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The Influence of the Writings of Martin Buber on the Thought of Eugene Borowitz and Emil Fackenheim

by

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for Ordination

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For Walter Eisenbeis,

who first helped me realize that it is possible to carry on the conversation.

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DIGEST

Martin Buber's thought has exercised considerable influence upon Jewish thinkers in the twentieth century. Eugene Borowitz and Emil Fackenheim, two liberal Jewish thinkers who still actively write, are among those who have been profoundly influenced by Buber's thought. Both have utilized Buberian concepts in their writings, and both freely acknowledge a debt to Buber's work. In some areas, both Fackenheim and Borowitz attempt to diverge from Buber, or move "beyond" his thought.

All three thinkers take a liberal view of revelation and Torah, and it is especially this liberal view of revelation which is central to their thought. All three thinkers make an attempt to reconcile the supernatural, theistic God with personal autonomy. For all three thinkers (although not quite as explicitly in Fackenheim's thought), personal autonomy is grounded in God; this has implications vis à vis a liberal interpretation of Torah. Torah is the human account of and response to the encounter with God. Since it is a human document, it does not possess ultimate authority, and can therefore be changed to fit changing circumstances and sensibilities. The autonomy of the individual is therefore preserved, because the Torah is not a divine document.

Revelation, for all three thinkers, does not contain verbal content; instead, its key characteristic is that it moves one to respond through some sort of action. The recipient of a revelation encounters God overwhelmingly as Presence, which moves him to respond. It is the recipient of the revelation who determines the content of the revelation.

All three thinkers place great emphasis on the Covenant which was forged at Sinai, and in which modern Jews still participate. It is this ongoing covenantal relationship which gives rise to Judaism and Jewish life and tradition. All three thinkers therefore write with an openness to tradition.

Borowitz (and to a lesser extent, Fackenheim) [attempt to] diverge from Buber in the emphasis they place upon some sort of structure, and the importance of a common framework of observance. Buber, as is well known, could not personally or in principle subscribe to any system of halacha. Fackenheim (although he very rarely ever mentions it explicitly) seems to give the idea of structure more authority than does Buber. Borowitz has a more positive view of the mitzvah system as a whole, and is much more concerned with the problem of common observance in Jewish life than is Buber. He assigns more authority to communal observance than does Buber, although he ultimately fails to establish a set of criteria for determining common observance.

Finally, Fackenheim's thought (or his concerns) has changed over the course of the past thirty years. Relating the Holocaust to Judaism and Jewish life has become his central concern, and at the very least, has resulted in a diminution of his criticism of secularism. This is in contrast to Buber and Borowitz, who discuss the Holocaust's implications for Jewish faith, but for whom it does not seem to present such an explicit and decisive challenge.

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps no other Jewish thinker in the twentieth century has made a greater impact than Martin Buber. In 1935, Ludwig Lewisohn wrote,

> Dr. Buber is the most distinguished and influential of living Jewish thinkers . . . We are all his pupils. The contemporary reintegration of modern Western Jewish writers, thinkers, scientists, with their people, is unthinkable without the work and voice of Martin Buber.[1]

Buber's writings have received wide attention over the past fifty years. His philosophy of dialogue, re-creation of Hasidic tales, analysis of Hasidic thought, and Zionism have engaged many thinkers. His influence upon Jewish thinkers of the twentieth century has been profound. Many (directly and indirectly) have incorporated various Buberian notions into their thought. Many have sought to criticize and challenge him. It seems, however, that very few twentieth century Jewish thinkers have not, in some fashion, been affected by Buber's work.

It is Buber's philosophy of dialogue, with its emphasis on encounter - both between human beings, and between human beings and God - which has had the most influence. In our increasingly impersonal and technocratic age, Buber's emphasis on the "I - Thou" realm of existence has found a receptive audience. Buber's

affirmation of each person's uniqueness has been attractive to many people, and has helped to offset the modern de-humanization of the individual.

Buber's impact has been most profound in the area of religious faith. He has helped modern Jewish thinkers to understand that the language of faith must somehow be different from the language of things and objects. Buber's use of evocative language has served to underscore the idea that the language of faith is different from the language of analysis.

It is Buber's thought which has overwhelmingly re-emphasized the prophetic idea that God is and can be met not just in the synagogue, but also in everyday life, and in encounters between people. And it is Buber's thought which has helped the modern Jewish thinker attempt to deal with the problem of the revelation of a supernatural, theistic God Who revealed Himself at Sinai, and yet still allows for personal autonomy.

Two modern Jewish thinkers who have been deeply influenced by Buber's work are Emil L. Fackenheim and Eugene B. Borowitz. Both have utilized Buberian concepts in their writings, and both openly acknowledge a debt to his thought. In some areas, both attempt to move "beyond" Buber.

Borowitz's emphasis on the reconciliation of a supernatural, transcendent God with personal autonomy

occupies a central place in his thought, and it seems that this emphasis is very similar to Buber's. For both thinkers, one's personal autonomy is grounded in God, and this has implications with regard to a liberal interpretation of Torah. For both thinkers, Torah is the human record of and response to the encounter with God. Since it is a human document, Torah does not have absolute authority, and is not immutable. Jewish observance can thus be altered in order to fit changing circumstances and sensibilities. Since the Torah is not a divine document, the autonomy of the individual is preserved.

Fackenheim, although he does not pay as much explicit attention to the issue of personal autonomy (there seems to be a tacit acceptance), nevertheless also makes use of Buber's liberal interpretation of revelation and Torah. This liberal interpretation of revelation came to occupy a central place in his thought, and especially his earlier thought.

In this thesis, I will attempt to analyze the influence of Buber's thought on the thought of Borowitz and Fackenheim. I will attempt to investigate where Borowitz and Fackenheim have incorporated Buber's concepts into their own thought. I will also try to explore where the thought of the three thinkers is similar, and where they depart from one another.

Additionally, I will attempt to point out some of the inconsistencies and problems in their thought.

[1]Lewisohn, Ludwig, Rebirth, A Book of Modern Jewish Thought, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1935), p. 87, as quoted in Friedman, Maurice, Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue, (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), p. 258.

THE LIFE AND RELIGIOUS THOUGHT OF MARTIN BUBER

It seems that one of the reasons Martin Buber's thought has proved to be such a provocative influence on Jewish thinkers such as Eugene Borowitz and Emil Fackenheim has been his reputation as a "religious" person who provided extraordinary leadership to his people throughout his life. In a profound manner, Buber's work and thought were inextricably bound, and they were his active personal response to the events, encounters and experiences of his life.[1] Buber meant to live his life as the embodiment and actualization of his thought, and concomitantly, meant for his thought to allude to and evoke the insights regarding God and the human condition which he attained through his living the "life of dialogue." For me, and I think especially for those of Buber's own generation, this confluence of life and thought is engaging, because it engenders hope that a person's thought and actions can indeed be harmonized.

Maurice Friedman has pointed out that in one of Buber's tales of the Hasidim, Rabbi Leib says that he came to see the Maggid of Mezritch not to hear him say Torah, but to see how he put on and took off his boots.

Buber entitled this story "Not to Say Torah but to Be Torah."[2] The point to be made here is that the "whole person," who has channelled his internal conflicts into a meaningful personal direction, communicates something of himself in every action, no matter how small or seemingly unimportant. Every gesture and utterance reflects the unique person that he is. And through these actions, gestures, and utterances, one actually communicates Torah--instruction and guidance. In educational parlance, this concept is known as "role-modeling;" in terms of styles of leadership, it might be called "leading by example," although there is more to it than simply example. It is the opposite of the axiom, "Do as I say, not as I do." Buber's friend, Abraham Heschel, said after Buber's death, that the man was greater than his writings. Heschel did not mean to denigrate Buber's writings; he meant to say that indeed, the writings themselves are great, but that their true greatness can only be grasped in relation to the person who wrote them, and that the greatness of his written work is enhanced and underscored by the fact that Buber actually lived it.[3] It was no mere intellectual exercise.

In a serious manner, Buber's childhood and early adult years were of major significance for his later development as a person and thinker, and it will be helpful here to provide a brief biographical sketch of these years.

Buber was born in Vienna in 1878. He lived with his parents until he was 3 years old, when his mother suddenly left home. Consequently, Martin was sent to live with his grandparents, Solomon and Adele Buber, in Galicia. Later on, it was discovered that Martin's mother had gone to Russia and remarried there. Maurice Friedman has indicated that the break-up of his parents had a depressing effect on the young Buber, and even though he never spoke of it, he demonstrated signs of grieving and bereavement throughout his youth.[4]

Buber's time in his grandparents' household served to underscore his feelings of isolation and abandonment. His grandparents were wealthy landowners and people of high status in their community, and were not the type who discussed personal affairs with one another, much less with the young Martin. They did not discuss his parents' separation in his presence, and because no one had told Martin that his mother had cut all ties to her family, he assumed that he would soon see her again. In the repressed atmosphere of his grandparents' household, however, he did not ask whether or not this was true. But Martin did receive an answer from an unexpected source.

Less than a year after his mother had left, Buber found himself at home on the balcony, talking to a neighbor. Whereas his grandparents had not discussed

his mother's disappearance at all, this neighbor, in no uncertain terms, told Buber that his mother would never come back. He did not answer, but was sure that the neighbor had spoken correctly.[5]

According to Friedman, this was the crucial experience of Buber's life,

> the one without which neither his early seeking for unity nor his later focus on dialogue and on the meeting with the "eternal Thou" is understandable . . . It moved him into a new situation which was to be the touchstone and testing point of every other situation into which he entered.[6]

And as Buber himself wrote,

> I suspect that all that I have learned in the course of my life about genuine meeting had its first origin in that hour on the balcony.[7]

When Buber was eleven, he had another experience which became a cornerstone in his development of the I-Thou philosophy. There were horses on his grandfather's estate, and the young Martin used to love to go into the stable and comb and brush the mane of his favorite, a large gray horse. Indeed, this proved to be not only the childish love of a boy for an animal, but a profoundly moving experience. In Between Man and Man, he wrote of the encounter:

> When I stroked the mighty mane, sometimes marvellously smooth combed, at other times just as astonishingly wild, and felt the life beneath my hand, it was as though the element of vitality itself bordered

> on my skin, something that was not I, was certainly not akin to me, palpably the other, not just another, really the Other itself; and yet it let me approach, confided itself to me, placed itself elementally in the relation of Thou and Thou with me. The horse, even when I had not begun by pouring oats for him into the manger, very gently raised his massive head, flicking, then snorted quietly, as a conspirator gives a signal meant to be recognizable only by his fellow conspirator: and I was approved.[8]

The memory of this incident stayed with Buber, and it seems that it may have contributed to his later position that one can also encounter a Thou in nature, and not only with other persons.

When Buber was fourteen, he came under the influence of the thought of Immanuel Kant, the rationalist philosopher of the Enlightenment. According to Friedman, Buber was undergoing a personal crisis at this point in his life, and he found himself "standing in terror before the infinity of the universe."[9] In his essay, "What Is Man?", Buber relates the crisis through which he passed at the age of fourteen. He sets it in the context of Pascal's acknowledgement of the mystery of human existence in the face of the infinity of the universe. This encounter with infinity makes human existence "casual and questionable," because it makes humans into vulnerable, exposed creatures who are consequently robbed of any feeling of being at home in the world. Friedman reports that Buber experienced this in a way which crucially influenced his entire life:

> A necessity I could not understand swept over me: I had to try again and again to imagine the edge of space, or its edgelessness, time with a beginning and an end or a time without beginning or end, and both were equally impossible, equally hopeless--yet there seemed to be only the choice between the one or the other absurdity. Under an irresistible compulsion, I reeled from one to the other, at times so closely threatened with the danger of madness that I seriously thought of avoiding it by suicide.[10]

And the question concerning time was even more pressing:

> If I wanted to take the matter seriously (and I was ever again compelled to want just this), I had to transpose myself either to the beginning of time or to the end of time. Thus I came to feel the former like a blow in the neck or the latter like a rap against the forehead--no, there is no beginning and no end! Or I had to let myself be thrown into this or that bottomless abyss, into infinity and now everything whirled. It happened thus time after time. Mathematical or physical formulae could not help me; what was at stake was the reality of the world in which one had to live and which had taken on the face of the absurd and the uncanny.[11]

It was Kant's work which, for the time being, rescued the young Buber from his dilemma. Through his study of the Prologomena to All Future Metaphysics, Buber came to the view that time and space are not real properties that attach to things in themselves; they are only forms of our sensory perception, the formal conditions through which people grasp the world of phenomena. The concept of the infinity of space and time is as impossible as that of their finitude. Neither is inherent in our experience and instead, they represent an irresoluble

antimony of ideas which do not necessarily correspond to any reality of being. It was at this time that Buber received the "intuition" of eternity. Eternity is not endless time, but is Being as such, Being which is beyond the reach both of the finitude and infinity of space and time. And not only did Buber obtain an inkling of the reality of eternity as very different from either the finite or the infinite; he also glimpsed the possibility of a link between himself--a human being--and the Eternal. Buber, therefore, in his "uncharacteristic" response to Kant, received an inkling not only of the "I-It," but also of the "I-Thou."[12]

Friedman has written that this insight was dimmed for a number of years by Buber's involvement with Nietzsche's Thus Spake Zarathustra. In fact, Nietzsche's philosophy almost "took possession" of Buber, and undermined the philosophical peace which Kant's work had provided for Buber. Nietzsche wrote Thus Spake Zarathustra as an interpretation of time, and emphasized the "eternal return of the same" within the flow of time. For Neitzsche, time is not linear, stretching out into the infinite. Instead, it is an infinite and basically circular sequence of finite segments of time; each segment is like another in all things so that its end phase overlaps into its own beginning. The seventeen year old Buber could not accept this conception as such,

but it still "negatively seduced" him. The primal mystery of time, and Buber's earlier intuition that each event occurs only once, and never recurs, was obscured by Nietzsche's "pseudo-mystery" of the "eternal return of the same."[13] Nevertheless, Nietzsche's influence set Buber on the path which led him to his later dialogue with the "eternal Thou;" his influence may be responsible, in part, for the dynamism within Buber's thought, for its concern with creativity, and for the stress it places upon the concrete and actual, rather than the ideal and the abstract.

Buber was fascinated with Thus Spake Zarathustra, and had to work his way through many stages of thought before he became able to renounce Nietzsche's "will to power" as a "sickness," and his teaching of the Superman and the value scale of strong-and-weak as "no teaching at all."[14] The threat of infinity, since it makes human beings into vulnerable, exposed creatures who cannot feel at home in the world, remained for Buber a source of lifelong tension; it became, however, the occasion for, instead of the obstacle to, "existential trust."[15]

The next important step in Buber's early development was his conversion to Zionism in 1898. In the years immediately before this (spent studying at the universities in Leipzig and Vienna), he had not been particularly concerned with things Jewish; during the

summer of 1898, however, while on his grandfather's estate in Galicia, the young Martin read Nathan Birnbaum's Modern Judaism. Maurice Friedman reports that this book completed for Buber what Moses Hess had begun - the synthesis of the national and the social idea in Judaism. After reading this work, Buber became a zealous and active Zionist; he had found, for the first time, a channel into which he could concentrate his energies and give himself to edifying and constant activity. Buber's conversion to Zionism played a key role in his early development because it gave him an impetus for entry into the Jewish community and Jewish life from which he had largely lost his moorings during his university years.[16]

Right after his conversion to Zionism, Buber was instrumental in founding a Zionist chapter and a union of Jewish students in Leipzig, and he quickly became associated with Theodor Herzl's fledgling Zionist movement. He began to write essays and articles on Zionism, and in 1901 became the editor of Herzl's journal Die Welt. Buber was soon at odds with Herzl over his emphasis on purely political Zionism, and consequently became a leader of the Zionist faction which stressed that the movement be based upon Jewish cultural renaissance. In 1902, this group founded the Jüdischer Verlag, which produced a Jewish almanac, books on Jewish art, and

collections of Jewish poetry, all of which Buber contributed to and helped edit. Even more importantly, the Jüdischer Verlag later became an important publishing house for Zionist literature. Additionally, this group proposed to establish a Zionist journal called Der Jude, which would address not only the limited objectives of the Zionist movement, but also the actual situation of the Jew. The proposal fell through, and it wasn't until 1916 that Buber was finally able to establish Der Jude.[17]

In 1904, Buber split with Herzl and the official Zionist movement over the issue of political versus cultural Zionism. Buber soon gave up active leadership in the movement, but continued to be involved in it through his speeches and writings. In 1938, as a result of the Nazi persecution, he finally immigrated to Palestine, where he became a professor of Social Philosophy at Hebrew University.

One of the principal (and most controversial) emphases of Buber's Zionism (especially after his aliyah) was his insistence on attempts to achieve Arab-Jewish rapprochement, both inside and outside of the land of Israel. He was very active in both the Brit Shalom and the Ichud, organizations which consistently stressed the importance of Jewish-Arab cooperation in the land of Israel. In a letter to Gandhi (who had questioned the Jews' right to live in the land of Israel) in 1939,

Buber wrote:

> I belong to a group of people who from the time Britain conquered Palestine have not ceased to strive for the concluding of a genuine peace between Jew and Arab.
>
> By a genuine peace we inferred and still infer that both peoples together should develop the land without the one imposing its will on the other. In view of the international usages of our generation, this appeared to us to be very difficult but not impossible. We have no desire to dispossess them: we want to live with them. We do not want to dominate them, we want to serve with them . . .

After his aliyah, Buber continued to maintain the importance of living with the Arab population in and around Palestine, in the face of much opposition on the part of both Jews and Arabs.

Around the turn of the century (when he was twenty-one), Buber came into contact with the New Community, which was led and taught by the socialist, Gustav Landauer (1870-1919). The New Community merged an emphasis on divine "swinging upward" (rather than comfortable settling down) with the goal of a communal settlement which would anticipate the "new age" in beauty, art, and religious devotion. Outside of his marriage, Buber's relationship with Landauer was to become probably the decisive relationship of his adult life. It was Landauer who encouraged Buber to switch his university studies from science and the history of art to Christian mysticism. During 1899 and 1900, Buber was close to the New Community, and he wrote his dissertation

for the University of Vienna on the thought of two mystical thinkers, Nicholas of Cusa and Jacob Boehme.[19]

In the main, Buber was drawn to mysticism by two phenomena: first of all, his own personal awareness of the "threat of infinity," which gave rise to his concern with the problem of the relation between the individual and the world. Secondly, Buber was drawn to mysticism as a protest against the mechanization and mass culture against which Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Dostoevsky had also protested during the nineteenth century.[20]

Through his study of the work of Nicholas of Cusa, Buber began to arrive at his own conception of individualism and particularity. Individualism did not mean simply difference--it meant uniqueness--that which makes a person or a thing valuable in itself. Uniqueness implied that which cannot be repeated and for which no other value can be substituted. It implied not utility, but, however much it may exist in relation to others, that which is an absolute center in itself. This concept of uniqueness is the first step on Buber's way to the philosophy of dialogue. It is not the only step, but is a necessary one. Additionally, Buber early on borrowed and elaborated upon another idea from Nicholas of Cusa and Renaissance mysticism, the idea of <u>coincidentia oppositorum</u>--the coincidence of opposites which unites them without diminishing their uniqueness. These two

ideas--uniqueness and coincidentia oppositorum--are two of the essential elements of the life of dialogue.[21] Buber was not a mystic, although there are mystical elements in his thought. His early encounter with mysticism, however, paved the way to his philosophy of dialogue, and even more importantly, served as a springboard to Buber's study of Hasidism.

In 1904, at the age of twenty-six, Buber went on a visit to his grandfather's house. During this visit, he picked up a book on the heritage of the Baal Shem Tov, the founder of Hasidism. Reading the description of the fervor and daily inward renewal of the hasid, he sensed that within these ostensibly simple tales lay a profound and vigorous message. He sensed that perhaps within Hasidism was the essence of Judaism:

> It was then, that, overpowered in an instant, I experienced the Hasidic soul. The primally Jewish opened to me, flowering to newly conscious expression in the darkness of exile: man's being created in the image of God I grasped as deed, as becoming, as task. And this primally Jewish reality was a primal human reality, the content of human religiousness . . . The image out of my childhood, the memory of the zaddik and his community, rose upward and illuminated me: I recognized the idea of the perfected man. At the same time I became aware of the summons to proclaim it to the world.[22]

Consequently, Buber withdrew himself for a period of five years from activities in the Zionist party, in which he had been quite active for several years. Additionally,

he stopped writing articles and giving speeches, and spent five years in isolation, studying Hasidic texts.

Hasidism occupied a key role in both the progression of Buber's interpretation of Judaism, and in the development of his general philosophy. Perhaps more than any other Jewish source, Hasidism was the meeting point between the two. In Hasidism, Buber felt that he had found a living manifestation of his early conception of Judaism--creativity, concern with personal wholeness, the realization of truth in life, and binding of spirit with the sanctification of the worldly. Buber also felt that he had found in Hasidism an important attempt to fulfill the biblical covenant and make manifest the kingship of God by establishing the true community and bringing the love of God into the love between human beings.[23]

According to Buber's interpretation, the teachings of Hasidism can almost be summarized in a single sentence: God can be beheld in each thing and reached through each pure deed. This is not, however, a pantheistic world view. In Hasidic teaching, the entire world is only a word out of the mouth of God. Hasidism teaches that through even the smallest, most inconsequential thing in the world, God can reveal Himself to one who truly seeks Him. Owing to the kabbalistic doctrine of creation, no thing exists without a divine spark, and each person

can uncover and redeem this spark at each time and through each action, even the most ordinary, if it is only performed in purity, entirely directed to and concentrated in God.[24] Kavannah, the devotion of one's entire being, is the prerequisite--one must direct oneself wholly to God and concentrate oneself in Him. It is not enough to serve God only in isolated hours and with fixed words and gestures. One must serve God with one's whole life and with one's entire being. All of one's existence must be directed towards divine service:

> Rabbi Pinhas said: "Whoever says that the words of the Torah are one thing and the words of the world another, must be regarded as a man who denies God."[25]

Salvation does not lie in one's withholding oneself from the worldly. On the contrary, a person must concentrate the worldly to the holy, to divine meaning: one's work and food, rest and wandering, the structure of the family and the structure of society. Hasidism's central concern is that of cleaving to God.[26]

According to Buber's interpretation, God hides Himself in the "garments" and barriers of the world. The divine is present in even the shabbiest thing, the smallest thing, and is especially present in human beings. Nothing exists which cannot be hallowed, and sanctification of God is possible even while carrying out the most mundane task or making small talk. There is no place which is devoid of the divine; one must simply let God in.[27]

Buber saw Hasidism as incorporating elements of Jewish mysticism in a healthy, constructive way. Mysticism, in and of itself, serves to negate community because it may move one to withdraw from the world and to asceticism. Hasidism, however, by incorporating the mystical teaching of the redemption of the divine sparks present in all things, teaches that one must not withdraw; instead, one must hallow everything, and indeed, that is our purpose on earth:

> Each man is called to bring something in the world to completion. Each one is needed by the world. But there are men who sit continually shut up in their chambers and learn and do not step out of the house to converse with the others; for this reason they are called bad. For if they would converse with the others, they would bring to completion something of what is allotted to them. This means: do not be bad in that you stay before yourself and do not go to men; do not be bad through solitude.[28]

Hasidism rejects the idea of asceticism and denial of the life of the senses. It rejects the traditional assumption that the body and the spirit are engaged in a bitter rivalry. The body should cooperate with the soul in the service of God; hence, its basic needs require satisfaction:

> . . . Mortifying the flesh weakens the strength you need for devotions and teaching, the bath of immersion heightens this strength.[29]

One must serve God with one's entire life--with the whole of the everyday and the mundane, and with one's entire

being. All of one's reality--body and soul--must be directed toward God and His service:

> This is what the rabbi of Kotzk said concerning Rabbi Akiba's saying that "God is the waters of immersion of Israel": "The waters of immersion only purify the soul if one is wholly immersed, so that not a hair is showing. That is how we should be immersed in God.[30]

By approaching every action and every thing with the intention of hallowing it, one raises the sparks, and increases the holiness present in the world.

For Buber, Hasidism was keenly aware of the fact that it is not always an easy task for the Hasid to attain the proper kavannah all of the time. The tzaddik is the response to this issue. The tzaddik can somehow understand the connection between God and human beings; the tzaddik has a clearer picture of the implications of the divine-human relationship. The tzaddik helps his Hasidim keep their thoughts constantly on God and their relationship to Him. He is there to help his disciples lower the barriers which they have erected between themselves and God:

> . . . the Baal Shem said: "When the people do not depend upon heroes but are themselves versed in the joyful shout of battle, then they will walk in the light of your countenance."[31]

And ideally, the tzaddik and his Hasidim are dependent upon one another.[32] The tzaddik not only bears the hasidic teaching as an apostle, but also as a true manifestation of its realization. The tzaddik is the teaching.

In Buber's interpretation, one of Hasidism's most important commandments is to love others (and ultimately, God). Truly loving another involves unselfishly giving all of oneself:

> The rabbi of Sasov used to visit all the sick boys in the town, sit at their bedside, and nurse and take care of them. Once he said: "He who is not willing to suck the pus from the sore of a child sick with the plague has not climbed even halfway up the mountain to the love of his fellow men."[33]

Love of others is not the fulfillment of an otherworldly commandment. It helps to redeem the world from evil, and release the holy sparks. True love is not possessive, but is giving and unconcerned with the selfish.[34]

Implicit in all Hasidic teaching is the idea that the Hasidic life is meant to inculcate a feeling of true joy and delight in one's dealings with others. A primary goal of Hasidism is to prevent the performance of the mitzvot from hardening into mere routine or ritual; instead, one should perform them with the proper emotional fervor and kavannah. According to Buber's interpretation, central to Hasidic teaching is the tenet that service of God is fundamental to existence, but that service without spontaneity or passion is lifeless. A hasid should serve God with fervor; he should not simply repeat or imitate mitzvot, but should perform them spontaneously and with delight in being given the power to surrender himself to the divine will.[35]

It is here that we gain a glimpse of the kernel which Buber later developed into the "eternal Thou" of his dialogical principle. For Buber, any great religious movement must attempt to promulgate a life of fervor which cannot be stifled by any experience, and which ultimately springs from a relationship to the Eternal. One must attempt to

> endow daily life with that constant, undaunted and exalted joy in the Now and Here . . . joy in the world as it is, in life as it is, in every hour of life in this world, as that hour is . . . [the greatest of all values is] the reciprocal relationship between the human and the divine, the reality of the I and the You which does not cease at the rim of eternity . . . If you direct the undiminished power of your fervor to God's world destiny, if you do what you must do at this moment--no matter what it may be!--with your whole strength and with kavvanah [sic], with holy intent, you will bring about the union between God and Shekhinah, eternity and time . . . Do not be vexed in your delight in creatures and things! But do not let it shackle itself to creatures and things; through these, press on to God. Do not rebel against your desires, but seize them and bind them to God.[36]

As I mentioned earlier, (p. 24), one must serve God even by means of his physical acts; the physical dimension of humans is regarded by Hasidism as a realm capable of religious behavior and value. One must worship God with both the good and the evil within his nature; it is possible, even obligatory for one to transform evil into good and to hallow it:

> Rabbi Abraham said:
> "I have learned a new form of service from the wars of Frederick, king of Prussia. It is not necessary to approach the enemy in order to attack him. In fleeing from him, it is possible to circumvent him as he advances, and fall on him from the rear until he is forced to surrender. What is needed is not to strike straight at Evil but to withdraw to the sources of divine power, and from there to circle around Evil, bend it, and transform it into its opposite.[37]

It is here possible to see the cornerstone upon which Hasidism is built, and indeed, Buber's entire philosophy: there is no ontological distinction between the sacred and the profane. Everything depends upon how one encounters and affirms the world at a particular moment:

> When Rabbi Wolf drove out in a carriage, he never permitted the whip to be used on the horses. "You do not even have to shout at them," he instructed the coachman. "You just have to know how to talk to them."[38]

By encountering the world with the proper kavannah and attitude, one sanctifies the name of God, and indeed, encounters God. Everything is waiting to be hallowed by human beings; there is nothing which is so crass or base that it cannot be sanctified. What is profane is only what has not yet been hallowed:

> There are no words which, in themselves, are useless. There are no actions which, in themselves, are useless. But one can make useless both actions and words by saying or doing them uselessly.[39]

This, according to Buber, is the core teaching of Hasidism, and all else flows from it.

The kernel of the dialogical principle upon which Buber touched during his early study of Hasidism was soon thereafter developed into what became known as his philosophy of dialogue. Buber himself wrote that:

> The question of the possibility and reality of a dialogical relationship between man and God had already accosted me in my youth. This dialogue implies a free partnership of man in a conversation between heaven and earth whose speech in address and answer is the happening itself, the happening from above and the happening from below. In particular, since the Hasidic tradition had grown for me into the supporting ground of my own thinking, hence since about 1905, that had become an innermost question for me.[40]

Buber continued to involve himself with Hasidic material, and his work on the dialogical principle paralleled it. In the fall of 1919, he finished a rough draft of I and Thou, and its final writing was completed in the spring of 1922; it was finally published in 1923.

The cornerstone of Buber's philosophy of dialogue is contained in a passage from I and Thou, which became a more developed formulation of the insights he gained from his study of Hasidism:

> I know nothing of a "world" and of "worldy life" that separate us from God. What is designated that way is life with an alienated It-world, the life of experience and use. Whoever goes forth in truth to the world, goes forth to God. Concentration and going forth, both in truth, the one-and-the-other which is the One, are what is needful.
>
> God embraces but is not the universe; just so, God embraces but is not my self. On account of this which cannot be spoken

> about, I can say in my language, as all can say in theirs: You. For the sake of this there are I and You, there is dialogue, there is language, and spirit whose primal deed language is, and there is, in eternity, the word.[41]

The philosophy of dialogue reflects Buber's concern with the nature and "playing out" of the relation of human beings to God. Humans approach existence through two main attitudes--I-Thou, and I-It. According to Buber, the "I" of the I-It relation is different from the "I" of the I-Thou relation. In I-It, the I appears as an ego, and becomes aware of itself as the subject of experiencing and using, and of itself as an individuality. In I-Thou, the I emerges as a "person" and becomes aware of itself as subjectivity, but without an object.[42] The "I" in I-Thou becomes "person" by entering into a relation with other persons. The central feature of this relation is reciprocity, and it is referred to as I-Thou. The second type of attitude is referred to as I-It. In this attitude, a person relates to other people as objects to be used and experienced. The central feature of this attitude is utility. One's existence oscillates between these two types of relating.

The I-It, or subject-object relationship is always indirect and impersonal. In an I-It relationship, the I (subject) approaches the It (object) as something which can be categorized and used. I-It is superficial, and never involves a person's entire being. The I of I-It

manipulates the It (other persons or things) without regard for the It's uniqueness. I-It enables a person to understand and order the world, but takes place internally, inside of a person, and not between the person and the It. In I-It, it is almost as if the subject is not "conscious" of the object itself.[43] The object is put into categories according to race, religion, social position, physical characteristics, etc., and one knows the person or object as defined by these categories and traits. The subject fails (or does not attempt) to approach the object in his own uniqueness. Exploitation is the goal.[44] Of course, in order to exist in the world, it is necessary for one to use other people as means towards ends. The mechanic who fixes a car, the tailor who alters clothes, the cashier at the grocery store--life in the world makes these people necessary to one's existence. If, however, one relates to others solely as means to various ends, then one is not really even human.[45]

I-Thou, according to Buber, involves genuine human dialogue. In dialogue, each participant is "turned" toward the other with the intention of forging a living reciprocal relation. Key elements in an I-Thou relationship include "making the other present," and "experiencing the other side." To enter into an I-Thou relationship with another, one must be concerned with him as genuinely different from oneself, but simultaneously as

someone with whom it is possible to enter into relation.[46] In an I-Thou relation, both participants retain their own subjectivity, and within the encounter, one becomes conscious of the other not as an object, but as a subject. What happens between participants in an I-Thou encounter is the crucial element. In experiencing the other side, one is moved to ethical responsibility; for Buber, responsibility necessarily involves response. And the response does not flow from self-interest or a heteronomous ethical code; it flows from the encounter with the other with whom one enters into a relation.[47]

In "experiencing the other side," Buber does not mean exactly "empathy." Empathy does not go far enough; in it, one loses oneself as the subject of the relation. Instead, Buber refers to this experiencing the other side as "inclusion." "Inclusion" seems to imply a much more advanced sense of empathy. When empathy moves from the symbolic to the actual, it becomes inclusion. In an empathic relationship, the one for whom the other empathizes is an object, and as noted earlier, a subject-object relationship falls into the realm of the I-It world. In inclusion, however, one subject is truly involved with the other subject, and this falls into the I-Thou world.[48]

For Buber, I-Thou is the essence of true friendship and love; each participant is made "present" by the

other in wholeness and uniqueness. It is the "between" which is important here; in a true friendship, one participant cares for the other for his own sake and affirms the other's own uniqueness. Utility does not enter into the relation. In a dialogical relationship, one accepts the other for what he is, and categories become suspended. I-Thou can occur even with an inanimate object or with something in nature. The relationship is not completely mutual, since a tree or work of art cannot move towards us or address us as a human being can. Yet, all things can address us if we turn to them in their uniqueness, and if we encounter them not in terms of their utility and relationship to other things. If one responds to someone or something with a dialogical attitude, one can enter into an I-Thou relation.[49]

Ultimately, according to Buber, behind every dialogue in the I-Thou world is a dialogue with God. God is the "eternal Thou" Whom a person meets through a dialogical attitude. For Buber, God is always present; when one does not encounter God, it is because one is not really present. It is incumbent upon each person to remain open to God's address, to encounter the world through a dialogical attitude. Each person must turn to the other in openness and readiness to respond; if one does this, he will encounter the divine. The eternal Thou is behind all other Thou's, even trees or inanimate objects,

because all things are ultimately a manifestation of God's creative power. The eternal Thou is therefore behind them. And, as with Buber's idea of inclusion, the I-Thou encounter with the divine through a human being is not merely symbolic or metaphorical--it is actual relation to God:

> . . . just the same Thou that goes from man to man is the Thou that descends from the divine to us and ascends from us to the divine.[50]

One lives with God when one lives with another in genuine dialogue, in the I-Thou realm:

> . . . the man who loves God and his campanion in one--though he remains in all the frailty of humanity--receives God for his companion.[51]

This philosophy of dialogue also played an important role in Buber's interpretation of the Bible. In his biblical studies, Buber was not concerned with the history of religion, but with the history of faith. He placed his emphasis not upon religious teachings, symbols, and practices per se, but upon how theological, symbolic, and institutional elements informed and were played out in Israel's total social, political, and spiritual existence:

> In shaping the common life of that community, with all its social, political and spiritual functions, the faith dealt with here undertook to become flesh in a people.[52]

For Buber, the Bible is important because in it, God (the transcendent God) speaks to human beings and

communicates a message to them. This is a form of the dialogical relation, and indeed, all of world history constitutes a dialogue between God and God's creation.[53] In Buber's biblical studies, he attempts to study the biblical traditions; he wants to sift out the layers of various interpretations in the biblical text, and penetrate to the original kernel of myth which was operative for the ancients. According to Buber, the Bible is overwhelmingly a record of the encounters in the course of history between a group of people and God. The Bible is not symbolic theology; it is a human account of people's relation to God. Miracles, therefore, are not objective events, nor are they subjective acts of the imagination; they are events which are experienced and seen by individuals or groups of people as acts of God.[54]

Buber's conception of revelation plays a critical role in his conception of the Bible. Revelation, for Buber, is the disclosure of the divine presence. It is important to note, however, that for Buber, revelation is non-propositional. Revelation moves one to action (to respond), but it is the recipient of the revelation who determines what the response is, who "translates" it into human speech and deed. For Buber, there is a sharp distinction between revelation and legislation:

> I do not believe that revelation is ever a formulation of law. It is only through man in his self-contradiction that revelation becomes legislation. This is the fact of

> man. I cannot admit the law transformed by man into the realm of my will, if I am to hold myself ready as well for the unmediated word of God directed to a specific hour of life . . .
>
> . . . for me, though man is a law-receiver, God is not a law-giver, and therefore the law has no universal validity for me, but only a personal one. I accept, therefore, only what I think is being spoken to me . . .[55]

For Buber, the biblical dialogue is most profoundly expressed in the idea of the kingship of God. In the forging of the Brit, the people of Israel accept YHVH as their King, and they recognize themselves as chosen by Him. It now is incumbent upon the Israelites to become a holy people which will bring all spheres of life under God's kingship.[56] The existence of the people cannot be fragmentized; there is no separation between the social and the religious. All elements of the life of the people are subject to God's rule. In Buber's view, the prophetic call came as a consequence of the kings' emphasis on cult, and their failure to open themselves to true dialogue with God.[57] The prophets argued against the separation of community life into a religious realm and a political realm. Their prophecy was spoken in direct response to the demands of the historical situation and with God's speaking in that situation and in the prophecy. The prophet did not predict the future; his mission was to set the choice before the people.[58] God demands human response, human decision, and the prophet was the bearer of this demand.[59]

As a young man, Buber became very active in the fledgling Zionist movement, and although he split with Herzl and the official movement in 1904, he continued to engage himself in Zionist activities until his death in 1965. Buber's approach to Zionism was inseparably bound up with his conviction that the people of Israel are chosen to play a key role in the beginning of the kingdom of God, by becoming a holy people. Israel's chosenness is not to be an excuse for national egoism; instead, its election gives rise to a mission which must be executed in all humility:

> . . . if the spirit of Israel is no more to us than the synthetic personality of our nation, no more than a fine justification for our collective egoism, no more than our prince transformed into an idol--after we had refused to accept any prince other than the Lord of the Universe!--then we are indeed like unto all the nations . . . "What then is this spirit of Israel of which you are speaking?"
>
> It is the spirit of fulfillment. Fulfillment of what? Fulfillment of the simple truth, that man has been created for a purpose . . . Our purpose is the great upbuilding of peace . . . There is one nation which once upon a time heard this charge so loudly and clearly that the charge penetrated to very depths of its soul. That nation accepted the charge, not as an inchoate mass of individuals but as a nation. As a nation it accepted the truth which calls for its fulfillment by the human nation, the human race as a whole. And that is its spirit, the spirit of Israel.[60]

Israel's mission involves not just another form of nationalism which views the nation as an end in itself;

the people are attached to and need the land of Israel so they can order their own life and create true community. For Buber, "Zion" is a theological concept, and the Jewish commonwealth is, at best, only a stepping stone to the realization of Zion; indeed, if the people forget that the realization of true community and the fulfillment of Israel's task is the goal, the Jewish state may even become a hindrance. If Israel merely tries to be a nation like all other nations, or simply a Jewish community in the land of Israel, it will eventually cease to exist.[61] Only by insisting upon and maintaining its uniqueness and inability to be categorized can Israel fulfill its mission. Only by not insisting upon national egoism will Israel survive.[62] And at the center of national life, behind all aspects of the Jewish state, must be the divine:

> If we were only one nation among others, we should long ago have perished from the earth. Paradoxically we exist only because we dared to be serious about the unity of God and his undivided, absolute sovereignty. If we give up God, he will give us up.[63]

Israel, due to its experience of history and revelation as being insuperably bound, cannot exist as a mere political structure, like that of the other nations. It can only exist if it translates into reality the divine command of the Covenant: to be a true community, and to encourage the nations to do likewise:

> There is no re-establishing of Israel, there is no security for it save one; it must assume the burden of its own uniqueness; it must assume the yoke of the kingdom of God.[64]

Buber's social theory and conception of community flowed directly from his interpretation of Hasidism and the Bible, and for him, the ideal type of community would have to be built around the life of dialogue. Implied by this is that since God is ultimately behind every I-Thou relationship, a community would be "religious" in nature.

Community, for Buber, does not connote merely a group of people and set of institutions organized into a society. Community refers to a phenomenon in which there exists a serious and unmitigated concern with the cultivation of dialogue and consequently, an emphasis on the relationship of God to daily life and routine. Buber views the Brit at Sinai as the first real attempt in history at a creation of this type of community; Moses was given the task of helping to bring it into being, and the prophets were charged with renewing the call for this type of community.[65]

Buber sees Hasidism as the most recent (and early on, fairly successful) attempt at creation of true community. The ideal Hasidic community operated around a divine center, and its goal, according to Buber, was the service of God in all realms of life, and with all

urges and drives. The true community brooks no division between individual and societal ethics, nor between the religious and the political.

Buber draws a sharp distinction between "collectivity" and "community." He points to what people today call "community," and rejects it as merely collectivity. The stress in a collectivity is not dialogue, the I-Thou encounter, or reciprocity; instead, the goal is how much power the collectivity can accrue. Characteristic of a collectivity are means which differ from the ends, and a lack of reciprocity; there is no between among its members:

> But who in all these massed, mingled, marched collectivities still perceives what that is for which he supposes he is striving--what community is? They have all surrendered to its counterpart. Collectivity is not a binding but a bundling together: individuals packed together, armed and equipped in common, with only as much life from man to man as will inflame the marching step. But community, growing community (which is all we have known of so far) is the being no longer side by side but with one another of a multitude of persons. And this multitude, though it also moves towards one goal, yet experiences everywhere a turning to, a dynamic facing of, the other, a flowing from I to Thou. Community is where community happens. Collectivity is based on an organized atrophy of personal existence, community on its increase and confirmation in life lived towards one another. The modern zeal for collectivity is a flight from community's testing and consecration of the person, a flight from the vital dialogic, demanding the staking of the self, which is in the heart of the world.[66]

Buber's social theory was based upon a sort of religious socialism in which the aforementioned conception

of community plays a central role. Society at large is to be a "community of communities"--a microcosm of the true community in which true dialogue and reciprocity are operative.[67] For Buber, socialism (because of its egalitarian principles) was the ideology best suited to his conception of how a society should be built, but only a socialism which is religious in nature:

> Religious socialism can only mean that religion and socialism are essentially directed to each other, that each of them needs the covenant with the other for the fulfillment of its own essence . . . Unity with God and community among the creatures belong together. Religion without socialism is disembodied spirit, therefore not genuine spirit; socialism without religion is body emptied of spirit, hence also not genuine body. But--socialism without religion does not hear the divine address, it does not aim at a response, still it happens that it responds; religion without socialism hears the call but does not respond.[68]

It is in daily life, lived concretely, that socialism and religion come together. A true community can only be built if it responds to and satisfies concrete situations, and not merely abstractions.[69] Only if its members dedicate themselves to living as much as possible in the realm of I-Thou, and therefore to divine service, can the true community survive. Human beings are given power to enable them to discharge their duties as God's agents; if they abuse their power, the power destroys them.[70] This holds true for socio-political systems, too.

Bearing in mind this understanding of Buber's thought, it now will be possible to evaluate it. One problem is that it might be possible to construe Buber's approach to religion as "secular," due to the emphasis he placed on the sanctification of everyday and the worldly. Buber wanted to move religion outside of the synagogue and into daily life. In Buber's view, religion had become a sort of separate compartment, to be practiced only in certain hours and places; this, to the great detriment of true faith, had only succeeded in obscuring the eternal Thou, and left daily life unhallowed. Buber felt that this tendency went against the tenets of biblical Judaism as it had been set forth by Moses and the classical prophets; the central thrust of most of his work attempted to mitigate against this tendency.

The issue here, I think, has to do with the definition of the term "secular." The word actually means

> of or belonging to the world and worldly things as distinguished from the church and religious affairs; not sacred or religious.[71]

Buber's intention, it seems to me, is to almost eliminate the term "secular" from our vocabulary, or at the very least, to make it non-applicable. For Buber, the term secular refers to a state of affairs which ideally should not exist. The second half of the definition (". . . as distinguished from church and religious affairs; not sacred or religious") should not at all be at odds with

the first half; all of existence, including the "world and worldly things," can and should be hallowed in the name of divine service. So the term "secular" is a misnomer, because it implies a fragmentation of existence which should not exist. Concomitantly, the word "religion" is also a misnomer because it, too, implies this ultimately false fragmentation of existence. To the extent that Buber's philosophy does advocate a sanctification of the worldly, it could be construed as secular; at the same time, however (and this is the critical issue), the "worldliness" of something does not (and indeed, must not) preclude its being hallowed in the service of God. For Buber, there is no ontological distinction between the sacred and the profane, and therefore, the terms "religious" and "secular" simply do not, or at least, should not apply.

In Buber's philosophy of dialogue, revelation plays a central role. In any I-Thou relation, one ultimately encounters the eternal Thou, which is Buber's expression for God (within the dialogical relationship). The revelation does not contain content, and it is left solely to the individual to decide what is to be done. Buber implies that the phenomenology of the revelation itself is universally experienced, and that it plays a critical role in the individual's response, but that the response to it is individual. This raises major questions: what or who is the "authority"? And how, then, does a group of people arrive at some sort of common observance?

> Man receives, and what he receives is not a 'content' but a presence, a presence as strength . . . The meaning can be received but not experienced; it cannot be experienced, but it can be done; and this is what it intends with us. The guarantee does not wish to remain shut up within me, it wants to be born into the world by me. But even as the meaning itself cannot be transferred or expressed as a universally valid and generally acceptable piece of knowledge, putting it to the proof in action cannot be handed on a table that could be put up over everybody's head. The meaning we receive can be put to the proof in action only by each person in the uniqueness of his being and in the uniqueness of his life. No prescription can lead us to the encounter, and none leads from it. Only the acceptance of the presence is required to come to it or, in a new sense, to go from it. As we have nothing but a You on our lips when we enter the encounter, it is with this on our lips that we are released from it into the world.[72]

It seems to me that, for Buber, the authority ultimately rests with the individual. The revelation of which Buber speaks <u>does</u> seem to come from a theistic, transcendent God. It is the individual, however, who decides when he is being addressed through revelation (although he says that one definitely knows when one is being addressed), and what his response will be; there are, therefore, no universal laws or prescriptions.

An underlying, tacit assumption of Buber's writing is that the human situation is inexplicable when one is estranged from God. One can only understand oneself and the world by grounding oneself in God, and one who has done this will undertake a different course of action than one who has not grounded himself in God. God is "Presence,"

and as Presence, He somehow guides and counsels the person with whom He communicates.[73]

It seems to me that Buber very profoundly felt the modern tension in his own life between reason and faith. He sought to alleviate this tension by grounding his own personal autonomy in a supernatural, theistic God. As Buber presents it, it is not clear who has ultimate authority. He implies that God has [at least some] authority; it is left up to the individual, however, to determine the extent of God's authority, and the response to it:

> Revelation, historical revelation, can bind us because the divine has a share in it. But what does this binding signify? An unhampered believer in revelation may trustfully follow, without reservation, a traditional codex that appeals to God's word, because the share of heaven and of earth are not objectively to be measured. But another man believes in revelation, yet is tormented by the all-too-human character of the human share in it, and resists obeying human prescriptions as divine commands. Such a man may find no other way than holding his own soul open to the whole traditional shall and shall not, in order, in the absence of objective criteria, to examine honestly in his own subjectivity what he can acknowledge as bidden and forbidden by God and what not. That is the lot of the "beggar."[74]

God calls upon the individual to respond; it is almost as if the "response" lay dormant, and needs to be "activated" by God's call:

> . . . Judaism knows that <u>true</u> autonomy is one with true theonomy: God wants man to fulfill his commands as a human being, and with the quality peculiar to human beings. The law

> is not thrust upon man; it rests deep within him, to waken when the call comes. The word which thundered down from Sinai was echoed by the word that is "in they mouth and in they heart" (Deut. 30:14). Again and again, man tries to evade the two notes that are one chord; he denies his heart and rejects the call. But it has been promised that a time will come when the Torah will be manifest as the Scripture present in the hearts of all living men, and the world will fulfill itself in the harmony of heaven and earth.[75]

In this way, Buber is able to preserve for himself both the transcendent, theistic God of the Bible, and his own autonomy.

The problem with this conception is that it does not furnish us with the criteria which will allow us to determine the occurrence of a genuine revelation. How may I determine that my encounter with God is, in fact, true? How can I demonstrate to others that I have had a genuine revelation? How can I claim that another individual's supposed encounter with God is not really so? We are not really given any criteria for establishing the truth or falsity of the divine-human encounter. My problem here is that without criteria, it becomes impossible to determine whether or not someone else's (or even my own) claim to revelation is genuine. Without criteria, it does not seem possible to accept (or deny) another individual's revelation. We are therefore, left, it seems to me, with no choice but to accept another's claim to revelation as infallible.

From a Jewish standpoint, Buber's personalization of the response to the divine-human encounter raises the question of common observance. If the response to the encounter with the eternal Thou is so wholly individualized, how is it possible to formulate any framework of common observance? For Buber, a person cannot be expected to perform an action which he has not been personally commanded to do. Indeed, one has not been commanded to do anything specific. Buber's thought, then, does not provide for a framework of common observance in the way that orthodoxy does. He built his philosophy upon the ideal of individual responsibility and a refusal to hide behind a dogma or an ideology. It is therefore not surprising that he did not think much of orthodox Judaism, with its inflexible approach to ritual and [what he perceived to be its] lack of spontaneity:

> "I am in favour of every religion in its beginning," he said. "Then it is fresh and spontaneous, filled with love and joy. If only it would stay that way! But then it becomes codified and organized. It becomes a mechanical repetition of a formula which has lost its original meaning. Look what happened to the hasidim! And nothing can hide the face of God from young people as organized religion does . . . if a religion is to stay fresh and spontaneous the only way is for it to change itself constantly- to renew itself in each generation, from the inside. Otherwise it will harden and die, even though it might not be aware of its approaching death."[76]

Nor did Buber feel that Reform Judaism was the "renewal" of Judaism of which he so often wrote and spoke. He felt

that liberal Judaism spent too much time rationalizing the faith, simplifying dogma, and relaxing rituals, all for reasons of convenience and gentility. This type of Judaism, for Buber, was not a renewal of Judaism, but its continuation in a more convenient, more elegant, more European form.[77]

What Buber does imply, however, is that there is a common body of tradition (e.g., Bible, Hasidism) which recorded how individuals responded to the divine address, and translated it into speech and action, into a communal framework which became common to all.[78] Individuals interact with the tradition, and through this interaction, some sort of common response may be erected. Implied by Buber here is that one who truly feels himself addressed by the Thou behind, for example, the Decalogue, will subscribe to it, thus creating a common response (at least, vis à vis the Decalogue). What becomes crucial for Buber is that the life of the community must be directed towards divine service. It is the attempt to unify all spheres of life and direct them towards God's service which causes community to happen. And for this to happen, it is necessary to provide a framework which works towards this goal. The Decalogue is

> both legislation and promulgation, in the precise historical sense. What this means is that the intention to be recognized in it refers neither to articles of faith nor to rules of behaviour, but to the constituting of a community by means of common regulation . . .

> Here the unifying force has to start from the conception of a divine lord. The disparate material out of which the people develop shapes itself into a closed national form as a result of their common relations to Him. Only as the people of YHVH can Israel come into being and remain in being. The constitution appears not as something objective, to be taken at its own intrinsic value, but as an allocution by Him, a thing which can be actualized only in and through a living relationship with Him. It therefore begins by His designation of Himself as the One who brought forth and liberated Israel addressed; including each and every person addressed in Israel.[79]

The starting point of the biblical community of Israel (and I think Buber would apply this to any true community) has to be the acceptance of God as Creator and Sovereign.

Indeed, for Buber, Moses' encounter with God provided him with the certainty that this sort of framework was what God wanted; in response to it, Moses undertook to write the Torah as just such a framework for this community which would serve God:

> Moses can only be understood as deriving from the terrain of an elemental unity between religion and society. He undertook the paradoxical task of leading forth the Hebrew tribes only because he had been possessed, in his direct experience, by the certainty that this was the will of the God who called those tribes His People. He aims at nothing else than to prepare the Community for this God, who has declared that He is ready to be their covenantal Lord; but, and for that very reason, he must provide Israel with a basic constitution, in order to make Israel united and firm in itself. For him, God's dominion over the people and the inner cohesion of the people are only two aspects of the same reality.[80]

Buber implies that if one interacts with the tradition, which was written both as a record of individuals' encounters with the divine, and as a framework which would galvanize the people around the ideal of divine service, perhaps some sort of similar common response will develop. In the final analysis, however, it is still left up to the individual to determine exactly what his level of observance will be, and the matter of common Jewish observance is left unresolved. It is this, along with the related issue of the criteria for determining the authenticity of revelation, which constitute the major problems in Buber's thought.

[1]Friedman, Maurice, Martin Buber's Life and Work: The Early Years 1878-1923, (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1981), p. xiv.

[2]Buber, Martin, Tales of the Hasidim: Early Masters, (New York: Schocken Books, 1947), p. 107. (Hereafter referred to as Early), as quoted in Friedman, Ibid.

[3]Ibid., pp. xiv-xv.

[4]Ibid., p. 4.

[5]Ibid., p. 5.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Schilpp, Paul Arthur, and Friedman, Maurice, editors, The Philosophy of Martin Buber, (LaSalle, Illinois: Open Court Pub. Co., 1967), section by Buber entitled "Autobiographical Fragments," p. 4, as quoted in Friedman, Ibid., p. 7.

[8]Buber, Martin, Between Man and Man, (New York: Macmillan Pub. Co., Inc., 1965), pp. 22-23. (Hereafter referred to as BMM), as quoted in Friedman, Ibid., p. 14.

[9]Ibid., p. 27.

[10]Buber, BMM, p. 136, as quoted in Friedman, Ibid., p. 27.

[11]Buber, "Autobiographical Fragments," in Schilpp and Freidman, The Philosophy of Martin Buber, pp. 11-12, as quoted in Friedman, Ibid., p. 28.

[12]Ibid., pp. 28-29.

[13]Ibid., pp. 29-30.

[14]Ibid., pp. 30-31.

[15]Ibid., p. 32.

[16]Ibid., pp. 37-42.

[17]Ibid., p. 60.

[18]Buber, Martin, Israel and the World, (New York: Schocken Books, 1948), pp. 231, 233, (Hereafter referred to as Israel).

[19]Ibid., p. 79.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Ibid., p. 80.

[22]Buber, Martin, Hasidism and Modern Man, (New York: Horizon Press, 1958), p. 53, (Hereafter referred to as HMM) as quoted in Friedman, Ibid., p. 97.

[23]Buber, Early, pp. 9-11.

Buber's analysis of Hasidism has been criticized as inaccurate, and that it is merely his own interpretation [cf. Scholem, Gershom, The Messianic Idea in Judaism (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), pp. 228-250.]. It should be emphasized, however, that Buber's intention is not to write a history of Hasidism, but rather, to convey a message. In doing so, he has written a creative synthesis, and is the first to admit as much [cf. Schilpp, Paul and Friedman, Maurice, editors, The Philosophy of Martin Buber (Lasalle, Illinois: Open Court, 1967), p. 731]. Nevertheless, it seems to me that Buber's interpretation of Hasidism fulfills a need in that it attempts to understand the spirit of the movement, and not merely its history.

[24]Buber, HMM, p. 49.

[25]Buber, Early, p. 134.

[26]Buber, Early, p. 50.

[27]Buber, Martin, Tales of the Hasidim: Later Masters, (New York: Schocken Books, 1948), p. 277, (Hereafter referred to as Later).

[28]Buber, Martin, The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism, (New York: Horizon Press, 1960), p. 141, (Hereafter referred to as Origin).

[29]Buber, Early, p. 52.

[30]Buber, Later, p. 277.

[31]Buber, Early, p. 67.

[32]Ibid., pp. 53-54.

[33]Buber, Later, p. 87.

[34]Ibid., p. 117.

[35]Ibid., p. 157.

[36]Buber, Early, pp. 2-4.

[37]Ibid., p. 115.

[38]Ibid., p. 160.

[39]Ibid., p. 122.

[40]Buber, BMM, p. 213.

[41]Buber, Martin, I and Thou, translated by Walter Kaufmann, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), p. 143.

[42]Ibid., pp. 111-112.

[43]Ibid., p. 56.

[44]Buber, BMM, p. 8.

[45]Buber, I and Thou, p. 85.

[46]Ibid., pp. 84-85.

[47]Buber, BMM, p. 16

[48]Ibid., p. 97.

[49]Buber, I and Thou, p. 58.

[50]Buber, BMM, p. 219.

[51]Ibid., p. 65.

[52]Buber, Martin, Moses, (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), p. 9.

[53]Buber, Israel, p. 16.

[54]Buber, Moses, pp. 75-76.

[55]Rosenzweig, Franz, On Jewish Learning, edited by N.N. Glatzer, (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), pp. 111, 115.

[56]Buber, Martin, The Prophetic Faith, (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), p. 54, (Hereafter referred to as Prophetic).

[57]Ibid., p. 82.

[58]Ibid., p. 103.

[59]Ibid., p. 3.

[60]Buber, Israel, pp. 185-186.

[61]Buber, Martin, On Zion, (New York: Schocken Books, 1973), p. 145.

[62]Buber, Israel, p. 248.

[63]Ibid., p. 236.

[64]Ibid., p. 171.

[65]Buber, Moses, p. 186.

[66]Buber, BMM, pp. 31-32.

[67]Buber, Martin, Paths in Utopia, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1949), p. 137, (Hereafter referred to as Paths).

[68]Buber, Martin, Pointing the Way, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), p. 112.

[69]Buber, Paths, p. 134.

[70]Buber, Israel, p. 108.

[71]Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language, College Edition (1968), s.v. "secular."

[72]Buber, I and Thou, pp. 158-159.

[73]Buber, Martin, Good and Evil, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 43.

[74]Buber, in Schilpp and Friedman, The Philosophy of Martin Buber, p. 699.

[75]Buber, Israel, p. 142.

[76]Hodes, Aubrey, Encounter With Martin Buber, (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1972), p. 87.

[77]Friedman, p. 138.

[78]Buber, Moses, p. 130.

[79]Ibid., pp. 130-131.

[80]Ibid., p. 135.

THE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT OF EUGENE BOROWITZ

During the past twenty-five years, Eugene Borowitz has written extensively about Judaism and Jewish life in America. Much of his work is creative and thought-provoking, and demonstrates a deep engagement with the issue of how one can meaningfully live as a Jew in the modern world. Borowitz often has referred to his thought as "Covenant Theology," and this provides a hint as to what his major concerns are: God, and how the people of Israel relate to God.[1] In many ways, much of his writing is less theology than it is social psychology. Borowitz attempts to reach certain conclusions regarding the nature of Jewish faith by way of a social-psychological analysis of Jews and the Jewish way of life; one must bear this in mind when reading his work.

Nowhere, it seems to me, is this more apparent than in his work, The Mask Jews Wear.[2] In this book, Borowitz argues that Jewish life in America is characterized by a sort of "Marranism." The Spanish Marranos converted to Catholicism, but remained Jews; they concealed their Judaism, but remained deeply committed to it. According to Borowitz, American Jews do not hide the fact of their Jewishness from the world at large, they simply hide the

fact that it is important--from themselves.[3] He goes on to provide a social commentary on Jewish life in America, and uses this analysis as a sort of springboard for his "remedy": Covenantal Judaism.

Borowitz possesses a strong background in the field of education, and received his doctorate in education from Columbia University in 1958. From 1957 until 1962, he was the National Director of Education of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and in 1962, was named professor of education and Jewish thought at HUC-JIR in New York. He continues to hold these positions today. The combination of these two disciplines (education and thought) is telling. One of Borowitz's principle strengths is his ability to write in a popular style which can be easily understood by laypeople (e.g., the title of one of his early books, A Layman's Introduction to Religious Existentialism).[5] It would seem that in some measure, this is linked to his background as an educator, and Borowitz possesses an ability to explain ideas and concepts in a cogent and lucid manner.

There is a strong democratic streak which runs through much of Borowitz's work. It is possible to see this especially in his article, "Tzimtzum: a Mystic Model for Contemporary Leadership."[4] In this essay, Borowitz proposes Isaac Luria's mystical account of the creation as a model for organizational leadership. Borowitz suggests that

organizational leadership can be most effective by the leader's practice of "creative withdrawal," or tzimtzum. By withdrawing and allowing others to "create," the leader enables those who follow to gain a measure of power; this contributes to the efficiency of the organization, community, school, etc., and allows one to administer an institution in a democratic fashion. In a similar way, Borowitz's thought is concerned with how the individual autonomously makes decisions vis-à-vis Judaism and Jewish tradition.

Borowitz has been influenced by the existentialist thought of his generation. He is deeply concerned with the individual and his situation, and particularly the autonomy of the individual. Borowitz, however, is a religious existentialist, and is therefore not only concerned with the individual's situation, but also with how one in this situation relates to God. This, it seems to me, is the central concern in Borowitz's thought, and much of his writing is devoted to it.

Borowitz wants to "do" Jewish theology from within. He wants to base his theology of Judaism on Jewish tradition, and return to our "traditional faith," which is based on the Bible and the covenant forged at Sinai. At the same time, however, Borowitz does want to do this from a modern Jewish viewpoint, taking into account both the autonomy of the individual and the God Who revealed Himself at Sinai:

> My overriding concern in these investigations has been to respond to the contemporary religious experience as best I can understand it. That, if such a thing may be said, is the Biblical way of working at the theological task. Of course, only a prophet could hope to know with some certainty who indeed are the faithful remnant amid the confusions we call history. I have no such special vision. I only know I must take my stand where I find myself and where I find a not insignificant fraction of my people gathering. We are that group who, Having stampeded from Jewish tradition into general culture, now find it a higher wisdom to reclaim our stake in our traditional faith. having gone as far into contemporary intellectuality as we have, we now realize we cannot base our Jewish theology on science, philosophy, or the mood of the times even as we still cannot found it on verbal revelation.[6]

Borowitz is not responding to a stimulus outside of Judaism, and does not feel the need to engage in apologetics. In this sense, he diverges from other modern Jewish thinkers. Moses Mendelssohn wrote for a predominantly non-Jewish audience, and sought to justify his decision to remain a Jew. Hermann Cohen, reacting to (and somewhat adopting) the Kantian universalism of his day, attempted to portray Judaism as a religion of reason, with important universalistic elements. Baeck wrote his book, The Essence of Judaism, in response to Harnack's The Essence of Christianity. Borowitz, in contrast, wants to do Jewish theology from an unapologetic point of view. In referring to Buber, he wrote:

> Yet, I wish to go beyond Buber by refusing to reshape Jewish theology as he does when he reduces the concept of Israel to that of man. Subordinating the people of Israel in that way

> makes sense if one is doing theology for universal men who are interested in seeing how Judaism might fit into their world view. There is still a useful place for such theologizing when it is recognized for what it is, apologetics, and particularly when it is directed toward Jews speaking from the stance of universalism. However, as a simple matter of self-respect, there ought to be Jewish theology for Jews whose Jewishness is neither incidental nor accidental but a very part [sic] of their existence. The incredible drama of recent decades, both its tragedies and its accomplishments, has made many a Jew recognize that universalism was true as an ideal, but not as a state, and that considering what western civilization was making of man in general, he was proud to see himself primarily as a Jew. I am concerned to do Jewish theology for such people, for I am one of them.[7]

Borowitz, then, wants to do Jewish theology internally, and for one whose Jewishness is the core of his existence, and not merely one aspect. And he wants to make this core of Jewishness explicit, not hidden below the surface of or adapted to a more universalistic sort of world-view.

For Borowitz, the major challenge of our time comes from those who advocate Judaism without God, and he feels compelled to rise to this challenge:

> Judaism clearly requires a belief in God, but what variety of idea of God, what sort of mental construct or intellectual picture of Him does it deem necessary? What is the Jewish idea of God?[8]

Implied by this statement is Borowitz's assertion that there is, in fact, a "proper" or "correct" notion of God in Judaism, or, at the very least, there are "incorrect" notions. As we shall see later, Borowitz's God is a supernatural, theistic, personal God Who, in some fashion,

commands and is in constant relationship to the people of Israel. For this reason, Borowitz wants to react to those who view the Jewish God as different from his conception, and especially those who eliminate his idea of God altogether from Judaism.

The nineteenth century idealistic rationalism of Hermann Cohen (1842-1918) presents a particular challenge for Borowitz. In Cohen's neo-Kantianism, "God" is the unique concept which brings nature and morality together. As such, this God-concept is not supernatural, but is the idea which motivates people to act ethically. God is the ground, the archetype of human morality.

In Cohen's conception, this God is not supernatural, and does not command. There was no supernatural, verbal revelation at Sinai. It is consequently left to the individual and his rational faculty to decide what constitutes the ethical act. For Cohen, religion is always subject to the judgement of reason, and Judaism is worth preserving and admirable because it is more rational than other religions.

Borowitz criticizes Cohen's thought as too rationalistic. Cohen's system does posit a God, but only as an idea. This, for Cohen, does give God an ultimate significance, but only (according to Borowitz) if one takes reason as a sufficiently adequate way to Him. God, for Cohen, is a purely philosophic idea which one apprehends through reason, and

> not even an idea as pure and lofty as Cohen's idea of God could function in our lives as we knew the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did.[9]

For Borowitz, rationality is not enough. Relationship to God (which is grounded in the Covenant) must involve a personal relationship to Him, and is not simply a conclusion reached through philosophical inquiry or the apprehension of an idea. God, for Borowitz, is supernatural and theistic, and He revealed Himself at Sinai.

Borowitz also criticizes the thought of Leo Baeck (1974-1956). He argues that Baeck followed in the tradition of Cohen by placing ethical monotheism at the center of Judaism. Baeck, however, attempted to go beyond Cohen's conception of God as simply an idea. For Baeck, the idea of mystery gives rise to the ethical commandment, and he grounds the ethical in this mystery, which is sensed by a "religious consciousness." This religious consciousness "senses" the ethical commandment which is behind the creation, and gives rise to the religious experience, which is testimony to what lies beyond the ethical, to a God who commands it. Baeck attempts to go beyond Cohen by positing that ethics without this mysterious grounding in God is mere moralism.[10]

At the same time, however, Baeck was also aware of the danger of placing too much emphasis on the mystery, which might lead people to become passive and overly inward-turning, thereby reducing the urgency of the ethical

command. According to Borowitz, Baeck wanted to avoid this sort of danger by emphasizing that this mystery affects one's actions only in the ethical realm. But for Borowitz, the flaw in Baeck's thought is that he provides no explanation of why ethics must be grounded in mystery, but a mystery which has no real authority for people:

> So, although Baeck teaches us a good deal about our experience of metaethical mystery, we are left with little sense of God, for Baeck insists that the mystery is not God. He vanishes behind the shimmer of our consciousness, and we are left alone with our feelings. Thus, despite Baeck's break with rationalism, he does not know the very present Other we saw as basic to our religious existence.[11]

Borowitz also finds fault with Baeck's universalism. For Baeck, the content of Judaism, although uniquely held by Jews, is universal. He saw Judaism as the religion of the future, a religion which contains universal truth. For Borowitz, however, this poses the same problem as Cohen's thought. If ethical monotheism is the essence of Judaism, and is a universal truth, then why does one need Judaism? Why particularize a universal truth? Why not teach it in its essential, intellectual form? One could argue that what is important is to act ethically and believe in God, and that is enough. For Borowitz, then, Baeck's theological position is untenable, because it is too universalistic, and de-emphasizes Jewish practice.

According to Borowitz, the naturalism of Mordecai Kaplan (1881-1983) attempts to restore particularity to

Judaism, but at the expense of the concept of a supernatural God. Kaplan, by emphasizing Jewish particularity, subordinates everything, including God and Torah, to the people of Israel. The Jewish people creates its own values and its own forms of expression:

> The people is the creator of its idea of God, the shaper of its religious institutions, the deviser of the forms in which its human values are given expression and effectively transmitted from generation to generation . . . By making the idea of God and the religious forms subject to the people, Kaplan provides for growth and development in religious thought and form. By requiring them to be expressed in particular, that is socially conditioned form, he keeps them Jewish.[12]

For Kaplan, the mitzvot, and indeed, all of Jewish practice are no more than folkways which were created by the Jews throughout their history. Borowitz cannot accept this, because for Kaplan, the mitzvot do not come from a supernatural, transcendent God. According to Borowitz, for Kaplan, everything, including God and Torah, is subordinated to the people of Israel. The people is the creator of its idea of God, the shaper of its religious institutions, the deviser of the forms in which its values are expressed and transmitted from generation to generation. Kaplan's God is not the supernatural giver of the mitzvot, but is the "Power that makes for salvation."[13] To Borowitz, Kaplan's God is not real. God cannot command, and does not stand behind the mitzvot; consequently, the mitzvot no longer possesses a truly imperative quality.[14] This,

for Borowitz, is an unacceptable position. Without God, Judaism is no longer religious, and becomes merely an ethnic affiliation.

Borowitz's thought is, in some measure, a response to these thinkers, and to Martin Buber's thought; Buber's influence and Borowitz's response will be discussed below. For him the central question posed to any modern Jew must be: How does one interact with Jewish tradition (and ultimately, God) in order to live "under the law" (which is not necessarily identical to the halacha) and therefore live an "authentic" Jewish life? By positing this question as central, Borowitz places himself in the existentialist camp. He is not so concerned with the problem of faith and reason, but with the individual and his situation. Underlying (although not usually explicit) Borowitz's thought, it seems to me, is a sense that existence without God is tragic, and condemns humanity to a life of meaninglessness and isolation:

> . . . we now recognize that personal existence gains its worth and dignity from a relationship with the God who "calls" humankind to transform history.[16]

From this assertion flows Borowitz's theology: Jewish existence is meaningful only when one participates in the Covenant which was forged at Sinai, and which is continually renewed. For Borowitz, universalistic or naturalistic notions of God as an "idea" have no meaning, because one cannot relate to Him. According to Borowitz, one cannot

have a real relationship to a God who is only an idea or a process. For Borowitz, God is only important if there is a personal relationship to Him.

As an answer to the question, Borowitz offers his notion of Covenant Theology. He calls for a reaffirmation, in contemporary terms, of the Covenant of Sinai, and its subsequent renewal throughout Jewish history. Covenant Theology attempts to investigate and understand Judaism as a covenant relationship,

> and specifically to make manifest the nature and meaning of the Jewish Covenant with God.[17]

Covenant Theology asserts that Judaism contains certain ideas, concepts, and practices. Even more important, however, is that Judaism constitutes a way of living one's life in relationship to God. This relationship must, for Borowitz, play a central role in one's life. Attempting to move beyond Buber, Borowitz asserts that this relationship is not only private, but is also one in which the individual is linked to God also as a member of the Jewish people. The Covenant was made with the entire people of Israel, and as a Jew, one must participate in this Covenant.[18]

The Covenant, then, is the cornerstone of Borowitz's thought. By participating in the Covenant,

> the Jews have acknowledged Adonai, "the Lord," alone as God and have pledged themselves to live by his law. Here the new theologians emphasize the mitzvah, for it is through

> this service, individually and communally, that Israel testifies to God's reality, nature, and existence throughout all of history.[19]

The Covenant, and the implications of it, inform all of one's life, and this is the basis of a Jew's existence. A Jew participates in the Covenant by performing the mitzvot which are commanded in it, and in doing so, sanctifies his life by becoming more closely connected to God. Moreover, by doing so, one helps to bring the world closer to the messianic era.[20]

Autonomy plays an important role in this conception. Borowitz feels obligated to act autonomously in response to God's command because this is what God wants. Of one who participates in the Covenantal relationship, Borowitz wrote:

> . . . as one of the covenant people his style of existence aims at universalism, messianically achieved, and is founded on autonomy called into being by a God Who commands him to live out their relationship but does not deprive him of his freedom in responding.[21]

In other words, it seems to me, a covenant between two autonomous parties.

Borowitz, then, places crucial emphasis on the Covenant of Sinai, and posits that it is still operative even today. One must therefore raise the question of what exactly happened at Sinai? By what justification is a Jew permitted such autonomy within the bounds of the Covenantal relationship with God? It is in answering

this question that Borowitz's thought is distinctly liberal. For him a distinction must be made between mattan Torah and kiyym b'rit. For Borowitz, mattan Torah was the giving of the body of laws, along with explicit instructions regarding how to live out these laws. This is the traditional, non-liberal interpretation of the revelation at Sinai. Kiyyum b'rit, on the other hand, refers to the keeping or upholding of the Covenant between God and Israel. For Borowitz, what occurred at Sinai constituted the beginning of the relationship which has undergone constant renewal throughout history. As one who participates in this Covenant, Borowitz acknowledges that he also, like an orthodox Jew, is bound by "the law." But for Borowitz, the law is not equivalent to the written and oral laws of the tradition. Instead, it flows from an awareness of being in relationship to God, both as an individual and as a member of the people of Israel. It is this relationship, both to the people and to God, which gives rise to deeds; these deeds are what impart meaning to the relationship. Borowitz feels that his sense of duty in this conception is less institutionalized than in traditional Judaism, but offers that it, too, rests upon what happened at Sinai, and has been carried on since:

> . . . The autonomous Jewish self derives its autonomy as part of the people of Israel's Covenant partnership with God. Such a Judaism knows no isolated, atomistic, worthy

> self. Rather, selfhood itself necessarily involves God, people, and history. Every decision of a Covenanted Jewish self intimately depends on transcendent and ethnic as well as personal considerations. Such a Jew is self-legislating but only in terms of what God wants of this individual as part of the people of Israel's historic-messianic service to God. The decision is individual but the content is more than personal. The autonomy is genuine but is exercised in terms of realities as real as one's self.[22]

Borowitz openly acknowledges that Buber has had a profound influence upon him:

> Intellectually, I have been influenced more by Martin Buber than by any other single thinker. What he has taught me about being a person in our world informs much of this book.[23]

And indeed, it seems to me that Borowitz's thought is very close to Buber's. Both take a liberal view of revelation, and both are existentialists; these two aspects are mainly responsible for what is similar about their thought. Although various emphases and/or terminology may be different, there are many aspects of Borowitz's thought which are based upon or taken directly from Buber. Both thinkers emphasize autonomy, non-propositional revelation, openness to tradition, and Covenant.

Autonomy occupies a central place in the thought of both thinkers, although Borowitz uses the actual term "autonomy" more often than Buber. Both ground the idea of autonomy in God--"God commands me to be autonomous." (cf. Chapter 1, p.45). Related to the idea of autonomy

is Borowitz's liberal view of revelation. As with Buber, revelation does not have content; its critical feature is that it somehow does move one to respond; it does move one to some sort of action. This is especially true vis-à-vis ethical issues:

> Our sense of how we must respond to other human beings comes rather directly from the personal quality of the relationship between us and God, thereby highlighting the personhood of all people and our responsibility to them.[24]

For both thinkers, neither God alone nor the Jewish people alone is the sole arbiter of what constitutes Judaism. Instead, it is God and Israel in covenant to one another; it is the [ongoing] relationship which gives rise to Judaism and Jewish life. In Buber's schema, the key element is the "between" which occurs in an I-Thou relation; Jewishly, it would seem that this is what is responsible for Jewish texts and Jewish traditions. This, it seems to me, is also Borowitz's view, and is what is mainly responsible for his (and Buber's) openness to tradition. As does Buber, Borowitz views Torah (and by extension, all Jewish text) as the human account of and response to the encounter with God. As a human document, Torah does not have ultimate, absolute authority, and is not immutable. Jewish practice can therefore be changed to fit changing circumstances and sensibilities. Since Torah is not a divine document, the autonomy of the individual is preserved. This is very similar to the Buberian view.

Borowitz, however, does find fault with Buber's notion that in the I-Thou relationship, God reveals himself only to individuals, and not to the people as a whole. God speaks to nations only by speaking to its individuals. For Borowitz, Buber does not provide for Jewish law as more than individual duty, and a person cannot be expected to perform an action which he has not been personally moved to do. The individual takes precedence over the people, and one does not engage in Jewish practice simply because other Jews do so. One only acts when one is commanded (ultimately) through dialogue.[25] God commands, but deciding exactly what has been commanded is left solely to the person who has been commanded. For Borowitz, this position is, in the final analysis, unacceptable, because it provides no framework for a commonality of Jewish observance. For Borowitz, there has to exist a level of observance, somewhere, in which the individual is not the sole determiner of Jewish practice:

> Against the power of an unimpeded autonomy, I would vigorously press claims of Jewish affirmation. Autonomy is not self-grounding but derives from being God's Covenant partner. To me that means that, if anything, somewhat greater priority must be given to Judaism in the balance of belief than to personal self-determination. Concisely put, for a believing Jew, the historical reality of the Covenant grounds one's personal existence.[26]

One is commanded as a Jew not only when one relates to God as an individual, but also as a member of the people of Israel. "Covenant" implies that the Jew is not only an individual, but also a member of the group with which the Covenant was made. In Borowitz's view, Buber does not provide for a strong enough link between the two.

Borowitz is heavily influenced by Buber's conception of revelation, but consciously attempts to move beyond it. He does this by emphasizing the idea of the Covenant, and by linking the individual's situation to that of the people. Borowitz, unlike Buber, implies that it <u>is</u> valid to adhere to a particular observance simply because it is a communal one, and even if one has not been personally commanded. When one sees Judaism as a faith which is grounded in Covenant, he regards it not only as a private religion, but also as one he shares with his people.

Nevertheless, in spite of the attention Borowitz pays to the importance of the role of communal observance in determining the level of one's personal observance, he ultimately fails to move beyond Buber. For Borowitz, as for Buber, the individual's autonomy is central. God commands, but for both thinkers, determining what has been commanded is left to the individual. It seems to me that Borowitz's introduction of the importance of tradition and communal obligation does not sufficiently

mitigate his emphasis on individual autonomy to allow for a common framework of observance which is more than merely coincidence:

> Jewish style emerges from living one's life in devotion to God as part of the people of Israel's Covenant with God. If enough Jews began to live so faithful an existence, I can conceive that what began in an individualistic fashion might go on to become community patterns. That would be the autonomous Jewish equivalent of what once was Jewish law.[27]

Given this understanding of Borowitz's thought, several issues arise. First of all, it seems to me that he uses the terms "authentic" and "inauthentic" too glibly. Superficially, this could be viewed as simply a matter of his existentialist style. I think, however, that by his use of these terms, Borowitz does manifest a bit of intolerance for other points of view. He often implies that if one does not subscribe to his notion of Covenant Theology, then one has an erroneous conception of Judaism and Jewish observance:

> Jewish integrity comes with basing one's existence on the Covenant.[28]

Were Leo Baeck, Mordecai Kaplan, and Hermann Cohen bereft of "Jewish integrity" because they did not base their thought on the Covenant in a similar fashion as Borowitz? When Borowitz writes that Judaism clearly requires a belief in God, does this imply that one who does not believe in God cannot be a Jew? I think not. And ironically, this concern with Jewish "authenticity" would seem to diminish

the very autonomy which Borowitz so forcefully emphasizes. What if one makes an autonomous decision not to base his existence on the Covenant?

In the final analysis, I think that when Borowitz makes use of terms such as "authentic" and "inauthentic," he is referring to the process of confrontation with the questions, or the outcome of the process. When pressed, I do not think that Borowitz would call Cohen or Baeck or Kaplan "inauthentic"; this is because they did consciously engage themselves with the question of Jewish existence. It is one who is not even open to the process whom Borowitz would call "inauthentic;" one who at the very least attempts to go through the process of interacting with the tradition, even if he ultimately disagrees with Borowitz's conclusions, would be considered by Borowitz as "authentic." Expressed in Buberian terms, an "authentic" Jew is one who consciously opens himself to the I-Thou realm as often as possible, and attempts to dialogue with others.

As in Buber's thought, Borowitz's liberal interpretation of revelation does not provide us with any criteria for determining the occurrence of genuine revelation. This makes it difficult (if not impossible) to accept or deny another's claim to revelation. In addition, and perhaps even more importantly, in not providing us with criteria, Borowitz makes it difficult for us to determine whether or not we've had a revelation.

As in Buber's thought, therefore, we only seem to have the choice of accepting another's claim to revelation as either infallible or entirely fallible.

As in Buber's thought, there is also a problem in Borowitz's thought regarding authority and the role which Jewish tradition plays. As with Buber, revelation for Borowitz is non-propositional. For Borowitz, a Jew is obligated to interact with Jewish tradition, but, communal demands notwithstanding, the authority ultimately rests with the individual. As with Buber, Borowitz's God is a theistic, transcendent God Who reveals Himself. But it is still the individual who decides what his response will be. The authority rests with the person. As stated above (p.72), this makes it difficult to arrive at any level of common observance. Borowitz, it seems to me, does have a more positive view of the mitzvah system than does Buber. Borowitz also views Jewish tradition and communal observance as playing more active roles in helping one to determine his own personal level of observance than does Buber. Indeed, this is where he attempts to move beyond Buber, by attempting to place more emphasis on Judaism than on personal autonomy in determining one's level of observance. He even writes that Jewish life must somehow have a structure to it:

> Despite precluding anarchy, this personalistic Judaism does not yield halachah. In the case of religious law I find neither the Jewish nor

> the existentialist position fully acceptable. I have a Jewish conviction that all authentic existence must be structured, something existentialism denies.[29]

Borowitz, however, does not tell us exactly what that "structure" is, or how we can determine that structure. Moreover, in Borowitz's thought, it is not clear who specifies the structure (the "mitzvot"?). He implies that God has given some sort of "law," and that a Jew pledges to live by this law when he chooses to participate in the Covenant. But it is not clear what this law actually is. What is implied is that if we all interact with the same Jewish tradition, we will somehow arrive at a common level of observance. For me, Borowitz fails to resolve this problem of common Jewish observance, in spite of the significance he attaches to it, because he does not specify what the structure is, or how we arrive at it in a way which is more than merely coincidence.

[1]Borowitz, Eugene, A New Jewish Theology in the Making, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968), p. 63. (Hereafter referred to as New).

[2]Borowitz, Eugene, The Mask Jews Wear, (Port Washington, New York: Sh'ma, 1980). (Hereafter referred to as Mask).

[3]Ibid., p. 10.

[4]Borowitz, Eugene, "Tzimtzum: A Mystic Model for Contemporary Leadership," Religious Education (November-December, 1974): 687-700.

[5]Borowitz, Eugene, A Layman's Introduction to Religious Existentialism, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965).

[6]Borowitz, New, p. 8.

[7]Borowitz, Eugene, "The Problem of the Form of a Jewish Theology," Hebrew Union College Annual XL-XLI (Cincinnati: 1969-1970), p. 406. (Hereafter referred to as Form).

[8]Borowitz, Eugene, How Can A Jew Speak of Faith Today?, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969), p. 15. (Hereafter referred to as Faith).

[9]Borowitz, Eugene, "Covenant Theology--Another Look," Worldview (March 1973):22. (Hereafter referred to as Covenant).

[10]Borowitz, New, p. 83.

[11]Borowitz, Covenant, p. 22.

[12]Borowitz, Form, p. 401.

[13]Borowitz, New, p. 112.

[14]Borowitz, Covenant, p. 22.

[15]In reading Borowitz's writings, one is struck by the amount of time he takes to outline and critique the work of other modern Jewish thinkers. Much of this is related to his desire to persuade people to adopt his conception of God and Judaism.

I think, however, that there is another element here which deserves mention. I personally find Borowitz's conceptions of God and Judaism to be a bit nebulous and vague. Perhaps he spends so much time critiquing other thinkers because he, in fact, has difficulty stating in definitive terms his own conceptions of God and Judaism. He therefore (sort of utilizing a Maimonidean model of negative attributes) states what God and Judaism are not: they are not Cohen's conception, not Baeck's conception, etc. This is not intended as an entirely pejorative observation, for there are limitations of language in dealing with this type of material. I only want to raise this point as perhaps indicative of Borowitz's style in "doing" theology.

[16]Borowitz, Eugene, Liberal Judaism, (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1984), p. 172. (Hereafter referred to as Liberal).

[17]Borowitz, New, p. 63.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Ibid., p. 64.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Borowitz, Form, p. 406.

[22]Borowitz, Eugene, Choices in Modern Jewish Thought, (New York: Behrman House, Inc., 1983), p. 271. (Hereafter referred to as Choices).

[23]Borowitz, Eugene, Choosing a Sex Ethic, (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 3.

[24]Borowitz, Choices, p. 288.

[25]Borowitz, New, p. 143.

[26]Borowitz, Choices, p. 269.

[27]Ibid., p. 272.

[28]Borowitz, Mask, p. 190.

[29]Borowitz, Choices, p. 271.

THE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT OF EMIL L. FACKENHEIM

During the past thirty-five years, Emil L. Fackenheim has written much about Judaism and Jewish life in modernity. As with Borowitz and Buber, his work manifests a deep concern with the issue of how one can meaningfully live as a Jew in the modern world. Underlying almost all of Fackenheim's thought is a sincere and deep commitment to the supernatural, theistic God of the Bible Who revealed Himself at Sinai, and how this commitment gives rise to and comes to bear upon one's faith. This commitment constitutes the core of Fackenheim's thought, and he begins from this point. Much of Fackenheim's early writings are concerned with responding to the challenges posed by modern secular thinkers to Judaism. Later on, the Holocaust comes to occupy a crucial role in his thought, and indeed, has moved him to revise or reconsider his earlier views.

Fackenheim was ordained (in 1939) at the Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums in Berlin; he was one of the last rabbis to be ordained there. He was interred in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp for three months, but escaped to Canada, where he eventually became a professor of philosophy at the University of Toronto.[1]

Fackenheim is currently a professor of Jewish thought at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

It seems to me that, his own personal faith notwithstanding, Fackenheim's writings, in a much more conspicuous way than either Borowitz's or Buber's, reflect a serious concern with philosophical rigor and consistency. He makes a conscious attempt to confront Judaism with the claims of modern philosophy,[2] and indeed, attempts to interpret Judaism philosophically, or, from his position of faith, in classic theological terms. Concomitantly, he also subjects modern philosophy to the claims of Judaism; for him, any cogent system of philosophy must be able to do justice to Judaism and the Jewish God.

As with Borowitz and Buber, Fackenheim is a religious existentialist. He is deeply concerned with the individual and his situation, and how one relates to God. Fackenheim begins with the human situation, his writings stress human experience and not a "God-concept":

> No modern man, then, can start his theology with God and God's revelation, and work his way down to man. The procedure must be the reverse; we must start with man and see whether there is not something in his existence leading up to God - in other words, whether a profound enough self-understanding does not lead to the point where one must make the leap into faith.[3]

As with Borowitz and Buber, Fackenheim's position is that existence without God is tragic, and condemns humanity to a life of meaninglessness and isolation:

> A history without God is an unmitigated tragedy. A history which is, as a whole, in the hands of God, but in which revelation is impossible, may be, as a whole, beyond tragedy; but the particular in it, as such, remains a dead and sodden weight. A history in which revelation is possible is one in which every event, no matter how trivial or insignificant, may in its stark particularity be lit up with unique meaning . . .[4]

In Fackenheim's thought, revelation is central. The God Who [still] reveals Himself is the same God of the Torah Who revealed Himself to the Israelites at Sinai, as it was recorded in the book of Exodus. Fackenheim (although it seems to me that he never really supports it) makes the assumption that the revelation at Sinai (as related in the book of Exodus) did take place:

> Whatever one may think of the Biblical account of Jewish origins--whether one takes it to be literally true or merely mythological--two facts are beyond doubt: first, even if the Biblical account is merely mythological there is an element in it which is true; second, countless generations of Jews accepted it as true . . .
>
> . . . it is not possible to doubt that the Biblical account of Jewish origins, however mythological, reflects something which did take place. What took place was a succession of overwhelming religious experiences. The presence of the Nameless was felt in experiences which were themselves nameless.

Additionally, (and perhaps more importantly), the fact (for Fackenheim) that the same God Who revealed Himself at Sinai still reveals Himself, is an argument for the belief that supernatural revelation did occur at Sinai. A modern Jew, for Fackenheim, can gain "present access" to the Israelites' "past experience." This will be

discussed more fully subsequently (cf. p. 101). This is Fackenheim's starting point. It is important to understand, therefore, that he is stating his position from within the circle of faith. As with Buber and Borowitz, however, Fackenheim's interpretation of revelation is a liberal one, and in fact, has been heavily influenced by Buber's. Revelation, for Fackenheim, does not have a verbal content; it is, overwhelmingly the manifestation of divine Presence:

> . . . by "revelation" I understand now, as I did then, not propositions or laws backed by divine sanction, but rather, at least primordially, the <u>event</u> of divine Presence.[6]

With revelation as its core then, Judaism for Fackenheim is a history of encounters between God and Israel.[7] The Bible, and to some extent, rabbinic literature, recorded the accounts of these encounters, and serve as a link between the God Who revealed Himself to the modern Jew who reads them today. Since revelation is "an event of divine incursion shot through with human interpretation," the issue of liberalism versus orthodoxy takes on only secondary importance. For Fackenheim, revelation cannot be explained as human inspiration, and God cannot be reduced to an idea or concept.[8] He consistently interprets revelation as the supernatural, transcendent God's incursion into time and history, and establishes the significance of the here and now as unique, because God can [and still does] reveal Himself when people open

themselves to His Presence. In Fackenheim's interpretation, revelation is non-propositional; it moves one to action, but as with Buber and Borowitz, it is the recipient of the revelation who determines what the response is or will be.[9] It is the recipient who determines what will constitute the content of the revelation.

It is in this context that the Bible and subsequent Jewish tradition comes to bear upon a Jew's response to revelation, and indeed can be a bridge to revelation itself. In Fackenheim's view, it is incumbent upon the committed Jew that he interact with the Bible and Jewish tradition, because these sources are the best record available of the supreme divine-human encounter between God and the Israelites. For a committed liberal Jew, it is important that he be able to interact with the religious experience of his ancestors in order to make it relevant for himself today, and ultimately (and ideally) encounter the living and present God. This is possible, writes Fackenheim, when one considers the Torah as the human reflection of a divine revelation, instead of as the literal revelation. Simultaneously, a person may regard it as the prime means of access to a divine revelation which addresses him as much as his ancestors. A person, in searching for the commandment as it relates to him, pays serious attention to the ancient human

reflection of the revelation. As a liberal, however, he cannot accept it as the literal word of God, and therefore blindly subject himself to its authority. Instead, he must

> hear it with his own ears. He cannot hear it with ears of yore.[10]

In Fackenheim's view, it is therefore crucial that the committed Jew read the Torah while asking the questions: What does the divine commandment require from me? What can I do?

> In search of an answer, the liberal Jew of today must encounter the ancient reflection of the divine incursion which constituted the covenant under which he still stands. He must also encounter the tradition of those of his ancestors who sought - and received - answers before him. But if and when he himself receives an answer as a result of this encounter, it will be - if the encounter itself is genuine - the answer heard by him with modern ears, and addressed to him in a modern situation. Heard by him, it will no doubt bear the stamp of his human interpretation, just as did the answers heard by earlier generations. But if it is a genuine answer, genuinely heard, his human interpretation will nevertheless be the result of God's address. For He, the God of Israel, still lives, and the liberal Jew, son of the covenant, still stands at Mt. Sinai, as did his fathers.[11]

Fackenheim's early writings were largely critiques of secularist humanism and religious idealism. In the introductory essay to Quest for Past and Future, Fackenheim reviews the motivation for his early writings:

> My first Jewish writing was occasioned by the experience of a clash between European Jewish realities and American Jewish theology. The Germany from which I had fled was an inferno of hate that persecuted Jews and forced believers among them to go back behind nineteenth century liberalistic platitudes to the roots of their faith. In the America to which I had come, Jewish theology was still arrested in nineteenth century euphoria. Man was still infinitely perfectible, God still an inspiring idea, and Judaism still no more than an admirable force for progress, democracy, and mental health. Nothing had changed.[12]

Having personally encountered the spectre of the Nazis in its full force, Fackenheim could not share in the religious idealism of the nineteenth century which was still prevalent in Europe and the United States, and he felt compelled to respond to this sort of idealism.

For Fackenheim, it is Immanuel Kant who presents Judaism with a serious challenge when he calls into question the classical Jewish notion that God is the source of all moral law. For Kant, the source of moral commandment does not consist of divine voices which come from outside of a person; the moral commandment consists of self-legislating reason within. A person is therefore obligated to consider laws as a moral <u>not</u> because God has given them, but rather to attribute them to God because they are intrinsically moral, whether God-given or not. For Fackenheim, this is a critical challenge, because it calls into question one's ability to "come into relation with God" while performing a moral act. It is

therefore Kant who has forced the modern Jewish thinker to ask:

> Can a law be at once moral and the direct and immediate will of God? Can one accept it at the same time as a moral duty and divinely revealed? Or is, perhaps, radically considered, a revealed morality nothing less than a contradiction in terms?[13]

As set forth prior to Kant the notions of revealed morality and rational morality were allowed to peacefully coexist. Even if the two moralities do quarrel about the content of the moral law, they have no necessary quarrel with regard to its source. The philosopher does not in principle need to object to a morality based upon revelation; nor does a Jewish thinker have any religious reason objecting in principle to a morality which is based upon reason. Moreover, this sort of mutual tolerance concerning the basis of morality creates opportunities for settling conflicts regarding its content. Fackenheim points out that this is attested to by a long line of Jewish rationalists who believed that, since the same God was the creator of human reason and the giver of the revelation at Sinai, the discoveries of reason and Jewish teachings cannot be in any genuine conflict.[14]

It was Kant who challenged this peaceful coexistance. He put forth the thesis that, in order for a moral law to be pure, it must be autonomous, or self-imposed. If it is not, then it cannot be moral. This calls into question the idea of the authority vis-à-vis moral law, and especially with regard to the biblical

God who revealed the moral law (i.e., the commandments). The Torah commands us to voluntarily fulfill the laws which God set down. Additionally, the Torah says that if we fulfill the commandments, we will be rewarded, and that if we do not, we will be punished. This sort of motivation is heteronomous, and therefore impure; it is "contaminated" by considerations of prudence. For Kant, a law cannot be truly moral unless it is self-imposed. The moral value of a law is derived from a source within ourselves, from the "ought" at which we arrive by use of our reason. If, however, the source of the law is from without, and poses the idea of reward and punishment, it reduces our motivations for fulfilling it to prudence or benefit. This, in Kant's view, is not moral. So, if a law is to be truly moral, it cannot be dependent upon outside promises or threats. Instead, the "ought" must be self-imposed, and not imposed from without. For Fackenheim, Kant's thesis is revolutionary, because it raises this crucial question: if in order to be moral, a law must be self-imposed, and not imposed externally, then how can a law given or imposed by God be genuinely moral? Even if what God has commanded is the same "ought" at which we arrive through our own reason, it is still not truly moral, because we are doing it because God imposed it. God is the authority, and not our own reason. In Fackenheim's eyes, this is a radical challenge to Judaism, because

> revelation is either a gift to man from without - the gift of a God other than man - or else it is not a revelation at all.[15]

Fackenheim points out, however, that Kant does not initially rule out the possibility of revealed morality, because for Kant, a person does not necessarily have to be the creator of a moral law in order to impose it on himself. What is crucial is that a person must be capable of appropriating a law (which he may not have created) as though he had created it. Kant, however, eventually does threaten the idea of a revealed morality, because an individual's moral will must act as though it were creator of moral law. The believer in a revealed morality is therefore confronted with a serious conflict. If he concedes that the will can and must impose God's law upon himself, then the fact that God gave it becomes irrelevant in the process of appropriation and self-imposition. If, however, he maintains that the God-given-ness of the law does not and cannot ever become irrelevant, then the will cannot impose the law on itself; it can only submit to it because of the divine promise of reward and punishment. According to Kant's doctrine, this is not moral.[16]

A religious person has a choice, then, between "theological morality," which is acceptance of laws as moral because they are the will of God, or "moral theology," in which he ascribes laws to God because they are

intrinsically moral, and are known to be so, apart from the will of God. One can utilize his own reason in order to ascertain a law's intrinsic morality (and therefore impose it upon himself) and thus attain moral autonomy. As Fackenheim points out, however,

> this achievement is bought at a price. In imposing moral laws on itself, the will need not and, indeed, cannot pay heed to their God-givenness. The same act which appropriates the God-given moral law reduces its God-givenness to irrelevance.[17]

Why, then, should an individual who has achieved moral autonomy remain religious? Why does "theology" (and therefore, God) even have to enter into the discussion? What is accomplished by attributing the moral law to divine authorship? According to Fackenheim, Kant is not clear on these issues; sometimes he attributes the voice of the "ought" to the voice of God, while at other times he claims that ascription of moral law to divine authorship is merely a useful fiction. On other occasions, however, Kant seems to consider religion as both an extension of morality and a truth which stands on its own; but this still renders the God-givenness of a moral law as irrelevant.[18]

For Fackenheim, the Kantian challenge is met by positing that the revealed morality cannot be classified as either heteronomous or autonomous. Instead, writes Fackenheim, the revealed morality of Judaism belongs between autonomy and heteronomy; its source lies in the

inseparability of two elements: a divine commanding Presence which never dissipates itself into irrelevance, and a human response which freely appropriates what it receives. A Jewish thinker must therefore consider the togetherness of these two elements in order to ask the question with which Kant confronts: How can a person appropriate a God-given law or commandment, accepting it and performing it as though it were his own, while yet remaining, in the very act of appropriation, essentially and receptively related to its divine giver? How can a person morally obey a law which yet is, and never ceases to be, essentially revealed? For Kant, this is impossible; for Fackenheim, it is not.[19]

Fackenheim attempts to resolve this dilemma by pointing out that the divine commanding Presence does not become irrelevant once moral law has taken on permanence and intrinsic value. The Torah was not given only once; it is given whenever a person is ready to receive it, and the recipient who takes it on confronts the One who gives it. In disagreement with Kant, Fackenheim (and Judaism) holds that, although the revealed moral law does perform a mediating function, God remains present in commanding immediacy. For Fackenheim (and Judaism) the moral law is a bridge, and not a bar, between its recipient and its giver.[20]

For Kant, morality, including religious morality, is a two-term relationship between a human being and his neighbor. The revealed morality of Judaism introduces God into this relationship. When one relates to his neighbor (we see here Buber's influence), one is also relating to God. The three participants, according to Fackenheim, are inextricably related; God commands a human being to turn to his neighbor and thereby turn towards Him. One cannot relate to God unless he relates to human beings first. For Fackenheim, this is best expressed by a Midrash from Pesikta d'Rav Kahana (XV) in which God says,

> Would that they had deserted Me, and kept my Torah, for if they had occupied themselves with the Torah, the heaven which is in it would have brought them back to Me.[21]

Fackenheim's view is that Judaism is able to resolve the Kantian dilemma because it (Judaism) requires that the commandments be fulfilled both for their own sake, and for God's sake. One points to the other to be moral; a commandment must be performed for its own sake. But, it is God Himself who demands that the commandment be performed for its own sake, not simply because He commands it. One obeys God when he accepts his neighbor and the commandment concerning him as possessing intrinsic value. And, it is God Who reveals Himself through all intrinsic value, as its ultimate source.[22] In this way, one is able to retain both his own free human appropriation and the relationship to the divine Giver.

Another question, however, is raised by the togetherness of the divine commanding Presence and the human appropriation of His commandment. Fackenheim formulates the question as follows:

> How can man presume to participate in a three-term relationship that involves not only his human neighbor but God Himself? How can he - as he must, in order to participate in such a relationship - act out of love for the sake of God, when God is God while man is only man? In Kantian language, what is the condition of the possibility of such an action?[23]

For Kant, this question is answered through the virtuous man, who "fears God without being afraid of Him," and who "wills the will of God." To fear God, Kant's virtuous man must imagine himself as willing what he is in fact, incapable of willing. According to Fackenheim, this is not possible in Judaism:

> The rabbis need no such strategy in order to stand in fear of God. Their impossible possibility is not the fear but rather the love of God. For Kant, the oneness of the human with the divine will is automatic once virtue is achieved. For prophets and rabbis, such oneness is very far from automatic even for the virtuous man, and, in a sense, for him least of all. For prophets and rabbis, there is a radical gulf between God, who is God, and man, who is only human.[24]

According to Fackenheim, it is God Himself Who makes a oneness of wills possible. It is God Who hands over His commandments for human appropriation. The Torah, since it is a gift of divine love, allows a person to live by it in the love and for the sake of God. A person can

participate in a three-term relationship which involves God Himself because God, Who in His power does not need human beings, still chooses to need them.

In Judaism, according to Fackenheim, divine love and divine commandment are inseparably bound, and the Torah manifests love in the act of manifesting commandment. This is because it commands human beings rather than angels, and thereby accepts these humans in their humanity. In accepting the Torah, therefore, one can simultaneously accept himself as accepted by God in his own humanity. This, according to Fackenheim, is the reason to attempt to fulfill the commandments, both for their own and God's sake. In principal, at least, the commandments can be performed in joy.[25] For Fackenheim, then, it is the divine manifest in the revealed commandments which preserves both their true morality and the person's relationship to the Revealer. An evaluation of Fackenheim's view of Kant will be offered later.

Fackenheim also feels compelled to confront the view of the empiricists that faith in God can be verified or falsified by scientific tests. For Fackenheim, empirical inquiry cannot and does not apply to faith. At most, the empiricist will grant that a religious person's relationship to a divine Presence is only a feeling; the Presence cannot be actual. For Fackenheim, this is untenable, because the core of faith is the actual divine

Presence; if a believer abandons or suspends this core in order to deal with empiricist criticism, he endangers or destroys the substance of his faith.[26]

According to Fackenheim, it is no longer so easy for the modern Jewish thinker to regard the revelation at Sinai as a historical fact and as acceptable on reliable authority (although Fackenheim ultimately does so). In the Middle Ages, the events at Mount Sinai were accepted on the authority of 600,000 witnesses (too many to be mistaken) who were present there (according to the Midrash); the fact of their presence as witnesses was accepted on the authority of an unbroken and reliable chain of tradition. For Fackenheim, however,

> No modern Jewish thinker can persist in this line of argument. The modern critical historian will accept even "natural" facts, not on the basis of past authorities but only on the basis of a present, critical reconstruction. As for the modern critical philosopher, he would not accept "super-natural"--but supposedly publicly verifiable--facts even in the troublesome mediation of authorities could be avoided, i.e., if he could project himself backward and be present at the events.[27]

It seems to me, however, that Fackenheim implies that if a person (from within the circle of faith) is able to gain "present access" to the "past experience" of the revelation at Sinai, it then becomes possible to accept the midrashic argument of the 600,000 witnesses. It is the present encounter with the God Who revealed Himself at Sinai which gives the 600,000 witnesses the authority.

For Fackenheim,

> The God of Israel rules neither solely over thoughts nor simply over souls but rather over complete, empirical man, and He can do so only if He is empirically manifest in the world.[28]

For Fackenheim, then, the key lies in God's present revelation in the world which provides one with the argument to refute empiricist criticism. God is empirically manifest in the world, but only to the believer. If one does not stand within the circle of faith, one cannot empirically encounter God's presence. The empiricist must attempt to understand God's revelation (and Judaism) on its own terms.[29] Fackenheim implies that if revelation is understood on its own terms, then empiricist criticism will be rendered irrelevant.

For Fackenheim, it is necessary for the empiricist to outline and understand faith (and especially biblical faith) in its own categories. Fackenheim utilizes Buber's doctrine of divine-human encounter as an example of how the empiricist may do this:

> In a genuine divine-human encounter - if and when it occurs - Divinity is immediately present to the believer; feelings of such a Presence are a "mere accompaniment to the metaphysical and metaphysical fact [sic] of the relation which is fulfilled not in the soul but between the I and Thou "When the immediate is feeling only (and a divine Presence is merely inferred), there already has been a prior "withdrawal" from the encounter into self-enclosed subjectivity; and when the inference is cut off, the withdrawal is complete.[30]

The crux of this issue for Fackenheim is that the empiricist doctrine (or its assumptions) by its very claim of subjectivist reductionism, precludes [already] even the possibility of actual divine Presence. Empiricism criticizes the doctrine of divine-human encounter, and

> already disposing of biblical faith as an unconscious and illegitimate inference, it will dispose of the doctrine articulating that faith is merely articulating its vices. But empiricism may in turn be criticized in terms of the doctrine of encounter, as articulating the vice of withdrawal from the present divinity into mere feeling.[31]

For Fackenheim, it is crucial that one adopt a stance of "believing openness." One must, at the very least, be open to or allow for the encounter with the living God. It is possible that one may not stand within the circle of faith, but one must allow for the possible, or at the very least, allow for others to do so without impugning that faith. For Fackenheim, it is only possible to understand biblical faith or the doctrine of divine-human encounter if one sheds every trace of empiricism.[32] In the final analysis, for Fackenheim, then, there is really no bridge between believing openness and empiricism:

> The believer, all along aware of subjectivist reductionism, embraces that position not when he ceases to hear but when he turns away from listening. The unbeliever, too, may turn. Such a turn may or may not require an experience; if it does, it will be a turning experience. For the author of Language, Truth and Logic to accept the voice heard at

> Mount Sinai - or his urge to worship in the Messianic age - he would have to be converted. But conversion is both a turning and a being turned.[33]

(For a critique of Fackenheim's formulation, see below, p.115).

In Fackenheim's thought, history has come to play an increasingly important role, and the philosophy of history of Hegel also confronts Judaism with a major challenge.[34] Fackenheim considers Hegel as "the greatest modern religious philosopher," and was confronted by his system as a profound attempt to encompass religion within the bounds of a historically conscious philosophy. Additionally,

> among modern philosophers - the argument within theology is outside our present inquiry - Hegel alone (Hegelians only excepted) deserves to be taken seriously by modern Jewish thinkers.[35]

This is mainly due to the fact that he is willing to attempt to understand faith on its own terms and in its own categories (unlike, for example, the empiricists). In the final analysis, however, Fackenheim finds Hegel's philosophy untenable because it is too much linked to one specific period of history.[36]

Fackenheim's consideration of Hegel is more sympathetic than one might expect; this is because Fackenheim considers him to be the only top-flight non-Jewish philosopher to take Judaism in its own right seriously.[37] As a philosopher, Fackenheim is attracted to Hegel's

attempt to delineate a system which could encompass, in a unified and coherent way, the theoretical and the actual worlds, the transcendent and the immanent, and revelation and freedom. Fackenheim is especially concerned with the role of religion within Hegel's system. In the system, according to Fackenheim, religion does not lose its distinctiveness when viewed in the perspective of philosophy. In fact, philosophy takes on the content of religion, giving it only a new form. What is key for Fackenheim is that Hegel's philosophy "makes peace with religion" by preserving the reality of the divine-human encounter while simultaneously "encompassing religious life in a transfigured philosophical form."[38]

In the final analysis, Fackenheim feels compelled to reject Hegel's system not so much on philosophical grounds; the system fails because of subsequent history. Hegel's confidence in reason and the modern person's use of that reason must be shattered by recent events of history:[39]

> Hegel's philosophy is in history and permits a contingent future. It is above history and rules out an essential future, for this latter is already present. Yet this Hegelian claim has been shattered by events that his philosophy not only fails to anticipate but maintains cannot happen. His "world-historical" standpoint suffers collapse not, as the vulgar textbook view has it, under the impact of subsequent philosophical criticism, but rather under the impact of subsequent history.[40]

For Fackenheim, Hegel's system, so optimistically based upon human reason, simply cannot encompass such a radical phenomenon as Nazism. For Fackenheim, Auschwitz shatters Hegel's entire system of philosophy.[41]

During the past fifteen years, Fackenheim has come to regard the Holocaust as a crucial event, with implications of deep significance, both for philosophical thought and for life [especially Jewish life] in the modern world. Indeed, most of Fackenheim's writings since the late 1960's deal with his attempt to investigate the Holocaust's implications for Jewish life and faith in today's world; for Fackenheim, the traditional Jewish understanding of a supernatural God is seriously called into question by the Holocaust, which cannot be considered as merely another instance of evil within history.

For Fackenheim, the Holocaust is unprecedented in history. It is singularly unique because it was evil for evil's sake. It was Jewish existence, in and of itself, which constituted the Jewish "crime" for which the Nazis undertook the Final Solution. The Final Solution was not a pragmatic project, designed to serve any political or economic end. It was an end itself, which at the end of World War II, took precedence even over winning the war. In addition, only a minority of the perpetrators were sadists or "perverts"; instead, most were "normal,"

everyday people. Even the ideologues of the Final Solution were "ordinary idealists," save for the fact that their ideals were torture and murder.[42] The Holocaust, for Fackenheim, was a unique act of evil and as such, must seriously shake his own understanding of the God Who is present and reveals Himself in history, and Whom he defended (against the secularists) in his earlier thought.

Fackenheim's first developed treatment of the Holocaust's implications for modern Jewish faith occurs in God's Presence in History.[43] In this book, he sets forth the ideas of "root experiences" and "epoch-making events." A root experience has three characteristics. First, it is a past event which continues to make a present claim (i.e., that God is present in history).[44] Second, it has a public, historical character. Third, and most crucially, a root experience is a past event which is still presently accessible.[45] Examples of root experiences would include the salvation at the Red Sea and the revelation at Sinai. A root experience is responsible for the establishment of a new faith.

An epoch-making event, in contrast, occurs when the already established faith is tested in light of contemporary experiences. An epoch-making event is a confrontation between past and present, and although it tests the past faith, it does not destroy it. Examples of epoch-making events would include the end of prophecy,

the destruction of the first and second Temples, the Maccabean revolt, and the expulsion from Spain.[46]

For Fackenheim, the Holocaust is an epoch-making event which is unprecedented, and presents the most acute challenge to Jewish faith. It is the most acute because it calls into question God's presence in history, if not His actual existence. For Fackenheim makes a radical assertion. Rejecting Buber's doctrine of the eclipse of God, he asserts that if all present access to the God of history is wholly lost, then the God is himself lost.[47] The doctrine of the eclipse of God, for Fackenheim, skirts the issue, and can therefore not provide an answer.

Instead, Fackenheim's radical answer is that of the commanding voice of Auschwitz. Fackenheim admits the possibility that God is, in fact, issuing a command from Auschwitz, as He did at Sinai:

> Jewish oposition to Auschwitz cannot be grasped in terms of humanly created ideals but only as an imposed commandment. And the Jewish secularist, no less than the believer, is absolutely singled out by a Voice as truly other than man-made ideals - as imperative as truly given - as was the Voice of Sinai.[48]

For Fackenheim, the commanding Voice of Auschwitz tells us that

> Jews are forbidden to hand Hitler posthumous victories. They are commanded to survive as Jews, lest the Jewish people perish. They are commanded to remember the victims of Auschwitz lest their memory perish.

> They are forbidden to despair of man and his world, and to escape into either cynicism or otherworldliness, lest they cooperate in delivering the world over to the forces of Auschwitz. Finally, they are forbidden to despair of the God of Israel, lest Judaism perish. A secularist Jew cannot make himself believe by a mere act of will, nor can he be commanded to do so . . . And a religious Jew who has stayed with his God may be forced into new, possibly revolutionary relationships with Him. One possibility, however, is wholly unthinkable. A Jew may not respond to Hitler's attempt to destroy Judaism by himself cooperating in its destruction. In ancient times, the unthinkable Jewish sin was idolatry. Today, it is to respond to Hitler by doing his work.[49]

Fackenheim has referred to this imperative as the "614th commandment."[50] It is this 614th commandment which has somehow given the Jewish people the strength to deny Hitler the final victory. Indeed, it is the continued existence of Judaism and Jews (especially in the State of Israel) which moved Fackenheim to assert the reality of the 614th commandment.

In Fackenheim's positing of the 614th commandment, it is possible to see how his thought has come to change. Firstly, he revises his earlier view, which offered a sharp distinction between secular and religious Jews. Originally, Fackenheim had seen secularism (because of its disavowal of revelation) as a threat to Judaism. In confronting the Holocaust, Fackenheim no longer raises such a sharp distinction between the secular and the religious Jew. Even though he may not consciously

believe it, the secular Jew still witnesses to God; indeed, any Jew who simply chooses to remain Jewish fulfills the 614th commandment.[51] Fackenheim still acknowledges the distinction, and still attempts to argue (albeit with less assuredness) for a transcendent God; he nonetheless no longer views secularism as such a threat to Judaism. Secondly, Fackenheim places extra (if not crucial) emphasis on the State of Israel. In stressing the unity of the Jewish people, he sees the State of Israel as the most important example of the response to (and even the reality of) the 614th commandment which was issued out of the ashes of Auschwitz. Israel is the most profound Jewish answer to the unprecedented evil of the Holocaust, and for Fackenheim, becomes the "orienting reality" for all Jewish and post-Holocaust thought.[52] More than anything else, the State of Israel is the radical response to Auschwitz which might be able to preserve Judaism.

Fackenheim finds a precedent for this type of response in the Maccabee's solution to the Sabbath attacks of the Syrians. The Maccabees were faced with a dilemma. If they defended themselves on the Sabbath, they would, paradoxically, violate the very Torah they were trying to defend. The alternative was to let themselves be slain; the result of this, however, was unacceptable: there would be no Jews left to defend the Torah (and Judaism). Judaism would therefore cease.

The Maccabee's radical solution was to interpret the Torah. "To violate the Torah so that it could be protected was not a violation, rather, it was an interpretation.

> And since the Torah, the Word of God, could not be interpreted by the mere word of man, the interpretation itself could not be merely human.[53]

Therefore, the idea of the "oral Torah" of rabbinic Judaism emerged to complement the "written Torah." According to Fackenheim, it was only in this way that the Sabbath could be changed, and saved by being changed. The response of the Maccabees was a radical one, and it was only this radical response to a radical problem which could preserve Judaism.[54]

The State of Israel belongs in the same category of radical response as the Maccabees' idea of the "oral Torah." For Fackenheim, it is only the radical response of the State of Israel which can preserve Judaism and the Jewish life in the post-Holocaust era. Just as the Syrians required the Maccabees to "open a new page" in the history of Jews and Judaism, so too has Auschwitz required all Jews (and especially those who created and live today in the State of Israel) to "open a new page in Jewish history." This is the importance of the State of Israel for Fackenheim.[55]

One more thing must be mentioned with regard to how Fackenheim's thought has changed over the years, and

indeed, it seems to me that this is the most profound change. In his early writings, Fackenheim was convinced that the secularists were wrong when they denied the primacy and centrality in Judaism of the divine-human encounter, and its supernatural, transcendent, theistic God. As a result of his confrontation with the Holocaust, Fackenheim is no longer so certain that they are in error, and that he is correct. Over the years, it seems to me, his writings have come to reflect this uncertainty. The Holocaust has deeply undermined his faith in the God Who revealed Himself at Sinai. Fackenheim, his uncertainty notwithstanding, is still unwilling to step outside the boundaries of faith. He cannot and will not give up the source of his faith. The Jewish resistance to Hitler, which began in Auschwitz and astonishingly continues to this day in the State of Israel and indeed, everywhere Jews continue to survive, is for him an inkling that it may be possible to continue (or recover) the relationship to the God of history who somehow was not present during the Holocaust. The very fact of Jewish existence today, post-Auschwitz, is an inkling that the God Who redeemed at Sinai still can redeem:

> . . . in this of all ages the Jewish people have returned - have been returned? - to Jerusalem. Their strength, when failing, is renewed by the faith that despite all, because of all, the "impulse from below" will call forth an "impulse from above."[56]

In Fackenheim's latest writings, there is less talk about God and the Jewish relationship to Him. One gets the sense that it is difficult, if not impossible, for him to talk about God after Auschwitz. Yet, it is the fact that there were Jews in the concentration camps who maintained their own faith, who attempted to fast on Yom Kippur, which prevents Fackenheim from giving up the possibility of the transcendent God:

> Was a love strong as death not present on that day? Were these girls not beyond the grave while still alive? Did an absolute transcendence not become real in the midst of that time and on behalf of all humanity? Heaven forbid that we should say any such thing! If the prayer that was in that fast was not heard, then no prayer on any Yom Kippur ever was heard, or could be heard. If this human love had no response in a divine love, then every Good News about divine love anywhere is a sham and a mockery. In this book we have made no attempt to demonstrate the commitment to transcendence, whether within Judaism or without it. (Only the "old" philosophical "thinking" seeks proofs, while its theological counterpart seeks infallible authorities.) At the same time, we have found not a single reason - philosophical, religious, moral, to say nothing of reasons psychological or sociological - for rejecting that commitment. We see no reason now.[57]

For Fackenheim, to give up the supernatural, theistic God Who is present in the divine-human encounter is to give up Judaism. For him, Judaism (and Jews) will cease to exist when God ceases to exist. For Jewish faith is dependent upon this God. Access to Him may be undermined after Auschwitz, but we nevertheless must attempt to somehow regain that access:

> (We cannot forget the girls at Auschwitz who observed Yom Kippur. And we equally cannot forget those victims, innocent all, for whom Nazi terror destroyed it.) The result is that their Yom Kippur must alter ours. For we cannot resort to the "cowardly and disconsolate talk" that it happened only once, that it is improbable or impossible for it to recur, and that in any case the Yom Kippur's transcendence-of-time dissolves into irrelevance that time. An absolute transcendence of time is not attainable in our time. For to return the throne of judgment usurped by Dr. Mengele back to God has become a Jewish necessity, and the necessity does not exist beside the Yom Kippur experience but is part of it. And since this returning would be an impotent gesture without a Jewish state, we are forced to conclude that if in our time there were no State of Israel, it would be religious necessity, with or without the help of God, to create it. Without such a state, the end of Galut Judaism would also be the end of Judaism.[58]

For Fackenheim, every Jew must confront the spectre of the Holocaust if he is to retain (or recover) his faith. After Auschwitz, Fackenheim is no longer sure whether the traditional Jewish God Who revealed Himself at Sinai still exists (or ever did exist). For Fackenheim, however, if he gives up his own faith in Him, he will surely lose any [chance for] contact with Him, and thus, his Jewish existence. Fackenheim, as before Auschwitz, still believes that Jewish existence must be grounded in a relationship to God. Indeed, what may be preventing Fackenheim from losing his faith is the fact that Jews and Judaism still exist and flourish, and in fact, that post-Holocaust, they actually will themselves to existence

before God Who remains present . This, after every attempt to get them to renounce their faith, and to actually exterminate them and their faith. It may be that only a truly divine command can furnish Jews with this will-to-survival, and enable them to heal the terrifying rupture with God.

Especially in his earlier thought, Fackenheim has been very much influenced by the thought of Buber. Both thinkers, it seems to me, stand within the camp of religious existentialism, and both take a liberal view of revelation and its implications for the divine-human encounter; in fact, Fackenheim's conception of the divine-human encounter is taken almost directly from Buber. As does Buber, Fackenheim emphasizes openness to tradition and Covenant, albeit in differing degrees.

For both Fackenheim and Buber, the cornerstone of Judaism is the divine-human encounter, and especially the divine-human encounter at Sinai in which a super-natural, theistic God revealed Himself to the Israelites. Both thinkers reject the notion that God can only be a concept or an idea. For both Fackenheim and Buber, God reveals Himself overwhelmingly as a commanding Presence; the command does not have a content, but moves one to decide or respond in some manner:

> . . . the nameless experience was not action. It had to interpret itself as a call to action. And this call could not be a call unless it was "heard." Nor could there be a "hearing"

> unless there was a "speaking." The Nameless interpreted itself as a "speaking," and the nameless experience as "hearing." What was heard was a commandment and a promise: the call to action, and the consequences which followed if the call was heeded. Thus in the primeval Hebrew experience, the presence of the Nameless manifested itself in the form of a divine-human covenant.[59]

It was the revelation at Sinai which made the Israelites into a people, and it is the [continuing] relationship between God and His people which results in Judaism and Jewish life. Both thinkers view Torah (and all Jewish text) as the human record of and response to the encounter with God. Since the Torah is a human document, its commands do not have absolute authority over a person, and Jewish practice may therefore be changed to fit that person's situation and sensibilities. It does, however, provide one with an important means of access to a divine revelation which addresses him as much as his ancestors.[60] And both thinkers affirm the Covenant which was forged at Sinai as a key and ongoing manifestation of the Jewish relationship to God.[61]

It does seem to me that Fackenheim, while appropriating Buber's doctrine of encounter (or at least viewing it as essentially accurate), nevertheless pays much less attention to it in his thought as an explanation of human relationships. For Fackenheim, it seems to me, the importance of the doctrine of I-Thou is contained more in its implications for divine-human relationships

than it is in its implications for relationships between human beings. Whereas Buber spends much time explaining that God is behind every I-Thou relation, this assumption is usually only implicitly made by Fackenheim.

Since both thinkers stand within the circle of faith, Buber's defense of revelation against the claims of the secularists (cf. above, p.86) has been of central importance for Fackenheim because he, too, has felt compelled to address the claims of secular thought. For both thinkers, one must, at the very least, attempt to understand faith on its own terms and in its own categories before one confronts its claims through another system of thought; one must remain open to the possibility that the divine-human encounter can be real. This condition, for Fackenheim, is important.[62] It is, it seems to me, very similar to Buber's claim that one cannot enter into I-Thou relation without at least being open to it.

Where Fackenheim and Buber differ (or at least, seem to differ) is their regard for the halachic system. Buber, as is well known, could not personally or in principle subscribe to a system of halacha (cf. above, Chapter I, p. 47). Fackenheim seems to have a higher regard for halacha, although he very rarely (at least, in my reading) ever mentions it. In the one instance where Fackenheim does deal with the idea of

halacha, he seems to give it more authority (albeit in a liberal sense) than does Buber.[63] And certainly in Fackenheim's later writings, in deference to his preoccupation with the implications of the Holocaust, halacha seems to have become a non-issue for him.

In Fackenheim's discussion of Kant (cf. supra, pp. 86-94) he attempts to resolve the dilemma between a revealed morality and autonomy. It would seem to me, however, that Fackenheim is not able to resolve this dilemma (at least, in Kantian terms) because he is not able to eliminate the problem of prudence for a revealed moral law. Even if God remains present in commanding immediacy, one would be compelled to follow it (moral law) out of motivations of reward and punishment. This would "contaminate" the motivation for fulfilling the law. Fackenheim's attempted resolution of the Kantian dilemma, it seems to me, is similar to Buber's attempt to resolve it (cf. supra, pp. 45-46). Both Buber and Fackenheim (and Borowitz) attempt to resolve the dilemma (in somewhat Kantian terms) by positing that there is a "middle ground" between heteronomy and autonomy. For Fackenheim (following Buber's lead) it is God Himself Who commands us to be autonomous:

> . . . the Divine manifests Itself as commanding, and in order to do so, it requires real human freedom. And since the Divine is Presence as well as commanding, the required human freedom cannot be merely conditioned, it must be unconditional and absolute. Finally, this

> unconditional and absolute freedom must be more even than the freedom to accept or reject, for their own sake and on their own merit, specific commandments: there are as yet no such commandments. The freedom required in the pristine moment of divine commanding Presence, then is nothing less than the freedom to accept or reject the divine commanding Presence as a whole, and for its own sake - that is, for no other reason that that it IS that Presence . . .
>
> The pristine human freedom of choice is not autonomous. Without the Other, man might have the self-sufficient power for all kinds of choice, but the power of choice to accept or reject the divine commanding Presence he would not have . . . The divine commanding Presence, then may be said to give man choosing power. It may even be said to force the actual choice upon him . . .
>
> It does not force him to choose God, and the choice itself (as was seen) is not heteronomous; for it accepts or rejects the divine commanding Presence for no other reason than that it is that Presence. But this entails the momentous consequence that, if and when a man chooses to accept the divine commanding Presence, he does nothing less than accept the divine Will as his own.[64]

Fackenheim's argument is similar to Buber's argument that God commands us to be autonomous:

> . . . Judaism knows that true autonomy is one with true theonomy: God wants man to fulfill his commands as a human being, and with the quality peculiar to human beings.[65]

This idea of "theonomous autonomy, for Fackenheim, is able to make the moral law into a bridge (and not a bar) between its recipient and its giver; this is because, in Fackenheim's view, it allows the recipient to appropriate the divine Will as his own.

For Fackenheim, it is God Himself Who demands that the commandments be performed for their own sake, and not simply because He commands them. It seems to me, however, that this is not possible. If God demands that the commandments be performed for their own sake, it renders Him irrelevant. The very fact that He "demands" something gives that something its authority. It does not seem possible (at least as Fackenheim presents it) that God can demand that the commandments be performed for their own sake without contradicting His own demand.

It seems to me that the major problem in Fackenheim's (as in Buber's and Borowitz's) thought concerns the emphasis placed on the experience of revelation as crucial in determining one's ability to confront the claims of philosophy. More specifically, it is the issue of how to determine the criteria for determining the authenticity of revelation. How is it possible to deny another person's claim to revelation? How is it possible to distinguish a "real" revelation from a "false" one? Fackenheim does not furnish us with criteria for this. He writes that

> . . . at least one claim made in behalf of divine-human encounters is untenable by <u>any</u> philosophical standard. One recent philosopher makes the believer say, "You couldn't have these experiences and at the same time sincerely deny God's existence." Another invokes certain Protestants' claims to a "<u>self-authenticating</u> direct awareness of

> God." If to assert an immediate divine Presence is ipso facto to assert an infallible human experience of such a Presence, then the doctrine is, in toto, untenable.
>
> This may be shown by merely pointing to the fact of serious but conflicting religious claims, or to the more exotic varieties of religious enthusiasm, not to speak of madness taking itself for prophecy.[66]

The problem here, at least for me, is that if Fackenheim does not establish criteria, then I have no way of knowing whether or not someone's claim to revelation is real. How can I then deny (or accept), for example, the Idi Amin Dada's claim to revelation? Or the claim of the man who set fire (on "God's orders") to the al Aksa mosque in Jerusalem? We are left, it seems to me, to depend upon the "self-authenticating experiences" of individuals, but which Fackenheim asserts cannot be the basis for affirmation of revelation. According to Fackenheim, "the true datum furnished to philosophy by biblical faith, (and the doctrine of encounter) is not self-authenticating experiences but rather a faith open to an immediate divine presence."[67] By not furnishing the criteria by which an encounter with the divine can be "authenticated," it seems to me that Fackenheim leaves us with no choice but to view another's (or our own) claim to revelation as infallible.

Related to this is Fackenheim's contention that a philosopher (i.e., an empiricist), in order to affirm even the possibility of the divine-human encounter, must

already stand within the circle of faith. For Fackenheim, empiricism cannot refute revelation. He nevertheless tells us that one must stand in "believing openness" (cf. supra, p.97). It seems to me that if one already believes, one is no longer "open." And if one's attitude is "open," it does not necessarily have to be "believing." In Fackenheim's formulation of this issue, the believer has already "won the argument." If, in order to understand faith, one has to stand within the circle of faith, then one has already left his own argument behind, and has embraced the argument of the believer. For me, the implication of this is that there can really be no common ground on which conflicting claims can encounter one another.

The other problem I have with Fackenheim's thought involves his assertion of the 614th commandment and its implications. To remain Jewish solely because we must not hand Hitler posthumous triumph is a sad and negative definition of modern Jewish identity. And ironically, it seems to me, if one is committed to remaining Jewish because one does not want to complete Hitler's work, one is actually letting Hitler dictate the reason for one's commitment to Jewish existence. It becomes Hitler who moves one to remain Jewish. This is a blasphemy which Fackenheim certainly does not intend, but it nonetheless

is there. To base Jewish commitment upon the memory of Hitler would not be acceptable to many Jews, myself included.

NOTES

[1]Kaufman, William, Contemporary Jewish Philosophies, (New York: Reconstructionist Press, 1976), p. 105.

[2]Hence, the title of one of his books, Encounters Between Judaism and Modern Philosophy, (New York: Schocken Books, 1980), (Hereafter referred to as Encounters).

[3]Fackenheim, Emil, "The Modern Jew's Path to God," Commentary, (May 1950):450.

[4]Fackenheim, Emil, Quest for Past and Future, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1983), p. 79, (Hereafter referred to as Quest).

[5]Ibid., pp. 114-115.

[6]Fackenheim, Emil, To Mend the World, (New York: Schocken Books, 1982), p. 6, (Hereafter referred to as Mend).

[7]Fackenheim, Quest, p. 8.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid., p. 220.

[10]Ibid., p. 146.

[11]Ibid., p. 147.

[12]Ibid., p. 7.

[13]Fackenheim, Encounters, pp. 36-37.

[14]Ibid., pp. 38-39.

[15]Ibid., p. 40.

[16]Ibid., p. 42.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid., pp. 42-43.

[19]Ibid., pp. 44-45.

[20]Ibid., p. 48.

[21]Ibid., p. 53.

[22]Ibid., pp. 48-49.

[23]Ibid., p. 50.

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

[25]Ibid., p. 51.

[26]Ibid., p. 25.

[27]Fackenheim, Encounters, pp. 13-14.

[28]Ibid., p. 11.

[29]Ibid., p. 12.

[30]Ibid., p. 24.

[31]Ibid., pp. 24-25.

[32]Ibid., p. 27.

[33]Ibid., p. 29.

[34]For this discussion of Fackenheim's interpretation of Hegel, I am indebted to Michael Meyer's article, "Judaism After Auschwitz: The Religious Thought of Emil L. Fackenheim," in Commentary (June 1972): 55-62.

[35]Fackenheim, Encounters, p. 82.

[36]Meyer, op. cit., p. 59.

[37]Fackenheim, Encounters, p. 86.

[38]Meyer, op. cit., p. 59.

[39]Ibid.

[40]Fackenheim, Encounters, p. 154.

[41]Ibid., p. 158.

[42]Fackenheim, Mend, p. 12.

[43]Fackenheim, Emil, God's Presence in History, (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), (Hereafter referred to as Presence).

[44]Ibid., p. 9.

[45]Ibid., p. 11.

[46]Ibid., pp. 8-9.

[47]Ibid., p. 79.

[48]Ibid., p. 83.

[49]Ibid., p. 84.

[50]Fackenheim, Emil, The Jewish Return into History, (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), p. 19, (Hereafter referred to as Return).

[51]Ibid., p. 53.

[52]Fackenheim, Mend, p. 14.

[53]Ibid., p. 323.

[54]Ibid., pp. 322-323.

[55]Ibid., pp. 323-324.

[56]Ibid., p. 313.

[57]Ibid., p. 322.

[58]Ibid., p. 324.

[59]Fackenheim, Quest, p. 116.

[60]Ibid., pp. 146-147.

[61]Ibid., p. 118.

[62]Fackenheim, Encounters, p. 28.

[63]Fackenheim, Quest, p. 110.

[64]Ibid., pp. 219-220.

[65]Buber, Israel, p. 142.

[66]Fackenheim, Encounters, p. 25.

[67]Ibid., p. 28.

CONCLUSION

Martin Buber has had a profound influence upon both Eugene Borowitz and Emil Fackenheim, and both openly acknowledge their debt to his thought.

Borowitz's emphasis on the link between the supernatural, theistic God and personal autonomy occupies a central place in his thought, as it does in Buber's. For both Buber and Borowitz, an individual's personal autonomy is grounded in God. This has important implications vis-à-vis a liberal interpretation of Torah. For both thinkers, Torah is the human account of (and response to) the encounter with God. Because Torah is a human document, it does not possess absolute authority, and is not immutable. Jewish observance, therefore, can be changed in order to fit different circumstances and sensibilities. Since the Torah is not a divine document, the autonomy of the individual is preserved.

Related to the idea of autonomy is Borowitz's liberal view of revelation, which is very similar to Buber's view. For both thinkers, revelation does not have verbal or conceptual content; instead, its most important characteristic is that it somehow moves one

to respond; it moves one to some sort of action, and especially with regard to ethical issues.

- Both thinkers place crucial emphasis on the Covenant which was forged at Sinai; it is this ongoing covenantal relationship which gives rise to Judaism and Jewish life and traditions. Both Borowitz's and Buber's thought manifest an openness to tradition.

Borowitz does diverge from Buber in the increased emphasis he places on the mitzvah system and the importance of some sort of structure or common framework. Borowitz has a more positive view of the mitzvah system as a whole than does Buber, and he attempts to move "beyond" Buber by giving Jewish tradition and communal observance greater roles in helping one to determine his own personal level of observance. For Borowitz, Buber's interpretation is too individualized, and therefore does not allow for a common framework of observance. In Buber's thought, the individual takes precedence over the people; in Borowitz's thought, the people [seems to] somehow take precedence over the individual. This, it seems to me, is the major difference between Buber's and Borowitz's thought.

In many ways (and especially in his earlier thought), Buber's influence on Fackenheim's thought is similar to Borowitz's. As with Buber and Borowitz, the cornerstone of Judaism is the Jews' encounter with God, and in

particular the encounter at Sinai in which a supernatural God revealed Himself to the Israelites. Both thinkers categorically reject (although Fackenheim is not quite as vehement in his later writings) the notion that God can only be a concept or an idea. For all three thinkers, God reveals Himself as a commanding Presence; the command does not have a verbal content, but somehow moves one to decide or respond in some fashion, and is what has resulted in Judaism and Jewish life. For all three thinkers, Torah and Jewish tradition provide the modern Jew with an important means to a divine revelation which addresses him in much the same way as it did his ancestors. To use Fackenheim's expression, Jewish tradition provides the modern Jew with "present access to past experience."

Fackenheim, however, diverges from Buber in that he pays much less attention to the latter's doctrine of encounter as an explanation of human relationships. For Fackenheim, the importance of Buber's doctrine of I-Thou is contained in its implications for the divine-human relationship. Whereas Buber devotes much of his writing explaining that God is behind every I-Thou relation, this assumption is usually only implicitly asserted in Fackenheim's thought.

For Fackenheim, Buber's defense of supernatural revelation against the claims of the secularists has

been of central importance, because both view the claims of secularist thought as threatening to Judaism. For both thinkers, it is crucial that one attempt to understand faith on its own terms and in its own categories; one must remain open to the possibility that the divine-human encounter can be real. For Fackenheim, this openness is important, and seems to approximate Buber's position that one cannot enter an I-Thou relation without at least being open to it.

It is as a modern Jew who is deeply concerned with the meaning of my Jewishness that I was originally attracted to Buber's thought, and later on to Borowitz's. As the son of a German-Jewish refugee who barely escaped the destruction, I also came to be attracted to Fackenheim's confrontation with the Holocaust and its implications for human existence.

It was my first encounter with Buber's writings which helped to clarify and illuminate experiences I had undergone, but never had really been able to understand. I came to recognize that these experiences could be interpreted as an encounter with the divine. It was then that I realized that words spoken and written, although they can only allude to and evoke intimations of the divine-human encounter, can nevertheless at least help one understand that encounter.

Perhaps more than Borowitz and Buber, Fackenheim is concerned with the harmonization of philosophy and faith. This is a concern which has remained constant for him, even as his thought has changed over the years. For Fackenheim, "philosophy is the critical self-consciousness of a civilization."[1]

Philosophy is also important as an attempt to explain and order our existence, to make some sort of sense and perhaps even give meaning to how we live. It seems to me, however, that because how we live is often fraught with uncertainty, inconsistency and paradox, philosophy can only describe or explain some of the enigmatic aspects of our existence. Because our existence is so often unsystematic, attempts to explain it in a system of thought must necessarily fall short. To be sure, philosophy can play an important part in helping us to confront the enigmas and mysteries which rest with us. It may even help us to answer or resolve some of them. But because philosophy is a finite thing, engaged in by finite human beings, it can only go so far. It seems to me that this could be one of the reasons that no one has ever expounded a philosophy which has convinced everyone, and which ended the need to philosophize.

When (or perhaps, because) one introduces the issue of religious faith, the attempt to philosophize becomes even more complex. Religious faith, it seems to me,

does not lend itself to the same sort of detached, systematic analysis which is attempted by philosophy, and indeed, which seems to be so crucial to it. The categories are different. Philosophy, which attempts to reduce or resolve or explain paradoxes which are part of religious faith, cannot do this. It cannot, it seems to me, because those mysteries and paradoxes are a cornerstone of faith; indeed, it may be that the paradoxes and mysteries actually give rise to religious faith. All we can do is allude to or evoke the nature of the mystery and the paradoxes and their source. We can gain inklings of it, but it seems to me that this is as far as we can go.

Related to this is the problem of religious language, and it is in this area that Buber's thought has been most helpful for me. To speak of religious faith (and God) is to immediately place both in the realm of I-It, where they do not belong and cannot really be explained. For me, Buber's most important contribution has been his assertion that the language of faith is different from the language of analysis. The problem of religious language is a real one, and by its very nature, cannot really be resolved. We can try to use our limited language to express or point to what or Whom we have encountered, but at best, we can only provide intimations or allusions as to the nature of the encounter. We can

learn to live in this situation, and perhaps even sanctify and hallow it. Indeed, this is what the person of faith is moved to do.

I am, in the final analysis, attracted to what Buber writes because, more than anything else I have ever read or encountered, it describes my own experience and my own situation both as a Jew and as a person. Perhaps more than any other reading I've ever done, or than any other person I've ever encountered, it is Buber who has helped me to clarify and actually live within the circle of faith. His thought cannot be organized into a system, but this, for me, is precisely its strength:

> No system was suitable for what I had to say. Structure was suitable for it, a compact structure but not one that joined everything together. I was not permitted to reach out beyond my experience, and I never wished to do so. I witnessed for experience and appealed to experience. The experience for which I witnessed is, naturally, a limited one. But it is not to be understood as a "subjective" one. I have tested it through my appeal and test it ever anew. I say to him who listens to me: "It is your experience. Recollect it, and what you cannot recollect, dare to attain it as experience." But he who seriously declines to do it, I take him seriously. His declining is my problem.
>
> I must say it once again: I have no teaching. I only point to something. I point to reality, I point to something in reality that had not or had too little been seen. I take him who listens to me by the hand and lead him to the window. I open the window and point to what is outside.
>
> I have no teaching, but I carry on a conversation.[2]

When all is said and done, it is Buber's writings which have helped me to become aware of the possibility of the conversation. Indeed, it is Buber who has helped me to carry on the conversation.

NOTES

[1]Fackenheim, Encounters, p. 4.

[2]Schilpp, Paul Arthur, and Friedman, Maurice, editors, The Philosophy of Martin Buber, (LaSalle, Illinois: Open Court Pub. Co., 1967), p. 693.

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