
TITLE "A Critique of Naturalism: The Influence of the Writings of Maimonides and Spinoza on Mordechai Kaplan's Concept of Jewish History"

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THE INFLUENCE OF MAIMONIDES AND SPINOZA
ON MORDECAI M. KAPLAN'S CONCEPT OF JEWISH HISTORY

By

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of the Requirements for Ordination

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DIGEST OF THESIS

Mordecai M. Kaplan recast Judaism to respond to changing needs of his time. An evaluation of Kaplan's enterprise leads to an examination of the tension between Naturalism and Supernaturalism. Beginning with the mutual influence between Israelite religion and Hellenistic Philosophy, the Problem of reason and faith in relation is discussed.

The history of this controversy within the Jewish fold is selectively reviewed which reveals the developing tendency from resistance to change on to integration. Analyses of Philo, Saadia and Halevi reveal the many responses to the challenge raised by Philosophy. Maimonides marks the climax of this development with his linking of Jewish Pursuits with the recognition of the value of human reason to validate religious claims. The identification of a realm above and beyond the letter of the law, "Lifnim mi shurat ha-din" suggests the beginning of Jewish intellectual maturity.

Building upon RMBM, Spinoza develops a system of Panentheism which asserts the universalism of thought and the unity of the human spirit. Spinoza is evaluated as marking the Jewish intellectual beginning of Modernity which

set the stage for the modern democratic ideal of liberty and the recognition of the limits of ecclesiastical law.

Having entered the modern period with great consequence, the Jews must confront the challenge to survive not as the result of an historical past as a *corpus separatum*, but as a voluntary group. Kaplan's conception of Judaism as a Civilization suggests that Jewish History is developmental and moves toward constant redefinition of the meaning of the Jewish moral destiny. Based upon the "case studies" of Maimonides and Spinoza, Mordecai M. Kaplan's Project to reconstruct Judaism aims to define a new type of Jew, the "universal Jew." Recognizing that Jews in America live in both a Jewish and an American civilization, Kaplan attempts to recast the basis for Jewish Practice while maintaining the essence of the faith.

The influences on Reconstructionism reflect the Spinozistic and Maimonidean examples. Kaplan's Project is critiqued based on its questionable philosophical "coherence" and with regard to the "moral fallacy."

Kaplan attempts to define Judaism in terms of the science of his day, viewing Jewish survival in terms of group consciousness. However, Kaplan is unable to insure that the group will define the essence of Judaism at all times within clearly identifiable Jewish parameters. The strength of his vision is in it being a method. Such a method calls for the rejuvenation of Judaism as one people, among all peoples striving to attain mutual cooperation and

human actualization.

THIS THESIS IS DEDICATED
TO THE MEMORY OF
MORDECAI M. KAPLAN

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I. INTRODUCTION

"According to most empirical endices contemporary Jewish life in the West is markedly different from that which the Jews traditionally led. The overarching role of religion is no longer a feature of Jewish life. Integrated in western, secular culture, contemporary Jews do not, as their forbears did, conduct their lives according to norms and criteria exclusively derived from Judaism and the Jewish experience. Economically and vocationally the Jews' activity now has an immeasurably wider range and variety than formerly. Politically, the Jews have left the ghetto and they legally enjoy either civic parity in the country of their residence or Political independence in the newly sovereign State of Israel. These transformations in Jewish life are structurally Parallel to the Process generally called modernization that has affected any number of traditional societies in recent times." (1)

Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz state the Problem dealt with herein concisely. What has the Process of modernization meant to the Jewish People and what are some of the roots of the conflict which modernity Presents to Judaism and the Jewish People? This thesis will examine this question with specific reference to Mordecai M. Kaplan's Proposals for a "Greater

Judaism."

Kaplan's response to modernity is a brave example of an approach which recognizes the changing, developing, evolving circumstances of the human condition and Judaism's role within that constant process of change.

Kaplan is often critiqued because of his "pragmatic method" which approaches reality based on the notion that an idea is true if it works. This method which demands the constant experimentation of its proponent has been viewed as invalid because it operates with the premise that the end justifies the means. Whatever works to preserve Jewish survival in the modern age is true, if it works.

Kaplan has also been questioned about his philosophical "coherence" with reference to his terminology. The vagueness of his writings often leads to misunderstandings for the not-so-careful reader. This thesis will attempt to read Kaplan carefully with the aim of elucidating the essence of his program. Kaplan responds to the condition of living in a bifurcated world, and recognizes that in the modern period, the Jews are "living in two civilizations," one Jewish and one secular.

There is a long history behind the bifurcated world that we have inherited. Kaplan must be understood with reference to this interesting and complex set of conditions which preceded him. Those factors which make up the reason/faith controversy are catalogued in the first exposition in this thesis. The roots of Greek philosophy and

their influence upon Hebrew culture will be explored with specific reference to the tensions between "Athens" and "Jerusalem." This catalogue will include reviews of the responses to Philosophy posed by Philo, Saadia and Halevi. These personages represent the fundamental categories of intellectual response to the changing climate of religious life in late antiquity and medieval times.

These early trends in Jewish intellectual history set the stage for the critical work done by Moses Maimonides in the Twelfth Century. Maimonides asserted nothing less than the liberation of reason from its subjugation to religious faith.(2) His Program of integration will be discussed with an attempt to shed light on the meaning of his final, albeit token subjugation of reason to faith. The Philosophical Position of Religious Naturalism within the Jewish fold has its roots with the extraordinary work of RMBM. Naturalism is based on the liberation of reason. This had a strong influence on subsequent thinkers both Philosophically and Jewishly, Particularly, Mordecai M. Kaplan.

One most influenced by the work of RMBM was Spinoza. It is clear that Maimonides informed the first Part of Spinoza's ETHICS. Spinoza developed a system of Panentheism in response to the development of Cartesianism. Spinoza posited the social nature of human morality and improvement which formed the intellectual basis for the transition into the modern world. Spinoza was a strong influence in the work of Ahad Ha-am and a fortiori, Mordecai Kaplan.(3)

With this as ground work, Kaplan's enterprise will be presented. Mordecai M. Kaplan's concept of the "organic community" and his focus on the People of Israel as a civilization is a provocative program for responding to the question of the meaning of Judaism in the contemporary world. The essential challenge for religion in our time is the result of the opposition of Naturalism and Supernaturalism. This study will attempt to shed greater light on Kaplan's system with the following aims: 1) to define and critique the concept of Jewish history at work in his thought; 2) to show the influences of the Maimonidean and Spinozistic versions of naturalism; 3) to analyze the difference between theocentrism and humanism toward a critique of Naturalism.

Kaplan's Naturalism is a limited one, superior to "Pure" naturalism viz. reason that rejects God and freedom. Unlike his Philosophical Predecessors, Kaplan attempted to show a distinct relationship between a) the Processes and relations in nature and b) man's efforts to live in abundance and to achieve self-realization.

A discussion of the "God of History" within the framework of Kaplan's system will lead to an idea of a "limited God" - for Kaplan's God is only associated with the powers related to the growth of humanity.

It has been suggested that Kaplan derives ethical imperatives from scientific thinking, which can be seen as a moral fallacy viz., to derive what is right from what is

factually true. This thesis will attempt to assess this moral fallacy with the aim of shedding greater light on the limits of naturalism with a focus on the specific example of Kaplan's Proposals.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

1. Paul R. Mendes-Flohr and Jehudah Reinharz. THE JEWS IN THE MODERN WORLD. New York, Oxford University Press, 1980, p.3
2. See David Hartman. MAIMONIDES: TORAH AND PHILOSOPHIC QUEST. Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1976
3. See Alfred Gottschalk. "Maimonides, Spinoza and Ahad Ha-am," in JUDAISM. Vol. 21, No.3, 1972

II. FRAMING THE PROBLEM: THE ROOTS OF NATURALISM

1. Naturalism and Supernaturalism

The Problem to be dealt with in this thesis concerns two central trends in the history of humankind: Naturalism and Supernaturalism. Human experience reveals many tensions between varying concepts and terms. These tensions are expressed as examples of different types of knowledge in relation, one to the other, i.e., Cognitive/Imaginative; Revealed/Discovered; Magical/Logical; etc. Throughout history, the tension between ideas, and their interrelation has been the subject of perpetual interpretation by Philosophers and religionists.(1)

The tension between the Naturalistic and Supernaturalistic view concerns the relations between reason and faith, between tradition and change, and between theocracy and democracy. The intellectual development of the modern age reflects the eternal conflict between human intellectual endeavor and the historical encounter with the Divine. This fact of human experience is no more central than in the case of Jewish History.

Israelite religion, as it is Presented in Scripture is a Supernatural cult-religion. The God is an ethical, and

Personal God. The authority of Supernatural revelation suggests an unconditional truth of its own. Julius Guttmann suggests however, that all unconditional truths present serious problems for Philosophy.(2) The tension between "Jerusalem and Athens" is the starting point of this investigation. Guttmann suggests the unique agenda of Jewish Philosophy: "(A) religious orientation constitutes the distinctive character of Jewish Philosophy, whether it was using philosophical ideas to establish or justify Jewish doctrines or with reconciling the contradictions between religious truth and scientific truth. It is religious Philosophy in a sense peculiar to the monotheistic revealed religions which, because of their claim to truth and by virtue of their spiritual depth could confront Philosophy as an autonomous spiritual power...In order to determine the relationship between these two types of truth, philosophers have tried to clarify, from a methodological point of view the distinctiveness of religion."(3)

Implicit in the Bible and Talmud are principles which define the nature of Jewish Supernaturalism. The God of the Bible is ethical.(4) God is also demanding and exercises a moral will as is expressed by the prophets.(5) God is the Omnipotent ruler of humanity and nature. This experience of Divine Power is articulated throughout Hebrew Scripture. It is not the result of a philosophical conception but an actual, recorded series of events which have been imbedded in the historical consciousness of the Jew. One crisis in

the history of the Jews after another was interpreted as an expression of God's will enforced upon the Israelite People.(6) Throughout Jewish history, the destructions of two Temples, the wasting of Jewish life at the hands of Christian and Pagan oppressors, the expulsion from Spain, the Pogroms, the Holocaust are interpreted as part of the Divine destiny inherent in Jewish History; a history which the Supernatural Jew accepts on faith, grounded in the strong hope, that in the Next World (Olam ha-bah), all will be made complete and the Purpose will be made clear and demystified.(7)

"The decisive feature of monotheism is that it is not grounded in an abstract idea of God, but in an intensely powerful divine will which rules history. This ethical voluntarism implies a thoroughly personalistic conception of God, and determines the specific relationship between God and Man...God imposes his will upon that of man, so man becomes aware of his relationship to God...The communion with God is essentially a communion of moral wills. The meaning of "nearness" to God or "estrangement" from him is determined by this perspective."(8) This refers to the covenantal relationship, the BRIT, between God and Israel. Such a solemn Promise between two Parties created a binding tie. Exodus 19:4-6 is an important example of the Supernatural element in Judaism of early antiquity. Beyond the beautiful literary quality of the Passage is the testimony to God's role in history and His Particular

relationship with the Jewish People: "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself. Now therefore, if ye will hearken unto my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be Mine own treasure from among all People; for all the earth is Mine; and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of Priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel." And then the covenant is formally accepted.(9)

Clearly, the motif of Israelite religion suggests that the roots of Judaism presuppose God's supernaturalistic nature. Jack Cohen defines the supernaturalistic basis of Judaism, from the viewpoint of modern philosophical concerns being dealt with in this thesis as "the belief that there is a Power (or Powers) operating in the universe not subject to the same restraints as are imposed on natural phenomena. Whatever order does exist is present by virtue of an arbitrary, omnipotent will above nature and is subject to interference at any time. The world, according to this view, exists by the grace of a living God." (10)

The result of this view is that Jewish History is conceived of as representing a unique and determined process and destiny. "It is in the unique historical process and not in the unchanging being of nature that the revelation of God's will and the satisfaction of all religious aspirations are found." (11) When one speaks of supernatural religion, one also speaks about a particular approach to the

question of values. A system of values that is dependent on God as its source provides a guarantee of values in God. This is based on the view that without revelation there can be "no legitimate claim on the conscience of man". (12) This provides some sort of cosmic authority or some "mitigating power" (13) between the varying claims of man. Cohen suggests two paradoxes regarding the search for certainty of the supernaturalist: "the first, that if God's absolute goodness and omnipotence will necessarily produce an ethical world then man's conduct is actually of little moment in its achievement; the second, that if God is absolutely good and omnipotent, then evil should be impossible." (14)

In addition to these considerations of the supernatural view there is the whole issue of miracles. This raises the "historical fallacy" which suggests that categories of man's knowledge change according to the level and advancement of his scientific method of inquiry. Thus, what was "miraculous" in the view of humanity at one time in history may be ordinary and normative, natural consequences of a series of causes in another time period.

Thus, the foundation of Judaism is Supernatural. Judah Halevi makes this very clear in his response in the KUZARI: "I believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, who led the Israelites out of Egypt with SIGNS * and MIRACLES *; who fed them in the desert and GAVE THEM * (emphasis mine) the Land, after having made them traverse the sea and the Jordan in a miraculous way; who sent Moses with His law, and

subsequently thousands of Prophets, who confirmed his law by Promises to those who observed, and threats to the disobedient. We believe in what is contained in the Torah-a very large Domain."⁽¹⁵⁾ The supernatural belief which stems from a documented event-experience speaks for itself.

The other trend within the history of Jewish religious Pursuits has its roots with the contact between Israelite religion and the Greco-Roman world.⁽¹⁶⁾ What later developed into "Religious Naturalism" had its roots in the teaching and Pursuits of Pagan "secular" or "civic" religious manifestations.⁽¹⁷⁾ It was inevitable that the Jewish Pursuit toward "holy Peoplehood" based on revelation would confront the Pursuit of a clear, reasoned, Philosophical "rational Peoplehood" exemplified by Greek Philosophy.⁽¹⁸⁾

The roots of "Naturalism" as this system came to be called in later Philosophy are found in the works of the Pre-Socratic Philosophers, and have fuller development with Plato and Aristotle. The roots of Philosophic study of the universe, which responded to the awareness of a distinction between appearance and reality begin with Anaximander in the middle of the sixth century B.C.E. He responded to the natural Process of change of the seasons, coming into being and passing away, cycles of the moon, movement of the heavenly bodies, the apparent order of world he perceived. His Perceptions were the catalyst for a new thinking: "What apparently interested him was demonstrating, as far as was

Possible, that universal change was somehow orderly and that it was a change of genesis and destruction. But the genesis and destruction were only apparent, since the process was endless."(19)

An in-depth survey of the Pre-Socratic tradition is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, suffice it to say, these original inquiries into the wonders of nature, from a RATIONAL Perspective set the stage for the perpetual faith/reason conflict, the tension between "Athens" and "Jerusalem". Through the work of Anaximides, who looked at change as a mechanical process, to Heraclitus and the principle that all is flux, along with the ideas of Parmenides concerning the distinction between Truth and Opinion, it is our starting point that these Pre-Socratic thinkers saw a distinction between reliable and unreliable types of knowledge.

The work done during the Periclean age (460-322 B.C.E.) which concludes with the death of Aristotle in 322 B.C.E. marks the period of Athenian cultural supremacy. The Sophists developed the notion that "man is the measure of all things" became the pivotal axiom which was the object of thorough development and critique by both Plato and Aristotle. This quotation given by Plato (Theatetus 151e) suggests at least three interpretations: 1) All truth is human truth. 2) All truth is individual, there is no solution to the problem of the difference of opinion. 3) What man does know is only the result of perception and is

therefore suspect. Much of Greek Philosophy is the discussion of these three options.

These examples should serve to exemplify the Pursuit of the "rational Peoplehood" which was the hallmark of Philosophy in its original form. From this discovery of the notion of "two worlds", the world of sense and the world of ideas, Plato develops his conception of forms. He suggests that the nature of things is independent of our knowledge of it. The theory of Forms posits a definite, determined order within nature itself. And it is the highest goodness for all things to fulfill their essence to the fullest. The essence of the human-beingness is the contemplative life. "The insistence upon the goodness of the rational life is seen in Plato's use of ordered nature as a norm. For it is the nature of men to be rational - that is what distinguishes them from the other animals. And the fact that some men are irrational simply implies that some men are unnatural(20)

Based on this, the next concern for Plato was to determine just what was natural and what was not. What is natural is that which is best. (Timaeus 28a-33b) Plato reasons that what is "Best" is synonymous with "the rational" and the rational is eternal, logically prior to its exemplifications, and autonomous in the sense that it depends on nothing else for its existence. (21)

Plato's development of a "natural" scheme for understanding the "two worlds" which appeared in human experience represents one early formulation of the

"Naturalist" Point of view, which stresses human reason as the basis of acquiring truth. The rationalism of Aristotle, however, became the "Archimedean Point" of most subsequent controversy between reason and faith Proponents.

Aristotle differed from Plato in many respects and was similar in others. Neither of them trusted sensory experience to provide singular truths. Aristotle went beyond Plato's Theory of Forms and Posited an Order of Nature. The hallmark of the Rationalism of Greek Philosophy was the Pursuit for the Permanent elements of reality. "The most important of Aristotle's laws was...the Law of Natural Development...(that) everything which exists in time, inanimate as well as animate, develops or changes in a set manner from what he called matter to what he called form. The form of anything was in all Probability a descendant of the Platonic idea, but instead of existing apart from the thing of which it was the form, it was found in normal experience embedded in the matter from which it emerged."(22)

From this Principle of Order Aristotle Posits the notion of the Unmoved Mover. A conception of a "Godhead" who set the universe in motion. This conception of nature is based on the idea that all ideas and events are linked together by a logical necessity. These "orders" are discussed in three different Places in Aristotle's works.(23) Nature is the collection of these categories and the Purpose of the human being is to examine these

structures to discover truth through the use of his reason, and thus, achieve Perfect knowledge.

The tension between the rationalism of Greek Philosophy and the theocentrism of Israelite Religion sets the context in which the Problem under study in this thesis will be examined. The interaction between reason and revelation between two different types of knowledge brings with it consequences in the unfolding of Jewish History. Some of which will be dealt with herein. Our concern will be Mordecai M. Kaplan's concept of Jewish History and response to modernity. These will be discussed with reference to Kaplan's Philosophical Precursors, Maimonides and Spinoza.

Leo Strauss discusses the tension between Naturalism and Supernaturalism in an article entitled, "The Mutual Influence of Theology and Philosophy." (24) Strauss points out that there can never be any absolute sacredness of any particular or contingent event when one speaks of Philosophy. In other words, history cannot be sacred. A comparison between Philosophy and theology reveals the tension between "theoria" (contemplation) and Piety. Strauss suggests that underlying the theological concern for Piety is the "Primeval identification of the good with the ancestral." (25) Since there is a large variety of so-called "divine" law, the whole notion of a singular divine code is problematic.

He proposes two solutions to this Problem. First: "The Philosophers transcend the dimension of divine codes

altogether, the whole dimension of Piety and of Pious obedience to a Pre-given code,"(26) in favor of a "free quest" for beginnings, or first Principles. On the basis of metaphysics, it is then possible to determine what is good by nature, as opposed to what is good by convention. The search for first Principles proceeds through sense Perception, reasoning and "noesis" (understanding or intellect). In the Philosophic context, this intellect is never separated from sense Perception or reason based on sense Perception "Philosophy never becomes oblivious of its kinship with the arts and crafts...with this humble but solid kind of knowledge."(27)

The theological Perspective however, is based on the Premise that there is ONE Particular divine code that is the singular divine code. Such a view implies a radical rejection of comparative mythology. It is a rejection of "moira".(28) Philosophy replaces this impersonal fate with a clear definition of nature and necessity. The Bible, however, views God as the cause of everything, including impersonal necessities. The Biblical Position is contingent on the acceptance of an omnipotent God. This omnipotent God must remain a mysterious God since to know God completely is to have Power over God. Because man has no Power over God, a covenant is created, a link to insure the free and mysterious action of love by God which corresponds to humanity's trust, or, faith (as opposed to the theoretical certainty of the Philosopher). Thus, we have in the conflict

between Philosophy and theology the tension between the experience of God and reasoning connected with sense Perception. Strauss suggests that Philosophy is begun by man's investigations, whereas, theology is initiated by God's revelation. In Philosophy the emphasis is on thought, viz. "creed". In theology, the emphasis is on deed.

With the above as background, we turn to a review of some of the Jewish intellectual responses to this Problem as they have been documented throughout Jewish Intellectual History. This will prepare the way for a critique of Naturalism and a discussion of Kaplan.

A First Attempt at Integration: Philo

The first example of a Philosophical attempt at an integration between Judaism and Greek Philosophy is with Philo Judeaus. For Philo, Philosophy was Biblical exegesis. For him, Philosophy was implicit in the Bible. His rootedness in Judaism is exemplified by the literary form of his writings which took the form of Commentaries on the Torah.

Philo reduces reality to two main factors: an active Divine cause, and matter. Philo's God is not the Greek "Pneuma" that fills the world, comparable to the Pantheism of the Stoics. Rather, Philo's conception of God is based on an idea of absolute transcendence. This conception is, however, viewed "as a rejection of Stoic materialism...(more than) a concept of a Personal God...(which is) completely missing." (30)

This view asserts that God is above knowledge, virtue, the good and the beautiful. In this sense, Philo's conception was anticipated by Plato's idealism. Plato was not totally successful at bridging the gap between his world of matter and his world of ideas. Philo makes this bridge, between the material world and God via a doctrine of intermediate beings, viz. LOGOS. It is through the Logos that God acts. Philo's "concept of divine Powers combines

the Platonic doctrine of ideas, the stoic "logoi Spermatikoi" which permeate the cosmos and Jewish Angelology." (31) The Logos is the unity of these three elements.

"Such an attempt to bridge the gap between a highly sublimated idea of God and the world of the senses, by interposing a series of intermediate steps which would convert an absolute opposition into one of degrees was to be repeated time and again in the history of metaphysics." (32) This dualism of God/Cosmos and Sensual/SuPrasensual represents a highly structured hierarchy. Man's role within this hierarchy is to free the self from corporeality to return to the heavenly source, which is very similar to Stoic ethics.

This anti-Passionate attitude is not so man can follow the laws of universal reason, to become master of the self, but, rather, to "liberate the soul from fetters of sensuality to fulfill heavenly destiny." (33) Guttman points out that Philo has an interesting paradox in his system. He asserts against the ideas of Stoic determinism the idea of man's freedom. And yet, at the same time, man is able to do good by his own power without the aid of God.

"The consciousness of man's moral freedom seems to be maintained against scientific determinism, but not in the face of the religious experience of man's impotence before God." (34) The channel through which man is able to develop this moral freedom is with "theoria". But this contemplative process differs from Aristotle in that it is restricted to

the sphere of religious knowledge. The knowledge gained from experience, empirical knowledge is a preparation for the higher level of knowledge of God. It is in this sense that Philo uses the method's and Principles of Greek science to advance his religious purposes. For him, true knowledge is religious knowledge. Thus, the philosophical knowledge of God is equal to the religious knowledge of God.

We see in this scheme the major elements of the reason/faith tension articulated and to a certain degree integrated via Philo's use of "intermediate" beings. This is, however, very distant from the ideas of historical Judaism. The notion of an ascent of the soul to the suprasensual world, an ideal culminating in a union with God is contrary to the ethical religion of Judaism which focuses on deeds within this world and their relation to the community. Philo's view is much closer to the world of mysticism, and in some ways is akin to Maimonides as will be presented below.

Along these same Philonic lines, revelation is not an historical event but a Process of individual Piety. This is very similar to Plato who attempts to combine mystical and moral religion. Philo asserts a dualistic religiosity: "Trustful submission to God is as important to (Philo) as the longing for mystical union with God.(35) He recognized the unique nature of an historical revelation and indeed did regard the Torah as absolute divine truth. But he attempts to fuse this truth with human experience and the

consequential knowledge it manifests.

Philo conceived God as the Mind of the universe: "Moses, both because he had attained the very summit of Philosophy, and because he had been divinely instructed in the greater and the most essential Part of nature's lore, could not fail to recognize that the universe must consist of two Parts, one Part active cause and the other Part Passive object; and that the active cause is the Perfectly Pure unsullied Mind of the universe, transcending virtue, transcending knowledge. the good itself and the beautiful itself; while the Passive Part is in itself incapable of life and motion, but when set in motion and snaped and quickened by Mind, changes into the most Perfect master Piece, namely this world."(36)

God is Being itself which is expressed in the benevolent orderliness of nature. God is immanent within the order of nature. He is the divine designer.(37) God is manifest through the Logos which is Present in the cosmos, in the Torah and in man. The Torah embodies God's law by which men are to live. "For the heavenly element in us is the mind...and it is the mind which Pursues the learning of the schools, and the other arts one and all, which sharpens and whets itself and trains and drills itself strong in the contemplation of what is intelligible by mind."(38)

We can draw some conclusions regarding Philo and his framing of the inter-relation between reason and revelation. His notion of the mystical encounter with God entails two

elements: 1) recognition of the experience of Prophetic inspiration, and; 2) the Hellenistic quest to flee from the "Prison of the Body and "bondage to the flesh." This Hellenistic concern is expressed in the fact that the Greek term for "body" and the Greek term for "tomb" have the same root. Philo introduces into Judaism two important notions for the eventual reason/faith controversy throughout all subsequent developments in Jewish Philosophy: 1) The dualism of Body and soul, and; 2) the idea of ascetic deprecation of the Physical experience of the world.

It took many generations for Philo's ideas to be absorbed into the Jewish fold. For our purposes a review of his system is important since he was the first to wrestle with the Problem of how to integrate Philosophy and Jewish wisdom into one singular truth. This goal became the hallmark of Medieval Jewish Philosophy. It is important to distinguish Philo in that his God is not the Demiurge of TIMAEUS nor the Unmoved Mover of Aristotle. Philo speaks of the Hebrew God of the Bible.

In his attempt to assert a supernatural hierarchy using a Philosophical basis, Philo attempts to turn the Bible into a Philosophic treatise. Although there are many contradictions within the Philonic system, according to Wolfson, the term Intelligible world, or Noetic Cosmos "is not known to have been used before (Philo)." (39) It is in this sense that he was the first to pose the basic Problem of reason and revelation for Philosophy and for the theology

of monotheistic religion.

Philo's Position of a Noetic Cosmos within the framework of Jewish historical tradition marked the intellectual beginning of Jewish medievalism. The medieval world, from the standpoint of intellectual history "sought to integrate all rational and moral sciences into one comprehensive system." (40) This was part of the attempt at a rational clarification of religious beliefs. Jewish medieval Philosophy encountered two central Philosophic entities that were the result of Islamic Philosophic endeavor. First, the Kalam which was a rational clarification of the authority of revelation. And, second, the Falasifa, which were expositions of the Philosophical classics of ancient Greece. Medieval Jewish Philosophy was influenced by and responded to these two phenomena.

According to Leon Roth, Jewish Philosophy could be defined as "the thinking and rethinking of the fundamental ideas involved in Judaism and the attempt to see them fundamentally, that is, in coherent relation, one with another, so that they form one intelligible whole." (41) This is distinct from Rabbinic Judaism in that throughout the Talmud, the Halachic and Aggadic literature there is an acceptance of contradiction, of mysterious premises from which religious ideology must flow. The search for a "coherent relation" between seemingly contradictory elements within the fabric of Judaism was of interest to Tanna and Amora, but it was not a matter of principle that all things

fit logically. Medieval Jewish Philosophy confronted the authority inherent in Rabbinic Judaism. At the same time, this Philosophy emerged as a response to strengthen loyalty to the Jewish religion among the members of an expanding Jewish commercial sector class in the Islamic world.(42) Thus, Philosophy was a response to change, and to the continuing need for survival.

Rabbinic Judaism was challenged in a number of ways. First, the Karaites had an interest in Philosophy. Second, the Muslims were asserting Muhammad's revelation as the definitive revelation. Third, the Zoroastrians and Manichaens were attacking monotheism as evil. And fourth, the Greek scientific/Philosophic world-view was attempting to explain the universe without the element of a supernatural, personal and creative God. Seltzer frames this challenge to Judaism: "Why should it not be possible to rely exclusively on the human intellect to attain the truth, rather than acknowledge as true a Prophetic revelation...?"(43)

We now turn to a selective review of the medieval Jewish responses to this question.

Medieval Roots and Responses

The first significant medieval Jewish Philosophical treatise was written by Saadia Gaon in 933 C.E. entitled, THE BOOK OF BELIEFS AND OPINIONS. This text marks the beginning of Jewish "science", a systematic attempt to construct a system of Judaism based upon Philosophic doctrine. Saadia bases his approach and method on the Mutazilite kalam model.

Saadia's apologetic defense of Judaism suggests four roots of human knowledge: 1) Sense experience, 2) the intuition of self-evident truths, 3) logical inference; and, 4) reliable tradition. From these four sources man is able to reconcile intellectual speculation with a confirmed doctrine of Jewish faith. Revealed religion has nothing to fear from Philosophical inquiry. For Saadia, the authority of divine revelation is only enhanced by rational arguments. At the same time, Saadia is concerned specifically with the truth of Judaism: only the Torah is divine, a Publically revealed doctrine. From this Particularistic standpoint, Saadia Posits an acceptance of the compatibility of reason and faith.(44)

Saadia bases his Jewish doctrine of God on the Mutazilite model: God exists. Reason leads to the conclusion that the cosmos had a starting Point in time. This means

that time is rational if one assumes a "beginning." Saadia, thus presents the first formulation of "creation ex nihilo" within a Jewish framework such that God is the single, incorporeal creator who is external to the universe. The language of the Bible, therefore, is metaphorical, describing God in human terms which can be grasped by the human intellect.(45)

Saadia delimits the laws of the Torah into two classes: those which are discovered by reason, and those which can be known only through revelation. The relation between these two types of laws is described in terms of the relation between reason and miracles: "The reason for our belief in Moses lies not in wonders or miracles only, but the reason for our belief in him, and all other prophets lies in the fact that they admonished us in the first place to do what was right, and only after we heard the prophet's message and found it was right did we ask him to produce miracles in support of it. If he performed them we believed in him, but if we hear his call and at the onset found him to be wrong, we do not ask for miracles, for no miracle can prove the (rationally) impossible."(46)

Saadia posits a paradoxical scheme that places God's foreknowledge and man's free choice in juxtaposition. Seltzer explains Saadia's reconciliation: "God knows in advance the outcome of man's deliberations, but ...God's knowledge does not cause or determine the outcome of human free choice, because God's knowledge is totally different

from man's."(47) In other words, "Omniscience is not the cause of human decisions but their result; the decisions themselves although foreseen by God, are arrived at independently of Him."(48)

The attempt by Saadia to offer "religious guidance in the language of Philosophy,"(49) underscores his concern that rational argument is useful in the process of refining tradition. "Saadia's commitment to rationalism is that of the Mutazilite Kalam: Although he is confident that reason cannot but confirm revelation, the results of reason are kept under control so as not to threaten any major element of religious belief. Saadia's faith in the power of the mind to solve all intellectual perplexities is that of the theologian, rather than the philosopher...Inasmuch as Saadia does not recognize that there may be metaphysical problems not fully resolvable by man, that reason may have its limits, and that fundamental religious doctrines may require radical reformulation; he can be called a dogmatic rationalist - dogmatic in his faith in reason as applied to religion."(50)

Saadia views revelation in terms of its pedagogic value.(51) This is understood in relation to the reasonableness of Judaism which "is so decisive that the real problem, to (Saadia) is not so much the question of whether or not revelation conforms to reason, but rather why revelation has been necessary at all. His answer is that without revelation mankind would have had to struggle some

time until reason prevailed. Revelation is not essentially superior, but historically prior to reason." (52)

Saadia offers a response to the spiritual confusion of his generation, and does so as the Rabbinite Protagonist in the struggle against the Karaites. His aim, to offer guidance when Judaism confronted intellectual and spiritual challenges is in concert with the intentions of his major treatise, to prove the thesis, "that intellectual speculation, if properly and patiently carried to its final conclusion, confirms the doctrines of Jewish Faith." (53)

The work of Saadia is significant for this study in that he represents a response to changing conditions, both intellectual and sociological. Also, he develops "a eudaemonistic ideal: the correct mode of life is that which leads to the satisfaction of man's needs and to the development of all his powers. The injunction to have a happy life, and the ethics of commandment and duty, stand side by side without any attempt at reconciliation...The ethical tendency of Saadia's rationalism corresponds to the Biblical conception of a personal creator-God and of a personal and moral relationship between man and God, even though he one-sidedly stresses the rational elements of Biblical religion. Saadia attempted to describe and establish the religious ideas of Judaism in a rational manner without altering their content." (54) Saadia set the stage for the eventual confrontation between Judaism and Aristotelianism. His attempt at integration, using the Kalam

as his model was the first attempt at a constructive interplay between conflicting intellectual and religious cultural factors.

Another response to the growing challenge of Philosophy was Jewish NeoPlatonism. This took many different forms. The NeoPlatonic systems reflected the common ideal of Biblical /Talmudical Literature of IMITATIO DEI which was also developed in Plato's THEAETETUS. This Proposal was based on two Principles: 1) Communion with God was equal to knowledge of the truth which was to be understood as systematic theoretical knowledge, and; 2) There is a distinction between right knowledge and right action.

These Principles which are found in Plato form the basis of Jewish NeoPlatonism.(55) Central to this is a monistic viewpoint: The absolute cause of everything is a Pure spiritual Principle, the One from which all other lower levels of existence emanate. On the other end of the spectrum, opposed to this spiritual Unity is the material world of change and decay.

Seltzer suggests that, "NeoPlatonism is not only a philosophical system, but a doctrine of salvation. Man's soul derived from the universal soul, can reascend to the upper, supernal world of the spirit by means of intellectual and spiritual Purification."(56)

What is central in the NeoPlatonic view is that the emanation from the spiritual One is NECESSARY. In contrast to this, traditional Judaism allowed, even insisted on a

CREATIVE will of God.(57)

At the same time, Aristotelianism "provided the Philosophical structure for the natural sciences of the middle ages." (58) This structure became the basis of the growth of the Kalam and the Jewish responses it encountered. In comparison, "Aristotelianism moves from observations of Processes in the natural world to metaphysics, whereas NeoPlatonism had dismissed the independent reality of Physical nature in its exclusive concern for the spirit." (59)

When one speaks of Aristotelianism and NeoPlatonism there are aspects of both that support religion and aspects that pose serious challenge. It is noteworthy that both confirm monotheism in the form of an incorporeal Principle: Aristotelianism in the positing of the Unmoved Mover and NeoPlatonism in the positing of a Divine One. Both recognize the existence of an independent soul which is able to exist independently of the body, viz. a concept of religious immortality. Both also possess an ideal of the human spirit which holds that it can be illuminated by God. Thus, there is a basis in both viewpoints for revelation. In addition to this, both provide arguments for the "rationality of religious ethics." (60) NeoPlatonism posits a freeing of the self from matter for the more perfect spiritual realm. Aristotelianism posits a discipline of the passions for the transcendence to the perfect mind.

The "greatest dilemma facing religious philosophers was

that in both Greek Philosophical systems, God is not a creative will, but an impersonal Principle." (61) Another is the fact that both Aristotelianism and Neoplatonism have no conception of the universe in time. There is no conceived beginning or end. The ideas of emanation and causation are viewed as "necessary, regular, automatic processes, not voluntary ones." (62) Finally, Greek Philosophy posited a basis for immortality, but one which is achieved by the intellect and not the will of moral action. Philosophy provided a basis for Prophecy, but as a natural process and not a mission." (63)

It is an attempt to solving these problems which forms the central core of medieval Jewish Philosophy from the Twelfth Century until the beginning of the Modern Period.

Judah Halevi is the first of this new generation of Jewish intellectualists. He had a unique philosophical system and was a celebrated Hebrew poet. Three central themes in his poetry and his other works are: 1) Pride in the election of Israel. 2) Grief in Israel's suffering. 3) A deep longing for redemption. These emotions are also found in his philosophy which "seeks to show that Judaism was the sole carrier of religious truth and the sole means of religious life, and that the Jewish people was the core of humanity, capable of realizing the religious life." (64)

Halevi presents these views in Kuzari, his apologetic work which attempts to elevate Judaism above the rational sphere. From this follows no attempt to identify Judaism

with rational truth since Judaism exclusively possesses the full truth. This truth posited a strong critique of philosophical knowledge and of math and logic. Halevi also denies the possibility of rational certainty, viz. metaphysics. Halevi's critique points at the confusion between genuine knowledge of math/logic and the pseudo-knowledge of metaphysics.(65)

The object of Halevi's enterprise was to critique Islamic Aristotelianism and the conclusions drawn by philosophy, while accepting philosophy's foundations. "He admits that the reduction of the world to a set of divine principles is also required by reason, and that philosophy with its proof of the unity of the divine cause of the world is superior to all other explanations of the world. Thus, the existence and uniqueness of God are also rational truths even if they are not capable of stringent proof, only the precise determination of the relationship between God and the world is beyond philosophic knowledge."(66) Halevi presents an antirationalism. And yet, he recognizes the rational truth in ethics, affirming the existence of a "rational although utilitarian morality, independent of revelation."(67)

For Halevi, the source of religious truth is revelation. The public nature of this documented experience excludes the possibility of error.(68) He argues that "if metaphysics were possible it would eventually embody religious truth just as revelation does. He differs from the

rationalists merely in contending that no such metaphysics does in fact exist.(69)

Opposed to his negative evaluation of metaphysics is a strictly supernatural concept of revelation. This supernatural conception is based on the view that the genuine religious life is a devotion toward achieving an "immediate communion"(70) between God and man. He does, however, deny the power of the intellect to bring about such a communion. History itself proves that prophecy and the communion with God are found exclusively outside the realm of the philosophers. For Halevi, philosophy can never find the way to God. The religious view claims that only God can initiate and show the path toward communion with Him. Thus, philosophy is pseudo religion. Whereas, revelation is the only way to achieve real communion with God, the philosophic communion is an illusion.

The pious man is driven to God "not by a desire for knowledge, but by his yearning for communion with him. He knows no greater bliss than the nearness of God, and no greater sorrow than separation from him. The yearning heart seeks the God of Abraham; the labor of the intellect is directed toward the God of Aristotle."(71) The God of the philosopher rests unmoved, "he knows nothing of man and does not care for him...the God of religion, on the other hand desires to elevate man to Himself." (72) Philosophy aims at the knowledge OF God whereas religion aims at life WITH God.

Judah Halevi views the ceremonial law as not an end in

itself . It is not to serve the moral and intellectual Perfection of man, as is argued by the Philosophers, but it serves a suPrarational PurPose to develop mans "disPosition for communing with God." (73)

In order for man to achieve this communion, Halevi posits a specifically religious faculty, a "suPraintellectual religious faculty." (74) which mediates the relationship with God. Along with this special faculty there is a suPernatural divine Providence which is manifested in reward and Punishment. This Providence exists for Israel only, not only in the biblical Past but into the Present that governs the scattered members of the Jewish People. (75)

At the highest level of human manifestation is a conception of the ideal moral Person much very like Plato's Philosopher/King. The Pious Man "rules over the Power of his soul in order to serve God through them, and to rise to the "angelic" highs of communion with God." (76) Such a man follows a completely harmonious life as ruler with total control over his soul. The notion of a religious faculty which makes this harmony Possible "rePresents a new species in the chain of being." (77)

Based on what has been said thus far we can establish two separate conceptions of divine activity within the Proposal of Judah Halevi. 1) God is the ultimate formal Principle of things. 2) God is the omniPotent will governing the course of the world. However, these two are "never

synthesized into an organic unity."(78)

Guttman states the inherent tension succinctly: "The rational concept of God understands Him from the viewpoint of his natural effects, while the Prophetic notion of God, since it is the expression of Prophetic experience, knows Him in the fullness and immediacy of His acts. But the same conception of the divine essence underlies both viewpoints. Judah Halevi's religious idea of God advances a new theory of divine action, not essence. The God of Abraham, to whom the soul cleaves in yearning and longing is conceived metaphysically in terms of the NeoPlatonic idea of God." (79)

Reason is useful to Halevi only because it indicates that an understanding of the world leads to the idea of a single divine cause. But this forms the basis of a paradox in Halevi: "Although critical of Philosophy, he offers in rebuttal a theory that explains the distinctiveness of Israel and biblical Prophecy in naturalistic, even biological terms."(80)

From the Philosophic standpoint, Nature is the cause. In Judaism, God is the cause and nature the effect. The impersonal God of Philosophy contrasts with the willfull God of Judaism. The whole idea of the Active Intellect was based on the meaning of Propositions, whereas in Judaism the acceptance of Prophecy-imagination was based on the meaning of concrete visions. Halevi's view of the inherent value of the ceremonial law is based on this perspective.

In contrast, to Saadia, Bahya and Maimonides, the test of value is rationality. From their standpoint, "the important laws of the bible are those known as the traditional commandments, would also turn out to be rational if we knew the reason why they were commanded. And in default of exact knowledge it is the business of the philosopher to suggest reasons. Bahya lays greatest stress upon the commandments (obligations) of the heart, i.e., upon purity of motive and intention, upon those laws which concern feeling and belief rather than outward practice. Judah Halevi's attitude is different. If the only thing important in religion were intention and motive and moral sense, why should Christianity and Islam fight to the death, shedding untold human blood in defence of their religion. As far as ethical theory and practice are concerned there is no difference between them. Ceremonial practice is the only thing that separates them. (64) And yet Halevi is opposed to asceticism because "every power and faculty must be given its due." (81)

Concerning the issue of free human will he is opposed to a fatalistic determinism. He attempts to reconcile divine causality with God's foreknowledge and he wrestles with the opposition between what is necessary and what is contingent and/or possible reality. Four classes of events are postulated: 1) Divine events which express the divine will. 2) Natural events which are natural elements striving for perfection and are secondary to the divine cause. 3)

Accidental events which are chance events, but also secondary causes. 4) Voluntary events that are expressions of the will of man. This means that "man chooses by his determination and yet God knows beforehand which way he is going to choose simply because he sees into the future as we remember the past." (82) We have a Paradox between a determined chain of free events (!)

In summation then, Halevi was not opposed to scientific knowledge. He argues that throughout Rabbinic Literature there is active cultivation of science, astronomy in connection to the calendar, anatomy, biology and Physiology. But it must be confined to the proper sphere. He was himself a Physician. This rational antirationalism claims that Judaism is not explained by intellect. Torah is suprarational in essence and, thus, Halevi sought to discredit any synthesis of Judaism and Philosophy. "He takes the stand of one who fights for his hearth and home against the attacks of foreign foes. He will not yield an inch to the adversary. He will maintain his own. The enemy cannot approach." (83)

Halevi also reflects the circumstances of his time. He must have sensed the consequences of the clash of Christian and Muslim armies on both ends of the Mediterranean for Spanish Jewry. Consequently, the focus on Zion as the symbol of Jewish survival and the ultimate affirmation of the election of Israel and her rightful place in history. This uniqueness of Israel is beyond the intellect. "The highest

goal for man is to attain true knowledge of the universe, through which one acquires purity of soul and eventually, union with the divine mind." (84)

The examples presented above set the stage for the full powered confrontation between Philosophy and Judaism. Each new era presented new challenges to Judaism and in each time period new thinkers confronted the tension between tradition and change. In a sense, throughout Jewish History there has been a recurring struggle in the search for a "contemporary Past."

The central categories and questions which comprise the first intellectual challenges to Judaism have been outlined. We now turn to a review and analysis of Maimonides. His work comprises a significant attempt at a synthesis of Judaism and Philosophy. His work, as will be argued below, initiates the primary elements of a synthesis which became the basis of Mordecai M. Kaplan's Reconstructionism.

Notes to: 1.Naturalism and Supernaturalism

1. See Ernst Cassirer. THE PHILOSOPHY OF SYMBOLIC FORMS. VOL.3, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1957

2. Julius Guttmann. THE PHILOSOPHIES OF JUDAISM. Translated by R.J. Zwi Werblowsky. New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1946, p.4.

3. IDEM.

4. See Particularly Ex.19:6; Deut.14:2,21;26:19 for examples of Israel as a "Holy People" obliged to follow the moral law.

5. See also Amos 3:1-2; Micah 6:8 for example.

6. This is discussed in many forms by the Israelite Prophets of the Eight Century B.C.E.

7. See Psalm 77:1

8. OP.cit. Guttmann. p.6.

9. See Exodus 24:9-11

10. Jack Cohen. THE CASE FOR RELIGIOUS NATURALISM. New York, Reconstructionist Press, 1958, p.26.

11. OP.cit. Guttmann. p.12.

12. OP.cit. Cohen. p.28

13. IDEM.

14. IBID. p.29

15. Judah Halevi. KUZARI. Quoted in THREE JEWISH PHILOSOPHERS. Ed. I. Heinemann. New York, Atheneum, 1979. p.33.

16. See Victor Tchernikover. HELLENISTIC CIVILIZATION AND THE JEWS. New York, Atheneum, 1977

17. This is discussed by Jacob B. Agus in the opening chapters of THE EVOLUTION OF JEWISH THOUGHT. London, Abelard-Schuman, 1959.

18. OP.cit. Guttmann. p.13

19. George Boas. RATIONALISM IN GREEK PHILOSOPHY. Baltimore, Johns-Hopkins Press, 1961. p.6

20. IBID. P. 180

21. IBID. P. 184

22. IBID. P. 189

23. Categ. XII, Meta. IV, Phys. VIII:7

24. Leo Strauss. "The Mutual Influence of Theology and Philosophy," in MODERN JUDAISM. Vol. III, 1979. P. 111-118

25. IBID. P. 111

26. IBID. P. 112

27. IDEM.

28. Op. cit. Guttman

29. Op. cit. Strauss

Notes to: A First Attempt at Integration

30. Op. cit. Guttman. P. 25

31. IBID. P. 23

32. IDEM.

33. IBID. P. 27

34. IDEM.

35. IBID. P. 28

36. Philo. ON THE CREATION, in Robert Seltzer. JEWISH PEOPLE JEWISH THOUGHT. New York, Macmillan, 1980. P. 209

37. SPECIAL LAWS I. 33-35, IDEM.

38. ON THE GIANTS. 60, IBID. P. 211

39. H.A. Wolfson. PHILO. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1948. P. 227

40. Op. cit. Seltzer. P. 373

41. Leon Roth. "Is there Jewish Philosophy?" in Raymond Goldwater, Ed. JEWISH PHILOSOPHY AND JEWISH PHILOSOPHERS. London, Hillel Foundation, 1962. P. 11

42. Op. cit. Seltzer. P. 375

43. IBID. P. 376

Notes to: Medieval Roots and Responses

44. OP. cit. Seltze

45. OP. cit. Guttman. P. 70-71

46. Quoted in A. Altman, Trans. in THREE JEWISH PHILOSOPHERS.

47. OP. cit. Seltzer. P. 380

48. OP. cit. Guttman. P. 72

49. OP. cit. Altman. P. 16

50. Samuel Atlas. "The Contemporary Relevance of the Philosophy of Maimonides," in CCAR Year Book, 1954. P. 194-195

51. OP. cit. Guttman. P. 63

52. OP. cit. Altman. P. 18

53. IDEM.

54. OP. cit. Guttman. P. 71, 73

55. OP. cit. Seltzer. P. 382

56. IBID. P. 383

57. IDEM

58. IDEM.

59. IDEM

60. IBID. P. 384

61. IBID. P. 385

62. IDEM.

63. IBID. P. 386

64. OP. cit. Guttman. P. 121

65. IDEM.

66. IBID. P. 122-123

- 67. IDEM.
- 68. KUZARI. I, 84.
- 69. Op. cit. Guttman.
- 70. IBID. P. 124
- 71. IBID. P. 125
- 72. IDEM.
- 73. IBID. P. 126
- 74. IBID. P. 128
- 75. IDEM.
- 76. IBID. P. 129
- 77. IBID. P. 130
- 78. IBID. P. 133
- 79. Op. cit. Seltzer. P. 391
- 80. Isaac Husik. A HISTORY OF MEDIEVAL JEWISH PHILOSOPHY. New York, Atheneum, 1976. P. 167
- 81. IBID. P. 168.
- 82. IBID. P. 173
- 83. IBID. P. 133
- 84. Op. cit. Seltzer. P. 389.

2. A MEDIEVAL ATTEMPT AT SYNTHESIS: MAIMONIDES

Moses Maimonides (Moses Ben Maimon) also known by the acronym RMBM was the leading Jewish intellectualist of medieval Jewry. He was very critical of his Philosophical Predecessors and utilized the works of the Muslim Aristotelians such as al-Farabi and Avicenna. Maimonides' rationalism reflected the rigorous scientific concerns of Spanish Jewish culture.

Throughout the writings of RMBM one finds a consistent Pursuit toward the notion that Philosophy and religion lead to the same truth. Two central Principles stand in relation within the total corpus of his work: 1) Nothing in Judaism could contradict reason; and, 2) Jewish Monotheism Posed specific challenges to Greco-Arabic Philosophy. To develop these issues, RMBM avoided apologetics at all costs. He faced every and all seeming contradictions within Jewish Tradition and found a niche for all troublesome notions.

RMBM inserted into Judaism a Principle of inner consistency. "Religious faith required not just outward consent, but a conviction that the truths of faith have been rationally demonstrated to the fullest extent Possible." (1) The attempt to unify religion and Philosophy was not viewed as the reconciliation of two opposing Powers. In spite of the surface differences between them "he does not consider

Philosophy as something alien or external to religion, something that needs some adjustments and adaptations in order to effect a reconciliation. On the contrary; the relationship between the two is essentially one of identity, and its demonstration is Maimonides' main concern."⁽²⁾ This means that Philosophy was to be framed as the single means for the "internal approbation" of the content of revelation.

Religious faith is a Particular form of knowledge.⁽³⁾ Maimonides argues that traditional faith is based on historical knowledge which gains its content in an external and indirect manner. Philosophy, however, suggests that the objects of religious faith are immediately apprehendable. This intellectualist concept of faith equates the degrees of Philosophic knowledge with the degrees of religious certainty. Thus, the religious inwardness is dependent on the development of the Philosophic understanding.⁽⁴⁾ Philosophy then is the central cornerstone of religion itself. The Philosophic task is a religious task and this pathos of religious rationalism is presented in the GUIDE FOR THE PERPLEXED.

There is an awareness of the circumstances of his time running through his system. He states at the beginning of the GUIDE his intention to obscure his position. This perhaps reflects his concern for those Jews who would not follow his insight and would be undermined by its force.

There is a vast literature which attempts to interpret the relation between his Halachic writings and his

Philosophical works. And the generations following RMBM became enveloped in controversy about the "Perplexities" of the GUIDE. Harvey discusses the return of Maimonideanism(5) within the scope of contemporary Jewish Philosophy: Maimonides revolutionized normative Judaism in his legal works and Jewish Philosophy in his GUIDE. Differing views of his enterprise abound.

Wolfson, like Luzzatto and Ahad Ha'am rejected Maimonideanism because it subjugated Judaism to Reason. Other writers attempt to read Maimonides Philosophically. For example, Maimonideanism for Leon Roth meant monotheism, and monotheism meant rationalism, universalism, and ethics.(6) He identified with RMBM on the notion that religion has intellectual content. Roth also was inspired by what he interpreted as Maimonidean universalism as opposed to religious coercion by the state.

Yeshayahu Leibowitz Proposes that Maimonides is anti-humanistic. "Roth claimed that monotheism makes ethics possible. Leibowitz declares that ethics is an atheistic category since it concerns man's status before man, not God." (7) Leibowitz also critiques the definition of Maimonides as a rationalist and moralist, "since for Maimonides reason, like morality is never more than a means to the service of God." (8) He views RMBM as a mystic.

Leibowitz suggests that Maimonides discussed Judaism on two levels, the "mystical" and the "utilitarian." The distinction between them however, is blurred. From his view,

in every age the true service of God entails rebellion against utilitarianism and anthropocentrism.

Another contemporary attempt to read Maimonides Philosophically is found in MAIMONIDES: TORAH AND PHILOSOPHIC QUEST by David Hartman. A review of this text will present both the central elements of Maimonides' system and Hartman's view that Maimonides chose "the way of integration."

Maimonides lived his life in the pursuit of truth. The truth he sought was the result of a world in crisis. The confrontation between Greek Reason and Hebrew Faith can be approached in four principle ways: 1) Insulation; 2) Dualism; 3) Rejection, and; 4) Integration. Hartman's Plan is to look at Maimonides from the perspective of "integration." His understanding of RMBM appears to be grounded in the idea that Tradition is intelligible via a "universal framework of intelligibility." (9)

Hartman wants to understand Maimonides in terms of Maimonides. He rejects Husik's view of Maimonides as an Aristotelian, as well as Strauss' focus on RMBM's Political categories a la Plato. For Hartman, their view of reason/revelation as an "either/or" Proposition is unfounded and unnecessary.

Based on his unconditional acceptance of the Jewish ideal of the "Primacy of action," Hartman sets out on his work: "The Primacy of action is not weakened by the contemplative ideal;...the contemplative ideal is not

insulated from Halakah, but affects it in a new manner. Sinai is not a mere stage in man's spiritual development, but the ultimate place to which man constantly returns - even when he soars to the heights of metaphysical knowledge." (10)

Hartman's first response deals with the variety of responses that are possible to the conflict of Halakah and Philosophy. The essential axiom for Hartman's understanding of RMBM's response is that individual excellence (which develops in connection with reason) can emerge within a tradition that is heavily concerned with community. Hartman points to Maimonides's sensitivity to Aggadah and the symbolic nature of Scripture. The two linguistic forms, Halacha and Aggadah, have separate purposes. Halacha is direct, explicit and expresses a democratic attitude because it serves to guide the community. (So, claims Hartman Maimonides does not explicate the Halacha in his legal work, except for the beginning of the Mishne Torah.) Aggadah, on the other hand, is highly symbolic, and it expresses the deeper spirit of Jewish Identity with profound meaning to the individual, that is, it is open to a variety of meanings.

This distinction between types of knowledge suggests Maimonides' "Greek" tendencies. He seems also to be pointing to a two-sided approach to learning. There is the study of the Law as a set of symbols which assists persons in their "ultimate task" to know God as part of a community. And,

there is the understanding of the Law from a rational perspective. Both, obedience of the Law and the understanding of its purpose are necessary in Hartman's assessment of Maimonides. "The risk of a religious, legal tradition is that man may focus on what one must or must not do, and forget or misunderstand for whom these actions are performed."⁽¹¹⁾ Thus, there is a difference between piety and knowledge of God. The obedience of the law devoid of intellectual affirmation of God's existence is inadequate for "God's reality (extends) beyond the structure of the Law."⁽¹²⁾

In Hartman's view, Maimonides did not undermine the Law, but, rather he insisted on a "rational fence" around it. Hartman has given a reasonable argument against the radical separation of Maimonides' philosophic and halachic endeavors. If in fact Maimonides "was aware that one could become enamoured and totally preoccupied with details of Halacha at the expense of knowledge of God,"⁽¹³⁾ then it does make sense that Maimonides had a wholistic aim in mind. Maimonides, according to Hartman has a new vision of the relationship between the halachic and aggadic categories which is called "philosophical spirituality."

Based on the view that Halacha is enriched by the philosophical understanding of God, Maimonides played down the "reward" system of action where obedience to the Law brings reward. Philosophy however, raises the individual from worship out of "Yirah", fear, to worship out of

"Ahavah", love. Thus, the quality of the divine encounter is no longer a reciprocal experience; it becomes an experience of pure love. In response to the biblical relationship of man and God in RECIPROCITY, and the biblical eschatology of the collective, Maimonides articulates in the GUIDE, taken together with the MISHNE TORAH that the divine relationship can encompass the pursuit of individual excellence along with a deep commitment to community. The concept of "Olam Ha-bah" is expanded to include pure love of God via "the human joy of intellectual understanding."⁽¹⁴⁾ So, Hartman derives a new Jewish definition of human joy out of Maimonides' system of reconciliation. This view is not unknown to Greek Philosophy. This dual notion of human joy which derives out of man's dualistic nature dominates Greek thought. This does however, make Maimonides more of an Aristotelian than I presume Hartman wishes to acknowledge.

It is upon this view of the dualistic nature of man, that Maimonides justifies a dualistic aspect of the Law itself: "din" - law which defines the line of legal requirement, and "lifnim mi-shurat ha-din"- law which is beyond the line of legal requirement. The Hasid and the Am Ha-aretz differ in their approach to action and their understanding of God. The Hasid understands the Law not only as authority, but also based on the study of Physics and Metaphysics.

The statement that one cannot be a Hasid without philosophical knowledge of God becomes a cornerstone of

Hartman's further explication of Maimonides.. He describes the difference of understanding of the Am Ha-aretz and the Hasid. For the Am Ha-aretz, the "legal category of "din" channels one's Perceptions of God within the particular Juridical relationship of God to Israel...(the Hasid knows, however) that when the boundaries of man's Perceptions of God are expanded, he discovers that the very existence of all men reflects an ethical attribute of God."(15) This sounds very Kantian, even Spinozistic and is perhaps more Hartman than RMBM. What is clear, however, is that Maimonides does see the Halachic category of "lifnim mi-shurat ha-din" as evidence for behavior that "transcends the motivations of self-interest and legal obligations based on reciprocity."(16) In fact, I believe Hartman is correct in singling this element out to support Maimonides' view of Tradition which enhances and supports a Process of individual Perfection. It is this Principle of Halacha that points to the recognition of a Personal, moral disposition which stands both within and beyond the scope of obligatory action. Moses was such a Person who exemplified both the highest degree of Philosophic knowledge and the deepest understanding of humility.

Hartman's view thus far is that Maimonides did not just append the spirit of Greek thought on to Tradition, but, rather, he attempts to show the definite reality of Philosophical spirit in the Tradition itself. At this point, Hartman's study blossoms into a provocative analysis

entitled, "Reason and Traditional Authority within Halacha and Philosophy."

Maimonides Possessed a revolutionary view of the Telos of Halacha: to create ideal conditions for the realization of "intellectual love" of God. This means that commitment shall be based on understanding. This is, of course, a reversal of the Scriptural ideal of "Na'aseh V'nishmah." In Hartman's view of Maimonides, blind obedience is only Plausible when Demonstrative Reason cannot offer certainty.

The Sinaitic Tradition is based upon the continuance of the Oral Tradition and its quality of Divine authority. Philosophy is also based upon an oral tradition but it is upheld by Demonstrative Argument. Couched within this view is the notion that Sinai Produced both a legal and a Philosophical tradition which suggests the imperative for loyalty to both Law and Reason.

The goal for the Jewish Philosopher, therefore, will be to develop epistemological guidelines to identify beliefs that derive from Traditional authority, and beliefs that derive from the universal community of rational men: "The condition for embracing Philosophy and Judaism will be the ability to discern the epistemological status of different types of statements."⁽¹⁷⁾ This "extraordinary knowledge" will prevent any confusion when distinguishing claims based on the authority of Tradition and claims based on reason. This shows Maimonides' recognition of both Philosophical and religious truths. Philosophical Speculation does have its

own limitations however, for there is great danger of ignoring the fact that speculative argument is distinct from demonstrative proof. Maimonides' criticism of Aristotle derives from this word of caution. Aristotle's speculative notion of Eternity would make the Law void. In response, Maimonides expresses the necessity of the event of creation and the recognition of Judaism's acceptance that certain things cannot be apprehended or demonstrated.

Even in the face of the serious possibility of mistaking speculative argument for demonstrative reason, Maimonides encourages his students to develop their rational abilities without fear of contradicting Traditional authority. The student who applies Maimonides' three-part criteria for the acquisition of knowledge - sense-data, reason, and authority - will not run into confusion. Hartman then concludes this treatment with a somewhat troubling statement: "The student of Torah (who follows Maimonides' criteria) knows when he must demonstrate allegiance to his tradition and when he is free to follow independent reason."⁽¹⁸⁾ Unlike Hartman, and like many others, I submit that it is sweeping to conclude that Maimonides calls for the subordination of Tradition. Hartman's interpretation would make individual Providence primary to communal identity and it is the "peoplehood" of the Jews in history which is the central datum of the Jewish Experience. Hartman's reading of Maimonides interprets him as an elitist. Although Hartman points to Maimonides' assertion of

the Possibility of making reasonable choices between the imperatives of Tradition and the imperatives of reason, the Process of making such choices has yet to be explained.

Hartman calls this Process "the Philosophic religious sensibility." The description of this Proceeds first with a review of Aristotle. The Aristotelian idea of the universality of demonstrative truth was accepted by Maimonides. In fact, it may have been this very concept that moved Maimonides to an attempt at integration of Judaism and Philosophy. Beyond the Paths of divine service that are employed by Particular religious communities there is the rational, universal way to God.

The Problem for the Jew is how to both accept the Particular Halachic way to God and also accept the Possibility of a spiritual way that extends beyond the membership in Israel. The crux for Maimonides, and for all generations after him is how the individual can rethink the communal way based on Tradition after he has discovered the universal way of reason. Maimonides' answer is that Torah as a way of life must be intelligible within a set of universal Principles of evaluation.

Scholem reads RMBM and contends that the "intrinsic disparity" of Philosophy and Judaism is implicit in Maimonides. In response, Hartman claims that the Philosophic chapters in the MISHNE TORAH can only be understood to prevent Halacha from becoming insulated from universal criteria of truth. And, likewise, the inclusion of the Law

in the GUIDE suggests a ground for a Philosophically trained Jew to take Halacha seriously.

For Maimonides, Reason is capable of developing norms of action based on a conception of human nature. If reason will play a role for the Jew, the Law must agree with reason's understanding of human nature. For the religious person, both Torah and intellect can be valid responses to the human longing for divine guidance. In this statement is the recognition that the religious world-view "does not negate the concept of nature in order to establish immediacy with God."⁽¹⁹⁾ Thus, the commandments which are given to nurture human nature reflect a RATIONAL Lawgiver, not the will of a demanding God. In this way, Maimonides points to a parallel between Torah and Nature.

Man himself reflects the dual perfection of Torah/Nature with the dualism of Body and Soul. And the Torah speaks to these distinct and unique entities in man. Torah responds to both body and soul in its attempt to raise humanity from an anthropocentric to a theocentric concept of religious life. We see here Maimonides' focus on a teleological principle within Judaism itself. The Law implies a teleology - as does nature.

God has given Torah to Man so that man can change through a process of education and self-discipline. God works through man as opposed to the Greek conception of the separation between God and creation. Maimonides is not, therefore, trying to Hellenize the Tradition, but to show

that the truth of God's love for humanity is expressed by the Law. In this view, the Guide must have been written simply to show that Nature and Torah reveal the same God - as a response to Philosophy which limited God to nature alone.

The final chapter of Hartman's book distills the work of the previous chapters. He points to Maimonides' recognition of the difference between knowledge which enhances self-realization and knowledge which enhances man's passionate love of God.

The Process of self-realization includes more than the mastery of natural and divine sciences. One must also gain high levels of worship as a result of knowledge. Philosophy enables one to become a "Passionate lover of God," as is expressed in Maimonides' interpretation of Psalm 91. "The intoxicated lover of God represents the Philosopher who strives to eliminate any distraction from the joy of the intellectual love of God." (20) This highest spiritual ideal is called "Hoshek." The realization of this brings about a serious reconsideration of one's total way of life, for human involvement may impinge upon one's active love for God. This almost sounds like the Path of the mystic. The actual meaning of Maimonides' "Intellectual love" is not completely revealed. Does this mean God becomes an idea of the intellect? Or does the idea of "loving God" take the place of serving God?

Hartman attempts to show that the "intellectual love of

God" recognizes both God as an idea and God as the Creator. Loving God does not replace serving God because of the intrinsic value of the Halacha. Hartman concludes his analysis of Maimonides' grand Project of integration by recognizing that Maimonides strove for a "total commitment" for the Jew where "intense love for a Particular way of life need not entail intellectual and spiritual indifference to that which is beyond one's own tradition." (21) Thus, Maimonides paved the way for Jewish exploration of the secular universe as a necessary element of living in a Jewish universe. Jewish universalism has its earliest expression, albeit between the lines with RMBM.

This response by RMBM to the Reason/Faith relation which at one time Proclaims the Particularity of the Jewish Community of People, at the same time Posits a Universalism of thought. Many Jewish thinkers since his time have considered the GUIDE as as a "thesaurus of Philosophical thought," (22) Particularly Spinoza, Mendelssohn, Solomon Maimon and Hermann Cohen. Spinoza bases much of his work as a response to RMBM. The same eros exists in both thinkers.

Samuel Atlas defines Maimonides' rationalism as a "critical rationalism." (23) He suggests that rationalism implies the belief in human reason which he equates with Progress. Belief in reason makes possible belief in Progress. Progress is an ethical category. Maimonides considered the striving for the cognition of existence, unity, and incorporeality of God as a Positive commandment.

He Posits a belief in reason.

The biblical commandment, "know thy God" means that one must intellectually comprehend the essence of monotheism.(24) Since man CAN achieve it he is morally bound to strive for it. In addition to this, the unity of God implies the unity of man. This "conception of an abstract unity of God is grounded in an idealistic epistemology...that the basic Principles of cognition are not to be found in the sense but in...concepts of thought." (25) Atlas describes this important Principle that reflects the revolution to Modernity: "The Kantian derivation of the reality of the freedom of the will from the categorical imperative: "Thou shalt, therefore thou canst", can be reversed with reference to Maimonides' derivation of the moral obligation of the striving for metaphysical cognition from the rational capacity of man and formulated thus: "Thou canst, therefore thou shalt.""(26)

The notion of Progress is thus defined: it is essential, and "absolutely indispensable for ethical life."(27) Science is based on the Possibility of Progress, that there is an ordered cosmos. Newton and Leibniz thought that the world was a manifestation of a supreme mind, and Spinoza Posited it as an attribute of God. "... the work of science is impossible without the assumption of one of these three metaphysical ideas: first, that the world was created; second, that it is the manifestation of a supreme being; or, that the world, though in itself not orderly, does not

resist the imposition of law and order by the human mind, and that law is capable of establishing order out of Chaos." (28) The Parallel of the idealism of concept with the idealism of action is an ethical idealism here described by Atlas to be "...implied in Maimonides' conception of the ethical attributes as the only positive attributes which we are allowed to ascribe to God." (29)

With regard to Maimonides' conception of man, like his conception of God, the creative capacity is of primary importance. His discussion of the passage in Jeremiah 9:22-23 forms the basis of his construction of a scale of values: the acquisition of wealth, bodily perfection, wisdom, mastery over one's passions, and the intellectual comprehension of the essence of God. (30) But there is a higher value to which man must strive: "The Prophet does not content himself with stating that the knowledge of God is the highest kind of perfection, for if this had been his intention, he would have said, "But in this let him who glorieth glory, that he that understandeth and knoweth me," and would have stopped there; or he would have said, "that he understandeth and knoweth me that I am one," or "that I have not any likeness,"...or a similar phrase. He says, however, that man can glory only in the knowledge of God and in the knowledge of His ways and attributes, which are His actions...We are thus told in this passage that the divine acts which ought to be known, and ought to serve as a guide for our actions, are lovingkindness, judgement, and

righteousness. Another very important lesson is taught by the additional phrase "in the earth". It implies a fundamental Principle of Law...It teaches, as has been taught by the greatest of all wise men in the words, "The earth is the Lord's"(Ex 9:29), that His Providence extends to the earth in accordance with its nature, in the same manner as it controls the heavens in accordance with their nature. This is expressed in the words, "That I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgement, and righteousness in the earth (Jer. ibid). The Prophet thus, in conclusion says:..."My object is that you shall practice lovingkindness, judgement, and righteousness in the earth." In a similar manner we have shown that the object of the enumeration of God's thirteen attributes is the lesson that we should acquire similar attributes and act accordingly." (31)

From this we can conclude that Maimonides held the intellectual contemplation of God secondary to the higher ideal of imitatio dei, such that the ultimate value is not contemplation but active creation. It was Spinoza who followed the contemplative ideal to its final and complete conclusion, as will be presented below. Maimonides injects into Judaism the normative principle of creative initiative being of primary ethical importance for a fulfilled life, and a recognition of Jewish Particularism within a context of intellectual universalism.

Notes to: A Medieval Attempt at Synthesis

1. Op.cit. Seltzer. P. 395
2. Op.cit. Guttman. P. 155
3. GUIDE FOR THE PERPLEXED. I. 50
4. IBID. III. 51
5. Warren Zev Harvey. "The Return of Maimonideanism," in JEWISH SOCIAL STUDIES. Fall 1983.
6. IBID. P. 255
7. IBID. P. 257
8. IDEM.
9. David Hartman. MAIMONIDES: TORAH AND PHILOSOPHIC QUEST. Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1976. P. 19
10. IBID. P. 26
11. IBID. P. 63
12. IBID. P. 64
13. IDEM.
14. IBID. P. 79
15. IBID. P. 94
16. IDEM.
17. IBID. P. 130
18. IBID. P. 136
19. IBID. P. 158
20. IBID. P. 191
21. IBID. P. 214
22. Op.cit. Atlas. P. 186
23. IBID. P. 187
24. IBID. P. 188

25. IBID. P. 190

26. IBID. P. 189

27. IBID. P. 198

28. IDEM.

29. IBID. P. 190

30. GUIDE. III. 54

31. IDEM.

3. THE CARTESIAN FAUX PAS

In the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, the Philosophical ground-work for the advent of Modernity was set in motion. Randall suggests that Modern Philosophy begins with Descartes. His first works in 1637 began the reign of his Philosophy of nature. His Philosophy was a Proposal for a New Science. The new science, which was advanced in many regions of Europe responded to the seemingly futile conclusions of metaphysics, shifted study to the world itself. Such an "intrusion" of science had happened many times in the four Prior centuries.

It was Descartes who first rendered the Aristotelian world-view as dead. The world according to the New Science was fundamentally mathematical and mechanical. Descartes wanted, however, to exceed his Predecessors and devise not just a scientific method but a total Philosophical system that answered all the questions. "Hence, Descartes became the symbol of the utter rejection, not only of the "errors of the Schools," of Aristotelian Physics, but also of all the various abortive attempts of the Renaissance to interpret nature as essentially like man - to display man as natural and nature as human. Far from being macrocosm and microcosm, the two were henceforth to be sharply sundered."(1)

Although in the Seventeenth Century no one would have distinguished too deeply between natural Philosophy and first Philosophy, Descartes was primarily a mathematical Physicist not a Philosopher. He envisioned a universal mathematics which would be applicable to any and all subject-matter. His system conceived of the world as pure Geometry, pure extension, thus, completely intelligible. His was a radical, exclusive new Philosophy of nature in terms of nothing but matter and motion. In 1644, his work *PRINCIPLES OF PHILOSOPHY* claimed to explain the total phenomenology of nature.

There are many aspects of Cartesian Physics of interest here since they influenced the subsequent generations of pre-modern and modern thinkers. His example of formulating natural laws in mathematical terms was very important. But he knew that his analytic geometry could only explain the general picture. Each particle of motion would have to be explained to get a clear and detailed picture of nature itself. He was certain that everything was produced by mathematical contact, but the details were beyond the capacity of man. "And thus, the very magnitude of a completely deductive science drove Descartes, as it drove Newton, to another and more modest goal. Only God the perfect Geometer could know the details of the pure space or extension out of which he created the world." (2)

Descartes' zeal for a mathematical formulation suggests his awareness of its limitations. The new science would only

be accepted with a metaphysics to go with it. He turned to the Augustinian theory of knowledge and metaphysics, because its Platonic branding had always supported a mathematical interpretation of nature.

He proceeds to find a criterion for certainty. He does so by inquiring into what it is that makes an idea indubitable. He selects the indubitable Principle of, "Cogito, ergo sum." The existence of one's own conscious existence is indubitable. This is because the idea is clearly and distinctly conceived. This is a step toward certainty based on a sort of intuitive knowledge which has its source in God. Thus, his proposal of the rule of self-evidence.

"This "clear and distinct conception," or intellectual intuition, is for Descartes thoroughly Augustinian in character: "Intuitive knowledge is an illumination of the soul, whereby it beholds the light of God those things which it Pleases him to reveal to us by a direct impression of the divine clearness on our understanding, which in this is not considered as an agent, but only as receiving the rays of divinity." (From "Lettre au Marquis de Newcastle, March or April, 1648; Adam et Tannery, V, 136.)"(3) Descartes' system remains a mathematical system based on self-evident axioms.

Randall Presents Hobbes' objection to this which is clearly to the point: "The term "great mental illumination" is metaphorical, and consequently is not adapted to the general purposes of argument. Moreover, anyone who is free

from doubt claims to Possess a similar illumination, and in his will there is the same inclination to believe that of which he does not doubt, as in that of one who truly knows. Hence, while this illumination may be the cause that makes a man obstinately defend or hold some opinion, it is not the cause of his knowing it to be true. ("Third Set of Objections to Meditations, Objection 13; Maldane and Ross, II,75)"(4)

Descartes Posits his "certainty" by evaluating the existence of a Perfect creator, who would not create man so as to deceive him. He defends this by saying that the idea of Perfection must imply the Possibility of Perfection and therefore it would be absurd that man can conceive of Perfection if the Perfect cause of the idea of Perfection did not exist. He also puts forward a formulation of Anselm's argument. The idea of a supreme being must include existence as one of its own Perfections. He adds to this the Prefection of infinite Power. God is thus the guarantor of the mathematically intelligible world. However, "Descartes' proofs of the existence of God are really proofs of the fixed mathematical order of nature, which cannot be proved, as any proof would have to assume it." (5)

It was Spinoza who later made the truth of intuition an axiom. Randall thus points out that Descartes' logical realism inadequately accounts for the Problem of error. Truly a faux pas.

Descartes system, although responsive to the Pursuit of

truth leaves the condition of man almost as an afterthought. What remains is an inescapable dualism between a mathematically explainable body and the rest of the unexplainable elements are delegated to the soul. These two elements are distinct and exclusive of one another. This "Cartesian Dualism" reflects those parts of the universe that his science could explain and those which were unexplainable. This is left unresolved in the Cartesian - Newtonian world-view.

It is with Spinoza that these inherent contradictions are confronted and re-cast, although radically with some degree of resolution.

Notes to: The Cartesian Faux Pas

1. John Herman Randall, Jr. THE CAREER OF PHILOSOPHY. New York, Columbia University Press, 1962. P. 372

2. IBID. P. 377

3. IBID. P. 388

4. IDEM.

5. IBID. P. 389

4. A Pre-Modern Attempt at Synthesis: Spinoza

Spinoza engages in an all-out critique of revealed religion. This is specifically directed at Judaism in the THEOLOGICAL-POLITICAL TRACTATE. Basically, Spinoza argued that religious tenets could only be judged on the basis of reason. His critique, similar to Abraham Ibn Ezra and La Peyrere rejected the Mosaic authorship of the Torah and the total possibility of Prophecy.

From the point of view of this rational metaphysics, there is no place for supernatural events. The bible is a human document. Nature is governed by eternal necessary decrees of God so that nothing can be contrary to natural law. In this sense, God is equal to nature since God determined nature lawfully. Therefore, Scripture is to be studied like nature is to be studied.

Concerning human happiness Spinoza develops a rationalistic method in his work, ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE UNDERSTANDING. His aim is to find the Summum Bonum. He first rejects divine authority, knowledge gained from sense perception and deductive knowledge based on limited knowledge. "True knowledge by which one could achieve genuine happiness is reached through perceiving things solely through their essences or proximate causes." (1)

In response to Descartes, Spinoza posits that Cartesian

doubt disappears as soon as one has a clear and distinct, or adequate idea of God. Such definitions are mathematical and, therefore, there is no room for doubt. This "geometrical" Philosophy is developed in the ETHICS.

God/Nature is Substance, which is defined as "that which is in itself, and is conceived through itself," namely, *Natura Naturans*, or, creative nature.(2) God/Nature is the only possible substance and all which is in the world is an aspect of God. These aspects are conceived by human beings in terms of two of God's knowable attributes: Thought and Extension.

Wolfson suggests that Spinoza's Pantheistic conclusions are the result of his pondering medieval discussions of whether there could be two Gods and whether God is different from the world.(3) Following the implications of Descartes' two kinds of substances: creative (God) and created (mind/matter), Spinoza concluded that only God can be substantial. Everything else is a qualification of Him. This monistic view posits that nothing could be different than it is. The creative will of God which was so much the central concern of medieval religious Philosophy is a moot point in Spinoza's reductionistic approach.

In Book I of the ETHICS Spinoza presents his argument that God is not a purposeful being and that "teleology" is merely a projection of human striving. God lacks nothing, needs nothing and tends toward nothing. He simply exists in and through Himself.

Book II rejects Descartes' dualism and the notion that mind is the idea of the body is presented. Roth suggests that Spinoza's monistic rejection of the Cartesian dualism is similar to Maimonides' rejection of the Kalam and argues that RMBM is a major influence in Spinoza's early work in the ETHICS.(4)

For Spinoza the highest form of knowledge is to see everything as an eternal, logical system. Complete intuitive knowledge is only totally possessed by God. Complete understanding of the universe would entail the knowledge of the infinite idea of God which humans can only approach. In this sense, Spinoza suggests that human beings, through attaining knowledge, to some extent, become God, or God-like.

Spinoza's conception of freedom is of central interest. Hobbes suggests that freedom is an artificial condition based on the desire for self-preservation. Human bondage is caused by causes we do not understand. Understanding these causes and the making of a social contract lead to freedom. For Spinoza, freedom consists not in being uncaused, but in being determined by oneself alone, or being self-caused, i.e. not to be controlled by one's passions but by the laws of our own nature. Thus, understanding one's own nature, which will give rise to freedom is the highest good, where human beings are no longer captives to external events. So, Spinoza's ultimate aim is to develop a system where the intellectual love of God gives rise to supreme, unending happiness. In this sense, Spinoza defines salvation as

complete wisdom. Man must concentrate on the logical order of the universe in order to achieve self-improvement which is to achieve blessedness or salvation. Nature contains all the "data" by which man may learn his own essential nature and thus, achieve fulfillment.

Spinoza's Political theory follows from this conception of human salvation. Akin to Hobbes, Spinoza sees the aim of the good society as that which allows rational beings to think freely and, therefore, achieve true knowledge. Such a society provides for civil peace and freedom of thought, a democratic society. In this model, religion serves the useful purpose of educating the lower masses in morality, but the wise need only the "religion" of reason which makes for self-knowledge and unending happiness.

Spinoza's radically rationalistic system retains some central Jewish themes. He posits fundamentally the existence and unity of God. All existence is dependent on God. The love of God, which is manifested through scientific study of nature and self is the highest good and the basis of morality.

It is significant to note that Spinoza marks the first modern view that includes a metaphysics that rejects a view of religion as the dramatic interplay of man and God. This is a denial of the distinction between God and the world, of supernatural events, of Providence and of revelation. His elimination of the basic written and oral religious traditions destroys the essential data for a personal

relationship with God. Somewhat like the spirit of Philo, Spinoza constructs a worldview involving no axioms based on revelation. He posits a basis for a thoroughly secular or naturalistic universe.

Let us look for more clarity within Spinoza's work. The "God" of Spinoza is similar to that of Maimonides and Aquinas in that they all submit rational theologies. Spinoza "called the Order of Nature God because he felt toward it precisely as the most pious theist feels toward God as he conceives him...He found in the rational vision of that order, and of his relation to it, that same peace and blessedness which the religious mystic finds in the "Visio Dei.""(5)

Spinoza calls for an eternal system. Basing his model on the example of Cartesian Analytic Geometry, he demonstrates that "whatever is, is in God, and without God, nothing can either be or be conceived."(6) God is not identical with being but is the basis of what orders the universe. His approach is not a pure Pantheism, as will be explained.

The order of nature is fixed. "Things could not have been brought into being by God in any manner or in any order different from that which has in fact obtained."(7) From this uniformity of nature follows a thorough logical determinism: "It is not in the nature of reason to regard things as contingent, but as necessary."(8)

For Spinoza, everything in the universe is "Pure

actuality." There are no miracles and no Providence. If we were to extrapolate a notion of Providence from Spinoza's system it would be in connection with his idea of "Conatus." The notion of "Conatus esse Conservandi", the idea that everything in the universe endeavors to persist in its own being, against outside forces suggests that Substance is endowed with the quality of "being in itself to its fullest essence." This notion which might be called the "conservation of essence" may reveal Spinoza's Idealistic underpinnings. And although there is no proper notion of Providence in Spinoza's system, God is still regarded as the proper object of religious feelings.(9)

It has been noted that there is no teleology in Spinoza's nature. His critique of natural teleology, that natural ends reflect human conceptions is a discarding of the Aristotelian functional view. In this sense, Spinoza "transforms..."God" from an ideal to an equation."(10)

In Descartes' system God and Soul were outside the mathematical order of nature. For Spinoza, God is the order itself, the logical order of nature not the anthropomorphic God of Scripture. God is not some of the things of nature, but the intelligible aspects of all things, viz. the system or the structure of the universe, but not its totality. It is essential to distinguish that Spinoza defines God as "the nature of" the universe and the "substance of" things. The universe exists in God and through God, but is not in itself God. Spinoza is, therefore, not a strict Pantheist but a

Panentheist.

Spinoza's rational view suggests that the origin of the mind lies within the logical structure of the universe itself.(11) Human beings are thus, "homo cogitat."

The "scientia intuitiva" brings men to realize the unity that exists between the mind and the whole of nature. But his denial of human freedom is puzzling. He tries to have it both ways: to maintain an extreme determinism while proposing an ethics which presupposes freedom. We must distinguish Spinoza's determinism as a metaphysical determinism. Freedom is an epistemological category in that it is arrived at via insight into the determination of essentials, viz. our nature or essence. The conclusion may be drawn thus: "Except for criticising Descartes' doctrine of free will, or better, *liber arbitrium*, Spinoza does not enter into the debate about antedeterminism of the particular consequences of a particular choice. It suffices for him to assert the complete determination of the frame or condition of choices by the structures of essential relation. Certain imaginations of philosophers, and of Descartes in particular, must be fought at all costs in order that we realize our constitutional limitations. (Spinoza the great realist and naturalist!) But the realistic assessment of the limitations must not make man despair on his road toward the greatest heights of freedom and power."(12)

This notion of freedom is a graduated freedom. Spinoza

suggests this in the statement, "The man who follows reason is more free in a state...than alone."⁽¹³⁾ Based on a number of texts we can attempt to state what Spinoza means by "to act freely":

- to act in accordance with one's essence.
- to act in accordance with one's nature.
- to act from the laws of one's own nature.
- to do what follows from necessity from one's own nature.
- to act, and not from contingency, or indifference.
- to effect what can be understood from the laws of one's own nature.
- to act from Power.
- to live according to the dictates of reason.
- to conserve one's being according to reason.
- to base one's actions on the fundament of seeking what is really useful.⁽¹⁴⁾

Freedom in this sense consists "in a social order that is itself directed toward a rational good."⁽¹⁵⁾ This "salvation" or freedom is the constant and eternal love of the object of science, toward truth. "Perfect knowledge is thus the completest expression of man's determinate action, and hence, is ipso facto Perfect freedom."⁽¹⁶⁾

The notion that God determined the mind to know truth may be implicitly at work in Kaplan's concept that "God is the Power that makes for salvation," as will be discussed

below. Randall sums up our exposition: "...a rational life can be led only when the necessity of human actions is recognized. Spinoza emphasizes the positive values which a deterministic scheme offers...Participation in the divine order: the necessary service of God is in itself blessedness and perfect freedom. It enforces a deep humility, for all that man does is the act of God. Those who realize it cease to fear God, and are consumed rather with love for Him. The deepest religious feeling, indeed, has always insisted on determinism, that all that takes place is the will of God."(17)

And as Dewey stated: "Nature as (Spinoza) conceived it, carried with it all the emotional associations and all the moral force and authority found in the older religious view of God."(18) In connection to Spinoza's own statement, "...men who are governed by reason...desire for themselves nothing, which they do not also desire for the rest of mankind."(19) "Therefore to man there is nothing more useful than his fellow man."(20) The deep reverence and basis for universalism is defined, and the world begins its transition into the Modern Period.

Notes to: A Pre-Modern Attempt at Synthesis

1. Rudolph Smend, "Spinoza," in *ENCYCLOPAEDIA JUDAICA*. Jerusalem, Macmillian Co., 1971. Vol. 15, p. 279
2. I. Prop. 7-10, 12-13
3. H. A. Wolfson. *PHILOSOPHY OF SPINOZA*. New York, Schocken, 1934
4. Leon Roth. *SPINOZA, DESCARTES AND MAIMONIDES*. New York, Russell & Russell, 1963
5. Op. cit. Randall. p. 433
6. I. Prop. 15
7. I. Prop. 33
8. II Prop. 44
9. Op. cit. *PHILOSOPHY OF SPINOZA*. Vol 2 p. 195-199 for discussion of "conatus."
10. Op. cit. Randall. p. 442
11. II Axion 2
12. Arne Naess. "Is Freedom Consistent With Spinoza's Determinism?" in *SPINOZA ON KNOWING, BEING AND FREEDOM*. ED. J. G. Van der Bend. The Netherlands, Van Gorcum & Company, 1974. p. 16
13. IV Prop. 73
14. IV DEM. 8; IV Prop. 24, 25, 26 Dem; IV Prop. 26 Dem; IV Prop. 52 Dem.; III Prop. 55 Dem. 2. Cited Op. cit. Naess. p. 18
15. Op. cit. Randall. p. 458
16. *IBID.* p. 447
17. *IBID.* p. 449
18. John Dewey. *QUEST FOR CERTAINTY*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1934. p. 56
19. I Prop. 5
20. IV Prop. 18

5. Foundation set by RMBM and Spinoza

RMBM and Spinoza, each in their own way were Precursors of Mordecai Kaplan. Central to the eventual confrontation between the Jews and modernity, is the emancipation of reason within a Jewish fold. RMBM set the groundwork for this, particularly with his distinction between, "din" and "lifnim mi shurat ha din." This recognition of a realm of independent action and voluntary assertion marks a critical turn from prior Jewish religious thought. Although, RMBM ultimately posits the supremacy of faith, it is clear, when one takes the GUIDE and the MISHNE TORAH together, one has a recognition of the independence of reason with regard to the pursuit of knowledge and salvation.

It is with Spinoza, that RMBM's view is liberated. Spinoza develops a system which posits that human rights and morality are inherent in the substance of the world, and that this knowledge is universal. This assertion of universalism, albeit, in a more philosophical context than a Jewish context marks the beginning of the modern period.

RMBM asserts, against the "necessity" of divine action which was so prevalent in the Greco-Roman philosophical world-view, God's creative will, a notion of divine voluntarism. So, not only is reason liberated with RMBM, but God, in a sense is also liberated. Spinoza picks up on this

and posits a unity between God, man and nature so to defend a universalism of thought and action. As will be discussed, Kaplan moves to the view that this universalism means that human creative will is the plane upon which God is inherent in human experience.

RMBM points out the distinction of the ritual/ethical law. Spinoza sets the groundwork for the separation of the public and private domains. This is worked out, from the point of view of Jewish life particularly by Mendelsohn who was deeply inspired by Spinoza. Although RMBM posits a liberation of reason, he also attempts to define the limits of reason. Spinoza, influenced by this notion of "limit" recognized the fixed laws of nature.

Spinoza suggests a number of crucial elements which form the basis of modern thought. He reconciled God's freedom and the moral law with the necessity of things. Along with this he argued for a principle of self-conservation, "conatus" which can be seen as a pre-conception of evolution based on his exposure to Descartes.

Central is Spinoza's conception of the summum bonum: self-perfection or fulfillment. Connected with this is his discovery of the social nature of human morality and improvement. As he discusses, virtue is essentially the striving for self-maintenance.(1)

Also, Spinoza's notion of the intellectual love of God is conceived not as an emotion, but as a pursuit. The striving after knowledge is identified with the service of

God.

Finally, and most significantly, Spinoza articulates his conception of democracy. Although he proposes a "federal aristocracy" as the best form of government, he discusses democracy as a government where citizens who "are appointed to rule the commonwealth are not thereto chosen by a sovereign council as the fittest, but are appointed merely by the law..., and he also says,..."A government which aims at nothing else than to guide men by fear will be rather free from defects than possessed of merit. Men are to be guided as that they may deem themselves not to be guided, but to live after their own mind and of their own free resolve; and that they be kept to allegiance by love of freedom, care for increasing their substance, and the hope of attaining honourable places in the government. But for statues, triumphs and other such whets to valour, they be tokens of slavery than freedom. Rewards are ordained for the valour of servants, not of free men. I do confess that by spurs of this kind, men are extremely quickened; but such things, which at first are awarded to notable men, yet afterwards, as envy increaseth, are given to worthless fellows that are puffed up with wealth, whereby all honest people are in great indignation. Likewise those who can make a show of their ancestors' triumphs and statues think themselves to be wronged if they have not precedence over others. And lastly, to say no more, 'tis certain that equality (which once being cast off, the liberty of a

society must needs Perish) can by no means be Preserved when especial honours are awarded as of common right to any one man of illustrious excellence." (2) Spinoza does not seem to contemplate the possibility of a social aristocracy being combined with a system of equality before the law. Still the Purpose of Government, for Spinoza should be to lead men to obedience rather than compel them. His discussion would include many forms of democratic government, and for Spinoza, every form of representative government is a form of democracy. Spinoza speaks as a philosopher who is proud of being a free citizen, and his total liberation of the human spirit figures prominently in the eventual Enlightenment and Emancipation.

Notes to: The Foundation set by RMBM and Spinoza

1. IV. Prop. 19-25

2. Quoted in Sir Frederick Pollock. SPINOZA: HIS LIFE AND PHILOSOPHY. New York, American Scholar Publications, 1966. p. 313-314

III. THE CRISIS OF MODERNITY

1. When Modernity begins

It is always difficult to generalize when talking about history. This stems from the problem that it is difficult to determine whether or not history is "disjunctive." That is, are events in history really interrelated or is that interrelatedness a paradigm of the historian? It is this very idea that affected intellectual life at the advent of the modern period. The development of "historicism," and the notion of "Geist" suggested that history was a process of the unfolding of culture and the material processes of nature. History in this new sense was developmental.

On the other hand, the rabbinic mind viewed history in a less radical way. Events were related, but only in the sense that events mark a change from the past. For the rabbis, history was seen to move away from its source. This is apparently paradoxical because in spite of the fact that rabbinic Judaism held the principle of "hildadarut hadorot," we find placed opposite this principle of degeneration a deep-rooted concern for Messianism. The modern period precipitated an interest in the developmental sciences such that modernity presents a turning of the rabbinical world and historical view upside down. This inversion is not so easily reconstructed.

It is of considerable interest to define what is meant

by "modernity," in order to understand the transformation it forced upon the Jews. Each Period in Jewish history has brought with it different circumstances requiring different responses. Maimonides responded to a growing discontent about the perplexities of a waning Spanish Jewish community. Spinoza responded to the Philosophical trends of his day, and with great consequence proposed radical reinterpretation of the conditions for maintaining Jewish Survival. Each in their own way, is a case study of how Judaism is reinterpreted by the Jew in order to nurture the continued existence of the Jewish People, and also the demands of human experience and logic.

How one defines modernity can be rendered in terms of two types of factors: internal and external. The vast literature of Jewish history records the events of the Emancipation and the Enlightenment with different emphases. There are a number of external factors which have been identified as boundaries of when modernity begins.

In 1846, Issac Marcus Yost suggested that the origins of modernity for the Jews trace to 1740 and the time when Frederick William rises and takes the throne. The impact of this event led Jews to see their ethnicity in relation to events in the broader culture. In a sense, modernity for Jews may be represented in their apologetic responses to slightly ever increasing degrees of emancipation. This event marks the first time that the Jews view themselves and what they do contemporaneously with the outer world. This may

represent a view that modernity is to be defined for Jewry in terms of Political motives, to become contemporaneous with the outer world. A type of "Politicalcentrism." The Process of emancipation in Germany which has its roots in 1740, onward into the Nineteenth Century represent this Politically centered definition of modernity.

Heinreich Graetz traces modernity to Mendelsohn. Mendelsohn affirms in his writings much of the new cosmopolitan life of western culture and attempts to create a new Judaism. Mendelsohn responded to the impact of new ideas on the intellectual elements of the Jewish masses. Highly influenced by Spinoza, Mendelsohn asserts a Position for a separation of Public domain and Private conscience.(1) Graetz views modernity in terms of the development of ideas in response to the changing intellectual climate. In this sense, his view is an "intellectualcentrism." Mendelsohn reacts to the variety of cultural opportunities Presented to the Jews. His example marks the Jewish intellectual beginning of modernity.

Simon Dubnow, however, takes a much less ethnocentric view. Modernity is not defined for Jews with reference to a Jewish intellectual response to changing conditions but by reference to the events of 1789 and the French Revolution. The creation of "liberty", "equality" and the rights of citizens mark the reality of the challenge to the Jewish masses. Modernity, as seen from this Perspective is based on Jewish acceptance of the conditions of citizenship, of which

the Parisian Sanhedrin is the Prime example. Modernity is thus defined as the response to the creation of democracy and social Pluralism.

Others, like Shochet and Endelman define modernity in terms of when the Jews begin to act like gentiles. For example, in the Eighteenth Century when Jews began to own Pets. From this view, modernity is defined in terms of social habits.

Frances Malino suggests that the Jews of France never go through the same trauma as other European communities upon entering modernity. These People simply adjusted the decorum of the synagogue. Only in Germany was there a "self-conscious" awareness of change or a need for change.

Finally, Gershom Scholem Posits that modernity doesn't arise out of Political factors. Rather, the events surrounding Shabbetai Tzvi caused an anti-halachic movement. The revolt against halacha, therefore, marks the beginning of Jewish modernity.(2) His view is that the fate of the Jews is totally related to factors determined by the Jews themselves, viz. internal factors. This is perhaps an overstatement and ignores many of the realities of the 1700's and 1800's. Although he defines modernity in terms of emotional, or internal factors.

From the Point of view of internal factors, it would seem that Spinoza represents an internal reconstitution which had a Profound effect on the Jewish People. His reconstitution is intimately related to roots in Maimonides.

Spinoza defines a posture of intellectual universalism and in a sense set the groundwork for the whole modern concept of the "non-legislation of the conscience."⁽³⁾ The Jewish People as an entity were faced with new circumstances. External changes always bring with it internal consequences. The Jews were faced with a new world, a bifurcated world.

What are the modes of response to a bifurcated world? What Plausibility structure could serve in order to understand the Jewish entry into the modern period? Spinoza identified two separate structure which for him were eternally interrelated: a Political structure and an ideational structure.

2. Modes of Response to a Bifurcated World

There are a number of modes of response to this reality. Individuals and groups may either offer resistance or accomodation. But, accomadation is a risk. There is a serious tension here between the voluntarism of secular life and the demands of religious dogma and committment. For the Jewish masses, modernity began with the events of 1789 when the first opportunity for exploring the "outer" society appeared, when Jews saw a distinction between citizenship and religious affiliation. Modernity is thus an atmosphere of voluntarism in religious and Political/social life. This

Posed as Great crisis to the sheltered Jewish masses.

It is difficult to determine the "internal" factors, as to when modernity is accepted by Jews. This is a much different question than when liberty was offered to them. David Ellenson offers an interesting model through which the internal definition of modernity can be understood. His article, "History Becomes Theology"(4) suggests that Reform Plurality of today is in fact a testimony in part to the inner factors that acted upon the Jew to precipitate the transition into the modern period. Ellenson analyzes the phrase in rabbinic literature, "there is nothing early and nothing late in Torah." The study of history became for the modern Jew the confrontation and tension of intellectualcentrism (which aimed at the universal), and ethnocentrism (the Particularism which accompanies any traditional Jewish authenticity). If history is viewed disjunctively, Ellenson argues, then history itself becomes theology. In other words, the very process of confronting change is the milieu in which theology is explored. Theology, then is not a system, it is an experience of integration. This is radically different than the rabbinic response to historical change: resistance.

During the modern period, not only does history become Theology for the Jew, but , also, the heteronomy of medieval feudalism become autonomy with rights for citizens. Wissenschaft des Judentums led to the rejection of the idea that "while Judaism existed in history, it was not of

history."(5) Judaism was no longer ahistorical.

This position, which was originally taken and developed by the early Reformers, like Geiger and Holdheim who differed about the degree of the importance of history reflects a serious attempt at accommodation. The ultimate questions of the "limits" of practice, authority, authenticity and identity--all become investigations, processes, rather than certainties. This was the question for the Jews of the enlightenment, and this is the question which faced Mordecai M. Kaplan.

Notes to: The Crisis of Modernity

1 This is one of the conclusions which may be drawn from JERUSALEM, Mendelssohn's central treatise, which was influenced by Spinoza's THEOLOGICAL-POLITICAL TRACTATE, although Mendelssohn reached different conclusions than Spinoza. Both church and state should exist to promote human happiness. See "Mendelssohn," in the JEWISH ENCYCLOPAEDIA. New York, Funk and Wagnalls, 1905. p. 479-485

2. See Gershom Scholem. SABBATAI SEVI; THE MYSTICAL MESSIAH. Trans. Zvi Werblowsky. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1973.

3. Although Spinoza does not use this phrase, Pollock suggests that "the whole scope of the TRACTATUS THEOLOGICO-POLITICUS is an elaborate plea for the liberty of thought and expression." Op.cit. Pollock

4. David Ellenson. "History Becomes Theology: The Emergence of Reform Jewish Ideologies." A Paper delivered at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Los Angeles Board of Overseers' Conference. San Diego, 1981.

5. Ibid. Precis. P. 1

IV. RE-FRAMING THE PROBLEM: KAPLAN'S MELIORISM

1. Kaplan's Proposal

Mordecai M. Kaplan offers a modern response to the crisis of faith, specifically the crises of Jewish Faith and Jewish survival. In 1928, Kaplan said, "The conservation of form with the reconstruction of meaning has been the history of Jewish civilization."⁽¹⁾ What exactly is meant by this statement will be discussed below.

Kaplan asked the major questions which have defined the pursuits of Jewish religious Philosophy during the Twentieth Century. Most of Modern Jewish Thought is reflection on the questions framed by Kaplan. His central question is, What happened to the Jews when they entered the modern era? To answer these questions, Kaplan literally risked his life and principles. With unparalleled passion he pursues the answer to the question of Jewish Survival.

One can only understand Kaplan by placing him in a context. On a most basic level, Kaplan approaches the question of Jewish Survival from his total acceptance of the principle of religious Pluralism. Within this context he poses his questions and develops his program. His context of religious Pluralism has its roots with the events of 1789, the French Revolution and the American Constitution.

With strict critical rationalism Kaplan accepted that the Jews had entered the modern era and that they ought to have entered.

This new set of circumstances brought with it certain changes from the Past. The Jews had lived as a "corpus separatum" Now, in America they lived in an emancipated society that had no legal separation. To Kaplan this radically new situation was not a misfortune but a good. In America, the Jews, along with other minority groups found a society without a medieval Past. In America there had never been a separatist society.

In this Post-Emancipation society that had no exclusionary Past, Kaplan found a change and a good which would affirm a new type of relationship to the majority society. Kaplan developed a notion of "ethical culture." (2) This was a challenge to the assimilatory culture of White Anglo Saxon America. In this world-view of ethical culture and religious Pluralism, Kaplan set out to lead a group of Jews of the 1910's 20's and 30's to a fulfillment of this ideal of ethical culture. He led them to ethical concerns both Jewishly and universally. Thus, Kaplan must be viewed as a leader toward ethical universalism, and the affirming of America in the truest sense, freedom and justice for all. Kaplan fought long and hard battles for social justice and labor. His Pursuit for Jewish identity was woven with a Pursuit for human identity.

In addition to his belief in the open society of

America, Kaplan also held the conception of the Yishuv in Palestine as a great moral enterprise. Central is Kaplan's affirmation of the open society in which being Jewish was an act of voluntarist choice both in America and in a Jewish Homeland.

Lurking behind Kaplan is, of course, Spinoza. Although Spinoza is mentioned only two times in JUDAISM AS A CIVILIZATION, the work of Spinoza, and the many Enlightenment thinkers from Kant until his time, Kaplan confronted Spinoza and accepted him.

Spinoza affirmed many principles which figure prominently in Kaplan's thought: Revelation was mythic. A specific revelation available to a specific group was, by definition, inconceivable. Mankind was one, to be understood in terms of intellectual and ethical universalism. Kaplan, like Spinoza was concerned with men and women, not specifically "Jewish" men and women in his approach. This figures strongly into Kaplan's view of the Torah. The notion of "Torah Min Ha Shamayim", which posits the uniqueness of the Jewish religious experience, as opposed to the uniqueness of other's, the chosenness is inconceivable. This cornerstone of Kaplan's view is developed and articulated in Spinoza's THEOLOGICAL-POLITICAL TRACTATE.

What is available to the Jewish masses and all other ethnic groups, for that matter, is universal value, particularly, universal moral values which Spinoza demonstrated in the mathematical mode in the ETHICS. Any

individual who is raised to the level of understanding may Possess it.

Behind SPinoza is Maimonides. RMBM, is, if you will, freed, sundered from his ultimate view by SPinoza that where faith and reason clash ultimately faith Prevails. Kaplan, like SPinoza, denies the supremacy of faith ultimately. What is available as the cornerstones of Jewish existence is the same as what is available to all other communities.

This Perspective represents the fundamental turn into modern thought as a whole. Modernity is the assertion of intellectual universalism. The intellectual Pursuits of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries set the stage for the ethical universalism of the Twentieth Century.

Modernity, from SPinoza through the Enlightenment is critically studied by Kaplan and forms the base of his system in a very Kantian mold: Cultural relativism is the fundamental Principle. Kaplan maintains the historical relativism of ritual form while positing the universality of content.

Based on all this, Kaplan accepted all of the civilizing, threatening and healing effects that the Jews are living in a different era and based on that Kaplan was determined to Proclaim that what Jews can make of their Jewishness must be quite different.

What can Jews make of their Jewishness? Kaplan assesses this question and begins his response. First, Kaplan doesn't accept modernity in toto. He makes a significant move

against it in his concern for cultural pluralism. Against the special notion of accepting America, the notion that individuals become part of American society or any other western society in its own terms, Kaplan suggests that it does no violence to the democratic ideal if it is understood in terms of voluntary groups, viz. groups that maintain voluntarily their own traditions, sense of corporate identity and sense of communion with their own historical past. Although he never uses the term, Kaplan points to the notion of "authenticity."

From Kaplan's view, this corporate group authenticity represents a proper pressure within the scheme of American democratic consensus. Kaplan makes a demand on America. Like many previous thinkers who responded to modernity, Kaplan demands cultural pluralism.(3)

Kaplan was influenced by Dubnow who called for a multi-ethnic kind of Europe. Ethnic identities under self-governing conditions would be building blocks of a truly democratic society. Kaplan looks at White Anglo Saxon America who says Jews should be American by WASP, i.e. assimilatory standards and he claims that it is not the last democratic word. It is within this context that Kaplan will reconstruct Judaism and he does so logically.

Judaism is a system of values to be reconstructed by focusing on the Jewish system of values and nurturing devotion to the universal ethical ideals of Judaism. Kaplan was in total support of Jewish citizenship in America. The

two elements, "Jewish" and "American" were to go hand-in-hand. This is articulated in the early Reconstructionist Prayerbooks which spoke about the rights of labor and a social democratic commitment.

Kaplan is not only interested in moral universalism. He is also interested in ritual practices; not based on a reward/punishment, guilt provoking standard of an all-powerful God, but ritual as enrichment. For Kaplan, ritual should be life-enhancing for the individual Jew and the community and also point to moral aims.

Kaplan's disposing of the ritual tradition is his "Copernican Revolution." He is able to deal with moral universalism because of the fundamental concept in his thought: The Peoplehood of Israel. For Kaplan, the people creates and can "un-create" its forms.

It is also important to note the fact that Kaplan believes Anti-Semitism will continue in the world. What will guarantee that the Jewish community will survive in the open society and will want to stay in business in this complex pluralist competition for survival? Kaplan begins with anti-semitism. Kaplan doesn't believe it will ever end totally. He presumes enough Anti-Semitism to keep the Jews together but not enough to destroy them. This is Kaplan's first hidden premise and his answer to why the Jews will continue to survive.

The second reason is the momentum of the past. This historic momentum is "Peoplehood," and Kaplan sees this

reinforced in Jewish life in America. This, Kaplan identifies as the biological commitment of the Jews of his time to staying married to other Jews. In our time, Kaplan's second premise is to be strongly critiqued. Kaplan identified a one generational phenomenon. This was true of the children of the Ghetto in America but not of the next generation in suburbia.

Kaplan, however, makes his boldest assertions to the Jews who agree to play in the open society and in fact accept it: "In order that Judaism shall survive, Jews must focus their mind and heart upon the task of giving purpose and direction to what is at present little more than a blind urge to live as Jews. The urge to Jewish survival must be given an inspiring and irresistible motive, and supplied with a definite method of self-expression. This calls for the formulation of a program which, reckoning with every phase of the contemporary challenge, will set up a goal so desirable that it will enable the Jew to resist the temptation to escape Judaism, a program which will so map out the possibilities of Jewish self-fulfillment that the average Jew will at last be able to find his way in the maze of spiritual problems."(4)

Kaplan wants to pose a goal so desirable that the Jew in the face of all other choices will wish to remain within the Jewish community. So, there comes the creation of the Jewish community centers, the Jewish arts councils and the grand variety of institutions which facilitate the continued

voluntary survival of the Jewish People. Kaplan wanted to enrich Jewish life by creating options for the Jewish expression of passion for art, music, the humanities.

Kaplan feared that the essential core of the Jewish masses had many attractive secular alternatives. He wanted to produce a rich Jewish civilization in America which Jews went to by choice, not as a place of sanctuary from the rejection of American non-Jewish supremacy. Rather, he called for the mobilization of strong Jewish alternatives because of a deep belief in Jewish authenticity which was high, moral and wonderful in its own right.

From this point of view we can see Mordecai Kaplan as a counterpoint to Judah Halevi. Halevi saw the Jew as special, not universal, but chosen. Kaplan, with Spinoza, Kant and the Enlightenment looming large in his world-view, never allowed the thought of chosenness to interfere with his universalist basis. Kaplan produces his conception of the Jew living in two civilizations and is totally aware of the tragic fact that the Jewish element would be secondary. He does so and moves to put together a worthwhile, affirmative identity in Judaism that would be so incredible it would be compelling.

In many ways the situation out of which Kaplan spoke has changed. In a half century since JUDAISM AS A CIVILIZATION there are plenty of Jewish options over the non-Jewish ones, but still the unaffiliated Jews far outnumber the affiliated ones. Perhaps Kaplan's assessment of the spirit of the age

as universalism is in need of critique. Let us develop a critique of universalism, first by looking, more in depth at the influences behind and elements of Kaplan's Proposals.

Notes to: Reframing the Problem1. Kaplan's Proposal

1. Menorah Journal, 1928. Cited by Authur Hertzberg in a Public Lecture given on the Centenary of the Birth of Mordecai M. Kaplan entitled, "New Answers, New Questions." Parts of the following chapter are gleaned from that lecture.

2. Idem. Hertzberg.

3. Ahad Ha-am develops a whole view of Jewish existence which limits the infusion of modernity in the context of a Jewish cultural entity.

4. Mordecai M. Kaplan. JUDAISM AS A CIVILIZATION. New York, Reconstructionist Press, 1957. p. 84

2. Influences on Reconstructionism

One of the hallmarks of the survival of the Jewish People has been their ability to respond creatively to challenges by reconstituting their inner life to meet new problems. Mordecai Kaplan embodies this reality of "tradition and change" in his life and his proposal.

Kaplan arrived in the United States at the age of eight in 1889. He must have been shocked by confronting the open society having come from the concentrated communities of Europe. Before him was democracy. In Europe, Jews were given rights because they were Jews, limited rights. In America people had rights because they were human beings. Life in America was a totally naturalistic life, i.e. a life based on the notion that secular life, norms of behavior were organic, natural, reflective of an American pathos, eros and ethnos. Kaplan realized that the combination of democracy and naturalism could lead to a complete end of the Jewish People as a self-perpetuating entity.

For Kaplan, Judaism existed for the Jewish People, just as "Americanism" existed for the American People. But, for Kaplan, Judaism was more than a religion, he was concerned with Judaism as a civilization. Civilization includes Hebrew language, Jewish culture, arts, mores, ethics and folkways. And, as a civilization, Judaism is an evolving process always in the making.

From this point of view, it becomes clear why Kaplan was

more concerned with Takkanah, over Halacha, enactments to meet changing conditions over laws of legal requirement. For Kaplan, Judaism is maintained by sancta: Persons, Places events and writings which commemorate values which lead to salvation.

The thought of Mordecai Kaplan evolved over many years. One of the early influences was Arnold Erlich.(2) Erlich held a naturalistic interpretation of the Bible and studied the Bible as literature. Kaplan received his early influences toward an evolving tradition with his exposure to the scientific study of the text.

The theories of the French sociologist Emile Durkheim had a lasting effect on Kaplan's thought. In his classic work, "The Elementary Forms of Religious Life," Durkheim emphasized the social function of religion - namely, the role of religion as the instrument of social cohesion and a unifying bond of the collective consciousness.(3)

Kaplan's method is crucial. He was a follower of Pragmatism. The originator of Pragmatism as a philosophical method was C.S. Peirce. In the essay entitled, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear," Peirce stated that the essence of Pragmatism is that the meaning of a concept can best be understood by its effects on life.(4) This notion of meaning was applied to the social sphere by John Dewey. Kaplan derived from Dewey the idea that all human experience must be understood in light of its context. In "A Common Faith," he defines the divine as those forces in nature and society

that generates and supports ideals.

Central in Kaplan is his definition of God as the Power that makes for salvation. In Mathew Arnold's, "Literature and Dogma" Arnold maintained that the Bible ought to be read as a record of the most articulate striving of man to achieve his salvation or self-fulfillment through righteousness. Kaplan was most impressed with Arnold's conception of God as "a Power that makes for righteousness - not ourselves." As Kaplan explains this idea, "Man needs the assurance which only faith in God as the Power that makes for righteousness can give him, that his strivings are not in vain." (6)

The most important Jewish influence for Kaplan is Ahad Ha-am. Ahad Ha-am posed two central ideas: The principle of Spiritual Zionism and the Centrality of the Jewish People. Kaplan describes the impact of Ahad Ha-am's writings: "That impact effected in me nothing less than a Copernican revolution. I discovered that throughout Judaism's universe of discourse, the People of Israel was the central reality, and that the meaning of God and of Torah can be properly understood only in relation to that central reality. The main concern of Judaism was the Jewish People, its origin, its vicissitudes, its sins and repentance, and the laws it had to conform to in order to achieve its destiny." (7)

Ahad Ha-am posited that the constant factor throughout Jewish History was the Jewish People. His proposal for

Cultural/Spiritual Zionism was based on a conception of the State of Israel as the spiritual center of Jewry. The influence of Spinoza on Ahad Ha-am is discussed by Alfred Gottschalk in terms of the basis for religious Pluralism: "Spinoza's views on the interpretation of Scripture found in Ahad Ha-am a ready listener, in that Spinoza maintains that the supreme right of free thinking, even about religion, as with everything else, is in the power of every person, who, therefore, wields the supreme right and authority of free judgement...to explain and interpret religion for himself. It is not necessary to invoke any external or supernatural authority for this purpose."(8)

So, there are three major influences behind Kaplan's Project to reconstruct Judaism: 1) The pragmatic method; 2) The centrality of the Jewish People, and; 3) The sociological basis for the reconstruction of the Jewish religion and a reinterpretation of the idea of God.

Kaplan criticises the customary assessment of Judaism: "The categories under which it has been customary to subsume Judaism have proved to be inadequate. It can no longer be confined within the terms of revealed religion or ethical monotheism. Both its own nature and the temper of the time preclude its being classified with either one or the other. We must therefore find for it a category which will do justice to the whole of it. Those who try to interpret Judaism to the outside world are in the habit of describing it in terms which they imagine would justify its existence

in the opinion of their audience. This is why Philo and Josephus found it necessary to represent Judaism to the Gentiles of their day as a philosophy, and this is why modern Jewish apologists deem it necessary to represent Judaism as a religion... (Judaism) is in need of intelligent planning and direction... Jews should learn Judaism's essential character so that they might know what to do with it in times of stress." (9) This essence Kaplan defines as the "Civilization" of Judaism.

Kaplan views Jewish life as a distinct social entity. "We make the mistake of believing that what we chiefly try to conserve is that wherein Jewish is unlike non-Jewish life, or what may be termed its differential. We concentrate on the religious aspect of Jewish life, because it is that aspect which is conspicuously most unlike, and because we assume it to be the least troublesome to justify. But the truth of the matter is that what is at stake in our day is the very maintenance of Jewish life as a distinct societal entity. Its very otherness is in jeopardy." (10)

From this vantage point, Kaplan asserts that "the spiritual regeneration of the Jewish people demands that religion cease to be its sole preoccupation." (11) And so, Kaplan is concerned with civilization which he defines as: "The life style of an organic society like a nation or self-conscious people that is self-perpetuating and self-governing by means of a spiritual heritage which is transmitted from generation to generation and which responds

to changing conditions and ever increasing needs of human existence."(12)

Kaplan describes civilization as "organic," which means, "... not a deliberate creation. It is as spontaneous a growth as any living organism. Once it exists it can be guided and directed, but its existence must be determined by the imperative of a national tradition and the will to live as a nation."(13) Kaplan proposes that Jewish civilization will be self-perpetuating "by the method of suggestion, initiation and education of the young."(14)

Judaism is also viewed as a social heritage, "the sum of characteristic usages, ideas, standards, and codes by which the Jewish People is differentiated and individualized in character from other Peoples."(15) Here we see that Kaplan is concerned not simply with universalism, but with the preservation of the "universal Jew," with the struggle between group and individual, particular and universal ever-present and an accepted consequence of living in a modern society.

Even though Kaplan calls for a recasting of Jewish life and a recognition that it includes much more than religion, he still asserts that religion cannot be separate from culture. Religion is the central phenomenon, "the controlling force, the organizing power, the vertex around which all other elements of culture revolve."(16)

Kaplan notes that the central concern of religion, viz. salvation has been conceived differently at different times

in the Jewish Past. In Biblical times, salvation was conceived as deliverance from this-worldly evil. In Rabbinic times, as bliss in the next world. In contemporary times, salvation is self-realization.(17)

Although he posits a strong support for self-realization this does not mean that the individual is prior to the community like is the case with many existential philosophers. Rather, "religion creates a sense of belonging and fellowship among the members of a community. It helps the individual to achieve self-fulfillment and happiness through the fostering of his potentialities and opportunities...that kind of belonging redeems us from the devastating sense of alienation. Religion helps the human being overcome the fears of being alone, which, according to Aristotle only a superhuman or subhuman being can endure."(18)

Kaplan thus suggests, along the lines of Durkheim that religion creates a sense of belonging by fortifying the collective unconscious of a group. In other words, the group provides the conditions for the attainment of self-knowledge and encourages growth for its members. Growth means change. But how can one change without totally becoming something different? Kaplan proposes that "sancta" provide the basis of identity where it is possible to maintain a sense of continuity within the mode of change or evolution: "If Jews will thrill to the sancta, or constellation of historical realities which figure in their tradition, and maintain

those realitites as centers of ethical and spiritual reference, no matter how far apart they are in their views about life - they will be sufficiently united to function in their collective capacity as an instrument of salvation to the individual Jew."(19) Sancta fortifies the collective consciousness and Provides an element of continuity.

For Kaplan, Belief in God is non-rational, it based not in logic but in the will to live. "Both the will to live and the belief in God are Phases of one vital Process. The belief in God is not logically inferred from the will to live. It is the Psychic manifestation of the will to live. We may state, therefore, that the belief in God is the belief in the existence of a Power conducive to salvation which is the fulfillment of human destiny. We must remember, however, that the grounds for that beliefs are not derived from speculative reason, but directly from man's actual strivings for maximum life or salvation. The inference from the striving for happiness or salvation to the existence of God is not a logical, but a soterical inference. The biological will to live implies the existence of conditions that are Propitious to life. The will to live abundantly, and to achieve one's human destiny, likewise implies the existence of conditions that favor abundant life, or salvation...Religion is thus man's conscious quest for salvation or the achievement of his human destiny." (20)

Kaplan's Premise is that the cosmos contains the conditions which are congenial to self-fulfillment. Borowitz

critiques this view claiming it to be a naive optimism denying the fact that most lives are unfulfilled.(21) "He would doubtless reply...most lives are unfulfilled because most people pursue wrong goals - namely, success instead of fulfillment, power instead of creativity, self-aggrandizement instead of cooperation. To believe in God, therefore, means to cherish the right ideals, such as justice, honesty, and compassion, to live by these ideals no matter what discouragement we face, and to believe that these ideals will ultimately be vindicated."(22)

Kaplan appears to be saying that what is good is divine. This is a misunderstanding of Kaplan's intention. He is concerned with "predicate theology" in the sense that one can predicate attributes. Goodness is real and divine in the sense that it is inherent in the universe. From this perspective theodicy is no longer a metaphysical issue but a practical one: how can one conquer evil, becomes the focus.

Kaufman presents Berkovits' critique of this position.(23) Kaplan draws conclusions about the structure of the universe from the experience of human aspiration, which is idolatry in the sense that he fashions the universe in a human image. Outside human consciousness and strivings one will find only facts not values. The issue is whether or not the cosmos is indifferent or is a source of values. To Kaplan, values are just as real as facts and the cosmos is a source of "value-potentialities."(24)

Kaplan is concerned with the conditions for the

collective fulfillment of the Jewish People. Ahad Ha-am posited the basis for Kaplan's notion of Jewish Peoplehood which asserts strongly that the Jewish People are a spiritual reality. This spiritual reality is intimately interwoven with the land of Israel. Kaplan defines the People as, "a chain of generations united by common history and culture the origin of which can be traced to life in a particular land." (25) A la Ahad Ha-am, Kaplan asserted that the People can function to their fullest only when Israel exists as its spiritual center, as a guide and inspiration to the Diaspora. Regarding Ahad Ha-am, Kaplan says that he "saw more clearly than any of his predecessors that, under the conditions of modern life, which are so radically different than those that preceded the Emancipation and the Enlightenment, the Jewish People would have to undergo nothing less than a metamorphosis in order to become a creative force in human life." (26)

Kaplan speaks of the spiritual unity of the Jewish People. This is an organic unity. Social organisms like human bodies must retain their essential parts in order to survive. The essential part for the Jewish People is Israel. "Israel today is the focal center of all that is vital in Judaism. It is the heart from which currents of that vitality can be circulated through all the Jewries of the Diaspora, provided that arteries of communication are left open, so that the vital bloodstream of a living and creative Jewish culture can circulate freely throughout the entire

body of world Jewry."(27)

Kaplan calls, therefore, for a new covenant with Israel at the center. He compares it with the spokes of a wheel, with Israel as the hub.(28)

This metaphor of the wheel suggests Kaplan's meaning of organic community. It is held together by a sense of mutual responsibility for all who belong to it. In the pre-Emancipation world this was certainly an operative principle in the closed segregated communities of the Jews in Europe. The post-Emancipation world which is based on a voluntary community presents an unparalleled challenge to the Jewish people. It is to this specific condition that Kaplan responds.

Although it would seem logical, in the face of the open society to turn away, to indulge in "self-defense" by clinging to the notion of the election of Israel, Kaplan, in total keeping with the consequences of modernity, rejects the notion of "choseness" for the notion of "vocation." Vocation is "the dedication of a people to the task of giving to the world those universal values which its experiences have revealed to it."(29)

Kaplan asserts quite clearly that the holiness of the Jewish people is not special. "Consecration of the Jewish people to its vocation makes it a holy people, but nothing in such a vocation implies that other peoples cannot become just as holy, if they too dedicate themselves to serving God by embodying in human life the universal values that their

historic experiences have revealed to them."(30)

He distinguishes between "vocation" and the Reform notion of "mission." He defines the Reform mission in these terms: "God chose the Jews among the nations in order that they might fulfill the divine mission of teaching mankind the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. The early Reformers made of this mission the sole justification of Jewish existence."(31)

Jews gain a sense of vocation by being true to themselves, particularly by acts of Jewish self-identification. This marks a complete, a total emancipation of Jewish identification from any prerequisite other than self-identification. As a result, Kaplan has been accused of reducing the meaning of Jewish existence to the ethos of the American experience. This thesis has documented the reason/faith controversy with a focus on some of the theological responses portrayed in the literature of Jewish intellectual history. It would appear that Kaplan presents a program, a plan to rejuvenate the Jewish people who have entered the modern era. Behind this program is an operative theology. Like Spinoza, Kaplan's religious proposals are very controversial. His theology was a life-long process of searching and revision.

Kaplan has made the removal of the God-idea from supernatural elements the basis of his theological pursuit. He focuses on three concerns: to steer away from the personification of the deity as a magnified human being; to

avoid hypostasizing God; and, to avoid conceiving God as an entity.(32) Kaplan develops his "Process theology" as a response to the traditional "entity theology."

The standard critique is that Kaplan commits the "reductionist fallacy" by identifying the People with God. In addition, Kaplan is accused of defining God, which is unJewish in the sense that God is beyond all human definition. In order to understand Kaplan, one must understand that he makes a distinction between the term "God" as it is used in human discourse and God. Values are created by God. Man is created with the capacity to discover values. God is the Power that makes for this discovery.

Kaplan is concerned with how the term "God" has meaning in human discourse. Kaplan realizes God's otherness and ventures only to discuss the term. He suggests that "God" is a functional term which is used as a value term and as a predicate. This is reminiscent of Tillich's notion of "ultimate concern." For Kaplan, "God" is a functional noun.(33) God is not an idea as might be thought. Rather, "...divinity is the creative, coordinating integrative Process of the universe insofar as it makes for salvation of man, both individual and social."(34)

For Kaplan, values are rooted in cosmic relations. The tendency toward integration by humans is parallel to the cosmic tendency toward unity. "We therefore learn more about what God or Godhood should mean to us when we use those terms as predicates of sentences than when we use them as

subjects. We learn more about God when we say love is divine than when we say God is love."(35)

We find Kaplan using "God" sometimes as a Predicate and sometimes as an adjective. This reveals a serious ambiguity in his thought. Kaufman states the problem succinctly: "Does Kaplan mean by the term "God" those properties or aspects of the universe which foster human creativity and are expressed in human discourse as Predicates? Or does Kaplan mean to identify the term "God" with the one central creative process in the universe and in man that human beings toward self-fulfillment expressed in human discourse as a noun?"(36) Does Kaplan refer to "God" as Process or "God" as Power? This metaphysical issue needs clarification in Kaplan's theology.

Kaplan's concept of the unity of God is illusive. He is not a Pantheist for he does not identify God with nature. Nor is he a Polytheist. "God" is the process and order of nature. But how can God be a unity of process and order? In an attempt to solve this, Kaplan introduces the notion of transcendence.

The notion of God's transcendence is called "transnaturalism." Kaplan attempts to "evolve a conception of transcendence that does not overstep the limits of natural law."(37) Kaplan defines transnaturalism "as cosmic process...God is more than physical, chemical, biological psychological or even social process. God includes them all, but what is distinctive about the God-process is that it is

superfactual and superexperiential. Were one to add supernatural the point would be missed, since the term supernatural implies miracle or suspension of natural law. On the other hand, it would be correct to say that the God-Process is transnatural."⁽³⁸⁾

But what is transnatural? "It is Kaplan's contention that the term "God" denotes that Process which interweaves through the elements of the universe, transforming them into new emergent organic wholes."⁽³⁹⁾ Let us ask, does Kaplan refer to the Hegelian notion of "Geist", the operative historical Process of change which became the basis of acute materialism? The meaning of "transnaturalism" is left unclear. What is clear, is that this evolutionary Process, this interaction of nature and cosmos is a Process of transformation from disunity to equilibrium, from chaos to cosmos. One prays not to the Process as an entity, but one prays for the wisdom within one's self to acquire the highest level of self-realization possible.

Particularly with regard to the Problem of evil, Kaplan is controversial. He is much in line with RMBM and Spinoza who preceded him. Kaplan has been critiqued to have identified God with the good only, ignoring evil and positing a cosmic optimism. Rather, Kaplan believes in the human capacity to improve the conditions of man's life. This could be termed "meliorism."⁽⁴⁰⁾ Kaplan calls for a shift of the Problem of evil "from the field of thought to the field of action."⁽⁴¹⁾ Divinity is creativity which conquers chaos

and it is the Possession of all human beings to strive for this on-going creative Potential.

Kaplan explains that moral evil "lies in self-deification, in the assumption that the salvation of the individual can be achieved by self-assertion without reckoning with a Power, not ourselves that lays down the conditions of such achievement."⁽⁴¹⁾ Kaplan thus asserts that man's relationship to the cosmos is conditional. Although he deals with moral evil, he fails to deal with natural evil, a striking void in his thought.

The thought of Mordecai Kaplan, has been briefly presented. It remains to define his concept of Jewish history in light of this presentation. Jewish history is the history of a civilization which has pursued its destiny along with other civilizations in the cosmos. Jewish history is a history of maintaining the conditions for the Jewish People to act as agents of universalism. The "universal Jew" is the Jew Kaplan aims to attract and nurture. It is a totally modern concept. Yet, universalism, as has been shown has been a Jewish concern, first with the liberation of thought by RMBM and then the liberation of conscience by Spinoza.

We turn now to a review of some of the objections to Kaplan's concept of Jewish history, toward a critique of Naturalism.

Notes to: 2. Influences on Reconstructionism

1. See Ellis Rivkin, A HIDDEN REVOLUTION. Nashville, Abingdon, 1978

2. William Kaufman. CONTEMPORARY JEWISH PHILOSOPHIES. New York, Reconstructionist Press and Behrman House, 1976. P. 181

3. IBID. P. 182

4. C.S. Peirce, "How to Make our Ideas Clear," in THE COLLECTED PAPERS OF CHARLES SANDERS PEIRCE. Cambridge, Hartshorne and Weiss eds., 1931-1935.

5. Op.cit. Dewey

6. Op.cit. Kaufman. P. 185

7. Ira Eisenstein and Eugene Kohn. MORDECAI M. KAPLAN: AN EVALUATION. Cited Note 3, IBID. P. 215

8. Alfred Gottschalk. "Maimonides, Spinoza and Ahad Ha-am," in JUDAISM. Vol. 21, No. 3, 1972. P. 206

9. Op.cit. JUDAISM AS A CIVILIZATION. P. 179

10. IBID. P. 177

11. IBID. P. 345

12. Mordecai M. Kaplan. RELIGION OF ETHICAL NATIONHOOD. New York, Macmillan, 1970. P. 16

13. Op.cit. JUDAISM AS A CIV. P. 180-181

14. IDEM.

15. IBID. P. 179

16. Op.cit. MORDECAI KAPLAN AN EVALUATION

17. Op.cit. RELIGION OF ETHICAL NATIONHOOD. P. 18

18. IBID. P. 71-72

19. Op.cit. JUDAISM AS A CIVILIZATION. P. 519-520

20. Mordecai M. Kaplan. FUTURE OF THE AMERICAN JEW. New York, Reconstructionist Press, 1957. P. 172

21. Eugene Borowitz. A NEW JEWISH THEOLOGY IN THE MAKING. Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1968. P. 119

22. Op.cit. Kaufman. P. 191
23. IBID. Cited Note 28, P. 215
24. IBID. P. 193. See RELIGION OF ETHICAL NATIONHOOD. P. 23
25. Mordecai M. Kaplan. QUESTIONS JEWS ASK. New York, Reconstructionist Press, 1966. P. 43
26. IBID. P. 222
27. IBID. P. 410
28. Op.cit. RELIGION OF ETHICAL NATIONHOOD. P. 123, 132-133
29. Op.cit. QUESTIONS JEWS ASK. P. 211
30. IDEM.
31. IBID. P. 208
32. Op.cit. Kaufman. P. 203
33. Op.cit. RELIGION OF ETHICAL NATIONHOOD. P. 4
34. Mordecai M. Kaplan. "The meaning of God for the Contemporary Jew," in ESSAYS ON JEWISH THOUGHT AND LIFE; ed. Alfred Jospe P. 71
35. IBID. P. 73
36. Op.cit. Kaufman. P. 205
37. IBID. P. 208
38. Op.cit. FUTURE OF THE AMERICAN JEW. P. 183
39. Op.cit. Kaufman. P. 208
40. IBID. P. 211
41. Op.cit. FUTURE OF THE AMERICAN JEW. P. 236

3. Critique of Kaplan's Concept of Jewish History

There have been exhaustive efforts to critique Kaplan's enterprise of reconstructing Judaism. One manner of critique centers on Kaplan's un-Philosophical use of language. Fishbein states, "An understanding of the way that the terms "nation," "nationhood," "nationality" and "nationalism" were once used by Reconstructionists is essential to illustrate the inappropriateness and looseness, which is characteristic of Reconstructionist terminology as a whole."⁽¹⁾ This critique, of Kaplan's "integrity" as a philosopher, represented by this example suggests not one of his weaknesses, but one of his strengths. Kaplan, is not a philosopher, per se. He is a social-theological activist. His approach is eclectic and extends beyond the limits of pure reason and logic. The variance of terminology reflects the evolution of Kaplan's thought. Kaplan was totally committed to refining and improving his views and he insisted on rigorous response by his critics.

An example of this sincerity and willingness to change and work for the "greater Judaism" is found in his dialogue with Arthur H. Cohen.⁽²⁾ Cohen responds sharply to Kaplan's social-psychological naturalism. What is maintained throughout, however, is a recognition of mutual tolerance.

Fishbein continues his critique on another level. He says Reconstructionists claim that "Jews are often called a

people, and that there are certain bonds which unite them...the only bond which unites them is a common fate." (3) He claims that reconstructionism misinterprets Jewish history. The key word, he points out, is "survival." If, Reconstructionism rejects "choseness" and "mission", what, therefore, asks Fishbein is the justification for survival? The Reconstructionist answer is, no rationale is needed: "As a civilization, Judaism possesses the prerogative of being justly an end in itself." (4) Based on this, Fishbein asserts quite strongly, that if this is the case, then Reconstructionism appeals only to committed Jewish people.

Although it has already been established that Kaplan intended to make Judaism attractive for all American Jews, Fishbein may be referring to a fundamental weakness in the Reconstructionist approach. In the context in which Kaplan developed his system, he was looking for ways for Judaism to affirm the Emancipation, to find ways to step in to emancipation and yet retain a sense of Jewishness. Perhaps, the relegation of Judaism to one of many alternatives among the vast choices of modernity has become mundane. The end product of total acceptance of emancipation is that one must compete for attention, compete for security among all the options. Judaism is therefore, no longer based on "membership" with associated duties, it has become "association" with temporary, insecure parameters.

Fishbein states: "Jews must be considered a people and Judaism as civilization because these terms can include all

Jews. It is not fair for religionists to monopolize the word Judaism.

"With this Philosophy in mind, Reconstructionists approach Jewish History, but they are not interested in history per se, they are interested in history only insofar as it supports Jewish survival. Reconstructionists do not look at the past with the purpose of understanding it. Rather they look to history to bolster their Philosophy. And this is basically why Reconstructionists can see a nation where there is only a People of God, a nationality where there is only religious messianism, and a civilization where there is only religion."⁽⁵⁾ Fishbein argues, that from the Second Commonwealth until 1789, Judaism was a universal religion. Now, in the modern Period, the only thing holding Jews together is a common fate, which itself is in need of definition. Fishbein is correct in pointing out that some Peoples/traditions have different moral destinies, that Kaplan must defend some limited Particularism. But the "cheap shot" at his use of terminology misses the point of Kaplan's proposals. To read Kaplan with the eye of the critical Philosopher is to miss the deeper essence of his vision.

Daniel Friedman argued that Kaplan's view that Judaism has always been a civilization is a distortion of Jewish history.⁽⁶⁾ Like Fishbein, he attempts to show that the misconception is revealed in contradictions in the terminology used to describe Judaism. Like Fishbein, he

attempts to show that the misconception is revealed in contradictions in the terminology used to describe Judaism.

But, has Kaplan misinterpreted Jewish history? Perhaps the critique to be offered is not towards reconstructionism but toward the interpretation of the spirit of the age as universalism. Universalism taken to its ultimate end leads to an assimilation of ethnicity and a society of automaton. Universalism has its roots in the naturalistic view point. What needs critique is not Kaplan but naturalism.

Eugene Borowitz begins a critique of naturalism with a focus on Kaplan's proposals in his article, "The Problem of the Form of a Jewish Theology." (7) In that article he notes that Kaplan subordinates everything to the People of Israel. Basing his whole enterprise on the triple relation of God-Torah-Israel, Borowitz suggests that for Kaplan, the God-Torah tension is derivative, which is to say, it is justified by the sociological conditions of the Jew. The group is the creator of human values and the forms of its expression.

"By making the idea of God and the religious forms subject to the People, Kaplan provides for the growth and development in religious thought and form." (8) For Kaplan the group is the authority whereas in previous modes, God is the authority. Borowitz asks, why give in to group authority? Kaplan would answer that man is bound by nature, society and humanity to express himself through a group. It is unhealthy not to use one's own group for expressing one's

religiosity. Borowitz suggests that Kaplan's theory is only for those ready to accept Jewish group identity. This raises a problem concerning autonomy. How can the group be prior to the individual without losing autonomy? From this Borowitz calls Kaplan's view a "sociological dogmatism," and he continues with the question: If the group is supreme, what prevents it from making Satan its God? What are the limits to group will? Kaplan's agenda is that the group cannot do away with one universal God, or the certainty that universal ethics can be attained. Central to Kaplan's view is the idea that one cannot set ethical limits to the group's acceptable creativity. The problem is solved by Kaplan's notion of the "vocation" of Israel: to moralize society and human relationships. Borowitz points out that it is circular to argue that the return to God is the supreme goal, and yet ethics are ultimately derived from Him.

Borowitz has raised a number of issues. He suggests that Kaplan substitutes a necessity arising from the workings of nature itself for the metaphysical necessity of older philosophies.(9) Kaplan is operating within the domain of discourse which claims that science can provide descriptions of what man must do. This is the "moral fallacy," to derive what is right from what is factually true. He concludes, "Functionalism cannot serve as a means of avoiding the metaphysical issue." (10)

We have a tension between the "theocentrism" of revealed religion and the "humanism" which is a consequence

of modernity. How does the Nineteenth Century secularist idea of "universalism" become transformed into the Twentieth Century naturalist idea of sociological dogmatism? First, Kaplan recognized the logical consequence of secularism, viz. assimilation. But, assimilation has always been a threat, even during times of Jewish Persecution there was generally the option of conversion. The transformation from theocentrism to humanism can best be understood as a practical problem, or what might be called the "is/ought" problem. Perhaps the theoretical problem, or, the "metaphysical" problem cannot be solved. The issue is best raised in terms of the example of benevolence. Is it our duty to be benevolent, as would be the case with the theocentric view? Or, is man in fact sometimes moved to action by benevolence? In other words, Is benevolence rational or instinctive? Benevolence is a natural instinct which can be guided by reason. This means that the concern is to develop reason so as to nurture benevolent action. The problem is a matter of "Practice" not "dogma", a matter of "deed" not "creed."⁽¹¹⁾

From this example, Kaplan can be better understood. Replace the word "benevolence" with any other predicate of positive moral content and Kaplan's method is made plain. It is a method, not a message. The metaphysical issue cannot be solved within the purview of Kaplan's proposals. This does not, however, lessen the positive impact his life and work has had on the continued growth and self-realization of the

People of Israel.

Notes to 3. Critique of Kaplan's Concept

1. Irwin Fishbein. "Reconstructionism." Cincinnati, HUC-JIR, Rabbinic Thesis, 1957. P. 7
2. Arthur A. Cohen And Mordecai M. Kaplan. IF NOT NOW, WHEN?. New York, Schocken, 1973
3. Op.cit. Fishbein. P. 71
4. Op.cit. JUDAISM AS A CIVILIZATION. P. 181
5. Op.cit. Fishbein. P. 73-74
6. Daniel Friedman. "Mordechai M. Kaplan's Concept of Jewish History." Cincinnati, HUC-JIR, Rabbinic Thesis, 1962
7. Eugene Borowitz. "The Problem of the Form of a Jewish Theology," in HUC Annual, Cincinnati, 1969-1970. P. 391-408
8. IBID. P. 401
9. Op.cit. A NEW JEWISH THEOLOGY IN THE MAKING. P. 119
10. IBID. P. 121
11. THE IS/DOUGHT PROBLEM. Ed. W.D. Hudson. London, Macmillan, St. Martin's Press, 1969

V.CONCLUSION: A CRITIQUE OF NATURALISM

This thesis has been discussing the question of how one can pursue the demands of a Pluralistic, voluntaristic society within the context of a religious tradition without the consequence of change. Essentially, Kaplan has argued that one cannot. Change is the inevitable consequence.

Naturalism sets up the justification for change by identifying the eternal Processes in the cosmos as Processes of eternal change. The question is, Why is change so threatening? Not to change with one's tradition would create the other consequence, total unity, which one might ask, at the expense of diversity?

Mordecai Kaplan Presents a limited form of Naturalism. He is aware that either extreme, Pure logic or Pure supernatural belief will not work in the conditions of contemporary times. It has been shown that the basis of his response is both Jewishly and Philosophically rooted in the work of Maimonides and Spinoza. Kaplan, Like them actually created a "New Judaism," actually recast and defined the "practice" of the faith. The essence, however, I believe remains the same.

Kaplan's Naturalism recognizes that both society and nature possess the forces that generate and support ideals. God is the term which defines the total Process whereby man's most important ideals arise and are brought to

fulfillment.(1) Although Kaplan has utilized the "science" of his day to assess the spiritual and social condition of the Jews, there is no reason to assume that God cannot triumph. It is the "right" of individuals to conceive of natural conceptions of God. This is unchallengeable.

Like Spinoza and Maimonides before him, Mordecai M. Kaplan recast the basis for Jewish practice, i.e. participation in Jewish life: All Jews must be Jews "by choice." Beginning with RMBM's GUIDE, which reflected the science of his time, the science of Aristotle, Jews were faced with an ever increasing sense of opportunity for enlightenment and growth. This condition continues to exist and it has brought about natural changes. Modernization cannot, and should not be avoided. God never commanded the Israelites to turn away from truth. "Justice, Justice, you shall pursue" suggests the primary recognition of the HUMAN pursuit of truth.

Thus, the moral destiny of the Jew has been perceived differently at different times. Spinoza was influenced by Cartesian methods, and, building upon Maimonides expansion of the Jewish world-view to include also a "Philosophical", or "secular" world-view, he established a revolutionary distinction between spiritual liberation and spiritual bigotry. For Spinoza, God was accessible in all realms of human experience by all people, but that experience was necessarily limited and bound by the laws of nature. Thus, to move in any other direction, from the point of view of

humanity, other than toward intellectual universalism and spiritual ecumenism would be self-bondage for humanity. We must recognize the "condition" of human life and act to nurture, with all our intellectual and spiritual power, all persons to become fulfilled and actualized.

Building upon this, Kaplan asserted a new means to achieve "Jewish" self-actualization: a recasting of our basic definition of community. As a civilization, all sectors speak for the whole of Jewish Civilization. All members assert leadership. The People is the corpus. Not the Law, Not God, not Philosophy, but the People. For Maimonides, the focus was on reason as the test of faith. For Spinoza, the focus was on nature, as the test of faith. For Kaplan, the focus is on the People, as the test of faith. What enhances the Jewish People, enhances the Jewish Religion which, as one civilization among many, should enhance the betterment of the world. For Maimonides, there was the "rational Jew." For Spinoza, there was the "Natural Jew." For Kaplan, there is the "universal Jew." And yet, as each one recast the spiritual horizons of Judaism based on the science of his time, the essence remained the same. Judaism was always a People centered monotheism which strove to harmonize humanity, overcome evil, and effect a goal of peace for human beings with reverence to God.

In a article entitled, "Jewish Ecumenism and Jewish Revival: A Symposium," Kaplan states in concise manner the essence of Judaism as he sees it. Judaism is pluralistic,

and has never been monolithic. Minority views have always existed and always will. The constant interplay within the corpus of the People of Israel will be an eternal process.

Judaism has also meant ecumenism, both to the non-Jewish World and within the variety of Jewish folk. He views the condition of Judaism and the self-destructive tensions within the heavily competing movements of modern Jewish life and calls for "Ressurrection." He calls for a renewal. Using the metaphor of "The Valley of Dry Bones" from Ezekiel, Kaplan asserts that the Jewish People will need to redefine themselves again so to achieve continued life.

Kaplan then suggests that modernity parallels the return from Babylon 539 B.C.E. That event marked the beginning of a renaissance for Judaism. With the advent of modernity, the will to live was again reasserted. His Program is response to this will to live which he perceived as a demand for redefinition.

Kaplan Proposed, as has been Presented above, essentially a two-fold Plan. The renewal requires 1) Cultural Zionism embodied in the State of Israel; and, 2) A creative diaspora which will enhance the organic growth of communities. These two elements are "organically" unified. Yet, the division among Jews and forms of Judaism suggests that although we live in a period of religious Pluralism, within the House of Israel we have little, if any religious tolerance, particularly in Israel. He calls for a Jewish

ecumenical movement to create such social structures for the Jews in the Diaspora as would identify them as the spiritual and physical heirs of the original Household of Israel.(2) He appeals to a complete non-definition of the Jew. Self-identification is the only criteria. This is truly a universalism of a sort.

What will be the response of Jews to the waning condition of Judaism in the Post-modern age? This thesis has attempted to shed light on the limits of universalism. Kaplan offers a challenge more than a response. The challenge to enjoy the fruits of modernity, but not totally. Yet, he is willing to risk the possible changes that may occur as a result of creating a "greater Judaism." Better a redefined Judaism than no Judaism at all. Kaplan comes from the heart, not just the mind. He appeals to the conditions of Jewry in modern times in modern form and language. He maintains the uniqueness of the content of the Jewish "vocation" as part of a world-wide struggle toward peace and self-fulfillment on the part of all peoples of all cultures.

The message of ecumenism is as old as antiquity. Kaplan has provided a valuable method for advancing the beauty and meaning of Judaism in a world which demands are imposing and draining. He proposes a greater Judaism which "will have a place in the greater and better world which has to come into being if mankind is to survive. Toward that greater Judaism, each of the existing Jewish denominations can make a positive contribution, provided it will function in the

spirit of Jewish ecumenism, provided it would unite us through our identification with the biblical Household of Israel, and provided it would help to translate that identification into a democratically and spiritually reconstituted living Jewish People."(3)

Notes to: Conclusion

1. Op.cit. Jack Cohen. P. 115

2. "Jewish Ecumenism and Jewish Revival: A Symposium." Part 1 by Mordecai M. Kaplan in RECONSTRUCTIONIST. New York, Reconstructionist Press, June 14, 1968. P. 12

3. IDEM.

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