THE MARTIN BUBER READER

ESSENTIAL WRITINGS

EDITED BY

ASHER D. BIEMANN

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The Martin Buber Reader
Essential Writings

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Asher D. Biemann

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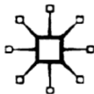

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The Martin Buber Reader

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Introduction

What are Martin Buber's essential writings? The editor is confronted with a body of work that spans a creative period of more than 65 years and that appears in a variety of literary genres and methods combining poetry, fiction, playwriting, translation, philosophy, and narrative, with subjects ranging from Viennese literature to Christian mysticism, from the Hebrew prophets to Taoism, from philosophy to art, and from Hasidism to capital punishment. Martin Buber (1878–1965) was nothing short of a humanist in a Renaissance manner, a universal scholar in the tradition of the classical Goethe, whose *Bildung* (education) became an icon for many German-speaking Jews and remained their ideal long after it was abandoned by their German fellow citizens.[1] In this, Buber stood at the climax of a development that had begun with the European Enlightenment and its Jewish manifestation, the *Haskalah,* embracing education as the single catalyst for political and social emancipation, and which continued throughout the nineteenth century with Jews enthusiastically immersing themselves in their cherished German culture and not seldomly disappearing in it.

At the time of Buber's birth in Vienna in 1878, Jews lived relatively undisturbed in the Hapsburg lands under Franz Joseph and in the new German empire under Wilhelm I, but their Judaism was fractioned into irreconcilable religious denominations, or indifference, or even self-hatred. Buber came from a typical assimilated, urban Jewish family of considerable wealth and education with roots in Galicia, then a province of Austria–Hungary. With a father studying Darwin in his youth and a grandfather back in Lemberg (Lvov) defending the ideals of the *Haskalah* while editing a widely respected compendium of Midrashic literature, Buber's heritage was not only one of classic German–Jewish culture but also one that stood at the passage between Eastern European Jewry, whose ritual life was still intact in largely autonomous communities, and the fragmented, individualized modern West.[2] Buber spent the better part of his adolescence at the traditional home of his grandparents where he also came into tangential contact with local Hasidic, or "pious" communities

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that combined Jewish mysticism, folk traditions, and an often supernatural style of leadership. Between the ages three and fourteen, Buber lived as a fully observant Jew whose everyday languages were Yiddish and Polish (in addition to Hebrew, German, and French), and who received comprehensive instruction in the classical Jewish literature. Like many of his contemporaries, however, Buber, by his own account, soon became increasingly "estranged" from both Hasidism and Judaism.[3] When, in an attempt to reopen this passage of his youth, he turned to the study of Hasidism later in his life,[4] he did so as a fully acculturated Jew in search of the community, authenticity, and religiosity that he was unable to find in the highly sophisticated societies of Vienna, Berlin, Leipzig, and Zurich, the centers of his formative years.[5] In Buber's writings on Judaism, both Hasidism and *Haskalah* are repeatedly invoked as the path-breaking forces of Jewish self-discovery, self-liberation, and an impending rebirth of Judaism (see On the [Jewish] Renaissance [1903] p. 139 in this volume). Buber's German adaptations of Hasidic narratives—most famously the legends of Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav (1906), the Baal-Shem (1908), and the collection of Hasidic tales (1946)—had such an impact on his generation that even remote Jews, the philosopher Ernst Bloch and the statesman Walter Rathenau among them, began to feel pride in their Jewishness after reading them.[6] It was with the renderings of Hasidism, congenial with the then prevailing *zeitgeist* (intellectual, moral, and cultural state of an era),[7] that Buber first reached a wide audience, Jews and non-Jews, disenchanted with what was frequently perceived as a lifeless, unspiritual, and mechanical West.

Yet, the first impulse of Buber's "self-liberation" did not come from Hasidism but from Zionism.[8] By the time Buber discovered Hasidism for himself and for German culture, he had already become the leading ideologue of a movement that he helped create, around 1900, and that was no less a distinct expression of the spirit of modernity: the Jewish Renaissance, the rerooting and recasting of Judaism in a cultural-spiritual mold that invariably pointed to the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche whose cult-like spell over young Jews and non-Jews of this time is well known.[9] The Renaissance movement was essentially an offshoot of the young Buber's active role in the early stages of Zionism, and, as offshoots tend to be, a critique of it. Unlike Zionism, itself a restorative phenomenon that had just gained momentum under the leadership of Theodor Herzl, the Jewish Renaissance conceived of itself as a suprapartisan and ultimately supranational movement whose primary concern was not the physical resurrection of the Jewish people but the respiritualization of Judaism. As such, the Jewish Renaissance was directed toward an immediate, inner revival of Judaism in the Diaspora, rather than a postponed, material revival in the land of Israel. For Buber, who ultimately withdrew from Zionist activities in 1904, the Jewish Renaissance did not mean an ideological subdivision of Zionism but Zionism in its truest form. As early as 1899, when speaking at the Third Zionist Congress in Basel, Buber maintained that Zionism was not a matter of "partisanship"

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(*Parteisache*) but a comprehensive "worldview."[10] Two years later, together with the young chemist Chaim Weizmann, the writer Berthold Feiwel, the mathematician Leo Motzkin, the artist Ephraim Moses Lilien, and other intellectuals—many of them young Russian Zionists—Buber was instrumental in drafting the Democratic Fraction, a group that was much indebted to the "spiritual" Zionism of Ahad Ha'am, demanding a commission devoted to the advancement of "Jewish culture."[11] Ironically the very question of "culture," a source of uneasiness for the Zionist leadership as well as the religious camp, broke Herzl and Buber apart, leading to the dismantling of the Democratic Fraction after 1903.

The fundamental difference between Herzl's Zionism and Buber's lay, at its core, in the perception of what made the Jewish national movement urgent: To Herzl, it was an external threat, from the pogroms in Russia and the rise of urban, modern anti-Semitism in the most enlightened of all nations—France, Austria–Hungary, and Germany; to Buber, it was an internal threat marked by assimilation, alienation, and spiritual emptiness—in short, a crisis of culture. The former strove for "normalization" of the Jewish people; the latter, for the renewal of Judaism. One might indeed wonder why Buber, who returned to Vienna from Galicia in 1896 to study at the capital's university, did not seem to be overly alarmed by the anti-Semitic populism of the Pan-Germanist Georg V. Schönerer and the Christian Socialist Karl Lueger that was raging through the city at exactly this time. But for Buber, anti-Semitism, a word rarely even mentioned in his writings, was not a reality that could inspire the revival of Judaism but one that only served as a pretext for national egotism under a Jewish flag.[12] With the Hapsburg model of multiculturalism falling apart into a jumble of ethnic national alliances, leaving Jews soaring between the phantom Austria–Hungary and the phantom of a Jewish state, Buber recoiled from any self-sufficiency of political nationalism and placed his own nationalism in a tradition of national humanism and later, Jewish socialism, echoing the voices of the proto-Zionist Moses Hess, the pioneer of labor Zionism Aaron David Gordon, and the socialist pacifist Gustav Landauer, to mention a few. Shaped by their ideas, Buber's lifelong attitude toward mainstream Zionism remained one of critique, yet not necessarily opposition.[13] Invoking the Italian Renaissance, at least in its neoromantic interpretation, Buber envisioned the Jewish national Renaissance as a "branch of the stream of the new [human] renaissance . . . a rebirth in which every person and every people will participate, each according to his kind and his values: a rebirth of humanity, a rule of 'new lands.' "[14] What stood at the center of this renaissance was again a deeply humanistic conception with learning and self-awareness as the anchors of a national rebirth. In another sense, the renaissance project was really about Jewish "re-education"—about educating Jews back to Judaism by offering them a cultural alternative to religion and assimilation.[15]

The problem of "culture" concerned Buber both in theory and practice. In a short essay of 1901, he commented on the debate on culture and

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its decline into civilization that was familiar to his time through the writings of Jakob Burckhardt, Nietzsche, and his teachers at the Friedrich Wilhelms University of Berlin, Wilhelm Dilthey and Georg Simmel.[16] Still in 1943, Buber defined "culture" as "creation" and "fulfillment of life" whose essence means particularity and uniqueness, whereas civilization "is occupied with a world that already exists and that can only be discovered."[17] Jewish culture, therefore, and Jewish creativity were essentially identical, and Buber's influence on the discussion of Jewish art,[18] the conception of a Hebrew University, and the establishment of a publishing house devoted to Jewish culture (the Berlin-based Jüdischer Verlag) must be viewed in the context of an aesthetic resurrection of Judaism. In fact, just as we can see Buber's Jewish Renaissance as the expression of his Zionism, it is legitimate to call his Zionism a "form of cultural politics."[19]

In his autobiographical remarks, however, Buber points to another aspect of his Zionism: "Zionism," he writes, "meant for me the restoration of the connection—the renewed taking root [*Einwurzelung*] in the community."[20] Like the debate of culture and civilization, the problematization of community and society was a characteristic fin de siècle phenomenon, raised in Ferdinand Tönnies's book of 1887, *Community and Society,* and reflected (in different ways) in the works of Georg Simmel and Max Weber. The discussion reached back to the origins of utopian socialism and communism in the mid-nineteenth century—to the Saint-Simonists (followers of the social reformer Claude Henri de Rouvroy) in France and the young revolutionaries in Germany and in Italy. But by the turn of the century, much of the revolutionary urge of socialism had faded, leaving the utopian mood even more pronounced. Communes and agricultural colonies inspired by German nationalism (Karl Eugen Dühring), social utopianism (Theodor Hertzka, Franz Oppenheim), or anarchism (Gustav Landauer) appeared in Germany as early as the 1890s.[21] They were, for the better part, upper-class expressions of counterculture, fusing the ideas of humanism, mysticism, vitalism, health consciousness, and aesthetization of manual labor. Among them was the circle of the brothers Heinrich and Julius Hart, the *Neue Gemeinschaft* (New Community); their accompanying worldview promised total "harmony," the creation of a "man of fulfillment" (*Mensch der Erfüllung*), who "is the god and artist of [H]is own universe," and a community that would realize the "highest ideals of culture."[22] Buber lectured in this circle at least twice, between 1899 and 1900, once on the Christian mystic Jakob Böhme, and once on "Old and New Community."[23] It was within this circle that Buber not only developed a close friendship with Gustav Landauer but also his first, albeit still vague and visionary, thoughts on community, the individual, and society. The description of the "new" community as a "living interaction of whole, refined human beings," whose sole purpose is "life," in contrast to the "old" communities whose purpose is religion and commerce; the distinction between community and society, directly borrowed from Tönnies, rendering community

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"postsocial," as "transcending society and its norms;" and, finally, the experience of the "great Thou" as the communion with the universe—these motifs recur, though much purified from the mystical, vitalist language, in Buber's later writings on Judaism, social philosophy, and dialogue.

With culture and community being the elementary components and concerns in Buber's Zionism and reconnection with Judaism, we must perceive the larger Jewish Renaissance also as a cultural and social critique. Judaism, itself, as Buber imagines it, using the model of Hasidism, becomes a critique of his time, of European culture and society, of Eurocentric Zionism, and of Judaism. Conversely, Buber's later writings became a critique of his earlier work, particulary the "mystical" phase that permeated his thought throughout the first decade of the twentieth century.

Between his graduation from the University of Vienna in 1904 and World War I was a period of utmost versatility in Buber's work: Aside from the renditions of Hasidism, there are translations from Yiddish (David Pinski's *Eisik Scheftel,* 1905), a collection of mystical thinkers (*Ecstatic Confessions,* 1909), German adaptations of Tshuang Tse (1910), Chinese ghost and love stories (1911), the Finnish national epic (*Kalewala,* 1914), Celtic legends (*Vier Zweige des Mabinogi,* 1914), and Buber's own contribution to mythical thinking, his *Daniel* of 1913.

There is also Buber's role as the editor of a series of "sociopsychological" monographs, *Die Gesellschaft* (Society), for the publisher Rütten & Loening. Between 1906 and 1912 (Buber was then living in Berlin), forty volumes appeared with leading European intellectuals contributing titles such as *Revolution* (Gustav Landauer), *State* (Franz Oppenheimer), *Language* (Fritz Mauthner), *Custom* (Ferdinand Tönnies), *Eroticism* (Lou Andreas-Salomé), *Dilettantism* (Rudolf Kassner), and *Religion* (Georg Simmel). In his preface to the series of 1906, Buber first introduced the concept of the "interhuman" (*das Zwischenmenschliche*) as the principal function of society and community. Sociology, in his definition, is the "science of the forms of the interhuman," and to the extent that society has to be understood as an "experience of souls" (*Erlebnis von Seelen*), sociology has to be psychological: "Its object is social life, which is to be regarded as a psychical process."[24] Buber's dialogical philosophy, which he developed about ten years later, again seized on the term of the "interhuman" and should, perhaps, be seen as a commentary on this concept.

The analytical, descriptive, and critical aspects that emerged from Buber's *Gesellschaft* seem slightly at odds with the enigmatic tone and mythical aura in his own writings of the same period. If we had to name a common theme in these writings, it would be the struggle for and *with* unity—a struggle that Buber saw as progression from otherworldly ecstatism to down-to-earth realism. "Since then," Buber wrote of his "conversion," which occurred shortly before World War I, "I have given up the 'religious' which is nothing but the exception, extraction, exaltation, ecstasy. . . . I possess nothing but the everyday out of which I am never

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taken."[25] Not by accident is the subtitle of Buber's *Daniel,* "Gespräche von der Verwirklichung" (Dialogues on Realization), a reverberation of the Young-Hegelian philosophies of "realization" and "deed," particularly Ludwig Feuerbach's *Philosophy of the Future* (1843). In a radical antitheological move, Feuerbach sought to "re-introduce philosophy from the realm of 'extracted souls' into the realm of physical, living souls, from the divine, self-sufficient bliss of thought into the human misery."[26]

Buber, who critically engaged with Feuerbach's work as early as 1900 and considered him a precursor of the dialogical principle,[27] gradually performed Feuerbach's "realization" of religion himself, and ultimately followed Feuerbach's transformation of philosophy into anthropology, mediated through the prevailing *Lebensphilosophie* (philosophy of life) of his teacher Wilhelm Dilthey. In his mature interpretation of Hasidism, the mystical element, although still prominent, is directed *toward* the world, not turned away from it; the fundamental difference between the sacred and the profane is overcome, because the sacred, in Feuerbach's language, has been "realized."[28] Similarly, what is stressed in Buber's early speeches on Judaism, which are, in essence, variations on his Hasidic principle, is the "realization" of Judaism as a religion—its transformation into "religiosity" through human action. "Genuine religiosity," Buber wrote in 1923, "is *doing.* It wants to sculpt the unconditioned out of the matter of this world. The countenance of God reposes, invisible, in an earthen block."[29]

But Buber's "doing" differs radically from Jewish orthopraxy (the "correct" observation of Jewish law, or *Halakha*). There is a clear distinction between "religion" and "religiosity" (which Buber adopted directly from his teacher Georg Simmel)[30]—the former was concerned with "organization" and "preservation," and the latter, with "creativity" and "renewal." But there is also a balance and creative tension between them, between priest and prophet, tradition and revolution. Religiosity, Buber admitted, "needs forms."[31] Indeed, although Buber shared his disdain for Talmudic Judaism with other Jewish reformers, revolutionaries, and secular Zionists, he tried not to abrogate Jewish laws and doctrines associated with "religion" outright but wanted to see them imbued "with new and incandescent meaning, so that they will seem to have been revealed to every generation anew."[32] Buber believed that the Law, too, needed to be "realized," "fulfilled" to the extent that "every man, by living authentically, shall himself become a Torah, a law."[33] The renewing force of religiosity, as the example of Hasidism seems to demonstrate, is possible also in a traditional society and, as Buber ultimately failed to see, may even require such a society. But as a force of renewal, true religiosity is always a subversion of religion—not a mere reform but a thorough revolution. In the end, Buber's attitude toward *Halakha,* which invites comparison to the radical antitraditionalist Micha Berdichevski, remained ambiguous at best and found its most undiplomatic expression in his speech "Heruth" of 1919 (p. 125 in this volume). This speech prompted the

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famous discourse on the question of Jewish law with the neo-observant Jewish philosopher and close friend of Buber, Franz Rosenzweig.[34]

The critical theme in Buber's early addresses on Judaism, delivered at the Prague Zionist chapter Bar Kochba, is the renewal and reformulation of Jewish identity. As such, they form a link between Buber's first Zionist expressions, the Jewish Renaissance, and his study of Hasidism and mysticism. In contrast to Reform Judaism at that time, Buber's religiosity, although emancipating and self-empowering the individual, was not relegated to the personal sphere or to the satisfaction of personal spirituality and rationality, but became the building agent of unity and, by extension, community. Just as the realization of God, for Buber, amounted to the realization of humankind, the renewal of Judaism amounted to the renewal of Jewish peoplehood. The same theme continues as an undercurrent in Buber's later speeches on Judaism as well, whose audience was not always a Zionist or even a Jewish group, as in the apologetic The Two Foci of the Jewish Soul (1932) (p. 107 in this volume), an address delivered in March 1930 at one of the Protestant *Judenmissionsgesellschaften* (Societies for the Mission of the Jews) in Stuttgart. And it comes to a closure in Buber's essay, "Hebrew Humanism" (p. 158 in this volume) of 1941, in which "Hebrew" replaces "Jewish" and "humanism" replaces "renaissance," tying together the national and the supranational, the classical and the revolutionary. Unlike the "Jewish Renaissance," "Hebrew Humanism" is an open critique of Zionism, an outspoken "opposition" to Jewish "national egoism," and an implicit reaffirmation of occidental, primarily German, humanism—the kind that reared the young Buber half a century before, in the light of the unfolding catastrophe in Europe. "[W]e Jews from Germany," Buber wrote, "must contribute to the education of our people in Palestine who are striving for regeneration. . . ." (ibid., p. 159). The re-education of Jews in the Diaspora to Judaism is now a re-education of Jews in Palestine to humanism. But in truth, Buber maintained that they are two sides of the same process—a process that leads to the "concrete transformation" of the "life of the individual as well as that of the community" (ibid., p. 161). The progression in Buber's Jewish writings, therefore, is not simply one from mysticism to Judaism, to humanism, but one of defining humanism through Judaism and Judaism through humanism, which, in the final analysis, is even closer to the vision of the late *Haskalah* than to Nietzsche and neoromanticism.

The context of Buber's renewal of Judaism lies also behind the widely popular journal, self-confidently called *Der Jude,*[35] which he founded and edited from 1916 to 1924, creating a uniquely Pan-Jewish forum of discourse that still remains the most comprehensive document of German–Jewish culture of that era. Unique was also the interconfessional journal *Die Kreatur,* which Buber edited between 1926 and 1930, together with the Catholic theologian Joseph Wittig and the Protestant psychotherapist and intellectual Viktor von Weizäcker. Both enterprises testify to Buber's inclusive, yet not unpolemic vision of Judaism.

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A certain process of universalization still must be observed in Martin Buber's thought. Appearing in the line of self-confessed mysticism, Hasidism, and Judaism is a shift toward religion in general, whereas in the line of Zionism, nationalism, and (religious) socialism there appears to be a shift toward the phenomenon of community. Both are changes in perspective, rather than content, which coincide with Buber's turn (or return) to philosophy and theory as well as his turn to academic life.

Becoming an academic teacher was a choice neither envisioned nor seriously prepared for by Buber. His doctoral dissertation, submitted to the University of Vienna in 1904 after a relatively long course of study, was never published,[36] and a habilitation (a second and larger dissertation qualifying one to teach at a university) in art history was never begun.[37] After his university studies (in philosophy and art history) and a year of research and rest in Florence, Buber turned to freelance writing and occasional editing as a profession, living first in Berlin (from 1906 to 1916), and then in Heppenheim, a small picturesque town in the heart of Germany. In 1923, when Buber was offered a lectureship in Jewish religious studies (*jüdische Religionswissenschaft*) and ethics, which was later converted into an adjunct professorship in the general study of religion at the University of Frankfurt, the personal files still listed his profession as "*Schriftsteller*" (writer).[38]

At the University of Frankfurt, Buber taught a variety of courses on the general theory of religion and biblical Judaism from 1924 until April 1933, when he resigned from his post before being officially suspended by the National Socialists in October of the same year.[39] How seriously Buber took the systematic, if not strictly academic, study of religion became evident from his plans as early as January 1916[40] to develop the foundations of a "social- and religious-philosophical system" in a five-volume work, whose "Prolegomena" and first volume was to be a slim book published in December 1922—*I and Thou* (see p. 181 in this volume). At that time, the dialogical principle, so central to his work and indeed Buber's entire frame of thought, was still subordinate—even though essential—to his general understanding of religion. This is also true of a series of earlier lectures, "Religion as Presence" (see p. 169 in this volume), that Buber delivered between January and March 1922 at the Frankfurt Lehrhaus, the leading institution of Jewish adult education at the time. Although the audience was predominantly Jewish, the tenor in the lectures was no longer "renewal" in the charged language of Jewish youth movements but one of historical and comparative study introducing the dialogical element as an explanatory model in the theory of religion. The problem of mystical experience was transformed into one of religious encounter, a deliberate self-critique of Buber's earlier approach, anticipating the fundamental ideas of *I and Thou,* which was completed precisely during that time. Despite the primarily theoretical concerns, however, the audience and reader of both texts could hardly ignore the strong normative impetus already inherent in Buber's conception of dialogue, as well as its groundedness in biblical Jewish thinking.[41]

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Together with the search for principles in the religious experience, and the reevaluation of the term "experience" itself, the most dramatic shift Buber made in *I and Thou* was a conscious turn toward language. With the "realization" of religion and the hauling in of the mystical union to the sphere of concrete "presence" (*Gegenwart*), which, in German, connotes both "presence" and "present time," Buber arrived at a conception of religious encounter that occurs in the temporal space of language—that is language and can only be represented through a process of thought that remains within the concrete temporality of language—*Sprachdenken*. Dialogue, for Buber, became the format of revelation, with God addressing the human individual as a "You" in the concrete flow of time, rendering revelation itself time bound. In this sense, "religiosity" is the temporalization of religion; and for Buber, just as true dialogue is free of content, religiosity is content-free and necessarily free of timeless laws and doctrines. By analogy, human encounter can be conceived as an act of speech operating with the two basic "word-pairs" that determine our attitude toward the world we live in—"I-You" and "I-It." For Buber, the human "I" is never a single "I" but always in relation: "Saying I and saying one of the two basic words are the same" (From *I and Thou,* p. 182 in this volume). In speaking one of the basic words, we determine our relation as one of subject-object ("I-It"), which can be lifted out of time, recorded, and described because it is essentially static, or as one of "meeting" ("I-You"), which must remain in time, for there is no permanence but only "becoming" (*werden*). It is in speaking "I-You" that the "I" becomes "I," and it is in our encounter with the "spoken word" of God that God becomes God. The human condition, which, for Buber, was an essentially interhuman one, is defined by a duality of attitude (*Grundhaltung*) expressed in the basic word-pairs and the creative tension between them. Ontologically, our choice of attitude reflects a form of being. The "I" of "I-It" is not the same as the "I" of "I-You." Just as we cannot live permanently in the "I-You" act of speech, we cannot live authentically in the "I-It" speech of observation. And just as mysticism and ecstasy remove the individual, now dissolved in a cosmic unity, from its social responsibilities, the "response-ability" of the "I," its individuality fully affirmed, becomes the single moral imperative in the social sphere of the interhuman.

One may look at Buber's dialogical philosophy as a logical extension of his antithetical themes of culture/civilization, community/society, and religion/religiosity. The focus on language, however, though a bit blurry compared to the synchronous philosophies of Franz Rosenzweig and Ferdinand Ebner, is a conspicuous turn in Buber's development in the 1920s. Only in the late 1920s, perhaps not untouched by the rise of existentialism and an increasing I-Thou discourse permeating philosophy and Christian theology,[42] did Buber develop his dialogical thought as an area independent, though not detached, from his scholarship in religion.

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The shift from a primarily religious to a more philosophical orientation is apparent in both content and form. His essay "Philosophical and Religious World View" (p. 219 in this volume) appeared in 1928; "Religion and Philosophy" (p. 223 in this volume) in 1929; and *Eclipse of God,* Buber's most systematic engagement with twentieth-century philosophy, in 1952. Using an overall philosophical terminology, Buber problematized philosophy, truth, and epistemology, applying dialogical categories. In contrast to *I and Thou,* written in the magical, visionary style of German literary expressionism,[43] Buber's later dialogical writings, *Dialogue* of 1929 (p. 189 in this volume), *The Question to the Single One* of 1936, and *Elements of the Interhuman* of 1954 (p. 214 in this volume), resorted to a relatively unassuming language, combining elements of philosophical existentialism (which Buber, like many other existentialists, rejected), contemporary German philosophy, and of course his own unique linguistic twists. In this capacity, Buber's later writings on dialogue served as clarifications and reinterpretations of the rather poetic *I and Thou,* expanding its social and anthropological dimensions; and similar to most interpretative traditions, it befits Buber to be read backwards.

With regard to Buber's Jewish writings, his appointment at the University of Frankfurt and the shift toward the study of religion and philosophy seemed to be a move away from particular Jewish concerns. Although Buber's appointment was in what would be "Jewish studies" today, his lectures avoided specifically Jewish sources like Rabbinics and liturgy and approached Judaism from the angles of comparative religion, history, or philosophy, but most frequently from a biblical view all of which were perfectly accessible to students of a Christian background.[44]

In these years, Buber emerged both as a biblical scholar and a translator of the Bible. Approached by the young publisher Lambert Schneider in 1925 to revise the existing translations of the "Old Testament," Buber, together with Franz Rosenzweig, undertook the famous *Verdeutschung* of Hebrew Scripture, following a model of recreating the poetic rhythm, stylistic and linguistic peculiarities, and "spokenness" and dialogical quality of the Hebrew original in German. The translation itself was primarily an attempt at reconnecting a largely assimilated Jewish readership, illiterate in Hebrew, with a genuine Hebrew tradition; but it also aimed at correcting the image imprinted on German readers by the still prevalent Luther Bible. With Rosenzweig's untimely death in 1929, Buber continued the project by himself, constantly revising the earlier drafts and printed versions, until it was completed in Jerusalem in 1961.

It is important to remember that Buber's scholarship on the Hebrew Bible also coincided with the rise of National Socialism in Germany. In 1933, the year of Hitler's ascent to power, Buber published his essays, "Biblical Leadership" (p. 33 in this volume) and "Biblical Humanism" (p. 46 in this volume), as well as an excerpt from his translation of Isaiah, "The Consolation of Israel," the first volume of the widely popular Schocken Bücherei. In 1936, a year after the proclamation of the

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Nuremberg Laws completing the disfranchisement of Jews in Germany, Buber published a translation of 23 Psalms (*Aus Tiefen rufe ich Dich*), a second, expanded edition of *Kingship of God,* and an essay, "The Man of Today and the Jewish Bible" (p. 51 in this volume). In 1938, the year of *Kristallnacht* (crystal night) and his emigration, Buber published an essay, "The Election of Israel" (p. 23 in this volume). Given this historical context, one must view Buber's biblical scholarship not only as a corollary of his Bible translation but also as a veiled commentary on and intellectual resistance to Nazism. Using the Bible as a source common to Jews and Christian Germans, Buber's essays invoke biblical values against the idols of nationalism, and biblical humanism against the destruction of humanity. Hidden from an all-pervasive censorship, their subtexts served as vehicles of accusation and hope, calling upon a community in fear to resist and remain true to its past: "This stormy night," wrote Buber in 1933, "these shafts of lightning flashing down, this threat of destruction—do not escape from them into a world of logos, of perfected form! Stand fast, hear the word in the thunder, obey, respond!" (Biblical Humanism [1933], p. 50).

In retrospect, Buber's tone of defiance and unswerving adherence to humanistic ideals seemed tragically unwise. But in the years between 1933 and 1938, Buber exercised immense influence on a subculture of Jewish learning that had hitherto been unparalleled.[45] Forced to leave his home in Germany in 1938, Buber immigrated to Palestine and settled in Jerusalem. An outwardly secular but also an antitraditional Jew, albeit with a strong Jewish identity and religious commitment, Buber was barred from teaching religion at the still young Hebrew University of Jerusalem because of a "veto" by a group of Orthodox Jews, who were rightly disconcerted about his radical reinterpretation of Judaism.[46] Buber was offered a position in social philosophy instead, which he filled from 1938 until his retirement in 1951. During that time he became not only the first chairman of sociology but also the first president of the Israel National Academy of Sciences and Humanities. Always vocal and controversial, Buber remained a fixture in Jerusalem who was made an honorary citizen and received birthday greetings from his "friend, admirer, and opponent" David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel.[47]

During his appointment at the Hebrew University, two further shifts can be observed in Martin Buber's thought. First, there was a turn toward the study of social philosophy which, quite naturally, followed from Buber's academic teaching and his earlier concerns with the possibility of community. We have seen that Buber's concept of community could not readily be detached from his concept of religiosity. For a short period of time, Buber even toyed with the idea of establishing a group of "Jewish religious socialists" modeled after similar Christian groups, and in April 1928 he and the Swiss Protestant theologian Leonhard Ragaz organized a convention to this effect in Heppenheim, under the heading, "Socialism through Faith" (*Sozialismus aus dem Glauben*) (see Three Theses of a Religious Socialism [1928], p. 258 in this volume). In contrast, Buber's

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approach to social philosophy at the Hebrew University seemed much more historical, analytical, descriptive, and in line with his editing of *Die Gesellschaft*. But there was also a practical tendency in Buber's academic work, as his student and later eminent Israeli sociologist Shmuel N. Eisenstadt remembers: The students were encouraged to conduct empirical studies on the social structure of the *Yishuv* (the Jewish community in Palestine) and the cooperative settlements (Moshavim and Kibbutzim) to test their validity for authentic human relationships.[48]

In a second, parallel turn, Buber began to develop a philosophical, "integrative" anthropology[49] of his own. *The Problem of Man,* a collection of seminars on the history of philosophical anthropology conducted in 1938 at the Hebrew University, appeared first in Hebrew in 1943.[50] "Distance and Relation" (p. 206 in this volume), which Buber considered the first foundation (*Begründing*) of his anthropology, appeared in 1950; *Man and His Image-Work,* an anthropology of art, in 1955; "What Is Common to All," in 1956; "Guilt and Guilt Feelings," in 1957; and "The Word That Is Spoken," in 1960. Together, these texts form a rather loose segment in Buber's collected works of 1962 under the heading, "Philosophical Anthropology."[51] Significantly, Buber, then 83 years of age, described himself as an anthropological thinker, or philosophical anthropologist, whose work and thought were devoted to an understanding of the "fact of man."[52] The dialogical principle, then, became once more part of a larger methodological framework. Anthropology, the science of man, is now concerned not with human nature and species, not with the "existence" of the individual nor with the fabric of the collective, but with man insofar as man is possible in relation to other beings. "Only the man who realizes in his whole life with his whole being the relations possible to him helps us to know man truly," wrote Buber in 1947.[53] In 1963, Maurice Friedman edited Buber's anthropological essays in English under the title The *Knowledge of Man,* introducing the volume as the completion of the "last and one of the most significant stages in the development of his [Buber's] philosophical thought, and in particular his philosophical anthropology, his study of what is peculiar to man as man."[54] The book, redacted by Buber, appeared in 1965, the year of his death.

There is a third aspect that emerges from Buber's life in Jerusalem. Although Buber had left the Zionist platform decades before, he still remained a Zionist in his own way and a relentless critic of what he deemed Zionist *Realpolitik,* as opposed to his own "*Wirklichkeitszionismus*" (Zionism of reality), in which the category of "realization" still resonated. Hence, it was possible for Buber in 1916 to defend Zionism against the "fictitious Judaism" of liberalism embodied by the Marburg philosopher, Hermann Cohen (see Concepts and Reality [1916], p. 263 in this volume) while, at the same time, to attack the Zionism of a *sacro egoismo* (see Zionism and Nationalism [1929], p. 277 in this volume). In 1925, when the right-wing, militant party of Revisionism was formed under Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky in response to the mounting friction between Arabs and

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Jews under the British mandate power, a group of Jewish intellectuals led by Arthur Ruppin founded B'rith Shalom (Peace Association) to promote Arab–Jewish dialogue and understanding "on the basis of absolute political equality of two cultural autonomous peoples."[55] Buber, whose ideas informed much of the German chapter of the association, actively joined B'rith Shalom while still in Germany and later (in 1942) became one of the founding members of *Ichud* (Union), a group associated with the League for Jewish–Arab Rapprochement and Cooperation (which Buber also helped found in 1939); the group promoted a model of cultural, social, political, and economic union between Jews and Arabs—nothing short of a "revival of the whole Semitic world."[56] As such, the *Ichud* rejected outright the partition into separate Jewish and Arab states (models of which were proposed by Victor Jacobson in 1932, the Peel Commission in 1937, and the United Nations in 1947) and also clashed with the Biltmore Program of May 1942 that David Ben-Gurion had initiated to facilitate the mass immigration of Jewish refugees from Europe—an urgent necessity at the time—with effective partition in mind.[57] In May 1948, when the Yishuv, led by David Ben-Gurion, unilaterally proclaimed independence and statehood, Buber revisited the act as one of "national assimilation," mere satisfaction of the "protective" tendency in Zionism, a yearning for sovereignty rather than true independence, and ultimately a blaspheming of the name of Zion (see Zionism and "Zionism" [1948], p. 289 in this volume) Yet, as a Zionist of "*Wirklichkeit*" (reality), Buber was well aware that the war that had broken loose could become a war of national survival at any moment: "Thus against my will I participate in it with my own being, and my heart trembles like that of any other Israeli" (see Zionism and "Zionism" [1948], p. 291). But Buber added: "I cannot, however, be joyful in anticipating victory, for I fear lest the significance of Jewish victory be the downfall of Zionism" (see Zionism and "Zionism" [1948], p. 291). Clutching to the ideal of Hebrew humanism and prophetic history, which were bound together by the reality of an ever new, unpredictable situational encounter, Buber continued to believe in Zionism as a "greater" task and in the possibility of true coexistence between Arabs and Jews until the end of his life.

The question of what is essential in Martin Buber's writings can now be addressed again. We have seen that Buber was a man of extraordinary versatility who continuously reinvented himself and was able to embark on parallel trains of thought. With the formulation of the dialogical principle, Buber became an increasingly systematic, unsystematic thinker, applying the model of dialogue to virtually all areas of thought. On the other hand, as readers of his work, we, too, are tempted to apply the model of dialogue to all of his writings, even before it was created.

As a "philosopher of dialogue" Buber was also introduced to an American audience in the early 1950s. Buber himself visited the United States on three separate lecture trips, once in 1951–1952, then in 1957, and again in 1958. His dialogical philosophy left strong impressions with

the Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, and the young Jewish thinkers Will Herberg and Arthur Cohen, to mention only a few, but also with the psychotherapists Leslie H. Farber and Carl R. Rogers.[58]

For about two decades Martin Buber's ideas were vividly discussed in philosophy departments and divinity schools, together with the reception of existentialist thought and, in fact, frequently as a "Jewish" exponent of it.[59] With the gradual waning of the existentialist mood at American and European universities, however, Buber all but vanished from the platform of academic philosophy while his dialogical writings continued to inform many liberal Christian thinkers, theologians, and interfaith programs in America and Europe.[60] But this development should not obscure the fact that Buber's ideas anticipated and, as an undercurrent, still sustain much of the philosophical discourse on the "Other," human rights, conflict solution, education, and mental therapy. Likewise, Buber's addresses on Judaism have lost none of their appeal for many young Jews in America and still play a critical role for Jewish spirituality and renewal movements in our days.[61]

The current scholarly interest in Buber has shifted from general philosophy to Jewish studies, particularly history. Indeed, the intellectual history of early twentieth century Europe, the history of Zionism, and the history of the State of Israel would be substantially incomplete without reference to Buber's work, as would be the study of Hasidism and biblical criticism. Recent scholarship has made available many earlier sources that had been neglected under the focus on Buber's dialogical period and that can now help us paint a more differentiated image of Buber's thought.[62]

The Buber who emerges at the center of this image is a dynamic thinker of great intellectual elasticity and complexity, shaped by an evolving vision of humanism and humanity, or what might be called normative anthropology. The insight that humanity is an unscripted process of interhuman events was Buber's major contribution to twentieth-century thought. In essence, Buber could be described as an eminent *public intellectual* whose deeply felt, unconventional Jewishness was a source of pride, open-mindedness, and moral commitment, and whose work felt most at home outside the walls of the academy as well as, it should be noted, outside the walls of synagogues.[63]

In this volume, "essential" is understood as a collection of representative writings in the most pronounced areas of Martin Buber's productivity that can be viewed together in a coherent manner. These areas are in thematical rather than historical order: Bible, Hasidism, Judaism and Jewish religiosity, dialogue and anthropology, philosophy and teaching, community, and Zionism. The list is obviously incomplete, for there are also the areas of aesthetics, psychology and psychotherapy, mysticism, and literary interpretation; nor can the plotting of areas be a distinct separation. On the contrary, such a separation would necessarily be at odds with Buber's organic style of thought. Furthermore, since maintaining a certain coherence always involves a process of censorship, many of

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Buber's earlier writings that have been mentioned above could not be included, for they are so far removed from the central body of his work that their significance is apparent often only to the specialist. This collection, nonetheless, tries to incorporate some of the quasi-apocryphical texts to the extent that they are consistent and compatible with Buber's mature thought. Many of the sources had to be carefully condensed and reedited. Omitted passages are marked with ellipses ("..."), and significant variants in text and translation (all existing translations have been reviewed) are indicated in the accompanying notes. The format of this volume, however, does not allow it to be a textual-critical edition. An editor's note has been provided where contextual understanding is necessary. Notes that were included by Buber in the original text are marked (M.B.); if they were provided by other editors, the name of the editor will appear in parentheses. The bibliographical information for each selection generally includes the first printing in the original language and the actual English source used for this volume. It should also be noted that the use of "man" for the German *Mensch* in earlier translations generally indicates a gender-inclusive reading.

I would like to thank Judith Buber-Agassi, the executer of the Martin Buber estate, whose initiative and vision have made this collection possible. My thanks to Rick Balkin, our agent, who has represented the book and its author with great knowledge and enthusiasm. I am also grateful to the staff at Palgrave for their professional assistance and conscientious, thoughtful copyediting of the manuscript. To Paul Mendes-Flohr I should express my deep gratitude for his critical and constructive advice in the final stages of the book. I am indebted to my wife, Dalia, for her careful reading of the text, and to our children, Natan and Gidon, whose patience and impatience have made it possible to complete the reader.

Asher D. Biemann
Cambridge, Massachusetts
November 2001

Notes

1. On the concept of *Bildung* among German Jews, see especially George L. Mosse, *German Jews Beyond Judaism* (Bloomington and Cincinnati: Indiana University Press and Hebrew Union College Press, 1985). That Buber was fully aware of this tradition becomes obvious in his essay "Goethe's Concept of Humanity," written for the 1949 Goethe Bicentennial Convocation at Aspen, Colorado ("Das Reinmenschliche," in *Pointing the Way. Collected Essays,* ed. and trans. Maurice Friedman [New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957], pp. 74–80). Since Buber was unable to attend, the essay was read by Ernst Simon, who contributed an essay himself to the convocation, "Goethe und der religiöse Humanismus" (English) in Goethe and the Modern Age, ed. Arnold Bergstrasser (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1950), pp. 304–25.
2. On Buber's own account of his childhood and heritage, see his "Autobiographical Fragments," in *The Philosophy of Martin Buber* (Library of Living Philosophers, vol. 12), eds. Paul A. Schilpp and Maurice Friedman (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1967), pp. 3–39. For comprehensive biographical

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information, see Hans Kohn, *Martin Buber—Sein Werk und seine Zeit. Ein Beitrag zur Geistesgeschichte Mitteleuropas 1880–1930,* with a postscript by Robert Weltsch, "Martin Buber 1930–1960" (Cologne: Joseph Melzer, 1961); Maurice Friedman, *Martin Buber's Life and Work* Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988); on Buber's earlier years, see Gilya Gerda Schmidt, *Martin Buber's Formative Years: From German Culture to Jewish Renewal, 1897–1909* (Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 1995); for recent scholarship, see Martin Treml's introduction to the *Martin Buber Werkausgabe,* vol. 1 (Frühe kulturkritische und philosophische Schriften, 1891–1924) (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2001).

3. Cf. Martin Buber, "My Way to Hasidism," in *Hasidism and Modern Man,* ed. and trans. Maurice Friedman (New York: Horizon Press, 1958), p. 55. Buber stopped putting on his *tefillin* (small ritual leather boxes worn during prayer) at age 14 and never returned to them. See Buber's letter to Franz Rosenzweig of 1 October 1922, translated in Franz Rosenzweig, *On Jewish Learning* (New York: Schocken, 1965), p. 110.
4. Beginning in 1905 with "Der Rabbi und sein Sohn—Eine Legende, dem Rabbi Nachman von Bratzlaw nacherzählt" (*Ost und West* 5, July–August 1905).
5. Buber enrolled at the University of Vienna in 1896 but went on to study in Leipzig (winters 1897–98 and 1898–99), then Zurich (summer 1899), Berlin (winters 1899–1900 and 1900–01), and then again in Vienna, where he graduated in 1904.
6. On the reception of Buber's Hasidic writings, see Paul Mendes-Flohr, "Begegnungen und Vergegnungen: Die Rezeption Martin Bubers im Judentum," in *Martin Buber (1878–1965). Internationales Symposium zum 20.* Todestag, eds. Werner Licharz and Heinz Schmidt (Arnoldshainer Texte, vol. 57), vol. 1 (Frankfurt/M.: Haag & Herchen, 1989), p. 242. Along with Bloch and Rathenau, Mendes-Flohr mentions Georg Lukàcs, as well as the American counterculture icon Norman Mailer.
7. Hasidism indeed became a preferred subject for young Jewish rebels, as well as neo-Romantic intellectuals at that time. As early as 1862, Moses Hess referred to Hasidism as a "transition from mediaeval Judaism to a regenerated Judaism" and expected an incalculable "great good which will result from a combination of Chasidism with the national movement." See Moses Hess, *Rome and Jerusalem, the Last Nationalist Question,* trans. Meyer Waxman (London and Nebrasaka: University of Nebraska Press, 1995 [reprint]), p. 247f., Note 5. Likewise, the historian Simon Dubnow and the revolutionary Hebrew publicist Micha Yosef Berdichevski began to value Hasidism in their work at about the same time as Buber did. Berdichevski, in fact, contacted Buber about a "society for the collection of Jewish legends and fables (see letter to Buber, 28 February 1909, in *Martin Buber. Briefwechsel aus sieben Jahrzehnten,* ed. Grete Schaeder [Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider, 1973] [henceforth referred to as *Briefwechsel I, II, or III*], vol. 1, p. 273). Buber also intended to coedit a *Corpus Hasidicum* with the Hebrew writer Samuel Yosef Agnon, which was, however, abandoned after Agnon's collection of Hebrew sources went up in flames in 1924. The preface to Buber's *The Great Maggid* (1923), however, still credits Agnon with supplying at least some of the material. Note also S. Schechter, *Die Chassidim. Eine Studie über jüdische Mystik* (Leipzig: Jüdischer Verlag, 1909) and Samuel A. Horodezky's *Religiöse Strömungen im Judentum, mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Chassidismus* (Bern: E. Bircher, 1920).

   On the resurgent interest in Hasidism, see also Paul Mendes-Flohr: "Fin de Siècle Orientalism, the *Ostjuden* and the Aesthetics of Self-Affirmation," in *Divided Passions: Jewish Intellectuals and the Experience of Modernity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991); Michael Brenner: *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996). See also the essay by Barbara Galli, "Nathan Birnbaum's Reaction to Buber's Retelling of rabbi Nachman of Bratslav's Tales," in *The Journal of Jewish Thought & Philosophy,* vol. 10, no. 2 (2001): 313–39.
8. Cf. Buber, "My Way to Hasidism," p. 57.
9. On the intellectual roots of Buber's Jewish Renaissance, see Paul Mendes-Flohr, "Zarathustra's Apostle: Martin Buber and the Jewish Renaissance," in *Nietzsche and Jewish Culture,* ed. Jacob Glomb (London and New York: Routledge, 1997); also Asher D. Biemann, "The Problem of Tradition and Reform in Jewish Renaissance and Renaissancism," in *Jewish Social Studies* 8, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 58–87.
10. "Referat," *Stenographisches Protokoll der Verhandlungen des III. Zionistenkongresses,* Basel, 15–18 August 1899 (Vienna: Eretz Israel, 1899). Quoted in Kohn, *Martin Buber,* p. 27. This idea was especially emulated by the members of the Prague student group Bar Kochba, where Buber delivered his first addresses on Judaism (1909–11). In 1911 Hugo Bergman, on whose initiative

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Buber had been invited, proposed the idea of a "greater Zionism" that could form "a living community to which nothing human is alien" ("Größerer Zionismus," in Bergman, *Jawne und Jerusalem. Gesammelte Aufsätze* [Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1919], p. 10). In an essay of 1918, he writes, "If the Jewish movement ought to be more than a multiplication of existing nationalisms, if it ought to become a force in human history, then it must aim for a Jewish worldview." (*Jerubbaal: Zeitschrift der jüdischen Jugend* 1 [1918–19], p. 38). Meir Wiener, in the same publication, demands an "enlightened [*geläuterte*] Zionist worldview" (ibid., p. 71). A few years later Max Brod and Felix Weltsch collaborated on a volume entitled *Zionism as Worldview* (*Zionismus als Weltanschauung* [Mährisch/Ostrau: R. Färber, 1925]).

11. On the Democratic Fraction, see Gideon Shimoni, *Zionist Ideology* (Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press, 1995), p. 213; 281f.; Michael Berkowitz, *Zionist Culture and Western European Jewry before the First World War* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), p. 43f.
12. See, for example, Buber's "Ways to Zionism" of 1901, in *The First Buber: Youthful Zionist Writings of Martin Buber,* ed. and trans. Gilya Gerda Schmidt (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1999), pp. 105-9.
13. On Buber's Zionism, see Paul Mendes-Flohr, "Das Volk des Bundes und seine politisch-moralische Verantwortung. Bubers Zionismus und der Staat Israel," in *Martin Buber (1878–1965),* vol. 2, eds. Licharz and Schmidt, pp. 203-21. That Buber's attitude toward nationalism was not one of clearly defined national humanism until after World War I was indicated by Hans Kohn (cf. *Martin Buber,* p. 163) and demonstrated by Paul Mendes-Flohr, who sees in Gustav Landauer's harsh criticism of Buber's initially enthusiastic response to the war (shared with many other German Jews) a turning point in Buber's attitude toward nationalism and Zionism (cf. Paul Mendes-Flohr, *Von der Mystik zum Dialog. Martin Bubers geistige Entwicklung bis hin zu "Ich und Du"* [Königstein/Ts: Jüdischer Verlag, 1978]. English: *From Mysticism to Dialogue* [Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989], especially chapter 5). An article on Buber's early Zionism is Martina Urban, "In Search of a 'Narrative Anthology': Reflections on an Unpublished Buber-Manuscript," in *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 7 (2000): 252–88.
14. Martin Buber: "Jewish Renaissance" (1901), in *The First Buber,* ed. Schmidt, p. 32; 34.
15. See also Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture,* p. 220.
16. "Kultur und Zivilisation—Einige Gedanken zu diesem Thema," *Kunstwart* 4, no. 15 (May 1901).
17. "Al Mahuta shel ha-Tarbut" (Hebrew, 1943), in Martin Buber, *Pnei Adam: Bechinot be-Anthropologia pilosofit* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1962), p. 378.
18. On Buber's impact on the creation of Jewish art, see Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, "Defining 'Jewish Art' in Ost und West, 1901–1908. A Study in the Nationalisation of Jewish Culture," in *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook,* 39 (1994): pp. 83–110.
19. Cf. Mendes-Flohr, *From Mysticism to Dialogue,* p. 11.
20. Buber, "My Way to Hasidism," p. 57.
21. See Ulrich Linse, ed., *Zurück o Mensch zur Mutter Erde: Landkommunen in Deutschland 1890–1933* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1983).
22. Heinrich and Julius Hart, *Das Reich der Erfüllung,* no. 2 (Leipzig: Eugen Diederichs, 1900), p. 92. Quoted in Kohn, *Martin Buber,* p. 294.
23. "Alte und neue Gemeinschaft," manuscript; now, Paul R. Flohr and Bernard Susser in *Association of Jewish Studies Review* 1 (1976): pp. 50–6. In English translation as appendix to Mendes-Flohr, *From Mysticism to Dialogue.*
24. Martin Buber, "Preface to 'Die Gesellschaft'," in *On Intersubjectivity and Cultural Creativity,* ed. and introduction by Eisenstadt (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1992), p. 94f.
25. Buber, "Autobiographical Fragments," p. 26.
26. Ludwig Feuerbach, *Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft* (Zurich and Winterthur: Verlag des literarischen Comptoirs, 1843), Preface.
27. Martin Buber, "Ein Wort über Nietzsche und die Lebenswerte," *Die Kunst im Leben* 1, no. 2 (December 1900): 13; also, "Zur Geschichte des dialogischen Prinzips," in Martin Buber, *Werke I* (Schriften zur Philosophie) (Munich: Kösel and Lambert Schneider, 1962), p. 291f.
28. Cf. Hasidism and Modern Man (1956) (pp. 87 and 92 in this volume).
29. Cf. Jewish Religiosity (1923) (p. 123 in this volume).
30. Cf. Georg Simmel, *Die Religion* (Die Gesellschaft, Band II) (Frankfurt/M.: Rütten & Loening, 1906).
31. Jewish Religiosity (1923) (p. 121 in this volume).
32. Ibid., p. 115.

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PART I

Bible

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established by just this relationship. "Visit upon" (*paqad*) in its precise sense means that someone is given what he deserves—either good or ill, reward or punishment. Israel alone has God set into such a relationship with Him that it can fail in this relationship and that all its failings are judged and punished in accordance with this relationship. As we learn from the great speech of rebuke (Amos 1:3–2:3), the other peoples must also atone for the historical iniquities they have committed in their national lives. But *their* faithlessness (*pesha*) consists in their pridefully doing evil to *one another* when they were put into their new lands to live together peacefully. Israel alone can at the same time offend against *God* by repudiating His teaching (Torah), for Israel alone has received it (Amos 2:4). Only Israel, during its wanderings, learned through revelation that its guiding power was not *its* God but *God:* the "God of hosts" (nine times in Amos), who guides the hosts of the cosmic powers as He guides the hosts of Israel, who as Creator also creates the spirit of man and as Revealer tells him what His intention is (Amos 4:13). However, this revelation did not befall Israel as a noncommitting announcement of the state of things but as entry into a *berith* with this God, into a covenant, a bond, an unconditionally committing union with Him. Historically, Israel enjoys no precedence over the others; superhistorically, it has precedence over them in this covenant, this subjection, this unconditional commitment in all commissions and omissions. In consequence thereof, any offense against the *berith* is "visited upon" it. That is the election of Israel. Only the call to a new generation leads out of the unconditionality of the judgment on the heaped-up offense: "Hate evil, and love the good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the Lord, the God of hosts, will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph" (Amos 5:15).

When God addresses the shepherd Moses from the Burning Bush of Sinai (Exod. 3), He first reveals to him that He is the God of the Fathers (Exod. 3:6). But then He begins the speech in which He sends Moses forth with the words, "I have surely seen the affliction of *my people* (*ammi*) that are in Egypt" (Exod. 3:7), and He finishes it with the words, ". . . that thou mayest bring forth *my people* the children of Israel out of Egypt!" (Exod. 3:10). Repetition at the beginning and end of a speech calls special attention to the significance of a word as a "key word."[3] For the first time since the promises to the Fathers, Scripture has God speaking about the people, and for the very first time about them already existing. The covenant has not yet been made, the people have not yet come "to Him" (Exod. 18:5), the encounter has not occurred; and yet, in anticipation, He already calls it His own, He already binds Himself to it.

But the dialogue at the Burning Bush continues, and the first key word, *ammi,* is followed by a second, which is brought into much sharper prominence than the first. In reply to Moses's objection that he is too weak and insignificant for such a mission (Exod. 3:11), God answers: "*Ki ehyeh imakh,* certainly I will be there with thee" (Exod. 3:12). This *ehyeh im* [I will be with], as assurance of God's direct support, recurs in two

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knew it and saw it, would not have been able to reach it without them. If, moreover, the lowest of them had left his place, then those above would have fallen to the earth. 'And the Temple of the Messiah is called the bird's nest in the book Zohar.'"

But it is not as if only the *zaddik's* prayer is received by God or as if only this prayer is lovely in his eyes. No prayer is stronger in grace and penetrates in more direct flight through all the worlds of heaven than that of the simple man who does not know anything to say and only knows to offer God the unbroken promptings of his heart. . . .

A villager who, year after year, attended the prayer house of the Baal-Shem in the "Days of Awe"[5] had a boy who was dull in understanding and could not even learn the shape of the letters, let alone understand the holy words. His father did not take him to the city on the "Days of Awe," for he knew nothing. Still when the boy was thirteen years old and of age to receive God's law, the father took him with him on the Day of Atonement that he might not eat something on the day of penance through lack of knowledge and understanding. Now the boy had a small whistle that he always played during the time he sat in the field and pastured the sheep and calves. He had brought it with him in his pocket without his father knowing it. The boy sat in the prayer house during the holy hours and did not have anything to say. But when the *Mussaf*[6] prayer was begun, he spoke to his father, "Father, I have my whistle with me, and I wish to play on it."

Then the father was very disturbed and commanded him, "Take care that you do not do so."

And the boy had to hold himself in. But when the *Mincha*[7] prayer came, he spoke again, "Father, allow me now to take my whistle."

When the father saw that his son's soul desired to play the whistle, he became angry and asked him, "Where do you keep it?" And when the boy showed him the place, his father laid his hand on the pocket and guarded the whistle. But then the *Neila*[8] prayer began, and the lights burned, flickering in the evening, and the hearts burned like the lights, unexhausted by the long waiting. And through the house the Eighteen Benedictions[9] strode once again, weary but erect. And the great confession returned for the last time and, before the evening descended and God judged, the worshippers lay yet once more before the Ark of the Lord, their foreheads on the floor and their hands extended. Then the boy could no longer suppress his ecstasy; he tore the whistle from his pocket and let its voice resound powerfully. All stood startled and bewildered. But the Baal-Shem raised himself above them and spoke, "The judgment is suspended, and wrath is dispelled from the face of the earth."

Thus, every service that proceeds from a simple or a unified soul is sufficient and complete. But there is yet a higher one. For he who has ascended from *avodah* to *hitlahavut* has submerged his will in it and receives his deed from it alone, having risen above every separate service. . . . He who thus serves in perfection has conquered the primeval

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duality and has brought *hitlahavut* into the heart of *avodah*. He dwells in the kingdom of life, and yet all walls have fallen, all boundary stones are uprooted, all separation is destroyed. He is the brother of the creatures and feels their glance as if it were his own, their step as if his own feet walked, their blood as if it flowed through his own body. He is the child[10] of God and lays his soul anxiously and securely in the great hand beside all the heavens and earths and unknown worlds, and stands on the flood of the sea into which all his thoughts and the wanderings of all beings flow. "He makes his body the throne of life, and life the throne of the spirit, and the spirit the throne of the soul, and the soul the throne of the light of God's glory, and the light streams round about him, and he sits in the midst of the light and trembles and rejoices."

Kavanah: Intention

Kavanah[11] is the mystery of a soul directed to a goal.

Kavanah is not will. It does not think of transplanting an image into the world of actual things—of making fast a dream as an object so that it may be at hand, to be experienced at one's convenience in satiating recurrence. Nor does it desire to throw the stone of action into the well of happening that its waters may for awhile become troubled and astonished, only to return then to the deep command of their existence, nor to lay a spark on the fuse that runs through the succession of the generations, that a flame may jump from age to age until it is extinguished in one of them without sign or leave-taking. It is not the meaning of *Kavanah* that the horses pulling the great wagon should feel one impulse more or that one building more should be erected beneath the overfull gaze of the stars. *Kavanah* does not mean purpose, but goal.

But there are no *goals,* only *the goal*. There is only one goal that does not lie, that becomes entangled in no new way, only one into which all ways flow, before which no byway can forever flee: redemption.

Kavanah is a ray of God's glory that dwells in each man and means redemption.

This is redemption, that the *Shekhinah* shall return home from its exile: "That all shells may withdraw from God's glory and that it may purify itself and unite itself with its owner in perfect unity." As a sign of this the Messiah will appear and make all beings free.

To many a Hasid, it is, for the whole of his life, as if this must happen here and now. For he hears the voice of becoming as it roars in the gorges and feels the seed of eternity in the ground of time as if it were in his blood. And so he can never think otherwise than that this moment, and now this one, will be the chosen moment. And his imagination compels him ever more fervently, for ever more commandingly speaks the voice and ever more demandingly swells the seed. . . .

Others, however, are aware of the progress of the stride, see the place and hour of the path and know the distance of the Coming One. Each

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thing shows them the uncompleted state of the world; the need of existence speaks to them, and the breath of the winds bears bitterness to them. The world in their eyes is like an unripe fruit. Inwardly they partake in the glory—then they look outward: All lies in battle.

When the great *zaddik,* Rabbi Menachem, was in Jerusalem, it happened that a foolish man climbed the Mount of Olives and blew the *shofar* (ram's horn trumpet). No one had seen him. A rumor spread among the people that this was the *shofar* blast that announced the redemption. When it came to the ears of the rabbi, he opened a window and looked out into the air of the world. And he said at once, "Here is no renewal."

This is the way of redemption: that all souls and all sparks of souls that have sprung from the primeval soul and have sunk and become scattered in all creatures at the time of the original darkening of the world or through the guilt of the ages should conclude their wandering and return home purified....

It is not only souls that are everywhere imprisoned but also sparks of souls. Nothing is without them. They live in all that is. Each form is their prison.

And this is the meaning and mission of *kavanah:* that it is given to men to lift up the fallen and to free the imprisoned. Not only to wait, not only to watch for the Coming One: Man can work toward the redemption of the world.

Just that is *kavanah:* the mystery of the soul that is directed to redeem the world....

Each man has a sphere of being, far extended in space and time, which is allotted to him to be redeemed through him. Places that are heavy with unraised sparks and in which souls are confined wait for the man who will come to them with the word of freedom....

However, though it is only the blessed ones who can plunge tranquilly into the darkness to aid a soul that is abandoned in the whirlpool of wandering, it is not denied to even the least of persons to raise the lost sparks from their imprisonment and send them home.

The sparks are to be found everywhere. They are suspended in things such as in sealed-off springs; they stoop in the creatures as in walled-up caves, they inhale darkness and they exhale dread; they wait. And those that dwell in space flit hither and thither around the movements of the world, like light-mad butterflies, looking to see which of them they might enter to be redeemed through them. They all wait expectantly for freedom....

But the liberation does not take place through formulas of exorcism or through any kind of prescribed and special action. All this grows out of the ground of otherness, which is not the ground of *kavanah.* No leap from the everyday into the miraculous is required. "With his every act man can work on the figure of the glory of God that it may step forth out of its concealment." It is not the matter of the action, but only its dedication that is decisive.... He who prays and sings in holiness, eats and

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