Translator’s bio: Hayyim Rothman is a Fulbright postdoctoral scholar at Bar Ilan University. He previously taught at Boston College, where he earned his doctorate in philosophy focusing on the political thought of Benedict Spinoza. Hayyim is an ordained rabbi with advanced degrees in Jewish thought, from Yeshiva University, and education, from Florida International University. Currently, Hayyim is at work on a book-length study of Jewish religious anarchism in the 19th and 20th centuries, of which his contribution to this volume is a part.

Concerning Isaac Nahman Steinberg: Isaac Nahman Steinberg (1888-1957) was born in the Latvian city of Dvinsk to a highly learned — men and women alike — cultured, and also deeply religious mitnagdic family that traced its lineage to R. Moses Isserles (the Rema). Tutored at home because attendance at government schools would mean violating the Sabbath, Steinberg excelled in both secular and religious subjects. He attended gymnasium in far away Kazan, Tartarstan where state antisemitism was less rigid and it was possible to obtain medical waivers to avoid exams on the Sabbath. During this time — and especially in Parnu, Estonia, where he completed his final year of gymnasium — Steinberg continued his intensive talmudic studies with a series of rabbis and scholars; most notably, Zalman Baruch Yehoshua-Heschel Rabinkow, a ilui and libertarian socialist better known for having tutored Erich Fromm in talmudics. It was also during this period (and likely under Rabinkow’s influence) that Steinberg forged more formal links (his initial exposure had come much earlier) with the Narodnik folk-socialist movement and its inheritor, the Socialist-Revolutionary (SR) party.

Upon graduating, Steinberg matriculated at the University of Moscow as a student of jurisprudence and joined the SR party, taking leadership roles on campus. For these activities, he was arrested and imprisoned in the Bolshaya Lubyanka prison. Besides donning tefillin and praying while other prisoners enjoyed their limited recreation time, Steinberg’s piety is attested to by the socialist passover seder he held there, and especially by the fact that he delayed his own release on account of the fact that this would have required signing paperwork on yom tov, only relenting when instructed to do so (due to concerns of pikuaah nefesh) by the beyt din of Moscow. Steinberg was subsequently exiled to Germany where, at Heidelberg, he completed — with the support of Rabinkow, who followed him there from Russia — his J.D. with a dissertation on criminal law in the talmud and also continued as a prominent figure in the SR party. In 1910, he returned to Moscow, where he became a criminal advocate and played an active role in the Jewish intellectual life of the city.

In 1917, as a representative of the Left-SR, Steinberg joined the coalition socialist government and was appointed commissar of justice. In this role, he resisted Bolshevik efforts to undermine the rule of law and embrace state-terror in the name of the revolution — i.e. party-power consolidation. This, in addition to his unabashed piety — there is an amusing and fascinating account of Steinberg’s derailment of a council meeting of people’s commissars headed by Lenin, which he interrupted in order to daven minha — put him in direct conflict with the Bolsheviks and ultimately landed him in prison once again.

Upon release, Steinberg fled Russia with his family and resettled in Germany. There, he composed a play entitled Der Veg fun Feyn (The Thorny Path), a semi-autobiographical piece dealing with the moral questions raised by the Russian revolution, for which he won the prestigious Bremen prize (more on his literary contributions later). After this time, he remained active in the Left-SR movement, but also began taking a more active role in exclusively Jewish organizations. Most prominently, the Jewish Territorialist Organization — a movement that once competed with Zionism and which was recently written about by Gur Alroey — over which he eventually assumed leadership and to which he dedicated the rest of his life. After a short period in England, Steinberg resettled in New York City, where he died in 1957.

Steinberg lived an active and complicated life, in which he balanced his dedication to Judaism with a vision for human liberation in general. In the course of his communal and political work, he was
also a tremendously prolific writer — a calling he answered from the time of his bar mitsvah forward. He edited tens of journals and published a large number of books based on his articles. Additionally, he composed a series of plays, all dealing in one manner or another with the fallout of the Russian revolution. Most prominent among his non-fiction texts, are his Der Moralisher Ponem fun der Revolution, in which he articulates both his critique of the actual progress of the Russian revolution and also his vision for its future, and Maximalism in der Yiddisher Velt, in which he translates the political vision of the Left-SR into Jewish life. Among his fictional texts, his greatest contribution is Der Veg fun Feyn, though it is rivaled in quality by Du has Gezigt Makhnochov! (You have Triumphed Maknochov!).

[Starts by talking about the wonders of the modern world, but then points out contradictions]
The tremendous progress of the economy has enslaved working people to economic organization and to machine technology. In consequence of the economic process, relations between men are not transparent; they are almost mystifying. Due to its international character, every step of this process leads to the deepest human suffering in the most diverse places. Whether the economic process is governed by private capitalist trusts, or by state-Bolshevik institutions, the working man stands helpless before powers above him.

Technology has enabled man to conquer nature, but it has also robbed men of the capacity for simple, natural forms of life. To the detriment of both [man and nature], nature itself has been technologized. Art represents and colors, writes and sings of the beauty of nature and man. Yet, it is unable to conceal the ugliness, the shame, and the dirt of the social condition in which millions upon millions of people live and die… The working man casts about in a world ful of dangers: unemployment, competition, war, pogroms, zealous embitterment, and moral chaos.

Opposed to the world as it is, the mind poses a world as it should be. Moral consciousness rises above the surface of the prevailing society and formulates for itself the unaltered (umboygzame) and absolute demands of an ideal. Thus, the mind considers the eternal voice of humanity, the voice that does not allow itself to be drawn into the elemental flow of history, and which bears in itself the activism of
human action. Some say “even the mind was born in [the process of] human evolution, it too must have a
social and historical source.” But such arguments ignore the most important thing: that there lives in man
a voice that… steps forth like a warrior \textit{(straynger moner)} against the laws of history, that — by the force
of suffering and joy, drives man to actively realize his spirit. Only thanks to this spirit is the natural
history of mankind transformed into human history.

Above all, the moral ideal longs for the liberation of humanity. In every new historical epoch, this
striving assumes a new social visage \textit{(partsuf)}. One must certainly take note of the social face of the ideal
during the period of capitalist downfall \textit{(untergung)}. In my mind, one must seek a union between the two
great revolutionary doctrines of our time: socialism and anarchism. With great force, socialism
emphasizes the idea of human mutuality \textit{(tsuzamengebundkayt)}, community \textit{(gezelhshilekhkayt)}. With
depth feeling \textit{(hush)}, anarchism expresses the idea of the freedom of the human individual. Yet, there is a
danger in the force with which socialism dedicates itself to the strong union of science and society on the
one hand and, on the other, also a danger in dividing men from one another in the name of anarchist
freedom. Neither the social utility in socialism, nor the personal force of rebellion in anarchism are alone
sufficient to build up a new society. The ‘equality’ of the former system, and the ‘freedom’ of the latter,
must be united in the name of human love and happiness \textit{(liebe un friede)}, in the name of a society of
brotherhood in which both ideas find their creative renaissance, having then flowed from a common
source.

Striving and fighting for such an idea cannot be split into two unequal parts, the program
maximum and the program minimum — the maximum shining (like the ideal) with the most regal colors
on the white heaven of the future, the minimum, a prosaic… compromising life-program. This division of
the ideal from life, of sacred from secular, destroys the holism \textit{(gantskayt)} of the fighter — for his fight is,
in substance, maximalist. Obviously, one may not, even for a moment, weaken the striving to better and
beautify daily life. Rather, one must always have in view the distinction between charity work and the
fight for redemption. The great achievement of the socialist movement (in all its forms) in relation to the life of the working man is, in substance, not different than a system of social philanthropy. The redemption idea permeates not one of its achievements so long as the giver and the receiver — consciously or not — continue to live in the present social world.

The social image of a free society consists, in my view, in three types of organs: [those governing] production, consumption, and men in general. All men who produce — be it material or intellectual goods — must be united in a production-association (local, central, international but on a federative foundation) in which they decide everything related to their creative work. But the same men are also consumers of social goods. As consumers, they must unite in consumer associations that decide as to the necessity of the, or some, products, articulating the needs of various social circles, controlling and protecting the productive work from one-sidedness and patriotism. The branches of production and consumption associations regulate the circulation of the free social organism. But the highest task of society, the question of its moral and cultural-philosophical fortune, is determined not only on the basis of production and consumption. They must be determined in arenas wherein man feels himself holistically, as an individual (an indivisible unity) who constantly revises the whole order, or the first tendencies of his social life in general. If the established order of production and consumption is static, the man in a free society must guarantee the possibility of a lively dynamic. If society is built on a system of certain and fundamental needs, the free man must also be able to review and to change the tablets of these needs.

Thus, in today’s struggle for freedom, there are two primary objectives: striving for the social reorganization of humanity, and concern for the inner, spiritual and moral needs of man. The many struggles of today can be regarded as reformist or rebellious movements, or as revolutionary (earthquakes?). They remain stuck in reform as long as one deals in thechnical-organizational changes that, in substance, affirm the old society. Fighters become social rebels when, like the Bolsheviks, they institute fundamental changes in the economic structure of the old society, but at the same time create a
new statist society of violence. The fight is lifted to the level of a socialist revolutionary only when it also brings about the spiritual transformation of the fighters themselves.

The historical mission of the social revolutionary consists in the revolutionization of society and of the individual. The prime objective of a lively socialist movement consists in the flowing together of both streams of revolutionization such that each of them is nourished by the other. In the external battle, the revolutionaries cast off present political forms of formal state democracy so as to facilitate the rule of the working and creative man. The revolutionaries are not pleased with apparently peaceful means of struggle — those of pacifist monks who see the unbearable pain of the oppressed, their spiritual and slavery, and let the oppressed wait until the new society is peacefully revealed. This means suppressing pain and painful feelings that are awakened in their moral consciousness. The violent means that the revolution uses are tamed by this same moral consciousness of human pain and cruelty that lives in the revolutionary — herein lies the distinction between violence and terror. In the end, the revolutionary strives that in the motives, the fields, and in the great economic centers of capitalism, the worker and the peasant should systematically take over control and guidance of the economic process.

In the inner struggle, the revolutionary also strives for the sole rule of the moral idea of struggle. Above all temporal economic, political, and national motives, he raises himself to the idea. This leads him to the realization that even economics, production, proletarian power, national pride, and so on are nothing more than the ways and means to the united life-goal: brotherhood. That this goal should shine through humanity, the revolutionary work must penetrate every cell of individual, intimate life: the family and the education of children, relations between men and women, between coworkers and between friends, the hierarchical relations within associations, parties, and unions. A cultural bond must uproot motives of dominion and submission among men. So that the moral idea of the future should, even today, break its way through, the fighting man must zealously avoid being enchanted by the requirements of
technology: civilization, luxury, fashion — these distractions (*farvayhungen*) of capitalist society. Socialism is actually trying to free itself from material need and slavery. But in no way is it a material striving. Because socialism wants to free the fettered, zealous powers of enslaved men, [men] must not fear [the] primitive material comportment of humanity. So long as modern socialism is taken with the treasures of modern civilization, it cannot take man over into the new world. It remains chained to the old world.

Who can wage the awesome historical battle to lead man into a new era? The workers, the enslaved, the suffering masses of humanity — they are the first to feel the call of the objective. Moral consciousness is fitting to be awakened in them and to be transformed into an active force — this, due to the difficult condition in which they live and suffer. Therefor, the socialist movement is, above all, a proletarian movement. But not every proletarian movement is socialist. They become so only when the economic and zealous feelings of the working man are purified by the fire of moral protest, preparedness for sacrificial struggle, for understanding and yearning for human brotherhood; when the working class war is fundamentally a war for humanity. Naturally, the goal of socialism is not to raise the worker in dominion over men but, rather, to free and elevate the man in the worker. The natural partners of the worker are the laboring peasant and all other classes that are trodden and made to suffer by the present society, that yearn for the just life.

The present world economic crisis, and also that for socialism, has shaken the broadest groups of the people and spread despair. Under the difficult clap of the capitalist world order, the tumultuous radiance of what came of Bolshevism, the victory shouts of the fascist camps, it appears to them that the flame of socialism has been extinguished. This impression is an error. Only the false flames of faux socialism have been extinguished. The more disappointed in its external forms people become, all the more must the suffering man of history — especially youth — listen to the hidden depth of the soul. In these depths, he will rediscover the sources of his moral and socialist striving. In these fresh sources will
he immerse his worn-out (*tsuhtsen on farumten*) vision and with fresh powers begin his march to the highest goal of history. In this renewal of the moral idea of socialism, some degraded walls between socialist parties and directions will fall. In this renewal, [socialism] will sprout again, beginning with brotherly relations among workers within one people, and ultimately among workers of all peoples internationally.

A guarantee of the triumph of the revolutionary idea in the future: this is the eternal voice of moral consciousness. Standing in its service and realizing its demands — this will cause more than one heart to beat.