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RATIO AND PATHOS: ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL AND SOME OF HIS CRITICS

Angela Susan Graboys

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College--Jewish Institute of Religion

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Referee: Dr. Jakob J. Petuchowski

DIGEST

Abraham Joshua Heschel has been called a poet, theologian, and a religious philosopher. Assuming these terms are not mutually exclusive, one can easily find a synthesis of the three vocations in Heschel's life and works. Yet a problem arises when his critics as well as his defenders attempt to pigeonhole him. Heschel's ideas and mode of expression do not fit easily into well delineated or pre-existing categories. "Polarity" and "paradox," terms which Heschel often employs in his writing, reflect many of the dichotomies in Heschel's thought process. Any attempt to label Heschel as a strict adherent to a particular school of thought obfuscates the subtlety of his message.

The writings and activities of Heschel bear witness to his status as a creative and innovative thinker. His life, like his thought, was a synthesis of seemingly opposing world views. A transplanted Hasid in a secular world, Heschel was a student of Eastern European mysticism as well as German phenomenology. An observant Jew and the grandson of the Apter Rebbe, Heschel advocated adherence to halakhah. Yet he also warned his readers of the dangers of "religious behaviorism." Heschel's understanding of religious praxis often led him to the left of the political status quo; his friendship with Dr. Martin Luther King, and his opposition to the war in Vietnam, demonstrated a willingness to raise eyebrows in his pursuit of truth. Yet there was a unifying principle underlying all of Heschel's activities--his understanding of the "divine pathos."

Although in Heschel's writings he attempts to divest the reader of preconceived notions and introduce novel ideas, he cannot be seen apart from the historical continuum. The questions which concern Heschel are

timeless: What is man's relation to God? What is the essence of man? How can the individual best come to understand the divine, through the faculty of reason or intuition? Ultimately, does faith or righteous action take precedence in man's relationship with God? Because Heschel and his critics are addressing universal questions which can neither be quantified nor answered with concrete proofs, they can be seen as participants in an ongoing historical debate. Fritz A. Rothschild gives Heschel's religious philosophy a historical context:

> Surely a thinker who has thrown down the gauntlet to the whole venerable tradition of Jewish and Christian metaphysical theology which includes Philo, Saadia Gaon, and Maimonides, and who proclaims that Greek categories such as "being" are inadequate to Judaism, and must be replaced by a new set of categories derived from biblical thinking, must expect brickbats from many directions. To replace Aristotle's Unmoved Mover with the Bible's Most Moved Mover and to argue for an anthropopathic God against Rambam's austerely de-mythologized Deity is no minor matter. (Conservative Judaism 23, pp. 19-20)

The problems Heschel and his critics discuss, like their issues of contention, have no clearcut resolutions. Heschel and some of his critics have attempted to formulate different theological and/or philosophical world-views after struggling with the aforementioned questions.

This thesis will explore the issues of contention between Heschel and his critics, as well as some of the implications of their differing world-views. For Abraham Joshua Heschel, one's view of God and the "divine-human partnership," directly influences the quality of his existence and his relationship to the world. Therefore we will examine Heschel's epistemology, theory of "divine pathos," and his view of the mitswoth. Some of the most salient objections of his critics will also be discussed.

Dedications

to three men who taught me what it means to be a Jew

Joseph Michael Wolpert
(January 20, 1896--October 18, 1978)

Lewis Morton Graboys
(May 26, 1900--October 23, 1976)

Rabbi William Braude
(April 25, 1907--February 25, 1988)

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Preface

When I was a junior at Brown, I read Heschel's The Prophets; this work changed the course of my life and way of thinking. Although I was a committed Jew, the institutional variety of Reform Judaism I had been exposed to during my youth did not capture my imagination. The temple and the worship services I attended struck me as cold and uninspiring. There were issues which I felt passionately about: i.e., social justice, politics, and spirituality, yet I perceived these concerns as far removed from Judaism. Heschel's work and life radically altered my perceptions. The Prophets convinced me that my Judaism and concern with social justice were interrelated. The more I studied Heschel's words, the more I came to believe that being a Jew involved an integrated and holistic way of living. Heschel's thinking inspired me to see connections between global and political issues and prophetic thinking. I became convinced that the Jew was obligated to do more than attend a house of worship and/or donate money to the United Jewish Appeal; he was obligated to see the holy in every action, encounter, and event. It is perhaps Heschel, more than any other thinker, who has shaped my vision of the rabbinate.

Given Heschel's influence on my life and thinking, I approached Dr. Jakob Petuchowski with a proposed thesis topic--The Theology of Abraham Joshua Heschel. My intentions were to explore and analyse those ideas which resonated within my soul. It is my good fortune that Dr. Petuchowski is a challenging and thought-provoking advisor. He stretched me intellectually by posing the following question: Could I not expand my horizons more by examining both the tenets of Heschel's thought as well as those relevant criticisms? Initially I was reluctant

to take on this project--i.e., How could anyone criticize Heschel? His philosophy of Judaism is beautiful, inspiring, and so alive! Then I became curious; I wanted to know who Heschel's critics were, what they said, and ultimately if they would influence my perspectives. Moreover, I came to believe that by understanding Heschel's critics I would better understand Heschel. His critics would force me to ask several questions about his "philosophy of Judaism" that I might have very well ignored.

I will always be grateful to Dr. Petuchowski for suggesting the topic: "Ratio and Pathos: Abraham Joshua Heschel and Some of his Critics." During the past two years I have been intellectually challenged and forced to examine a vast array of theological problems. I have emerged with a more well rounded perspective: I appreciate both our need for intuitive epistemology and rational speculation. My respect for, and commitment to, Heschel's "philosophy of Judaism" has grown. Yet my understanding of his critics has given me a greater appreciation of many of his problems one encounters if he or she bases a theology upon intuition. Ultimately, this project has not only enabled me to better understand Heschel; it has also helped me to better develop a personal theology. I agree with Heschel's understanding of God as One Who Cares. Praying becomes problematic if one believes in an impersonal deity who is unconcerned with the welfare of humanity. Yet I also respect those who caution against the dangers of dismissing the rational. Although we cannot afford to minimize the importance of intuitive insight, we also cannot afford to ignore the importance of cognitive reasoning. If we stress the former while losing sight of the latter we run the risk of elevating an irrational system of thought and/or action which has no safeguards to prevent potential abuses. The

strength of Heschel's thought is its inclusion of man's emotions, passions, and profound feelings. Indeed, his innovation is the incorporation of these intuitive elements into a "philosophy." Yet Heschel's weakness is his inability to provide us with a system of checks and balances; i.e., given Heschel's understanding of "philosophy," we have no means or criteria with which to evaluate "religious experience." The question Heschel and his critics leave us with is: Must we choose between intuition and reason, or can these values be unified?

Acknowledgments

I could not have written this thesis without the encouragement, support, and guidance of the following men and women:

First and foremost, I want to thank my advisor, teacher, friend, and Rabbi--Dr. Jakob J. Petuchowski, who suggested this topic and guided me every step of the way. Providing personal insights, invaluable resources, challenging ideas, and rigorous motivational techniques, my advisor has been a mentor and role model. Beyond the scope of this thesis, I have learned a great deal from Dr. Petuchowski about Menschlichkeit and intellectual freedom. I will miss our numerous discussions and political debates. It was indeed a privilege to study with such a gifted scholar and exemplary human being.

I cannot express in words all the heartfelt gratitude I feel towards Dr. Werner Weinberg. During my tenure in Cincinnati, Dr. Weinberg has provided me with help and support in virtually all of my undertakings. Friend, teacher, and confidant, Dr. Weinberg opened his home and his heart to me. Indeed I cannot imagine what life at the college would have been like without Dr. Weinberg's shoulder to lean on. Every text I have studied, like every page of my thesis, reflect his invaluable insights.

This project has put me into contact with some extraordinary individuals who have been extremely generous with their time and energy. Dr. John C. Merkle of the College of St. Benedict in Minnesota contributed many critical insights. Dr. Merkle, an inspiring thinker, shared many of his observations with me. Dr. Samuel Dresner of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York was also extremely helpful to me. Sharing his personal reflections and scholarly analysis, Dr. Dresner's contributions added greatly to this project. My understanding of Heschel has been greatly enhanced by the perspective of Dr. Fritz A. Rothschild of the Jewish Theological Seminary. Dr. Rothschild's superb analysis of Heschel's thought and his erudition provoked many of the questions addressed in this thesis. Heschel's daughter, Susannah, also lent a great deal of time and energy to this project. Dr. Susannah Heschel, a professor at Southern Methodist University in Texas, took time out from her busy schedule to answer many questions and elucidate many of her father's ideas.

This thesis cannot be viewed in isolation from the H.U.C. experience. Several teachers and friends have greatly enhanced my tenure at the college. From Dr. Michael Meyer I have learned the importance of critical thinking; his ability to analyse a variety of perspectives and consider opposing viewpoints has taught me a great deal. Dr. Ellis Rivkin's creative and imaginative approach to learning has inspired me to take intellectual risks. Dr. Jonathan Sarna's ability to synthesize historical analysis and literary expression has caused me to see connections and interrelationships between several academic disciplines. Rilke wrote, "learn to love the questions..."; Dr. Barry Kogan's courses have taught me to "learn to love philosophy...." Through Dr. Kogan's courses I have come to love the journey and the process of thinking--rather than only seek "the

answers." My understanding of philosophy has also been deeply influenced by the provocative and disturbing questions of Dr. Alvin Reines. Never one to take the well-trodden paths, Dr. Reines's unique insights and command of philosophic systems have provided me with a great deal of food for thought.

My friends and fellow H.U.C. students have given me a great deal of joy during my time in Cincinnati. Laura Rappaport taught me the importance of humor and not taking one's self too seriously. Always willing to laugh, to create parody, and to break into song--Laura's approach to life has added much to my perspective. Had I not met Laura, I would undoubtedly have taken life more seriously and continued along on my melodramatic and overly romantic path. Thanks to Laura, I've given up looking for Prince Charming and am looking for someone who can repair cars.

Deborah Bronstein has been a soulmate and dear friend during the past five years. We had an auspicious meeting--each one of us was carrying Heschel's Man is Not Alone. Our motto, "We Can Do It," has seen us through a myriad of experiences.

Sheryl Stahl and Jane Withrow are the sisters I never had! These two women have been such nurturing friends: driving me to the airport at 6:00 a.m., making dinner for me, getting me soup when I was sick, and always ready with a warm hug.

Beth Jarecky Singer and Jonathan Lubarsky Singer--I cannot imagine more wonderful and supportive friends. Beth and Jonathan have been with me through thick and thin--always there to lend an ear and a smile. We have survived the vicissitudes of H.U.C. and an exciting road trip together. I am genuinely grateful for all the rachmones and laughter we have shared.

Judy Trombly is a woman committed to ecumenical and philosophical dialogues. I have greatly appreciated our mutual concerns and friendship. I cannot imagine what my experience of Cincinnati would have been like without spending time with such a warm and vibrant friend.

Sarah Bernstein, artist of life, writer, and roller skater. Our friendship captured my imagination. One moment we would be discussing the meaning of life and the next we'd be roller skating at Sawyer Point. We shared eclectic interests to say the least.

Hannah Berger--friend and committed congregant, helped introduce me to Selma, the connection between psychology and religion, and several other new ideas. I appreciate her interest, help, and feedback on many of the thoughts expressed in this thesis.

Sid Helbraun--always a support during times of travail, a more thoughtful friend would be hard to find. Sid, alias Zelig, has put up with all my Meshugas without ever raising a complaint.

Matt Kraus--sweet soft-spoken, and enigmatic. With strong convictions and a gentle voice, Matt has been a special friend. Moreover, his commitment to the environment and recycling has greatly increased my awareness on a variety of ecological issues. Thanks to Matt I am more conscious of all forms of "exploitation."

I could never have accomplished my goals without the unconditional love and support of my family. In a sense my parents represent the values of Ratio and Pathos. My father, George, is one committed to rational analysis and facts and figures. Never one to "shoot from the hip," my father has always stressed the importance of "not speaking before you have your facts straight." Were it not for my father's stabilizing influence, I might very well have ended up a "granola crunching bohemian." Fortunately for all concerned, this is not the case.

My mother, Lois, embodies Heschel's theory of intuition. A spiritual and mystical woman, my mother taught me the importance of questioning reason and trusting intuition. Deeply committed to God, Torah, and Judaism--I have no doubt that my mother could have been a remarkable Rabbi. With grace and charm she raised 3 kids, 2 dogs, and three cats. Without her guidance and interest in Judaism, I would never have come to H.U.C.

My brothers Kenny and Jimmy have always been there to cheer me on. Ken, a committed social activist, and Jim, a military man, have both inspired me with their dedication to serving others and our country. They do not know it, but they are exemplary Jews, always eager to perform mitswoth.

Last, but far from least, I'd like to thank my typist--Ray Yearwood. It is not every day that one hires an ordained minister, let alone a serious student of theology, to type her rabbinic thesis! Ray has been quite a mensch, meeting every deadline and skillfully typing this work.

All in all, God has blessed me with a caring community of family, friends, and teachers. The past five years have passed like the blink of an eye. I have experienced much beauty and love--for this I am grateful to the Source of All Life, The Holy One, Our Nurturing Presence.

Introduction

How do we evaluate the work and life of Abraham Joshua Heschel? Adherents, defenders, and students of Heschel's thought argue that both his analysis of modern man's crises and his theological insights have had significant influence on contemporary religious perspectives. Many of his critics, however, argue that Heschel is neither a systematic philosopher nor a serious theologian. Moreover, those who attack Heschel often accuse him of substituting poetic and evocative language for content. While these individuals concede that Heschel has mastered rhetoric, they hold that his literary gifts are suspect, i.e., Heschel conveys moods and feelings--not a coherent "philosophy of religion." How do we evaluate these criticisms? This thesis attempts to address these concerns and the following problems: Heschel's theories are built upon intuition; yet intuition is not a concept which can be easily articulated. Indeed, Heschel believes that the moment we perceive the ineffable we part company with words. Yet Heschel's critics question such an assumption; they hold that rational speculation must be incorporated into any thought process which calls itself a "philosophy." Ultimately one examining Heschel's thoughts, as well as his critics' observations, must struggle with the question--what constitutes "philosophy"?

Although Heschel has been challenged by a variety of religious thinkers, his impact on the American religious scene cannot be questioned. During the Fifties and Sixties Heschel was perceived as both a leading Jewish voice and religious figure throughout the nation. As Reinhold Neibuhr correctly predicted in 1951, Heschel would become "a commanding and authoritative voice not only in the Jewish community but

in the religious life of America."[1] Heschel's impact transcended denominations; he was seen as "the Jewish spokesperson" on a vast array of social and religious issues. As Samuel Dresner noted, Heschel was the "Jewish touchstone on civil rights, ecumenical dialogue, and the Vietnam War..."[2] Moreover, the Christian community actively sought out Heschel's opinions on a wide range of issues; Kenneth L. Woodward relates, "When an order of Roman Catholic nuns could not decide whether to keep or abandon their traditional religious garb, they came to Heschel as the only person who could give them sound advice."[3]

Some of Heschel's admirers compared him to the prophets of old. While such a comparison would not be amenable to Heschel, it is not beyond the reader's understanding as to why some would be tempted to draw certain parallels. As Franklin Sherman explains:

> As the decade of the 1960's moved onward from its hopeful beginnings through the ordeal of assassinations, urban crises, and protracted war to the opening of yet another new frontier in outer space, a disquieting voice was heard increasingly throughout America. The voice was that of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel... . Even in his physical appearance conjuring up the image of what an Amos or an Isaiah must have looked like--stocky, full-bearded, speaking softly but with passionate intensity--it is small wonder that many viewed him as a latter-day Hebrew prophet.[4]

Many familiar with Heschel's writing have observed the influence of mysticism on "depth theology." Indeed Heschel's Hasidic background was a formidable influence on his thought. Thus, it is intriguing that Heschel felt compelled to leave his milieu and pursue a secular education. Hence Heschel's life, like his "philosophy of Judaism" was an attempt to synthesize Eastern European Jewish thought and German philosophical perspectives. Heschel was born in Warsaw, Poland in 1907. As John Merkle notes, "He was the descendant of long line of scholars and religious leaders that can be traced back to the late

fifteenth century."[5] Yet despite Heschel's attachment to his place of birth and illustrious family, he felt compelled to leave Warsaw. Samuel Dresner traces Heschel's intellectual development as follows:

> Some hasidic leaders felt that in him a renewal of their movement, which had grown dormant in the twentieth century, might come about. Others too were aware of the new light that was glowing in their midst. It can be said with certainty that the years in Warsaw provided that nourishment of spirit and intellect, that inner dignity of who he was, which gave permanent direction to Heschel's being. It could not, however, prevent him from peering beyond and, in the end, setting out from his home to explore the world of western civilization which thundered and glittered about him. Departing from Warsaw in his teens, he traveled first to Vilna, where he pursued his secular education and joined a promising group of Yiddish poets. Then on to Berlin, the metropolis of science and philosophy in the twenties, where he immersed himself in the culture of the West and began to publish his first books and establish his career.[6]

In Berlin, Heschel "enrolled not only at the University of Berlin, but also concurrently at Berlin's Hochshule fur die Wissenschaft des Judensums..."[7] It is noteworthy that in Germany, Heschel's Jewish studies, like his Rabbinic ordination, and early teaching positions, were all under the auspices of institutions committed to modern Jewish thought. In 1934 Heschel assumed his first teaching position at the Hochshule in Berlin where he had been ordained,[8] and in 1937 Heschel succeeded Martin Buber at the Central Organization for Jewish Adult Education and the Judische Lehrhaus in Frankfurt am Main.[9] In 1938 Heschel was deported by the Nazi Regime. As Merkle explains:

> Heschel was one of thousands of Polish Jews being sent back to their native country. But when the train carrying them reached the border, Poland refused to let them come home. Heschel and others were placed in a detention camp along the border. It was not long, however, before Heschel's relatives had him freed and he returned to Warsaw where he taught for the next eight months at a rabbinical seminary, the Institute of Jewish Studies.[10]

In 1939, six months before the Nazi invasion of Poland, Heschel received an invitation to join the faculty of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Ohio. In "Abraham Joshua Heschel: A Man of Dialogues," Dr. Alfred Gottschalk discusses the college's plan to bring Heschel and other European scholars to America. "As early as 1934, President Julian Morgenstern and the Board of Governors of the Hebrew Union College had been concerned about the fate of Jewish scholars in Europe."[11] Hence the college developed a rescue plan; among the scholars Hebrew Union College brought to America was Abraham Joshua Heschel. In the Spring of 1940 Heschel arrived in Cincinnati.

Heschel was well aware of the fate of his fellow Jews who remained in Europe. As he stated in "No Religion is an Island": "I speak as a person who was able to leave Warsaw, the city in which I was born, just six weeks before the disaster began. My destination was New York, it would have been Auschwitz or Treblinka. I am a brand plucked from the fire, in which my people was burned to death..."[12] Though Heschel felt indebted to the Hebrew Union College for saving his life, he was not comfortable at the Reform seminary. There was a wide gulf between Heschel's understanding of ritual practice and spirituality and the environment which he confronted at the Hebrew Union College. As Jakob Petuchowski explains:

> ...When Heschel came to the Hebrew Union College in 1940, the College was far closer to so-called "Classical Reform" than it has tended to be since. It should not be too difficult to empathize with the feelings of a descendant of the Rabbi of Apt, the Maggid of Mezhirech and (on his mother's side) of Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev in the setting of Cincinnati, Ohio in the nineteen-forties. It should not be too difficult to understand why Heschel left after five years, attracted to what he felt to be the more Jewish setting of Manhattan.[13]

In 1945 Heschel joined the faculty of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York; he taught there until the time of his death in 1972. According to Dresner, Heschel was never adequately appreciated by the Seminary.[14] He only taught a few course hours per week and attracted few disciples. Yet despite Heschel's academic frustrations, he attracted a sizable following in the larger community. Heschel's books, political involvement, and commitment to ecumenical dialogue provided him with opportunities to touch many lives. Heschel's involvement with social concerns and his theological works provided him with a forum in which he could express many of his ideas.

Despite Heschel's numerous accomplishments, he was relatively young when he died; he was only sixty-five years old. Kenneth Woodward describes Heschel's last week:

> It had been, for him, a typically vigorous week. On Monday, he finished his latest book and personally carried it to his publisher's office. Two days later, despite a weak heart, he journeyed to Danbury, Conn., where he waited in the snow to welcome Father Philip Berrigan when the antiwar priest left prison on parole. Then he traveled back to New York for his last class at Jewish Theological Seminary. By sundown on Friday...he was utterly exhausted. And early the next morning, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, one of the most beloved and respected voices in American Judaism, died in his sleep at age 65.[15]

During Heschel's lifetime he wrote several works which covered a broad range of topics. While a student in Berlin, Heschel wrote his doctoral dissertation Die Prophetie (1936), upon which he based much of his later work The Prophets. In 1935, Maimonides: A Biography was published. Heschel's memorial to Eastern European Jewry, The Earth is the Lord"s... followed in 1950. In 1951, Heschel published two monumental works: The Sabbath and Man is Not Alone...; four years later the sequel to Man is Not Alone, God in Search of Man... appeared. In

1962 and 1965, Heschel published his two Hebrew volumes of Torah Min ha Shamayim be-ispaklaryah shel ha-dorot (Torah from Heaven in the Light of the Generations).[16] According to Merkle, these two volumes are "regarded as his magnum opus as a historian of theology."[17] In 1965, Who Is Man? emerged. This book was considered by some to be one of Heschel's most concise theological statements.[18] During these decades, two collections of Heschel's essays also appeared: Man's Quest for God... (1954) and The Insecurity of Freedom... (1966).

Heschel also wrote two works addressing the specific political crises of his day: Vietnam: Crisis of Conscience (1967) and Israel: an Echo of Eternity (1968). These works "are answers to appeals...answers to explicit requests by other's for Heschel's help."[19] A few days before Heschel died, he completed A Passion for Truth..., which was published posthumously in 1973.

Although Heschel's writing and thinking explore a wide range of concerns, one familiar with Heschel will recognize certain recurring themes. "Depth theology" and the theory of "divine pathos" seek to elicit a response from the reader. Heschel is calling for our involvement with God; he seeks to engage man in the "divine-human encounter." Moreover, Heschel challenges several traditional understandings of "philosophy." Specifically, Heschel calls upon us to abandon the Greek concept of the Unmoved Mover and/or the Active Intellect and to embrace a personal, feeling, and caring deity. Hence, Heschel's theology is an affront to those who are opposed to a supernatural deity. Moreover, those committed to the idea of God as the "Wholly Other" find Heschel's ideas problematic. Understandably, Heschel is attacked by critics who espouse rational speculation, Greek

categories of thought, and naturalistic conceptions of deity. Heschel's critics represent a vast array of perspectives on the theological spectrum: Reconstructionist, Modern Orthodox, and Reform responses are provoked. Moreover, Aristotilian conceptions of God and Maimonides's theory of negative attributes are invoked by several thinkers. This thesis examines some of the tensions between these competing world-views.

Heschel and his critics are competing for the reader's religious commitment to their respective positions. Heschel is asking us to give intuition precedence over cognitive speculation. He is asking us to establish personal relationships with a God who cares and suffers. Heschel's opponents, on the other hand, warn of the dangers that befall those who elevate insight over reason. Those who are critical of "depth theology" fear the consequences of irrational mindsets. Heschel and his critics are participating in a dialogue which transcends the confines of these specific thinkers. Opposing world-views, schools of thought, and philosophical perspectives are colliding with one and other. Hence the debate between Heschel and his critics is a clash between: the Bible and Greek philosophy, mystical insight and logical reasoning, phenomenology and the quest for external empirical evidence, and ultimately--between the "God of the Philosophers" and the "God of Pathos." It is left to the student of theology to determine whether the aforementioned tensions can be harmonized or whether they represent mutually exclusive perspectives.

Full bibliographical details of

the works quoted here will be found in

the Bibliography.

Notes to Introduction

[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, "Masterly Analysis of Faith," in New York Herald Tribune Book Review, April 1, 1951, p. 12.

[2]Samuel H. Dresner, Interview, Union Theological Seminary, August 30, 1988.

[3]Kenneth L. Woodward, "A Foretaste of Eternity" in Newsweek, January 8, 1973, p. 50.

[4]Franklin Sherman, The Promise of Heschel, p. 1.

[5]John C. Merkle, Genesis of Faith..., p. 4.

[6]Dresner, "Abraham Joshua Heschel Ten Years After His Death" in Conservative Judaism 36, No. 2, p. 6.

[7]Merkle, Genesis of Faith..., p. 7.

[8]Ibid., p. 10. Also see Footnote #29, p. 226.

[9]Ibid., p. 10.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Alfred Gottschalk, "Abraham Joshua Heschel: A Man of Dialogues" in Conservative Judaism 28, No. 1, p. 24.

[12]Abraham Joshua Heschel, "No Religion is an Island" in Union Seminary Quarterly Review 21, No. 2, part 1, p. 117.

[13]Jakob J. Petuchowski, "In Memoriam--Abraham Joshua Heschel," words spoken at the Sheloshim Observance, 1972, p. 2.

[14]Dresner, Interview, Union Theological Seminary, August 30, 1988.

[15]Woodward, "A Foretaste of Eternity" in Newsweek, January 8, 1973, p. 50.

[16]Torah Min ha-Shamayim be-ispaklaryah shel ha-dorot, (The Theology of Ancient Judaism), is a work beyond the scope of this investigation.

[17]Merkle, Genesis of Faith..., p. 16.

[18]See Petuchowski, Review of Heschel, Who Is Man? in CCAR Journal 13, No. 5, p. 89.

[19]Merkle, Genesis of Faith..., p. 17.

Chapter One: INTUITIVE EPISTEMOLOGY

In God in Search of Man, Heschel presents his "philosophy of Judaism." Because he offers the reader a polemic, he employs a terminology which is consistent with his world-view. Heschel initially attempts to define and qualify the respective meanings of "philosophy" and "religion"; in doing so he also lays the foundation for his own theology. One of the primary tasks Heschel assigns to philosophy is "to rediscover the questions."[1] Religion is another domain; one in which "the mystery of the answer hovers over all questions."[2]

Although Heschel acknowledges the value of philosophy's "critical reassessment of religion,"[3] it is clear throughout his works that he believes religion must now reassess philosophy.

> Religion, we repeat, is a unique source of insight. This implies that the insights and demands of religion cannot be completely synchronized with the conclusions of any particular system of philosophy...
>
> The role of religion is to be a challenge to philosophy, not merely an object for examination.[4]

Religion is concerned with the source of man's ultimate insights and questions, whereas philosophy is concerned with the classification and systematization of his ideas. Heschel does not attribute equal status to these disciplines. Religion, due to the nature of the issues it addresses, must take precedence.

After examining the terms "philosophy" and "religion" separately, Heschel then discusses their interrelationship. The goal of a "philosophy of religion" is not only the "critical reassessment of religion from the point of view of philosophy"; it is also self-understanding. Religion must seek to understand itself, in its own terms, as "radical understanding in terms of its own spirit."[5]

As mentioned earlier, Heschel views the study of philosophy as subordinate to that of religion. This perspective shapes his understanding of their interplay. One of Heschel's most novel ideas regarding the role of "philosophy of religion" concerns its need to limit philosophical inquiry. For Heschel a "philosophy of religion" must set borders for its respective domains. It should be noted that Heschel seems more concerned about the potential dangers of philosophy overstepping its boundaries than he does about religion.

> [Philosophy of religion] must furthermore elucidate the essential difference between philosophy and religion. Its task is not only to examine the claim of religion in the face of philosophy, but also refute the claim of philosophy when it presumes to become a substitute for religion, to prove the inadequacy of philosophy as a religion.[6]

As we will see later in this chapter, Heschel's view of philosophy as a discipline, and his caution against the potential abuses it poses to religion, derive from his premise that rational speculation and reason pose a threat to intuitive insight and faith.

In laying the groundwork for his "philosophy of Judaism," Heschel creates his own methodology. He often expresses his theories by coining previously non-existent words and categories of meaning. We see an example of Heschel's creative thinking in his discussion of "depth theology," his innovative subcategory of theology. Whereas theology is the content of belief,[7] depth theology's "purpose is to explore the depth of faith, the substratum out of which belief arises."[8]

Depth theology is part and parcel of Heschel's epistemology. Underlying all of our beliefs are moments of insight which cannot be expressed. The antecedents of faith, or man's pretheological[9] situation cannot be easily articulated; often they are experienced as brief intuitive flashes. For Heschel these intuitive flashes constitute the

intensity of our profound inner experience, one that cannot be adequately conveyed, and is the root of faith. As Fritz Rothschild explains:

> This dimension of depth never enters the domain of knowledge, yet for religious consciousness it is as much a fact of experience as any causal sequence... . It is the source for man's sense of the ineffable, the sensitivity to the mystery of being and the uniqueness of each being.[10]

"Depth theology," the cornerstone of Heschel's "philosophy of religion," is based upon personal experiences and intuitions. We must be willing to abandon our preconceived notions and prejudices, "to unthink many thoughts."[11] According to this view, each person, if he is open to the experience, has the ability to perceive the ineffable through an innate intuitive faculty. As Heschel states: "the sense of the ineffable is not an esoteric faculty but an ability with which all men are endowed..."[12]

"Depth theology" calls upon the reader to become engaged and involved in the search for God with his whole being. To deepen our understanding of God, we must use our hearts and souls as well as our minds. "Depth theology," like the one who coined the phrase, is unabashedly partisan. It contains no pretense of satisfying purely academic curiosity. "Depth theology" is not concerned with abstract theories which can be debated in a detached intellectual manner; it is concerned with man's immediate situation. Heschel's desire is for religion to be relevant; it should address man's most profound questions, problems, and aspirations.

Because Heschel believes religion must address the concrete situation of man, he develops a new theological term called "situational thinking." "Situational thinking is necessary when we are engaged in

an effort to understand issues on which we stake our very existence."[13] Heschel contrasts "situational thinking" to "conceptual thinking." The relationship between these two terms in many ways parallels Heschel's understanding of the dichotomy between philosophy and religion. As John Merkle explains, "[conceptual thinking] deals with concepts by way of detached analysis; [situational thinking] by way of concerned involvement."[14]

Unlike "conceptual thinking," "situational thinking" is not concerned with abstract theories or speculations about the nature of man. Rather, "situational thinking" seeks to explore the events and insights which precede conceptual analysis. Just as "depth theology" attempts to uncover these intuitive experiences which are the antecedents of faith, "situational thinking" attempts to describe those life-transforming moments and epiphanies which precede organized thought.

Because "situational thinking" is concerned with immediate concrete events and unique moments in time, its application is twofold. It addresses man's problems and concerns in the "here and now," and it also connects him to the experiences of his biblical predecessors. As was stated earlier, Heschel believes that every person is endowed with the faculty to perceive the ineffable. The sensitive individual, open to this startling experience, is overcome with humility, awe, and wonder. Since these perceptions are universal, one experiencing them in the present is capable of directly relating them to biblical thought. As Rothschild states: "The event of revelation as described in the Hebrew Bible exhibits in archetypal form what normal religious consciousness has discovered on a lower level."[15]

Both "depth theology" and "situational thinking" stress the primacy of "inner experiences" and intuitions. For Heschel the first step towards awareness of deity is man's inkling of mystery. This experience occurs in the realm of the soul and cannot be expressed in words.

For Heschel there are three ways to God: human experience, biblical understanding, and sacred deeds.[16] These three ways are never presented as proofs or intellectual arguments for the existence of God, but rather are offered as means towards enhancing our awareness. In a sense, Heschel is attempting to provide his readers with the spiritual tools necessary for deepening their relationships with God.

When Heschel discusses human experiences in the world of nature in terms of power, beauty, and grandeur, he is not offering a cosmological proof for the existence of God. He does not see his role in terms of presenting us with empirical evidence. Rather, his goal is to help us discover our innate awareness of deity, and when necessary to strip away our resistance and indifference. For Heschel God is an "ontological presupposition."[17]

> ...Our belief in His reality is not a leap over a missing link in a syllogism but rather a regaining, giving up a view rather than adding one, going behind self-consciousness and questioning the self and all its cognitive pretensions.[18]

There is a paradoxical element in Heschel's writing; he is attempting to describe experiences and concepts which he acknowledges can never be adequately verbalized. The ineffable, by its very nature, cannot be conveyed in words. As Heschel states: "while we are unable either to define or describe the ineffable, it is given to us to point to it."[19] The ineffable is the mystery which hovers both within and beyond all being. Moreover, it is our means towards God. We become aware of Him when "the ineffable in us communes with the ineffable beyond us."[20]

There are moments in every person's life when he feels overwhelmed by the numinous aspects of existence. Sometimes we respond with awe and radical amazement, and other times with fear and trepidation. In Who Is Man?, we read of the situations which prompt man's confrontation with the ineffable:

> All we have is a sense of awe and radical amazement in the face of mystery that staggers our ability to sense it. No one can ridicule the stars or poke fun at an atomic explosion. No one can debunk the man who committed suicide in order to call the attention of the world to the Nazi atrocities.[21]

The ineffable is not God; it is the mystery which alludes to Him. Before man can have faith in deity, he encounters the ineffable. Awareness of the numinous, the unknown behind the known, is the first step towards God. Man's encounter with the ineffable takes place on an emotional level. It is an intuitive perception which precedes organized thought. Hence Heschel's innovative language attempts to capture these initial human experiences which ultimately lead man to God. This is reflected by his use of the terms "preconceptual thought" and "preconceptual knowledge."

How does man become aware of the ineffable? Overwhelmed by the realization that there is more than he knows, he is overcome by a sense of humility in light of nature's power, beauty, and grandeur. Moreover, he is startled by the very fact of his existence. Every sensitive human being, according to Heschel's intuitive epistemology, must be aware that there is a great unknown beyond all perceptions. The religious or pious individual recognizes that this unknown points to deity. There is meaning beyond the mystery; known permeating and transcending the unknown.[22]

Heschel's epistemology, unlike that of the positivists and the empiricists, does not begin with observable facts. Rather, Heschel focuses on the unanswerable questions which are beyond our mental grasp. It is by struggling with these questions that we enter into a divine-human relationship. "The way of thinking about God in traditional speculation has been via eminentiae, a way of proceeding from the known to the unknown. Our starting point is not the known, the finite, the order, but the unknown within the known ..."[23]

Heschel, like those other theologians and philosophers who oppose rational proofs for the existence of God, believes that the road to faith begins with our unanswerable questions. The very fact that we are unable to fully comprehend the enigma and mystery of our lives, our world, and all that is beyond us, indicates that there is a God. As Heschel states in Man is Not Alone: "It is in our inability to grasp Him that we come to understand Him...God is not an explanation of the world's enigmas or a guarantee for salvation. He is an eternal challenge, an urgent demand."[24]

It is important to note that although Heschel dismisses the empirical approach to reality and stresses the importance of intuition, he is not an advocate of what is popularly called "blind faith." Faith must not be used as a pretext for ignorance. Rather, it is a spiritual process wrought with struggles. The following description in A Passion for Truth is of twofold concern; it illustrates the similarities between Heschel's and Kierkegaard's thought processes and gives insight into Heschel's own understanding of faith:

> Kierkegaard also opposes rational religion, for the reasoning faculty is incapable of direct apprehension of God. God is always perceived as a paradox: the intellect is completely confounded by contradictions. All religious themes -

> conscience, sin, repentance, [and] faith are mystifying beyond reason. Faith is not a sustained, comfortable state of consciousness but a painful, hard-won, and impermanent conviction...[25]

At this point a question arises: If the ineffable is not God, but rather an allusion to Him, how does man actually arrive at an awareness of deity? For Heschel the antecedents of faith lead to actual faith through a process. Initially we experience the sublime, wonder, and glory as objective aspects of existence. The religiously sensitive will respond to these three elements of grandeur by expressing wonder, awe, and ultimately faith.

For Heschel the sublime, wonder, and glory are aspects of the ineffable, reflections of the mystery hovering over all reality. Yet these elements of grandeur, in and of themselves, are not God; and we must take pains not to confuse them with Him. Perceiving the ineffable is not an act of faith in God; it is a sensory and emotional experience. It is man's reactions to these experiences that have the potential to develop into faith. Hence our question is not: Does man experience wonder? But rather, what will he do with his sense of wonder? One who refuses to penetrate the questions beyond nature's mystery might become a pantheist. Moreover, a callous individual might interpret that which cannot be expressed as a meaningless abyss.

Faith, the path to God, is a choice. When confronted with the numinous, we can opt to see "meaning beyond the mystery," or we can remain oblivious. Some will perceive the questions we do not know how to ask as an invitation or entrance-way towards a divine-human encounter. These individuals will struggle to develop and deepen their faith in God. Others will choose to remain insensitive to the spiritual challenge and forgo a life of faith. As stated in <u>Man is Not Alone</u>:

> Faith will come to him who passionately yearns for ultimate meaning, who is alert to the sublime dignity of being, who is alive to the marvel of matter, to the unbelievable core within the known, evident, concrete...[26]

The antecedents to faith lie in our sense of the mystery of creation, human existence, and all that is beyond our comprehension, while our expression of faith is manifested by our response to this enigmatic challenge. The pious individual who yearns for meaning is forced to ask: Who is the author of it all? As John Merkle explains:

> Surprised by the unexpectedness of being, awed by its sacred relevance, we human beings must confess that we are not sovereign in the realm of being, we have not authored the realm of meaning.[27]

Humbled by his very being, aware that he is not the author of his own existence, the sensitive individual enters into a life of faith. His desire for meaning leads him to the realization that he is the object of transitive concern.[28]

For Heschel, man's very desire for meaning attests to his relationship with God. The spiritual challenge which confronts him, the "ultimate question,"[29] is not formulated by him. It is God who implants the desire for meaning in man. This point cannot be stressed enough: It is God who is in search of man. In Heschel's "biblical philosophy," God is always the frame of reference. Thus the Bible is not viewed as man's theology; it is God's anthropology.[30]

Before we examine the frame of reference of Heschel's "biblical philosophy," an observation must be made. As we have seen, Heschel sees God as an "ontological presupposition." His reality is never called into question. Heschel never entertains the notion that the doubter or the atheist might have valid views. Those who do not have faith are not "in tune" with the ineffable; they have "lost touch" with their

intuitive faculty. Moreover, many who do not have faith in God are unable to "unthink thoughts"; these individuals are attached to preconceived notions and prejudices. The individual who does not possess faith is like one who is blind to a universal truth. Heschel believes that one need not remain in this state of darkness. Hence the content and style of Heschel's writing reflect his desire to jolt the reader into "unthinking thoughts." In colloquial terms, one of the aims of Heschel's poetic writing is to reach the reader on a "gut level."

Didactically, an attempt is being made to strip away the doubter's and the disbeliever's intellectual barriers and appeal to him on an emotional and/or spiritual level. It is an attempt to penetrate what Heschel considers to be "cognitive pretensions."[31] Heschel wants to introduce his readers to a new and different world view, to open them up to spiritual opportunities.

Heschel seems aware that some might ask: If every man is in possession of the intuitive faculty, and capable of encountering the ineffable, why do so many remain alienated from the divine source? What is the cause of man's obliviousness to God? Moreover, one might ask: Why must even those who have faith fight with such a vigilance to retain it?

There are two possible responses to this problem which can be gleaned from Heschel's writing: man's conceit and God's exile. Human arrogance, as evidenced by man's zealous attachment to rational inquiry and scientific speculation, obscures his ability to experience moments of insight. God's exile, the other cause of man's inability to experience awareness of deity, is a paradox. Although God is in search of man, and as "near as the air we breathe," He is also hiding. Heschel explains the paradox of a hiding God as follows:

> The prophets do not speak of the hidden God, but of the hiding God. His hiding is a function not his essence, an act, not a permanent state. It is when the people forsake Him, breaking the Covenant which He made with them, that He forsakes them and hides His face from them...A hiding God, not a hidden God. He is waiting to be disclosed, to be admitted to our lives.[32]

God's hiding, for Heschel, is a reaction to man's fleeing. This perpetual cycle of "hide-and-seek"[33] will only come to an end when man is willing to face God. God needs man and searches for him because He wants to enter into a partnership with him. Implicit and explicit in the divine-human partnership is the idea of human responsibility. Heschel holds man responsible for God's seeming absence and the world's disarray. As he states in Man is Not Alone:

> The world is not one with God, and this is why His power does not surge unhampered throughout all stages of being. Creature is detached from Creator, the universe is in a state of spiritual disorder. Yet God has not withdrawn entirely from the world...The goal of all efforts is to bring about restitution of the unity of God and the world.[34]

Messianic redemption will come when the divine-human partnership is realized. The first step towards restitution is for man to accept his responsibility vis a vis deity. Thus we see the nature of the paradox: Man is obdurate because the source of faith is in exile, and God is in exile because man is obdurate. Heschel calls upon us to break this vicious cycle. Hence for Heschel, the question is not: Where was God during the Holocaust? But rather, where was man?

To understand Heschel's perspective on the divine-human relationship we must examine the premise of his "biblical philosophy." Unlike many modern religious thinkers who see the Bible as an account of man's reflections about God, Heschel sees the Bible as God's view of man. As we discussed earlier, the Bible is God's anthropology.[35] In "Heschel's Exposition of Biblical Theology," Bernard Anderson states:

"It is the Bible, the drama of God's search for humanity and God's engagement that captivates Heschel's thought, providing him with his basic perspective."[36]

For Heschel, the Bible chronicles events which exemplify divine concern for man. Man dwells within God, and is the object of His search. Inherent in Heschel's view of the divine-human relationship and man's three paths to God (the world of experience, the Bible, and sacred deeds) is the belief that God is the subject of all, and man is His object. Man is Not Alone describes the dynamic between God and man as follows: "In the depth of our trembling, all that we can utter is the awareness of our being known to God. Mah cannot see God, but man can be seen by God. He is not the object of a discovery but the subject of revelation."[37]

"Biblical philosophy" according to this view, is not obligated to prove God's existence; this assumed from the start. Rather, the task of a "philosophy of religion" is to explore what God requires of man. Hence "biblical philosophy" has direct applications; it strives to help us live more righteously.

The religiously sensitive, when confronted with the ineffable, is aware that God is beyond the mystery. He senses that God is asking something from him and thus his life is infused with meaning and purpose. Heschel implies that the intuitive individual goes through a process. He acknowledges that he has unanswerable questions and then becomes aware of a transcendent being who is the subject of all life. For one who is spiritually open, it is impossible to see the ineffable as an allusion to a meaningless abyss or chaotic darkness. "Biblical philosophy" is the antithesis of nihilism. Heschel sees the interaction

between God and man as a transitive one. God, the author of all existence, searches for man. Man, aware that he is the object of divine concern, can choose to respond to Him. As Maurice Friedman states:

> We are embraced by God's inner life. We know only our relation with God, and we discover this relation when we perceive ourselves as perceived by Him and respond to His demand. God is characterized above all by his compassionate concern for every individual man and everything.[38]

Heschel's epistemology differs from the traditional Greek categories which characterize ancient philosophy, as well as from the later concepts found in logical positivism and naturalism. Heschel reverses their frames of reference: He does not address man's questions about God's reality. Rather, he is concerned with what God asks of man. A parallel can be drawn between Heschel's "Biblical philosophy" and Kierkegaard's religious existentialism. God's reality is assumed. Man's problem is whether or not he will assent to a life of faith. Will man say "yes" to the "ultimate question?"

As discussed earlier, one of Heschel's criteria for a "philosophy of religion" is "radical self-understanding." The desire to understand God within the b[illegible]lical framework, the stress on man's intuition, and the need to prot[illegible] religion from the rigors of the "hard sciences," reflect Heschel's partisan biases. As religious thinker Dr. Jakob J. Petuckowski notes in his review of <u>Who is Man?</u>: "Heschel stands for the religious outlook, and his God is the God of the Bible."[39] When Heschel asserts - "To the philosopher God is an object, to men at prayer He is the subject...What they crave for is to be wholly possessed by Him..."[40] --it is clear that the term "philosophy" is not referring to one who espouses "biblical philosophy" or "depth theology." This passage reflects Heschel's predilection for associating the term "philosopher"

with those who engage in scientific inquiry and rational speculation. As we will see later on, Heschel's views will cause some to ask if "biblical philosophy" is indeed a philosophy. Those who define "philosophy" according to the Greek tradition, for example, might call Heschel a poet or a mystic.

Heschel's understanding of the biblical God has important ramifications for his view of humanity. Man's ultimate purpose is seen in his response to deity. Both human freedom and responsibility are seen in terms of the choices one makes when confronted with God's presence. While man is free to make a choice, he is not free to escape making a choice. Consistent with this perspective is the idea that: one who does not assent to the "ultimate question" and respond to God's call, can never truly realize himself as a human being.

The individual who is not attuned to the divine-human relationship is incapable of realizing his potential. One who sees himself as master of his own destiny and sovereign of his fate, is a being who happens to be human, not a human being. Obliviousness to God relegates man to the lowest common denominator of life forms. One of the focal points of Who is Man? is that man is unique in his ability to acknowledge God. It is only when man recognizes that he is "created in the image of God" that he is distinguished from the animals. The man who sees himself as purely autonomous lives a life of deprivation and alienation. As Heschel states in Who is Man?:

> Sophisticated thinking may enable him to feign his being sufficient to himself. Yet the way to insanity is paved with such illusions. The feeling of futility that comes with the sense of being useless, of not being needed in the world, is the most common cause of psychoneurosis...
>
> The only way to avoid despair is to be a need rather than an end. Happiness, in fact may be defined as the certainty of being needed. But who is in need of man?[41]

For Heschel, the answer to this question is God. It is man's task to realize that he is needed by God and to respond. Awareness of God's presence and His needs has implications for how man views himself. Life cannot be seen as a human possession; it belongs to the divine realm.

Given Heschel's understanding of the dynamic between God and man, the words "I" and "self" take on theological connotations. These two terms cannot refer to man in a vacuum; they can only describe man's relation to God. Man is not Alone gives us insight into Heschel's understanding of the human situation: "When we are overtaken with the spirit of the ineffable, there is no logical self left to ask the question or mental power to stand as the judge with God as an object, about the existence of whom I am to decide. I am unable to raise my voice or sit in judgment. There is no self to say: 'I think that...'"[42]

Who is Man? addresses human self-perception. To truly live up to our creed as human beings, our relationship with God must be incorporated into our sense of "self." Our hearts, minds, and souls must have God's imprint upon them. As Heschel states: "'Thou art' precedes 'I am'."[43] Heschel's question: "Who is Man?"--as opposed to--"what is man?," reflects his desire to divest the reader of a purely mechanistic and/or biological definition of man. Man is reduced when he is seen as only a physical and/or psychological entity. For Heschel this materialistic definition of man is a "worst case scenario." Who is Man? registers a protest against a minimalistic vision of man:

> In pre-Nazi Germany the following statement of man was frequently quoted: 'The human body contains a sufficient amount of fat to make seven cakes of soap, enough iron to make a medium sized nail, a sufficient amount of phosphorous to

> equip two thousand match-heads, enough sulfur to rid oneself of one's fleas.' Perhaps there was a connection between this statement and what the Nazi's actually did in the extermination camps: make soap of human flesh.[44]

As we noted earlier, every individual has a choice vis a vis God. He can respond to His plea and engage in a life of meaning, or he can remain aloof and opt for a life of alienation. Likewise, every person has a choice when he defines "man": Man can be seen as the object of transcendent concern, "a little less than the angels," or man can be seen as the sovereign of his own life, unaccountable to deity, "a tool making animal."

Heschel's observation about the Nazi's conception of man, and his statement: "The problem of religious thinking is not only whether God is dead or alive, but also whether we are dead or alive to His realness"[45] raises an interesting question. Do Heschel's protestations against the trivialization of humanity and his theology reflect a response to an historical crisis? According to Rabbi Joseph H. Lookstein, the Holocaust catalysed two varieties of existentialism: philosophic and religious. Philosophers like Sartre sought to debunk reason and speculation and stressed the primacy of "being over essence." Jewish existentialists responded differently. Like the philosophic existentialists, they divested reason of its power. Yet unlike them, the Jewish existentialists stressed the primacy of faith. According to Lookstein, Heschel, like Martin Buber and Will Herberg were part of a post-war phenomenon. Moreover, the neo-hasidism of these men was a reflection of religious existentialism. Lookstein explains how the Jewish existentialists altered Kierkegaard's God concept in his article "The Neo-Hasidism of Abraham Joshua Heschel": "The God into whose arms the Jewish existentialist leaps is more receptive to those

who seek Him...His communion with them is not an either/or basis, but rather on an "I and Thou" basis."[46] Lookstein posits the view that Heschel can be seen in an historical context; he was responding to the crises of his day. Heschel's appeal, like his "philosophy of religion," can be seen as a response to modern man's crisis of faith.

Many post-war religious thinkers and their readers found Reason suspect. Technological advancements had proven that science could easily annihilate man. Reason was no longer seen as a redemptive force; it could easily be detached from morality. The liberal pre-war optimism had been shattered, and many thoughtful individuals were looking for new theological alternatives. Mystical and intuitive approaches to religion emerged as potential answers for the spiritually hungry. Dr. Jonathan Sarna in his chapter "The Challenges of Post-War American Jewish Life" in The Americanization of Jewish Culture, discusses the conditions which gave rise to the new post-war theologians:

> Abraham Joshua Heschel's Man is Not Alone, published a few months before Herberg's volume appeared (1951), shared its neo-orthodox critique of the idea that religion and reason are synonymous, and likewise was directed toward solving the problem of the modern man...[47]

The religious existentialists, and the neo-orthodox critics of rational thought, offered their readership a new understanding of man's plight. Both Rabbi Lookstein and Professor Sarna see Heschel's message and subsequent popularity as a post-war phenomenon. If we understand Heschel within this context, it is possible to see the debate between Heschel and his critics as part of an on-going historical process.

Before we can examine Heschel's critics, we must understand some of the historical and philosophical influences which helped to shape his

ideas. Moreover, in order to understand his impact we must see him in relation to the crises of his day. By identifying those formative influences on Heschel's thought, we will be in a better position to understand his critics. For example: How do we distinguish between those criticisms which are aimed specifically at Heschel, as opposed to those which are broader - i.e., directed toward a school of thought, or theological/philosophical movement? As we will explore later on, many of the observations which Heschel's critics offer, are not unique to a critique of Heschel. In actuality, some of his detractors are attacking theological and philosophical perspectives which have come under fire for centuries: mysticism, intuitive/experiential approaches to deity, Hasidism, Existentialism, and phenomenology.

Heschel, his neo-Hasidic contemporaries, and his Christian counterparts, as previously discussed, were trying to debunk speculative thought. It is clear that both Heschel's upbringing and education were consistent with his later polemics. A transplanted Hasid with a phenomenological bent, Heschel articulated the yearnings and frustrations of those seeking a Jewish and/or spiritual revival. Using poetic sensitivity and evocative language, he was able to both reflect the despair, and elevate the hopes of those who were dissatisfied with the pre-war theological movements. Was Heschel the voice of his generation? The answer to this question depends on whom one asks. Dr. Sarna gives us a perspective which resonates amongst Heschel's admirers:

> Heschel's novel emphasis on wonder, awe, transcendence...all deeply influenced by his background in Hasidic piety and classical Jewish texts, had a pronounced influence on Jews and Christians alike, no religious thinker in all of American Jewish history ever has made so great an impact...[48]

Hasidism and phenomenology played key roles in the formulation of his "philosophy of religion." These two influences can be seen in Heschel's descriptions of man's inner religious experience, and the divine-human relationship. Moreover, Hasidism and phenomenology share some important characteristics: neither is concerned with "objective reality," causal relationships, or scientific methodology. As Samuel Dresner states in his introduction to Heschel's The Circle of The Baal Shem Tov:

> One of Heschel's major contributions as a religious thinker was his analysis of Jewish piety. He was a phenomenologist. He held that discursive reason, while essential, was, alone, inadequate in penetrating the inner recesses of religion. This could better be achieved through a description of the religious phenomena itself, which as the artist's canvas would have the power to evoke another level of comprehension.[49]

For Heschel, Hasidism and phenomenology are complementary world-views. Both concern themselves with the purity of religious experience. "Situational thinking," "depth theology," and man's need to turn inward, are similarly concerned with describing the depth and intensity of man's perception of the divine. Hasidism and phenomenology were formative influences on Heschel's thought, and these two world-views are ever-present in his works. The following observation by Samuel Dresner is quoted at length because it illustrates the interplay between Hasidism and phenomenology in Heschel's methodology, and it reflects the profound impact of Hasidic thought on Heschel's theology:

> ...Indeed the more familiar one becomes with Hasidic literature the more one understands how Heschel drew upon these sources. The influence of Hasidism is reflected in Heschel's contributions to the understanding of phenomenology of prophecy and of ruah hakodesh (the holy spirit). There are, for example, clear echoes of Hasidic concepts and concerns in Heschel's excursions upon the Sabbath as a bride, upon "divine pathos," "the ineffable," "radical amazement," the illusion of God's absence, the "holy dimension," of all reality, the "primacy of inwardness," "the criticism of

> 'panhalachism,'" the centrality of prayer, the "dignity of words," and the "endless yearning." Some of the section headings in Man is Not Alone might, in fact, be transposed to a book on Hasidic philosophy.[50]

Both John Merkle and Fritz Rothschild note the impact of phenomenology on Heschel's methodology. As Rothschild states: "The phenomenological method, advanced by Edmund Husserl whose writings were of decisive influence on Heschel in his student days in Berlin, may briefly be defined as the attempt to present the structures of experienced reality in their essential and archetypal purity."[51]

While Merkle and Rothschild stress the importance of the phenomenological method on Heschel's thought, both take pains to point out that Heschel "does not stop"[52] with phenomenology. According to Merkle and Rothschild, Heschel's "philosophy of religion" encompasses more than an analysis of man's perceptions of religious experience. Both scholars feel that Heschel goes beyond describing spiritual phenomena; he explores what they signify. As Merkle states, "While Heschel maintains the soundness of the phenomenological method, he employs it only as a first step in his study of religion. Concerned as he is not only with the essence of phenomena, but also with their existence, meaning, and relevance, he sees the need to go beyond the method of phenomenology."[53]

Fritz Rothschild's analysis: "Varieties of Heschelian Thought," attempts to present a coherent and systematic schema of Heschel's epistemology. Heschel's methodology is divided into three levels of discourse: empirical description, phenomenological analysis, and the philosophical approach.[54] Rothschild summarizes his analysis as follows: (This text,) while having its poetic moments (level one), and while presenting a phenomenological description of the relationship

between needs and ends (level two), also seeks to persuade its readers of the reasonableness and the universal significance of the problem described (level three).[55]

For Rothschild, Heschel's ideas both include and move beyond phenomenology because of his emphasis on the universality of religious experience and perception of "the ineffable." Indeed, one of Heschel's primary epistemological points and central arguments in his "philosophy of religion" is that throughout history vast numbers of men have perceived and recorded their communion with "the ineffable." In many ways Heschel's view on the universality of religious experience resembles Judah Halevi's position on reliable tradition. Halevi believed that the reason Jewish tradition has been effectively transmitted throughout the centuries is due to its truth.[56] How could the vast majority of Jews believe a lie throughout the generations? Heschel offers a similar polemic when he states:

> To assert that the most sensitive minds of all ages were victims of an illusion; that religion, poetry, art, and philosophy were the outcome of a self-deception is too sophisticated to be reasonable. Bringing discredit to the genius of man, such an assertion would, of course, disqualify our own minds for making any assertion.[57]

Full bibliographical details of
the works quoted here will be found in
the Bibliography.

Notes to Chapter One

[1]Abraham Joshua Heschel, God in Search of Man..., p. 3.

[2]Ibid., p. 4.

[3]Ibid., p. 10.

[4]Ibid., p. 17.

[5]Ibid., p. 8.

[6]Ibid., pp. 11-12.

[7]Ibid., p. 7.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Heschel, The Insecurity of Freedom..., p. 116.

[10]Fritz A. Rothschild, ed., Between God and Man: An Interpretation of Judaism From the Writings of Abraham J. Heschel; see Introduction, p. 22.

[11]Heschel, God in Search of Man..., p. 251.

[12]Heschel, Man is Not Alone..., pp. 19-20.

[13]Heschel, God in Search of Man..., p. 5.

[14]John C. Merkle, The Genesis of Faith..., p. 34.

[15]Rothschild, ed., Between God and Man...; see Introduction, p. 17.

[16]These three paths to God are seen in the structure of God in Search of Man.... The three rubrics--God, Revelation, and Response--correspond to Heschel's three entrance-ways to the holy, i.e., the world of nature/experience, the Torah as a reflection of the "God of Pathos," and the "leap of action."

[17]Heschel, God in Search of Man..., pp. 114-124.

[18]Ibid., p. 121.

[19]Heschel, Man is Not Alone..., p. 21.

[20]Ibid., pp. 74-75.

[21]Heschel, Who Is Man?, p. 88.

[22]Heschel, Man is Not Alone..., p. 75.

[23]Heschel, God in Search of Man..., p. 114.

[24]Heschel, Man is Not Alone..., pp. 91-92.

[25]Heschel, A Passion for Truth, p. 90.

[26]Heschel, Man is Not Alone..., p. 89.

[27]Merkle, The Genesis of Faith, p. 73.

[28]Heschel, Man is Not Alone..., pp. 137-138.

[29]Ibid., p. 69.

[30]Heschel, God in Search of Man..., p. 412.

[31]Heschel, Man is Not Alone..., p. 85.

[32]Ibid., pp. 153-154.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Ibid., p. 112.

[35]Heschel, God in Search of Man..., p. 412.

[36]Bernhard W. Anderson, "Coexistence with God..." in Abraham Joshua Heschel: Exploring..., ed. John C. Merkle, p. 63.

[37]Heschel, Man is Not Alone..., p. 129.

[38]Maurice Friedman, "A. J. Heschel: Toward a Philosophy..." in Conservative Judaism 10, No. 2, p. 4.

[39]Jakob J. Petuchowski, Review of Heschel, Who Is Man?, in CCAR Journal 13, No. 5, p. 89.

[40]Heschel, Man is Not Alone..., pp. 128-129.

[41]Heschel, Who Is Man?, p. 58.

[42]Heschel, Man is Not Alone..., p. 48.

[43]Heschel, Who Is Man?, p. 98.

[44]Ibid., p. 24.

[45]Heschel, God in Search of Man..., p. 127.

[46]Joseph H. Lookstein, "The Neo-Hasidism...," p. 251.

[47]Jonathan Sarna, The Americanization of Jewish Culture, (Forthcoming), p. 62.

[48]Ibid., p. 64.

[24]Heschel, Man is Not Alone..., pp. 91-92.

[25]Heschel, A Passion for Truth, p. 90.

[26]Heschel, Man is Not Alone..., p. 89.

[27]Merkle, The Genesis of Faith, p. 73.

[28]Heschel, Man is Not Alone..., pp. 137-138.

[29]Ibid., p. 69.

[30]Heschel, God in Search of Man..., p. 412.

[31]Heschel, Man is Not Alone..., p. 85.

[32]Ibid., pp. 153-154.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Ibid., p. 112.

[35]Heschel, God in Search of Man..., p. 412.

[36]Bernhard W. Anderson, "Coexistence with God..." in Abraham Joshua Heschel: Exploring..., ed. John C. Merkle, p. 63.

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[44]Ibid., p. 24.

[45]Heschel, God in Search of Man..., p. 127.

[46]Joseph H. Lookstein, "The Neo-Hasidism...," p. 251.

[47]Jonathan Sarna, The Americanization of Jewish Culture, (Forthcoming), p. 62.

[48]Ibid., p. 64.

[49]Samuel Dresner, ed., The Circle of the Baal Shem Tov: Studies in Hasidism--Abraham J. Heschel; see Introduction, pp. xxviii-xxiv.

[50]Ibid., pp. ix-x.

[51]Rothschild, "Varieties..." in Abraham Joshua Heschel: Exploring..., ed. John C. Merkle, p. 97.

[52]Ibid., p. 99.

[53]Merkle, The Genesis of Faith..., pp. 32-33.

[54]Rothschild, "Varieties..." in Abraham Joshua Heschel: Exploring..., ed. John C. Merkle, pp. 93-102.

[55]Ibid., p. 102.

[56]Judah Halevi, The Kuzari..., pp. 44-51.

[57]Heschel, Man is Not Alone..., p. 33.

Chapter Two: THE QUEST FOR REASON

Now that we have examined some of the most prominent tenets of Heschel's epistemology and formative influences on Heschelian thought, we are in a position to discuss those salient criticisms. A fundamental objection to Heschel's epistemology is voiced by those who challenge his definition of "philosophy." As we shall see later, this objection underscores all those arguments which fault Heschel for dismissing rational discourse and giving faith an exalted status over reason. The following oft-quoted challenge posed by Reform thinker Jakob J. Petuchowski parallels those criticisms which take Heschel to task for dismissing logical analysis, rational thought, and scientific speculation:

> ...Instead of striving for that higher unity of rational thought and mystical insight, he [Heschel] has almost declared war on the former, and practically branded the philosophic quest for God as idolatry.
>
> But can the "God of the Philosophers" be so cavalierly dismissed from the mind of the 20th-century Jew? How indeed can Heschel hope to communicate his insights to those of us who are benighted enough to tarry in the realms of "conceptual thinking" if he shuns conceptual thought altogether?[1]

Dr. Petuchowski's observation raises interesting questions: Can a "philosophy" which dismisses rational thought be called a "philosophy"? Is it possible to base a philosophy entirely upon one's understanding of biblical thought and ignore the Greek tradition? What criteria do we use to define "philosophy"? Heschel and his critics seem to be using different ones and thus are engaged in a battle of semantics.

It seems that Heschel anticipated that some would fault him for espousing a "philosophy" which did not conform to the Greek tradition of Aristotelian metaphysics; perhaps this is why he went to such great lengths to create a vocabulary which was consistent with his own views.

Heschel, in his two "philosophic" works: Man is Not Alone and God in Search of Man, devotes a great deal of energy to the definitions of--"a philosophy of religion," "a philosophy of Judaism," and "biblical philosophy." Moreover, these works, like many of Heschel's others, are filled with terms and language patterns which reflect Heschel's desire to divest the reader of more conventional definitions of "philosophy." Yet Arthur Cohen in his chapter "The Rhetoric of Faith: Abraham Joshua Heschel," objects to Heschel's definition of terms and use of language. As Cohen states:

> ...Abraham Joshua Heschel, [is] undoubtedly the most significant thinker which traditional Judaism had given to contemporary America, as a rhetorical theologian. His rhetoric is both the strength and the undoing of his theology.[2]

Cohen, like other critics, voices overall objections to what he considers to be Heschel's self-serving definitions. For example, Cohen notes: "...Heschel is not averse to pronouncing evident and clear-cut self-contradictions under the popular form of paradox..."[3]

Yet Cohen is particularly disturbed by Heschel's understanding of the term "philosophy"; an understanding which assumes an unnecessary dichotomy between Faith and Reason. One of Cohen's most pointed objections to Heschel's epistemology is the criticism that Heschel presents his readership with a caricature of philosophy and logical discourse. For Cohen, the relationship between Faith and Reason and/or philosophy and religion need not be seen in terms of black and white. As he states in The Natural and Supernatural Jew: "If faith is only to be reborn out of the ashes of philosophy, we risk giving birth to a crippled phoenix...In the end, only philosophy and faith conjoined can ensure that the marveling of one--in which philosophy begins--and the radical amazement" of the other--in which faith arises--will comport to man's nature and God's design."[4]

Reinforcing his premise that Heschel creates a caricature when he discusses traditional views of philosophy, logic, and scientific speculation, Cohen offers the following observation: Heschel does not acknowledge fundamental distinctions between the aforementioned disciplines. Moreover, Heschel does not demonstrate a willingness to discuss the fact that "philosophy" is not a monolithic entity, but rather a discipline comprised of a vast array of world-views. Cohen believes that Heschel does not make the subtle, and not so subtle, distinctions necessary for intellectual discourse. Rather, Heschel categorizes all those disciplines and world-views which he finds personally objectionable under one heading. Cohen registers his protest as follows:

> ...Heschel is clearly dissatisfied with philosophy. He is sufficiently passionate in his dissatisfaction as to be reluctant to draw distinctions, to acknowledge the abyss which separates philosophy as the Greeks understood its nature, from the attitudes of Western scientific empiricism, medieval philosophy from the idealisms of German philosophy; Kant from Hegel...[5]

> ...Heschel polarizes philosophy, science, and reason and the Biblical. The former cluster of attitudes and doctrines reflects all that bespeaks the self-arrogating hubris of man, his assumption of self-sufficiency and completeness. The latter casts man into a universe of existential risk and involvement.[6]

"The Rhetoric of Faith: Abraham Joshua Heschel" provokes an important question: Can Heschel be subjected to a critique by those very disciplines he divests of meaning? In other words, Heschel seeks to insulate religion from the rigors of rational and systematic argumentation, yet should he also be considered immune from intellectual scrutiny? For Cohen, it is clear that if Heschel wishes to offer a "philosophy"--it must meet certain intellectual criteria. Hence he faults Heschel for his circular reasoning, and lack of precise language

and rational argumentation. Cohen offers the following example of Heschel's lack of a cogent methodology: He refers to Heschel's statement that: "God is given with our world: to think of him is to experience him, to acknowledge his life is already to accept his life into ours, to apprehend his reality is to place ourselves before him and to accede to his dominion..."[7] Then Cohen presents his critique, one which finds no logical progression of ideas:

> This is but to say--and Heschel says it often and variously--that the only way to enter the orbit of faith is to enter it, and the only way to apprehend God is to apprehend him. This seeming tautology--and it is a persistent and aggravating tautology--underscores the fact that Heschel is essentially disinterested in argument.[8] The argument is won long before the conclusion is reached.

Another criticism which Cohen mentions briefly, but, to which, as we shall see, Meir Ben-Horin devotes considerable time, is the vapidity of Heschel's evocative language. Moreover, both critics find several of the terms which Heschel coins--meaningless. As Cohen states: "Heschel is so evidently concerned with evacuating from religious experience all contact with common modes of rational and philosophical discourse that he makes use of phrases such as 'preconceptual and presymbolic,' which are at best suggestive, and at worst meaningless."[9]

Reconstructionist thinker Meir Ben-Horin is one of Heschel's most acerbic critics. In his articles: "The Ineffable: Critical Notes on Neo-Mysticism," and "The Ultimate and The Mystery: A Critique of Some Neo-Mystical Tenets," Ben-Horin examines some of the potential dangers of mysticism in general, and what he considers to be Heschel's abuses in this area. Ben-Horin's articles caution against abandoning the intellect in favor of intuition and supernaturalism. "The Ineffable" opens with an observation by Gershom Scholem quoted at length pertaining

to "an uncritical and obscurantist glorification of the Kabbalah."[10] Throughout his articles Ben-Horin cites numerous historical examples of dangerous interpretations of mysticism and the worst case scenarios of irrational understandings of deity. His writing abounds with examples of scheming charlatans, Kabbalists who practiced necromancy and exorcism, Christian mystics who were willing to burn people at the stake in the name of faith, and with other atrocities.[11]

Using Heschel as a modern test case, Ben-Horin writes a powerful and compelling polemic against the abuses of mysticism and its harmful applications. As a critic, his agenda seems to be twofold; he seeks to negate all theologies which dismiss rational discourse and elevate intuition over reason, and by refuting the specifics of Heschel's epistemology, Ben-Horin hopes to equip his readers with the tools necessary to recognize "conceptual vacuity and logical contradictoriness..."[12] Like Arthur Cohen, Meir Ben-Horin accuses Heschel of creating a terminology which is barren of meaning. Moreover, for Ben-Horin, "vaporous and fugitive verbalizations"[13] are endemic problems for those who seek to express mystical or intuitive experience. Heschel, like his mystical counterparts,[14] does not use precise terms, rather he employs an evocative language which can only point to imprecise feelings. For Meir Ben-Horin, Heschel's over-use of words like "ultimate and ineffable" render these terms meaningless. Thus he states in "The Mystery":

> The mystical terms are vacuities not simply because they 'provoke' neither music without words nor hypothesis without precedent. They are vacuities because theirs is a music without sound, an hypothesis without condition, experience without life, existence without being. They 'provoke' the evacuation of inquiry from questions, thought from meaning, vision from the actualities to which it responds.[15]

In Ben-Horin's estimation, Heschel's terminology reflects a desire to evade rational discourse and engage in profound theological debate. Heschel's vocabulary by its very nature is anti-intellectual. Because words like "ultimate, ineffable, presymbolic, and pretheological" are used to modify such a plethora of ideas and concepts, Heschel sidesteps a systematic and sustained discussion of any substance. Not only do Heschel's terms lack depth and meaning, in Ben-Horin's eyes, they exalt human ignorance. The following observations typify his objections to the form Heschel uses to express his ideas. Ben-Horin vociferously attempts to prove that both Heschel's medium and message glorify the adage "ignorance is bliss"; a perspective which he believes has had tragic historical ramifications. "The critic will conclude that to be filled with the ineffable or incompatible essence of things is to be stunned, amazed, dumbfounded, chronically stupified..."[16] Particularly pointed is Ben-Horin's criticism that:

> At this point the objection must be raised that to return to the presymbolic-language is symbolic-, to the preconceptual--true, good, beautiful are concepts--, is to return to the prehuman stage of evolution. To anchor religion in general and the Jewish religion in particular to such precivilizational "ultimate" insights is to redefine Judaism as a religious precivilization and religion and sanctity as originally a matter of the inarticulate ejaculations of the Neanderthal.[17]

Though Ben-Horin spends considerable time and energy attacking Heschel's linguistics, the thrust of his critique is directed at his understanding of Heschel's ideology, an ideology which he believes can prove extremely dangerous. As we noted in Chapter 1, Heschel believes that the words "I" and "self" have theological connotations. Heschel's concept of the dignity of man reflects the view that "Thou art precedes I am".[18] For Heschel, human life is a "transcendent loan," a divine

gift. His "biblical philosophy" is founded upon the premise that to be human means to exist within the mind of deity. For Heschel the ideas that: "our lives are not our own" and "we are not the sovereigns of our own destiny" resonate with positive implications. His view of the divine authorship of all life, in his scheme, assures dignity for all people. Promoting this view of the divine-human relationship, Heschel sees his theology as a safeguard against a minimalistic and/or nihilistic view of humanity.

Yet for Meir Ben-Horin, Heschel's understanding of a supernatural deity and man's inability to comprehend the divine can only promote human degradation, the antithesis of his intended goals. Meir Ben-Horin sees Heschel's mystical understanding of man's relation to deity as a view which negates human autonomy and responsibility. According to this perspective, Heschel's theological beliefs divest the individual of his unique identity and cause social degeneration--which can result in mobocracy and totalitarian systems.

A supernatural deity, and a mystical understanding of the divine-human relationship, according to Ben-Horin, destroy the sanctity of the individual and undermine his initiative and decision-making abilities. In a worst case scenario, these conditions can breed totalitarian destruction. Ben-Horin sees a direct relationship between the anti-intellectual tenets of mysticism and human atrocity. He believes that theologies which exalt "the unknown" and take disparaging views of logic and reason pave the way for totalitarian systems.

Ben-Horin's argument against Heschel in particular, and the mystics in general is the following: those who ponder "the unknown" and life's "unanswerable questions" and then turn to mysticism commit a tragic

error. Instead of using reason and logic to penetrate life's questions and that which seems beyond their intellectual grasp, they exalt ignorance. As Ben-Horin states: "The fallibility of the intellect does not argue the infallibility of intuition. Mysticism misrepresents the religions it defends by mounting frenzied assaults on the strongholds of intelligence."[19] According to this view, the mystic's error is his reliance on intuition in the face of uncertainty. Moreover, the mystic misinterprets his sense of wonder as the answer to all that baffles him. For Ben-Horin, the appropriate response to life's enigmas and seemingly unanswerable questions is not intuition, nor is its reliance on supernaturalism, rather it is the further refinement and development of our powers of reason.

Comparing Heschel to the Christian mystic Meister Eckhart, Ben-Horin notes that both men take pejorative views of the terms: "mind, wisdom, and reflection." Moreover, according to this critic, both mystics are guilty of singing "hymns to 'higher ignorance.'"[20] As we noted earlier, it is not the anti-intellectual trends inherent in mysticism which give rise to Ben-Horin's most vehement objections; rather, it is the relationship Ben-Horin perceives between mysticism's anti-intellectual tenets and ensuing totalitarian mind-sets. According to this reasoning, destructive self-effacement tends to flourish in environments which discourage individual inquiry, rigorous intellectual debate, and an open forum which promotes a vast array of competing philosophical views.

"The Ineffable" concludes with the author presenting historical examples of the inter-relationship between destructive interpretations of mysticism and the emergence of totalitarian and nihilistic

societies, amongst them Bolshevik Russia and 20th century Germany.[21] Ben-Horin explains his perception that: "Totalitarianism emerges as mysticism's ultimate social expression,"[22] as follows:

> Heschel actually suggests that 'I am that I am not' which is the same as suggesting that to be is either not to stand for or to stand for nothing. In either case an ominous relation between mysticism and totalitarianism becomes visible: the former idealizes the continuity and eventually the identity of being and non-being; the latter realizes the ideal in mass extermination.[23]

In evaluating the criticisms of Ben-Horin, we must ask whether he is justified in labelling Heschel as a "mystic" since all of the former's attacks depend upon this contention. Moreover, we must ask whether Ben-Horin can categorize what he considers to be Heschel's "mysticism" under the same rubric as that of men like Meister Eckhart. By classifying Heschel's theology under such a broad heading, and not differentiating between the different genres of mystical thought, Meir Ben-Horin's criticisms are open to the charge that they lack any specificity. Moreover, it is not clear to all that Heschel is indeed a "mystic." Though Reform theologian Dr. Jakob Petuchowski agrees that Heschel can be classified as such, another prominent Reform thinker, Dr. Eugene Borowitz takes issue with the categorization of Heschel as "mystic." As Borowitz states in A New Jewish Theology in the Making:

> Were the term not so easily misunderstood, Heschel might be termed on the first, most generally available level, a nature mystic. That would be true in regard to his extraordinary sensitivity for the wonder that inheres in all things, for the hidden reality that the seemingly ordinary actually reveals. Yet it would be false to his sense of normalcy to this sort of perception. He is not a believer in special states or special talents for religion.[24]

In an interview on August 4, 1988, I questioned Dr. Borowitz about his position. I asked whether those who call Heschel a "mystic" might not be justified given his penchant for using terms like "the ineffable"

and "the hiding God." Borowitz stated that those who call Heschel a "mystic" commit an error; perhaps this error stems from misconstruing the influence of the latter's Hasidic background on his formulated world-view. Borowitz feels we must note that Heschel left his place of birth to study philosophy. Moreover, his writing does not imply that he is a "mystic"; he never uses terms like "sefirot." The ideas of "the ineffable" and a "hidden God" are found in the Torah.[25]

It is ironic that Heschel and Ben-Horin are both responding to the same historical crisis and share the same concerns: the trivialization of human life and human annihilation. Yet their respective solutions to humanity's plight are diametrically opposed. For Heschel, our salvation lies in recognizing the limits of Reason and committing ourselves to lives of faith. The answer to human misery requires us to realize that we are accountable to the source of "the meaning beyond the mystery"--deity. For Heschel, the "I" and the "self" belong to God and this awareness will bring about redemption. Ben-Horin, on the other hand, believes that human salvation requires us to renounce supernaturalism. Belief in intuition and a belief that "the 'I' belongs to God" destroy the individual's initiative and sense of responsibility. Ultimately when these ideas are taken to their logical extremes they can lead to the degeneration of humanity.

Like Meir Ben-Horin, Maurice Friedman also takes issue with Heschel's understanding of the divine-human relationship; yet unlike him, Friedman's overall view of Heschel is characterized by reverence and appreciation. Hence Friedman's book <u>Abraham Joshua Heschel and Elie Wiesel: Your Are My Witnesses</u> tends to be an adulatory tome. Moreover, when the author of this work does criticize Heschel his tone is gentle,

almost apologetic. Although Friedman's scholarly articles tend to be somewhat less felicitous, this reader could not escape the impression that Friedman considers Heschel a legendary master and himself a mere student collecting dust at his feet. In colloquial terms, Abraham Joshua Heschel and Elie Wiesel: You Are My Witnesses seems to reflect the perception that Friedman does not consider himself in the same spiritual or academic league as Heschel.

As noted earlier, Ben-Horin objects to Heschel's tendency to obliterate the individual's unique identity. By claiming that the "I" and the "self" belong to deity and that man is "transcendence in disguise," Heschel is accused of minimizing the importance of human autonomy. In a similar vein, Maurice Friedman questions Heschel's idea that man is a "possession" of deity. Specifically, Friedman takes issue with the vantage point of "biblical philosophy," a perspective which claims that "God is the subject and man is the object." By creating a "subject-object" dichotomy, Heschel robs the individual of his responsibility and initiative in the divine-human relationship. According to Friedman, Heschel's understanding of God as the subject or the "I" and man as the object or "it" contradicts his view that God and man are engaged in a reciprocal partnership. It is understandable that this critic, a man who considers himself a disciple of Martin Buber, is troubled by Heschel's view that "what is an 'I' to our minds is an 'it' to God."[26] In his article: "A. J. Heschel: Toward a Philosophy of Judaism," Friedman voices his objections as follows:

> This "subject-object" terminology appears incompatible with Heschel's dominant theme of a genuinely reciprocal relationship between God and man. His assertion that the "I" is an "it" to God cannot be reconciled with his statement that God is compassionately concerned for the fate and needs of every individual.[27]

> A genuinely reciprocal relationship demands that man regard himself neither as God's "possession" nor as an "object" of His thought, but as a free and responsible person--a partner in dialogue.[28]

Another objection Friedman raises which has also been expressed by the majority of critics discussed in this thesis is relevant to any epistemology grounded upon intuition: concepts like the ineffable, the ultimate, the meaning beyond the mystery, and flashes of insight, can never be established as objective truths. Friedman, like Heschel's other critics, argues that we have no objective criteria which can be applied to these experiential aspects of an intuitive philosophy. We cannot prove that these ideas are the objective and universal realities Heschel claims them to be. As Friedman states in his review of God in Search of Man: "Heschel gives no real answer to the question he himself raises of how we know that what is subjectively true--the sense of the ineffable is transubjectively real, that is, genuinely alludes to or derives from the transcendent."[29] This observation, as we will discuss later, will prompt other critics to question Heschel's availability to those who are not already disposed to his theology. This underlying challenge, more than any other, seems to motivate Heschel's critics: Can intuitive insight, the ineffable, and God be understood as objective realities and universal truths?

Friedman notes that Heschel's response to this critique seems to be his theory of the "ontological presupposition." According to Heschel, an awareness occurs on a "preconceptual level" as a response to life's mystery. As he states in God in Search of Man: "...our belief in His reality is not a leap over a missing link in a syllogism but rather a **regaining**, giving up a view rather than adding one, going behind the self-consciousness and questioning the self and all its cognitive

pretensions. It is the ontological presupposition."[30] In layman's terms, Heschel seems to be saying that if man would simply be honest with himself and abandon all of his pretenses and psychological defenses, he would experience deity. Heschel's view that "subjective is the absence not the presence of radical amazement"[31] is indicative of his belief that intuitive epistemology reflects objective truth.

In discussing Heschel's "ontological presupposition" as an objective reality, Friedman notes that it bears a striking resemblance to the ineffable. Hence Heschel is engaging in a tautology, not in presenting independent ideas. According to Friedman both the "ontological presupposition" and the ineffable require man to think on a "preconceptual level" and to be open to rare moments of insight; therefore Friedman arrives at the conclusion that the "ontological presupposition" is "only another name for the awareness of the ineffable itself."[32] Indeed this critic is not the first to call Heschel's reasoning circuitous or accuse him of creating a methodology which "begs the question."[33]

John Merkle in The Genesis of Faith refutes Friedman's claim that the "ontological presupposition" and the ineffable are synonymous. It should be noted that Merkle, a Catholic theologian, is a firm adherent of Heschelian concepts. His work not only attempts to organize and present a cogent and systematic view of Heschel's philosophy, it also attempts to defend many of Heschel's perspectives and further develop his arguments in light of his detractors. Merkle denies Friedman's charge that Heschel's progression of ideas is convoluted when he states: "The ontological presupposition about which Heschel speaks is not as Maurice Friedman claims...'only another name for awareness of the

ineffable itself'. It is God or our experiential belief in God that is the ontological presupposition of our affirmation of God's existence."[34]

The "ontological presupposition" is not the only Heschelian concept Merkle and Friedman understand differently. These two expositors have a profound disagreement as to whether Heschel effectively conveys man's journey from awareness of the ineffable to belief in deity. Friedman feels that Heschel does not adequately prepare his readers for the transition he makes between man's universal ability to perceive the ineffable, and the Jew's particular need to embrace the God of the Hebrew Bible and commit himself to a life of sacred deeds. As he states in Abraham Joshua Heschel and Elie Wiesel: You Are My Witnesses:

> This may account in part for what will seem to some readers to be an unprepared transition from the sense of the ineffable to an acceptance of the unique authority of the Bible and the sacredness of Jewish law in which Heschel identifies the voice of God with objective tradition. He does not show sufficient recognition of the tension that may arise in the relationship of the sense of the ineffable to the inherited form.[35]

Merkle takes issue with this critique and once again accuses Friedman of misinterpreting Heschel's thought process:

> Therefore, contrary to what Maurice Friedman claims...The transition that Heschel makes is not from the sense of the ineffable to the belief in God proclaimed by the Bible, but from a sense of the presence of the Ineffable One to an acceptance of the biblical proclamation of this very same God.[36]

There is no clearcut way to evaluate which interpretation of Heschel is correct; indeed his poetic and evocative style and complex ideas lend themselves to a multitude of exegetics. In fairness to both Merkle and Friedman, Heschel uses the term "ineffable" as both a noun--"our sense of the ineffable" and as a modifying adjective--"the ineffable name." It should be noted that Heschel himself does not use the term "the Ineffable One," although Merkle is correct in his

assumption that Heschel's theology implies that such an entity exists. Ultimately it is the reader who must decide whether Friedman's criticisms--that Heschel's language and thought process are nebulous and tautological--are accurate; or whether Merkle is correct in presenting Heschel as a methodical philosopher. This latter perspective is expressed by Elliot B. Gertel in his review of The Genesis of Faith when he states: "Merkle makes it clear from the outset, in response to Heschel's critics who have accused him of substituting poetic and suggestive phrases for systematic thinking, that Heschel was indeed a philosopher whose very methods of expression reveal a philosophy of language and words."[37]

Another theologian questioning Heschel's concept of the ineffable is Father Edward A. Synan. Given Heschel's view that man is totally incapable of fathoming the ineffable, let alone capturing and communicating it in words, Synan wonders how Heschel can consider the discipline of theology possible at all. Synan finds Heschel's negative estimations of man's conceptual abilities self-defeating, when he observes:

> Heschel insists on the negative character of our grasp of the ineffable God so strongly, however, that in principle it would seem for him no theology remains possible at all. But, inadequate though our concepts of God be, they are true; when Heschel says that in the face of God's reality 'all concepts become cliches,' he falls into a trap of his own making.[38]

Synan asks how it is possible to be certain of God's existence when we consider the fragility of our mental comprehension. According to this criticism, Heschel's idea that man "ponders the ineffable" is an oxymoron. For Synan intellectual humility must preclude a certainty that "there is meaning behind the mystery."

As we noted in Chapter One, Heschel's epistemology elevates the intuitive faculty over the rational mind. Thus for Heschel our awareness of the ineffable does not derive from cerebral prowess of our conceptual abilities but rather from brief moments of insight or intuitive flashes which occur on a "preconceptual level." We referred to Heschel's theory of apprehending the ineffable colloquially as understanding this phenomenon "on a gut level." Heschel provides us with an example of how we can arrive at certainty without logical discourse in his work, The Quest for Certainty in Saadia's Philosophy. The following perspective bears a striking similarity to Heschel's own intuitive epistemology:

> According to Aristotle it is impossible to prove everything. There are final propositions which, on account of their immediate certainty, neither admit nor stand in need of proof. In the human soul lies an intuition or immediate knowledge of those highest principles which are the source and premise of all scientific and immediate knowledge and which a student must possess before he can be taught.[39]

Professor Marvin Fox asks several thought-provoking questions about Heschel's reliance on intuition. Unlike those critics who focus on terminology, Fox's trenchant observations penetrate to the heart of Heschel's "philosophy of religion." In his article: "Heschel, Intuition and Halakhah," Fox attacks the premise that any theology or religious system can be built upon a theory of intuition. Moreover, he posits the view that Heschel's three paths to God: the world of experience, the Bible, and sacred deeds, are all dependent upon his theory of intuition. In Fox's assessment, before the reader can embark upon Heschel's paths to God he must first be open to intuitive insight and accept its divine nature. Objecting to the primary role intuition plays in Heschel's "philosophy of religion," and to the assumption that

our paths to God are contingent upon it, Fox devotes much of his critique to debunking intuitive epistemology.

The initial challenges Fox offers are not unique to a critique of Heschel; they apply to any belief system which makes intuition its corner stone. His first observation is familiar not only to those who question the mystic's assertions, but also to those liberal Jews who question the divine origin of the Hebrew Bible:

> The most common objection to any theory based on intuition is that we have no reliable way to distinguish between those experiences which are genuine perceptions of a higher reality and experiences which are delusions or hallucinations. How can we be certain whether a given intuition is a prophetic vision or the aberration of a madman?[40]

Cognizant of Heschel's view that--in genuine intuitive experience there is no doubt, the one perceiving flashes of insight is filled with a sense of certainty--Fox notes that this response does not answer the question of how we can distinguish between true experiences of deity and illusions. The madman, religious fanatic, and cult member may all be certain that their perceptions come directly from God. Fox wants to know what standards Heschel uses in evaluating intuitions.

Although Heschel never directly tackles the problem of how modern man can establish criteria to prove the legitimacy of his intuitive experience, he does attempt to deal with this issue on a biblical level. In The Prophets Heschel attempts to differentiate between prophecy and psychosis when he states:

> The mind of the prophet, like the mind of a psychotic, seems to live in a realm different from the world most of us inhabit. Yet what distinguishes the two psychologically is most essential...While his [the prophet's] mode of perception may differ sharply from the perceptions of all other human beings, the ideas he brings back to reality become a source of illumination of supreme significance to all other human beings. Once the psychotic crosses the threshold of sanity to take refuge in a world of his imagination, he finds it difficult to return to reality, if he wishes to return.[41]

Hence for Heschel the prophet can be distinguished from the madman. The former offers beneficial insights and teachings to all of humanity, ideas which will be passed on throughout the generations; whereas the latter is incapable of communicating a message of universal or ethical import.

There is an implicit relationship between Heschel's concept of prophecy and his intuitive epistemology. Likewise, there is a correlation between his "biblical philosophy" and view of modern man's perceptions of deity. The individual can look to tradition and to the Hebrew Bible for insight and understanding in regard to his intuitive experience. Heschel seems to imply that genuine intuition is related to universal truths, truths which have been expressed in the Hebrew Bible in the forms of revelation and prophecy. In contemporary terms, intuitive flashes are not "a shot in the dark"; they resonate with universal truths which have been perpetuated for more than three thousand years. As we noted earlier: "The event of revelation as described in the Hebrew Bible exhibits in archetypal form what normal religious consciousness has discovered on a lower level."[42] In Jewish Philosophers Steven Katz describes the relationship between contemporary man's religious experience and Heschel's view of biblical revelation:

> To evoke the 'ineffable' in our own lives a mediating source and model of authentic spirituality is required and Heschel argues that this is found, paradigmatically, in Hebrew scripture. Scripture is the record of an authentic human response to the Divine address, and as such an authoritative model. Biblical man sensed the Divine mystery and responded appropriately in wonder and awe. A renewed recognition of the former and the lived response of the latter are the pressing needs of our generation.[43]

In a sense Heschel's response to those who question his intuitive epistemology seems to be--the reliability of Jewish tradition. The

Bible provides modern man with a litmus test for his intuitions; and the legitimacy of the Bible and Jewish tradition, for Heschel, cannot be doubted. We recall his view: "To assert that the most sensitive minds of all generations were victims of an illusion; that religion, poetry, art, and philosophy were the outcomes of a self deception is too sophisticated to be reasonable."[44]

Despite Heschel's defense of biblical thought and the correlation he suggests between intuition and timeless truth, there are many who will not be satisfied with these responses. Fox's criticisms will find much sympathy amongst those who doubt the divine authorship of scripture, liberal Jews and Gentiles wary of external authority, those who look at mystical experience in askance, and all who have not as yet experienced intuitive flashes.

Similar to the question: How do we distinguish between authentic and inauthentic intuitive experience, is Fox's second observation. Different religious groups often have contentious and mutually exclusive claims: how do we establish the validity of one belief system over another if intuition is used as the root of religious doctrine? In other words, does the Jew who bases his faith on the grounds of intuition have any right to criticize the "Jew for Jesus" or the Hare Krishna who does the same? As Fox states:

> In the market place of competing and often contradictory ideas the appeal to intuition seems to be a self-defeating weapon. If it is used to justify one doctrine it can be used with equal success to justify every other doctrine. The net result, it would appear, is an intolerable theological chaos, which offers a fertile field for the saccharine inanities of the "good will" movement.[45]

Fox's third objection to Heschel's theory of intuition is consistent with those criticisms which charge that Heschel's theology is

only accessible to those who are already predisposed towards it. Fox feels that Heschel addresses himself to an extremely small segment of the population: those who experience intuitive insights which they attribute to the divine. In Fox's appraisal, not only does Heschel dismiss the atheist, agnostic, and skeptic, he also ignores a vast number of those who are religiously faithful: namely those who adhere to their tradition for reasons other than intuition. Fox notes that there are many observant Jews who "simply accept the entire tradition as valid because they received it from their parents and teachers. For them there are no serious personal or intellectual obstacles to a Torah-true life, and it is not to them that Professor Heschel has addressed his writings."[46] Accusing Heschel of only appealing to a small select group, this criticism takes "philosophy of religion" to task for addressing itself to such a narrow audience. Only those who have personally experienced the intuitive flashes to which Heschel alludes can appreciate his theology.

> ...Furthermore, a religion which depends on intuition as its primary method restricts itself to a very small segment of mankind. Great spiritual sensitivity is not widespread... Flashes of insight, moments of spiritual exaltation, soul shattering vision are available to very few of us. A conception of religion which is rooted in such experiences automatically restricts the realm of faith to a small group of spiritually elite.[47]

In evaluating the charge that Heschel is a spiritual elitist, the following observations should be made. One reading Heschel cannot fail to note his blatant disregard for those who mechanically practice halakhah without any higher purpose. Indeed Heschel devotes much of his writing to the dangers of "religious behaviorism," "pan-halachism," and prayer without sufficient inspiration or kavvanah. True to his Hasidic roots, Heschel asks Jews to do more than go through the motions of

ritual; he asks them to experience "wonder" and "radical amazement" in every aspect of daily life. For Heschel religious observance is an entrance-way to spiritual living. In a sense Heschel is bold in his didactics, demanding both the performance of sacred deeds and an accompanying enthusiasm. It was not an accident that much to the consternation of his respective audiences Heschel addressed the Central Conference of American Rabbis on the importance of halakhah, and the Rabbinical Assembly of America on the importance of spontaneity in prayer. Fox is therefore correct in assuming that Heschel takes a disparaging view of the Jewish practitioner who does not struggle to understand the reasons behind his actions and seek "spiritual exaltation."

Yet can Heschel be called a spiritual elitist? In considering the criticism that Heschel addresses himself to a select few, Fox is not alone. Others also accuse Heschel of not speaking to those who harbor doubts. Though there is no way of measuring how effective Heschel is in winning over adherents, his books do seem to be written for this purpose. His works are polemics written for the purpose of convincing people they must change their ways, "unthink thoughts," and abandon preconceived notions. Hence the question must be raised: If Heschel is only addressing himself to those who share his views why does he spend so much time and energy proselytizing? It is for the reader to decide whether or not Heschel's arguments have the power to convert those in doubt; yet it is clear that Heschel is addressing himself to all those whom he feels are in need of spiritual nourishment.

An interesting aside should be noted. Although both Friedman and Fox accuse Heschel's epistemology of "begging the question" because it

requires an initial acceptance of certain premises vis a vis intuition, the ineffable, and God, both critics also acknowledge that Heschel's writing has the force and kergymatic power[48] to convince and transform his readership. It is for the student of Heschelian theology to decide if he or she thinks that Friedman's and Fox's praises contradict their criticisms. To my mind the following defenses of intuitive epistemology offered by Friedman and Fox respectively suggest that these two critics do not require of themselves the same intellectual consistency they ask of Heschel. We noted earlier that Friedman was a reticent critic, thus the following observation is not surprising:

> Actually, Man is Not Alone has as much power to speak to the "uncommitted" as any book that American Jewish thought has produced. It does not start with dogma or the law or with recapitulations of classic proofs of the existence of God, but with that sense of wonder and the ineffable that belongs, in greater or lesser measure to every person's experience. Only then does it move toward transcendent reality...Thus it becomes a fitting instrument for conveying new meaning to the minds of the "unconvinced"...[49]

Fox's article: "Heschel's Theology of Man" published six years after his "Heschel, Intuition, and Halakhah" seems to reflect an about-face:

> He helps his readers share his own sensitivity and teaches them to respond to ordinary events and ordinary people with wonder, with reverence, and with a profound sense of personal renewal...[50]

> There are some who find Heschel's rhetoric inflated, others who are suspicious of his tendency to express a profound insight in a pithy epigram. Such critics miss the point of Heschel's approach to the problems about which he writes. His strategy is to appeal simultaneously to the mind and heart, to engage in intellect and emotions; for he seeks more than the assent of the understanding; he aims at the transformation of feeling, the awakening of sensitivities, the heightening of imagination. Heschel is a poet as well as a philosophical theologian--a poet with a mission, the saving of man from self destruction.[51]

William Kaufman's Chapter "A. J. Heschel" in Contemporary Jewish Philosophies effectively summarizes the major tenets and criticisms of

Heschel's intuitive epistemology. Moreover, Kaufman offers us his own observations on the strengths and weaknesses of Heschelian thought. Particularly helpful for those trying to place Heschel within a philosophical framework is Kaufman's method of comparing and contrasting Heschelian concepts to other philosophical thought developments. Hence the reader is able to draw parallels between the following: Heschel's understanding of wonder and Wittgenstein's theory of amazement,[52] Heschel's "ultimate question" and Tillich's "ultimate concern,"[53] Heschel's view that "God is the subject and man is the object" and Barth's notion that "theology starts not with man's ascent to God but rather with God's revelation to man."[54] Because Kaufman does not treat Heschel in isolation, the student of theology emerges with a contextual understanding of many of Heschel's ideas and is also better able to analyze his critics. Moreover Kaufman enables his readers to distinguish between those objections which are unique to a critique of Heschel as opposed to those which are inherent to all intuitive epistemologies.

We noted earlier that Heschel's "ontological presupposition" has been accused of "begging the question"; Kaufman further extends and develops this argument with his observation that Heschel's method precludes the free and open exchange of ideas. According to Kaufman, not only do Heschel's assumptions result in circuitous reasoning, they limit the scope of inquiry to such an extent that true debate is rendered impossible and genuine philosophic exploration is no longer an option. Heschel's presuppositions rule out the possibility of any real discussion of conflicting viewpoints and thus the whole philosophic enterprise is compromised. In a sense, Kaufman is accusing Heschel of

not only dictating the acceptable answers to those in search of knowledge but the acceptable questions as well. The following criticism reflects Kaufman's method of placing Heschel within a philosophic context:

> Either the question "Why does the world exist?" is an unintelligible, unanswerable question or it is intelligible and presupposes that the reason for the world's existence lies in the will of God. More precisely, to ask the question the way Heschel raises it presupposes that the answer is already known.
>
> This is the fundamental difficulty in Heschel's philosophy that will continue to arise--namely one will not find a spirit of free, untrammled inquiry. The answer is already implicit in the question. In this respect, there is a similarity with Tillich's method of correlation. According to Tillich, the problems of human existence are correlated with theological doctrines which resolve and fulfill the deficiencies of human finite existence.[55]

Implicit in the charge that Heschel's ideological intolerance results in myopia is the idea that because Heschel refuses to entertain opposing viewpoints there is no substantive discussion. Hence Heschel never even provides himself with an opportunity to successfully refute his critics. This lack of mental sparring is to the detriment of Heschel's polemic; by not allowing himself to come under fire he never further sharpens or refines his arguments.

A variation of this criticism is Kaufman's attack that Heschel attempts to legislate feelings. This challenge stems from Heschel's tendency to assume that his own experiences and insights are normative and that his reactions to nature's grandeur and life's mysteries are paradigmatic for every man. It is true that many have responded to their sense of the unknown with awe and reverence and understood their sense of mystery as a manifestation of a transcendent deity; but Kaufman wonders if Heschel is being presumptuous in assuming that this reaction

is a categorical imperative.[56] Does he have the right to assert that everyone must react to a sense of mystery and grandeur as he does? Moreover, does Heschel have the right to assert that there is something wrong with all those who do not share in his response? Kaufman observes that many a sensitive individual has responded to life's unknowns and mysteries with a sense of finity. Indeed many of the post-war existentialists who were not of the religious variety, often looked at life's unanswerable questions and saw a meaningless abyss or experienced a sense of resignation. Is there a necessary or logical progression between sensing grandeur and responding with a sense of awe which germinates into a full blown faith in God? Kaufman's challenge illustrates the problems many have with Heschel's correlation between man's sense of mystery and his understanding of the appropriate response--one of awe which leads to faith.

> A possible objection to this argument lies in the fact that there are morally and aesthetically sensitive individuals who do not see a categorical imperative manifested in this situation. It is precisely nature's grandeur, that generates, for Albert Camus, the sense of the absurd. A more fundamental objection is now implicit--namely, how can feelings be legislated? This intellectual certainty, argued by Heschel, that in the face of nature's grandeur we must respond with awe, is not a certainty shared by all intellectuals. Therefore, we must conclude that Heschel's argument, though subtle is not convincing.[57]

Kaufman notes that Heschel's epistemological point--those who do not sense the divine nature of reality are deaf to God's call--is part and parcel to his "biblical philosophy." According to Heschel those who do not sense the divine purpose behind the mystery are spiritually lacking. This view is the corollary of "biblical philosophy" which states that scripture is the account of God's search for man, and man's failure to respond. Hence the modern man who senses life's mystery but

does not respond with awe is echoing the behavior of his biblical counterparts who failed to heed God's call. As we noted earlier, Heschel's view that "God is the subject" permeates his philosophy. This view is predicated on the belief that biblical thought is normative and the Jewish tradition is reliable. Hence for Heschel the idea "God is not the problem, man is the problem" is a timeless truth which is reflected by contemporary man's obtuseness. In Kaufman's opinion it is Heschel's view of the Bible and Jewish tradition which distinguishes him from the existentialists. As he observes Heschel's view that "God is not the problem, man is the problem" is not only consistent with "Biblical literature" it is also found in the work of Judah Halevi, and other traditional sources.[58]

In considering Heschel's reliance on "biblical philosophy" in order to explain modern man's refusal to respond appropriately to life's mysteries, Kaufman poses the following question. Can we afford to dismiss modern man's quest for understanding the world and God from his own vantage point? Kaufman observes: "Despite its literary antecedents, the concept of God in search of man is not congenial to the modern mind. Few people today experience the irresistible compulsion to be seized by God..."[59] The question generated is: Can Heschel afford to dismiss all those who seek to understand God from man's perspective? According to Kaufman, not only does Heschel ignore those who strive to understand God from the human perspective; he considers their efforts to be arrogant.

Just as the Reform theologian Dr. Jakob Petuchowski asks if "the 'God of the Philosophers,' can be so cavalierly dismissed from the mind of the 20th-century Jew,"[60] Kaufman seems to be asking if--the way

modern man thinks, conceptualizes the world, and processes information, can be so "cavalierly dismissed" from the 20th-century mind? The implication here is that even if Heschel adheres to his "God is the subject" perspective, he must also attempt to address modern man in terms which he can understand. As a philosopher, Heschel cannot ignore those who conceptualize the world from another perspective; he must utilize the modern frame of reference if he wants to reach people on their level. It is almost as if Kaufman is asking Heschel to use Reason to defeat Reason.

Given this perspective, we can understand that for Kaufman and others, Heschel's "ontological presupposition" and belief that "God is the subject," do not address the problems of the modern mind. These critics see such terms as evasive since they do not answer the questions of those who are not predisposed towards Heschel's theology. Thus if Heschel truly wants to stop "begging the question" and break his cycle of circular reasoning, he must address modern man's problems from modern man's perspective in a language which he can understand. It follows that Kaufman, Fox, and others do not feel that Heschel's "philosophy of religion" is accessible to the atheist, agnostic, skeptic, or questioning intellectual. Kaufman explains why Heschel's lack of sustained argument renders his theology meaningless to many:

> Heschel relies heavily on his conception of revelation as God's quest for man. To many minds, this conception is simply too anthropomorphic to stand the test of rational scrutiny. Moreover, to those seeking a tenable idea of God, Heschel's "Copernican revolution" begs the question. Consider an intellectual person seeking a tenable idea of God, who is told that God is seeking him. Such a person would probably consider the idea of God's quest for man as an arbitrary way of terminating open-minded theological discussion and inquiry.[61]

Dr. Eugene Borowitz shares the point of view that Heschel is doctrinally intolerant. A few initial observations are necessary concerning Borowitz's Chapter "Abraham Joshua Heschel and Joseph Baer Soloveitchik: The New Orthodoxy." This brief analysis reflects Borowitz's attempt to present a balanced view of Heschel's strengths and weaknesses as a religious thinker; both positive assessments and critical observations are therefore included within it. In his preliminary comments Borowitz addresses Heschel's presentation of ideas. He notes that Heschel's method of articulating his "philosophy" is difficult for many to penetrate because his arguments do not proceed in a linear fashion.[62] For Borowitz, Heschel's mode of communication, like his "philosophy of religion" tends to "point to" or "allude to" a meaning beyond itself. As he explains, Heschel's sentences are not "additive," nor are his paragraphs "ladderlike in their progression,"[63] yet he is able to make "structure emerge."[64] This point is well taken when we consider that Heschel's two most sympathetic expositors--John Merkle and Fritz Rothschild--each altered Heschel's conceptual structure of ideas when they attempted to present their respective understandings of Heschel's "philosophy."[65]

Turning to the oft-mentioned criticism that Heschel has little sympathy for those who do not agree with him, we note that Borowitz challenges Heschel from the Reform perspective. Citing Heschel's reliance on biblical thought and the oral tradition, Borowitz categorizes Heschel's position as "a sophisticated fundamentalism,"[66] and places him to the right of the religious spectrum. Borowitz sees Heschel as "Orthodox...or at least to the far right of the Conservative movement."[67] This categorization allows Borowitz to attack both

Heschel and the traditional stance of all those who adhere to the divine authorship and authority of the written and oral Torah. Borowitz registers the protestations of many liberal Jews when he takes Heschel and other "Torah-true" Jews to task for their religious intolerance which stems from an absolute certainty vis a vis biblical revelation. For Borowitz Heschel's immovable faith in this doctrine creates an obstinacy which renders him incapable of adequately responding to those who have not adopted his views. In contrast to Ben-Horin for whom the culprit is "mysticism," for Borowitz, Heschel's major stumbling block is the rigidity of his traditionalist position vis a vis revelation. Since Borowitz believes that it is Heschel's faith in divine revelation that causes him to fail "to see the validity of the questions that come from the other side...,[68] the thrust of his objections are not unique to a critique of Heschel. In this sense Borowitz's observations could just as well be the liberal Jews' objections to the Orthodox position that the Torah is divine.

Although Borowitz's challenges to Heschel's ideology are not unique to a critique of Heschel, Borowitz's objections to his mode of expression do address Heschel in particular. Like those critics who accuse Heschel of engaging in tautology and inflated rhetoric, Borowitz accuses Heschel of using aphorisms to circumvent rigorous debate:

> Almost as with a Zen koan or a Hasidic master's epigram, enlightenment may strike. Yet the repeated exposure to that treatment, particularly in works that call themselves "philosophy," makes one increasingly uncomfortable.[69]

Both Kaufman and Borowitz provoke the question: Does one espousing a "philosophy" have the obligation to refute his critics? Moreover, must the "philosopher" employ the same terms and modes of reasoning his critics do if he wishes to advance a polemic? We began this chapter with

Dr. Petuchowski's observation that Heschel does not "strive for that higher unity of rational thought and mystical insight."[70] The implication here is that Heschel is not being asked to abandon his intuitive epistemology nor any other of his theological values, but Dr. Petuchowski and others are asking Heschel to address his readership on a rational level as well as on an intuitive and biblical one. Thus these critics do not seem to find fault with Heschel for employing an intuitive epistemology; their problem seems to lie with him employing only an intuitive epistemology.

An avid defender of "biblical philosophy," E. LaB. Cherbonnier challenges Dr. Petuchowski's analysis of Heschel. In "A. J. Heschel and the Philosophy of the Bible: Mystic or Rationalist?"[71] Cherbonnier refutes the charge that Heschel is a mystic who disparages Reason, and he attempts to defend "biblical philosophy" as a valid world-view. Cherbonnier's response to the contention that Heschel rejects rational discourse is twofold: he holds that the "Biblical conception of God offers the only hope for a truly rational philosophy,"[72] and he seeks to debunk the "God of the Philosophers."[73] Cherbonnier's first premise reiterates Heschel's belief that the Bible is consistent with the laws of logic. In order to prove Heschel's allegiance to Reason, Cherbonnier quotes his statement that "without reason, faith becomes blind...The rejection of reason is cowardice and betrays a lack of faith."[74] His second observation--that the "God of the Philosophers" has been proven inadequate--is based on Cherbonnier's commitment to Heschel's "God of Pathos." This conception will be discussed in further detail in Chapters 3 and 4.

Although Cherbonnier, like Heschel, contends that the Bible offers us a legitimate philosophy, he does not explain why. Rather his method

of argumentation rests upon his attempts to prove the fallibility of post-biblical traditional religious thought. According to this view: "since the philosophers' god has failed to vindicate itself at the bar of reason, the God of the prophets (must) be given a chance."[75] Ultimately, Cherbonnier's defense of "biblical philosophy" depends upon our acceptance of his view that the "God of the Prophets" or the "God of Pathos" is superior to the "god of the philosophers."

Cherbonnier's defense of Heschel does not directly address the question: What makes "biblical philosophy" a "philosophy?" Is it a coherent world-view? Nor does Cherbonnier establish any criteria for establishing a particular world-view as "philosophical." Yet his polemic against Heschel's critics does succeed on a different level: he shifts the "burden of proof" away from "biblical philosophy" to its adversaries. Thus Cherbonnier implies that it is not Heschel's task to prove the Bible espouses a legitimate philosophy, rather his critics must prove that a biblical world-view is "unphilosophical."[76] Moreover, Cherbonnier holds Heschel's view that the modern mind is particularly prone to biases which are based on limiting preconceived notions. As he states in "Heschel's Time-Bomb": "If Biblical ideas are philosophically untenable, let this be openly demonstrated. Mental habit, however, has proven stronger than logic. Because of their formal shortcomings and because they do not fit the usual textbook specifications, Biblical ideas have, in effect, been subjected to a kind of censorship."[77]

Actually Cherbonnier and Heschel are protesting the view that "philosophy" is a monopoly of the Greek Aristotelian "tradition." Cherbonnier questions why the presuppositions: the world was created by a Creator-God and the "God of Pathos" are considered less "philosophical"

than the "rational view": God is an "Unmoved Mover." Why is it considered more "objective" and "rational" to assume that life has no divine purpose than it is to assume we were created for a transcendent reason?

By reversing the "burden of proof" and shifting it from Heschel and those who defend "biblical philosophy" to the "rationalists," Cherbonnier offers an innovative defense. In a sense, Cherbonnier uses the very same criticisms which have been employed against Heschel to attack his critics and "rational philosophy." Yet ultimately the reader is given no new insights as to why he should consider Heschel's ideas or "biblical philosophy" systematic conceptualizations of the world. One insight the reader does gain, however, is why Reason is suspect. Although Sol Tanenzapf believes "Cherbonnier's response to Heschel's critics is the most successful,"[78] the question we come away with after reading Cherbonnier is: does distrust of "rational analysis" justify the acceptance of a biblical world-view?

Emil Fackenheim attempts to resolve the issue of whether the burden of rational/philosophical proof lies with Heschel or with his critics by claiming that Heschel is "a religious thinker."[79] Drawing an analogy between Heschel and the school of Kalam,[80] Fackenheim sees Heschel as an apologist, not a systematic philosopher. Hence Heschel need not worry about his "ontological presupposition," the rationalists' demands for proofs, or his own reliance upon "mysticism"; since he is a "committed religious thinker."[81] As Fackenheim explains: "Unless this writer is mistaken, some of the religiously-minded among Heschel's critics look to him for the performance of one task, when in fact he performs another."[82]

For Fackenheim, "The thinking in God in Search of Man is religious thinking and nothing else."[83] By distinguishing between "committed religious thinking" and "uncommitted philosophical thinking," this defender hopes to free Heschel from the fetters of rational speculation. Heschel's theology is thus labelled as "midrash."[84] Because Fackenheim believes that Heschel's critics do not understand his task, he attempts to define it for them: because Heschel is an apologist, he is not required to justify his position before the "modern mind." Heschel has the right to presuppose the Torah is "min hashamayim."[85] Thus, for Fackenheim, Heschel does not "beg the question," as a "religious thinker" he is entitled to begin with his standpoint.

One wonders when reading Fackenheim if Heschel saw his "philosophy of religion," "philosophy of Judaism," and "biblical philosophy" as "religious thinking and nothing else." The word "philosophy" is so prominent in all of Heschel's writing, and his knowledge of this discipline is so erudite, it is hard to imagine that Heschel did not choose this term carefully. Does Fackenheim's defense of Heschel come at the expense of the latter's intended purpose? It is one thing to claim that Heschel's intention--to write a philosophy--does not fit a certain criterion, and yet quite another to state that this is not Heschel's professed purpose or goal. One cannot help but feel that Fackenheim minimizes both Heschel's approach to religion and his critics' objections by classifying Heschel as a "committed religious thinker." As Sol Tanenzapf observes in "Heschel and his Critics": "Emil Fackenheim...attempts to defend Heschel against the objections of his critics but does so by making him impervious to philosophical analysis."[86]

By reformulating Heschel's purpose, Fackenheim, in effect, throws both Heschel's epistemology and his critics' reservations out the window. Fackenheim, some feel, does not defend Heschel; he ends the grounds for debate. According to this view, Heschel's critics demonstrate more respect towards "biblical philosophy" than does Fackenheim; they take it seriously enough to refute it. Both John Merkle and Edward Kaplan--defenders of Heschel--take issue with Fackenheim's position. As Kaplan states: "Fackenheim is mistaken to separate the different modes of Heschel's discourse and to reject the conceptual in favor of the expressive..."[87] Merkle, rejecting Fackenheim's analysis, claims that he recognizes Heschel's "rational and coherent world-view."[88] As we noted earlier, Fritz Rothschild, an authoritative expositor, also holds that Heschel's "philosophy" is based on well formulated analytic methodology.

One studying Heschel must attempt to answer the following questions for himself: Does he present his ideas in a coherent, logical, and progressive fashion? Is one obligated to pay tribute to the tradition of "rational speculation" if he wishes to be considered a "philosopher"?, and can a "philosophy" which stems from "biblical thought" be granted the same validity as one based on Aristotelian metaphysics or any other category? The answer to these questions, of course, is subjective. This is why Heschel, his critics, and his adherents are engaged in a debate, the nature of which transcends the particular issue at hand. What does not seem to be subjective however, is Heschel's goal--his intention is to present "a philosophy," not a homily.

Edward Kaplan, the last expositor we will discuss in this chapter, is novel in his approach to Heschel. He uses Heschel's poetic language

in order to defend his strength as a philosopher. Kaplan's view of Heschel's poetic language stands in direct opposition to Arthur Cohen's critique. For the former, Heschel's rhetoric powerfully enhances the persuasiveness of his "philosophy," whereas for the latter, it is his "undoing." For Kaplan, Heschel's exceptional style is a didactic tool which provides him with an effective vehicle for communicating with his readers. It is precisely Heschel's poetic use of language which enables him to penetrate our indifference, confusion, and skepticism and get his theological message across. Moreover, Heschel's genre of writing serves him better than a more prosaic form of argumentation. As Kaplan states in "Mysticism and Despair in Abraham J. Heschel's Religious Thought," "Heschel has replaced rational discourse with highly condensed imagery and extended metaphor. We are caught in the vise of poetic logic..."[89]

This observation concurs with Fox's statement that Heschel's approach is "kerygmatic."[90] According to this view, Heschel's approach is to use passionate and evocative language aimed at appealing to the readers' emotions. Heschel's style is congenial to convincing his readers; once his poetic language establishes a connection with his readers' emotions, they are open and responsive to the profound theological concepts which Heschel expounds. Thus for Kaplan, Heschel's use of metaphor and poetry are inextricably linked to his polemic. Moreover, Kaplan believes Heschel's method is far more effective in converting people to his vantage point than a "textbook approach." As he states: "The poetic elements of Heschel's style play an essential part in converting consciousness."[91]

For Kaplan, unlike other critics, Heschel's rhetoric speaks directly to modern man's predicament and especially to the problem of doubt.

Unlike those who claim contemporary man demands Reason and rational analysis, Kaplan believes he desires poetry, esthetic beauty, and passion. In this expositor's assessment, Heschel's words are uniquely suited for the modern man, an individual who feels engulfed in Kafkaesque despair. Heschel initially identifies the depth of man's problems and then moves forward and introduces him to a new and redemptive world-view. Because Heschel seeks to penetrate cliches, he reaches both the reader's heart and mind. Hence for Kaplan, Heschel's language serves a dialectical function: first he penetrates the reader's preconceived notions by jolting him to awareness, next his captivating and passionate imagery establishes a rapport with his reader, and ultimately the reader accepts Heschel's spiritually exhilarating alternative over the status quo. For Kaplan it is Heschel's use of language which moves his polemic forward.[92]

Full bibliographical details of
the works quoted here will be found in
the Bibliography.

Notes to Chapter Two

[1]Petuchowski, "Faith as the Leap of Action..." in Commentary 25, No. 5, p. 396.

[2]Arthur A. Cohen, The Natural and the Supernatural Jew, p. 235.

[3]Ibid., p. 239.

[4]Ibid., p. 237.

[5]Ibid., p. 241.

[6]Ibid., p. 242.

[7]Ibid., pp. 243-244.

[8]Ibid., p. 244.

[9]Ibid., p. 246.

[10]Meir Ben-Horin, "The Ineffable: Critical Notes..." in The Jewish Quarterly Review 46, No. 4, p. 321.

[11]Ibid., pp. 350-354.

[12]Ben-Horin, "The Mystery..." in The Jewish Quarterly Review 51, No. 1, pp. 61-63.

[13]Ibid., p. 61.

[14]Ben-Horin, "The Ineffable: Critical Notes..." in The Jewish Quarterly Review 46, No. 4., pp. 336-337.

[15]Ben-Horin, "The Mystery..." in The Jewish Quarterly Review 51, No. 1, p. 67.

[16]Ibid., p. 60.

[17]Ibid., p. 65.

[18]Heschel, Who Is Man?, p. 98.

[19]Ben-Horin, "The Mystery..." in The Jewish Quarterly Review 51, No. 1, p. 58.

[20]Ben-Horin, "The Ineffable: Critical Notes..." in The Jewish Quarterly Review 46, No. 4, p. 336.

[21]Ibid., pp. 350-354.

[22]Ibid., p. 347.

[23]Ibid., p. 339.

[24]Eugene B. Borowitz, A New Jewish Theology in the Making, pp. 150-151.

[25]Telephone interview with Eugene Borowitz, New York, August 4, 1988. Borowitz observes that the argument over whether Heschel is a "mystic" boils down to one of semantics. He feels that Meir Ben-Horin errs in not distinguishing between Heschel and other "mystics" like Meister Eckhart. "In a sense Meir Ben-Horin commits the same error he accuses Heschel of by not defining his terms. If we use a modern rationalist understanding of the word "mystic" then perhaps Meir Ben-Horin is right; yet if we use a more traditional understanding of what the term implies, Heschel is not a 'mystic.'"

[26]Heschel, Man is Not Alone, p. 126.

[27]Friedman, "A. J. Heschel: Toward a Philosophy..." in Conservative Judaism 10, No. 2, p. 8.

[28]Ibid., p. 9.

[29]Friedman, Review of Heschel, God in Search of Man..., in The Journal of Religion 37, No. 1, p. 54.

[30]Heschel, God in Search of Man..., p. 121.

[31]Heschel, Man is Not Alone..., pp. 20-21.

[32]Friedman, Review of Heschel, God in Search of Man..., in The Journal of Religion 37, No. 1, p. 54.

[33]A summary of this type of criticism is as follows: According to Heschel man comes to know God by realizing that the ineffable points to the transcendent (God); yet how does this realization occur? He must first presuppose there is a God. The ineffable points to God, and God points to the ineffable ad infinitum.

[34]Merkle, The Genesis of Faith..., p. 247, Footnote #74.

[35]Friedman, Abraham Joshua Heschel and Elie Wiesel..., p. 60.

[36]Merkle, The Genesis of Faith..., p. 81.

[37]Elliot B. Gertel, Review of Merkle, "The Genesis of Faith" in Jewish Spectator 53, No. 1, p. 45.

[38]Edward A. Synan, "Abraham Heschel and Prayer" in The Bridge 1, ed. John M. Oesterreicher, p. 263.

[39]Heschel, The Quest for Certainty in Saadia's Philosophy, p. 278.

[40]Marvin Fox, "Heschel, Intuition, and the Halakhah" in Tradition... 3 No. 1, p. 6.

[41]Heschel, The Prophets II, p. 188.

[42]Rothschild, ed. Between God and Man..., See Introduction, p. 17.

[43]Steven T. Katz, Jewish Philosophers, p. 209.

[44]Heschel, Man is Not Alone, p. 33.

[45]Fox, "Heschel, Intuition and the Halakhah" in Tradition... 3, No. 1, p. 7.

[46]Ibid., p. 10.

[47]Ibid., p. 7.

[48]Fox, "Heschel's Theology of Man" in Tradition... 8, No. 3, p. 80.

[49]Friedman, "A. J. Heschel: Toward a Philosophy..." in Conservative Judaism 10, No. 2, p. 2.

[50]Fox, "Heschel's Theology of Man" in Tradition... 8, No. 3, p. 79.

[51]Ibid., p. 80.

[52]William E. Kaufman, "Abraham J. Heschel..." in Contemporary Jewish Philosophies, p. 148.

[53]Ibid., p. 148.

[54]Ibid., p. 170.

[55]Ibid., pp. 152-153.

[56]Ibid., p. 153.

[57]Ibid.

[58]Ibid., p. 156.

[59]Ibid.

[60]Petuchowski, "Faith as the Leap of Action..." in Commentary 25, No. 5, p. 396.

[61]Kaufman, "Abraham J. Heschel..." in Contemporary Jewish Philosophies, p. 171.

[62]Borowitz, A New Jewish Theology in the Making, p. 150.

[63]Ibid.

[64]Ibid.

[65]Both Genesis of Faith and "Varieties of Heschelian Thought" are works which attempt to defend Heschel as a "systematic philosopher." Hence Merkle and Rothschild restructure Heschel's polemics--each exegete

attempts to re-order Heschel's presentation into a more linear progression.

[66]Borowitz, A New Jewish Theology in the Making, p. 154.

[67]Ibid., p. 156. We get into a problem of semantics when we call Heschel "Orthodox." Susannah Heschel explained her views in a phone interview on August 5, 1988. "My father was an observant Jew, yet unlike Mordecai Kaplan he never aligned himself with any movement. He saw himself as speaking for the tradition of "Judaism," not for one of its branches. This is why as an "observant" Jew he could teach at Jewish Theological Seminary. There are Reform Jews who keep Kosher; would we call them "Orthodox?" My father does not fit into a framework which we associate with a movement; he never wanted to advance the positions of any movement per se." In evaluating Borowitz's view that Heschel's ideas on revelation are "Orthodox," we must consider the following--there are "Reform" and "Conservative" Jews who believe that the Torah was divinely inspired. How do we draw the line between their views and Heschel's? I would argue that although Heschel is a "sophisticated" thinker, he is not a "sophisticated fundamentalist." He advocates adherence to the mitswoth, but he never states we need to follow all 613. It is my view that his cautions against an overly literal interpretation of Torah which are attested to by his writings on "pan-halachism" and his stress on inner experience disqualify him as a "fundamentalist."

[68]Borowitz, A New Jewish Theology in the Making, p. 157.

[69]Ibid.

[70]Petuchowski, "Faith as the Leap of Action..." in Commentary 25, No. 5, p. 396.

[71]E. La B. Cherbonnier, "A. J. Heschel and the Philosophy of the Bible" in Commentary 27, No. 1, pp. 23-29.

[72]Ibid., p. 23.

[73]Ibid., p. 24. Cherbonnier's critique of Dr. Petuchowski states: "On the one hand, he emphasizes the irreconcilable difference between the impassible 'god of the philosopher' and the Biblical God-who-cares. On the other hand, he demands that these mutually exclusive conceptions be reconciled in a higher unity of rational thought and mystical insight.' In the name of 'traditional rationalism,' Petuchowski resorts to the very tactics with which he charges Heschel: the appeal to mystical intuition in defiance of the laws of logic" (pp. 26-27). Cherbonnier, in my opinion, misses the thrust of Dr. Petuchowski's article. "Faith As The Leap of Action" does not focus on opposing God-concepts, nor does Petuchowski ever assert that the "God of the Philosophers" and a personal God are "mutually exclusive." Rather, he suggests that the philosopher must attempt to reconcile the "God of the Philosophers" with the "God of personal experience." Hence Petuchowski contends that while such a synthesis "may be difficult" it is possible. His article asks for a "unity" between different, not "mutually

exclusive" world-views. Moreover, when Petuchowski calls for "that higher unity of rational thought and mystical insight," he is referring to more than different God concepts; this critique, like the tone of his article, offers a perspective as to how the religious philosopher should develop and present his methodology. In my opinion the thrust of "Faith As The Leap of Action" is that Heschel cannot rely solely on intuition if he wishes to espouse a philosophy; he must also integrate rational discourse into his scheme. Moreover, Petuchowski does not suggest intuition and rational thought are "mutually exclusive"; they are different, often competing world-views which must both be considered. In a sense, Petuchowski implies that intuition and rational thought are both necessary. These two perspectives provide a system of checks and balances. For a further discussion see Petuchowski's "Problems of Reform Halacha" in Contemporary Reform Jewish Thought ed. Bernard Martin, pp. 105-122.

[74]Cherbonnier, "A. J. Heschel and the Philosophy of the Bible..." in Commentary 27, No. 1, pp. 23-24.

[75]Ibid., p. 24.

[76]Cherbonnier, "Heschel's Time Bomb" in Conservative Judaism 28, No. 1, p. 12.

[77]Ibid., p. 13.

[78]Tanenzapf, "Abraham Joshua Heschel and his Critics" in Judaism 23, No. 3, p. 277.

[79]Emil Fackenheim, Review of Heschel, God in Search of Man..., in Conservative Judaism 15, No. 1, p. 51.

[80]Ibid.

[81]Ibid., pp. 50-51.

[82]Ibid., p. 50.

[83]Ibid., p. 53.

[84]Ibid., p. 51.

[85]Ibid., p. 52.

[86]Tanenzapf, "Abraham Joshua Heschel and his Critics" in Judaism 28, No. 1, p. 276.

[87]Edward K. Kaplan, "Heschel's Poetics of Religious Thinking" in Abraham Joshua Heschel: Exploring..., p. 117, Footnote #1.

[88]Merkle, The Genesis of Faith, p. 234, Footnote #84.

[89]Kaplan, "Mysticism and Despair..." in The Journal of Religion 57, No. 1, p. 39.

[90]Fox, "Heschel's Theology of Man" in Tradition... 8, No. 3, p. 80.

[91]Kaplan, "Heschel's Poetics of Religious Thinking" in Abraham Joshua Heschel: Exploring..., ed. John C. Merkle, p. 106.

[92]In evaluating Kaplan's praise one is tempted to observe: Heschel's language is more effective in reaching readers with poetic sensibilities than it is in reaching those who do not hold such esthetic values in high esteem. Indeed Kaplan himself is a writer prone to engaging in metaphor and thus it is understandable that he finds Heschel's approach amicable to his own. His comments on the power of poetry are insightful:

> ...If I were not profoundly convinced that esthetic experience is connected with authentic religious insight, I would probably stand outside the frontiers of faith, isolated and silent in the wilderness of disbelief. But through poetry I have been able to imagine some of the emotions of those who have been touched with a love of God...(Kaplan, "Toward a Poetics of Faith" in Response 5, No. 1, p. 44.)

> Poetry requires us to participate profoundly in words...and to explore the poet's expressed subjectivity. Such reading is a deepening of the self of the poetic reader, an enrichment of his responsiveness...(Kaplan, "Three Dimensions of Human Fullness" in Judaism 22, No. 3, p. 311.)

Indeed we all have met individuals who claim they don't like or understand poetry; one wonders if Kaplan feels Heschel's words can address them. We recall the critique that Heschel's ideas only reach those who already share them. Kaplan's focus on Heschel's rhetorical skills seems to leave him open to a similar criticism: Heschel's style only reaches the "poetic reader."

Chapter Three: DIVINE PATHOS AND THE GOD OF THE PROPHETS

Consistent with Heschel's intuitive epistemology is his theory of "divine pathos."[1] Just as man's emotional flashes of insight are elevated over his rational abilities, so too is the "God of Pathos" elevated over the "God of the Philosophers." Heschel not only seeks to refute the Greek metaphysical categories of knowledge, he also challenges the classical Greek and later philosophical tradition's understandings of deity. Unlike those who strive to arrive at a synthesis or "unity" between the "prophetic" experience of God with later philosophical conceptions, Heschel's position is that these respective views are mutually exclusive.

For Heschel, the prophet's experience of God is the antithesis of Aristotelian conceptions of deity. The prophet perceives God as an emotional, suffering, caring deity, one who is directly involved in the affairs of men. The Greek tradition and other prevailing philosophies and theologies, on the other hand, depict God as a detached and uninvolved entity--one who is void of emotional attachments to humanity. For Heschel the latter conception, although dominant in Western thought, is implausible. An interpretation of God which renders him unemotional and incapable of demonstrating concern is not "authentically Jewish." The idea of a "living God" assumes that God is intimately involved in history as opposed to a static, detached, and "apathetic" entity.

A theory of God which understands Him to be the First Cause or Unmoved Mover, is, according to Heschel, built upon erroneous Greek conceptions of perfection. Much of The Prophets is devoted to the explication and refutation of certain fundamental Greek assumptions.

His polemic is a protestation against the incorporation of these assumptions into post-biblical theologies. Heschel believes it is erronecus to adopt the view, that which is perfect cannot change, react, or feel. Moreover, the very "qualities" of an immutable God are an anathema to Biblical, ergo "authentic" Judaism. As Heschel states in his article, "The Divine Pathos":

> Authentic Jewish thought evaluates the emotions in a manner diametrically opposed to the Greek view. The emotions have often been regarded as inspirations from God, as the reflection of a higher power. Neither in the legal nor in the moral parts of the Bible is there a suggestion that the desires and the passions are to be negated. Asceticism was not the ideal of biblical man. Since the feelings were considered valuable, there was no reason to eliminate them from the conception of God. An apathetic and ascetic God would have struck biblical man with a sense not of dignity and grandeur but rather of poverty and emptiness. Only through arbitrary allegorizing was later religious philosophy able to find an apathetic God in the Bible.[2]

Another Greek premise later adopted by Western thought which Heschel questions, is the idea that reason and emotion are by necessity enemies. Heschel notes that the Greek concept of the emotional faculty included irrational and capricious aspects.

Ancient conceptions of deities understood them to be whimsical, unpredictable creatures; the later philosophical traditions sought to rectify such notions by devising a self-sufficient, self-contained God who was never subject to any change. In Heschel's view, biblical man did not see emotion and reason as being at odds with each other. The prophet understood that God's emotions were predicated on "ethos,"[3] not caprice. God's involvement with man, and His reactions to him are reasonable--they correspond to a given situation. For Heschel, there is no dichotomy between "divine pathos" and reason. The error of Western thought lies in the assumption that moral absolutes preclude God's

dynamic and emotional involvement in history. The traditional philosophical concepts of absolutes render God static. For Heschel, God is always moral, always ethical; yet his reactions to man can always change. Hence Heschel's theory of "divine pathos" does more than forward an understanding of God's relationship to man, it also refutes a vast array of philosophical and theological notions. Fritz Rothschild describes the revolutionary implications of Heschel's theology:

> Surely a thinker who has thrown down the gauntlet to the whole venerable tradition of Jewish and Christian metaphysical theology which includes Philo, Saadia Gaon, and Maimonides, and who proclaims that Greek categories such as "being" are inadequate to Judaism, and must be replaced by a new set of categories derived from biblical thinking, must expect brickbats from many directions. To replace Aristotle's Unmoved Mover with the Bible's Most Moved Mover and to argue for an anthropopathic God against Rambam's austerely de-mythologized Deity is no minor matter. The last prominent thinker who did something similar was Judah Halevi, who was forgiven by historians of Jewish philosophy on the grounds that the Kuzari was really a book of apologetics rather than of philosophic thought, and that the author was a poet rather than a systematic philosopher."[4]

Just as Heschel is committed to man's involvement and emotional investment in God, so too, is he dedicated to God's concern and passionate attachment to man. "Divine pathos" is congruent with Heschel's view of the divine-human relationship--a relationship which is characterized by mutual concern. God and man are engaged in a dialogue, one in which each party reacts. Heschel does not see God as the "Wholly Other"--for such an antithesis between God and man would render Him unapproachable. Although man cannot understand God's essence, he can understand his own relationship to God and therefore engage in a dialogue. Heschel explains the divine-human relationship in The Insecurity of Freedom: "Man is not because of what he has in common with the earth, but because of what he has in common with God. The

Greek thinkers sought to understand man as part of the universe; the prophets sought to understand man as a partner of God."[5]

Heschel's God interacts with man, their relationship constitutes an on-going dynamic process. The theory of "divine pathos" refutes any theology which understands God to be static, or unresponsive. God is intimately concerned with the individual, the Jewish people, and all of humanity. One reading Heschel may be tempted to draw analogies between his theory of "divine pathos" and Martin Buber's understanding of the "I-Thou" relationship. Yet there are significant differences which are instructive. A brief comparison elucidates the prominence biblical thought plays in Heschel's theology, and the crucial difference between "God is the Subject" and "I and Thou." For Heschel, God is the focus of the divine-human relationship. The Prophet experiences sympathy with Him; he is well aware before whom he stands. Although the prophet and God are partners, they are not equal partners. As Eugene Borowitz explains:

> [Heschel]...gives God a far greater place in the moment of prophetic sympathy than Buber seems to find in the "I-Thou" relationship. While the prophet is not overcome to the point of loss of self or union with divinity, it is nonetheless God, the one real Master of the universe, he stands in relation to...For it is not as Buber says, just presence which the prophet experiences.[6]

In Theologians At Work, Heschel offers a critique of the "I-Thou" relationship which illustrates the centrality of prophecy in his theological scheme:

> [Buber] believed it as a vague encounter. That is untenable. A Jew cannot live by such a conception of revelation. Buber does not do justice to the claims of the prophets. So I choose between him and the Bible itself. The Bible says God spoke to men--a challenging, embarrassing, and overwhelming claim. I have trouble with many things He said, but I have to accept them. If I don't accept the claim that God spoke to the prophets, then I detach myself from the biblical roots. Buber was a person of depth and

> greatness, but on many points he was not able to reach the Jewish people. One of the weaknesses in Buber, who was an exceedingly learned man, was that he was not at home in rabbinic literature. That covers many years. A lot has happened between the Bible and Hasidism that Buber did not pay attention to.[7]

Thus we see that for Heschel God is neither engaged in a monologue nor in a totally mutual dialogue with man. Rather, when God and the prophet interact both are aware that "God is the subject." God and man are partners; yet man's position vis a vis God is one of "object." "Biblical philosophy" places the prophet in the role of "sympathizer" with God. God is not static; He is concerned with man, yet both parties are aware that God is the focal point; it is man's task to help Him.

"Divine pathos" has two essential components. It instructs us about the manifestations of God's concern: pain, suffering, love, wrath etc. It further describes the prophet's understanding of God, namely, his sympathy and identification with God's emotions. The first premise of this equation--that God suffers--has ramifications for man's current situation. Whenever God witnesses injustice, He experiences pain. (The modern implications of this aspect of "divine pathos" will be explored in further detail later in this chapter).

Now we will concern ourselves with the biblical aspect of "divine pathos"--the phenomenon of prophetic consciousness. The prophet's experience of God is both archetypal and unique; archetypal because it serves as a blueprint for all mankind as to how we should ideally react to God's emotions, and unique because we are not prophets. As Heschel states: "It is a claim almost arrogant enough to say that I'm a descendant of the prophets, what is called Bnai Nevi'im. So let us hope and pray that I am worthy of being a descendant of the prophets."[8]

For Heschel, the prophet's relationship with God exemplifies an awareness that "God is the subject." Moreover, the prophet, a human being, "employs notes an octave too high for human ears."[9] Unlike modern man, the prophet's extreme sensitivity to God's concerns, allows him to identify them and make them his own. The prophets see the world from the point of view of God, as a transcendent, not immanent truth.[10] Unaware that "God is in search of man," the modern mind is estranged and alienated from the divine source. The prophet, on the other hand, is filled with a sense of God's needs. Prophetic awareness of God serves as a timeless ideal; it is a touchstone for every generation:

> Others may suffer from the terrors of cosmic aloneness, the prophet is overwhelmed by the grandeur of divine presence, He is incapable of isolating the world. There is an interaction between man and God which to disregard is an act of insolence. Isolation is a fairy tale.[11]

In explicating the impact of "divine pathos" upon the personality of the prophet, Heschel disavows two conventional notions of prophecy: the idea that the prophet was not fully human, i.e., that he was endowed with supernatural powers,[12] and the idea that he was a "mouthpiece"[13] for God, i.e., that he was a passive recipient of a divine message. The theory of "divine pathos" implies that the prophet never relinquishes his unique personality, nor is the prophet a different species of humanity. Rather, the prophet's gift lies in his ability to "sympathize" with God's emotions and concerns. Prophetic consciousness can be characterized as awareness of the dynamic relationship, and of the process of action and reaction between God and man. Although the prophet is overwhelmed by God, he never loses himself in the encounter; he remains cognizant of his own person. The prophet's mark of

distinction is his ability to "hold God and man in a single thought."[14] Heschel explains prophetic consciousness as follows:

> An analysis of prophetic utterances shows that the fundamental experience of the prophet is a fellowship with the feelings of God, a sympathy with the divine pathos, a communion with the divine consciousness which comes about through the prophet's reflection of, or participation in, the divine pathos. The typical prophetic state of mind is one of being taken up into the heart of the divine pathos. Sympathy is the prophet's answer to inspiration, the correlative to revelation.[15]

It must be noted that although Heschel discusses the prophet's identification with God's "emotions" or "pathos," he never categorizes these characteristics as "essential attributes of God." The terms "emotion" and "feeling" are never used to describe God's essence; they are terms which describe relational aspects of deity. Because Heschel believes that "transitive" concern as opposed to self-centeredness (or "reflexive concern") characterizes God's relationship with man, "pathos" is used to describe God's involvement with human history. It is God's relationship with man that is mutable and dynamic, not His nature. We noted in Chapter One the dichotomy between "conceptual" and "situational thinking." God is concerned with man's immediate situation, hence His emotions, suffering, and relationship with man reflect historical realities.

Since God's nature and essence are not subject to change, Heschel's God is not capricious. Moreover, although God reacts to man, his reactions are never arbitrary. His "pathos" is always consistent with His "ethos." God's emotions are always a just response to man's situation. Hence Heschel is careful to distinguish between God's wrath and human anger. Divine wrath is always the appropriate reaction to human injustice; moreover when the prophet conveys God's wrath it is always with the hope man will change, that he will turn from evil. For

Heschel it is essential that God has the freedom to change his emotions and reactions; this freedom allows God to forgive man's transgressions and to respond to sins with mercy. If God's emotions were not subject to change, He would be bound by static human imperatives. Since "ethos" characterizes his emotions, God reacts to man with compassion.

Prophetic sympathy does not seek to understand God's nature. The prophets do not ask "who is God?"; rather they ask "what does God want?" Heschel's distinction between God's relation to man's situation and his "essential attributes" is an attempt to separate God from archaic or "anthropomorphic" conceptualizations. As Nathan Rotenstreich points out in "On Prophetic Consciousness":

> Heschel was clearly attempting to present his own version of the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" as against the "God of the Philosophers." Because of this theological or systematic motivation he emphasized strongly God's turning to men as an ultimate direction encountered by prophetic consciousness, or, let us say, living in the prophetic consciousness. His distinction between declaration of will and the disclosure of essence is not very far removed from the medieval distinction between the attributes of essence and attributes of action, whereby only the latter are open and understandable to man.[16]

Though Heschel distinguishes between God's essence and the manifestations of his "transitive concern," his notion of God flies in the face of traditional theology. As Fritz Rothschild states: "The notion of a God of pathos whose chief characteristic is concern for and participation in the lives of his creatures is diametrically opposed to the mainstream of Jewish, Moslem, and Christian metaphysical theology throughout the last two millennia."[17]

Heschel finds the Greek idea of in impassible God unacceptable. In his mind the Unmoved Mover is apathetic. Why pray to a deity who has no stake in human existence? Heschel's God responds, feels,

suffers, and "needs man." Yet does this make Him "anthropomorphic"? In John Merkle's view, the distinction Heschel draws between God's essence and the manifestations of His relationship to man are crucial:

> The fact that God's modes of reacting to the world are mutable does not mean that God changes in essence. To be, in essence, passible is not the same as passible essence. To be, in essence passible is to be by nature a being who may change modes of action and reaction; to have a passible essence is to have a changing nature--for example; now human, now divine, or now living, now inanimate.[18]

For Heschel, God can still be God while demonstrating emotions. Unlike the Greek concept of "perfection" which is unchanging and entirely self-sufficient, the Biblical concept of divine perfection understands responsiveness and involvement as critical. Consequently, A god who shows no concern for man cannot be God. Religion and prayer, in Heschel's scheme, would be obsolete if man did not believe God cares and has a stake in human welfare. As Heschel states in "The Spirit of Prayer":

> Decisive is not the mystic experience of our being close to Him; decisive is not our <u>feeling</u> but our <u>certainty</u> of His being close to us--although even His presence is veiled and beyond the scope of our emotion. Decisive is not our emotion but our <u>conviction</u>. If such conviction is lacking, if the presence of God is a myth, then prayer to God is a delusion. If God is unable to listen to us, then we are insane in talking to Him.[19]

In <u>Man is Not Alone</u> and <u>God In Search of Man</u> Heschel extends his discussion of "divine pathos" from prophetic consciousness to the universal situation of every man. Because Heschel believes that the Bible speaks directly to our current predicaments, his theology attempts to apply its universal truths to modern problems. The God who sues for prophetic devotion is also calling for our response. "He who seeks an answer to the most pressing question, what is living? will find an answer in the Bible: man's destiny is to be partner rather than a

master."[20] Just as the prophet was called upon to respond to God's needs, we are being asked to answer God's call.

"Our task is to concur with His interest, to carry out His vision of our task. God is in need of man for the attainment of His ends..."[21] Modern man, like his biblical ancestors, is being called upon to recognize "God needs him." The divine-human partnership is just as relevant in the atomic age as it was in prophetic times. Moreover, God still reacts to humanity's plights, the idea of an emotive God is not a primitive notion which we have outgrown, but rather it is an everpresent reality.

Yet doesn't the premise "God needs man" negate his omnipotence? How could God "need" anyone or anything? Heschel directly addresses this question with his doctrine of divine freedom. God chose to construct the world in such a way that man would be involved. Humanity must enter into a covenantal relationship and take responsibility for its role in the partnership. "His need is a self-imposed concern. God is now in need of man, because He freely made him a partner in His enterprise, 'a partner in the work of creation.'"[22]

God does not "need man" because of any weakness on His part, but rather because of a choice He made. Man was given the opportunity to become involved in a relationship, to become a righteous, responsive, individual. If God had constructed the world without the potential for the divine-human covenant, humanity could not realize its highest aspiration. Hence for Heschel, human "free will" is the corollary to the idea of partnership. Human freedom provides us with the opportunities of living righteously. This is the path God desires for us:

> The Bible is not a history of the Jewish people, but the story of God's quest of righteous man. Because of the failure of the human species as a whole to follow on the path of righteousness, it is the individual--Noah, Abraham--a people: Israel--or a remnant of the people, on which the task is bestowed to satisfy that quest by making every man a righteous man.[23]

God, in accordance with His freedom, chose to create a world which gives man an active role. This implies that man can choose to enter into a covenant or partnership with deity, or he can choose another course. Because God created man as a being who possesses the possibility of reaching his fullest potential, he was created with free will. Hence, human evil is not indicative of God's weakness; it is a reflection of man's refusal to fill his part of the covenantal relationship. Ergo, God deeply desires that man enters into the divine-human partnership, yet he cannot force him to do so or it would not be a "partnership." Free will has two opposing aspects: it allows man to live up to his creed as one "created in the image of God," and it also makes it possible for man to choose otherwise--hence there is evil. If man had not been given freedom to enter into a relationship with God of his own volition, he would be a static entity. Moreover, the beauty of the dynamic encounter between God and his creations would be lost. "We are free to choose between good and evil; we are not free in having to choose. We are in fact compelled to choose. Thus all freedom is a situation of God's waiting for man to choose."[24]

Although "God is waiting" for man to choose between good and evil, he is not waiting placidly. In Heschel's eyes, the "God of Pathos" passionately desires human righteousness. Although at times He appears to be "silent" or "hiding," God has also attempted to guide man throughout history. In a sense, God desperately wants man to make the

"right" choice; hence God "searches" for him and strives to communicate with him. God implores man to live righteously and to fight against evil:

> Unless history is a vagary of nonsense, there must be a counterpart to the immense power of man to destroy, there must be a voice that says NO to man, a voice not vague, faint and inward, like qualms of conscience, but equal in spiritual might to man's power to destroy.
>
> The voice speaks to the spirit of prophetic man in singular moments of their lives and cries to the masses through the horror of history. The prophets respond, the masses despair.
>
> The Bible, speaking in the name of a Being that combines justice with omnipotence is the never-ceasing outcry of "NO" to humanity.[25]

For Heschel, the ultimate fulfillment of human freedom is expressed through man's decision to enter into a partnership with God. Fritz Rothschild calls this "Heschel's positive doctrine of freedom."[26] Freedom is choosing to transcend the finite ego and responding to the divine concern. Hence freedom is more than the ability to choose, it is the ability to choose a life of involvement with God. As Rothschild explains: "As the object of divine transitive concern, man is; as knowing himself to be the object of divine concern and responding through acts of his own transitive concern, he is free...man is to be responsive before he can become responsible."[27] In Heschel's scheme, God and man share a common goal, redemption. This will only come about when they work together in partnership. "He cannot do the job alone, because he gave us freedom. And the whole hope of messianic redemption depends on God and on man. We must help Him."[28]

Because the "God of Pathos" is intimately concerned with history and suffers when He witnesses cruelty, Heschel believes that He is involved with all political and social justice issues. This belief

prompted Heschel to speak out on a vast array of modern concerns from a religious standpoint. Just as the "prophets and God mixed into social and political issues,"[29] Heschel invoked the "God of Pathos" when he discussed racism, the plight of Soviet Jews, and the Vietnam War. Since the "God of Pathos" cannot be separated from history, the pious individual cannot afford to be silent during times of social injustice. Hence for Heschel, the political issues of his day could not be separated from religion or an awareness of "divine pathos." In "The Moral Outrage of Vietnam," Heschel applies his views of "divine pathos" to a contemporary political situation. The correlation he draws between God and American politics is in keeping with his view that the Bible speaks to every human situation.

> The encounter of man and God is an encounter within the world. We meet within a situation of shared suffering, of shared responsibility.[30]

> The question addressed to everyone of us personally and collectively is this: What shall I do to stop the killing and dying in Vietnam? It is this urgent question that we all have in common at this moment, challenging equally our integrity, our right to invoke the name of Him who is the father of the Vietnamese as well as the Americans.[31]

While acknowledging his lasting contribution to Jewish philosophy and scholarship, Jacob Neusner attempts to separate Heschel's theology from his social action involvements. He writes, "Heschel's authentic existence, not his public role as a Shaman for the left, focused upon his theological and scholarly enterprise."[32] Creating a dichotomy between Heschel's public and private lives, and minimizing his political activities, Neusner asserts "this [political] side of Heschel is superficial and unimportant and will be forgotten very soon, when the issues of the day have changed."[33] Later events have called Neusner's perspective into question: those committed to a black/Jewish dialogue

recall his presence at the side of Martin Luther King in Selma;[34] those concerned with Soviet Jewry remember his passionate pleas on their behalf,[35] and participants in the ecumenical dialogue still discuss Heschel's meeting with Pope Paul VI.[36] Moreover, Heschel's major expositors all devote considerable attention to the relationship he saw between "divine pathos" and social justice.

Neusner's interpretation of Heschel's "authentic existence" seems to negate the latter's understanding of theology. For Heschel, the "God of Pathos" is involved in every aspect of human existence; thus political and religious concerns are, by necessity, interrelated. As Heschel stated: "I've learned from the prophets I have to be involved in the affairs of man, in the affairs of suffering man."[37] Had Heschel restricted his understanding of God to academia and "scholarly enterprises," he would have been denying the viability and truth of his theology. One might quibble with the particular stand Heschel took; yet it must be acknowledged that not to have "taken a stand" would have been totally inconsistent with his theological views. Heschel's "philosophy of Judaism" was meant to be practiced. It is a polemic calling for involvement in both the divine-human encounter and man's relationship to the world. To have restricted himself solely to the realm of thought would have been tantamount to denying the practical application of his "philosophy." Heschel was compelled to practice what he preached. As Jakob Petuchowski stated in a commemorative address: "He lived his own definition."[38]

Full bibliographical details of
the works quoted here will be found in
the Bibliography.

Notes to Chapter Three

[1]Heschel, The Prophets II, p. 39. Heschel explains God's pathos as follows: "...the God of the prophets cares for His creatures, and His thoughts are about the world. He is involved in human history and is affected by human acts. It is a paradox beyond compare that the Eternal God is concerned with what is happening in time... . The grandeur of God implies the capacity to experience emotion. In the biblical outlook, movements of feeling are no less spiritual than actual acts of thought.

[2]Heschel, "The Divine Pathos..." in Judaism 2, No. 1, p. 66.

[3]Heschel, The Prophets II, p. 5.

[4]Rothschild, "The Religious Thought of Abraham Joshua Heschel" in Conservative Judaism 23, No. 1, pp. 19-20.

[5]Heschel, The Insecurity of Freedom..., p. 152.

[6]Borowitz, A New Jewish Theology in the Making, p. 154.

[7]Heschel in Theologians At Work, interview with Patrick Granfield, p. 75.

[8]Heschel, "A Conversation With Heschel," interview with Carl Stern on NBC's "Eternal Light," p. 6.

[9]Heschel, The Prophets I, p. 10.

[10]Heschel, The Prophets II, pp. 263-268.

[11]Heschel, The Prophets I, p. 16.

[12]Ibid., p. 21.

[13]Ibid., p. 25.

[14]Heschel, "A Conversation with Heschel," interview with Carl Stern on NBC's "Eternal Light," p. 5.

[15]Heschel, The Prophets I, p. 26.

[16]Nathan Rotenstreich, "On Prophetic Consciousness" in The Journal of Religion 54, No. 3, p. 189.

[17]Rothschild, ed. Between God and Man...; see Introduction, p. 27.

[18]Merkle, "Heschel's Theology of Divine Pathos" in Abraham Joshua Heschel: Exploring..., ed. John C. Merkle, p. 71.

[19]Heschel, "The Spirit of Prayer," Reprinted from Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly of America 17, p. 163.

[20]Heschel, God in Search of Man..., p. 238.

[21]Heschel, Man is Not Alone..., p. 241.

[22]Ibid., p. 243.

[23]Ibid., p. 245.

[24]Heschel, God in Search of Man..., p. 412.

[25]Ibid., p. 171.

[26]Rothschild, ed. Between God and Man...; see Introduction, p. 28.

[27]Ibid., p. 29.

[28]Heschel, "A Conversation with Heschel," interview with Carl Stern on NBC's "Eternal Light," p. 4.

[29]Ibid., p. 7.

[30]Heschel, "The Moral Outrage of Vietnam" in Vietnam: Crisis of Conscience, p. 52.

[31]Ibid., p. 57.

[32]Jacob Neusner, "Faith in the Crucible of the Mind" in America 128, No. 9, p. 207.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Cf. Kenneth L. Woodward, "A Foretaste of Eternity" in Newsweek, January 8, 1973, p. 50. According to Woodward, "In the past decade, Heschel assumed a role of social leadership seldom attained by a man of prayer. When the call went out for clerical support of Martin Luther King, and later for a religious coalition against the war in Vietnam, Heschel was the first major Jewish figure to respond, and he soon became a fixture at civil rights marches and peace rallies. Among his own people, he was one of the first to come to the aid of Soviet Jews... . On the interfaith front, it was Heschel who went to Rome to see Pope Paul VI and to plead, despite much criticism from Jews at home, for a declaration by Vatican Council II 'absolving' Jews of blame for the death of Jesus. And when Union Theological Seminary, a Protestant institution in New York, decided in 1965 to appoint its first Jew as a visiting professor, Heschel was the overwhelming choice." In an interview at Union Theological Seminary on August 30, 1988, Samuel Dresner stated: "He was the number one figure--the Jewish touchstone for Christians and Blacks for ten to twenty years--no question about it..."

[35]Ibid.

[36]Ibid.

[37]Heschel, "A Conversation with Heschel," interview with Carl Stern on NBC's "Eternal Light," p. 6.

[38]Petuchowski, "In Memoriam--Abraham Joshua Heschel," words spoken at the Sheloshim Observance, 1972, p. 6.

Chapter Four: THE GOD OF THE PHILOSOPHERS

Eliezer Berkovits is the foremost critic of Heschel's theory of "divine pathos." Berkovits's sustained and biting attacks reflect many of traditional philosophy's assaults on biblical thought. The dispute between Heschel and Berkovits is a microcosm of a much larger historical debate, the clash between two opposing world-views: the biblical interpretation of God as a personal caring deity vs. the Aristotelian conception of God as an impassible Unmoved Mover. Indeed Heschel's definition of a "philosophy of religion" captures the historical tension between these two conflicting perspectives. In Berkovits's critique of "divine pathos" we see the "God of the Philosophers" confront the "God of the Prophets." Moreover, we are provided with an example par excellence of "philosophy" taking "religion" to task for its lack of intellectual sophistication. Invoking Maimonides' theory of negative attributes, Berkovits levels challenges against the "God of Pathos" which address not only Heschel but every school of thought which understands God to be passible. Hence Berkovits's critique of Heschel's theology can be seen as more than a disagreement between two modern thinkers; it can also be viewed as the timeless and on-going dispute between Greek philosophy and rational speculation on the one hand, and biblical religion on the other. Regardless of whether the student agrees with Heschel or Berkovits, he will glean invaluable insights by studying the issues of contention between these two first rate minds. Both men advance arguments which encapsulate traditions whose impact upon Western thought has been decisive.

Berkovits introduces his arguments with the observation that Heschel is an extreme literalist in his interpretation of scripture. By

taking biblical descriptions of God's love, anger, and pain at their word he ignores the "age-old problems of Jewish theology and philosophy."[1] Biblical expressions of God's emotional state, for Berkovits, are to be interpreted as metaphors, not reality. Hence Heschel is guilty of espousing a theory laden with anthropomorphisms and anthropopathisms. The "God of Pathos" is created in Heschel's image, as Berkovits explains: "The question of course is: by ascribing emotions to God, by allowing Him to be affected by man, by conceiving Him as capable of joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, don't we form Him in the image of man?"[2]

The greatest challenge for the theologian and the philosopher, according to Heschel, is to reconcile the language in the Bible with God's transcendence. For Berkovits a transcendent deity is absolute and infinite, hence no finite or human characteristics can be ascribed to Him. God is a "Wholly Other" who cannot be understood in any human terms. Moreover, Berkovits is careful to point out that the nature of the difference between God and man is one of kind, not of degree. Heschel therefore errs in assuming that both God and man experience emotions, even though he states--God's are, in a way, far greater. By allowing God and man to share certain attributes, Heschel commits blasphemy--his "God of Pathos" is finite. As Berkovits explains:

> The essence of Maimonides' criticism of the positive attributes of God is that all our concepts are derived from our finite experience; we can associate with them only finite meanings. No matter how much we might magnify or purify them in trying to apply them to God, we either associate some positive meaning with them in which case we shall be describing something finite that will have no relevance to God, or else we shall be using words without any meaningful positive content.[3]

Berkovits is well aware of Heschel's response to this point--God's pathos is not man's pathos. Yet he finds this statement problematic:

Either God and man are so totally different that man is incapable of "sympathizing" with God, or the difference is only one of degree and Heschel is guilty of creating an anthropomorphic deity. Berkovits ultimately builds his critique of Heschel on the assumption that the latter "creates God in man's image." Although Heschel asserts that there is a qualitative difference between God's and man's emotional capacities, he nonetheless believes that there are commonalities. It is the prophet's ability to share God's feelings, and "participate in His life" which create the "religion of sympathy." In Berkovits's opinion, Heschel's theory of prophetic consciousness would be impossible if man did not share the same feelings as God--albeit to a lesser degree.

John Merkle has an interesting response to Berkovits's charge; he states:

> Heschel would probably say that the difference in degree is so great that that makes it a difference in kind, but not such a difference that the two have nothing in common. For Heschel, God and humans are different kinds of beings who, nevertheless, have being, and certain attributes of being, in common.[4]

It becomes clear that the issue underlying the question: Are the differences between man and God ones of kind or ones of degree?, is: Is God a "Wholly Other" or a sharing partner? Ultimately, we must ask is God transcendent or immanent? Although both Heschel and Berkovits claim that God is both transcendent and immanent, their respective understandings of these terms differ greatly. In Berkovits's scheme, Heschel's God cannot truly be transcendent because He shares common characteristics with man. Moreover in Heschel's scheme, Berkovits's God cannot be immanent because He is not affected by His creations. John Merkle seems to capture Heschel's view on this latter point when he asks: "Is it not more philosophically consistent, 'more logical,' to

speak of God as both supreme Lord of history and also concerned for, and moved by, historical beings than it is to claim that God is impassible yet in relation to human beings?"[5] For Berkovits, a transcendent God by necessity is "Wholly Other"; and for Heschel an immanent God is by necessity one whom shares in man's emotional state. Despite numerous statements to the contrary, both theologians are engaged in a debate as to the nature or essence of God. Heschel is concerned with God's presence in history; his vision of deity is one of a concerned, emotional participant in human affairs. Berkovits stresses God's absolute distinction from man; his view of deity reflects the Greek philosophical conception that "that which is perfect cannot change."

Berkovits is well aware that we may perceive a tension between God's absolute immutability and His awareness of humanity; hence he concedes that God is capable of perceiving the individual as a "concrete fact." Yet Berkovits feels that we should call this tension or paradox "a mystery" as opposed to labelling it "divine pathos." Berkovits explains:

> Why not reason in the following manner? It is inconceivable that the Supreme Being should be passible. Therefore there could be no such thing as divine pathos. At the same time, God realizes man as "a concrete fact." However, in order to do that one must feel him, one must become aware of him emotionally. But God is free of pathos. Ergo, God's realizing man as a concrete fact and not as an abstraction is enveloped in mystery. We believe our way of reasoning is much more valid than that of Heschel. For Dr. Heschel commits the unforgivable fallacy of equating the human way of realizing a fellowman as a concrete fact with the way of God.[6]

Whereas for Heschel God's ability to perceive man as an individual is the basis of his theory of "divine pathos," for Berkovits this divine quality is a "mystery." Berkovits believes that these two seemingly contradictory aspects of God--his absoluteness and his awareness of the

individual--is a paradox beyond our grasp. According to Berkovits, "divine pathos" does not deal with the absolute aspect of God, thus Heschel ignores half of the equation. The theory of "divine pathos" is not a theology, rather it is an attempt to ignore the inherent tension between God's transcendence and immanence. "Jewish theology begins when one realizes the implications of the presence of both aspects, that of the absolute and of the personal, in the biblical concept of God...Until he [Heschel] is able to render the presence of pathos in the Absolute meaningful or sensible he cannot speak of a theology of pathos."[7] Merkle notes that Heschel and Berkovits each begin their polemics with different "starting points."[8] Berkovits begins with the philosophical notion that God is impassible and "Wholly Other." Heschel, on the other hand, starts with the "biblical perspective that God is supreme but not the absolute antithesis of humanity."[9]

After discussing the anthropomorphism of Heschel's "divine pathos," Berkovits examines the problems with his conception of divine wrath. From a methodological standpoint this criticism is aimed at the internal inconsistency of Heschel's theology. Berkovits notes that when the Bible conveys God's emotions in a positive light, e.g., as love, pain, forgiveness, etc....Heschel is quite comfortable with a literalist stance. Yet when God is depicted as a deity filled with wrath, Heschel shifts his ground. Heschel interprets this emotion, and this emotion alone, in a metaphorical sense. Suddenly Heschel becomes a rationalist who sees God's anger as a didactic tool or "educational gimmick."[10] As Berkovits notes:

> What he says concerning anger is that it is inconceivable that God should be angry. He now becomes a rationalist and refers to the absoluteness of divine Being in order to explain the pathos of anger. How can anyone imagine that with God anger

> could mean anger? Is not God absolutely different from man? To God, His anger is really love, an instrument of His care and concern for man.
>
> One can see that Dr. Heschel does not relish the idea of an angry God, but at least intellectually, he rather appreciates the thought of a suffering God.[11]

Berkovits believes that Heschel's view of "divine wrath" seems to be at odds with his overall theory of "divine pathos." When Heschel discusses God's anger, he stresses those aspects of deity which have traditionally been understood as absolute and transcendent. Moreover, Heschel is highly exegetical: God's wrath is interpreted as a reflection of "divine concern"; it is "love withheld." For Berkovits, this view of "divine wrath" is the lone example of Heschel rejecting an anthropomorphic God. The contradiction implicit in "divine pathos" is Heschel's "anthropomorphic" interpretations of God's other emotions--love, pain, etc....Although Heschel asserts "God's anger is not really anger," he would never state "God's love is not really love." Hence, the difference between God's anger and man's anger is one of kind; whereas the difference between God's love and man's love is one of degree. For Berkovits, Heschel tailors God to meet his own needs--thus He is a suffering, concerned, loving deity. As he states, "One cannot help wondering however what would become of the entire theology of pathos and religion of sympathy if one would apply the same method of interpretation [of wrath] to other emotions of God."[12]

In Berkovits's analysis of the "religion of sympathy" he also notes the dilemma of divine wrath. How can we understand the prophet's wrath? Is this also "love withheld?" Moreover, there are numerous examples in scripture of prophetic anger which does not seem to correspond to "divine wrath," how are we to understand this?

> There are also many more reasons why this psychological key of sympathy opens no new doors to understanding the prophet. There is, for instance, this question. If the prophet's anger by itself is inexplicable, even more so must be God's anger. Or are we to assume that the prophet loves his people more dearly than God does?[13]

For Berkovits, Heschel's "religion of sympathy" implies that there must be some type of correspondence between divine and human emotions. Hence if we say "God's anger is His love," we must apply the same premise to prophetic anger. The problem is clear, we would not be able to make such an interpretive analysis with positive emotions. If we are not able to take divine wrath or prophetic anger literally, why are we obligated to understand God's other emotions on such a literal level?

For Berkovits, the crux of Heschel's problem is not his methodological inconsistencies, but rather it is his anthropomorphic understanding of deity. If Heschel had applied his interpretation of "divine wrath" to all of God's emotions--this metaphoric and nonliteralist understanding of God would have been in keeping with Maimonidian philosophy. Yet it is Heschel's willingness to understand the Bible's descriptions as accurate reflections of divine emotions that troubles Berkovits. As we will see, it is Berkovits's contention that Heschel's anthroporphic God or "manlike"[14] god is an anathema to Judaism.

Aware that Heschel tries to resolve this problem by separating God's essence from the relational aspects of "divine pathos," Berkovits sets out to prove that "it is not possible to separate the essence of God from His pathos."[15] Berkovits shuns the idea that the manifestations of God's emotions can remain totally detached from his being. Heschel is offering us positive attributes of deity which inform us about God's essential being:

> Assuming that, indeed, the prophet experiences only what God offers what He does in relationship to man, only His manifestations directed to man, the question of what He <u>is</u> remains inescapable.[16]

> The prophet does not have sympathy with pathos; experiencing God's pathos he sympathizes with God, the Absolute and Perfect, the Supreme Being...It cannot be overcome by abstaining from any claim to comprehend God's essence. Of course, one may well take the position that all is a mystery, but one should not speak of the <u>theology</u> of pathos.[17]

For Heschel, the prophet can sympathize with the manifestations of divine concern. Moreover, these relational aspects of deity are not to be interpreted as essential attributes. For Berkovits, a theory of "divine pathos" assumes that God's actions cannot be separated from His nature. What God does must tell us something about who He is, hence Heschel commits the heresy of attributing positive attributes to God. In so doing, he blasphemes God's transcendent and absolute nature and provides us with a "manlike god."

Because Berkovits's argument against Heschel's anthropomorphic interpretation of scripture culminates with the accusation that Heschel espouses a Christological doctrine, his criticisms attempt to demonstrate the similarities between "divine pathos" and Christianity's suffering Jesus.[18] Hence Berkovits attempts to give us several examples of why Heschel's theology flies in the face of traditional Judaism. He asks, for example, what is preventing Heschel's God from having a body? A God of pathos, "who is affected by man's behavior and responds to it emotionally--is he not a person?"[19] For Berkovits, Heschel's literal interpretations of God's emotions and reactions to man imply that the "God of Pathos" could take on human form. "How come he doesn't equip the Almighty with a body too? The anthropomorphic references to God in the Bible are hardly less conspicuous than the anthropopathetic

expressions. Using Dr. Heschel's own method of reasoning, it should not be difficult to prove that God has a body."[20] The assumption Berkovits seems to be making here is--because God and man are capable of sharing emotions, they are also capable of sharing other similarities, ergo Heschel's God could have a body.

John Merkle takes Berkovits's analysis to task in "Heschel's Theology of Divine Pathos." Merkle thinks that Berkovits's logic is clearly at fault: just because God and man share some common emotions it cannot be assumed that they share similarities in every aspect of being.

> It does not follow that just because God shares pathos of spirit with human beings that God might also have a body as do humans. The fact that God and man have certain attributes in common does not mean that they need have all attributes in common, and Heschel is careful in suggesting just what attributes may be ascribed to both.[21]

Another possible disagreement with Berkovits's analysis is that he takes Heschel's view of a "personal God" too literally. Just as he accuses Heschel of being unable to distinguish metaphor from realistic description, Berkovits seems to assume that Heschel's "personal and living God" must be--according to strict definition--a flesh-and-blood human being. Fritz Rothschild discusses the implications of such an understanding:

> To emphasize that he is not to be conceived as an abstract principle or process but as the living God, he is called a person. But it must always be understood that this is not strictly correct. The terms "person" and "personality" usually denote the essential structure of a human being. God whose essence is incomprehensible and who is known only by His acts and expressions, cannot properly be called a person in this sense.[22]

Merkle and Rothschild's comments imply that Berkovits fails to understand Heschel's descriptions of the relationship between man and

God. The nature of the encounter is personal; they share a mutual concern and love. Yet this is no way implies that God possesses a corporal body. Berkovits assumes that if God and man share any commonalities, they must share all commonalities. Either God is the antithesis of man, or He and man are one in the same. The idea that God and His creation might share certain attributes and not others is untenable for him. Hence it is impossible that there are certain differences between man and God which are of degree, e.g., the capacity for love, pain, etc...., and other differences which are of kind, e.g., God is incorporeal and man is corporeal.

In keeping with his view that Heschel's theology is not authentically Jewish is Berkovits's attempt to prove that "divine pathos" is inconsistent with traditional rabbinic and kabbalistic sources. He notes that the rabbis took pains to use the term "keveyakhol or as it were"[23] when they used anthropomorphic expressions. Moreover the talmudic and midrashic traditions were careful in their usages of the terms Shekhinah and God. The distinction between these terms was an attempt to distinguish between the transcendent immutable God and man's perception of His indwelling presence.[24] While some might argue that the difference between the Shekhinah and the "God of Pathos" is minimal and a point of semantics, Berkovits holds that there is a qualitative difference. Indeed one is tempted to apply all of Berkovits's criticism of "divine pathos" to the rabbinic concept of God's indwelling presence--for just as there is an implicit tension between Heschel's "God of Pathos" and the transcendent/immutable God, is there not also a contradiction between the immanent/indwelling Shekhinah and this absolute deity? Berkovits

attempts to address this problem in terms, which ironically enough, bear a striking resemblance to Heschel's language:

> Even less acceptable is Professor Heschel's concept of the religion of sympathy. Again, it would be a misunderstanding to compare it to the idea that one should feel the tza'ar ha'shekhina, so widely spread in Hasidic literature. On the basis of what has been said about pathos in the Kabbalah, it should be obvious that it is not possible to equate the "sorrow of the skekhina" with Heschel's "pain in the heart of God." The sympathy called for is with a finite manifestation of the divine in the world of creation. It is/not sympathy with God, but as it were, with the cause of God in the world. (Underlining mine)[25]

What seems particularly offensive to Berkovits is Heschel's view of a "suffering God." Berkovits's polemic advances the argument that Heschel's theology not only goes against the grain of Jewish tradition, but that it is Christological. He notes that Heschel's terminology is not found in the body of Jewish sources but rather expressions like "suffering together with God" and "sharing an inner experience with God"[26] are strikingly consistent with the Christian's understanding of Jesus. For Berkovits an emotional deity, who suffers and has an "inner life" and reacts to man is consistent with the Christian tradition.

Berkovits explains that historically Judaism and Christianity responded differently to the challenge Greek metaphysics posed to the Bible: the Jews responded by reinterpreting biblical thought whereas the Christians faced a far more serious dilemma because of their faith in a god incarnate.[27]

Berkovits asserts that the Christians were unable to meet the challenges posed by Greek thought specifically because their God was human. Yet the Jewish tradition took pains to eliminate and reinterpret anthropomorphic thinking. Hence the Christians have retained a "God of Pathos"--while the Jews have not. Heschel's understanding of deity,

according to Berkovits negates Judaism's interpretative approach to biblical thought and is consistent with Christianity.

In Merkle's critique of Berkovits, he challenges the assumption that it is "more logical" to begin with Berkovits's "starting point" e.g., the philosophical notion that God is "Wholly Other." In a sense Berkovits's attacks on Heschel boil down to the argument--Heschel must reconcile the "God of Pathos" with the traditional Greek notion of an absolute and immutable deity. Merkle inquires as to why we must assume that this Greek premise has any more validity than the "biblical view." Merkle notes that because Berkovits assumes that metaphysical philosophy's attacks on the Bible are valid--he faces a dilemma:

> Because Heschel begins with an observation of Jewish faith, not with a preconceived philosophical notion, he does not have the same dilemmas as Berkovits: how to reconcile the notion of God's absolute otherness with the biblical testimony of God's relationship to historical human beings.[28]

For Merkle, Heschel avoids this dilemma by claiming God is supreme, yet not "Wholly Other." Because Heschel believes that certain attributes of God and man can overlap without the two beings being totally congruent, Heschel's theology is not contradictory. Heschel's God is different from man, yet not the antithesis of man. Berkovits, on the other hand, cannot avoid the problem of reconciling God's absoluteness with His concern for the "concrete fact." Because he presents these two aspects of deity as mutually exclusive, he is forced into the position of calling this dilemma or paradox a "mystery"--and offering us no concrete solutions to the problem. In fact, Berkovits concludes his critique by acknowledging this difficulty:

> God is Infinite and Absolute and Perfect; yet, according to Judaism, the infinite, absolute, and perfect God is related to the world and cares for His creation.

> How are the two aspects of Divine Reality to be related to each other? The solution of the problem requires ontological investigations into the nature of Being, undertaken--perhaps for the first time--with specifically Jewish religious predilections and intellectual anxieties.[29]

Berkovits's critique of Heschel prompts questions which transcend this specific debate: Are the "God of the Prophets" and the "God of the Philosophers" mutually exclusive entities? Can a theology successfully pay tribute to both of these ideas; or must the development of one of these God-concepts be at the expense of the other? We recall Cherbonnier's observation that the "God of the Philosophers" has been proven inadequate, thus we must give the "God of the Prophets" a chance. Berkovits's analysis refutes this premise, the assumption here is--one cannot create a theology out of the ruins of past mistakes. Ultimately Berkovits is asking for the "God of the Prophets" to be incorporated into the Greek category of Absoluteness. Yet unlike Dr. Petuchowski who suggests that "unity" between these differing world-views is possible--albeit difficult, Berkovits argues that these two perspectives are diametrically opposed. Hence this critic leaves us with a theological dilemma which does not seem to have any potential resolution: The transcendent/absolute God cannot care about the individual yet He does--hence we have a "mystery."

It is clear that for Berkovits and others who adhere to the "God of the Philosophers," the fundamental problem with divine pathos is that it is "anthropomorphic." By attributing human characteristics to deity, Heschel negates divine perfection and commits a sacrilege. Although Heschel attempts to refute this charge by distinguishing between God's essence and attributes, and by claiming that his theology is "theomorphic,"[30] his critics accuse him of begging the question since

God and man still share some commonalities. Implicit here is the assumption that for God to be transcendent, He must be perfect, "Wholly Other," One distinguished from man by differences of kind, not degree. Yet Heschel challenges those who equate transcendence with perfection when he notes:

> The notion of God as a perfect being is not of biblical extraction. It is not of prophetic religion but of Greek philosophy; a postulate of reason rather than a direct, compelling, initial answer of man to His reality. In the Decalogue, God does not speak of His being perfect but of His having made free men out of slaves.[31]

Despite Heschel's rejection of the Greek philosophical conceptions of deity, he never fully escapes Berkovits's methodological observation: In Heschel's scheme, God's troubling attributes--i.e. wrath, etc. ... are differences of kind, whereas His empathic attributes are differences of degree. In his critique of divine pathos, Berkovits notes that Heschel's methodological inconsistencies preclude any real discussion of divine wrath or the problem of evil.

Meir Ben Horin further develops this argument when he questions how we can reconcile divine pathos with the problem of theodicy. While Berkovits asks how the "God of Pathos" and the "God of Wrath" can coexist, Meir Ben Horin raises an even more perplexing question. How can a God who is mindful of all of His creatures and who suffers with them permit evil? Ultimately Meir Ben Horin will conclude that if one takes Heschel's view of divine pathos to its ultimate extreme, he emerges with a cruel and Darwinian conception of deity.

This Reconstructionist thinker's reasoning is as follows: Heschel believes that there are times when God is actively involved in human history and other times when He is silent. Why is God willing to reveal

Himself only during certain choice moments? Moreover why does He go into "hiding" at other times? According to Ben Horin, the "God of Pathos" establishes "a hierarchy of moments" which seldom corresponds to man's piety or his needs. Hence Heschel's God is capricious and arbitrary, not a deity filled with compassion for His creatures.

> An ineradicable streak of caprice runs through the picture, and an amiability, at least as observable through the eyes of mortality, relates to shifting mood rather than definable principles of morality. Arbitrary, incomprehensible, or supersensible hierarchies of moments, ages, persons, peoples, places, acts; sudden bursts of grants and favors, divine pathos, compassion, ecstasy--...All these are doubtful consolations in the face of obstinate reality of the unredeemed. They fall short of mitigating the plight of uncounted millions of years and untold millions of human beings doomed to the shadow of grace. They do not still the tears of the naked, who remain unclothed and unsheltered.[32]

As we noted earlier, for Heschel, God's silences are a response to man's obtuseness. Yet is Meir Ben Horin correct in understanding this concept as a theodicy? Although Heschel believes that "God is hiding," this phenomenon is not offered as an explanation as to why the righteous suffer. Rather, God's silences are part of the incomprehensible mystery of living. For Heschel, God's "eclipse" is a problem for man, not the reason for evil in the world. Although Heschel discusses the problem of evil, he never offers us a theodicy. In Heschel's scheme evil is only discussed in terms of man's inadequacies, never in terms of God's nature; hence the question--how can an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God coexist with evil--is conspicuously absent from his work. The following excerpt is characteristic of Heschel's treatment of this subject.

> Does not history look like a stage for the dance of might and evil--with man's wits too feeble to separate the two and God either directing the play or indifferent to it? The major folly of this view seems to lie in its shifting the responsibility for man's plight from man to God, in accusing the Invisible though iniquity is ours.[33]

Although Heschel never specifically addresses the question: What type of God can allow human suffering?, Ben Horin believes that we can extrapolate given Heschel's views on divine pathos and revelation. The "God of Pathos" reveals Himself during select moments of history, hence the most salient feature of this anthropomorphic God is His total freedom. Heschel's God is free to prioritize periods of involvement and periods of silence, free to choose when He will supernaturally intervene in the affairs of men and when He will withdraw. Moreover, because man is always "the subject," he has no alternative but to accept divine decree. For Ben Horin, Heschel's God is a dictator, and man is subject to His authoritarian rule. Ultimately free will only exists for God, not for His creatures.

> Beyond the hierarchy of chosen moments there is also the grimness of unfavored moments...the unpredictable spur-of-the-moment, parsimonious blasts of grants, mercy, love, interest, choice, justice are enveloped in long, loathsome, lean inter-moments which are governed by an economy of grace scarcity, produced by either omnipotence or omni-impotence. These negative grants bespeak a divine "rugged individualism" lurking behind our author's sketch of the ultimate "subject," a freedom for irresponsibility...[34]

Ben Horin's objections to divine pathos can easily be applied to other theologies which understand deity as supernatural, miraculous, or revealing. For any supernatural understanding of God lends itself to the question--where is He during times of suffering? We observed earlier that Heschel attempts to avoid the problem of theodicy by not addressing the issue of God's nature, i.e., what type of God remains silent while His creatures cry out? Yet it should also be noted that on occasion his references to divine justice seem to give credence to Ben Horin's objections. Specifically, one can find in Heschel's writings the idea that man has no choice but to accept God's incomprehensible

will. In God in Search of Man the talmudic legend of Akiba's martyrdom is quoted at great length.[35] It is clear that Heschel believes his readers can learn from the sentiments expressed here:

> Moses turned around and saw how the Romans were selling the flesh of the martyr Akiba at the market place. Lord of the universe, cried Moses, is this the reward for such learning? And the Lord replied, Be silent, for such is My decree.[36]

In Ben Horin's opinion, Heschel's theology fails because the "God of Pathos" permits evil. Moreover, he believes that if the premise of divine pathos is taken to its logical conclusion one emerges with a capricious, cruel, and dictatorial conception of deity. Yet it remains unclear whether we can extrapolate these conclusions from Heschel's statements on God's "silences." Perhaps the question of theodicy is never specifically addressed by Heschel because he does not dare to posit any theory as to why the righteous suffer. Thus one reading Ben Horin's critique of divine pathos must ask two questions: Can one legitimately conclude that Heschel's God is Darwinian and capricious? And, more importantly--Must a "philosopher of religion" attempt to address the problem of theodicy? It is quite possible that Heschel's avoidance of this topic was a sincere reflection of his own uncertainties. Hence the question arises: Must a "philosophy of religion" or a theology address the problem of theodicy? In Heschel's writings this issue is scrupulously avoided; moreover, those who knew him acknowledge that he refused to discuss "the darker side" of life.[37] It is for the individual to decide whether Heschel's silences on these issues make him less tenable as a philosopher.

Arthur Cohen voices similar concerns about divine pathos--How can a God who "needs" man be a fully independent entity? This critic objects

to Heschel's view that God reacts to man and is affected by him. An emotive God, according to Cohen, is movable, passable, and imperfect, ergo not God. Aware of Heschel's response to this polemic--i.e. God's reactions to man are accidental, not essential attributes--Cohen offers the following refutation:

> The question still remains, and Heschel has not answered it, whether pathos is an essential or an accidental attribute of God. If it is essential, grief and suffering are introduced into God's life; if it is accidental, it is liable to the complaints of traditional theologians who would consider the imputation of the transitory and impermanent to God to be a self-contradiction.[38]

For Cohen, Heschel is in a "no win" position as long as he subscribes to a "God of Pathos" who is also transcendent. There is an inherent and irreconcilable contradiction in Heschel's theology--a theology which attempts to pay homage to both the "God of the Philosophers" and the "God of the Prophets." According to this perspective--these two conceptions of deity are diametrically opposed and therefore unable to harmoniously coexist in Heschel's world-view. Hence Cohen suggests that the theory of divine pathos must be significantly altered if it is to be efficacious.

We recall John Merkle's refutation of the assertion that a transcendent deity cannot be involved with human history. As Merkle states, "while God <u>is</u> transcendent, transitive concern for being, the expressions of that concern are historical and subject to change."[39] For Heschel and Merkle, a transcendent deity is not synonymous with the Unmoved Mover. The Aristotilian ideal of an Active Intellect who only thinks about thinking, according to this perspective, is not only solipsistic--it is amoral. Hence the Unmoved Mover cannot be God. Cohen, on the other hand, believes that Heschel's position is logically

inconsistent because the term "divine pathos" is self-contradictory. God is either a transcendent entity totally detached from His creations, or He is an imperfect deity who is subject to the vicissitudes of emotions. As Cohen notes:

> At the same time that Heschel affirms that pathos has no substantial reality, he still avers "that God can actually suffer." This exemplifies what has bothered us frequently in our reading of Heschel: namely, Heschel is aware of all the problems, all the dilemmas, all the mysteries inherent in theology, but has not yet elected the resolute way. He is still too much the disciple of the Jewish Philosopher, Maimonides, whose strictures against anthropomorphism prevent him from imputing to God's essence the meaningful and instructive experience of anything which might, in the view of human finitude, compromise divine perfection.[40]

Cohen's observation on Heschel's reluctance to fully dismiss Maimonidian principles is an astute one. Though Heschel attempts to reject the Unmoved Mover and the "God of the Philosophers," he indirectly pays tribute to them by continually distinguishing between God's unknowable essence and His attributes of action, e.g.--His relational aspects to the world. Moreover, his repeated attempts to prove that divine pathos is not anthropomorphic almost reflect a certain recognition of the validity of God as the "Wholly Other." Cohen implies that Heschel's inability to embrace a more methodologically cogent position--like process philosophy--[41] is due to the latter's ambivalence vis a vis the "God of the Philosophers." Heschel's theology reaches an impasse because he is unable to abandon either of his mutually exclusive world-views.

Cohen is not the only one who suggests that Heschel could glean valuable insight were he to adopt Whitehead's process philosophy. Heschel's "defender" Sol Tanenzapf also claims that this metaphysical system could greatly enhance the theory of divine pathos. In "Heschel and his Critics," Tanenzapf initially explains:

> Heschel's sometimes too cavalier denial of the need for reasoned argument in support of the main tenets of Jewish belief is, in my opinion, a serious weakness in his position, but one that is not irremediable. It is left to his supporters to do what he did not do; indeed what he did not see the need for doing...He did not consider whether there are metaphysical systems that would permit him to formulate, without distortion, his understanding of the Biblical vision of reality and, in turn, provide some evidential support for it. It is my opinion that Whitehead's philosophy, as developed by Charles Hartshorne and others, would allow him to do just that.[42]

Tanenzapf suggests that process philosophy could eliminate Heschel's stumbling blocks because it is ultimately a more consistent world-view. This "defender" of Heschel therefore proposes that the theory of divine pathos completely do away with all notions of God as an Unmoved Mover or a "Wholly Other" and incorporate a more dynamic understanding of deity. By taking this position, Tanenzapf implies that Heschel's theology will be free of contradictions and the onus of theodicy. Tanenzapf offers the following interpretation of a fully dynamic and evolving deity:

> But why cannot God be said to live and grow and surpass Himself? If it is assumed that God is complete actuality or static perfection, then, of course, He could not surpass himself; what is complete and perfect cannot change. However, if change is a pervasive feature of reality and if growth and novelty are real values, then change need not be denied of God.[43]

In a sense Tanenzapf is suggesting that Heschel abandon his reticent attachment to the "God of the Philosophers" and embrace a deity who is capable of self-improvement. Hence God's essence need not be impassible or immovable and the dichotomy between God's nature and his attributes of action or his relational aspects need not exist.

In evaluating this proposal several questions come to mind. By suggesting that Heschel introduce changeability into God's essence, Tanenzapf underestimates the extent to which he alters Heschel's

understanding of deity. True, process philosophy might be consistent with Heschel's view that God experiences emotions, but would Heschel be comfortable with a God that could stand improvement? We recall Heschel's assertion that God is always just and that His morality is absolute; can these values be reconciled with a God who is self-surpassing? Moreover, we still have the problem of divine wrath. Heschel believes that this divine quality is a just response to wicked behavior. Is it not possible, according to process theology, to view God's anger as a less evolved state of the deity's development? Perhaps this is an aspect of God that needs to improve and change? Hence, although Tanenzapf eliminates the problem of theodicy for Heschel, he does so at the expense of Heschel's understanding of God's omnibenevolence and all encompassing sense of justice. It seems to me that Heschel would prefer to leave the question of theodicy open rather than tamper with deity's absolute morality. In other words, Heschel seems to prefer to live with his God's contradictions as opposed to embracing an imperfect or limited deity. As Harold Schulweis notes in his critique of Tanenzapf:

> I would argue that the proposed relationship of Biblical and process categories can be only surface in accommodation. The moral connotation of goodness in Heschel's Biblical view and in Hartshorne's process view is radically different.[44]

We recall Heschel's reference to Rabbi Akiba's martyrdom "Be silent, for this is my decree." Implicit here is an understanding of a deity who needs no further improvement. Heschel relies on the premise that although God's will is at times incomprehensible, it is altogether just. Hence the idea "His ways are not our ways" permeates much of Heschel's writing. One wonders, therefore if Tanenzapf is truly acting in the capacity of a "defender" of Heschel when he assigns himself the

task of "doing what Heschel did not do." Perhaps he should have further examined the reasons why Heschel "did not see the need" for adopting process theology. Tanenzapf errs by assuming that Heschel's failure to ascribe to this world-view was due to some type of oversight on the latter's part. Moreover, this "defender" implies that if Heschel had merely studied this metaphysical system he would have realized that it would lend support to his theology. In my opinion, Tanenzapf is wrong on both counts: firstly, Heschel was familiar with Whitehead's ideas,[45] hence we have no reason to assume that his failure to adopt them was not a deliberate choice. And secondly Heschel was familiar with a vast array of particular philosophical systems and often employed them to bolster his own position; this can be seen in his adaptation of Husserl's phenomenology as well as in his alteration of Kierkegaard's "leap of faith." I would argue, as Arthur Cohen has, that Heschel's failure to adopt process theology reflects an attachment (however reluctant it may be) to Maimonides's theory of negative attributes. Simply stated, although Heschel challenges the "God of the Philosophers" and Western civilization's adoption of the Unmoved Mover, he is still too much a product of these schools of thought to encourage their wholesale abandonment.

Heschel, though by no means an adherent of the Greek or Rational traditions, was nonetheless an heir of centuries of "traditional" Jewish thought. Thus, although Heschel sought to revive "biblical categories" which he felt had been overshadowed by later philosophical trends, the overall historical influence of this latter development on his thought cannot be underestimated. The "God of the Philosophers" and a variety of Maimonidean concepts have permeated Jewish thought from the Middle

Ages through modernity. Hence, for Cohen, Heschel's "philosophy of religion" cannot escape the imprint of the Greek philosophical tradition.

Full bibliographical details of
the works quoted here will be found in
the Bibliography.

Notes to Chapter Four

[1]Eliezer Berkovits, "A. J. Heschel" in Major Themes in Modern Philosophies of Judaism, p. 194.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., p. 196.

[4]Merkle, "Heschel's Theology of Divine Pathos" in Abraham Joshua Heschel: Exploring..., ed. John C. Merkle, p. 79.

[5]Ibid., p. 77.

[6]Berkovits, "A. J. Heschel" in Major Themes in Modern Philosophies of Judaism, p. 205.

[7]Ibid., p. 203.

[8]Merkle, "Heschel's Theology of Divine Pathos" in Abraham Joshua Heschel: Exploring..., ed. John C. Merkle, p. 76.

[9]Ibid., p. 77.

[10]Berkovits, "A. J. Heschel" in Major Themes in Modern Philosophies of Judaism, p. 199.

[11]Ibid., p. 200.

[12]Ibid., pp. 199-200.

[13]Ibid., p. 208.

[14]Ibid., p. 216.

[15]Ibid., p. 204.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid., pp. 220-224.

[19]Ibid., p. 213.

[20]Ibid.., p. 205.

[21]Merkle, "Heschel's Theology of Divine Pathos" in Abraham Joshua Heschel: Exploring..., ed. John C. Merkle, p. 78.

[22]Rothschild, ed. Between God and Man...; see Introduction, p. 26.

[23]Berkovits, "A. J. Heschel" in Major Themes in Modern Philosophies of Judaism, p. 218.

[24]Ibid., p. 219.

[25]Ibid., p. 218.

[26]Ibid., p. 220.

[27]Ibid., pp. 220-223.

[28]Merkle, "Heschel's Theology of Divine Pathos" in Abraham Joshua Heschel: Exploring..., ed. John C. Merkle, p. 77.

[29]Berkovits, "A. J. Heschel" in Major Themes in Modern Philosophies of Judaism, p. 224.

[30]Ibid., p. 194.

[31]Heschel, Man is Not Alone..., p. 101.

[32]Ben Horin, "The Mystery..." in The Jewish Quarterly Review 51, No. 2, p. 142.

[33]Heschel, Man is Not Alone..., p. 151.

[34]Ben Horin, "The Mystery..." in The Jewish Quarterly Review 51, No. 2, p. 143.

[35]Heschel, God in Search of Man..., p. 70.

[36]Ibid.

[37]Dresner, Interview, Union Theological Seminary, August 30, 1988.

[38]Cohen, The Natural and the Supernatural Jew, pp. 249-250.

[39]Merkle, "Heschel's Theology of Divine Pathos" in Abraham Joshua Heschel: Exploring..., ed. John C. Merkle, p. 72.

[40]Cohen, The Natural and the Supernatural Jew, p. 250, Footnote #250.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Tanenzapf, "Heschel and his Critics" in Judaism 23, No. 3, p. 278.

[43]Ibid., p. 286.

[44]Harold M. Schulweis, "Charles Hartshorne and the Defenders of Heschel" in Judaism 24, No. 1, p. 58.

[45]Merkle, The Genesis of Faith..., p. 260, Footnote #7.

Chapter Five: THE LEAP OF ACTION

> A Jew is asked to take a leap of action rather than a leap of thought: to surpass his needs, to do more than he understands in order to understand more than he does. In carrying out the word of the Torah he is ushered into the presence of spiritual meaning. Through the ecstasy of deeds he learns to be certain of the presence of God.[1]

In the preceding chapters we discussed two of Heschel's three paths to faith in deity: Man's intuitive perceptions of the divine in the world and his experience of divine pathos as reflected in both the Hebrew Bible and daily living. We now turn to Heschel's third entrance-way to the holy dimension--the leap of action. It is in this latter realm where our discussion is the least theoretical and where the concrete praxis of Heschel's theology is the most apparent. For it is in the performance of sacred deeds or mitswoth that we translate our inner understanding of God into reality. Sacred deeds are the manifestations of our religious convictions--the fruit of our spiritual quest. Moreover, deeds have an efficacious power in-and-of themselves; they transform the doer by enhancing and deepening his awareness of God. Hence although the mitswah is the concrete manifestation of spiritual awareness; it is also more--the sacred deed is also part of a dynamic process which enables the doer to grow and evolve as a human being. The leap of action is self-transcending; one who performs a mitswah will develop a more profound faith which will motivate him to do and accomplish even more.

Because Heschel views the mitswah as both a manifestation of faith and as a catalyst for further spiritual awareness, some have found his "leap of action" problematic. Several critics have charged that Heschel's view of the mitswoth is tautological: to take a leap of

action requires a prerequisite amount of faith--how can one do more than he understands? Doesn't "doing" first require "understanding"? Heschel's oft quoted response to this type of question is Exodus 24:7--na'aseh wenishma'--We shall do and we shall hear.[2] In colloquial terms Heschel's leap of action is an example of behavioral psychology, e.g., there are times when concrete behavior teaches more than intellectual contemplation. Hence, we must first engage in an act in order to glean subsequent understanding. As Heschel states:

> Indeed, Israel's supreme acquiescence at Sinai was an inversion, turning upside down the order of attitudes as conceived by our abstract thinking. Do we not always maintain that we must first explore a system before we decided to accept it? This order of inquiry is valid in regard to pure theory, to principles and rules, but it has its limitations when applied to realms where thought and fact, the abstract and the concrete, theory and experience are inseparable. It would be futile, for example, to explore the meaning of music and abstain from listening to music. It would be just as futile to explore Jewish thought from a distance in self-detachment. Jewish thought is disclosed in Jewish living.[3]

In order to better understand the subtleties of Heschel's leap of action we need to examine his terminology and views on halakhah. Initially we note that Heschel uses the terms mitswoth, good deeds, and leap of action interchangeably. Hence the reader emerges with the question: Do all these terms refer to the same mode of behavior? Moreover, what is the mode of behavior to which Heschel is referring--Jewish Law or halakhah? Ethical or moral comportment? Or engagement in the fight for social justice? Perhaps Heschel is referring to all of these values or certain aspects of the three aforementioned categories? Reform theologian Jakob Petuchowski notes this ambiguity when he observes: "Heschel points to the mitsvah--usually translated as commandment, but really, in his view a quite untranslatable word."[4]

Heschel offers us an all-encompassing interpretation of mitswah when he states:

> A definition or paraphrase of the word mitsvah is difficult to frame...It denotes not only commandment but also the law, man's obligation to fulfill the law, and the act of fulfilling the obligation, or the deed, particularly an act of benevolence or charity...It is often used in the wide sense of religion or religious. It combines all levels of human and spiritual living. Every act done in agreement with the will of God is a mitsvah.[5]

What can we extrapolate from Heschel's view of the mitswoth or leap of action? One familiar with the vast body of Heschel's works in English comes away with the following understanding--this third path to God contains certain aspects of Jewish ritual observance as well as a more general mode of behavior--i.e. the performance of acts of loving-kindness and the advocacy of social justice.

It is interesting to note that while Heschel fuses legal, ethical, and moral values into his broad definition of the mitswoth, he seldom introduces specific examples of what he considers to be "mandatory observance." Heschel's leap of action trusts the reader to interpret a great deal for himself. True, Heschel stresses the importance of ritual observance, but he also states that he does not view every aspect of halakhic observance as equally binding. What is intriguing is that Heschel refrains from stating which of the 613 laws he views as imperative. Rather he observes: "To each individual our advice should be: 'Observe as much as you are able to, and a little more than you are able to.' And this is essential: A little more than you are able to."[6]

At this point we must ask--why isn't Heschel more exacting in espousing those obligations which are incumbent upon Jews? Why does he take such a flexible approach on halakhic matters and give the reader interpretive freedom in regard to the leap of action? One plausible

response is offered by Dr. Jakob Petuchowski, who suggests that Heschel deliberately steered clear of a literalist approach to halakhic observance in order to be accessible to the entire Jewish community--as opposed to advocating any one of the denominational positions.[7] Another important observation is made by John Merkle when he notes that Heschel does not hold that the Bible in its entirety is the immediate word of God. As Merkle states: "Heschel claims not only that there are in the bible words of men and women inspired by God but also words that were not divinely inspired."[8] Likewise Merkle observes that Heschel believes that there are halakhic laws which are not divinely inspired.

We noted earlier that Borowitz calls Heschel a "sophisticated fundamentalist" and claims that the latter takes both the Torah and the Oral Tradition literally. Clearly Petuchowski's and Merkle's respective observations call into question the accuracy of Borowitz's view. Heschel's position on the mitswoth is not a literalist one, nor can his leap of action be classified as an "Orthodox" approach. Yet despite Heschel's flexible understanding of halakhah and his belief that the Bible was written by human beings--we would be incorrect in labelling his position as "Reform." For Heschel is committed to the performance of certain mitswoth. Heschel rejects the "all or nothing" approach to halakhah and stresses the importance of quality over quantity in regard to religious observance.

By quality Heschel is referring to kavvanah or the inward motivations of the doer or performer of the mitswoth. Heschel believes the issue of religious observance has been obscured by those who stress "religious behaviorism" or "pan-halachism" at the expense of the heart and soul--i.e. the motivation behind the actual acts of observance. The

following statement is quoted at length because it reflects Heschel's attitude towards an over-literalist approach to halakhah and his stress on the over-riding value of kavvanah or quality of action:

> There is also the notion that you observe everything or nothing; all the rules are of equal importance; and if one brick is removed, the whole edifice must collapse. Such intransigence, laudable as it may be as an expression of devoutness, is neither historically nor theologically justified. There were ages in Jewish history when some aspects of Jewish ritual observance were not adhered to by people who otherwise lived according to the Law. And where is the man who could claim that he has been able to fulfill literally the mitzvah of "Love thy neighbor as thyself"?[9]

Rejecting both maximalistic and minimalistic interpretations of ritual observance, Heschel advocates a "ladder of observance."[10] Heschel asks us neither to abandon halakhah nor take an instransigent stance. "Elasticity and flexibility is the way."[11] Hence Heschel called upon members of the Reform community to recognize the importance of halakhah and members of the Conservative community to pray with kavvanah.[12] Clearly Heschel does not see the performance of the mitswoth in terms of black and white--rather he is calling upon members of the Jewish community at-large to recognize that there are various shades of grey. An interesting aside is noted when we consider that Heschel's position on halakhah has prompted criticism from both the Orthodox and Reform camps,[13] but not from the Conservative Movement which prides itself on attempting to achieve a middle ground or centrist position vis a vis halakhah.[14]

I asked Fritz Rothschild if Heschel ever explored any practical criteria for Jews to apply when developing their own "ladder of observance." Did Heschel concern himself with formulating workable halakhic applications for modern Jews? Rothschild responded" "I do not think that Heschel really gave you any detailed guidance on that, and if

you want to criticize him on that, I think that's fair criticism...But I think that this is still one of the great unsolved problems--namely how much can you change Judaism without making it something that it isn't?"[15]

We noted earlier that for Heschel the leap of action requires both a commitment to ritual observance and moral conduct. Moreover in regard to ritual observance Heschel stresses the importance of flexibility and elasticity without offering any specific examples of such an approach. Ultimately the reader comes to understand that for Heschel the leap of action is not concerned with formulating details of religious behavior but with a broader issue--the Jew's overall commitment to pious living, his integrated mode of being. Hence Heschel continually stresses that the question is not how much we observe but how we observe the mitswoth. "The Torah is primarily divine ways rather than divine laws...not particular acts but all acts, life itself, can be established as a link between man and God."[16]

Heschel's emphasis on quality over quantity and his distinction between divine ways and divine laws reflects the importance he places on the agadic aspects of Jewish learning. For Heschel, many have erred in the past when they viewed fulfillment of the mitswoth solely in terms of halakhah and not in terms of agada. Implicit and explicit in Heschel's leap of action, view of integrated Jewish living, and the intent behind our actions, is his stress on the importance of agadah. Moreover, Heschel views agada and halakhah as polarities which have equal importance.

> Halacha deals with details, with each commandment separately; agada with the whole of life, with the totality of religious life. Halacha deals with the law; Agada with the meaning of the law. Halacha deals with subjects that can

> be expressed literally; agada introduces us to a realm which lies beyond the range of expression...
>
> Halacha, by necessity, treats with the laws in the abstract, regardless of the totality of the person. It is the agada that keeps on reminding that the purpose of performance is to transform the performer, that the purpose of observance is to train us in achieving spiritual ends...[17]

For Heschel, those who view the mitswoth solely in terms of halakhah commit a grave error; they jettison the heart and soul of Jewish living. Hence any discussion of the leap of action must necessarily include a commitment to agada. The flaw in the literalist's approach is his abandonment of this crucial ingredient which is the cornerstone of spiritual living. "To maintain that the essence of Judaism consists exclusively of halacha is as erroneous as to maintain that the essence of Judaism consists exclusively of agada. The interrelationship of Halacha and agada is the very heart of Judaism. Halacha without agada is dead, agada without Halacha is wild."[18]

Although Heschel does not outline the specific details of those actions we should embrace, and although he leaves it to the individual to interpret his own level of observance, it would be erroneous to assume that Heschel is speaking abstractly or only addresses himself to the individual's state of mind. On the contrary, although Heschel only gives us a few concrete examples of mitswoth (i.e. prayer, the Sabbath, and engaging in social action), he nonetheless is advocating that the individual engage in concrete activities. Hence, though Heschel does not give us a formulated plan of action, his intent is that we act. In Heschel's scheme it is left to the individual to determine what constitutes "a little more than he feels capable of," yet his polemic is direct when he calls upon the Jew to begin a process of engagement.

Heschel's goal is that we commit ourselves to action--he leaves it up to the individual to formulate the course of actions he will pursue.

Thus although the leap of action and "ladder of observance" do not provide us with specific suggestions, they are not abstract or theoretical concepts. Both values are concerned with eliciting a concrete response from the reader. Heschel is very clear in his discussion of faith and works that in Judaism faith alone is not enough; the leap of action or performance of sacred deeds reflects the Jewish commitment to works.

Heschel distinguishes between the Jewish and Christian attitudes vis a vis faith and works. His position here is straightforward--faith cannot be separated from deeds, nor can intentions be divorced from actions. Hence we see that Heschel is calling upon Jews to commit themselves to concrete activity though he seldom offers detailed examples of the activities Jews should pursue. Heschel differentiates between the Jewish and Christian views of faith and works as follows:

> Those who have only paid attention to the relation of man to ideals, disregarding the relation of the ideals to man, have in their theories seen only the motive <u>but not the purpose</u> of either religion or morality. Echoing the Paulinian doctrine that man is saved by faith alone, Kant and his disciples thought that the essence of religion or morality would consist in an absolute quality of the soul or the will, regardless of the actions that may come out of it or the ends that may be attained...Does not such an attitude illustrate the truth of the proverb, 'The road to hell is paved with good intentions?' Should we not say that a concern with one's own salvation and righteousness that outweighs the regard for the welfare of other human beings cannot be qualified as a good intention?
>
> The dichotomy of faith and works which presented such an important problem in Christian theology was never a problem in Judaism. To us, the basic problem is neither what is the right action nor what is the right intention. The basic problem is: What is right living? And life is indivisible. The inner sphere is never isolated from outward attitudes. Deed and thought are bound into one.[19]

According to Heschel performance of the mitswoth are part of a dynamic spiritual process. Faith alone cannot sustain Jewish living; rather faith must go hand in hand with action if we wish to have integrated and consistent Jewish lives. For Heschel the leap of action serves several purposes: it purifies and refines the soul of the doer, connects the individual to the community of Israel, and combats the forces of evil--ultimately bringing humanity closer to redemption. Hence for Heschel sacred deeds are not a catharsis or an edifying experience, rather they are didactic tools with transforming power. Actions teach and ultimately bring us closer to tikun olam.

We have noted that Heschel believes that the deed transforms and deepens the awareness of the individual. By focusing our energy on performing mitswoth we turn away from our petty and mundane concerns and reestablish our connection to the source of life. The leap of action is never expedient; its purpose is never for personal aggrandizement or egotistical concerns, rather the purpose of the mitswah is acknowledgment of our relation to our creator. Hence one performing a sacred deed departs from selfish motivations and enters into a spiritual realm which revolves around serving God.

> Deeds not only follow intention; they also engender Kavvanah. There is no static polarity of Kavvanah and deed, of devotion and action. The deed may bring out what is dormant in the mind, and acts in which an idea is lived, moments which are filled with dedication make us eloquent in a way which is not open to the naked mind.[20] Kavvanah comes into being with the deed, Actions teach.

Heschel's idea that "kavvanah comes into being with the deed" has raised questions for many of his critics. Doesn't Judaism teach that a deed must be performed with pure intentions? Isn't the implication therefore that kavvanah is an antecedent to fulfilling the mitswoth?

According to Heschel's view of "we will do and we will understand," kavvanah can be viewed as both an antecedent and a result of sacred deeds. For the individual who already possesses faith, righteous actions further and deepen his spiritual resources. For the individual who is not yet spiritually committed, the mitswoth have the potential to catalyze intuitive (perhaps unconscious) spiritual stirrings which may ultimately grow. Several critics will be prompted to challenge Heschel's leap of action on the grounds that it is hypocritical to perform a mitswah without sufficient kavvanah. The response here for Heschel is that the power of a righteous deed is retroactive, it activates dormant spiritual longings. As Merkle explains:

> A mitsvah may function as an antecedent of faith in two senses. (1) It may be an act of faith that precedes loyalty to the pledge made by that act or to the God to whom the pledge was made. As such a mitsvah may be the beginning of faith that leads to a life of faith. (2) But a mitsvah may precede even an initial expression of faith. It may be enacted not as a sign of faith in God but simply because it is perceived as a good deed or as something that may lead to faith discerned as a value...A mitsvah is an antecedent to the act of faith inasmuch as its performance may lead to the discovery of God.[21]

Just as the mitswah has the power to catalyze faith for one who is not yet committed to God, it also has the power to awaken the spiritual energies of those who have lost touch with their sense of the holy. Heschel believes that even the faithful are not immune to experiences of emotional lethargy. Even individuals who are committed to religious observance are capable of losing sight of the sanctity of life. In colloquial terms the mitswoth "recharge the batteries" of those who lose sight of the holy.

> Our own moments of illumination are brief, sporadic, rare. In the long interims the mind is often dull, bare and vapid. There is hardly a soul that can radiate more light than it receives. To perform a mitsvah is to meet the spirit. The

> spirit, however, is not something we can acquire once and for all but something we must be with. For this reason the Jewish way of life is to reiterate the ritual, to meet the spirit again and again, the spirit in oneself and the spirit that hovers over all beings.[22]

Just as the mitswah serves to remind the individual of his relationship to God, it also serves as a touchstone which enhances his awareness of his relationship to Jewish history and the community of Israel. We recall that earlier we discussed Heschel's belief that the Bible provides man with archetypal examples of spiritual consciousness. Likewise, in Heschel's scheme the mitswoth provide the modern Jew with a sense of historical continuity; they are connecting links from the past to the future. The mitswah is a reminder of past covenants and God's redemptive power as well as a commitment to Israel's future hopes. By taking a leap of action the modern Jew is renewing his loyalty to Sinai and defining future aspirations. It should be noted that Heschel does not believe that the mitswoth are important simply because they originated in the past, i.e., they are not justified solely on the basis of antiquity. But rather, their validity lies in the fact that they remind us of an ever present relationship, one that continues to grow and evolve. As Merkle explains:

> Ritual and study, like all mitsvot are meant not only to remember tradition but to enhance it, not only to convey an ancient faith but to cultivate a pioneering faith. And, more than that, these mitsvot are meant not only to celebrate redemptive events from the past but to advance the drama of redemption in the present and the future.[23]

Having discussed the efficacious power of the mitswoth in terms of the individual's spiritual growth process and as a reminder of his link to the community of Israel, we now turn to a third function of the mitswoth--namely their role in combatting the forces of evil. For Heschel one of the primary goals of sacred deeds is that they avert

sin. By engaging in righteous behavior we liberate ourselves from base impulses and help to activate tikun olam. "Evil is not only a threat, it is also a challenge. Neither the recognition of the peril or faith in the redemptive power of God is sufficient to solve the tragic predicament of the world. We can not stem the tide of evil by taking refuge in the temples, by fervently imploring the restrained omnipotence of God. The mitswah, the humble single act of serving God, of helping man, of cleansing the self is our way of dealing with the problem."[24]

Hence for Heschel the mitswoth are not only our spiritual tools for inner refinement and growth, they are also our weapons for combatting the world's ills. Hence performing a mitswah not only impacts the doer, it also affects the balance of good and evil in the world at large. A good deed can help to bring about universal redemption. Thus for Heschel, man's concrete acts are of the utmost significance because they have the power to bring about concrete results. It is in Heschel's theory of the leap of action that we see the idea of the divine-human partnership clearly manifested. The mitswah demonstrates man's willingness to do his part to bring about the redemption of the world. For Heschel, "taking refuge in the temples" is not enough to save the world from doom; the individual must also take responsibility for his part in the historical drama--the mitswah provides him with such an opportunity.

As we have noted throughout this thesis, for Heschel, the key problem of human existence is not the philosophical question: What is truth? Moreover, the Platonic desire to ascertain What is goodness?, and the Kantian struggle over What man ought to do?, are not foremost in his scheme. Rather, for Heschel, the most pressing problem is: How can

man live "in the neighborhood of God?"[25] How can we live in a holy dimension? Because man is created in God's image, he has the potential to live in a manner consonant with divine will. The mitswoth are spiritual entrance-ways; sacred deeds are holy bridges between Creator and creation. It is in the leap of action that the human and the divine meet and interact--both parties are affected by this encounter. We observed earlier in this chapter that Heschel is not concerned with formulating the details of ritual observance but with the overall issue of pious living. The leap of action is a concept which stresses an integrated mode of spiritual being and righteous behavior as opposed to isolated moments in the life of the individual. Hence when Heschel discusses the importance of prayer, the Sabbath, and social justice, he does not dwell on halakhic requirements. Rather, he stresses the spiritual and efficacious power these mitswoth have upon man and the universe.

> All mitsvot are means of evoking in us the awareness of living in the neighborhood of God, of living in the holy dimension. They call to mind the inconspicuous mystery of things and acts, and are reminders of our being the stewards, rather than the landlords of the universe; reminders of the fact that man does not live in a spiritual wilderness, that every act of man is an encounter of the human and the holy.[26]

For Heschel, performing the mitswoth are a way of life, a way of of being; the mitswah is not a singular action which can be understood apart from the whole person. In brief--what you do cannot be separated from who you are. Hence, for Heschel, life cannot be compartmentalized; i.e., the individual who observes the legal aspects of the Sabbath, but is insensitive to the needs of others, has not understood the nature of performing sacred deeds.

> ...If it is the word of Micah uttering the will of God that we believe in, and not a peg on which to hang views we derived from rationalist philosophies, then "to love justice" is just as much halacha as the prohibition of making fire on the Seventh Day...[27]

Heschel does focus on the importance of observing certain concrete deeds, namely the importance of prayer, keeping the Sabbath, and our need to fight against social injustice, yet these three priorities must all be understood within the broader framework of spiritual and righteous living.

The purpose of observing these mitswoth is to heighten the awareness of the doer, transform humanity, and engage in the divine-human partnership. Ultimately performing these mitswoth bring mankind closer to redemption because the mitswoth, according to Heschel, affect God. God is in need of man's help in restoring the universe. Through deeds we add to our spiritual awareness and increase the amount of loving kindness in the world. By engaging in mitswoth we are extending God's immanent presence in the universe.

> With a sacred deed goes more than a stir of the heart. In a sacred deed, we echo God's suppressed chant; in loving we intone God's unfinished song...To fulfill the will of God in deeds means to act in the name of God, not only for the sake of God; to carry out in acts what is potential to His will. He is in need of the work of man for the fulfillment of His ends in the world.[28]

Having discussed Heschel's view of the mitswoth as an overarching way of life, we now turn to three examples of sacred deeds which demonstrate this integrated world-view. Heschel's understanding of prayer, the Sabbath, and social justice give us insight into the dynamic nature of the divine-human encounter. Each of these pathways to the sacred dimension reflects the view that the mitswah is a bridge connecting the human and the holy. Moreover, though Heschel singles out

these aforementioned mitswoth, they are always related to the broader context of holistic living. Hence, Heschel's foremost question: How can man live in the neighborhood of God?, is ever present in his analysis of the following sacred deeds.

In Heschel's address "The Spirit of Prayer," the issue of kavvanah is explored in detail. The crisis we confront according to Heschel, is not the abandonment of tradition, ritual observance, or keva; rather it is "spiritual absenteeism."[29] Heschel laments our preoccupation with synagogue attendance as opposed to meaningful and heartfelt prayer. It is interesting to note that in Heschel's address to the Reform community --"Toward an Understanding of Halacha," he also focuses on the dearth of spiritual content in modern worship services. Although these two speeches differed somewhat, (Heschel castigated the Conservative Movement's over-zealousness, vis a vis keva, and the Reform Movement's minimalistic stance vis a vis halakhah), his emphasis in the respective addresses was the same: the modern Jew has sacrificed spiritual meaning in the name of aesthetic form. The Conservative community has abandoned kavvanah by overemphasizing keva, and the Reform community has rendered worship irrelevant by transforming religious observance into "customs and ceremonies."[30] Ultimately Heschel is calling upon both groups to put God back into the worship service. For Heschel, the modern Jew's predicament is that he does not know "before whom he stands." We do not pray with kavvanah because we do not take God seriously. Modern thought has transformed God into a "god-concept" and prayer into sociological phenomenon. How can the modern Jew pray with sincerity if he does not believe his prayers are being heard? How can prayer have any meaning if we believe they do not affect deity? Hence when Heschel calls upon us

to take a leap of action in the realm of prayer, he is not asking us to be more punctilious in our ritual or halakhic observance, rather he is asking us to change the way we pray. The leap of action is a commitment towards praying with kavvanah; it is a call to take God's involvement with humanity seriously. According to Heschel, this leap of action has ramifications which affect both humanity and deity:

> To pray, then, means to bring God back into the world, to establish His kingship, to let His Glory prevail...Great is the power of prayer. For to worship is to expand the presence of God in the world. God is transcendent, but our worship makes Him immanent. This is implied in the idea that God is in need of man: His being immanent depends upon us.[31]

Hence prayer is a mitswah which acts as a connecting link between man and God. Our "leap of action" is the manifestation of our willingness to pray with this realization in mind; it is the assent to the belief that prayer makes a difference. For Heschel, one who prays without believing in the efficacy of prayer is void of kavvanah. Heschel's view of prayer is consistent with his overall view of the mitswoth; prayer is a subdivision of the larger issue: How do we live as a holy people? The leap of action is a call to elevate and sanctify our existence so that we can be God's emissaries on earth and help to being about tikun olam.

> Thus prayer is a part of a greater issue. It depends upon the total spiritual situation of man and upon a mind within which God is at home. Of course, if our lives are too barren to bring forth the spirit of worship; if all our thoughts and anxieties do not contain enough spiritual substance to be distilled into prayer, an inner transformation is a matter of emergency. And such an emergency we face today. The issue of prayer is not prayer; the issue of prayer is God. One cannot pray unless he has faith in his own ability to accost the infinite, merciful, eternal God.[32]

For Heschel, the act of prayer, like all mitswoth, is never utilitarian. Rather, the goal of performing sacred deeds is to bridge

our temporal existence with God's eternal reality. For Heschel, our finite concerns, and our material needs are manifested in the world of space. Heschel distinguishes between the world of space--which is our physical domain--and the dimension of time--which is God's sphere. In distinguishing between time and space, Heschel draws attention to the differences between the sacred and the profane, the infinite and the finite, and the ephemeral and the eternal. For Heschel, God's presence permeates time, and it is in performance of the mitswoth that we reach towards God's holy realm. This concept is seen in Heschel's understanding of the Sabbath. By observing the Sabbath we infuse our finite realm of space with God's eternal reality. The mitswah of Sabbath observance is the realm in which man's temporal world of space and God's eternal world of time intersect.

One of modern man's greatest problems is his failure to understand the meaning of time. Instead of recognizing its relationship to the infinite and eternal deity, man views time as a frightening and overwhelming wasteland. He fills time with trivial pursuits and finite concerns. The Sabbath provides us with an opportunity to recognize the eternal presence in time; it is an opportunity to sanctify time and regain our awareness of the ultimate reality. The Sabbath is a touchstone to the holy, an entrance-way to awareness of deity. Moreover, by sanctifying time and putting the world of material-spacial relationships aside, man is able to gain insight into his role in restoring the universe. As Heschel states in The Sabbath:

> To set apart one day a week for freedom, a day on which we would not use the instruments which have been so easily turned into weapons of destruction, a day for being with ourselves, a day of detachment from the vulgar, of independence of external obligations, a day on which we stop worshipping the idols of technical civilization, a day on

> which we use no money, a day of armistice in the economic struggle with our fellow man and the forces of nature--is there any institution that holds out a greater hope for man's progress than the Sabbath?[33]

What emerges from Heschel's understanding of prayer and the Sabbath is the idea that these mitswoth heighten the spiritual awareness of the doer, thus enabling him to be a more effective emissary of God. In a sense mitswoth have a ripple effect--by elevating the consciousness of the doer they enable him to lead a more God-centered life. Moreover, this individual will affect others and ultimately help to repair the larger world. For the individual one good deed stimulates another--as commitment to a God-centered life grows. Moreover, one committed to pious living has the potential to influence and transform those who are around him. The mitswah deepens our inner spiritual life and also redeems our external/social reality.

It is not possible to do justice to Heschel's view of integrated Jewish living and the mitswoth without devoting attention to his commitment to social action. Heschel's understanding of ethics and morality and his belief that "actions teach" are reflected in his view that sacred deeds are instrumental in combatting evil and bringing about tikun olam. Although the mitswoth purify the doer, that is not their sole aim; sacred deeds also address human suffering. Hence Heschel understood the mitswah--"to do justly" as a call for our involvement in the civil rights struggle, as well as a variety of other political and social crises. "The world is torn by conflicts, by folly, by hatred. Our task is to cleanse, to illumine, to repair. Every deed is either a clash or an aid in the effort of redemption."[34]

Heschel's understanding of righteous behavior and piety calls for both internal commitment and external actions. Hence, we are called

upon to do more than contemplate, meditate, and pray--we are also required to involve ourselves in the affairs of mankind. For Heschel, our involvement with humanity means combatting the forces of evil in concrete and practical ways. The future survival of humanity depends upon our commitment to social justice.

> The world is not the same since Auschwitz and Hiroshima. The decisions we make, the values we teach must be pondered not only in the halls of learning but also in the presence of inmates in extermination camps, and in the sight of the mushroom of a nuclear explosion.[35]

The mitswah reflects man's commitment to the divine-human partnership. Man and God share responsibility for redeeming the world. Consistent with this view is the belief that man is obligated to fulfill his role as a healer and builder of our broken and shattered society. Our commitment to social justice is reflected in the steps we take to alleviate suffering and fight social ills. "The encounter of man and God is an encounter within the world. We meet within a situation of shared suffering, of shared responsibility."[36]

A life of piety, according to Heschel, is like a work of art. The individual considers all of his actions as potential encounters with the divine. His way of being is unified and harmonious because he is constantly refining himself spiritually. Moreover, a life of righteousness reflects a commitment to saving our world from impending doom and alleviating pain and misery. Taken collectively the lives of the pious are weaving a tapestry--it is the cumulative efforts of mankind which will ultimately bring about tikun olam.

Full bibliographical details of

the works quoted here will be found in

the Bibliography.

Notes to Chapter Five

[1]Heschel, God in Search of Man..., p. 283.

[2]Ibid., p. 281.

[3]Ibid., p. 282.

[4]Petuchowski, "Faith As The Leap of Action..." in Commentary 25, No. 5, p. 391.

[5]Heschel, God in Search of Man..., p. 361.

[6]Heschel, The Insecurity of Freedom..., p. 207.

[7]Interview with Dr. Jakob Petuchowski, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, November 10, 1988.

[8]Merkle, The Genesis of Faith..., p. 127.

[9]Heschel, The Insecurity of Freedom..., p. 205.

[10]Ibid., p. 207.

[11]Ibid., p. 206.

[12]Heschel's statement on the importance of halakhah is reflected in his address "Toward An Understanding of Halacha"--which he delivered to Reform Rabbis--See the Yearbook 63, The Central Conference of American Rabbis. Heschel stressed the importance of kavvannah in his address directed toward Conservative Rabbis--"The Spirit of Prayer." See the Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly of America 17, 1953.

[13]We note that Borowitz's critique of Heschel focuses on the latter's commitment to many "traditional" concepts; whereas, Fox criticizes Heschel for his tendency to de-emphasize certain halakhic requirements.

[14]It is interesting that none of Heschel's critics do so from a "Conservative" perspective. According to Samuel Dresner, Heschel was never fully appreciated by the Jewish Theological Seminary, i.e. he taught very few course hours per week. Hence it is noteworthy that Fritz Rothschild currently teaches a course at JTS on Heschel's philosophy, and that Dresner invokes Heschel's name when discussing the fundamental values of the Conservative Movement. I obtained this information from interviews with Samuel Dresner, Union Theological Seminary, New York, August 30, 1988 and Fritz Rothschild, Jewish Theological Seminary, August 31, 1988. Also--Dresner's Address, "The Vital Center," (unpublished), Dec. 10, 1986, pp. 1-25. "The Vital Center" argues that Heschel was the archetypal Conversative Jew.

[15]Interview with Fritz A. Rothschild, Jewish Theological Seminary, New York, August 31, 1988.

[16]Heschel, God in Search of Man..., p. 288.

[17]Ibid., p. 336.

[18]Ibid., p. 337.

[19]Heschel, Between God and Man..., ed. Fritz A. Rothschild, pp. 155-156.

[20]Ibid., p. 180.

[21]Merkle, Genesis of Faith..., p. 210.

[22]Heschel, God in Search of Man..., p. 344.

[23]Merkle, The Genesis of Faith..., p. 207.

[24]Heschel, God in Search of Man..., p. 377.

[25]Ibid., p. 356.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Heschel, "Toward An Understanding of Halacha" in Yearbook 63, The Central Conference of American Rabbis, p. 396.

[28]Heschel, God in Search of Man..., pp. 290-291.

[29]Heschel, "The Spirit of Prayer" in Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly of America 17, p. 154.

[30]Heschel, "Toward An Understanding of Halacha" in Yearbook 63, The Central Conference of American Rabbis, p. 406.

[31]Heschel, "The Spirit of Prayer" in Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly of America 17, p. 163.

[32]Ibid., p. 160.

[33]Heschel, The Sabbath..., p. 28.

[34]Heschel, God in Search of Man..., p. 357.

[35]Heschel, "The Moral Outrage of Vietnam" in Vietnam: Crisis of Conscience, p. 56.

[36]Ibid., p. 52.

Chapter Six: COGNITIVE THOUGHT, KEVA, AND KAVVANAH

The most incisive and far reaching criticisms of the leap of action are offered by Reform thinker, Dr. Jakob Petuchowski. In his article "Faith As The Leap Of Action," Petuchowski challenges Heschel's understanding of the mitswoth and asks several probing questions. Yet unlike those critics who seek to discredit Heschel's overall philosophy of Judaism, Petuchowski acknowledges and appreciates many aspects of Heschel's theology. Hence, while Petuchowski faults Heschel's de-emphasis of the "God of the Philosophers" and rational speculation, he also cites the latter's contributions in the areas of developing a theology based upon the "God of Israel" and the Shekhinah, as well as evoking sensitivity to spiritual living.

Petuchowski's perspective is that a philosophy of religion should incorporate both intuitive insight and rational speculation. The overall criticism he expresses is that Heschel treats acceptance of the "God of the Philosophers" and the "God of Israel" as an either/or proposition. For Petuchowski, belief in a personal God or "God of Israel," does not necessitate the abandonment of rational inquiry. More specifically, Heschel's dismissal of the philosophic tradition and rational analysis creates a variety of problems in respect to his theory of the mitswoth. Initially Petuchowski notes that Heschel differentiates between mitswoth and "ceremonies and symbols."[1] Mitswoth are to be distinguished from customs, ceremonies and symbols because the former term denotes "an expression or interpretation of the will of God,"[2] whereas the latter terms reflect human aesthetic values. Moreover, the mitswah affects God, whereas symbols and ceremonies reflect man's need for edification. Petuchowski notes that given Heschel's understanding of the mitswah as

the will of God, and his castigation of overzealousness vis a vis ceremonies, "the leap of action" or "doing more than we understand" appears to be a self-contradictory concept. Doesn't taking the leap of action presuppose that the doer believes the mitswah is the will of God? If one "leaps" without possessing a conviction, is he not engaging in an empty action which is on par with vacuous ceremonial practices? Is Heschel's stress on kavvanah and man's need to recognize that "God is the subject" at odds with his belief that the leap of action engenders faith? As Petuchowski observes:

> The fact is, of course, that Heschel's phrase "leap of action" is a sophism. He may make a distinction between the "leap of faith"...and the "leap of action" but this "leap of action" actually presupposes a "leap of faith." It presupposes my belief that there is a God, my faith that the performance of a mitsvah will vouchsafe me an encounter with Him. That is to say, my "leap of action" is not a leap from nothing into something, but a leap from my already acquired faith in God into an awareness that the Divine is revealed in the mitsvah. What is more, the kind of God I believe in must be the kind of whom a priori I do not deny the possibility of this form of revelation. Once I believe in such a God, the "leap" is no longer such an athletic feat, and may even be unnecessary. But if I do not believe, then the "leap of action" becomes nothing more and nothing less than a form of experimentation with ceremonies.[3]

We recall our discussion of this issue in the preceding chapter: Does the leap of action require an initial faith? We noted Heschel's view that the mitswah possesses retroactive power, and Merkle's explanation that the mitswah can be antecedent of faith. One who does not believe in God and performs a sacred deed may experience an epiphany or be awakened to dormant spiritual stirrings. As Merkle states: "Even though pious Jews believe that mitsvot are commanded by God, others may see value in doing mitsvot prior to the belief that God commands them. A mitsvah is an antecedent of the act of faith inasmuch as its performance may lead to the discovery of God."[4]

Petuchowski anticipates this response and argues that it is specious. His reasoning is as follows: given Heschel's understanding of the divine origin of mitswoth and disdain for those who elevate form over content, one who takes the leap of action without faith performs an experiment, not a mitswah. Petuchowski is willing to concede that such an experiment (which at this point has the status of a ceremony) may ultimately lead to performing a mitswah. He notes the approach of Franz Rosenzweig was one of "travelling the long road to experimentation from nothing to something."[5] Yet when the individual takes the leap of action without a prerequisite belief in God--it cannot be viewed as a mitswah, given Heschel's definition of this term. This type of action without belief is at best a ceremony and at worst a motion void of spiritual meaning. True, the ceremony may one day lead to a life of faith, but at the moment of its inception it cannot be termed a mitswah. It is clear that for Petuchowski, Heschel's positions on the vapidity of ceremonies and the mitswah as an antecedent of faith are at odds with each other. Moreover, for Petuchowski, the idea of performing a mitswah without believing in God is fraught with contradictions.

We noted throughout Chapter Five that Heschel's position on halakhic requirements is never clearly spelled out. Given this imprecision, Petuchowski raises another challenge: Since Heschel's view of the mitswoth reflects a belief in a God of revelation who wills certain human actions, how does modern man distinguish between those halakhic requirements that are divinely ordained and those which are of human origin?

> A mitsvah, as Heschel understands it, is an expression or an interpretation of the will of God. (He never really clarifies this either/or aspect of the definition, thus making it possible for his theories to be adopted by Jews of

> varying shades of orthodoxy on the question of Revelation.) To those who would ask whether God requires anything of man, Heschel points out that if, as is generally conceded, God requires us "to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with Him," it is no more difficult to conceive of His requiring us to hallow the Sabbath. For once it is granted that God communicates His will, how can we dare set limitations on His power to make requirements?[6]

Petuchowski offers a related criticism when he discusses Heschel's negative view of aesthetic form over content. Since Heschel does not develop specific criteria for determining which aspects of halakhic observance are God's will, and since he does not provide any specific suggestions to the uninitiated, one pondering the leap of action will have the natural propensity to consider aesthetic issues. Moreover, this is not necessarily negative. As Petuchowski notes: "Thus, though the mitzvah of lulav may appeal to us, the mitzvah of spitting in front of the man who refuses to marry his deceased brother's widow (Deuteronomy 25:9) may very well not. In other words, we are introducing into our consideration of mitzvah the very criteria which, according to Heschel, would deprive a mitzvah of its essential character and reduce it to the level of customs, ceremonies, and symbols."[7]

According to Petuchowski, for a mitswah to be meaningful, there must be a prerequisite amount of faith and/or thought. If one takes the leap of action without understanding why he is doing so, he is performing a ceremony. This critic seems to be addressing the contradictory aspects of the leap of action in order to underscore a broader issue--religious observance and spiritual awareness cannot be devoid of intellectual rigor or conceptual understanding. One who performs a mitswah must understand why he is doing so. Likewise, for spiritual living to have staying power intuition is not enough; there must also be cognitive understanding. As "Faith As The Leap Of Action"

concludes: "There is danger in wallowing in the irrational. Moods are in need of the corrective Reason, and Judaism in the 20th century, as the late Erich Unger made so abundantly clear, cannot survive if it by-passes, and permits itself to be by-passed by, the constant development of cognitive thought."[8]

Professor Marvin Fox shares Petuchowski's view that the leap of action requires a prerequisite faith. Initially Fox notes that Heschel's polemic against "mechanical observances" seems to belie his view "we should do more than we understand."[9] Moreover, Fox wonders how actions void of content can be efficacious. As he states in "Heschel, Intuition, and The Halakhah": "If a man performs deeds without any sense of their spiritual significance whatsoever how can they be effective in leading him to God?...Without the commitment of faith a man is most unlikely to undertake the performance of 'sacred deeds', and if he should they will be mere posturings without any spiritual effect."[10]

At this point a question arises: when Heschel states, "There is a way that leads <u>from piety to faith</u>,"[11] is he implying that one performing "sacred deeds without any sense of their spiritual significance whatsoever" will undergo a transformation? When Heschel discusses the power of the leap of action, does he imply that cynic and heretic alike will discover God? Fox's criticism paints the leap of action in bold strokes: the <u>mitswah</u> is depicted as almost magical, and Heschel's outlook as naive. It is for the reader to decide whether or not Fox constructs a caricature of Heschel's view of the <u>mitswoth</u>. John Merkle argues that when Heschel introduces the concept of the leap of action as a path to God, Heschel does not imply that the insincere will somehow see the light, nor does he imply that "one lacking integrity"

will discover God. Rather, according to Merkle, Heschel is addressing those who harbor the sincere desire to find God but have not as yet. Given this view, the individual who is not yet committed to a life of faith, but takes the leap of action--is not an individual "performing sacred deeds without any sense of spiritual significance whatsoever." Rather, this individual has a "sense" or an inkling of the possibilities which could lie ahead. For Heschel, the very act of taking the leap of action demonstrates some type of religious commitment. The individual who earnestly searches for God is expressing the seeds of faith. It is these searching, yet uncommited individuals Heschel is addressing when he describes the mitswah as a path to God. As Merkle explains:

> ...His call for a leap of action is addressed primarily to those who are already striving for faith. He is calling upon those who long for faith to do things faithful in order to give faith a chance to flower. Performing mitsvot in the hope of attaining faith is like studying the Bible in the hope of finding God. Neither need lack integrity. In fact both are mitsvot, acts of piety in search of faith.[12]

Fox expends considerable energy attacking both Heschel's theories on intuition and the leap of action, yet this critic's most vociferous disagreement with Heschel relates to the latter's conception of halakhah. It is clear that halakhic requirements and detailed ritual observances play a more prominent role in Fox's world-view than they do in Heschel's philosophy of religion. As Fox states: "With all of Dr. Heschel's repeated affirmations of the fundamental need for halakhah in religious life, his qualifications and restrictions of the place of halakhah undermine the effectiveness of his stand. Jewish tradition devoted its major efforts to the development of halakhah without qualifications or apology."[13]

Fox objects to Heschel's stress on the primacy of kavvanah and spontaneous outpourings of the soul as opposed to keva and religious discipline. Fox believes that the Jew is required to observe halakhah, yet he is not required to possess certain feelings. Heschel's stress on kavvanah comes at the expense of keva; his emphasis on inspiration minimizes the importance of discipline and the value of commitment to routine. "Is it necessary to go as far as Dr. Heschel in his absolute requirement of spontaneity, burning religious feeling, and inner devotion? Must we, in effect, scorn the piety of the vast numbers of meticulously observant Jews because it is often routine and mechanical?"[14]

Fox is correct in noting that for Heschel technical "observance" is not enough; the individual is on a spiritual journey and halakhic observance is seen as a means to a greater ends. For Fox, Heschel's idea of the mitswah as a spiritual tool might represent the ideal scenario, but it does not reflect current realities. Moreover, Heschel does not appreciate all those ritually observant Jews who have no "burning religious feeling." As Fox states:

> A Jew who lives in accordance with Halakhah has done all that can be asked of him. Whenever he acts in response to the mitzvah, he draws close to God, even if he never has a mystical experience, even if he never knows the anguish of craving for the divine presence and the transcendent joy of breaking through the barriers. Professor Heschel seems to underestimate the worth of the most prosaic fulfillment of the divine commandments.[15]

It is possible that part of Fox's problem with Heschel's view of the mitswoth stems from the likelihood that these respective thinkers define this term differently. It appears that Fox approaches the term mitswah from a more traditional or orthodox stance than does Heschel. Fox is more of a literalist--thus the terms mitsvoth and halakhah appear

to be synonymous for him. Heschel's definition of mitswah appears to be broader and more multifaceted: for Heschel the mitswah fuses together halakhic observance, spiritual motivation, ethical and moral modes of behavior, and issues of social justice. Hence for Heschel, the term mitswah is more all encompassing than it is for Fox. As we noted earlier, for Heschel observing the mitswoth involves more than performing specified actions; it involves embracing an integrated way of life. Further compounding the problem that Heschel's and Fox's conceptions of the mitswoth are incongruous is an additional consideration to which we alluded earlier, namely, Heschel does not consider all halakhic requirements equally binding. Because Heschel thinks certain halakhic understandings are of human origin and advocates a "ladder of observance," he defines pious behavior differently than does Fox.

For Heschel, meticulous observance of halakhah, in-and-of itself, is not necessarily a virtue. Moreover, his stance on "religious behaviorism" and "pan-halachism" implies that an over-literalist approach to the mitswoth is detrimental to spiritual growth. Thus Heschel attempts to elevate the importance of agada, claiming that it is of equal value to halakhah. Fox objects vehemently to this approach and accuses Heschel of breaking with normative Judaism. As Fox states:

> While we applaud the skill with which he has explicated and defended the often neglected Aggadah we must note that this enthusiasm seems to have blinded him somewhat to the special place of Halakhah in Judaism...
>
> The greatest Jewish sages were, of course, cognizant of the importance of Aggadah and many of them made brilliant contributions to aggadic literature. Nevertheless, they consistently centered the bulk of their study and concern on Halakhah. Their preference for Halakhah indicates that they found in it far more than Professor Heschel does.[16]

For Fox, Heschel commits a grave error in viewing halakhah and agadah on equal footing. For this critic, Jewish tradition mandates that halakhah be given precedence over agadah. It is interesting to note that both Heschel and Fox quote the same tractate of Berakhot to support their respective positions: "Since the day that the Temple was destroyed the Holy One blessed be He has nothing in this world but the four cubits of halakhah alone."[17] Fox uses this prooftext to illustrate his contention--halakhic literature, according to rabbinic tradition, has consistently been given priority over agadic literature.[18] Heschel, explains the significance of this text quite differently:

> Those who quote this passage [Berakhot 8a] as a statement of disparagement of agada fail to notice that the passage is hardly an expression of jubilation. Its intention rather is to convey profound grief at the fact that man's attentiveness to God became restricted to matters of halacha...[19]

Whereas for Fox, those who elevate agada and consider it on a par with halakhah break with Jewish tradition, for Heschel, those who stress the primacy of halakhah while diminishing the importance of agadah have lost sight of the spirit of Judaism. Moreover, Heschel believes that agada needs to reclaim its once exalted status if Judaism hopes to avoid "pan-halachism." Heschel explains as follows:

> The Torah is more than a system of laws; only a small portion of the Pentateuch deals with law. The prophets, the Psalms, agadic midrashim, are not part of halacha. The Torah comprises both halacha and agada. Like body and soul, they are mutually dependent, and each is a dimension of its own.[20]

> ...To reduce Judaism to law, to halacha, is to dim its light, to pervert its essence and to kill its spirit. We have a legacy of agada together with a system of halacha, and although, because of a variety of reasons, that legacy was frequently overlooked and agada became subservient to halacha, halacha is ultimately dependent on agada.[21]

Given Fox's and Heschel's respective interpretations of the roles of halakhah and aggadah, these two thinkers understand the term mitswah differently. Fox believes that Heschel minimizes the importance of halakhah and ultimately fails to realize its spiritual value. Heschel errs in viewing halakhah and agada as diametrically opposing values. In Fox's estimation, meticulous halakhic observance brings the doer spiritual awareness. Heschel incorrectly assumes that certain technical aspects of religious observance are "dry legalisms"[22] without value. For Fox, even the most intricate and painstaking elements of Jewish law have something to teach us. These aspects of halakhic observance are attempts to infuse an awareness of God into the most mundane aspects of living. As Fox states at the close of his article:

> In spite of his strictures Dr. Heschel will surely grant that the talmudic discourse concerning "the ox which gored the cow" is not merely an arid discussion of certain technical problems in the law of damages. It is the Jewish way of concretizing the presence of God in the most mundane aspects of daily life.[23]

In Chapter Two we examined Maurice Friedman's criticisms of Heschel's intuitive epistemology. Friedman challenges Heschel's idea that we are capable of distinguishing between subjective and objective truths. We recall that Friedman posited the view that we have no criteria for determining whether what we perceive as subjective experience is transubjectively real. How can the individual determine whether his intuitions point to objective universal reality? For Friedman, Heschel's subject/object dichotomy is extremely problematic because there are no guidelines to help us distinguish between inner perceptions and external/universal truths. In a similar vein, Friedman challenges Heschel's position on the mitswoth; this critic claims that

we have no basis for determining those actions which reflect subjective human needs as opposed to those actions which are genuine responses to God's call.

Like Petuchowski, Friedman finds Heschel's distinction between ceremonies and mitswoth problematic. Friedman initially notes that, for Heschel, ceremonies "are conventional folkways which are relevant to man" and mitswoth are "requirements of the Torah which are ways of God."[24] Thus Friedman believes that in Heschel's scheme ceremonies are "subjective" and the mitswoth are "objective." Friedman's observation on Heschel's subject/object dichotomy prompts the following question:

> Ceremonies, like symbols, express what we think while the mitsvoth express what God wills. This distinction seems of special importance as it applies to the motive for religious observance. What is done merely for the sake of keeping alive the tradition or continuing Jewish culture and civilization can hardly be called "religious" in any meaningful sense of the term. But can one apply this distinction with equal clarity to the content of the action itself, so that one can say in each particular case, this is a subjective folkway and that an objective command of God?[25]

Friedman notes that Heschel's solution to this problem seems to be his stress on kavvanah, i.e.--his belief that the question is not "how much" we observe, but "how" we observe. Yet Friedman finds this answer evasive because it does not answer the question of how one distinguishes between subjective ceremonies and God given commands.

> If a little with Kavana is better than much without, then the subjective/objective distinction that Heschel makes is not a crucial one. The real question becomes whether our way of life is not only part of a genuine dialogue with God, within which both subjective motive and objective law find their meaning.[26]

The logical extension of Friedman's observation is that one man's ceremony might very well be another man's mitswah. (For example: I light the Sabbath candles to feel part of the Jewish community, whereas

my mother lights the candles because she believes God wills such an action.) Ultimately we are left with the problem: Is what determines whether a given action is a mitswah as opposed to a ceremony dependent on the motivations of the doer?

In Chapter Two we noted that Friedman finds Heschel's transition from awareness of the ineffable to adoption of the mitswoth problematic. An individual may perceive the sublime in nature; he may even come to believe that this experience points to God, but does it necessarily follow that he will accept the divinity of the Hebrew Bible? Moreover does an awareness of the ineffable necessarily lead to a belief in the divine origin of the mitswoth?

> ...The modern Jew's sense of the ineffable does not necessarily lead him to follow Heschel in accepting the prescriptions of the law as an objective order of divine will. The presence of divine meaning in observance of the law comes to us through our very commitment to and participation in that observance, writes Heschel. But if those who are not observant Jews do not now feel themselves commanded by God to perform the law, how can they perform it with integrity even on the strength of Heschel's assurance that they shall know this to be God's will for them through their observance?[27]

Friedman's challenge provokes the following questions: How does Heschel's theory of the leap of action address those who perceive the ineffable, and/or believe in God, but do not view the mitswoth as the will of God? Are these individuals unable to fully understand the natural steps one must take to progress in spiritual development? Moreover, how does Heschel address those who engage in the leap of action without believing that God commands them to do so? We recall Merkle's response to this question. The search for God can be understood as an act of faith. The individual who performs a sacred deed with the earnest desire to discover God does not lack integrity; in

taking the "leap of action" this individual is "doing more than he understands in order to understand more than he does."[28]

Dr. Lou Silberman also attempts to respond to Friedman's critique regarding Heschel's transition from awareness of the ineffable to adoption of the mitswoth. According to Silberman: "Heschel does not require the transition from the sense of the ineffable to Torah and mitsvot. Indeed...these three ways are one; hence, each must be made available for all are ultimately required."[29] Friedman responds directly to Silberman's statement when he notes: "To say this is to miss the central problem in Heschel's philosophy: the transition from his general philosophy of religion to his specific philosophy of Judaism."[30] Although Silberman is correct in noting that, for Heschel, all three paths lead to God; Friedman's response, i.e. that Heschel's ideas progress from the universal to the particular, seems to defeat the former's argument. One reading Heschel's theology[31] cannot help but notice the structure of his polemic--he begins with man's sense of intuition which leads to an awareness of God; next he progresses to the significance of the Hebrew Bible, and ultimately concludes with the importance of sacred deeds. The sequential structures of Man is Not Alone and God in Search of Man are deliberate--Heschel is attempting to take his readers on a spiritual journey; this journey follows in a progressive fashion. Silberman rightly observes that all three paths to God are interrelated, yet ultimately Friedman's objection remains: it is possible to adopt one of Heschel's three entrance-ways to the holy without seeing the logical necessity of adopting all three paths. The essential challenge to Heschel's theology, according to Friedman, is how to "build a bridge to Jewish law for those outside it."[32]

Harold Kasimow, author of Divine-Human Encounter: A Study of Abraham Joshua Heschel, is also critical of the leap of action. According to Maurice Friedman, Kasimow's professor, "Divine-Human Encounter... is, in fact, the first full-length scholarly study to be published on Heschel's thought, the only other book being Franklin Sherman's little The Promise of Heschel."[33]

Before examining the specific difficulties one encounters in Kasimow's work, we turn to those legitimate objections he raises. In Divine-Human Encounter, Kasimow presents Heschel's view of the mitswoth in light of Friedman's and Fox's reservations. Kasimow opens this discussion with an observation which is particularly apropos given the aforementioned disagreement between Silberman and Friedman. Kasimow observes that although Heschel's three paths to God seem to progress in an intended order, the third path or leap of action, can also serve as an initial step to Heschel's divine-human encounter. Hence, although the structure of Heschel's polemical writings tends to proceed from the general to the particular, e.g.,--from man's inherent intuitive capacities to the Jew's need to perform mitswoth, the leap of action can also be understood as a vehicle in-and-of itself, which leads man to the holy dimension. Kasimow explains as follows:

> Heschel's contention that "the mitsvah is a supreme source of religious insight" helps us understand more fully the interrelationship between the three different aspects of his "path to God." The outline of God in Search of Man leads us to believe that the path moves from the ineffable to the reality of revelation and finally to worship. Here, however, the direction of the path is reversed. The mitsvot may lead man to sense the ineffable, then to the study of Torah.[34]

We see that for Kasimow, like Silberman, the interrelationship of Heschel's three paths is significant. Each path is seen as a door to the spiritual dimension, and all three paths are ultimately seen as

interdependent. Hence, one who discovers God through performing a mitswah, according to Heschel's scheme, will also come to understand biblical philosophy, and intuition of the ineffable. Although Heschel presents these three paths in a given order, this sequence is not written in stone. The key issue is man's journey towards God; one man's starting point might be the world of nature, while another might discover God through the leap of action. What is essential for Heschel is that ultimately the spiritually aware embrace all three entrance-ways to God.

We recall Fox's objections to Heschel's approach in Chapter Two. All three of Heschel's paths to God, according to this critic, are dependent upon intuition. Man must initially intuit that there is a reason for him to possess faith before he is capable of embracing any one of Heschel's three entrance-ways to the holy. Similarly, Petuchowski posits the view that the cornerstone of Heschel's theory of the mitswoth is faith. Hence the questions these critics raise, and Friedman and Kasimow attempt to address are: Does Heschel present the reader with three discrete paths (or vehicles) to the holy? Or, are all three paths dependent on some other underlying concept, i.e. faith or intuition? Moreover, does acceptance of one of Heschel's three paths logically bring about an understanding and/or acceptance of the other two? The problems these critics introduce focus on issues of logic: if all three paths to God depend upon my need for faith and/or intuition--isn't the leap of action a spurious concept? (Ultimately it is the leap of faith I must take.) Moreover, for Friedman, the link between man's awareness of the ineffable and acceptance of the mitswoth is never firmly established. As Friedman explains:

> Heschel's philosophy does not offer the non-observant modern Jew sufficient links to enable him to make the transition, or "leap of action,"...from the universally human sense of the ineffable to an acceptance of the sacredness of Jewish law in which the voice of God becomes identified with objective tradition.[35]

Kasimow's discussion of the leap of action attempts to address these very questions. Moreover, this expositor pays special attention to Friedman's criticism of the leap of action. Kasimow presents his discussion of the leap of action as follows. "Is it conceivable that Heschel, the man of aggadah, is asking us to take the 'leap of action' before we attain inner devotion?"[36] Next he cites Heschel's view that "there can be acts of piety without faith."[37] What follows is the conclusion that:

> Heschel would concur with Friedman that the Jew who does not feel commanded by God to perform the mitsvah does not perform them with integrity. Nevertheless, despite the lack of integrity Heschel insists upon the "leap of action."[38]

Initially one is prompted to ask if Kasimow is correct in stating that Heschel would "concur with Friedman" that the "Jew who does not feel commanded by God to perform the mitsvah" and does so--lacks "integrity." As John Merkle states in his review of Kasimow's work:

> ...Kasimow is wrong to suggest, with Friedman, that deed before devotion implies action without integrity. Heschel calls for a leap of action, realizing that only those who suspect that action may be valuable and who seek to attain faith through that action will take the leap...Also, the fact that in other contexts Heschel implies that yearning for faith, itself, a matter of faith suggests that when Heschel speaks of taking the leap of action to attain faith he means perhaps that the leap itself is the beginning of faith which may lead to a life of faith. Thus we can understand Heschel's statement, not quoted by Kasimow, that 'the way to faith is the way of faith.'[39]

Heschel does not believe that those who perform sacred deeds in order to discover God lack integrity. The earnest seeker will benefit by engaging in a life of piety since deeds promote faith.

A second question raised by Kasimow's interpretation of Heschel relates specifically to the former's understanding of the term "integrity." Heschel does not use the term "integrity" in the context of the modern or non-observant Jew searching for faith. Rather Heschel's discussion of integrity relates to those individuals who succumb to egotistical impulses. Specifically, Heschel's discussion of integrity is devoted to those who are committed to God but experience "alien thoughts"[40] when attempting to perform mitswoth. Hence there is a difference between the individual who does a mitswah without believing it is the will of God, and the individual who performs a mitswoth for selfish or self-aggrandizing purposes. Kasimow does not consider the leap of action as an antecedent of faith and/or as a revitalizing force during emotionally barren times. Heschel's discussion of integrity, however, takes place within the context of the nature of good and evil; it does not address the problems of the doubter or modern Jew who is striving for God.

Kasimow's discussion of the leap of action is directly linked to Heschel's views of good and evil. Kasimow treats Heschel's concepts on the leap of action and "doing more than we understand," and his theories of "the confusion of good and evil," as if they were one-and-the-same. True, these two categories have certain similarities, but their respective emphases is different. Kasimow implies that Heschel advocates performing the mitswoth "without integrity" because of his "Kabbalistic" notion of the relationship between good and evil. Immediately after Kasimow's statement that "despite the lack of integrity, Heschel insists upon the leap of action,"[41] he states (within the same paragraph):

> An examination of his important article "Confusion of Good and Evil" focuses [sic] clearly on the problem and meets the question of integrity itself in a new way. In this article, profoundly influenced by Kabbalistic and Hasidic thought, Heschel argues that even the saint cannot perform the commandments with complete integrity. In support of his contention he cites the Jewish mystical view:..."that in this world neither good nor evil exists in purity, and there is no good without the admixture of evil or evil without the admixture of good."[42]

One reading Kasimow's interpretation of Heschel might easily come away with certain erroneous assumptions. Firstly, Kasimow's own discussion of the leap of action and subsequent juxtaposition of Heschel's statement on evil is misleading. Kasimow's statement "in support of his [Heschel's] contention" implies that Heschel's view of evil is in some way related to those who perform mitswoth without believing in God. It should be noted that Heschel's essay "The Confusion of Good and Evil" in The Insecurity of Freedom addresses Reinhold Niebuhr's theology. The specific quotation cited by Kasimow is actually used by Heschel to contrast the views of good and evil in Jewish mysticism with Niebuhr's perspective.[43] Moreover, although Heschel's essay on "The Confusion of Good and Evil" does address man's commitment to the mitswoth, it does not address the plight of the modern man who is in search of God. Rather, the problem Heschel addresses in this essay is "Who can be trustful of his good intention, knowing that under the cloak of kavvanah there may hide a streak of vanity?"[44]

Kasimow equates essential tenets of Heschel's thought: the "leap of action" as an antecedent of faith, the "confusion of good and evil," and its corollary the "problem of integrity." Heschel's premise of the "leap of action" as a path to deity addresses those who lack faith but seek God. The mitswah or leap of action is a means of developing faith as well as a reflection of faith. With the exception of Kasimow, other

critics have attacked Heschel's logic on this issue. Kasimow, however, claims that Heschel's leap of action allows for those who "lack integrity" to perform mitswoth, ergo Heschel's "Kabbalistic" view of good and evil is the influence underlying his leap of action. Hence Kasimow understands those modern Jews to whom Friedman refers, as individuals involved in "the confusion over good and evil." Kasimow fails to realize that the concept of the "leap of action" is directed towards the retroactive power of deeds and is directed towards those who are searching for God. Heschel's view of integrity, in contradistinction to the leap of action, addresses those who have found God--but at times feel overwhelmed by egotistical concerns. The latter concept is directed towards those who lack a prerequisite faith in God, whereas the former concept addresses those who have found God but lost sight of Him.

Our discussion in Chapter Five concluded with Heschel's conceptions of prayer, the Sabbath, and social action. We noted that these three examples of piety, in Heschel's scheme, are manifestations of the leap of action. We now turn to those criticisms which addresses these three aspects of Heschel's thought.

In "Abraham Joshua Heschel and Prayer," Father Edward A. Synan criticizes Heschel's understanding of the purpose of prayer. According to this critic, Heschel's complete disdain for "utilitarian"[45] goals renders petitionary prayers meaningless. As Synan states:

> Is it really true, as Heschel holds, that when we pray our needs are only incidentally fulfilled, that our petitions are answered only in the sphere of the spirit? I cannot help saying that here he is not faithful to his own people's glorious tradition. Was it only incidental when Israel prevailed over Amalek so long as Moses lifted up his hands to implore God's help (Ex. 17:8-13)?...In excluding the prayer of petition I am afraid Heschel shortens the hand of God.[46]

Synan's criticism inspires questions. Does he interpret Exodus 17:8-13 more literally than Heschel? The implication of Synan's criticism seems to be that God "answers" prayers. As Synan complains, "So little utilitarian is prayer that Heschel excludes on principle the possibility of an 'answer' to prayer, at least in the natural order."[47] It is possible that in Heschel's scheme Synan's observation "shortens the hand of God." Indeed, any assumption that God directly responds to petitionary prayers presents a number of problems in terms of divine justice and theodicy.

Heschel and Synan seem to have different understandings of the purpose of prayer. In Heschel's essay "The Spirit of Prayer," it is never suggested that one who is suffering or in need of help should not implore God. Yet it must be noted that Heschel's stress, unlike Synan's, is that one prays to "gain insight," not concrete advantages. As Heschel states, "prayer has the power to generate insight; it often endows us with an understanding not attainable by speculation. Some of our deepest insights, decisions, and attitudes are born in moments of prayer."[48] While Heschel never implies that the petitionary prayer is invalid, he does imply that seeking a concrete response is futile. The purpose of prayer, according to Heschel, is to "know before whom you stand,"[49] to enter the holy realm, to "meet" the divine. Prayer is not fruitful when its purpose is to elicit "answers" to problems.

Clearly Synan and Heschel conceive worship differently. Synan argues that Heschel's concept of prayer does not allow for "'interference' in the natural order of things."[50] It must be understood that although Heschel's understanding of deity is supernatural, his understanding of prayer is not; in Heschel's scheme

there is not a quid-pro-quo relationship between man's petitions and God's intervention in human affairs. Though Heschel believes that God reacts to man and intervenes in his life, he does not hold that God becomes involved in human affairs "on demand." As Heschel concludes in "The Spirit of Prayer":

> I do not refer to any supernatural events or any scholarly discoveries. I refer to countless moments of insights which can be gained from communing with individual words. I refer to the mystery that the same word may evoke ever new understandings when read with an open heart. I refer to the mysterious fact that happens in the heart of one person conveys itself to all others present. One single individual may transform the whole congregation.[51]

For Heschel the power of prayer becomes manifest within the individual. Moreover, the inner transformation one gains through prayer has the potential to influence others. For Synan, a belief that God is a concerned and caring partner necessarily implies that He responds directly to man's prayers.

In the preceding chapter we discussed Heschel's view of the Sabbath and his understanding of time and space. We noted that for Heschel, time is understood as God's infinite realm whereas space is man's finite dimension. While man has no control over the passage of time, he does possess the ability to acquire things in space. Heschel explains his views on time and space in his essay "Architecture of Time"[52] as follows:

> Time, is that which is beyond and independent of space, is everlasting: it is the world of space which is perishing. Things perish within time; time itself does not change. We should not speak of the flow or passage of time, but of the flow or passage of space through time. It is not time that dies; it is the human body which dies in time. Temporality is an attribute of the world of space, of things of space. Time which is beyond space is beyond the division into past, present, and future.[53]

Hence for Heschel, observing the Sabbath is man's attempt to sanctify time--it is our human recognition of the eternal dimension. Given Heschel's understanding, the Sabbath is an opportunity to turn our attention from the tangible world of space to the eternal world of time.

In an editorial,[54] Dr. Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, challenges Heschel's conceptions of time and space. Initially she notes that Heschel's time/space dichotomy "rests on untenable premises and is supported by faulty props."[55] More specifically, Dr. Weiss-Rosmarin objects to Heschel's view that space is not God's holy realm. The following observation characterizes the tone of her critique:

> There is no proof whatsoever for this theory [that Judaism conceives of God as being in time and not in space], which is presented as a not to be questioned fact by Dr. Heschel. But the evidence of the most authoritative Jewish sources proves on the contrary that Judaism identifies God with space, viz., the usage of makom--space--as a synonym for God in the Mishnah, Talmud, medieval literature, and colloquial Hebrew speech.[56]

Weiss-Rosmarin feels Heschel's differentiation between time and space is not only contrived, it also breaks with normative Jewish tradition. According to this critic, both time and space belong to God's realm. Any assumption that there is a hierarchy of sanctity in regard to time and space is erroneous. A factual analysis, according to Weiss-Rosmarin, does not hold that "Judaism is a religion of time."[57]

Heschel responds directly to Weiss-Rosmarin's attack in his article "Space, Time, and Reality."[58] He argues that Judaism's understanding of a transcendent God is consistent with its elevation of time over space. Moreover, the tendency of equating God with space, according to Heschel, was a Greek innovation. As Heschel explains:

> The Greek philosophers were endeavoring to account for things in a way quite different from the manner of the Hebrews. They sought to find the causes of things within the phenomena

> themselves rather than in the will of some external power. They sought to know the mechanisms of nature rather than the will of the God who governs nature.
>
> The doctrine of imposed law leads to the monotheistic conception of God as essentially transcendent and only accidentally immanent; while the doctrine of the immanent law leads to the pantheistic doctrine of God as essentially immanent and in no way transcendent.[59]

Heschel's response is interesting for a number of reasons. Again we are faced with the question: Should Greek philosophical concepts be understood within the context of "normative Judaism"? We recall those critics who challenged Heschel's "God of Pathos" also accused him of breaking with mainstream Jewish ideas. Specifically, Heschel's rejection of the "God of the Philosophers"--was accused of being inconsistent with post-biblical understandings of God. Heschel, on the other hand, claimed that those who accepted Greek conceptions of deity were not "authentically Jewish." The question underlying the aforementioned debate is: What is "authentically" Jewish?

Similarly, the exchange between Weiss-Rosmarin and Heschel can be distilled into the question: What is normative Judaism? Another aspect of Heschel's response which prompts attention is his stress on the "essentially transcendent" nature of God as opposed to the "accidentally immanent" nature of deity. One familiar with Heschel's "God of Pathos" and his rejection of the "Unmoved Mover" might question the overall consistency of his approach.

In "Abraham Joshua Heschel's 'Biblical Man'..." S. Daniel Breslauer attempts to analyse Heschel's political involvement from a sociological point of view. Breslauer's article is based on his unpublished doctoral dissertation, "The Impact of Abraham Joshua Heschel as Jewish Leader in the American Jewish Community."[60] According to Breslauer, Heschel

struck a responsive chord in the American Jewish community precisely because of the ambiguity of his theology. The average Jewish American during the 60's was confused and searching for an identity; Heschel's equivocal philosophy spoke to the "undifferentiated American."[61] The following passage is characteristic of Breslauer's understanding of Heschel: "The outstanding characteristic of Heschel's presentation is its ambiguity. There is a vacillation between the emphasis on the uniqueness of Biblical man in contrast to other religious viewpoints and the demand for the adoption of Biblical religiousness by all modern men. Behind this ambiguity is an interesting ambivalence."[62]

Breslauer conceives of Heschel's "ambiguity" as an essential component in his political appeal. Because Heschel's terminology and actions could be interpreted differently by a variety of individuals, he was a "symbolic leader" who attracted a diversity of groups. As Breslauer states:

> While Heschel's ambiguity reflects, on one level, a psychological ambivalence, on another level a sociological ambivalence is also present. Institutions and social conventions are essential in creating and maintaining a political following. Yet, leadership must appeal to a broader audience than its original limited powerbase. Heschel's political leadership, while at first restricted to a group of committed radicals, emerged as an influence on the entire community. This was possible because of the ambivalence which he finds in prophetic politics. While potentially radical, the prophet's inwardness makes his radicalism ambiguous.[63]

Although Breslauer is not a hostile critic, his analysis of Heschel implies that the latter neither clearly defines his politics nor his theology. Moreover, it is Heschel's lack of ideological precision that caused him to gain popularity. For Breslauer, Heschel's "ambiguity" allowed Americans who were groping for an identity to project their own uncertainty onto his "symbolic leadership."[64]

Although Breslauer's thesis is interesting, it is methodologically unsound. Firstly, neither his dissertation nor any of his subsequent articles make use of any surveys or statistical data regarding Heschel's influence on American Jewry. Hence the reader has no means to assess the "impact of Heschel's leadership." Secondly, Breslauer asserts that Heschel's political followers were familiar with his views on prophetic theology--this assertion is in no way substantiated. Finally, Breslauer never tells us why he believes the "prophet's inwardness makes his radicalism ambiguous."

According to Heschel, the prophets' political stances were anything but ambiguous. Moreover, there is no reason to assume that the qualities of inwardness and radicalism need be at odds with each other. As Heschel states:

> Prophetic utterance is rarely cryptic, suspended between God and man; it is urging, alarming, forcing onward, as if the words gushed forth from the heart of God, seeking entrance to the heart and mind of man, carrying a summons as well as an involvement. Grandeur, not dignity, is important.[65]

> The prophet faces a coalition of callosness and established authority, and undertakes to stop a mighty stream with mere words. Had the purpose been to express great ideas, prophesy would have had to be acclaimed as a triumph. Yet the purpose of prophesy is to conquer callousness, **to change the inner man as well as to revolutionize history.**[66] (Emphasis mine.)

Although Breslauer's theories as to why Heschel's social activism attracted adherents are interesting, they are hypothetical. Particularly weak is his assumption that those who sympathized with Heschel's political stances did so for theological reasons. As Jakob Petuchowski remarked in an interview: "It was ironic that many who respected Heschel's theology and academic advancements did not support his political views. It is also probable that those who admired his politics were not students of his theology."[67]

Full bibliographical details of
the works quoted here will be found in
the Bibliography.

Notes to Chapter Six

[1]Petuchowski, "Faith As The Leap of Action..."in Commentary 25, No. 5, p. 392.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., p. 396.

[4]Merkle, The Genesis of Faith..., p. 210.

[5]Petuchowski, "Faith As The Leap of Action" in Commentary 25, No. 5, p. 396.

[6]Ibid., p. 392.

[7]Ibid., pp. 395-396.

[8]Ibid., p. 397.

[9]Fox, "Heschel, Intuition, and The Halakhah" in Tradition... 3, No. 1, p. 9.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Heschel, God in Search of Man..., p. 282.

[12]Merkle, The Genesis of Faith..., p. 210.

[13]Fox, "Heschel, Intuition, and The Halakhah" in Tradition... 3, No. 1, pp. 11-12.

[14]Ibid., p. 11.

[15]Ibid., p. 12.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Ibid., p. 14.

[18]Ibid., pp. 14-15.

[19]Heschel, God in Search of Man..., p. 331.

[20]Ibid., p. 324.

[21]Ibid., p. 338.

[22]Fox, "Heschel, Intuition and The Halakhah" in Tradition... 3, No. 1, p. 14.

[23]Ibid., p. 13.

[24]Friedman, Abraham Joshua Heschel and Elie Wiesel..., p. 52.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Ibid., p. 53.

[27]Ibid., p. 63.

[28]Merkle, The Genesis of Faith..., pp. 209-212.

[29]Lou H. Silberman, "The Philosophy of Abraham Heschel," in Jewish Heritage 2, No. 1, p. 26.

[30]Friedman, Abraham Joshua Heschel and Elie Wiesel..., p. 63.

[31]Heschel's chapters in God in Search of Man... progress from the world of experience, to "biblical philosophy," and then ultimately to the "leap of action."

[32]Friedman, Abraham Joshua Heschel and Elie Wiesel..., p. 63.

[33]Harold Kasimow, Divine-Human Encounter: A Study of Abraham Joshua Heschel; See Preface by Friedman, p. vi.

[34]Kasimow, Divine-Human Encounter..., p. 55.

[35]Friedman, "Liberal Judaism and Contemporary Jewish Thought" in Midstream... 5, No. 4, p. 23.

[36]Kasimow, Divine-Human Encounter..., p. 56.

[37]Ibid., pp. 56-57.

[38]Ibid., p. 57.

[39]Merkle, Review of Kasimow's Divine-Human Encounter... in Judaism... 30, No. 3, p. 373.

[40]Heschel, God in Search of Man..., p. 388.

[41]Kasimow, Divine-Human Encounter..., p. 57.

[42]Ibid.

[43]Heschel, The Insecurity of Freedom, pp. 127-147.

[44]Ibid., p. 139. Kasimow confounds Heschel's discussion of the universal problem of purity of intentions with his specific didactic premise--actions engender faith. While it is true that Heschel is concerned with the relationship between good and evil and views the mitswah as an antidote to evil, he does not discuss this problem in relation to those who take the "leap of action" without believing in the divine origin of the commandments. Hence, Heschel's discussion of good and evil does not attempt to address the question Friedman poses: How can a non-observant Jew take the "leap of action?" The structure of God in Search of Man bears this out: Heschel's discussion of "the leap of

action" is found in Chapter Twenty Eight under the rubric--"The Science of Deeds." His discussion of "the confusion of good and evil" follows later in Chapter Thirty Six under the general heading--"The Problem of Evil," and finally in Chapter Thirty Eight Heschel addresses the problem of integrity.

Heschel's ordering of subject material is not haphazard. The leap of action addresses the mitswah in a different context than does Heschel's concept of "integrity." The leap of action deals with the power of deeds, how sacred acts engender faith, and ultimately how the mitswot can lead those who are striving for faith to spiritual living. Heschel's chapter on integrity addresses the individual at a later stage of his spiritual development. The problem of integrity relates to those who have already committed themselves to God but experience "alien thoughts" and "egotistical concerns." The problem with Kasimow's analysis is reflected in his critique:

> The mystical and Hasidic view does not answer the entire questions of the integrity of human actions as propounded by Dr. Friedman. The Hasidic masters were addressing themselves to Jews who had difficulty in attaining proper intention, even though they felt themselves to be commanded by God. This special consideration permits Friedman to raise the question regarding the very different position of contemporary Jews who do not feel commanded by God and therefore cannot even begin to perform the commandments with integrity. (Kasimow, The Divine-Human Encounter..., p. 58.)

Kasimow's, problem is that he never realizes that Heschel does not attempt to use "mystical and Hasidic" views on good and evil to answer Friedman's question. Heschel never suggests that "the confusion over good and evil" relates to Friedman's problem--i.e. the logical progression of the "leap of action." Moreover, just as "the Hasidic masters...were addressing themselves to those who felt commanded by God," Heschel's discussion on "integrity" also addresses those who have faith in God.

Kasimow errs in assuming that Heschel's treatment of good and evil, and the problem of integrity addresses modern Jews struggling with the issue of faith. Heschel's discussion of integrity deals with those who already possess faith but experience intrusive/negative thoughts. Heschel's discussion of "piety preceding faith," on the other hand, relates specifically to his concept of the "leap of action" as an antecedent of faith. This concept, in contradistinction to Heschel's ideas on integrity, addresses the modern Jew's search for faith. The leap of action focuses on the retroactive power of deeds, and how actions teach (these issues are geared to those modern Jews Friedman discusses); it does not concern itself (at this point) with the nature of evil and problems of impure motives.

Friedman poses the question: How can Heschel ask the modern, non-observant Jew to take the "leap of action?" Friedman's question

implies that without an initial faith, the "leap of action" is illogical and contradictory. Hence his use of the term "integrity" does not imply that a discussion of the nature of good and evil is in order. Kasimow associates Friedman's question on integrity with Heschel's discussion on integrity and the nature of good and evil. This is unfortunate when we consider the fact that Heschel's discussion of good and evil, like his discussion on integrity, directs itself to the plights of the faithful, not the modern/non-observant Jews to whom Friedman refers. (One is prompted to wonder why Friedman, Kasimow's teacher, never discusses the "leap of action" in relation to good and evil if Kasimow is correct in implying that Heschel's "mystical and Hasidic" understanding was an attempt to answer Friedman's question of integrity.)

[45]Synan, "Abraham Joshua Heschel and Prayer" in The Bridge 1, ed. John M. Oesterreicher, p. 259.

[46]Ibid., p. 264.

[47]Ibid., p. 259.

[48]Heschel, "The Spirit of Prayer," Reprinted from Proceedings of The Rabbinical Assembly of America 17, p. 161.

[49]Ibid., pp. 160-164.

[50]Synan, "Abraham Joshua Heschel and Prayer" in The Bridge 1, ed. John M. Oesterreicher, p. 264.

[51]Heschel, "The Spirit of Prayer," Reprinted from Proceedings of The Rabbinical Assembly of America, 17, pp. 212-213.

[52]Heschel, "Architecture of Time" in Judaism... 1, No. 1, pp. 44-51.

[53]Ibid., p. 47.

[54]Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, Editorial in Judaism... 1, No. 3, pp. 277-278.

[55]Ibid., p. 277.

[56]Ibid.

[57]Ibid.

[58]Heschel, "Space, Time, and Reality..." in Judaism... 1, No. 3, pp. 262-269.

[59]Ibid., p. 266.

[60]S. Daniel Breslauer, The Impact of Abraham Joshua Heschel as Jewish Leader in the American Jewish Community (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, 1974). Breslauer's dissertation contains no factual analysis to support his claims.

Moreover, it is poorly written, and his theses are unclear. The following two examples characterize the problems one encounters when perusing Breslauer's dissertation.

> While the poetic force of his writing was admitted, few found his theology acceptable or viable. His attitude toward prayer and ritual was idiosyncratic nor did he exert a definitive influence on attempts to reformulate the liturgy. (Breslauer's Dissertation, p. 1.)

> Heschel's ability to reach a student population is revealed by an event that occurred in 1970. Shortly after the Kent State killings Heschel was called to speak at a certain university. The campus had been split by the disturbances. Faculty and students were at odds among themselves. Yet after Heschel's talk the atmosphere calmed... . (Breslauer's Dissertation, p. 41.)

The two aforementioned quotes reflect the weak scholarship that plagues Breslauer's work. In the case of the first citation, the reader is never given any substantial reasons as to why he should accept Breslauer's assumption that Heschel's attitude "toward prayer and ritual was idiosyncratic." Moreover, one familiar with Heschel's writings and biography is well aware that Heschel never attempted to "reformulate liturgy." Heschel was concerned with philosophy and theology--not liturgy. He wanted individuals to pray, yet he was not interested in rewriting the content of prayers. The second citation also illustrates the type of imprecise references which abound in Breslauer's dissertation. Why doesn't Breslauer tell us where this "certain university" was located? Why doesn't he give us the details of what transpired? The reader is left with little more than hearsay.

[61]Breslauer, "Abraham Joshua Heschel's 'Biblical Man' in Contextual Perspective" in Judaism... 25, No. 3, p. 344.

[62]Ibid., p. 342.

[63]Ibid.

[64]Ibid.

[65]Heschel, The Prophets 1, pp. 6-7.

[66]Ibid., pp. 16-17.

[67]Petuchowski, Interview, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio, December 12, 1988.

Chapter Seven: RESPONDING TO HISTORY

In the preceding chapters we examined Heschel's three entrance-ways to the holy dimension: man's intuition of the ineffable, man's perception of the divine-human relationship and awareness of the "God of Pathos," and "meeting" God through the leap of action. After each discussion of Heschel's thought, we examined those criticisms which were germane and attempted to explore some of Heschel's responses. Certain tensions reappeared throughout our discussion: the polarity between intuitive experience and rational speculation, the conflict between the "God of Pathos" and the "God of the Philosophers," and opposing views as to whether cognitive thought necessarily precedes sacred deeds. We noted that underlying the aforementioned contentions between Heschel and his critics were the broader questions: Must a "philosophy of Judaism" incorporate rational inquiry into its scheme? For a theology of Judaism to be viable, need it include the "God of the Philosophers?" And ultimately, how do we define "normative Judaism?" In response to this last question we noted that Heschel's view of "biblical philosophy" maintains that several Greek innovations are not "authentically Jewish." Heschel's critics, however, maintain that the Jewish philosophic tradition necessarily includes these Western intellectual developments.

In this chapter we will discuss three of Heschel's works not previously mentioned in this thesis: Israel: An Echo of Eternity, The Earth is the Lord's, and Mainonides: A Biography. Although these works include several tenets of Heschelian thought previously discussed, their respective foci are different. Unlike Man is Not Alone, God in Search of Man, and Who is Man?, these works are not primarily theological expositions. Narrower in scope, these works aim at presenting a specific

historical subject to Heschel's readership. Hence the criticisms these works inspire are not as far-reaching as those noted in the preceding chapters. In general, criticisms related to these three works focus on issues of historical veracity and methodological cogency--not on broader theological questions.

Israel: An Echo of Eternity

We begin this chapter with Israel: An Echo of Eternity for purposes of contrast. In the preceding Chapter we closed with a discussion of The Sabbath and Heschel's views on time and space. We noted that Weiss-Rosmarin faulted Heschel's view that time is in the holy/divine realm while space is in the corporal/finite dimension. We noted Heschel's response: Judaism is a religion of time. As Bruce Graeber explains:

> Heschel, however, maintains that time is holy, simply because it is exclusive of and apart from space and matter, the raw materials of the physical world...
>
> Heschel believes that via time space is able to reveal its innate holiness. The works of creation contain the potential for holiness. And it is from the perspective of time that the material aspects of creation are transformed from the realm of potential sanctity to an active manifestation of holiness.

Heschel's perspectives on time and space as reflected in The Sabbath are stressed here because they stand in sharp contrast to those expressed in Israel: An Echo of Eternity. The Sabbath, written in 1953, is a very different work from Israel: An Echo of Eternity which was written in 1967. The latter book was written in response to the Six-Day War, and, unlike The Sabbath, stresses the sanctity of space. The following quotation is characteristic of the tone of Israel: An Echo of Eternity:

> There are moments in history which are unique, moments which have tied the heart of our people to Jerusalem forever.
>
> These moments and the city of Jerusalem were destined to radiate the light of the spirit throughout the world. For the light of the spirit is not a thing of space, imprisoned in a particular time. **Yet for the spirit of Jerusalem to be everywhere, Jerusalem must first be somewhere.**[2] (Emphasis my own)

In Stranger At Home..., Neusner remarks on the opposing views Heschel conveys in his earlier and later works. Neusner contrasts The Sabbath and Israel: An Echo of Eternity as follows:

> In his later years, Heschel became deeply impressed with the holiness of place, not time, and spoke of the Wall and of Jerusalem in terms reminiscent of the way in which he described the Sabbath, our "cathedral in time." That is a measure of the age in which he wrote, of deep engagement in holy land, holy space. Indeed, I think his argument in The Sabbath stands at one extreme, in its stress on the centrality of the vertical line, of time, and that in Israel: An Echo of Eternity stands at the other, in its emphasis on the predominance of holy space, of the land.[3]

Though Neusner's observation is not negative, it raises questions as to the overall consistency of Heschel's approach. Indeed there are different ways of interpreting the changes in Heschel's perspectives on time and space. On the one hand, his views might be seen as contradictory; yet on the other, Heschel's writing can be seen as responding to the issues of his time. Given its historical context, Israel: An Echo of Eternity can be understood as a reaction to the events of Heschel's day.

Richard J. Neuhaus discusses the situation that prompted Heschel to write Israel: An Echo of Eternity in Worldview Magazine. He notes both Heschel's motivations for this work as well as his subsequent reservations. According to Neuhaus, Heschel was disappointed that Israel was not a priority in activist circles, and he thus felt compelled to address this issue. As Neuhaus states:

> That the Middle East was never really on the action agenda of Clergy and Laity was a disappointment to Heschel, but he understood better than most the depth of the differences that precluded a united approach toward Israel among all who opposed the Vietnam War. After the "Six-Day War" Heschel visited Israel and wrote his Israel: An Echo of Eternity.[4]

Neuhaus notes that "in some quarters the book was criticized as a veritable call to holy war..."[5] Moreover, Heschel recognized that there were perhaps grounds for such a negative reaction: "Heschel felt hurt by the failure to understand that his writing about Israel was not, in any conventional sense, an essay on the ethics of international relations but a theological statement regarding Israel's role in God's designs in history. He privately granted that he had perhaps not been as careful as he might have to make this distinction clear."[6]

Israel: An Echo of Eternity is a difficult book to evaluate. Some, like Neusner, will compare it to The Sabbath and contrast the respective depictions of time and space. Others, like Neuhaus, will focus on the political realities of the time in which Heschel wrote and view Israel: An Echo of Eternity as a response to the exigencies of his day. It should be noted that although Heschel's views of time and space were subject to change, his moral and ethical principles remained constant throughout his life. As Neuhaus notes:

> Nor did Heschel credit for a moment the argument popular in some circles that American Jews should, in order to secure Administration support for Israel, mute their protest against U.S. policy in Indochina. He viewed such an acceptance of a "trade-off" as unspeakably immoral and felt that those who suggested it would turn American Jewry into a political party. This was offensive to his whole understanding of the Jewish people, who had been entrusted with the Law in order to witness against evil in a way entirely indifferent to any interest except that justice might prevail.

The Earth is the Lord's

Israel: An Echo of Eternity was not the first book Heschel felt compelled to write in response to the world-historical situation.

Earlier, in 1949, as a reaction to the overwhelming ravages of the Holocaust, Heschel wrote his memorial to Eastern European Jewry--The Earth is the Lord's. Like Israel: An Echo of Eternity, The Earth is the Lord's also aroused criticism from some quarters, albeit for different reasons. In The Earth is the Lord's, Heschel pays tribute to a once vibrant community by stressing what he understands to be its outstanding contributions to Judaism. Those who criticize this work do so on the grounds that his portrait of Eastern European Jews, while touching, is historically inaccurate.

Heschel's depiction of Eastern European Jewry stresses the piety, learning, and beauty of the Ashkenazic community. There are two subjects that The Earth is the Lord's does not touch upon: the internal schisms and ignoble features of life in the shtetl, and the Nazis' total destruction of the Eastern European Jewish community. Some have faulted Heschel for these omissions, while others have been critical of his over-glorification of shtetl life. In an interview Samuel Dresner discussed Heschel's aversion to discussing the "dark side of Judaism" in general and the Holocaust in particular. "He believed that after the Holocaust we were practically dead and therefore to dwell on our failings would be counterproductive."[8]

Heschel's conception of Ashkenazic Jewry and shtetl life is that it equaled if not surpassed the Golden Age of Sephardic life in Spain. The following excerpt reflects much of the sentiment expressed in The Earth is the Lord's:

> What distinguishes Sephardic from Ashkenazic culture is, primarily a difference of form rather than a divergence of content. It is a difference that cannot be characterized by the categories of rationalism versus mysticism or of the speculative versus the intuitive mentality. The difference goes beyond this and might be more accurately expressed as a

> distinction between a static form, in which the spontaneous is subjected to strictness and abstract order, and a dynamic form, which does not compel the content to conform to what is already established. The dynamic form is attained by subtler and more direct means. Room is left for the outburst, for the surprise, for the instantaneous. The inward counts infinitely more than the outward.[9]

One reading Heschel's account of the differences between Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jewry is immediately reminded of his distinctions between keva and kavvanah, and halakhah and agada. In The Earth is the Lord's, Heschel identifies those aspects of Judaism which he views positively and which permeate all of his writings with the Eastern European community. Moreover, rational speculation and the Greek tradition, modes of thinking which are not close to Heschel's heart, come to be identified with Sephardic Judaism. Critical of Heschel's approach, Milton Hindus states the following in his review of The Earth is the Lord's:

> It is Heschel's thesis that a revision of nomenclature is necessary in Jewish History. The "Golden Period," according to him, was not that of Spain and Sephardic Jewry but of the Ashkenazic culture of Eastern Europe. It is this thesis which must now be subjected to criticism...Basically true as Heschel's picture probably is, it now seems upon second thought a little too idyllic, too much without shadow. Above all, we must judge more fairly that Sephardic Jewry which, in the interests of his theme of panegyric, he somewhat downgraded.[10]

In assessing this criticism a few questions arise: Can Heschel be legitimately faulted for depicting only the positive aspects of a destroyed community? In a sense he was eulogizing a lost civilization; would it have been appropriate to discuss its more negative traits? Moreover, by stressing those spiritual elements which Heschel considered to be of lasting contribution, is Heschel more faithful to the perpetuation of Jewish values than he would have been had he discussed those ignoble and "dark features?" In response to this question Samuel

Dresner raises an interesting issue. While acknowledging that Heschel can be "faulted"[11] for his Hasidic apologetics and tendency to "stay clear"[12] of discussing the negative elements of Eastern European Jewry, he questions the motives of those who seek to convey a bleaker picture. "The reader and the student must submit the final verdict as to the relative reliability of those who sought for whatever reasons, to portray a different and more often negative picture than did Heschel."[13] In an interview, I asked Dresner about this statement, and he replied that if we admitted that Heschel's account of European Jewry was accurate, our sense of loss and desolation would be incapacitating.[14]

In a positive review of The Earth is the Lord's, Herman Kieval concurs with Dresner. Moreover, he believes that Heschel's elevation of the Ashkenazic community's contribution to Judaism is well founded. As Kieval states:

> Of course, there are some Jews who refuse to get excited over the gigantic loss. You will find them among the Israelis, you will find them here in America. They read Dr. Heschel's book and they say: "Very pretty and very sad. But over sentimental. A 'pious fraud!' We mourn the criminal murder of these brothers but we cannot summon up too many tears over their way of life which has ceased to exist. It was boorish and crude, narrow and ghettoish..."
>
> But it is the contention of Dr. Heschel, strongly supported by Maurice Samuel and other profound observers, that the heritage of the Jews of Europe ranks with the heritage of the Prophets and the ancient rabbis and that our generation, in which this culture disappeared, has the historic task of finding some way to take it over and transmit it to future generations.[15]

Hence for Kieval, Heschel's depiction of the Jews of Eastern Europe is not distorted. Rather, Heschel is restoring and transmitting the contributions of a community, a community whose loss many fail to mourn. It is interesting to note that in the case of European Jewry, as

in the cases of "biblical philosophy," and the "long neglected agada," Heschel attempts to restore and elevate certain Jewish values and ideals, which he feels have been inadequately appreciated. Heschel's detractors accuse him of subjectivity, whereas his defenders believe that he is preserving truths which we are in danger of forgetting.

We noted earlier, that The Earth is the Lord's was Heschel's memorial to those who died in the Holocaust. Yet Heschel does not discuss the Nazi's atrocities in this work. How do we interpret such an omission? While so many historians and theologians focus on the barbaric details and tortuous depths of suffering and loss, Heschel's writings do not directly address these issues. Perhaps Heschel's stress on the perennial teachings and spiritual beauty of Eastern European Jewry was the most productive response one could offer. Jacob Neusner's evaluation of The Earth is the Lord's is novel. Claiming that Heschel's "immortal Kaddish"[16] is more potent than the theology which emerged from the "'after Auschwitz' school,"[17] Neusner states: "For there is surely a contrast between the dignity and hopefulness of Heschel, who had suffered and lost but endured, and the bathos and obsession of those who, thirty-five years later, want to speak of nothing but transports, gas chambers, a million abandoned teddy bears, and the death of God."[18]

Maimonides

> The ardent and passionate dedication to study and scholarship which had dominated him since the days of his youth and which had resulted in immortal works now gave way to another exclusive dedication: the healing of the sick, the momentary relief from suffering of mortal men. He continued to respond to inquiries and to compose some corrections of earlier writings, but found no time to carry out any major design after the last chapters of The Guide of the Perplexed...Indeed, he seems to have given more years of his life to the healing of the sick than to his most

important work Mishneh Torah, the code of law, which took ten years of labor.[19] ("The Last Days of Maimonides," The Insecurity of Freedom, Heschel)

During the last years of his life the tremendous genius and knowledge of Heschel could have been expended on the great works that he had planned. He wanted to write his book on the Baal Shem Tov--which he never did. He wanted to write his great book in which he would restore Biblical categories to modern thought in the place of Greek and German categories. He wanted to do so much. He wanted to compile a Hasidic anthology, like the midrash, incorporating agadic thinking, etc....Yet what did he do? He spent his time on Vietnam and on the blacks and so forth; on social issues--many of which, I, and other friends of his, thought were not deserving of the amount of time. (Interview with Samuel Dresner on Heschel.)[20]

No student of Heschelian thought can read his works on Maimonides without sensing certain similarities between the author and his subject. Indeed, many of Heschel's conceptions of the Rambam seem to parallel his own life and thought. It is therefore both intriguing and ironic that Maimonides's name is often invoked by those critical of Heschel's theology. Heschel's early scholarship was devoted to a philosopher whose theory of negative attributes and stance on anthropomorphism would later be used as ammunition against the "God of Pathos."

For Heschel, the Rambam was a scholar who experienced an inner transformation, a transformation which culminated in the latter's desire to elevate deeds over intellectual exploration. The following passage reflects Heschel's Maimonides:

At the heights of his life, he turned from metaphysics to medicine, from contemplation to practice. That was Maimonides last transformation: from contemplation to practice, from knowledge to imitation of God. God was not only the object of knowledge, He was the Model one should follow...The observation of and absorption in concrete events replaced abstract viewing.[21]

Dr. Barry Kogan challenges the historical veracity of Heschel's interpretation in his review of Maimonides: A Biography. Kogan states that "his persistent attempt to reveal the personal dimension of the Rambam's thinking easily slips into eisegesis and even misrepresentation."[22] Just as Berkovits accuses Heschel of creating God in his own image, Kogan faults Heschel for remaking Maimonides according to his own predilections. As Kogan states: "At times, Heschel's depiction of the Rambam's views tends to reflect his own. Maimonides, as it were, becomes 'Mymonides,' and the resulting exposition becomes a peculiar mixture of fact and fiction."[23]

Kogan cites specific examples of what he believes to be misrepresentations of the Rambam on Heschel's part. Heschel's understanding of "negating attributes of God,"[24] according to this critic, is based upon an incomplete "proof"[25] that is not "properly translated."[26] Moreover, Heschel's understanding of "pathos" in relation to Maimonides's cosmology is particularly flawed. Kogan's critique of Heschel on this point reflects the former's view that Heschel attributes his own theological conceptions to the Rambam.

> Heschel, to be sure, developed a theology of pathos in connection with his interpretation of the prophets, but it is quite mistaken, if not bizarre, to suggest that the universe that found its likeness and echo in Maimonides's own character was in any sense pathetic.[27]

Despite Kogan's criticisms, he concludes his review by stating that "Heschel's Maimonides offers us a readable, informed, and often absorbing account of a life that still has much guidance to offer the perplexed of this and every age."[28] Jakob Petuchowski offers a similar appraisal of Heschel's work. While implying that Heschel's biography of the Rambam reflects the former's theological views, he also notes that it is "extremely sensitive and perceptive."[29]

Heschel's biography of Maimonides is of interest to any student of Heschelian thought. Though it is open to certain questions of historical veracity, it foreshadows many tenets of Heschel's theological development. Written when Heschel was twenty-eight, Maimonides: A Biography points to the direction of Heschel's later and more evolved thought. Petuchowski notes that Heschel's Maimonides "might better be thought of as the man who, time and again, used his ratio in order to define the limits of reason."[30] We recall Heschel's conception of a "philosophy of religion": "Its task is not only to examine the claim of religion in the face of philosophy, but also to refute the claim of philosophy when it presumes to become a substitute for religion, to prove the inadequacy of philosophy as a religion."[31]

Another unfolding theme found in Maimonides: A Biography which later comes to fruition is the idea that God is not the "object of cognition." In Heschel's discussion of Rambam's transformation and "Imitatio Dei" we see the seeds of his later conceptions of both the "God of Pathos" and the leap of action or "doing more than we understand." Hence, Maimonides: A Biography provides insight to all those interested in Heschel's intellectual and theological evolution.

Israel: An Echo of Eternity, The Earth is the Lord's, and Maimonides: A Biography contain many themes which appear and/or are further elaborated upon in Heschel's other theological writings. While sharing certain points of similarity with Man is Not Alone and God in Search of Man, each of the three works must also be viewed as a discrete reflection of Heschel's thought process. Each one of the three volumes attempts to address a specific historical reality and/or human example of piety. Hence, though certain concerns manifest themselves in all of

Heschel's writings, his scope of interest and overall knowledge of Judaism was so vast, it behooves the reader to look beyond points of overlap. Those elements which are unique to each one of Heschel's works must be recognized.

Full bibliographical details of

the works quoted here will be found in

the Bibliography.

Notes to Chapter Seven

[1]Bruce S. Graeber, "Heschel And The Philosophy of Time" in Conservative Judaism 33, No. 3, p. 55.

[2]Heschel, Israel: An Echo of Eternity, pp. 12-13.

[3]Neusner, Stranger At Home..., p. 155. Also see Arnold Jacob Wolf, "Israel as the False Messiah" in Conservative Judaism 40, No. 3, p. 57.

[4]Richard J. Neuhaus, "Connections" in Worldview, February, 1973, p. 6.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Ibid. Also see; Heschel, "Should the United Synagogue of America Join the World Zionist Organization? No!," in The Torch 19, No. 1. [Reprinted in Roads to Jewish Survival, ed. by Milton Berger, Joel Geffen and M. David Hoffman, pp. 330-342.]

[8]Dresner, Interview, Union Theological Seminary, August 30, 1988.

[9]Heschel, The Earth is the Lord's..., pp. 34-35.

[10]Milton Hindus, Review of Heschel, The Earth is the Lord's... in Conservative Judaism 20, No. 1, p. 70.

[11]Dresner, ed. The Circle of the Baal Shem Tov...; see Introduction, p. xxiv.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Dresner, Interview, Union Theological Seminary, August 30, 1988.

[15]Herman Kieval, Review of Heschel, The Earth is the Lord's... in Conservative Judaism 7, No. 3, p. 26.

[16]Neusner, Stranger At Home..., p. 76.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid., p. 83.

[19]Heschel, The Insecurity of Freedom..., p. 286.

[20]Dresner, Interview, Union Theological Seminary, August 30, 1988.

[21]Heschel, Maimonides: A Biography, p. 243.

[22]Barry Kogan, Review of Heschel, Maimonides: A Biography in Journal of Reform Judaism 30, No. 4, p. 71.

[23]Ibid., p. 72.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Ibid., p. 73.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Petuchowski, "Faith As The Leap of Action..." in Commentary 25, No. 5, p. 390.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Heschel, God in Search of Man..., pp. 11-12.

Chapter Eight: CONCLUSION

Having examined the major tenets of Heschel's thought and his critics' responses, this thesis will conclude with a few personal reflections. How can we understand the debate between Heschel and those who oppose him? Initially we note that Heschel's polemic is a critique; "depth theology" seeks to dismantle certain ingrained philosophical and theological belief systems. Although Heschel seldom attacks specific individuals (the notable exceptions being Spinoza and Mendelssohn), his "philosophy of Judaism" challenges several conventional perspectives. For example, those who perceive of God as an Idea, i.e., followers of Hermann Cohen, and those who understand God as a natural and/or impersonal force, i.e., followers of Mordecai Kaplan, would in all likelihood oppose Heschelian concepts. Moreover, individuals who adhere to the "death of God" school and adherents of Richard Rubenstein's "After Auschwitz" theology would probably find Heschel's "God of Pathos" objectionable. On the other hand, adherents of Martin Buber, and those who embrace varieties of mysticism might be sympathetic to Heschel's views. Hence, Heschel can be seen as an advocate of a supernatural theology which incorporates mystical, existential, and phenomenological[1] elements. Heschel's God is both transcendent and immanent; He is a personal, caring, and feeling deity; yet at times He is "hiding" from man.

Although Sol Tanenzapf and Arthur Cohen argue that Heschel's theology resembles Whitehead's and Hartshorne's process theology, I believe that "depth theology" is a synthesis of certain prophetic and <u>hasidic</u> conceptions. Heschel's understanding of God is panentheistic, and his understanding of human suffering resembles the <u>hasidic</u> idea of

tsimtsum, i.e. God must withdraw from the world in order for man to express his freedom and creativity.

Given Heschel's understanding of God, it is easy to understand why none of his critics are mystics, disciples of hasidic schools of thought, and/or religious existentialists. Rather, Heschel's critics tend to subscribe to either one of, or a combination of, the following schools: Naturalism, Humanism, Idealism, Skepticism, and/or some configuration of rational metaphysical philosophy. Levi Olan's observation epitomizes the perspective of many of Heschel's critics:

> His earlier work Dr. Heschel subtitles "A Philosophy of Religion." This was an unfortunate mistake, for if words are to have values, Man is Not Alone was certainly not a philosophy of religion. It was a meditation about God interrupted by some clever aphorisms and some not so clever...It is at this point that the author [Heschel] joins the band of modern theologians who resent the appellation "anti-rational," yet concentrate their heaviest fire upon the rational faculties of man.[2]

Given this contextual understanding of Heschel and his critics, the following question emerges: Does Heschel present his readers with a "philosophy of religion?" Are Heschel's critics correct in assuming that one who elevates intuition over reason, criticizes rational speculation, and creates new categories of meaning, cannot be termed a "philosopher"? Moreover, does a mystical understanding of deity preclude a "philosophy of religion"? Heschel's critics believe that for a philosophy (and a theology) to be efficacious it must pay tribute to rational speculation and/or the "God of the Philosophers." Moreover, certain thinkers, Ben-Horin being the most notable example, dismiss any system which exalts intuition. It is my position that such assumptions are counter-productive. If we adhere to Heschel's critics' definition of "philosophy" we are forced to dismiss countless thinkers. Indeed

Plato's and Plotinus's theories of intuition would prove untenable for critics like Ben-Horin. Moreover several religious thinkers such as Soren Kierkegaard, Karl Barth, Rudolf Otto, Paul Tillich, and Martin Buber would also have to be dismissed.

The problem with Heschel's critics' definition of "philosophy" is that it does not justify the dismissal of intuition, nor does it prove the superiority of rational speculation over insight. Indeed, Cherbonnier is correct in asserting that Heschel and his adherents are equally justified in offering their own definition of "philosophy." Given this view, Heschel and his adherents could claim that those thinkers who fail to incorporate intuitive epistemologies into their systems are not legitimate "philosophers." We recall Petuchowski's critique of Heschel. This critic calls for a philosophy which does justice to both Ratio and Pathos. Petuchowski calls for a philosophic understanding which harmonizes the "God of the Philosophers" with the "God of the Prophets." The ramifications of this perspective are clear: those who adhere exclusively to Ratio and the "God of the Philosophers" can justifiably be attacked by Heschel and his followers for ignoring "pathos" and the "God of the Prophets." It is my perspective that if Heschel's critics wish to effectively prove that he is not a "philosopher" they cannot do so by asserting that for a "philosophy" to be tenable it must consist solely of rational speculation and/or arrive at the "God of the Philosophers."

I would argue that it would have been far more effective for Heschel's critics to concede that Heschel does offer "a philosophy of religion" and then challenge it on different grounds. For example, what are the potential dangers and abuses of a philosophic system based upon

intuition? What were the historical consequences of such systems in the past? To Ben-Horin's credit, he attempts to draw parallels between intuitive systems and totalitarian regimes; yet he never effectively proves that Heschel's specific ideas are similar to authoritarian and Fascist mind-sets. Another effective attack might be to demonstrate that the "God of the Philosophers" is superior to the "God of Pathos." Berkovits asserts that this is the case, yet he never offers us any proofs as to why his understanding of deity is beneficial. As Steven Katz states in his critique of Berkovits:

> There is a curious blindness attached to Berkovits's appeal to the Medievals. He notes that Maimonides rejected the attributes of emotional predicates to God on the philosophical grounds of God's immutability. To make such attributions would challenge God's immutability and hence His perfection according to Maimonides's inherited notion of perfection. What Berkovits fails to appreciate is that the notion of perfection here involved is perhaps inappropriate and needs to be rethought.[3]

Had Heschel's critics not been content to harp on his definition of "philosophy," and had they offered more attractive alternatives to "depth theology," I believe they would have been far more effective.

Another fundamental problem with the analyses of many of Heschel's critics relates to the tendency to see Heschel as a "straw man." Few of Heschel's opponents consider the overall body of his work. Rather, those who attack Heschel tend to pinpoint issues which often reflect the formers' personal polemics. It is hard to tell whether the critics had specific axes to grind with Heschel or whether they had personal shibboleths that they wanted to express. For example: Ben-Horin, a Reconstructionist thinker, devoted his energy to attacking the concept of the ineffable. It should be noted that his critiques of Heschel and Buber are almost identical.[4] Eugene Borowitz, a Reform theologian,

offers a critique of "Orthodox" views of revelation. Moreover, Marvin Fox, an Orthodox thinker, stresses the importance of the mitswoth in his critique of Heschel. The reader who follows the exchange between Heschel and his critics emerges with the question: Are these criticisms unique to a critique of Heschel or do they reflect the polemical views of certain denominational perspectives? It should be noted that Petuchowski, Kaufman, and Friedman do not fall into the same trap as the aforementioned critics. The latter group, considerably less vociferous in their criticisms, tends to be more balanced in their respective analyses of Heschel. Petuchowski, Kaufman, and Friedman were careful to present both the strengths and weaknesses of Heschel's theology; hence, these thinkers did not come across as partisan to any particular religious denomination.

My own criteria for evaluating the efficacy of a "philosophy of religion" differs considerably from many of Heschel's critics. To my mind the following questions are important when evaluating a "philosophy." Does the thinker present us with ideas which can be practiced? Moreover, I find Kant's Categorical Imperative important when evaluating a given philosophical perspective: Can the proposed philosophical principles be universally applied? (What would society be like if everyone practiced Heschel's "philosophy"?) Given my predilections, Heschel provides us with a tenable "philosophy of religion."

Unlike those critics who tend to focus on singular elements of Heschelian thought, Merkle and Rothschild consider the vast body of Heschel's writing in their analyses of Heschel. These expositors argue that Heschel presents a coherent world-view. I agree with this

perspective for the following reasons. Firstly, if one accepts Heschel's suppositions, his system is cogent. It follows logically that one who believes in the "God of Pathos" will be motivated to take the "leap of action." If one believes that God suffers and is in need of man's help to being about redemption, does it not follow that he will behave accordingly? Hence Heschel's "philosophy" has serious ethical ramifications.

A comparison between Heschel and Berkovits is instructive. If I accept Berkovits's view that God is an unfeeling "Wholly Other" who does not intervene in human history, why should I pray, perform the mitswoth, and/or attempt to approach Him? It is interesting to note that Heschel's critics never attempt to discuss the ethical ramifications of their respective God-concepts. For example, what are the practical consequences of Arthur Cohen's conceptions? I believe that Cohen and Ben-Horin would offer more effective critiques of Heschel if they could demonstrate their theological views inspire ethical modes of behavior. For example: Because God does not intervene in the affairs of man, we are obligated to behave ethically and responsibly--i.e., since God cannot "save" man, he must "save" himself. Of course, such an assumption would obligate one to prove that ethical behavior is beneficial regardless of God's existence. (For example, ethical behavior promotes happiness, social order, etc.) Heschel's system, if considered on its own terms, is consistent. Initially Heschel establishes a purpose for existence, next he discusses the divine-human relationship, and ultimately he proposes an ethical mode of conduct which is consonant with his first two assumptions.

The second reason why I believe Heschel's thought is tenable relates to the Categorical Imperative. Heschel's theories, if universally applied would be advantageous. It is unfortunate that Heschel's critics did not pay more attention to the practical applications of Heschel's views as expressed in The Insecurity of Freedom. This series of essays addresses a variety of social and ethical problems and advocates practical solutions which are directly linked to Heschel's theology. Heschel discusses the crises of his time: racism, discrimination against the elderly, materialism, the alienation of youth, etc. Heschel seeks to do more than enhance the reader's awareness of these problems; he seeks to engage him in tikun olam.

In order to accomplish his goals Heschel relates his social concerns to his theological understanding. Man, created in the image of God, has a responsibility to his Creator. The divine-human relationship requires man to become directly involved in the process of restoration. Hence, belief in a "God of Pathos" requires us to become actively engaged in the alleviation of human suffering. Heschel's theological system requires the individual to do more than think; he must act ethically. For Heschel this means fight social injustice and behave compassionately. Hence, one who "practices" Heschel's "philosophy of religion" is obligated to actively fight human degradation--i.e., help the sick and elderly, advocate universal human rights, speak out on behalf of Soviet Jewry and other oppressed groups, etc. Heschel's theology attempts to put certain prophetic ideals into practice. "Depth Theology" addresses concrete human behavior from a theological perspective. One who accepts the "God of Pathos," i.e., a God who

suffers with man and seeks tikun olam, is obligated to assume ethical responsibilities. What are the practical ramifications of Heschel's critics' world-views? Indeed it would have been beneficial for the reader to be presented with the practical ramifications of naturalistic, humanistic, and impersonal God-concepts.

It can justifiably be argued that Heschel's critics are not obligated to present the reader with practical alternatives to Heschelian thought. Perhaps they are only required to point out specific problems and/or express personal reservations. Yet it is my position that the most effective refutation of a given philosophy should do more than tear down and destroy, it should also replace the system it seeks to debunk with a superior one. I believe that Heschel followed this principle in establishing his "philosophy of religion." Not only did he attack the Greek categories and certain philosophical assumptions, he also replaced them with his own innovative system which was based upon prophetic thinking. Heschel's critics do not assign themselves a very difficult task. They simply point to his "philosophy" and note that it dismisses cherished assumptions; yet they do not attempt to prove that these assumptions provide a superior world-view and/or motivate a more ethical system of behavior. Hence it is not enough to say Heschel dismisses Maimonides's theory of negative attributes; it must be demonstrated that Maimonides's theory surpasses "biblical philosophy."

Although it is my opinion that Heschel offers a cogent "philosophy of religion," I am cognizant of certain weaknesses. Although there is a logical progression between Heschel's "God of Pathos" and his call for the "leap of action," his view of intuition is problematic. We recall

that before Heschel presents his view of deity in God in Search of Man he discusses the perception of the ineffable. Initially man intuits that the "meaning behind the mystery" points to the divine. Heschel introduces his view of the ineffable by establishing that man senses "wonder" in the world of nature. I do not believe that it logically follows that one's sense of wonder and/or intuition of the ineffable necessarily requires an acceptance of the "God of Pathos." Indeed one might intuit a divine presence in the world of nature and/or experience, and emerge with a totally different God-concept than the one Heschel offers. The pantheist, nature-mystic, and followers of Spinoza all perceive the divine in nature, yet they do not perceive a transcendent deity. Though I believe this is a problem for Heschel, I do not think that it is insurmountable. "Biblical philosophy" justifiably argues that the "God of Pathos" is "authentically Jewish" by presenting prophetic consciousness as archetypal. Moreover, Heschel offers several examples within Jewish tradition which conceive of the "God of Pathos."

I would like to conclude with a final observation about Heschel, the man. One of the most intriguing aspects about his personality was his ability to "practice what he preached." Heschel's life and activities reflected his intellectual convictions. It is common to hear of philosophers, theologians, and social activists, who dichotomize their lives and ideas. Biographies often destroy society's idols--i.e., we read of Ghandi's sexism or Martin Luther King's extra-marital affairs. Yet Heschel's consistency transcended his writings; his life reflected his values. As Samuel Dresner stated, "Heschel was the kind of man he wrote about."[5] Heschel's academic pursuits and his personal life went hand-in-hand. His activities were directed toward the goal of

improving the world. Unlike so many modern heroes, Heschel's life was not ridden with contradictions, nor did he ever follow an "ends justify the means" approach. Pinchas Peli relates a wonderful personal vignette which reflects Heschel's approach to life.[6] Peli was considering getting his doctorate in Ugaritic and consulted Heschel about his plans. According to Peli, Heschel opened up a "bottle of Schnapps or whiskey"[7] and said, "Let's drink L'chaim."[8] For two hours Heschel and Peli drank and discussed Ugaritic. Heschel continually made statements like: "I am sure that in your childhood you always dreamt that someday you're going to write about Ugaritic Traditions. It's great that you can fulfill your life's dream."[9] Peli stated repeatedly that this was not his "life's dream" but that he wanted a union card and a good teaching job. Yet Heschel continued to repeat these words throughout their conversation. Peli states, "I didn't catch on..."[10] Finally Heschel concluded with the statement: "I'm thinking. You know while I am thinking about your doctorate, I think you are doing the right thing--you're getting your union card, and this will probably change the world."[11] Within a few days Peli decided to write his thesis with Heschel on prayer.

Full bibliographical details of
the works quoted here will be found in
the Bibliography.

Notes To Chapter Eight

[1]Lawrence Perlman, Abraham Heschel's Idea of Revelation, Phenomenologically Considered, (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, 1987). Perlman argues that Heschel is a "philosopher" because he follows Husserl's "phenomenological program."

[2]Levi A. Olan, Review of Heschel, Man's Quest For God..., in Judaism... 4, No. 2, p. 180.

[3]Katz, Review of Berkovits, Modern Philosophies of Judaism, in Tradition... 17, No. 1, p. 126.

[4]Ben-Horin, "Martin Buber's 'Absolute Personality'" in Judaism... 6, No. 1, pp. 22-30.

[5]Dresner, Interview, Union Theological Seminary, August 30, 1988.

[6]Pinchas Peli, Prayer and Politics: The Twin Poles of Abraham Joshua Heschel, ed. Joshua Stampfer, pp. 52-62.

[7]Ibid., p. 55.

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[11]Ibid., p. 56.

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