemy which he hated as the depravity of the post-1815

Romantic School, as I do. This experience affords me the advantage of knowing the principled, historical features underlying that European historical setting, in which the European Jew usually struggled to find and defend a sense of identity in a largely menacing, surrounding world.

All these and related considerations taken into account, this book can be appreciated as a gem. In due course here, I shall tell you why I say this, without risk that I might be justly accused of some exaggeration on this account.

The subject of the inner life of peoples subjected to prolonged, and recurring persecution, on account of their origins or religious beliefs, has fascinated me since my childhood, especially since my adolescence in the greater Boston area, in an environment where I hated the vicious discrimination against people of Italian, Eastern European Jewish, and African-American origins, which was typical.

In this setting, two models of Jewish resistance to this form of discrimination inside the U.S.A. itself have been of continuing crucial importance for me, since then, to the present day. The happiest recollections are of the triumphant achievements of Moses Mendelssohn, and the relatively melancholy, contrasting case of the Heinrich Heine who fought most of his adult life for a great cause, the Classical Renaissance of Germany's late Eighteenth Century. Heine fought, for much of his adult life, until near the end, against the malignant filth of the post-Napoleonic Romanticism of Prince Metternich's secret correspondent, the proto-fascist G.W.F. Hegel, and the Romantic School generally. Then, from a more recent time, we have the Yiddish Renaissance, typified by what was known in the U.S.A. of my youth and young manhood by names such as the "Workman's Circle" and the writings of Sholem Aleichem.

As Yudl Rosenberg demonstrates in his *The Golem*, the relative defeat, almost the obliteration of the heroic achievements of Moses Mendelssohn, created a kind of vacuum in which there came into being a thus much-needed, late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century's Jewish humor, which is based implicitly, like Yudl Rosenberg's *The Golem*, on the image of the young child's "secret friend," his "Big Rabbit."

About two decades ago, during one of my visits to Florence, my wife and I chanced to sit in a grassy area, across the Arno, when I could fancy that this might have been where Boccaccio sat, writing his *Decameron* while viewing the holocaust of the Black Death in those streets of Florence, across the river, which I could view from where I sat. Cervantes' treatment of a morally failed Sixteenth-Century Spain under Philip, does echo Boccaccio, using the morally, utterly failed characters Don Quixote and Sancho Panza as the key foils of his account. It is important for readers of *The Golem* to recognize that Yudl Rosenberg is no gloomy Romantic pessimist; he expresses a truly delicious sense of humor also characteristic of the greatest Classical tragedians.

On this account, reading *The Golem*, one should think of Schiller's famous observation on the intent of Classical drama: that the citizen entering the theater, and seeing the pervasive folly enacted there, should resolve, leaving the theater, to be a better citizen upon leaving, a citizen who considers himself warned to adopt a sense of responsibility for the way things go in his or her society. Schiller points, thus, to the essential optimism, the optimism of the citizen provoked to take care of what a society neglected by its citizens might inflict upon itself, which is implicit in the Classical tragedy, when all within the action of the drama on stage is horrifying.

There had been no tragic element in the work of Moses Mendelssohn and his dear friend and collaborator Gotthold Lessing. Mendelssohn, the poor, young Jewish son of a minor religious figure of Dessau, raised the banner of Gottfried Leibniz and Plato before him, and thus shook the pillars of the Philistine temple of Friedrich der Grosse's Berlin, in the onslaught against the corruption of the empiricist school of the Voltairians, D'Alembert, Leonhard Euler, and Joseph Lagrange. This pair of friends, together with Lessing's mentor, the great mathematician Abraham Kästner, unleashed, from within Germany, the great Classical upsurge which spread throughout Europe, and, was, in fact, crucial for the creation of the U.S. Constitutional Republic.

These often almost penniless friends shook the world in their time. For example, as some of my collaborators have published the relevant evidence of this, the greatest musicians, the leading followers of J.S. Bach of their time, including Wolfgang A. Mozart, Ludwig v. Beethoven, Franz Schubert, and others, were within the family circles, from Leipzig and Berlin, of Moses Mendelssohn. From that time on, there is nothing truly great in German culture which has not been rooted in the Classical conspiracy in which the circles of Lessing and Mendelssohn played a crucial part, the circles from which the genius of Friedrich Schiller leaped upward to shape much of the best which lingers still in the world of today.

This was echoed in the circles of Benjamin Franklin in the U.S., in the exemplary circles of Percy B. Shelley and John Keats in Britain. Then came the evil of the siege of the Bastille, the Satanic reek of the Jacobins and their Terror, and of Count Joseph de Maistre's virtual "Trilby," Napoleon Bonaparte. The Vienna negotiations of 1812-1815 turned back the clock of European history.

The genius of Schiller, Beethoven, and Schubert, had been a reflection of a glorious time past. The disease of what Heinrich Heine called "The Romantic School" and its wickedness took charge of a new trend. Later than that came the ouster of Germany's Chancellor Bismarck, and, with that, what became known as World Wars I and II was the result of the intended effect launched by Britain's "Lord of the Isles," Prince Edward Albert, Edward VII. In that same time came a turn typified by the strange police chief and torturer, the Okhrana's

Zubatov, who served as architect of Russia's 1905 Revolution, a plot pivoted on the Okhrana programs against the Jews of Eastern Europe.

The Bund of that time created a tradition, which spilled over into the communities of Jewish immigrants pouring into the U.S. version of ghettos. This was a generation with a deeply felt need of a secret life shared among those who enjoyed a sense of the presence of a child's "invisible friend." The Golem, as presented by Yudl Rosenberg's referenced work, reflected that desire for "an invisible friend," with whom the hopes for a miraculous justice could be expressed in whispers. Every child, once tucked into bed, may think of what he, or she imagines to be the whispers of the parents in a room below. To sleep, that child, thinking his or her parents brave but helpless against the lurking danger, must whisper silently to the consoling presence of an imaginary, powerful friend.

Moses Mendelssohn, 'The Socrates of Berlin'

Moses Mendelssohn (1729-86), the philosopher and Orthodox Jew, played a pivotal historical role in keeping alive the Platonic tradition in philosophy, music, the natural sciences, and statecraft. A scholar of Plato and Leibniz, he was known the world over as "the Socrates of Berlin." He provided the educational pathway that emancipated and transformed the backward, hermetic majority of the Jewish community of Europe and Russia into modern citizens.

For further reading:

Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., "Affirm the Mendelssohn Defense of the Soul," *EIR*, June 14, 2002.

Moses Mendelssohn, *Phaedon, or On the Immortality of the Soul*, Patricia Noble, trans. (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2006).

Steven P. Meyer, "Moses Mendelssohn and the Bach Tradition," *Fidelio*, Summer 1999 (available at schillerinstitute.org).

David Shavin, "Philosophical Vignettes From the Political Life of Moses Mendelssohn," *Fidelio*, Summer 1999 (schillerinstitute.org).

Helga Zepp-LaRouche, "The Classics Against the Enlightenment in the 18th Century," *EIR*, Sept. 3, 1999.

What is important about the sensed presence of the child's invisible friend, is not what the child might believe explicitly, but, rather, the fear which underlies that hopeful wish. That child, at his or her best, is Schiller's ordinary citizen, leaving the theater a better citizen than he had entered, despite the playwright's inspired, warning depiction, as by Shakespeare and Schiller, often of the total depravity of all of the principal characters of *Wallenstein*, and such as those of Posa and the King in *Don Carlos*, of the conduct of virtually all of the characters of the tragedy itself, and of the fears lurking in the hushed voices of the parents in a room below.

Under the Floorboards of Dreaming

On this latter account, I urge the reader to give special, thoughtful attention to pages xxiii-xxxiv of Curt Leviant's Introduction. Now, permit me to speak briefly on those deeper implications of the work, as I see them for myself, and as those indicated pages from Leviant's Introduction prompt my own deeper thoughts on the same matter of the "invisible friend."

Albert Einstein described our universe as finite in its wholeness, and yet self-bounded without external "fences." As Einstein credits Johannes Kepler and Bernhard Riemann on this account, the human individual's power to discover those unseen principles which shape the universe in which we act, reflects a kind of knowledge pertaining to that which lies beyond an attempted literal reading of sense-experience. We meet this higher realm in the discovery and mastery of universal physical principles; we meet the work-product of the same marvelous human faculty, in great Classical artistic composition. A child, drifting toward sleep in an attic room, may sense the presence of universal principles more powerful than the mere objects of sense-perception. In fact, that sense reflects the mental faculty on which discovery of universal principles of the Solar system and galaxy depends, the sense of some power which is good by nature, acting upon the shadow-world of simple sense-perceptual experience in the small.

In judging this just-described irony, we must take into account the fact known to every great physical scientist, that what we regard as simple sense-perception is our image of the experience of sense-perceptual faculties of the mortal flesh, and that images of sense-perception are merely the shadows cast upon sense-perception by a reality which the person does not see directly. The reality lying behind that sense-perceptual view of experience, is what we locate as the domain of experimental knowledge of the certainty of existence of certain principles.

The result of the exploration of these types of ironies, has been, repeatedly, the notion of a physical universe like the domain of *Sphaerics* of the ancient Pythagoreans and Plato, and, in modern times, of Nicholas of Cusa's restatement of the Py-

thagorean-Platonic principle of *Sphaerics* under the title of *De Docta Ignorantia*. This was the method employed by Kepler, and such among his followers as Fermat, Leibniz, and Riemann. This is the anti-Euclidean, anti-Cartesian notion of the universe associated with the work of Kepler, Leibniz, and Riemann, as Einstein referenced this.

If we extend this properly, we trace the development of the notion of harmonics by Kepler into the developments, reflecting both Florentine *bel canto* vocal methods and Kepler in the system of counterpoint of J.S. Bach. We see reflections of this in the revolution in painting by Leonardo da Vinci. These experiences demonstrate that the mind is able to know the principles of physical geometry located within the real universe beyond our sense-perceptions. The power to do this, and the impulse to do this lies within the mind of the growing child who invents his or her "invisible friend." This is not mere fantasy; it were fantasy to deny the efficient significance of that rather commonplace phenomenon of the young child. Yudl Rosenberg's Golem is fictional, but the faculty of the human mind which generates the fancied existence of the Golem is not fictional.

Those among us, who have long since rejected the Euclidean and Cartesian fantasies, and recognized the basis for a Riemannian physical geometry in the ordering of the demonstrated lawful processes of qualitative change in principle of processes, can assure the child that something like an invisible friend does exist in a universe which is essentially good. The child's mind reaches out, saying: "Please!" Some day, if that child follows the thread which leads into real science and real Classical artistic composition, the child will find there the evidence of the the real friend for which he or she had hoped in early years.

Yudl Rosenberg's Golem does not exist, but the world in which he should exist is real. The nightmares associated with the Golem's adventures seem to speak of pessimism, but Rosenberg's Golem is an expression of a deep optimism. Rosenberg's delicious sense of humor, as expressed in his creation of a fictive universe like that of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* earlier, expresses a form of deeply innate optimism expressed in a world which seems otherwise an abomination. There is a rustling of hope which whispers from behind the curtain of an awful tragedy; it is not on stage, but it is there. As adults we call this science, and Classical artistic composition; each of those is conceived as an expression of the same essential substance as the other. That substance is to be known as the expression of individual human creativity.

That sense of the presence of creativity, is the essence of what I read in the course of the Transatlantic flight where I had the opportunity to concentrate on the reading, essentially uninterrupted, from cover to cover. I thank Curt Leviant very much for that. I suggest that you do the same; however, remember, the price of the ticket is on your account.