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## CHAPTER I

Buber's philosophy, whether in the realm of the interpersonal or the political sphere, exemplifies his belief that human beings can enter into dialogue with one another. The realm of the "between" represents one cornerstone of Buber's philosophy. Genuine between-ness begins at the moment in which two persons become aware of the uniqueness of the other. This awareness depends on mutuality and an ability to accept the other person as a unique creation of God. The individual's challenge is to channel this awareness into a concrete relationship. Therein the between-ness becomes concretized by a mutual, reciprocal encounter involving two individuals. This meeting empowers a person towards responsibility, that is, the ability to respond to another person as a unique individual.<sup>1</sup> Such a dialogical relationship can blossom between two persons and as Buber insists, between two communities. In this opening section we seek an understanding of Buber's concept of dialogue. His dialogical message affected his political philosophy, especially in relation to the Jewish-Arab question. The possibility that two peoples can respond and live with the other is not a dream. It is the reality of Buber's political beliefs, expressed by Maurice Friedman in this manner:

"Nor can it (dialogue) be genuinely founded if it thinks in terms of the dialogue between state rather than between peoples, between the representatives of states rather than between the responsible and tested leaders of genuine communities."<sup>2</sup>



Buber sought the actualization of a dialogue between Arabs and Jews. His ideas were formulated in the form of an abstract national theory, which he concretized for the Jewish nation of the future. In 1921, he advocated an organic Zionist community, attuned to the economic and social co-operation of Arabs and Jews. Before we investigate his political attitudes, we will uncover his basic philosophy.

For Buber, someone who sought to meet his fellow man throughout his life, the metaphor of the eclipse of God is vital. In an eclipse of the sun, the moon passes between the earth and the sun; similarly, the eclipse of God means that something has blocked the relation between man and God. However simple the metaphor of sight: "we make the tremendous assumption that we can glance up to our God with our 'mind's eye' or rather being's eye, as with our bodily eye to the sun." Sight, the most sensitive and discriminating of our senses, becomes a metaphor of the mind's perceiving God. The emphasis in Buber's idea is on the "being's eye," the being or essence of man. Certainly Buber never intended to have the metaphor of sight misconstrued by those who might think that man could literally see God. Rather, he meant to place its full force on the darkness of the image, for that is the result of an eclipse. Man is left in darkness; the betweenness of man and God has been entered by "something," and it casts a shadow. The essential question posed by the eclipse, then, is--what has entered between man and God?

The between is found in relation; and relation is the key word in understanding Buber's thought, because for him, if man

can enter into relation with another being, the eclipse may eventually vanish. Relation, as Buber fully appreciates, is an ambiguous and probably misleading word because in modern usage, it usually refers to relating to "something;" the something that blocks real relation, in the basically religious sense in which Buber understands it. Relation in this real sense occurs when man's being is involved with another: being with nature, with man, and with God. Of course, by just defining relation one already objectifies it, and therefore one gives it qualities and characteristics, thus distinguishing them as objects. Nevertheless, relation, as we describe it, must include such ideas as reciprocity, betweenness, addressing, and wholeness. These are the intellectual components of the idea, but even if we can fit them together in life, this does not necessarily give us real relation, as Buber has lived it and believes all men may live it. No matter how profound philosophical thought may be, Buber contends, it does not yield relation. The baby, who has only a limited awareness of the world, lives in relation, in the I-Thou, but as he grows older, enters adolescence, and matures, he increasingly realizes that he lives in a world, the sum of everything, and only rarely enters into the I-Thou. Man's relations are manifold, his attitude two-fold: I-It, I-Thou. Within the latter, man enters into relation with God.

But how does man enter into the relation which Buber calls the absolute and perfect one? "The relation to a human being is the proper metaphor for the relation to God."<sup>4</sup> Here

again we find another metaphor, a way to God. Metaphor, in the Greek, means "to carry across:" thus in the I-Thou of two men, the relation is carried over into the Eternal Thou. If God has become eclipsed, it is because man's proper relation to man has also been eclipsed. Buber, unlike theologians whose conception of relation is limited to man-God, has based his idea of God on man-to-man relationships. Man's way must begin with listening, not merely hearing, but concentrating one's whole being on another person ("being" in German means "essence" as well). When a man understands a person as a whole being, as a "wesen," and listens to his address with all his being, relation is possible. Buber calls the occurrence "meeting, or encounter," and for him, real meeting is in the present. Perhaps the most powerful words of Buber are "all real living is meeting;"<sup>5</sup> or "toute-vie veritable est rencontre."<sup>6</sup> It is man's turning away from this "real living" which makes relation nearly impossible. Man next to man is empty; between man and man is meaningful.

\* \* \*

Man has become myopic in many ways, Buber believes, for he sees only what is directly in front of him, the object, and is blind when he looks beyond. Although Buber uses the metaphor of sight to describe his ideas, the essential sense in a true relation is acoustical. Man must address and listen to his fellow man; so too with nature and with God.

Most religions, like that of the Greeks, conceived their

gods visually. The Greek word "eido," to know, also means "to see." The Hebrews, on the other hand, "did not visualize their God and expressly forbade attempts to make of him an object. He was to be heard and listened to." <sup>7</sup> Herein, Buber maintains, lies the distinction between philosophy and religion, a vital difference if one is to understand his conception of the eclipse of God. "Philosophy and philosophizing (for Buber the former means the latter), ...begins ever anew with one's definitely looking away from his concrete situation, hence with the primary act of abstraction." <sup>8</sup> Abstract, that which "draws off" ideas from the concrete, the present, and turns them into objects, is the preoccupation of the philosopher. The pre-eminent sense of the philosopher is sight; he examines an idea in his mind and turns it over and over, abstracting the logic of it, and in so doing, he sees an "it". Understandably, the "noetical" act is the act originating in the mind or apprehended by reason.

Buber's description of philosophy is not intended to degrade philosophy for he too is a philosopher, as well as a poet and a religious man. Moreover, the dichotomy between philosophy and religion is not irreconcilable. Buber insists that "I may not try to escape the paradox. I have to live relegating the two irreconcilable positions to two separate realms...I must take it upon myself to live both in one and lived both are one." <sup>9</sup>

By insisting on the possibility of reconciliation of philosophy and religion, Buber recognizes that whether re-

conciliation occurs is man's decision; God did not create the division. Furthermore, the idea of unity pervades Buber's thought. In his essay "Judaism and Mankind," Buber reiterates that "one thing above all is needed."<sup>10</sup> Man must strive for "one thing," that is, unity in his life. Man cannot live in this dualistic world and yet hope to turn to God, unless he reconciles the inner self with the world of relation. Buber contrasts the duality in the attitude of the ethical man with the unified life of religious one, who has turned to God. The man who makes this change must choose to do so; it is his true test. As Buber speaks:

"In the unconditionality of his deed man experiences his communion with God....for the one who chooses, who decides, who is aflame with his goal, who is unconditioned, God is the closest, the most familiar Being, whom man, through his action, realizes ever anew, experiencing thereby the mystery of mysteries." <sup>11</sup>

The magnitude of that reconciliation is staggering, yet a philosophical anthropologist could not divorce himself from his fellow man, nor his ideas, and still be a whole person.

The pre-eminent sense of religion is hearing, the accoustical sense; its complement is speaking, the faculty of language. As Buber wrote: "the duality of the I and Thou finds fulfillment in the religious relationship; the duality of subject and object sustains philosophy while it is carried on."<sup>12</sup> Although in modern times religion and the religious relationship have become practically eclipsed from one another, for Buber their identity is essential, if there is to be true



religion. Religion generically means to "bind back;" for Buber it means "the act of holding fast to God...holding fast to the existing God."<sup>13</sup> Man must bind himself to God, and do so intentionally. This holding fast to God is a continuous struggle, because man cannot always be in relation to God. To hold fast to God one must hold fast to man. The religious relationship is that of meeting, of reciprocity, of addressing one's fellow man. Moreover, "the religious essence in every religion can be found in its highest certainty. That is the certainty that the meaning of existence is open and accessible in the actual lived concrete, not above the struggle of reality but in it."<sup>14</sup> The struggle, the confrontation with the meaning of religion and the meaning of life, leads man to the realization that such a struggle is part of leading a religious life. If man sees the world as "of objects," but listens to the words of relation, then he may begin to find his way.

\* \* \*

Man must turn himself, so that he may speak to God, but what are the forms of man's speech? In one of his sublime metaphors, Buber indicates that man's relation to nature lies on the threshold of speech, his relation to man is under the "seuil" of speech (grounded in speech), and his encounter with God hovers above the door of speech. Man speaks to God, but his speech often is in the form of silence; the spoken word being a hindrance because it is only a refraction of man's thought. The address to God is made with one's whole being; it is man's turning to God. Turning may take the form of: prayer, of pouring one's whole soul into the spoken word; but

there is something lacking in prayer; as Buber says: "all religious expression is only an intimation of its attainment... The meaning is to be found through the engagement of one's own person."<sup>15</sup> Prayer is only an intimation, but not the paradigm of the way. Perhaps Buber de-emphasizes prayer because it has become so misused, preferring to stress silent relation. For Buber, prayer is timeless, wordless, and speechless if it is man's real address to God. He also recognized, however, that prayer can become narcissistic and introverted. The word "address" always reappears in Buber's discussion of religious expression because if man speaks his prayers, making it an address to God, then the prayer will be filled with meaning. Though man may find his greatest comfort in prayer during times of suffering, he can also find meaning in prayer every day, if the prayer becomes lived speech. Man frequently criticizes prayer as meaningless, for where is one to find God in reciting prayers? Rather man should ask, where may I discover in my whole being the way of speaking to God? Searching within oneself reveals that prayer is only meaningful if man makes it so.

For Buber, language does not reside in man but we stand in language and speak out of it.<sup>16</sup> The message conveyed in one's language is often corrupted. Buber's dialogical message requires that dialogue lead to action. Individual dialogue does not lead to mysticism, but an involvement in public life. Building a strong relationship between communities is one way of reinforcing one's relation to God.

Buber seeks to restore the sanctuary of the between, so that man may return to God. If man chooses his way through prayer, then prayer means living. Living in relation to man, hallowing the wonders of the everyday. As W. Kaufmann noted in his preface to I and Thou: "the central commandment of the I-Thou relationship is to make the secular sacred."<sup>17</sup> Man lives, but man rarely lives in relation. The man who addresses God has nothing, but he stands in relation.<sup>18</sup> Nothingness, in Buber's sense, can be fullness; for if man possesses no object then he addresses the You, the essential being of God, which leads him to God. For Buber, man's response to the Eternal You is pre-linguistic.

The doors of relation are open, but mutuality does not always come to pass. If one addresses the Eternal Thou and receives God's answer, he receives the unfathomable strength of life's meaning. "Man receives the inexpressible confirmation of meaning...nothing henceforth can be meaningless."<sup>19</sup> The meaning resides in one's own life, not in some distant world but in this world. Man receives meaning in this world, as Buber calls it, he receives "the whole abundance of actual reciprocity, of being admitted, of being associated."<sup>20</sup> But if man only receives, this relation to God will be one-sided. Rather, he must give of himself, he must act. "Man must put the Presence in action, not let it reside in thought---this is not what we ought to do---we cannot do otherwise."<sup>21</sup> In Buber's mind, the man who enters into relation with the Eternal Thou has, in effect, made the decisive choice of his



life: one must act now.

Every person faces this monumental choice; it is the eternal test of the individual. The next test begins when a person stands ready for a dialogical relation to the community. The realization of a personal dialogical life must be extended to the community. This concept of the We-Thou, the group's relation to God, and within it the individual's relation to the group, is of paramount importance in this thesis. The matrix of dialogical relations is lived in the communal arena, and it is here that Buber developed his ideas on politics. The political community must be responsive to both the individual and communal needs.

While Buber's philosophical rubrics stress God's willingness to meet man, albeit at times more latent than actual, he also demands a personal and communal response to Him. This action entails a responsibility to act in the community, and testify to God's presence in Israel's history. The fulfillment of the I-Thou, translated into the life of politics, centers around two foci: the locus of personal relations and communal dialogue. Faith in dialogue is perhaps one of the only antidotes to a de-humanized society, a society that Ernst Simon characterizes as a diseased nationalism. For Buber, a genuine community comprised a social and spiritual reality. We cannot talk with God if we have abandoned the world, the community demands that we act towards the realization of our political goals.<sup>22</sup> Those goals, which he defended at the Zionist Congress

in 1921, crystallized in two patterns. The goal of a Jewish community, or nation responsive to the spiritual needs of its people, and a nation whose dialogical relation to the Eretz Yisrael implied a responsiveness and cooperation with the Arab peoples. As Simon points out,<sup>23</sup> Buber never advocated a withdrawal into a private, mystical life. Rather, the goal of political action must be the creation of a spiritual-political community living in concert with its neighbors.

Although Buber's ideas on community seem quite utopian, his concern was with the politics of the here and now. He did not advocate a utopia in Israel but a slow organic development of Israel, in congruence with the needs of a Zionist nation. He believed in building now, that, "We cannot prepare the messianic world, we can only prepare for it."<sup>24</sup> The world and the self are unifiable, to this end, Buber stressed the co-working of Community and God in a program of religious socialism.

The mature expression of Buber's concern with a community responsive to God is his religious socialism, which he developed after World War I.<sup>25</sup> Our Western culture, Buber wrote, has moved into a "Gesellschaft" society, wherein the mechanical living has replaced the organic community life. Friedman, in his analysis of Buber's political model, emphasizes that "true participation in community demands no less power of the soul than participation in a parliament or state politics."<sup>27</sup> The political goals of the community must be pursued within the community. Thus Buber's community is grounded in religious socialism, and includes an attachment to God's spirit as

manifested in our history. Buber's religious socialism is built on a "closeness to the land, on the meaningfulness of work and mutual help, on the leadership of those men who can take responsibility for individual lives, on a community built out of direct relationship between men and groups of men...and above all on the reign of God."<sup>28</sup> Buber's socialism is no substitute for utopianism; it demands the community's 'power of the spirit' to build a life-style of total community, responsible to individual and communal needs. This community is possible, but not because of God's grace. It can be established through man's will which is responsible to God's presence. Buber saw the failures of both the socialist and the capitalist societies, and thus his religious socialism is grounded in a dialogical community. In this religious socialism, Buber's call for the actualization of God on earth and his concern for the relations between man and man have merged into a whole--the message of true community.<sup>29</sup>

The spirit of this new community is based on the leader's belief in a community responsible for all its inhabitants and one that is devoted to the working of the land.<sup>30</sup> This community emerges from Buber's idea of 'humanitas.' It is the true humanism of a life lived in dialogue; it includes not only intellectual growth but a regeneration of the uniqueness of human life. That individual uniqueness can be transposed to the political realm; a nation encompasses a unique national purpose and spirit, which advances the people towards a res-

ponsiveness to its neighbors. This is one of the primary goals of Buber's nationalism. This idea represents the goal of Jewish nationalism Buber propounded in 1921 which was subsequently rejected by the Twelfth Zionist Congress. Eight years later, at the 1929 Congress, Buber reiterated the danger faced by the Jews: the nation cannot become a national idol. The nation must recognize that God stands above the entire community. The community's humanity is "the unity of human life under one divine direction."<sup>31</sup> Maintaining the community necessitates compromises: Buber delineates two essential factors. First, the people's 'will to power' cannot interfere with the community's relation to God. Second, there should exist a constant communal responsibility to weigh exactly "how much is necessary to preserve the community."<sup>32</sup> This consciousness will allow Israel a life of national humanism that nourishes the spirit of national cooperation, and attachment to the land, and a spiritual concern that are consistent with Buber's idea of a Zionist nation.

Endnotes: Chapter 1

- 1 Martin Buber, Between Man and Man, p. 16.
- 2 Maurice Friedman, Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue, p.220.
- 3 Martin Buber, Eclipse of God, p. 127.
- 4 Martin Buber, I and Thou, p. 151.
- 5 Ibid., p. 14.
- 6 Buber, trans. J. Loewenson-Lavi, La Vie en Dialogue, p. 17.
- 7 On. cit., p. 33.
- 8 Buber, Eclipse of God, p. 38.
- 9 Buber, I and Thou, p. 144.
- 10 Buber, On Judaism, p. 28.
- 11 Ibid., p. 86.
- 12 Buber, Eclipse of God, p. 38.
- 13 Ibid., p. 123.
- 14 Ibid., p. 35.
- 15 Ibid., p. 36.
- 16 Buber, I and Thou, p. 189.
- 17 Ibid., p. 23.

- 18 Ibid., p. 55.
- 19 Ibid., p. 150.
- 20 Ibid., p. 158
- 21 Ibid., p. 160.
- 22 Ernst Simon, Line of Demarcation, p. 45.
- 23 Ibid., p. 45-46.
- 24 Buber, Pointing The Way, p. 137.
- 25 Maurice Friedman, Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue, p.45.
- 26 Ibid., p. 46.
- 27 Ibid., p. 47.
- 28 Ibid., p. 47.
- 29 Ibid., p. 47.
- 30 Ernst Simon, Line of Demarcation. p. 23.
- 31 Buber, Israel and the World, p. 246.
- 32 Maurice Friedman, Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue, p.246.

## CHAPTER II

The understanding of Buber's politics begins with certain universal concepts that underlie his notion of a people and a nation. The universal operative political concepts are grounded in his notion of "mythos", a form of abstract beliefs or experiences that are fundamental to any people. A mythos, or myth, as described in Ernst Simon's last chapter on Buber, "The Tangible and the Abstract in Buber's Politics", often remains undefined. Buber often concentrates on the concrete myths of the Jewish people without explaining the idea of "mythos" in general. A myth in its broadest sense, is a fundamental way of organizing reality, which we might add, tends to become more abstract in Western civilization. Every people has a myth, and every nation includes a national myth that justifies its continued political existence. Myth, translated into political terms, yields an ideology. The Torah and the experiences therein constitute the myth of the Jewish people, but we can only examine these myths after analyzing Buber's views on peoplehood, nationalism, and the spirit.

Maurice Friedman provides a useful definition of myth that elucidates Buber's idea, especially in light of Buber's concern for Jewish relations with Arabs: "myth is the expression of a world in which the divine and the human live next to and in one another."<sup>1</sup> Thus a myth is the concretization of a dialogical relation. In one of Buber's early speeches



on Judaism (1913), he spoke of myth in general terms, insisting that "every person can determine the destiny of God through his own life, therefore every person is deeply rooted in the mythos of life."<sup>2</sup> This early statement, which becomes clearer upon examination of Buber's notion of spirit, implies that the myth not only directs the life of a people, but also affects the individual. Living in accordance with this mythos necessitates an actualization of the spiritual element of living.

Buber's notion of a people encompasses certain universal characteristics. The sina qua non of a people's origin is threefold: the element of fate, the spiritual factor, and a communal self-consciousness. The concept 'people' implies a unity of fate.<sup>3</sup> This presupposes a gigantic molding of a group based on common experiences and fate, a fate which can be further explained as the encounter between a group of people and a Thou or transcendent being. The transmission of this encounter to future generations relies on the propagation of the species and the development of a body of literature that explains this unity of fate. Buber denotes this human-divine meeting as the "spiritual factor" of a people. This spiritual factor manifests itself in the organic, potential, common memory of a people and is authenticated to future generations through a pattern of experiences, as a language of existence or way of life.<sup>4</sup> In Buber's thinking, the unity of fate and the spiritual factor (expressed in common memory and language)



are the cornerstones of any people. This idea of people also implies that a person is born into it and accepts the physical and spiritual goals that are sui generis to the people. Once this people is established, Buber can define his notion of a nation. Only through the progression of a people to a nation can we understand Buber's nationalism. The term "nation" signifies the unit people from the perspective that a people becomes aware of its distinctiveness from any other nation. That is, a people becomes a nation when it develops a consciousness of a unique identity. The manifestation of this national self-consciousness leads inexorably to an awareness of modern nationalism. Buber expressed this change thusly: "A nation is produced when its acquired status undergoes a decisive inner change which is accepted as such in the people's self-consciousness."<sup>5</sup>

Buber likens this awareness of national uniqueness to a person who has an awareness of his 'seeing ability' and understands the function of his visual capacity. But if a people becomes obsessed with its vision, with its national capacities, this leads to an overextended awareness. Such extremes of national awareness are in Buber's mind, signs of unhealthy nationalism. If we return to the model of the dialogical relations, we see that a healthy nationalism compares to the fullness of the encounter between two persons or groups of people. There is a recognition of the divine presence in every dialogical relation. But when that awareness is lost, the partners are no longer ends in themselves,

rather they try to manipulate each other as means to an end. Dialogue fails. Likewise in the history of a nation, the national self-awareness propels the nation towards a national program, which in Buber's mind, can be twisted into a national myopia, an obsession with the nation as a god unto itself. This is the disease of nationalism. Such nationalism cannot channel the communal power of relation into its national program, nor will it utilize the spiritual component of the people, the common fate and memory that binds a people into a nation. In Buber's eyes, nationalism can only be effective if it recognizes the power that transcends the nation. The reality of God is the ultimate power who overarches any national consciousness. The nation in Buber's eyes, is not self-sufficient, but it is completely aware of its existence quo nation. If the nation's identity becomes distorted, this signals the onset of a diseased nationalism.

"He who regards the nation as the supreme principle, as the ultimate reality, as the final judge and does not recognize that over and above all the countless and varied peoples there is an authority named or unnamed to which communities as well as individuals must inwardly render an account of themselves, could not possibly know how to draw this distinction...."(between two types of nationalism)

7

Although Buber initially defines nationalism in negative terms, he also discusses the idea of positive nationalism. The Hebrew term *לִי'נִיּוּת* in contradistinction to *לִי'נִיּוּת* represents Buber's concept of healthy nationalism, which will be discussed in the next chapter. As opposed to a disembodied

nationalism that separates a people from the driving spiritual force of its national myth, Buber views Jewish nationalism as distinctive because of his belief in organic nationalism and the people's association with the land of Israel.

The original kernel of nationalism inspires a people to struggle for what they lack, in order to achieve their "droits de la nation."<sup>8</sup> A problem inevitably arises in national-hood development that spells the inner destruction of a people, namely that the nation wins its rights but loses sight of its binding myth which gives it purpose. This is what Buber calls *אויניקס*. This nationalism lacks a spiritual component and regards the nation as primus inter pares. The best example of this nationalism remains the Third Reich. Essentially, the Buberian concept of healthy nationalism implies a spiritual factor and ability to work with other nations: "It (the nation) does not feel superior to others, but considers its task incomparably sublime, not because this task is greater<sup>9</sup> than another, but because it is creation and mission." The people are God's creation, the nation unfolds from an awareness of communal uniqueness, and the mission means working in cooperation with other nations.

Underlying Buber's nationalism is the concept of "spirit" as the fundamental ground of a nation. The problem with the term spirit, or spiritual force resides in its multiplicity of meanings. Buber refers to the spirit of nationalism, the prophet's spirit, and the spirit of the land (i.e., land of

Zion). Here it is necessary to remember that 'spirit' encompasses many nuances, but at an elemental level, spirit refers to the infusion of God's presence (past or present) in any task, whether personal or political. The spirit of nationalism as we have just explored, blossoms in the nation's ideology, but this ideology can only be fruitful if it does not make the nation an end in itself. Hence a national awareness of God must color a healthy ideology.<sup>10</sup> That spiritual presence infuses Jewish nationalism with a special task--to create a nation answerable to God and morally responsible towards other nations, such as the Arabs.

Buber also speaks of spirit in terms of the spiritual history of the Zion concept. The spiritual component of Zion rests with God: "the basis of joining land and people was not from an artificial process, but based on God and his relation to the Jews."<sup>11</sup> (In this sense Buber considers Zion unlike any other nation, but views the Jewish nation as a "people interpreting its historical experiences as the actions of its God.")<sup>12</sup> But his idea of Zion does not undermine Buber's idea of nation, rather it impels his conceptualization of a state based on the interplay of spirit and politics. The spiritual history of the people of Israel is not based on a single event, rather it is an ongoing reality that directs the progress of the Jewish nation. In his preface to On Zion, Buber expressed the concreteness of Jewish spirit in this way: The political enterprise reflects the spiritual history of a faith, and thus "as long as such a spiritual

reality lives, history should be responsible to it rather than that it should be responsible to history."<sup>13</sup> The nation can only become a spiritual force if it overcomes certain dualisms. Spiritual force means in concrete terms, the substitution for war by (a) community, "the practice of a religion of communal living."<sup>14</sup> Religion, if lived in this way, can prevent the nation from becoming an end in itself. This is the task of our religion. That spiritual force represents the paradigm of a Jewish nation, it enables the nation to overcome the dualism of truth and reality, idea and fact, morals and politics.

In his introduction to On Zion, Nahum Glatzer indicates<sup>15</sup> that the idea of spirit pervades Buber's prophetic view. Spirit is "the prophetic teacher of faithfulness and renewal" and the prophet's task demands that he be "Faithful to the task of realization of genuine community."<sup>16</sup> The spirit represents the regenerative fountain from which the prophet drinks, it is a "guardian of social dynamics out of which all institutions must renew themselves."<sup>17</sup> This is spirit in its most abstract form. How does the spirit function in the individual chosen by God? This spirit, or spiritual force is not a possession belonging only to the prophet, but rather it is a tangible message transmitted by God. Without this spirit the prophet has no power. Power is given to the prophet in order that he might discharge<sup>18</sup> God's duties. Spirit does not exist independent of the prophet's being, it is not a timeless ideal of Platonic



form. The spirit manifests itself through the prophet's words and actions. This is the core of Buber's essay on "Plato and Isaiah" in which he claims that the prophet "does not, like Plato, believe that he possesses an abstract, general, or timeless concept of truth. He always receives only one message from one situation."<sup>19</sup>

The desideratum of the prophet rests not in a power that he possesses sui generis, rather his power stems from his relation to God's spiritual power. The man of spirit is the one whom the spirit invades and seizes, whom the spirit uses as its garment, not one who houses the spirit.<sup>20</sup>

With this understanding of the prophetic spirit, we now turn to Jeremiah, who Ernst Simon portrays as a paradigm of this spiritual force. We have noted the multiplicity of meanings attached to the term 'spirit.' God's spirit has a multifaceted effect on the prophet. The prophet is part of a people, and by extension, the spirit determines the pattern of a healthy national growth. The nation must live in accord with its spiritual power. The essential fusing of land and people, which created Jewish nationalism, was not an artificial process, but was grounded on God's relation to the Jews.

Simon delineates the prophetic task most clearly in comparing Jeremiah to Buber. The prophet must first concern himself with the spiritual existence of Israel before attending to her physical existence.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, Buber devoted himself to the task of national identity in Germany

by developing a program of adult education.<sup>22</sup> Without this spiritual basis there could be no Jewish people in the Reich's shadow. Buber's caveat to the German Jewish community paralleled Jeremiah's warnings to the Jerusalemites. Jeremiah had warned that Jerusalem would fall, maintaining that the leaders were incapable of ruling a theo-political state. But Jeremiah never accepted the blandishments of Nebuchadnezzar's chief guard, he remained faithful to his people, and stood by his basic position.<sup>23</sup> Simon's interpretation mirrors the Biblical passage: (Jeremiah 40: 2-4)

"The Lord your God threatened this place with this disaster; and now the Lord has brought it about. He has acted as He threatened, because you sinned against the Lord and did not obey Him. This is why this has happened to you. Now I release you this day from the letters which were on your hands. If you would like to go with me to Babylon, come, and I will look after you....See, the whole land is before you: go wherever seems good and right to you."

Jeremiah's spiritual force summoned him to remain with his people. Yet his spirit also compelled him to decry the spirit<sup>ual</sup> malaise of his people.<sup>24</sup>

The prophetic task begins as a corrective to the people's spirit. Buber also found himself in this position, vis-à-vis his position with the Arabs. In Germany, Buber had advocated a tribal attachment to Judaism; he transformed this goal into a national goal in Palestine. But he did not

abaondon the goal of spiritual nationalism in Palestine. He espoused a humanistic living together with the Arabs, reminding the Yishuv settlers that this was their obligation. The alternative was a zealous secular nationalism. Such a position was difficult to maintain in a time of extreme  
 25  
 national awareness:

אתה רוח הומאנית, ירדן צורק לנכבד לעם את התחייבות האנושיות  
 נחמ"חיות בקפיליפ המפיווד לא אל נצלת הירודי בעבד.

In later years, Buber echoed these words of national responsibility in a speech delivered on April 30, 1958 in which he spoke of the national obligation to the spirit.

"But he who will truly serve the spirit must seek to make good all that which was once missed: he must seek to free once again the blocked path to an understanding with the Arab peoples."<sup>26</sup>



Notes: Chapter 2

- <sup>1</sup> Maurice Friedman, Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue, p.231.
- <sup>2</sup> Ernst Simon, Line of Demarcation, p. 48.
- <sup>3</sup> Martin Buber, Israel and the World, p. 217.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 217.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 218.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 219.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 226.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 218.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 221.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 221.
- <sup>11</sup> Martin Buber, On Zion, p. xix.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. xix.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. xv.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. xiv.
- <sup>15</sup> Buber, On Zion, p. xiv.
- <sup>16</sup> Buber, Israel and the World, p. 107-108.
- <sup>17</sup> Op. cit., p. xiv.
- <sup>18</sup> Buber, Israel and the World, p. 108.

- 19 Buber, Israel and the World, p. 111.
- 20 Ibid., p. 108.
- 21 Ernst Simon, Line of Demarcation, p. 32.
- 22 Ibid., p. 30.
- 23 Ibid., p. 32.
- 24 Ibid., p. 32.
- 25 Ibid., p. 32.
- 26 Martin Buber, Israel and the World, p. 257.

## CHAPTER III

Now that we have defined Buber's fundamental universal concepts, namely, a people, its growth into a nation, and the subsequent development of a national spirit, we can turn to the distinctive qualities of Jewish nationalism. Just as nationalism cannot flourish without a healthy spirit, so too Jewish nationalism necessitates a tie to a particular land, namely Israel. This is an apodictic factor of Jewish nationalism. Before explaining this idea, which Buber defines in On Zion, we must first understand the components of Jewish nationalism.

Authentic Jewish nationalism, in its highest form encompasses both a practical program and ideological aspirations. The practical program, as lived in the land of Zion, we call Zionism, but we have to first understand its ideological foundation. In Buber's mind, Jewish nationalism is known as *אומניקל* a term signifying a healthy nationalism. This nationalism is the paradigm of organic nationalism that Buber builds for the nation Israel. In our early discussion of nationalism, *אומניקל* is opposed to the incomplete nationalism of *אומניקל* this is a nation that becomes a god unto itself.<sup>1</sup> Simon adumbrates the characteristics of organic nationalism: its legitimacy is based on the cooperation of a nation with its neighbors, the nation has a common fate or destiny, the nation achieves a common experience in history, and it has an attachment to the spiritual power that transcends it. Finally organic Jewish



"The spiritual element in this formulation is the common organic memory in potential, a foundation which reveals itself in a structural way[that is, in its actual manifestation], in the experiences, language, and in its way of life."<sup>6</sup>

There exists, in Buber's words, a mysterious element among the chain of people, spirit, and land. He called this a living matrimony, a "challenge to make of it (God's giving the land) what He intended to have made of it."<sup>7</sup> There remains a living, acting partnership between land and people, expressed in the dialogical: the land needed the people and the people needed the land.

A particular land is essential to Buber's belief in Jewish nationalism, for the basis of joining land and people was not an artificial process, but based on God's relation to the Jewish people. The people did not choose a land to justify their national claims. Rather that land was given them in an ongoing historical event. This is one of the unique elements of Jewish nationalism. Buber calls this mutual relationship a mystery, but his Zionist critics tried to dissolve this mystery. In Buber's schema, Zionism aims at the creation of a just and genuine community, tied to a specific land. The land is as important to God as is the relationship between the people and God. This is an integral part of Buber's Jewish national belief. Yet his critics abhorred the mysterious basis of a God-land

relationship. The mystery resides in the relation of the people, God, and Zion. Only on this particular land can Buber's dream of organic nationalism be fulfilled. The people's tie to the land involves the peoples's relation to God. Buber explains it this way in his essay on Herzl:

"Why can Zion be built only in Palestine? Because it is the structure hidden in the material of this land if it allows itself to be perfected by it: Zion means a destiny of mutual perfecting....Israel would lose its own self if it replaced Palestine by another land and it would lose its own self if it replaced Zion by Palestine."<sup>8</sup>

The danger for Jewish nationalism is that it will become like other nationalisms: it should shun political self-aggrandizement.<sup>9</sup> To Buber a Jewish nationalism that is based on a formal theory devoid of a spiritual basis will fail. As Simon enunciates, That which shatters the covenant between faith and a people endangers the root of its existence of the two participants."<sup>10</sup>

Buber's Zionism is the actualization of a theory of organic nationalism which can only be worked out in the land of Israel. His Zionism charted a paradoxical demand, to live up to the idea of a "chosen people" complete with the dangers and hopes that confront a 'diaspora' people, while living that chosenness in a normal state, the state of Israel. Simon never defines Buber's Zionism in strict political terms. Rather he talks about a slow development of the state, a natural organic process that



no nationalism could attain in a few years. Simon explains Buber's ideas by examining<sup>n</sup> his Judaism. Judaism is more than a religious entity, it is a faith in a people responding to God. If it were simply a religion, Judaism would never have exerted such an influence on Christianity.<sup>11</sup> In Buber's words, Judaism is an ~~?)JINK~~ an "emunah", rather than a religion.<sup>[13]</sup> This faith inextricably binds itself to a people and its destiny. Thus anything that shatters the tie between the faith and the people (an organic, developing people) endangers the existence of both. One of Zionism's problems centers on the general condition of a normal state: Buber calls the average state a "disembodied faith."<sup>12</sup> This condition is precisely the recipient of Buber's strongest attack; the Zionist nation can only survive if it is grounded in the spirit, that is, a responsiveness to God's words. Buber reiterates this idea in a late essay, "Israel and the Command of the Spirit:" "By means of the spirit alone the Zionist movement established its position in Palestine and wrested for itself the first legal title of a political nature."<sup>13</sup>

In the first chapter of On Zion, Buber speaks of the relationship between the land and God. The giving of the first fruits represents an acknowledgment of the covenant between God and Israel. It also symbolizes

the continual re-giving of this sacred space. Bringing the first fruits symbolized the reciprocity between God and the individual members of the land. "The whole land has been bestowed by God on His People,"<sup>14</sup> and the first-fruits are a tangible sign of this mutual relation. Thus the land cannot lie fallow, it must be cultivated and it is an integral key to Buber's organic nationalism. The land must flourish, not by the toil of one people, but through the physical cooperation of two peoples, Jews and Arabs, who could foster that necessary symphonic cooperation.

In Simon's interpretation of Buber, he stresses the mythic elements of both the Jewish land and the Jewish people. For Buber the fruits of nature are as important as the blessings of history. Both blessings need a real land and a real people, but in Simon's mind, the people stands above the land. (Here we are not sure if Simon is representing Buber accurately). The land was never just the property of the people Israel, it was always a kind of demand for the acting out of God's commandments. This kernel of Buber's religious ideology jolts the mind of any Zionist theory that the land is gratuitously given to Israel. Yet fulfilling Buber's dialogical balance, Simon insists that the people fulfill their spiritual responsibilities. The land is given



contingent on Israel's will to restore it and build a new society. But a new society must build on its spirit, as Simon notes:<sup>15</sup>

חגורו כנז תיגמל וליחמך גאעריבולת די מציאות ,  
רק אס תיעשר זו כוח דומי, רק אס תחזיק מציאות.

"Such a secular society will be swallowed and strangled in a whirlpool. Only if it will act by its spiritual strength, will it strengthen its stance."

The land is God-given, but a Zionist return demands an internal self-renewal of the people, a renewal of the heart, as Ahad Ha'am termed it. Buber believed in the obligation of the people to express itself in social and political deeds; this is their national responsibility.<sup>16</sup>

The joining of land and people was the prerequisite of Buber's Zionist state. But the danger of this Zionist nation lurks in the possible detachment of the people from its spirit. The people can create a nation that is an idol, or the people can build its nation based on Buber's principles of national humanism. The choice remains clear because Israel is a unique nation. She owes allegiance to God and in Buber's words: "...is the only people in the world which, from its earliest beginnings, has been both a nation and a religious community."<sup>17</sup> As a nation it possesses a spiritual-political tie to one land, as a religious community it is bound by a sacred responsibility to God. Buber's idea of a return to

Zion is paradoxical: can a people become a nation without losing spiritual identity?

This attachment to the land epitomizes one of the singular characteristics of Jewish nationalism. From his earliest theorizing Buber faced the dilemma of creating an organic nationalism that does not build the land at the expense of its neighbors. Zionist theory demands a cooperative nation that is responsive to its neighbors as well. Because there is a spiritual component, you must consider your neighbors.

Zionism, should not be an artificial melding of a people to a land, but an ongoing belief in the people's responsiveness to that land. Transferred to the ideological realm, this means that the nation has to realize its organic national program. Simon's analysis of Buber's Zionist ideas are as much a study of Buber's Judaism as it is his political views. If nationalism represents the universal and Zionism its particular application, then how should the state of Israel reflect the theory of a unique nation?

In his chapter on "Zionism and Judaism, " Simon notes the tension between the abstract idea and the tangible realization in all of Buber's thought. Buber insisted that the pure idea is connected to the tangible via that which is created, namely the nation.<sup>18</sup> The Zionist purpose cannot solely rest on a community of faith that builds

the land, rather it must create a new society that will authenticate a response to the land and the spirit. In this vein, Buber rejects Plato's idea of a "just state" because the hand of the spirit cannot realize Plato's state. That polity remains a philosophical abstraction that can never be concretized. But the spirit, in Buber's language, serves as a this-worldly guide to bring forth something greater than just one more state among states.<sup>19</sup> As Simon points out, Buber fears both an "alienated faith" *אמונה מנותקת* and the tendency to a secular-national approach:

"We have also not touched upon the second possibility, to transform the life of our faith into an abstract philosophical structure. But many, perhaps even the majority of us, lean towards collective assimilation, in the form of a secular-nationalist approach, that is, "we should be like all the other nations."<sup>20</sup>  
(I Samuel 8:20)

When Israel becomes a nation like all others, it will err in the direction of collective assimilation. Simon's point is twofold: the Jewish people can never exist as a Church, nor can they afford to build a totally secularized state.

In spite of his insistence on a faith-full nation, Buber recognized the necessity of political compromise, and explained this issue via prophetic examples.<sup>21</sup>

הסכמתו של בוגר.... לציונות הפוליטית והסכמתו למדינת ישראל  
מסתגרת לאור תפיסתו את עצם פאראדוקס הפשרה.

Buber's agreement to political compromise, does not mitigate his doubts about the weaknesses of the new state.

Rather, Buber showed his understanding of this paradox. Spiritual nationalism does not mean being above politics. It is part of the political process. He quotes this prophetic example: Samuel's willingness to anoint Saul as king is only partial. He crowns a king but instructs the people that their ruler will be responsible to God, for a king can only fulfill the superficial desire of the people.<sup>22</sup>

כֹּה תִּכְנֹן לְפִי כִּסֵּדָר זֶה, יִהְיֶה דַתְּחִלָּה, אֲשֶׁר  
אוֹפֵן לֹא הוּא אֶל אֱלֹהִים, אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁמָעֵל - מֵאֲדוֹמִים.

In a similar way, the necessary political compromises of Buber's Zionism are informed by his tenacious adherence to Judaism. Again Simon quotes Buber as a paradigm of the theo-political conflicts of the state. The ruler must be responsive to the needs of the people, but if they reject him, the prophets' words ring true: "Hearken to the voice of the people in all that they say to thee, for they have not rejected you, but have rejected God." (I Samuel 8:7) In a modern nation, nationalism and the spirit can be realized just as theocracy and real-politik were joined in Samuel's time.

The elemental problem with which Buber wrestled for forty years focused on the direction and motivation

that would color the Zionist experience. Zionism ought to engender a genuine community, but there were inherent tensions in Zionism:<sup>23</sup>

במחשבותי נני ובין לאומיות ומתבטח  
 ערוח העם ובין אמצעי למתבטח - תיבדילי עניי המורכב מאת צרכיו.

We can summarize these tensions in this way: the tension between the actuality and the ideal state, and the dilemma of building a self-limiting state that will not oppress others. If the Jewish nation is to satisfactorily reflect the theory of a state, it must grapple with these tensions. The nation should not embrace a nationalism that denies the spirit of the people. In Simon's analysis of the Zionist state, he expresses the essential problem of Jewish existence in this fashion:<sup>24</sup>

"The real dilemma of the Jewish existence is on the one hand that we are required to lessen our relationship to what is concrete, by means of the limitation that derives from our essence. Therefore we must not place a god made in our own national image in place of a God who stands over against us. We must guard this relationship to the concrete in its organic and folk character, so that the living God will not evaporate from our midst, and will not only be an exalted ideal."

Here Simon succinctly captures the Buberian paradox: how to maintain a Zionism without, on the one hand, succumbing to secular nationalism, and, on the other hand, allowing the people's faith to become so vague that it forfeits its power in the here-and-now. The

people and its community of faith are inseparable; this is the model he gets from Buber's vision.

He actualization of Buber's Zionism raises both internal and external problems for the Zionist thinker. The internal problems have just been discussed. The test of Buber's ideal remains: what does Zionism do with another people? If Israel is to be a "light to the nations," as Buber paraphrases Isaiah, Israel must be self-critical, especially in relation to its Arab neighbors. Before we deal specifically with Buber's proposals on the Arabs, we want to summarize his justifications for the Zionist settlements in Palestine.

Buber believed that the settlements were justifiable for three reasons; first, the Jews possessed an eternal link to the land, which is not the same as an historical right to the land.<sup>25</sup> This link reflects the covenantal nature of the God-Israel relation. Secondly, regarding the Jewish right to the land, the Jews took a desolate land and made it flourish. Finally, the Jews have created a community of new collective settlements. The physical protection of these settlements by armed men caused Buber much anguish. He distinguished between two kinds of armies, the one designed to protect Jewish settlers and the other, a conquering army. He criticized



those who used violence against the Arabs, saying that the Jewish hero must be defined as different from the man of war:<sup>26</sup>

ענינו כן אריות, ומלחמה לא עלינו.

His concern is for the spirit and against violence. In 1920 Buber wrote that Palestine would be the homeland of the Jews, if it did not undermine the rights of the Arabs:<sup>27</sup>

מבלי לפגוע בזכויות האוכלוסים הערבית.

The creation of this new land demanded a revival in the heart, a building of the land through hand labor, and a political rebuilding. In other words, redemption of the folk is not purely political. Yet the political rebuilding could not rely solely on diplomacy:<sup>28</sup>

אין בכוונה לשאול את המדינה, ובנוסף לא את המדינה.

Again Buber infuses his Zionist dream with a spiritual dimension. Simon notes that Buber's statements on the Arabs were never well-received, especially one made in 1942: the Jewish task is not to live next to the Arabs, but to live with the Arabs.<sup>29</sup>

ישיבה זו לא ענינהם היהודים.

אזרחות ארץ אחרת, זה-זה יד, אלא תפיסת הישיבה לא ענינהם.

Simon explains Buber's continual dilemma as the conflict between spirit and reality. It is the dream of a Jewish state in a time of burgeoning Arab nationalism. This tension was, in its crystal form, delineated in the early issues of Buber's Der Jude. In it he "fought for issues of (Zionist) principle: on its positive, although complex

relationship to the essence of Judaism as a religious 'weltanschauung,' on its organic relationship to the Jewish people...on its progressive communal and political character, both anti-reactionary and anti-chauvinistic, on its appropriate setting within the geo-political sphere of the Arab nations which were arising from a nationalist point of view."<sup>30</sup>

What is the proper basis of Zionism's healthy co-existence with the Arabs? This is the test of faith we will analyze in the next chapter.

Endnotes: Chapter 3

- <sup>1</sup> Ernst Simon, Line of Demarcation, p. 2.
- <sup>2</sup> Martin Buber, On Zion, p. xix.
- <sup>3</sup> Ernst Simon, Line of Demarcation, p. 2.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 3.
- <sup>4a</sup> Ibid., p. 3.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 3-4.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 3.
- <sup>7</sup> Martin Buber, On Zion, p. xx.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 142.
- <sup>9</sup> Buber, Israel and the World, p. 224.
- <sup>10</sup> Ernst Simon, Line of Demarcation, p. 82.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 8.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 8.
- <sup>13</sup> Buber, "Israel and the Command of the Spirit," Israel and the World, p. 256.
- <sup>14</sup> Buber, On Zion, p. 5.
- <sup>15</sup> Simon, Line of Demarcation, p. 22.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 23.
- <sup>17</sup> Buber, Israel and the World, p. 248.
- <sup>18</sup> Simon, Line of Demarcation, p. 9.
- <sup>19</sup> Buber, Israel and the World, p. 256.

## CHAPTER IV

- 20 Simon, Line of Demarcation, p. 10.
  - 21 Ibid., p. 11.
  - 22 Ibid., p. 11.
  - 23 Ibid., p. 14.
  - 24 Ibid., p. 14.
  - 25 Ibid., p. 17.
  - 26 Ibid., p. 17.
  - 27 Ibid., p. 20.
  - 28 Ibid., p. 23.
  - 29 Ibid., p. 17.
  - 30 Simon, "The Builder of Bridges," Judaism, p. 154.
- ... and the ensuing response by ...
- ... focuses at length on ...
- ... in 1921. This is the ...
- ... between Ruler's program

## CHAPTER IV

Just as the question of Jewish existence became for the Christians their testing-stone, so, according to Ernst Simon, the existence of the Arab question marked the central focus of Jewish concern.<sup>1</sup> In Simon's analysis, this question generates an internal moral question for the Jews: namely, how do we treat a neighbor, as well as an external dilemma, how will the Jews deal with the burgeoning Arab nationalism? As we have noted, the great potential failure of Zionism remains in Buber's mind, the danger that Israel will become like any other nation, and thus deny its spiritual power. The necessary steps for the bringing forth a new nation depend on the individual as well as the seeds of a people: *אדם וצדק*. These steps are threefold: a revival in the heart, a building of the land through hand labor, and a political development, as Simon insists, demands diplomatic intervention. Buber feared such diplomatic interference because it might subvert Israel's place in the Middle East. As Simon quotes Buber: "The face of Zionist diplomacy is directed almost always towards the West, and the question of our relations to the people dwelling here, the Arabs, remains without a proper perspective, and without a longtime program."<sup>2</sup>

To understand these issues, Simon focuses at length on Buber's address to the Zionist Congress in 1921. This is the crux of Buber's Zionist stance, and the ensuing response by the Congress reflects the disparity between Buber's program

and the secular Zionists. This chasm eventually led to Buber's break from the Zionist movement in 1929. Before we examine Buber's speech to the Congress, we will examine the political conditions in Palestine from 1920-21.

The Twelfth Zionist Congress of September 1921 reacted in many ways to the Arab-Jewish violence of the previous months in the Yishuv. Since Simon does not elucidate this problem, we will rely on Neil Caplan's work, Palestine Jewry and the Arab Question: 1917-25. Prior to the Congress, Winston Churchill visited Palestine in March to 'tidy up' various pressing grievances against the British control of the Yishuv.<sup>3</sup> Churchill bolstered Jewish confidences and congratulated the Jewish achievement, admitting that they had changed "desolate places into smiling orchards and initiated progress instead of stagnation."<sup>4</sup> The Yishuv's greatest victory lay in Churchill's response to an Arab call for the repudiation of the Balfour Declaration. He told the Arabs that the creation of a Jewish national home was manifestly right.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the British leader insisted on "the establishment in Palestine of 'a' National Home,<sup>6</sup> and not the making of Palestine into 'the' National Home.

The Jewish community was elated by Churchill's reassurances, and his strong words for the Arabs. Still the build-up of internecine tensions in the Yishuv during April-May 1921 led to severe rioting in Jaffa.<sup>7</sup> The tone of Churchill's affirmations contra Arab national determination seems to have anta-



onized the Arabs. Moreover, the Arab propaganda press, coupled with the 'near riot' of March 29, left the Arab populace with a profound sense of frustration.<sup>8</sup> On May 1, 1921, clashes erupted which eventually left forty Jews dead, 131 wounded, and thirteen Arab dead.<sup>9</sup> A massive Arab attack on Petah Tikvah was narrowly averted by the arrival of Indian calvary. Aside from the human disaster and political frustration, a growing sense of Jewish self-protection surface. Moreover, the Jewish leadership was singularly disturbed by Herbert Samuel's announcement of a temporary stoppage on Jewish immigration, following the May riots. The Jewish leaders were also provoked<sup>10</sup> by the High Commissioner's failure to criticize the Arab rioters. Tensions remained high throughout the summer. The Hagana had to be rebuilt because of persistent Jewish insecurity after<sup>11</sup> the May debacle.

This brief sketch indicates the tensions in the Yishuv. After the summer 1921, the Zionist political focus shifted from Palestine to Europe. The Congress responded to Samuel with a strongly worded resolution:

"...The hostile attitude of the Arab population, incited by unscrupulous elements to commit deeds of violence, can neither weaken our resolve for the establishment of the Jewish National Home nor our determination to live with the Arab people on terms of concord and mutual respect...

The Congress calls upon the Executive to redouble its efforts to secure an honourable entente with the Arab people...in accordance with the Balfour Declaration. The Congress emphatically declares that the progress of Jewish colonization will not affect the rights and needs of the working Arab nation." <sup>12</sup>

Herbert Samuel responded by impressing on the Jews the need for two things: 1) immediate constructive activity to prove to the Arabs that the success of Zionism would be to their benefit, and 2) an official Zionist declaration to re-<sup>13</sup>assure the Arabs on this matter. As Caplan indicates, the paramount concern at Carlsbad was the need for Yishuv security. This idea outweighed the idea of mutual cooperation with the Arabs. This point is not mentioned by Ernst Simon. His focus is on Buber's call for joint cooperation with the Arabs. According to Caplan, this 'home rule' resolution was considered historic, for it insisted on an entente with the Arabs but also resolved to live by the rights guaranteed in the Balfour Declaration.

The resolution also called for the Palestine Administration to guarantee complete security of life and property and afford the Jewish inhabitants the possibility of physical<sup>14</sup> protection. Basically, the Jewish security issue was of paramount importance at the conference. Moreover, the fourth resolution of the Congress protested the stoppage of Jewish immigration. The Congress insisted that: "The free immigration to Eretz Israel is an incontestable right of the Jewish people of which in no circumstances it can be deprived."<sup>14a</sup> With this background to the Congress, let us now examine Buber's proposal to the Zionist leaders.

The following is Buber's speech of September, 1921.

"In this hour, in which we meet again, after eight years of separation, representatives of the Jewish world, who are men of national consciousness, we return and declare in the

ears of the peoples of the West and East, that we have definitely decided that with our healthy nucleus of the people Israel, to return to our original homeland and to renew life in it, that is based on self-work. For its life will develop and last forever only as the organic basis of a new people. This decision, for which generations of pioneers "gave reality in their lives and deaths, there is no power that can object to this. All acts of violence that were done against us in the Diaspora are a seal of blood in the unfolding of our national will.

This national will is not directed against any other people. The people Israel that existed for thousands of years as a persecuted minority in all other nations, at the hour that it again enters, as the carrier of its own fate into the realm of world history, pushes away with abhorrence the nationalist method of self-determination. For a long time Israel was the sacrifice of this dominant nationalism. It is neither in order to oppress another people nor to rule over them, that we yearn to return to the land which we are tied via historical and cultural ties that cannot be cut, and whose soil, on which today only a few Jews live as a scattered people; there is a place for us and the tribes that dwell there who have adopted measures of intensive and systematic cultivation.

Our settling on the land of Israel, will come in a great aliyah and will continue. It does not come to take by force the right of others. [In it we seek] a legitimate covenant with the Arab people. In our desire to turn the place of our forefathers into a cooperative community that will blossom economically and culturally, [we seek an] understanding that will bring to everyone self-development without bothering anyone. The settlements [are dedicated] to her [the land's] success and revival. They do not come in the name of capitalist exploitation or in the name of imperialism. The importance of this creative work of free people on the land, comes from its shared possession [of these two peoples.] This socialist character of our national ideal, [within it] is an ordered security for our protection that will grow between us and the Arabs. They who work in real deep solidarity of their interests, in the end will overcome their opposition [to us.] Among these binding feelings, that will be born in the hearts of two peoples, there will be feelings of respect and mutual good will, and they will work in both the communal life and the private life. Only then will the two nations meet in a new historic meeting of great splendor." 15

Buber's speech is notable not only for its religious socialism but for its adherence to the organic nationalism he espoused. He stresses the need for self-determination which is accorded to all nations, but he also insists that such nation-

alism cannot oppress the political rights of those living in Palestine. Buber reiterates the pillars of economic and social cooperation that form the basis of his nationalism. This is evident in his call for a cooperative community grounded in the belief that two communities can live in a political dialogue with one another. The sharing of common goals, i.e., building the land will engender a spirit of social cooperation between Arabs and Jews. Ultimately the Jews are tied to this specific land, but they can share the land, and in so doing, they will build a dialogue among individuals as well as communities.

The Zionist Congress' position reveals prominent differences in their view towards the Arabs. Buber accepted the Congress' compromises, despite serious reservations. Let us examine the Congress' decision and compare the two documents. The Congress declared that despite previous acts of violence, the Jewish will aimed at building a national Jewish home and living with the Arabs in mutual respect, was never diminished. <sup>16</sup>

"The Congress requests the Jews work towards a complete agreement with the Arabs, without undermining the Balfour Declaration. The Congress insists that the work of Jewish settlement not oppress the rights of Arabs in any way." <sup>17</sup>

This is the substance of the Congress' political position.

As Ernst Simon explains, such suggestions constitute serious differences from Buber's plan. Buber's address touched on three ideas. First, the renewal of Jewish life in Israel, based on self-work ~~and~~ would be the organic basis of a new people. The second idea was the strengthening of a national will which is not directed against the Arabs. Thirdly, whatever

historical ties Jews hold to the land, both Jews and Arabs can live there through intensive cultivation of the land. These three ideas mirror Buber's belief in a communal dialogical commitment to organic nationalism.

The Congress' decision reflects a different attitude toward the Arabs. Rather than emphasizing the positive aspect of Jewish-Arab cooperation, the Congress ended in a negative fashion: <sup>18</sup> "We <sup>18</sup> לא תרבה את עבדותנו עם הערבי העודד. That will not deny the rights of the existing Arab people." That is, the Congress would accept those Arabs on the land, providing they did not interfere with Jewish settlements. But neither would the Congress condone greater Arab nationalistic expansion. The Congress dismissed Buber's idea of an organic basis for a new state. Simon further notes that the Congress omitted any criticism of national methods that rely on dominant and oppressive national rule: <sup>19</sup> <sup>19</sup> "לא תרבה את עבדותנו עם הערבי העודד. Perhaps the real caesura in the Congress' statement is the non-acknowledgement of Arab self-development. Simon refers to this idea as 'autonomy.' In an age of growing nationalism, the Congress promised "national development without inter-<sup>20</sup>ference," a notion far removed from autonomy. The Congress rejected any idea of an Arab state in Palestine. Moreover, they were not partial to a bi-national state in 1921.

The Congress' statement also omitted Buber's references to capitalism and imperialism, while at the same time omitting Buber's socialist ideal. The idea of social cooperation was unimportant to the Congress. Buber's notion of a "promise of real solidarity between peoples" was replaced by the idea,



"[We seek] to continue in many ways the effort to reach  
<sup>21</sup>  
 an agreement."

There appears to be a dearth of good will in the Congress' decision, as well as an unwillingness to accept future Arab self-determination. In his evaluation of the two speeches, Simon notes that any compromise would take a long time to reach fruition. Buber accepted the Congress' decision on the Arabs, but his acceptance foreshadowed his future split with the European Zionist movement. In an essay originally published in 1958, Simon characterized Buber's view on the Arab movement in his fashion:

"It is a paradoxical claim: that the Jews rebuild their historic tie to the land, in effect remaining a 'chosen people,' but at the same time achieving normal relations with the Arabs: he (Buber) claimed that the Arabic nations were in the midst of a process of unification similar to that of the Zionist movement which was itself, an exemplar of the process. We cannot halt it, but we may be able to direct it, either for or against us." <sup>22</sup>

Buber incurred much wrath from his fellow Zionists for espousing the normalization of Arab-Jewish relations. Moreover, as Simon notes, the disintegration of Britain's power meant the re-evaluation of British policy towards the Arabs and the Jews. Buber opposed the view that if not for the Jewish involvement in Palestine, there would be no Arab nationalist movement. Rather Arab nationalism was the natural  
<sup>23</sup>  
 product of the nationalism sweeping the Middle East. Buber believed in the inevitability of the movement, and despite the tensions, he thought that the Jewish nationalism would continue its efflorescence.



In his analysis Simon maintains that Buber's thinking on Arab nationalism was prophetic. One could not dismiss Arab nationalism. The only way to mitigate tensions was via a cooperative effort towards social and cultural dialogue. This dialogue would develop in a part of the land if not in the whole land.<sup>24</sup>

בזמן נבואה כי פועלים ייחזקו בכיוון לאיזו צורה של קישור מדיני אל בריה  
בין-טוראטאליסטי. ככל אשר תתפתח האמיתיות הפנימית ביניהם לבין עצמם...  
ידוע כי חידושי בני-המסורת צריכים להיות כיוונו אל תכנית פיתוח מאוחדת....

Ultimately, Buber's greatest disappointment lay in the Congress' negative attitude towards the Arabs. The Congress' refusal to accept an organic nationalism based on God's presence led to his withdrawal from the political mainstream. For Buber's organic nationalism included a spiritual approach to Zionist problems. Whereas the secular-folk approach insisted on a purely political solutions. It is important to note that this spiritual approach remained in the forefront of Buber's thinking well after the creation of Israel.

Despite his setbacks in the political arena, particularly in the Zionists' rejection of his organic nationalism, Buber remained on his course. In 1929 his views on Jewish-Arab co-operation were again rejected by the Zionist Congress. The riots of 1929 affected this Zionist change in attitude. As Walter Laquer notes, 1929 brought a radical change, when the problem [Arab question] took on a far greater urgency than before, yet prospects for reconciliation seemed remote.<sup>24a</sup>

The Zionists refused to believe that the Arabs had developed a national consciousness. Moreover, the riots were described as acts of the criminal element.<sup>24b</sup> After the blood bath of

of August 1929, the secular Zionists would never listen to Buber's reconciliation plans. The riots marked a turning point in Arab-Jewish relations.

Buber returned to his role of education and developed the Leherhaus model for adult education in Germany. Although his educational programs in Nazi Germany met with short success, he remained committed to the German pedagogic movement.<sup>25</sup> According to Simon's interpretation of Buber, the purpose of Diaspora education is determined from the outside, whereas in Palestine the Jews determine their own educational purpose.<sup>26</sup> Even though Buber's influence waned vis-à-vis the Zionist settler of the 1920's, he believed that he must continue educating German refugees. They in turn would take their humanism and transform it into the spiritual Zionism necessary for a new nation. Simon explains that Jews were the most vulnerable people in Germany, yet Buber insisted on educating despite their impending destruction. In Buber's words: "The purpose of education can be only one of the goals of independence."<sup>26a</sup>

... על ידי 'צירוף צמח' של יהודי לאומני, כי דר' מרטל החינוך שלנו לא תוכל להיות אמת מרטל לאומניות."

That is, the future freedom of a Zionist nation depended on education as well as national cooperation.

In 1938, Buber fled Germany for Palestine, there beginning anew, while immediately attacking the problems of the Yishuv. Namely, what was the Jewish relationship to the Arabs?

At the time of his introductory lecture at Hebrew University, entitled "Plato and Isaiah," Buber spoke on the subject of national education, like a prophet uttering reproachful words: "For the real destiny of a nation is not decided in the act of national liberation, but only after that liberation."<sup>27</sup>

Buber sustained his position, criticizing German Jewry for its false assimilation and rebuking the 'halutzim' for their failure towards the Arabs. Simon likens Buber's early position in Palestine to Jeremiah. The prophet never alters his stance, despite the blandishments of King Nebuchadnezzar. Buber, who in Germany advocated, "An understanding of the tribal attachment and trustworthiness of the Jewish people,"<sup>28</sup>

"מקום שמעולם לא היה בו ארץ ישראל, אלא ארץ יהודה".  
בא"י - ק' צונויות

stood his ground in Palestine while criticizing the "burning and zealous nationalistic atmosphere which had awakened extreme political goals."<sup>29</sup> He reminded the Jews of their responsibilities towards their neighbors and not just towards Jews:<sup>30</sup>

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In 1939, Buber helped establish a cooperative group of differing classes, whose purpose was to support the goal of Arab-Jewish understanding. The league was called:

הליגה לרמי קרבות ואשירות - יבד' - ערב' a league for

Jewish-Arab rapprochement.<sup>31</sup> The league was championed by Judah Magnes and Buber, yet Simon explains that the league never became a party. It remained a coalition of Socialist

and Kibbutz groups whose purpose was dual. First the leaders criticized the Mandate government and at the same time, they worked for the realization of Arab-Jewish political cooperation. The League continued to wave the flag of political equality in the mid-1940's despite its progressive loss of support.

According to the League, political equality could be attained in three areas. First, in the actual division of the land for its cultivation, second, the division of the populations in the land. Finally, equality meant the establishment of a parliamentary democracy for a future Arab-Jewish government.<sup>32</sup> In 1945-46 the League still advocated the numerical equalization of the two populations. That is, the Jews should equal the number of Arabs in Palestine. In 1946 Judah Magnes, who shared Buber's vision of a state based on spiritual fulfillment, demanded before a joint American-English audience that America accept 100,000 Jews from European camps. We should note in analyzing the league's position that its basis meshed with Buber's idea of Jewish organic nationalism.

Let us briefly examine the platform espoused by the League's representative. The League comprise the following political groups, the Ichud, headed by Judah Magnes, the HaShomer HaZair, and other Socialist groups in the cities, known as the *החבורה הסוציאליסטית*. Magnes was instrumental in the formation of its platform. Simon outlines the League's platform along four themes.

- 1) The League stands on the basic recognition that the building of Eretz Israel as a joint homeland of Jews and Arabs will be based on the reciprocal, eternal understanding between the two peoples.

2) The principle of the Jewish return to their historic homeland to build a national life is one of the first [non-debatable] principles. In the area of defining the rights of Jews, we also include the right of the Arabs to self-determination and their connections with the rest of the Arab peoples.

3) The work of the League will be carried out with the consciousness of Jewish rights to make aliyah in consonance with the 'absorptive capacity' *כוח הקליטה* of the land. The development of the Yishuv will be geared to the economic, social, cultural, and political life of the land, all this in cooperation with the Arab people.

4) On the basic principles of aliyah, as outlined in #2, it is possible to fix aliyah quotas for a given period of years: While agreeing to an aliyah-quota, the League opposes any plan to make the Jews a minority in Palestine. [This is the critical point in the platform]

... אולם הקסביה לאיכות עליה מוסכמת תמנע להיעלם אצל האמה הקדמ  
לאגם אר הישוב היפוזי כמיצוי האגף - ילדא.

As Simon notes, this very important document is characterized by the Buberian idea that the political principle stands last. First the people must build an organic nation, based on economic, social, and cultural grounds. Only then can it define its political direction. The platform is also unique because its authors did not demand a Jewish majority in Palestine. Rather they insisted on an equality of numbers. For Buber, this was a hard concession because he believed in unlimited aliyah:



עליו חשב משה. But Simon argues that later realized that unlimited Jewish immigration was a severe stumbling block for the nascent nation.

The fourth plank of the platform proved a major political stumbling block. The Ichud and Magnes agreed with the plan for aliyah quotas. The HaShomer HaZair disagreed. This was a foreshadowing of future political problems in newly created Israel.<sup>34</sup> Buber preferred and fought for unlimited Jewish immigration, but he lost the battle. In the fifth paragraph of the platform, the League recapitulated specific political aims. First, it reiterated the non-rule of one people over another, and demanded a dual Constitution and a bi-national state or federation with neighboring Arabs. This point was particularly close to Buber's heart.<sup>35</sup>

יְסוּדוֹת עֲקָרִיּוֹת בִּימֵי הַעֲקָרוּנוֹת לֹא אֵי-שִׁטָּתִית עִם אֶחָד בְּזוּלָתוֹ...  
עֲמִצָּה חִיבָה כָּלכֵּי הַשְׁתַּתְּפוּת אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּיחִיצֵה לִד-לְאוֹמִית עֲלִמָּאית,  
בְּבִרְאֵיכָה עִם הָאֲרָצָה נִשְׁכָּנוֹת....

The final paragraph of the League's statement detailed the practical tasks of the nations. First there existed the problem of authentic political rapprochement, for as Simon adds, it was one matter for Buber to endorse a platform, it was another for the Zionists to engage in political dialogue with Arabs. The second major task consisted of a crystallization of the economic implementation of the plan. As noted, the platform stressed the social and cultural problems far above political solutions. As Simon notes, the League splintered



apart by the mid-1940's. The political compromise on the aliyah issue proved a major obstacle. For Buber's group, while not rejecting the idea of a Jewish majority, could never espouse the principle of Jewish rule over Arabs. This would subvert the spirit of an organic Jewish nation. Thus Buber's belief in a bi-national state was not warmly received by the League. However, Simon does not discuss this problem at length. Simon does mention Buber's activities in a journal that he collaborated in with Buber, entitled: פ'רוץ [started in 1944]. In this magazine Buber stressed the principle of truth, namely his belief in the rightness of the Zionist-socialist principles he had espoused in 1921.<sup>36</sup>

... לעצמנו במדינת אומה יהודית עצמאית, כדי להביא את ארצנו, ובן ערבים את כוח ורצונם הציוני וסוציאלי, כדי להפוך את רכושם לעצמם.

Buber never approved of a divided land, despite his advocacy of the political principles of his 1921 speech. His concept of a bi-national state implied that two peoples could live together in one land. He abhorred the partition plan but when it occurred, he did not stand idle. As he spoke in 1958 in his essay "Israel and the Command of the Spirit," he accepted the necessity of war: "I am no radical pacifist; I do not believe that one must always answer violence with non-violence. I know what tragedy implies; when there is war, it must be fought."<sup>37</sup> In effect, Buber's words ten years earlier rang a prophetic note. "Two people together necessitated political equality, or else a second-class citizenry would evolve."<sup>38</sup>

To understand Buber's support of the League, and in particular his belief that political changes would follow the cultural and economic cooperation, we must look at his bi-national program. This idea is not fully developed by Simon. Rather, the clearest definition of Buber's bi-nationalism is expounded in the work, Towards Union in Palestine: Essays on Zionism and Jewish-Arab Cooperation. 39

The League's platform, promoting the idea of economic, social, and political development, directed its efforts towards future Jewish-Arab cooperation. The political principle should remain last because, as Buber explains, the hypertrophy of political factors has negatively influenced the economic and cultural structure of the new state. Buber regarded the political principle thusly:

"Politics [should be]...the facade of the economic and cultural structure. This facade has only to represent the economic and cultural structure, and not to exercise an influence impairing it...Hence when essentially economic clashes of interest occur between two nations, it is not the actual extent of the divergencies which determines the struggle, but the exaggerated and overemphasized political aspect of these divergencies." 40

In this passage, Buber refers to the clashes over the use of Jewish labor versus Arab labor. Buber, in his bi-national stance, does not limit the nature of Jewish settlements.

That is, he advocated free acquisition of land<sup>and</sup> the right of Jewish self-determination, but he opposed the use of Arab labor. Economic self-development would lead to eventual intra-national cooperation. That is, Jews and Arabs developing the same land was an integral part of Buber's plan. An Arab-Jewish agreement could not be imposed as a political deus ex machina; rather it must<sup>41</sup> begin with economic cooperation. This Arab-Jewish cooperation, Buber wrote, "though necessarily starting out from economic premises, will allow development in accordance with an all-embracing cultural perspective and on the basis of a feeling of at-oneness, tending to result in a new form of society."<sup>42</sup>

Buber's stance is clear. He insists on economics over politics, and secondly, he advocates the intra-national principle over the international one. The international principle he labeled the fictitious political program of the Biltmore Program.<sup>43</sup> Politics is not evil per se, its evil lies in its hypertrophy. Buber rejects the prevalent Zionist policy that international agreement must precede any Jewish-Arab detente. For Buber the organic nationalist imperative is the reverse. The intra-national principle is more constructive because it fosters direct political

dialogue. From such intra-national agreements would emerge the bases for "joint economic action, and cemented inwardly by the singleness of purpose in the cultural and social domains."<sup>44</sup> This molding of interests will yield new social structures, agreeing with the international principles that Buber's opponents so desperately sought.

In Buber's thinking, the slow development of a new economic-social order could not be truncated by outside political blueprints. That is the reason he fought against an internationally imposed settlements on the Jewish question. This social-economic belief derived from Buber's unique spiritual thrust to his Zionism. Becoming a nation implied more than the international creation of borders or constitutions, it meant that the nation must develop in consonance with the spiritual guidance that stems from Israel's relation to God.

Now let us consider the consequences of such a spiritual state. Could it function in a secular society? How would it relate to the Arabs? While the term 'spirit' is not an integral part of the League's platform, Buber's clear vision of economic, social, and cultural cooperation implied the existence of a spiritual dimension to the state. When Buber speaks about social cooperation he is in fact, referring to the earlier notion outlined by Simon. A new social order

will produce a new man. From the physical-spiritual unity of a people with its land, would emerge a 'new man,' <sup>45</sup> *אדם חדש*. This new man, or speaking on the communal level, this new people, must build working relationships with its neighbors. Such was Buber's vision which was embodied in the League's political goals, viz. waving the flag of political equality, dividing the land equally between Jews and Arabs, and implementing a parliamentary government. Despite these ideals, Buber was not a pacifist. When the war of independence <sup>46</sup> erupted, he espoused fighting as the means of survival. He would not allow his people to fall into exile, nor did his political idealism undermine his belief that Israel, the land and the nation must survive.

How was this Jewish survival to be effectuated? Only if we (the Jews) form a cooperative alliance with the Arabs can the new state survive, according to Buber. Simon outlines the problem in this fashion: the Jews cannot build a political constellation and be blind to their neighbors. Buber's vitriolic criticisms of 1938-39 were directed against all Zionists, including those who advocated restraint vis-à-vis the Arabs. He reasserted the Jewish political failures, chastised the Zionists for a lack of spiritual direction, and criticized the deeds of the "Samsons," asking: "How have we

reached this point?"<sup>47</sup>

...לא שמנו לב לכך, לא אחרנו אף לבנו, שיש רק אחצ'י אחד... לעשות מילק  
בידך ראש מופת עם האוכלוסיה, למען אמת ברצונת המפעלנו בארץ...

"This is the history of the matter: When we returned to our land after many hundreds of years, we acted as if it were empty of inhabitants---no, worse than this--as if the populace which we saw did not affect us, as if we did not need to deal with it, that is to say, as if it does not see us. But the populace did see us... and as is the way of nature, with growing clarity year after year...we paid no attention to this, we did not say to ourselves that there is only one way to deal with the results of the increasing sight: to seriously make an alliance with this populace, to join it to us seriously in our endeavor in the Land, in our work and its results."

Simon does not dwell on Buber's activities during the years 1941-46, except in relation to his work with the League. Buber stood on the margin of political activities, at a time when Arab-Jewish relations had descended to its nadir.

In the final section of his work, Simon devotes his analysis to the Buber-Scholem debate. The author notes that Buber leveled much criticism at the nascent Israeli government. The existence of a government does not automatically justify its policies. He opposed the military control of Arab border areas.<sup>48</sup> More importantly, he questioned the moral right of the nation's survival. Simon describes this intellectual battle in the chapter, "The Moral Justification for the State of Israel." In 1951, Buber began debating



Scholem on the moral structure of a Zionist state. Buber, recognizing the imperative of Israel's existence, questioned the direction of a theo-political nation, which strays from its spiritual path.

Scholem responded directly to Buber: does the state have the moral right to survive, even if the government is unsatisfactory? Buber's answer mirrors his political realism: "Even in times of a crisis of the spirit, we must support the State, just to maintain the state is good, for there is a seeming protection for the Jews in the state."<sup>49</sup> In Buber's mind, the problem remained that Zionism did not develop out of a slow organic nationalism. It was now perceived as a robber nation. As Simon points out Buber's words:

"Instead of a society which builds its life in partnership with Near Eastern peoples, the state arose out of successful battles with all its neighbors, appearing then and now in their eyes as a robber-nation." 50

There followed a long public debate between Scholem and Buber on the future of a secular Zionist nation. Simon devotes much space to this argument, explaining that Buber's position vis-à-vis the Arabs remained singularly unpopular.

In short, Scholem views Buber as a political romantic, who cannot deal with the pragmatic demands of real historical development. But Buber did not despair despite his lack of political influence. As Simon explains, a social thinker must

not despair if his ideas are not realized, nor must he stop working. Perhaps a first step will be taken in the right direction.<sup>51(a)</sup> During this public debate, Simon urged Scholem to publish a letter severely critical of Buber. In essence Scholem complained that Buber was praiseworthy, but that he had no influence in political thinking. In this response to Buber, Scholem concluded with the phrase: "Happy are those who sow and do not reap."<sup>52</sup> His words implied that Buber's idea might eventually germinate, but he would never live to see the fruition of his work.

Buber, stung by this attack, defended his political principles by saying that although one's influence may be small, one does not stop acting! In eschatological fashion, Buber emphasized the two basic forms of history: the obvious, daily history, and a history whose meaning is hidden. Its day might not arrive until the next world, but we must prepare for it now. Thus he countered Scholem's acerbic quotation with the following metaphor:

"The influence of the spirit on history is convoluted, its seed crumbles in the ground, and from its rotting remains sprouts a new plant. Men of spirit, though their portion is tragic, and though their spirit is filled with toil and sorrow, at the end of their trials they bring to victory what is concealed from the eye." <sup>53</sup>

In short, the influence of such spiritual men is indirect yet powerful. Isolated and without allies, they approach their work, for their influence is "round-about."<sup>53a</sup>

Nevertheless, as Simon continues, their seed will grow. There is an eventual coming together of the spirit's moral requirements and the practical development of a nation. This coalescence is the sprouting of the new seed that penetrate Buber's political thinking. Buber concluded his answer to Scholem by reminding him of the last phrase to the poet's verse, reiterating that the spiritual task stands equal to any task.

אשרי הזורעים ואם יקצורו, כי הם ירחיקו מכבד.

"Happy are those who sow but do not reap, for they will go  
<sup>54</sup>  
 far."

In the middle of this debate, Buber insisted that modern Zionism had only three options: first, to continue the status quo in Israel, secondly to forget the purity of the struggle and devote oneself to the attainment of practical goals in a time of crisis, or third, to work towards a reciprocal understanding between the two nations. In this statement, as interpreted by Simon, we see Buber's political program, even in the midst of the future of Israel's political efflorescence. Buber insisted that there could be no state unless two peoples talked to one another. Such a minimization of Arab-Jewish distrust and the concomitant political solution (based on

economic and social cooperation) was Buber's goal. That is by extension, Buber's reasoning behind the belief in spirit. The work of a spiritual man is replete with pitfalls, but the seeds of the spirit regenerate yielding victory. Buber called this final goal the "good news" of the spirit, its <sup>55</sup> *טובת*. It is interesting to note that in the Buber-Scholem debate, Ernst Simon does not develop the practical basis of Buber's politics. Rather he concentrates only on the abstract. He remains within the abstract realm at the book's conclusion, but entitles this section: "The abstract and the tangible in Buber's political theory."<sup>56</sup> In the context of this debate, Buber must ultimately defend his notion of a "just state." He had severely criticized Israel in 1951-52, vis-à-vis its political direction, and Scholem had at the same time rebuked him for his criticism. Buber reasserted that the state has the moral right of existence. First, it was founded on the ashes of the Holocaust. Secondly, though the state is not the result of a slow organic growth, it contains a *דיוקנות*, a "direction of the spirit" that is essential for its existence.<sup>57</sup> Buber, criticizing the spiritual deficiencies of a new nation, defends the nation's existence, and thus justifies the philosopher's role in the state's evanescence. The philosopher must combine ab-

stract thinking with political action. Furthermore, the man of spirit must act consistently, he must direct his heart towards the world and politics.<sup>58</sup>

... תורה זו [היא מונח ברוח חזונו עם ארץ ישראל] חסידות לאין אנו יבוסים  
לכבוד עם האלוהים שזו לאנו אנוצים את רעיוןם לנפשו.

Buber, the man of spirit, understood Aristotle's man of politics. Nevertheless, being a Zionist meant living a political life attuned to the spiritual demands of a modern nation. That is, a life devoted to intra-national cooperation. Knowing the exigencies of the political realm, Buber was impelled to transpose his abstract belief in the mythos (ideology) of Jewish history into a workable political program. In the face of Scholem's criticisms, directed at Buber's abstractions, Buber countered with this statement:<sup>59</sup> "We must respond to God's signs in a fitting manner." To be sure, the religious man must participate in a Zionist nation, and he cannot descend into mystical wanderings. Just as Buber criticized the mystical way in his essay "Dialogue," (1929) he reiterates his criticisms of the potential mystical flight from politics (circa 1950):

"We cannot talk to God if we have abandoned the world; We live in a political world wherein we direct our thoughts to God, but we must direct our actions as well as our moral criticisms towards the political realm." 60

In this way, Buber stresses the need for political action as well as the necessity of moral criticism of the state. In his thinking, political redemption can only be realized<sup>61</sup> by working in this world, and on this specific land.

This is the essence of Simon's analysis of Buber's "faith in the midst of politics," as he points out in the text:

אמונת ישראל בגאולה העולם לא נהייתה משמעה, שהעולם ייבנה יחד עם בארץ.  
אלא זו האמונה בעולם חדש עם האדמה הנאת.

"Israel's faith in the redemption of the world does not mean that this world will be transformed into another world, it is the faith in a new world "on this land,"...Its meaning is that we cannot talk to God if we abandon the world to itself." 62

While not directly explaining his political defense of Buber, it is clear that Simon justifies Buber's politics in the face of those who claimed that he was a 'mystic.' Thus he argues that Buber railed against a *ברחה אל הפנימיות* the "mystical flight to inwardness." Separation from public life would not yield truth, it would only lead to a weakening of the nation. Buber advocated a working social cooperation based on daily Arab-Jewish interaction. This was the crux of the human encounter, and extended, it reflects the divine-human encounter: "Unless we bring the (God's) truth and righteousness into the depths of every matter, to everything we do, we cannot begin



to talk to God."<sup>63</sup> As Simon insists, it is not true that in God's eyes every political act is equal. Carrying God's truth into every matter was the crux of the Arab-Israeli question. God's signs are readily accessible; these are the mitzvot of God's Torah, which in Buberian terms means the commands to God's people to live in a just way with all others. These mitzvot tell Jews how to live with their Arab neighbors, but as Buber insists "It is the Zionists' responsibility (and all people's) to respond to these signs appropriately."<sup>64</sup>

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How does one justify the 'realpolitik' of the Zionist nation? This was the most difficult question to which Buber addressed himself. Can a man separate politics and ethics from questions of actual life? For Buber, life does not occur in a societal or historical vacuum, thus we must respond to history's necessities: namely the cooperation of Arabs and Jews.<sup>65</sup> Buber defended this testing-stone of Jewish-Arab cooperation throughout his political writings. In 1946 he wrote that there must be "a genuine agreement between Jews and Arabs and its international sanctioning,"<sup>66</sup> and he reiterated this belief in 1965 to Ernst Simon. In one of their

last discussions, Simon raised the question of bi-nationalism, and Buber replied: "Even though this method (bi-national state) had failed from the time we began advocating it forty years earlier, it is better than the present Arab-Israeli conditions: if the Canadiens, French, and English cannot order their life in Quebec, and if the Catholics and Protestants of Ireland find themselves in a blood-bath civil war, what will become of us?"<sup>67</sup> While Buber admitted the pragmatic impossibility of a bi-national state, he still advocated a reciprocal understanding and agreement with the Arabs. Buber answered Scholem's criticism of this idea in a wonderful manner:

"The matter of bi-nationalism, even for me, is only a step to a wider purpose; to a Jewish-Arab confederation in the area, or in a part of the area: it is possible that we now must arrive first of all at a treaty *בְּרִית* through a relative separation of their places of residence." 68

Herein lies Buber the idealist, who having fought for forty years, stands on the margin of the political spectrum even in the early 1950's, and reaffirms that a nation must talk with its neighbors in order to co-exist with them.

What is the myth or ideology that motivates Buber's idea of a cooperative relationship among peoples? Buber's mythos

never accedes to the ideology of secular Zionism, rather his mythos is grounded in the prophetic spirit, which draws its spiritual strength from God's words. In an extremely dense summary, Simon interprets Buber's mythos as Torah and God's presence in the world. This is the ongoing mythos of Jewish existence.<sup>69</sup>

Buber's national ideology compels his responsiveness to God's presence in Jewish history. The most complete formulation of that presence is found in Torah. Thus we must interpret Torah as God's working through history, for it is given to each man. Here Buber stresses the "primal man" who will be the prototype for all persons, who fulfills God's directives in building a new political order. To understand this new political schema, and the nature of "adam kadmon" Buber again refers to the prophet as the leader of this society. The prophet is not a philosopher, he acts in consonance with God's demands; he is the man of spirit and action: "The one in whom the spirit invades and seizes, whom the spirit uses as its garment...spirit is an event, it is something which happens to man."<sup>70</sup> The proof of this spiritual power is not found in philosophy. Buber claims that proof for the mythos of Torah is not philosophically validated, but is only explicable via mythical language.<sup>71</sup> Thus religious

experience has its own language, namely, the language of mythical experience. This is neither defined nor provable via philosophical inquiry.

... ויבין לעסביר את הידברים כמציין "הוכחה אונטולוגית" לקיומו של יש  
טראנסצנדנטי, שאינו ניתן לביטוי אלא באשון במילואים בלבד.

"God's presence in the world (as expounded in Torah) lies in the realm of myth, and it is possible to explain these words as a form of "ontological proof" for the existence of a transcendant Being, which can only be explained in the language of Myth." 72

The importance of this mythos cannot be mitigated. While Simon does emphasize the mythos as it affected Buber's Zionism, he does mention the problem of myth and its relation to mystical religious forms, i.e. Hasidism. But this subject does not illuminate our discussion of Buber's politics. Suffice it to say that Buber considered this problem a serious one, since he could not live his life without an attachment to the spirit of life.<sup>73</sup>

As we see<sup>in</sup> Simon's final chapter, Buber never doubts the existence of God, but he removes his idea of God from the realm of metaphysical inquiry. God can be encountered, but he cannot be proven. God is the a priori of a dialogical life; moreover it is the ground of being for the Jewish response to a religious myth that affects its ongoing historical situation. Scholem could not agree with Buber's re-interpretation

of the mythical realm, for he believed that Buber's rejection of an ontological proof for God meant that any person could actualize a religious experience for himself, without any philosophical proof for the matter. Hence he argued that for Buber the reality of Jewish mythos is redefined in a new (Buberian) ontological framework, which was unacceptable to Scholem. Mythos must remain on the religious level, it was not rationally verifiable, but it could be rendered authentic on a communal (or personal) level.

Buber clung to the idea of mythos because it informed his attitude towards political cooperation. Since he is not a rationalist, he never viewed rationalism, like Scholem, as a means of speaking to the real situation of people. Buber could not live without the mythos of Torah, and this myth, or national-religious ideology, compelled him to create a political order responsive to the needs of Jews and Arabs. This order meant a return to one unique land, wherein a new social fabric would arise in concert with the Arabs.

In our conclusions we will examine Buber's ideas on this new political order, as he expressed it in the spiritual-political life of the nation.

Endnotes: Chapter 4

<sup>1</sup> Ernst Simon, Line of Demarcation, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 14-15.

<sup>3</sup> Neil Caplan, Palestine Jewry and the Arab Question, p. 82.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 85-86.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>14a</sup> Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>15</sup> Ernst Simon, Line of Demarcation, p. 24.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 25-26.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>22</sup> Ernst Simon, "The Builder of Bridges," Judaism, p. 155.

<sup>23</sup> Ernst Simon, Line of Demarcation, p. 27.



- <sup>24</sup>Ernst Simon, Line of Demarcation, p. 27.
- <sup>24a</sup>Alter Laqueur, A History of Zionism, p. 255.
- <sup>24b</sup>Ibid., p. 256.
- <sup>25</sup>Simon, "Builder of Bridges," Judaism, p. 155.
- <sup>26</sup>Simon Line of Demarcation, p. 31.
- <sup>26a</sup>Simon, Line of Demarcation, p. 31.
- <sup>27</sup>Buber, Israel and the World, p. 154.
- <sup>28</sup>Simon, Line of Demarcation, p. 32.
- <sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 32.
- <sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 32.
- <sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 35
- <sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 37.
- <sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 36.
- <sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 36.
- <sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 36.
- <sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 37.
- <sup>37</sup>Martin Buber, Israel and the World, p. 256.
- <sup>38</sup>Ernst Simon, Line of Demarcation, p. 38.
- <sup>39</sup>M. Buber, J.L. Magnes, E. Simon, Towards Union in Palestine, p. 8-9.
- <sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 9.
- <sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 10.
- <sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 10.
- <sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 11.
- <sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 12.
- <sup>45</sup>Ernst Simon, Line of Demarcation, p. 3.

- <sup>46</sup> Martin Buber, Israel and the World, p. 256.
- <sup>47</sup> Op. cit., p. 33.
- <sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 38.
- <sup>49</sup> Simon, Line of Demarcation, p. 40.
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 40.
- <sup>51a</sup> Ibid., p. 40.
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 40.
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 45.
- <sup>53a</sup> Ibid., p. 41.
- <sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 41.
- <sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 41.
- <sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 43.
- <sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 45.
- <sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 45.
- <sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 45.
- <sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 49.
- <sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 45..
- <sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 45.
- <sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 45.
- <sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 45.
- <sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 47/
- <sup>66</sup> M. Buber, J. Magnes, E. Simon, Towards Union in Palestine, p. 12.
- <sup>67</sup> Op. cit., p. 47.
- <sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 47-48.
- <sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 49.
- <sup>70</sup> Martin Buber, Israel and the World, p. 108.

<sup>71</sup>Ernst Simon, Line of Demarcation, p. 49.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

## CONCLUSION

As Simon notes early in his work, the Jewish relation to the Arabs was the testing-stone for the Zionist nation. Beneath that test case, which became the central focus of Buber's political speeches from 1921 to the early 1950's, remains the tension between the abstract political idea and the tangible realpolitik in the Jewish state. As we outlined in our first two chapters, Buber's abstract thinking begins with two foci: the first centers on the general theory of states and nationalism. The second focus of Buber's thinking revolves around his general theory of the Jewish state and Jewish nationalism, that is, the particular manifestation of an abstract concept. We know that Buber's abstraction contains a fundamental ideology, or mythos, and we have ascertained that this ideology includes certain mythical elements, or ideas, based on Buber's reading of the Torah. He believes that God's presence must and does infuse Jewish political history. Moreover the Jewish nation must include and adherence to this spirit, for the seeds of God's spirit will grow and blossom again.

Just as a political abstraction needs concrete living to test its authenticity, so too Buber's theories are defined by Simon in tangible ways. The first tangible we have discussed is the actual operation of a Jewish

state. That is, how is the Jewish state to be governed? How will the nation incorporate the principles of spiritual Zionism? The second tangible component rests on the specific operation of the Jewish state vis-à-vis its Arab neighbors. This is the ultimate best of Zionist theory. Once the Jews achieve power, how are they going to treat the Arabs? The real basis for Buber's tangible position is that spirit and politics are inextricably intertwined. If not, the nation becomes god unto itself. As Dr. Eugene Borowitz noted in this thesis: "it is fair to say that Buber's spiritual approach to nationalism hives him a horizon and vision which the purely organizational/folk approach to nationalism does not render. And Buber's approach has its immediate political effects."<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps Simon summed up Buber's abstract dilemma most succinctly in the pages on "Nationalism and Zionism," where he wrote:

"The real problem of Jewish existence, is that on the one hand we are required to lessen our relationship to what is concrete, by means of the limitation that derives from our essence.... [but] We must guard this relation to the concrete in its organic and folk character, so that the living God will not be an exalted ideal."<sup>2</sup>

This quote reflects Buber's dilemma; on the one hand we cannot allow the state to become a god, and thus lose our faith in God, and on the other hand the

Jewish people while building a nation must adhere to her spiritual goals. For if the Jews do not grasp the concrete character of their Zionist task, the spiritual component might become so vague as to be rendered ineffectual. For Buber, we cannot live only in the abstract world, we must live out our theories in the political arena.

This consistent attachment to spiritual nationalism is probably the most clearly defined section of Simon's book. Even in his discussion of Buber's binational idea, Simon notes that Buber never lessened his belief in Arab-Jewish cooperation. His understanding of Buber's basic political theory is accurate after having studied the secondary material. Perhaps the most difficult section of Simon's work is his rendering of the Buber-Scholem debate. Since he was a student of both, Simon tends to defend both sides of the debate. Moreover this controversy can only be strictly evaluated if we had access to the German texts cited in the footnotes.

The greatest weakness in Simon's text surfaces in his discussion of Buber's address to the Zionist Congress of 1921. While this speech stood as Buber's paradigmatic position on the Arabs, his words<sup>did not</sup> have a profound effect on the political results in the Congress. From Neil Caplan's<sup>3</sup> account of the Congress it is clear that



Buber's position did not strongly influence any other resolutions adopted by that Congress. In discussing Buber's political compromises, Simon fails to explain the relative significance of Buber's words. The Zionists could not accept Buber's notion of cultural and economic cooperation because they did not understand the reality of a nascent Arab nationalism growing in the early 1920's.

Even in Buber's early writing on the dialogical life, we see his belief in spiritual nationalism. For dialogue between nations required not only a conscious effort of national will, but also required the nation's willingness to accept self-criticism. As Simon notes, Buber always insisted that there is plenty of room (in Israel) for both of us.<sup>4</sup> Moreover the power of the spirit infuses Buber's political task, and it still prevails. We see today a modern Israel shackled by secular Zionist thinking yet crying out for the ability to live in peace with its neighbors.

In his most abstract discussion on the 'moral justification for the state's existence,' Simon remains a faithful correspondent of Buber's views. Buber is justified in his critique of the nascent state, for the tangible plan must build its foundation on a spiritual

Zionist nation. Cooperation with the Arabs is of penultimate importance. Herein we find Buber's prescience as well as the remarkable consistency of his ideas. As Dr. Borowitz points out, Buber's schema, stemming from his I and Thou and the essay of the 1920's, forms a consistent backbone to his politics in the days of 1948 and beyond. This consistency reflects his basic notion of a life of dialogue, and the necessity of one people relating to another as equals. Simon explains these sentiments thusly:

"In the stipulated myth of 'A People and its Land' the Arab question returns to its appropriate place: to the center of Jewish resurrection of itself, [i.e. the people Israel, and [the Arabs] will also be tested therein."

His genuine renewal begins not only within the Jewish community, as Buber explained in his essay "Dialogue"<sup>6</sup> but also between communities. The imperative of personal responsibility transposed into community action implies that one cannot live fully, in Buber's language as a spiritual Zionist, unless one fights for communal inter-responsibility. Building bridges nurtures the spiritual Zionist goal. For Buber the Jew cannot live abstractly he must live a responsible political life. Community happens when Jews, living in freedom, respond to this notion of personal responsibility. As Buber succinctly stated sixty years ago, "community is where

community happens."<sup>7</sup>

Such is the paradox of modern Zionism: how can a state be spiritual? But how can that spirit manifest itself in the political world, if we do not live according to it? Buber answered his own call for a community response by advocating economic and political cooperation with the Arabs. His stance remained firm throughout the 1950's, two generations after his initial call to the 1921 Zionist Congress.... He insisted that the spirit had preserved the Jewish national destiny for 3000 years, and it must continue. Buber reiterated this words during his association with Magnes and the League in the 1940's. His belief in a special land, tied to a unique people, who are responsible to God, reverberates in his address of 1957:

"The command to serve the spirit is to be fulfilled by us today in this state, starting from it. But he who will truly serve the spirit must seek to make good all that was once missed: he must seek to free once again the blocked path to an understanding with the Arab peoples.... There can be no peace between Jews and Arabs that is only a cessation of war; there can only be a peace of aggravated circumstances, the command of the spirit is still to<sup>8</sup> prepare the way for the cooperation of peoples."

The renewal of the Jewish people, and its future success rests on this test of the spirit. Only if the spirit infuses the nation's political task can it survive.

- <sup>1</sup>Eugene B. Borowitz, unpublished notes.
- <sup>2</sup>Ernst Simon, Line of Demarcation, p. 14.
- <sup>3</sup>Neil Caplan, Palestine Jewry and the Arab Question, p.102-118.
- <sup>4</sup>Op. cit., p. 24.
- <sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 55.
- <sup>6</sup>Martin Buber, Between Man and Man, p. 30-32.
- <sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 31.
- <sup>8</sup>Martin Buber, Israel and the World, p. 257.

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