THE INFLUENCE OF HASIDISM
ON THE THOUGHT OF
MARTIN BUBER

by

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STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to show how the philosophy of dialogue developed by Martin Buber was based upon his early studies and research into the living philosophy of a new Jewish religious movement, the Hasidic movement, that emerged in the waning years of the eighteenth century in central and eastern Europe. The secondary foundation of Buber's philosophy is shown to be existentialism, particularly the writings of Søren Kierkegaard.

A short historical background of the rise of Hasidism is included. The fundamental ideas of Hasidism—immanence of God, the importance of the individual and his everyday life, and reciprocity of relationship—are basic in the formation of Buber's philosophy. The recurrence of these ideas in a new form is exhibited in Buber's concepts of relation, the I-Thou, I-It primary words. Also, Buber's framing of the idea of community and a comparison with other existential concepts of community are explained. The welding of the Hasidic statement with Buber's existentialist position is seen as the final step in the exposition of the philosophy of dialogue.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The history of man's quest to provide some meaning to his short visit to this earthly realm portrays a pitiful floundering between the whirlpool of his past and the enigma of his future. Every abstraction from his past experience is grounded as a foundation for his future; the fading light of yesterday is expected to guide him safely through the fog of today toward the promised brightness of tomorrow.

Vainly he tries to remember what other worlds he visited before reaching this particular planet, and strains to discover what new and different worlds lie ahead. But, sometime, in one or another of the countless generations of men, the aimless floundering gains new direction for a man appears who can sight on a meaning. Such a man was Martin Buber, who used his own lifetime for the quest. It is my aim to examine how one of history's beacons served to illuminate for Martin Buber, and through him the world, a good part, at least, of the real meaning of life for man on earth. That beacon was an episode of faith unmatched in the long history of man, namely, Hasidism, the "greatest phenomenon we know in the history of the spirit."¹

A. The "Enlightened Jew" Discovers Hasidism

Martin Buber, the 20th Century's greatest Jewish thinker, described variably as a scholar, a researcher, an avid Zionist, a Biblical analyst, the founder of his own neo-mysticism, and a Jewish existentialist, was born in Vienna, 1878, but was reared by his grandfather, Solomon Buber of Lemberg (Lvov). The seeds for the search were thus sown in extremely rich soil, for Solomon Buber's vast estate (he was an extremely wealthy and influential banker) served as a center for Jewish learning and scholarship. Martin's grandfather was an editor of rabbinic texts who spared no expense in the acquisition of old manuscripts and rare editions. Solomon Buber did extensive research into Jewish literature, organized compilations of the Haggadah, and editorialized many texts of the Midrash. Being raised in such a scholarly environment, young Martin was saturated with Talmudic knowledge and Biblical lore; and he developed a love for research and study, especially in the realms of religion and metaphysics. But the study of Jewish law and the practice of its tenets are two different things, for when Martin studied philosophy and the history of art at the Universities of Vienna, Leipzig, Berlin and Zurich, interspersed with a year's sojourn at Florence, he changed (as many of his generation did) from practicing religion to doing philosophy.

Concentrating on the sociology and philosophy of religion in contrast with the interpretation of dogma, as had his noble grandfather, he began to question positive knowledge in spiritual matters. He became an "enlightened" Jew, one of thousands of young German Jews who were throwing off the yoke of orthodoxy and seeking to modernize an ancient faith.

Earlier, much earlier, Martin Buber had been introduced to Hasidism. Quite possibly as a reaction to the "enlightenment", or just as possibly as a normal Sunday excursion to a county fair, Martin's father occasionally took him for a visit to a nearby Hasidic community.

In his essay, Mein Weg Zum Chassidismus, (My Road to Hasidism) Buber tells of how his father took him on occasional visits to the Hasidic community of Sadagora in Galicia when he was a child. Although estranged by the conspicuous grandeur of the zaddik and by the wild gestures of the Hasidim in prayer, when he saw the rebbe stride through the rows of the waiting, he felt that here was a leader, and when he saw the Hasidim dance with the Torah, he felt that here was a community.

B. Investigation and Response

But it was later, in his early twenties, that Buber literally fell in love with his research into Jewish mysticism and especially Hasidism, "the attraction of the movement being so strong that, in

1904, he withdrew from his active life of writing and lecturing and
devoted five years of intensive study to Hasidic teachings, "4 gathering
together all the stories, legends, and hand-me-downs of faith that he
could come by. The stock of Hasidic teachings in print at that time
was extremely small; for while the mystic teachings were popularized,
they had not been written down. The Hasidic disciples memorized the
preachments of their teachers. Not until over one hundred years had
gone by and Martin Buber's works appeared were the teachings and
pronouncements of the Baal-Shem-Tov and the following five genera-
tions of his disciples in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth cen-
turies made available to students outside the Hasidic community.

The fruits of Buber's steady probing were twofold: one sub-
jective and one objective. In the latter case Buber used Hasidism as
a message to the world, being "convinced that Hasidism, more than
any other teaching, has the power to remind modern man of what he is
in danger of forgetting, namely, for what purpose we are on earth."5
This pronouncement was distinctly against the disposition of the
Hasidim, for as Buber himself wrote, "Hasidism has never set foot

4. Buber, Martin, Tales of the Hasidim, The Later Masters

5. Buber, Martin, The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism,
edited and translated by Maurice S. Friedman (New York: Horizon
in the world of man as Christianity has done; because of its truth and because of the great need of the hour, I carry it into the world against its will."⁶ Internally the effect of Hasidism on Buber was more profound, for the teachings of the zaddikim influenced his entire life. They were the raw ore from which Buber mined his own philosophy of life and to which he gave his very own meaning. I shall examine these teachings in depth later. For now we can only envisage the deep meaning Martin Buber gleaned from his research into a hitherto unstudied and unpublished phenomenon within the Jewish faith. "It was this teaching of man's union with the world in God's sight, this answer to Spinoza's teaching, given by Hasidism, which struck so deeply into my life. Already early I dimly perceived, even while I defended myself against seeing it, that I was inevitably destined to love the world."⁷

"To love the world" is in essence Buber's great philosophy; for as he writes, "Man cannot love God in truth without loving the world,"⁸ and "You cannot truly love God if you do not love your fellow man and vice versa."⁹ What must Hasidism be and what must the

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6. Ibid., Author's Foreword, p. 22.
8. Ibid., p. 158.
9. Ibid., p. 165. This concept of the marriage of man's ethic with his religion is repeated by Buber in many of his writings. His later study of the New Testament, resulting in his great appreciation of the life of Jesus, together with his attachment with Zen Buddhism, did much to solidify these ideas.
zaddikim teach to elicit such a profound response? What was imparted from zaddik to zaddik, from chasid to chasid, from teacher to pupil, from rebe to student, and from all of these to Martin Buber to establish the real foundation for all of his philosophical inquiry and the final statement of his basic philosophy of dialogue? It is necessary in order to answer these questions to trace some small history of the Hasidic movement from its birth and examine the fundamentals of the message it imparted.
CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND FOR THE RISE OF THE HASIDIC MOVEMENT

A. The "Second Exile"—Expulsion of the Jews from Spain

In the same year that Christopher Columbus sailed across the seas to the western world, those same Spanish monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella, who dispatched the captain on his fateful journey, also sent an entire segment of the Spanish populace on its way, but in a decidedly different direction. In spite of the demurring of Pope Innocent VIII, the guile and goading of Torquemada finally bore fruit, and a royal edict was proclaimed: All Jews living within the borders of Spain and its possessions were given three choices—leave Spain immediately, be baptized into the Christian faith, or die. One can scarcely envisage the stunning force of such a decree upon more than one hundred fifty thousand bewildered inhabitants, who, though living under most difficult conditions in an alien land, were still Spanish citizens in their hearts. And one can only marvel that these people managed to sustain themselves against evil shipmasters, slave dealers, marauding pirates, and their ilk. Meanwhile, the work of conversion by the Church was vigorously pursued, and those who could not bear to leave their homeland wound up at the baptismal fount. Thousands upon thousands were slain; thousands embraced
Christianity, most of them in form only, remaining Jewish in their heart of hearts (the Maranos); and thousands fled to Italy, eastern Europe, northern Africa, the Balkan Peninsula, and every corner of the Ottoman Empire, including Palestine.

B. Dispersion and Persecution Throughout Eastern Europe

The Crusades, years earlier, had forced thousands of German Jews to migrate eastward. Poland protected the rights of the Jews, and the Lithuanian monarchy resisted the clerical intrigues and backbiting against them. But the royal resistance was subject to constant church prodding, and the Polish monarchs from 1450 forward turned inimical toward the Jewish population; the first ghetto was created by John I of Poland at Cracow. But constant persecution and the size of the Jewish population grew concomitantly, and by the time that Hasidism was to enter upon the European scene, there were over two million Jews in the Polish Empire, Hungary, Russia, and the Balkans. They were a hardened, obdurate people, accustomed to living the unprivileged, unsafe, uncitizened, disenfranchized life. They had been literally torn from the hearths of their homelands in Spain, England, France, and Germany, and had set down new roots in new lands, yet always aware that some new bigotry, some new hatred would tear them loose again and scatter them to the four corners of the earth.
C. Pogroms and Chmielnicki Murders

The Polish kings did not restrict their persecution to the Jews. They placed their heels to the necks of the entire Greek Orthodox Catholic subjects as well, which brought about the usual reaction to absolutism--popular uprising. "Fear of the Polish magnates put the notion into the head of the Cossack Bogdan Chmielnicki to unite with the Tartars in a determined onslaught upon Poland." The Jews were again caught between two opposing forces and the year 1648 was to become the blackest in the history of Eastern European Jewry until more modern times. Jews had been used by their Polish overlords as tax collectors, government agents, and commercial factors, the only trades left open to them. When the peasant army of Chmielnicki was victorious against the Polish army, it was a signal for the rest of the Russians, peasants and townsmen alike to arise and throw off the evil yoke.

And arise they did, spewing destruction and devastation with a wild fury unmatched since the time of the Hun and the Mongol. The Poles could not resist the ferocity of the onslaught, and to save their own necks in many cases, sacrificed their Jewish wards to the insatiate mobs. Fire and flame, torturing and maiming, rape and murder,

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became the bywords for every Jewish settlement in every city, town and hamlet in Poland, Lithuania, and the Ukraine. Between 1648 and 1658 upwards of one hundred thousand Jews were sacrificed on the altars of insanity, and many, many times that amount became refugees. But where to turn?

D. The False Messiah

The stage was thus set for the entrance of a Messiah—and one appeared. Sabbatai Zevi believed in his heart that he alone could lead the Jewish people to eternal redemption, and the people were ready for him. A people so persecuted, so driven in upon themselves, would logically accept anyone who claimed to be God's Messenger who would lead them to a better life, either on this earth or to the promised land in the hereafter. Sabbatai Zevi pointed the mass of the Jewish people toward religiosity and penitence. He reopened the mysteries of the Kaballah and led his people in. Faith was restored—and then the cruel blow fell. As the power of the Messiah grew, the temporal rulers of the Ottoman Empire discovered that Sabbatai Zevi was going to lead the people to the land of Israel to establish once more the Kingdom of Solomom. When Sabbatai reached Istanbul, he was seized by the Moslems and imprisoned. Whether through fear of his own death or dreading the Sultan's ravishing of his people throughout the Ottoman Empire (we shall never know), Sabbatai Zevi embraced
Islam. This ignoble act undermined the faith of the people in their God and plunged them into misery, the depths of which will never be fathomed.

Under constant pressure from the Christian world outside, deprived of every basic right, resigned to a life of poverty and starvation, despondent and despairing, dejected and utterly hopeless, the Jew reacted. The reaction thus provoked was a response in the form of a new-found piety, Hasidism, the "new method of serving God, addressing itself to the individual concerned with his own personal salvation."¹¹

CHAPTER III
FUNDAMENTALS OF HASIDISM

A. The Written Message--Talmud and Zohar

The appearance of the Baal-Shem-Tov is the fundamental fact of Hasidism. His real name was Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer (1700-1760), but he was more commonly known by the name above, the Baal-Shem-Tov, master of the good name of God. The fact that Israel ben Eliezer was a rabbi establishes the fundamental basis of Hasidism in Jewish principle, for Rabbi Israel was a Talmudic scholar, well versed and well practiced in the study of Torah, Mishna, and Talmud. The study of Jewish law is the Talmudic Halakah; the study of Jewish legend is the Talmudic Haggadah; the study of the Jewish mystical tradition, called Kabbalah, is the added ingredient which the Baal-Shem-Tov used to solidify his followers into a well-formed wholeness. "Within the context of post-biblical Judaism, Hasidism may be considered as a union of these three different currents."13

"The first revolt of the Am-Haaretz, the revolt of early Christianity, rushed out of the gates of Judaism. The second revolt,

the Hasidic one, remained within the confines of Judaism."14 Hasidism took over two ancient traditions: the ritual structure, as described in the Torah and amplified in the Talmud, and the Kabbalah, as described in the Zohar. The Sefer ha-Zohar, the main scholarly work setting forth the secrets of Kabbalah, has been attributed to Simeon ben Yohai, a rabbi of the second century. The basis for the mystic practices with which the Baal-Shem-Tov and his followers were to restabilize the Jewish faith is to be found in the Zohar. Discovered there are three distinct and important doctrines: (1) the transmigration of souls, (2) the impending advent of a Messiah, and (3) the potency of certain magical formulae. The Hasidim served the purpose of spreading these doctrines of the Kabbalah to the masses of the people; they took the secret, esoteric principles of the few and distributed them to the many. "In Hasidism the tendency to permeate the whole of religious life with mystical elements reaches its full development, accompanied by an extreme popularization of mysticism."15 This new movement appealed to the simple people; this new movement brought the uneducated commoners into direct contact with the mysteries of their religion; this new movement brought the wandering Jew into a closely knit communal life around the zaddik. But nothing new


was added to the precepts of their religion or to the Kabbalah; there was only a shift of emphasis to the practical side of the individual's life.

B. The Lived Message--Popularization of the Kabbalah

The development, study, and practice of Kabbalah, but with its magical core eviscerated, is the central idea of Hasidism. In the study of Kabbalah there are many essential questions: for instance, if God is unity, why duality? If God is, why the world? If God is infinite, how can there be anything outside Him? If God is eternal, wherefore the duration of time? If God is perfection, how could imperfection arise? If God is the unconditional, why the conditional? The answers to these questions and other questions of the same import, or rather the Kabbalistic attempts to find answers to these questions, are expounded in the paradoxes of an unshaken faith. All the presuppositions stated in the queries above are so because God willed to let relations emerge; God willed to be known; He willed to be loved; He willed to allow Otherness to emanate and strive toward Unity. For instance, to the question as to why God did not stop at the world of ideas, or as Martin Buber puts it, "Why could we not remain of the nature of luminiferous ether?" the Kabbalah answers that God,
wanted an independent Otherness, free in its knowing, free in its loving, free in its willing. He set it free. 16

C. The Change of Emphasis

"The name chasid which first appears in the Psalms with the meaning of 'pious' was applied in the time of the Maccabees to those Jews who most steadfastly resisted the Hellenistic tendencies of the day." 17 The foundation of that piety, so-called, came from certain texts in the Torah, particularly from Psalm CXI, Verse 10, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and from Job, XXVIII, Verse 28, "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding." The Baal-Shem-Tov reversed this emphasis on fear by insisting that piety should begin not from fear but rather from love and joy. To quote the Baal-Shem, "For the spiritual man the first service is love without mortification for others, to learn to see that there is a holy life in everything corporeal, and that one can carry back all to this root and hallow all." 18 What is important here is that this love is not general and impersonal; "it has to be quite concrete, direct and effective." 18 Human love is not the fulfillment

16. Op. Cit., Buber, Hasidism, pp. 64-65. Buber goes on to say that in our world, the world of Man, God's fate is being accomplished.


of a commandment coming from outside the world; it is the work of completion; as Rabbi Raphael once said, "A surplus of love is necessary to fill up what is lacking of love in this world." The three central virtues which were preached by the Baal-Shem-Tov were love, joy, and humility. Concerning love he said that the world was created out of love, and that the world was brought to perfection by love. Joy, secondly, is the knowledge of God's presence in all things. Finally, humility requires the denial of self although not self-negation. Man is the son of a King and is in part godly; and all these three central virtues can be attained through piety and prayer.

It is quite easy to see that with the shift of emphasis from a fear-inspired piety to a love-inspired piety there will be created an abnormal disturbance among the religious leaders and dogmatists who were wrapped up in a philosophy of religion extending back over three thousand years. The release from stringent dogma, the release from punishment inflicted because of strict adherence to the Shulchan Aruch, or Code of Jewish Law, can be imagined as the breaking forth of a chained prisoner from the narrow confines of his existence. From this background of persecution by their neighbors, from this background of persecution by the unchanging constrictions of their own religion, from this background of self-chastisement, Hasidism burst

19. Ibid., p. 86.
forth in a way that is unrivaled in the history of religion. Jacob Frank, another false Messiah, said that all leaders must be without religion. Other false prophets have made similar claims, but as Buber says, "The Baal-Shem himself belongs to those central figures in the history of religion who have done their work by living in a certain way, that is to say, not starting out from a teaching, but aiming toward a teaching, who have lived in such a way that their lives acted as a teaching, as a teaching not yet translated into words." 

D. Zaddikim and Hasidim

The followers of the Baal-Shem-Tov became known as zaddikim or leaders. These leaders formed the nuclei of different communities among the Jews all over middle and southeastern Europe during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. They were disciples of the Baal-Shem and served to perpetuate and continue his teachings. "The most important thing about these zaddikim is that each of them was surrounded by a community that lived a brotherly life, and who could live in this way, because there was a leading person in their midst who brought each one nearer to the other by bringing them all nearer to that in which they believed." At this point there must not arise any misconception that the way of life of the zaddikim and the hasidim


21. Ibid., p. 4.
was in any way monastic. They were part and parcel of the community forming a working segment of the commercial and social environment. They came from the farms and factories; they were shoemakers, bakers, candle-makers, carpenters, brewers, and pharmacists. They considered celibacy a profanation, yet sexuality shameful. Cleanliness before God in mind and body was essential, for one was required to approach his Maker as nearly perfect as he could.

To see them dancing in the streets of the ghettos with their arms wrapped around the Torah in the ecstasy of love for their God and His Law was the uplift of many a Jewish heart; to join in that ecstasy was the fate of thousands of Jews who left their own homes and joined the hasidic communities to study under the aegis of this zaddik or that. The zaddik became the hasidic saint. It was a case of the personality of the individual replacing the doctrine of faith, and by that "what was lost in rationality by this change was gained in efficacy."

The zaddikim, which originally translates as "the righteous," but which actually means, "those who have stood the test," or, "those who have been proven," were men who lived by the basic, fundamental teachings of the Baal-Shem-Tov. The zaddik became dependent upon the hasid, and the hasid was dependent upon his zaddik. The lives of

the zaddikim were governed by the needs of others. Rabbi Moshi Leib of Sasov, a famous zaddik, said, "If someone comes to you and asks your help, you shall not turn him off with pious words, saying, 'Have faith and take your troubles to God!' You shall act as if there were no God, as if there were only one person in all the world who could help this man—only yourself!" Another famous zaddik, Rabbi Barukh, said,

Every man has the vocation of making perfect something in this world. The world has need of every single human being. But there are those who always sit in their rooms behind closed doors and study, and never leave the house to talk with others. For this they are called wicked. If they talked to others, they would bring to perfection something they are destined to make perfect.

1. The Community of Individuals. To recapitulate, the community arrangement between the zaddikim and hasidim is important. The zaddik had three circles of love. First, there were those people, hasidim or not, who came from afar to the zaddik for his aid, advice and comfort. Then there were those who lived in the neighborhood of the zaddik, who would come to the oppressive, crowded room of the Beth ha-Midrash, which was the common prayer house and place of


study, in which there was a corner for weary travelers to sleep, in which there were early morning Talmudic disputations, and in which the zaddik held forth his court of the Kabbalah. The zaddik was known as "rebbe," a term of endearment, and was qualified by his spontaneously acknowledged leadership of the souls of his community, and about whom there was this central feeling of God's "presence." The "rebbe" shaped his whole life into an active prayer. ("Rebbe" is different from "rav," it should be noted in passing, for the "rav" was only qualified by his proven knowledge of the Torah and the Talmudic commentaries.) The third circle of love was that between the zaddik and his disciples, the hasidim, and between the zaddik and the immediate members of his household. The zaddikim imparted their teachings from generation to generation and all was accomplished by word of mouth. Therefore, the writings of Martin Buber concerning the Hasidic movement represent the result of a monumental task monumentally completed.

2. Leaders and Followers. Thus we see that the zaddik and his hasidim represent a community of individuals, made up of leaders and followers, who devoted their entire lives to the service and love of one another and of their God. As Buber states it, "One cannot understand the tremendous influence exerted by Hasidism on the mass of the people, unless one observes the "democratic" strain in it, its
peculiar tendency to set, in place of the existing "aristocracy" of the spiritual domain, the equal right of all to approach the absolute Being." 25

3. The Religious Movement and the Concept of Love.

Hasidism became the core of a religious movement. Despite the fact that Hasidism added no doctrine to Judaism, nor did it contain any new elements of doctrine or dogma to be added, it filled a need of the Jewish people in the 18th and 19th centuries. Of paramount import in Hasidism was the consecration and hallowing of all acts of every living moment. Man exerts an influence on the eternal, thus the everyday occurrence, the everyday action, must be made holy. "It is true that Hasidism has taken up and practiced much of kabbalistic tradition, such as the secrets of the letters of the alphabet, the twisting around and joining together of the names of God; but this magical part has never touched the center of Hasidic teaching. In this center there is no secret formula, but the hallowing of everything." 26 The hallowing of the everyday occurrence, the making holy of each meeting, of each action, of every second in one's life can be accomplished in two ways: first, by the love of each one of us for his neighbor, and secondly, by the love of each one of us for his God. It is the combination of


26. Ibid., p. 80.
these two loves into one great love that hallow[s] our lives. "As members of human society we are not mutually exclusive atoms of consciousness; we are, in part, reciprocally determining beings. We make each other what we are."27 And so it is in all other religions of love, Christianity, Buddhism, even Taoism. As St. Teresa said, "Any love of God which does not increase the love for your neighbor is false. C'est par les effets et par les oeuvres que l'on connaît la vérité de ce qui s'est passé dans l'oraison."28 In other words, one can only understand what has transpired in the realm of God when one can fully take part in and understand His works on earth. And that understanding is only arrived at through the bi-fold love.


A primary concept in the philosophy of the Hasidim is the importance of the individual and his love, which makes his life and all the lives about him holy. The Hasidim preached the immanence of God, and at the same time the reciprocity of relationship between every man and his fellow, and between every man and his God. Every man is a member of God's community, and every man is a member of the human community. Further, they taught that in this reciprocity of relationship there exists dialogue between father and son, between teacher and student, between zaddik and hasid.

A. The Immanence of God

By a short examination of the famous sayings which Martin Buber recorded in his study of the Hasidic communities of eastern Europe, we may be able to attain some insight into Hasidic philosophy of life. From that insight we shall then be able to trace the influence of that philosophy on the thinking of Martin Buber. To bring out the immanence of God as felt by the Hasidim, one must read the song of Levi Yitzhak, the Rabbi of Berditchev (d. 1809) who sings of his God in the following poem:
Where I wander--You!
Where I ponder--You!
Only You, You again, always You!
You! You! You!

When I am gladdened--You!
When I am saddened--You!
Only You, You again, always You!
You! You! You!

Sky is You! Earth is You!
You above! You below!
In every trend, at every end,
Only You, You again, always You!
You! You! You!

God's immanence is at the very root and core of Hasidism.

"A ray of God's essence is present and perceptible everywhere and at every moment." The relationship between the hasid and his immanent God was one of close, mystical contact; the hasid lived every day of his life with his God, and with all of God's creations. As Rabbi Zev Wolf of Zbarazh (d. 1802) proclaimed, "Man should love all that lives and this love must not be determined by the way the object of his love behaves toward him!" This hasidic panentheism became an answer to Spinoza's pantheism: It left the way open for the hasid to find joy in his life, joy in his religion, and joy in the worship of his God. One can only feel the fervor and the happiness that can come to


a depressed, persecuted individual who finds his relief and release in the ability to approach and speak on personal terms with a God who was all around him.

B. The Importance of the Individual

Along with the immanence of the Divine, the Hasidim stressed the importance of the individual on this earth. The texts they utilized were the ancient kabbalistic books and particularly the Zohar. Isaac Luria, a Jewish visionary who lived in Safed, Israel, in the middle of the 16th century, and who delved deeply into Kabbalah and the mysticism of the esoteric doctrines, directed his teachings above all to the perfection of the individual soul and the improvement of it for this world and all worlds. In Lurian Kabbalism we find "the tendency to interpret human life and behavior as symbols of a deeper life. The conception of man as a micro-cosmos and of the living God as a macro-anthropos has never been more clearly expressed and driven to its farthest consequences." 32 "In the center of existence, according to the Zoharic idea of the universe, stands man." 33 It seems that man represents to the kabbalist and to the hasidim the next to the final step in the Maker's gradation of beings towards perfection. Man adds


the final touch to the divine countenance; in a way it is man who per-
flects God. Man produces the unity of God.

C. Reciprocity of Relationship

Since the important and central figure in the hasidic scheme
of the world is the individual, and of equal importance in this scheme
is an immanent God, it then follows that the third concept which fuses
these two ideas into the one great teaching of Hasidism will be the rela-
tionship or the dialogue between the individual and other individuals,
and between the individual and his God. The reciprocity of this rela-
tionship is fundamental. A man who lives with and for his fellow men
acts as the foundation of man's relation to the divine. The zaddik and
the people around him were dependent on one another, and while both
lived out a concept of life as a fervent prayer and an exalted joy in the
worship of God, they felt that real completeness was lost without this
true relation of one to the other. Rabbi Pinhas of Koretz (d. 1791)
used to say, "Every human being has a light in Heaven. When two
meet the lights fuse and a new light shines out of them. This is called
a begetting and the new light is an angel."34

All human relationships, it was taught by the zaddikim, are
based on a mutual ground of give and take. The Baal-Shem had said

Masters, p. 126.
that man must use every movement that he performs, every word that he utters, to direct his entire being toward a union. His disciples carried that message to all who would listen. We need only absorb the feelings of the zaddik as we read the following tale told of Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sasov.

One midnight when Rabbi Moshe Leib was absorbed in the mystical teachings, he heard a knock at the window. A drunkard stood outside and asked to be let in and given a bed for the night. For a moment the zaddik's heart was full of anger and he said to himself, "How can a drunk have the insolence to ask for entrance and what right has he in this house?" But then he said silently in his heart of hearts, "And what business has he in God's World? But, if God gets along with him, can I reject him?" He opened the door at once and prepared a bed.  

On this point the rabbis were at one with Jesus, who justified the fact that he consorted with sinners by saying that the physician comes to heal the sick and not those who are well. Another amusing story which will help to bring out the feelings of the zaddikim and their emphasis on the needs of others is told of Rabbi Naftali of Roptchitz.

After a sermon wherein he spoke of the poor and their many needs, and complained of the high prices of food, and rent, and other essentials, Rabbi Naftali came home very tired. "What did you accomplish?" asked his wife. "Half of what is necessary," he replied, "You see, the poor are now ready to take. As for the other half, whether the rich are ready to give--I don't know about that yet!"  


36. Ibid., p. 197.
We can now summarize the hasidic philosophy which developed from the Baal-Shem-Tov, using the Torah, Talmud, and Kabbalah, through the long line of his many disciples: (1) the individual and his soul are of central importance, (2) God is all about us and in our everyday living, therefore we must hallow each and every act and approach our Maker in the spirit of rejoicing, and (3) man must live in a community with other men; there must be a reciprocity of relationship between soul and soul; each soul, being a part of God's creation, must develop into God's unity by a constant dialogue between soul and soul and between man and man. Although Martin Buber was never fully accepted into the Hasidic communities which he visited and studied because he did not observe the sacred commandments and did not practice the prescribed daily rituals, he made good use of what he had learned in the development of his own philosophy of dialogue. Hasidism formed the solid bedrock upon which his philosophy was erected. Although there were other influences, particularly that of Søren Kierkegaard, and of lesser significance that of Ludwig Feuerbach, Hasidism played the major role. Martin Buber considered himself too "enlightened" to ever become a hasid. Another barrier to his acceptance into the fold was the fact that he was not born into a hasidic family; again, he was born too late, over 100 years too late. But his study of five years' duration, beginning in 1904, gave him a thorough insight
into Hasidism and showed him what could and did develop out of the abject misery of a trodden people. If Hasidism could lift the everyday Jew out of his morbid and depressed state, out of his misery, what could it do for the rest of the world? Hasidism did not want to influence the world. The mere fact that none of the teachings of the early zaddikim, much less those of the Baal-Shem-Tov, were put on paper is proof that these men never conceived of being prophets of the future. The hasid rebelled against the dogmatic stand of the orthodox rabbinate but never did he think to influence a great portion of the Jewish community of his day nor of a later day. On the other hand Martin Buber took these teachings and developed from them an entire philosophy of the meaning of life. Basic to that philosophy is the meaning of "meeting."
CHAPTER V
THE PHILOSOPHY OF MARTIN BUBER

A. Development from Varied Sources

The development of Martin Buber's philosophy began with his early period of mysticism extending from the year 1900 through 1910. During these years he was intensely interested in religious phenomena and he himself was a practicing orthodox Jew. After his intense study of Hasidism he discarded the stringent ritualism of orthodoxy and attempted in his personal everyday life to emulate the zaddikim. But soon he was to outgrow this mystic tendency. In the period from 1910 to 1920 he made a thorough study of the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, and also became intrigued with the writings of Søren Kierkegaard which had been translated from the original Danish into German. Buber's sympathy with the plight of the sombre Dane had a profound influence on the development of his own existential thinking. Finally, in 1923, the welding of Hasidic thought with the growing influence of existentialist ideas was completed in Buber's statement of his dialogical philosophy. Disapprobation of dogma and legality, the angst which accompanies man's realization of the gift of freedom, and the continuous inspiration which flows from man's living in relation, are all fundamental to Buber's philosophy of dialogue. "In sum, the Hasidic
vision anticipates the universe of I and Thou and implies its essential character."^{37}

B. God or "I Am That I Am"

Initially one may divide Buber's philosophy of meaning into three separate though interlocking fragments, not in the sense of pieces of a puzzle, but rather as contributing eventually to an encompassing whole. Primarily there is the concept, Judaic in its origin, of the immanent God. Buber could neither accept the God-Father-Judge image of the early Hebrews nor the Throne-God concept of the Kabbalah. He dispensed with the ancient representation of the Hebrew God as "a crass anthropomorphism which bound together the deity and the tired, exhausted slave."^{38} But that very concept of a God greater than all gods, with human qualities immeasurable by human means did serve to set before the community the loftiest sense of following the Leader. But how could such a Leader lead, and how could such limited followers follow? The question remaining to be answered was how that Leader could communicate with His followers. Buber answers this query by explaining that communication between God and his people was established through revelation. God can be described in one way and one way only. When Moses asked God to reveal His Name,

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the answer came forth, "Ehyeh asher ehyeh, I am that I am." I am
that I am—these succinct words, this terse tautology, this statement
of pure existence are the words of revelation. They say that which is
is and nothing more. Nothing more is to be implied, nothing more is
to be inferred, nothing added to this purely mystical existential an-
nouncement. "What am I? Who am I? Where am I?"—these are all
answered by the terse, "I am." There is no need to explain further,
for anything subsequently added would only represent the machination
of the translating communicant. Not that such translation is unimpor-
tant, but rather that it adds nothing to the original idea. Once having
accepted the expression, ehyeh asher ehyeh, as complete in itself,
man is then ready to accept the translations of other communications
from this existent source, such as covenants, laws, and ethical con-
cepts.

The revelation, the making of the covenant, the giving of the
statutes, was performed by the "translating" utterance of a
mortal man; the queries and requests of the people are pre-
sented by the internal and external words of this person; the
species of man that bears the word from above downwards
and from below upwards is called nabi, announcer. 39

But the nabi's first responsibility as the chosen translator is to fix
permanently in the people's minds the isness of God. Note that none
of the qualities of God is stated; His justice, His love, His holiness,

39. Ibid., p. 57.
none of these is implied until after the initial revelatory words, \textit{I am that I am}, are accepted. \textit{Isness precedes hasness; isness is not a part of hasness.} What is meant here is that the state of being is not a predication when referring to God. Saying "God is" adds nothing to our idea of God nor does saying "God has existence" add anything at all.

The completeness of God as an existent is the basis of immanence, for He is not only \textit{an} existent, but the only existent. Yet in that immanence nothing of transcendence is lost. Relationally, immanence can embrace transcendence, but it is not necessarily the case that transcendence implies immanence. The anthropomorphic concept of a God sitting on His throne in a heaven could almost rule out the concept of a God all about us; but if one begins with God all about this world, there is no limiting factor requiring God to be in this world only and in no other. To Martin Buber, God is the Eternal Thou, as a term of identity. God is Pure Spirit, again, an identity. What is God? God is. Where is God? God is. Who is God? God is. What does God look like? God is. Why is there a God? God is. Over and over again the answer to all questions about God is the same; it is the revelation, \textit{I am that I am}, and no more should be needed, for there is nothing more to be had.
1. **Anthropomorphism and the "Eternal Thou".** In Buber's concept there is no anthropomorphism. Anthropomorphism represents objectivization, the setting up in the mind of a firm image, a delineation, a picture. But the Eternal Thou cannot be made into an object or an image, for when that is done it is no longer a Thou but an It. "Here world, there God, 'is the language of It; nothing is beside God; everything, world and all, is in Him." Man cannot escape from this immanence, and yet man may never find his God therein. It is not a case of man wanting to escape from God, but rather of his not recognizing that the Eternal Thou can be approached and reached, and in fact must be approached to obtain any relief from the anxieties resulting from man's innate freedom. "I know nothing of a 'world' and a 'life in the world' that might separate a man from God. What is thus described is actually life with an alienated world of It, which experiences and uses." 41

2. **The Availability of God.** There is in the above exposition of Buber's conception of God nothing essentially new or different from elemental Judaic doctrine. There is a softening of the judge-type, super-human, super-worldly, ever-to-be-feared father-image into a pervasive spiritual essence, to be sure; but God still remains the object, though not as object, of prayer and supplication, the object of

man's "meeting." Though mentioned verbally as follower, God becomes the first part of the I-Thou relation. He becomes the Thou that is unchangeable into an It; He becomes the Thou, not endless in the sense of infinite duration, but the Thou timeless. Even as Buber speaks of the Eternal Thou, it is clear that he is limited by the insufficiencies of language in divulging the real core of his teaching. The Thou can only be approached by man through relation, through dialogue, through "meeting." Orthodox Jewish thought, with its emphasis on the fierce judge-like God demanding service and repentance, created an abyss between man and God that could not be crossed. Man was thus self-condemned to ever reaching for his God but never being able to attain the holy throne. In Martin Buber's philosophy, God can be reached, can man but divorce himself, if only for a moment, from the world of experience, the world of It, the world of acquisition and use; if only man will extend himself with his entire person, body and soul, to God--then, with this fervent will of man and the gift of God's grace, He can be reached. Rabbi Mikhal, Maggid of Zlotchov, (d. 1786) used to say, "The 'I' stands between God and us. When a man says 'I' and encroaches upon the word of his Maker, he puts a wall between himself and God. But he who offers his 'I'--there is nothing between him and his Maker." As Part of man and as Himself He can then be

known. "Buber, having affirmed that God is never available to logical or empirical proof, can maintain the continued eternal activity of God. God has merely been shrouded by man. He has been covered over. It is for man to remove the veil."\(^{43}\) This mystical concept is part of Martin Buber's heritage from Hasidism.

C. The Divergent Realms of the It and the Thou

Having clarified to some extent the position God holds in the Buber dialectic, it is now materially significant that one examine man's position in the scheme of things. The duality subsumed in the concept of God's Otherness is the foundation of Martin Buber's existentialist thought. This duality is not only manifested between God and man, but within man himself. Man's possessing an I in contrast to the Thou is accompanied by that same I in contrast to an It. The difference between these two relationships is that the former, the I-Thou, gives rise to the problems contained in the "meeting," while in the latter, the I-It, there is no reason for doubt, no reason for anxiety, no ground for hesitation. In the world of the It man can pick and choose with little or no thought for consequence; the decisions, if they are made at all, bear no relation to the future, they influence nothing. But in the world of the Thou man's free decisions, freely made,

unshackled, unrestrained, impossible not to be made, do influence eternity and become thereby eternally important. For instance, a decision to listen to someone else's pressing problem with the intense desire to aid him may prevent a suicide; or again, the honest effort of an agriculturist to teach the backward farmer how to reap a better harvest from his lands may result in a lessening of future starvation. These are the movements and decisions in the real world of relation I-Thou which must and do influence eternity. The I in the relation I-Thou differs from the I in the relation I-It. As the Thou differs from the It, so the I differs in its relation with either. Martin Buber explains the divergent realms in the following manner.

Firstly, it must be realized that the I cannot stand alone; I can only exist in combination; a Thou or an It is indispensable. The moment that one says, "I", one bespeaks the existence of I as part of a relation; at the same time when one says "Thou" or "It," one concomitantly bespeaks the existence of I. It thus follows that there are two worlds of relation, distinct, necessary, in which man lives, and the denial of either destroys man's completeness. The world (that is, the world in which man lives) is not presented to man by experience alone. "These (meaning, experiences) present him only with a world composed of It and He and She and It again." 44 This world of

experience and as experience is the essence of the I-It relationship.

1. The Relation I-It. In the realm of It, under the dominion of experience, I perceive something, I am sensible of something, I imagine something, I will something, I feel something, I think something. In other words, I am bounded. In this relation I am subject and all else is object. I am the user and all else is used. "The primary relation of man to the world of It is comprised in experiencing, which continually reconstitutes the world, and using, which leads the world to its manifold aim, the sustaining, relieving, and equipping of human life."45 Without the relation I-It man cannot survive on this earth, he cannot withstand his alien environment, he cannot take cognizance of the cause-effect relationship so vital to his existence, for It has the quality of being able to be arranged in order; the world of It is set in the context of space and time.46 Man, then, requires the world of It for his survival; he must ever remain able to orient himself and reorient himself in this changing world of It. All his bodily senses, seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling, are required, are, in fact, unconditionally requisite for him to cope with mere existence on this planet. The world of It unrecognized is unconquerable; non-acknowledgement of the world of It results in the utter destruction of the I.

45. Ibid., p. 38.
46. Ibid., p. 33.
2. **The Relation I-Thou.** The world of Thou, on the other hand, has no object in speech, has no bounds and can be known only in relation. The statement of this I-Thou relation came originally from Ludwig Feuerbach who explained God only in terms of man's relations with man; the unifying of the I and the Thou, in that alone is God. Martin Buber expanded that idea, brought it to maturity and saw in it the real meaning of life for man. Unerringly, man, in the realm of the Thou, unbounded by space and time, gains completeness. By the unification, the establishment of this fundamental relation, man becomes whole. As Buber, in the exultation of discovery, exclaimed, "And in all the seriousness of truth, hear this: without It man cannot live. But he who lives with It alone is not a man!"\(^{47}\)

Man's attitudes and personality make clear the existence of the world of Thou. While "the Thou does not help to sustain one in life, it does help one to glimpse eternity."\(^{48}\) The individual is only an object until he takes part in the "turning" toward the Thou. Each of us has his Thou, and the man whom we meet has his—when the I of the individual seeks out the Thou of the other, then one has entered into relation. "In the beginning is relation—as category of being, readiness, grasping form, mould for the soul; it is the _a priori_ of relation,

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47. _Ibid._, p. 34

48. _Ibid._, p. 33
the inborn Thou. But how can one enter into such a dialogue with less than one's entire being? How can one's approach with his I to the Thou of the stranger be anything at all, if it is only partial, fragmentary, elusive? The I-Thou world of relation cannot be entered partially; one must cross over the threshold in one's wholeness and with finality. When the stranger is considered for use, for benefit, as an It, the personal I is incomplete. Under that condition the primary word I-Thou cannot be spoken, the "meeting" does not take place. "The primary word I-Thou can be spoken only with the whole being. Concentration and fusion into the whole being can never take place through my agency, not that it can ever take place without me. I become through my relation to the Thou; as I become I, I say Thou."50

The impersonality involved in our daily greetings to one another is one of the most easily discernible proofs of our almost complete submergence in the world of It. A short investigation of our common practices will substantiate this claim. When we greet each other with "Hello," just what are we saying? Why have we shortened our personal greetings to a mere "Hi!" instead of using longer salutations which are surely more fertile with meaning? "How are you?" "Como esta usted?" or "Comment ca va?" surely establish finer,

49. Ibid., p. 27.

50. Ibid., p. 11.
more fastidious lines of communication, better grounds for "meeting," than "Ciao!" It seems that when we approach the stranger in the world about us we do not even see him; but when we "turn" towards him with our whole being, when we see him as a sum of qualities, when we address his Thou in the same manner that we would address the Eternal Thou, then we enter the world of Thou, then we establish relation, then we become a completed I.

D. The World of Relation

For Martin Buber there are three spheres in the world of relation.

1. Man in the World of Nature. Man lives in the world of nature, his outside-the-skin environment which is exclusive of his life with others of his kind and God. In this world of nature, while the Thou exists, it does so in silence; communication between man and that world is ephemeral. In that world of trees and land and sky and sun and animals, man is in effect, a foreigner, for he cannot speak the language of that strange country and can only guess whether or not there is a language spoken at all. In Wittgensteinian terms, nature and man must surely be playing two different language games, as he says, "If a lion could talk, we could not understand him." 51

believed that there was a language spoken, heard by man but not understood in man's terms; he believed there was a silent speech seen by man, but uninterpretable by man's standards. "An animal's eyes have the power to speak a great language... This language is the stammering of nature at the first touch of spirit, before it yields to spirit's cosmic venture that we call man. But no speech will ever repeat what that stammering knows and can proclaim." Man is destined never to know the innermost secret in a blade of grass, never to fathom the reason behind nature's intricate system of checks and balances. As William Blake so poignantly asks of the tiger in the forest, "Did he who made the Lamb make thee?" The answer is silence. But if man "turns" to search for the Thou in creation, the Thou of nature, if he seeks with the wholeness of his I, possibly it may happen that man will find the Thou and establish relation. Agonizingly, the individual who does so will never be able to convey that meaning that he has discovered in nature to other men. Each man must fend for himself in the first of the three spheres in the world of relation.

2. Man in the World of Men. Another sphere in the world of relation is man's life with men. In this orb man has a much better chance, a much easier way of "meeting," for here he can communicate; he can open relation with speech. On this level the Thou is both

givability and receivability, the transferring agent being love. Buber calls love "the responsibility of an I for a Thou." In this sphere of relation the Thou can be voiced, but the ugly head of It is constantly rearing up, blocking the sound, shutting it off. After the I has established relation with a particular Thou, after the event of the "meeting" has run its course, the Thou is bound to become an It. In other words, when real communication, real meeting ends, the Thou is destined to become an It, returning to the world of experience. The person involved as the Thou to any particular I must then become objectified to that I and remain an It until the real meeting again occurs. At that time the renewal "happens" and the objectified It reverts to the subjectified Thou for the involved particular I. On the other hand, the particular It, by entering into a relational event, may become a Thou. "But this is the exalted melancholy of our fate, that every Thou in the world must become an It." This is the case with all save one—which leads us to the third sphere of relation.

3. Man in the World of Intelligible Forms. In the sphere of man's life with intelligible forms no Thou can be perceived, but it is there nonetheless. Voice and language are of no avail in this sphere for the primary word of relation is spoken by man with his whole being.

53. Ibid., p. 15.

54. Ibid., p. 16.
To address the Eternal Thou with anything less than the whole being is not to address Him at all. The Eternal Thou can only be approached by the twofold I, body and soul in conjunction, whole and complete.

Very few men were considered by Buber to be I's great enough to enter into an unconditional relation in this sphere. Socrates through his dialectic, Goethe through his deep acknowledgement of nature, and Jesus through his teaching, gave the complete I to the "meeting," and in consequence, Buber thought, they attained a glimpse, though possibly unknown to themselves, of the Thou, the timeless, the Eternal. There were other men in history and there might even be some today, for "every man can say Thou and is then I, every man can say Father and is then Son; I and Thou abide, reality abides."55

4. Man's Misuse of Relation. But there are also I's who cannot share in such greatness however history treats of them. For such men, who become entombed in the use of all other men for their own aggrandizement, Martin Buber has no use. He never questions the decisive fact of the It's importance for sustaining man in his environment, as mentioned earlier.56 But intrinsically man's use of the I-It relation leads him inexorably to an overindulgence of his desires; he takes more and more from his environment in the way of riches and

55. Ibid., p. 67.

56. See Page 38 of this paper.
power than he should. He accumulates wealth in measure far beyond his needs; he revels in praise far exceeding what is warranted; he yearns for power far beyond his capacity to control it. Man becomes blinded to the Thou because of the thickness of the opulent veil of his environs. He loses the will to enter into relation with the world of Thou. One man in history that seemed to be of the kind sketched above (according to Buber) was Napoleon Bonaparte. 57

"Man's will to profit and to be powerful have their natural and proper effect so long as they are linked with, and upheld by, his will to enter into relation." 58

Man can thus become enslaved by abandoning himself to the world of It; his freedom vanishes and disappears. Since in the world of It causality reigns supreme and the effect of every action is foretold, man in that world must become a fatalist. And a fatalist cannot be free. Yet God willed man to be free. He wants man to "turn" from the world of determinism to the world of destiny. The "turning" of a man to the Thou has a profound influence on eternity, and when "man is freed from the belief that there is no freedom, he is indeed free." 59

Only the man who is free to "turn" can "turn." By this "turning" and only by that method, with the entirety of his existence, can he seek

58. Ibid., p. 48.
59. Ibid., p. 58.
out and reach the Thou. Freedom fuses the dual I; belief in the I-Thou relation is freedom.

E. The Life of Dialogue

1. Reciprocity Reframed as Relation. The Hasidic principle of reciprocity⁶⁰ has thus been reshaped by Buber into his principle of relation. The hasidim and zaddikim used the service that they rendered one another as an integral part of their search for meaning. Buber states this principle in yet another way: he says, "We are created along with one another and directed to a life with one another. Creatures are placed in my way so that I, their fellow creature, by means of them and with them find the way to God."⁶¹ These creatures who are met, though, must be met in a certain specified way, yet without compulsion; there is surely no demand for dialogue between creatures. Where there is force applied of any kind, there can no longer be a "turning." Each individual must have a will, a desire, to "meet" with his fellow earth-inhabitants; there must be a "turning" of personality to personality. Buber asks, "How could the life of dialogue be demanded? There is no ordering of dialogue. It is not that you are to answer but that you are able."⁶² In the world of dialogue

⁶⁰ See page 26 ff. of this paper.


⁶² Ibid., p. 35.
there are no special persons; there are no saints nor are there sinners; there are only those people who become persons by giving of themselves and those who remain people by withholding themselves. "The basic movement in the life of dialogue is the 'turning' towards the other." 63

2. Forms of Dialogical Relation. In Buber's homiletics one finds detailed three principle forms of the dialogical relation. The first is the genuine, mutual experience of inclusion, the I-Thou primary word. The second form of dialogue is the technical one, concrete, but usually a rather one-sided experience of inclusion, the I-It primary word. The last form is that of friendship, wherein both parties of the dialogue vacillate between the I-It and the I-Thou; reciprocity takes over. "Neither needs to give up his point of view; only, in that unexpectedly they do something and unexpectedly something happens to them which is called a covenant, they enter a realm where the law of the point of view no longer holds." 64 What happens is a change from communication to communion; dialogue has just happened and it has happened sacramentally.

3. Dialogue in Disguise. But dialogue can be disguised and can take on a false face. This occurs in many ways of which four are

63. Ibid., p. 22.
64. Ibid., p. 6.
listed by Buber. 65 In debate one can find the best, the most flagrant example of actual monologue disguised as dialogue. Eristic argument wherein the object of the conversation is the defeat of another's point of view does not involve persons; only the world of I-It is implied in this formal pattern of discussion. How could any "turning" occur when the end in view is the downfall of the opponent rather than his uplift? The value of debate and sophistry is not in question for its value is limited by its being solely in the I-It world. What remains is that real dialogue cannot exist unless personalities, whole personalities, rather than just people are involved. Personalities never become involved in debate--people do. Conversations, though on a less formal level than debate, not having the rules of procedure and rebuttal, are also excluded from real dialogue. In ordinary conversation people are not usually interested in the other's thoughts and use the means to do nought but hear their own thoughts expounded for their own gratification. It is as though there were two people in a room talking to themselves although they are facing one another. What possible dialogue can take place here? In friendly chats there might possibly be no sham, except that such chats are usually used, not for their serious content, but rather for the sole purpose of passing the time of day or listening to rumor, or for over-the-fence-tittle-tattle. Lastly, lovers'
talks are excluded from real dialogue (though there are many, many times when pure understanding and pure "meeting" take place), because mostly the lovers are taken up with the satisfaction of their own natural needs and those of their partners. The tremendous yearning of nature must be put aside before a genuine "meeting" of the personalities can occur. In all the cases mentioned above, while the outward form seems to appear as dialogue, the people taking part are so imbued with their own importance, their own ideas, their own wants, that it becomes impossible for them to open their hearts and minds to the other and it becomes impossible for them to "turn."
CHAPTER VI

WELDING HASIDISM AND EXISTENTIALISM

A. The Existential Questions

Martin Buber took great pains to develop a philosophy of the wholeness of man. One must also take some pains in understanding the development of Buber's scheme by tracing the evolution of the existential questions brought down through the ages, together with the attempts at answers. Let us begin with Aristotle, who placed man at the center of the cosmos and defined his goal as happiness being the mean between two extremes, the balance between excesses in sufficiency and excesses in deficiency. This idea held sway for many hundreds of years, together with Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Neo-Platonism. The great St. Augustine was not satisfied with any of these, however, for he asked, "Quid ergo sum, Deus meus? Quae natura mea?" ("What indeed am I, my God? What really is my nature?") Many generations later the question was asked in a different way by Blaise Pascal--"Qu'est ce qu'un homme dans l'infini?" ("What is a man when compared to infinity?") Again, later in the history of man, Nietzsche asks how we can understand that such a

66. Ibid., p. 121 ff.
being as man has stepped forth from the animal world. Immanuel Kant added three other questions to that of "What is man?" and posed four essential questions that cried for answers. Kant asked, "What can I know?" and attempted to show that only metaphysics could provide the answer; "What ought I to do?" could be answered only by a study of duty and ethics; "What may I hope?" was a query answerable only by religion; these three limited questions open the door to the final question, "What is man?", and Kant sought the answer in philosophical anthropology. If he were able to find what sort of a being is able to know, if he were able to find what sort of a being is born with innate obligations, if he were able to find what sort of a being had an inherent capacity to hope—then he would have found the answer to the question, "What is man?" Spinoza before Kant had given a strictly rationalistic answer by claiming that man is a being in whom God loves himself; man was only one finite part of the infinite system of God; man and God were of one substance. Hegel developed a much more intricate system of philosophy as an answer; he defined man's life in phenomenological terms, positing the threefold dialectical principle of his governing law. But not all philosophers were satisfied with his methodology and his idealism. And so the search

67. Collins, James, A History of Modern European Philosophy, 1954, p. 608 ff. Professor Collins' chart of the dialectic of the absolute (p. 626) and on the development of the absolute concept (pp. 632-633) do much to clarify the Hegelian principles.
continued. Karl Marx espoused an **unreal** collectivism, unreal in the sense that he magnified the importance of man's life on earth being in society with other men and considered man as individual with indifference. On the other hand, Søren Kierkegaard espoused an **unreal** individualism, unreal in the sense that he exaggerated the status of the individual and negated the significance of man's relation to his fellow man.

1. **Martin Buber's Attempt to Answer.** In Martin Buber's work, through the reaction between the dual parts of man in relation there is another attempt at answering the pressing question. He says, "(Concerning man) The finite has its effect on him and the infinite has its effect on him; he shares in finitude and he shares in infinity."⁶⁸ From this as a beginning he endeavors to answer Kant's three limited questions in the following manner: To "What can I know?" he replies, "I can know many things--the truths of logic, the rules of evidence, the witness of my senses; I can develop a systematic cosmology, and the history of man is open to me."⁶⁹ When responding to the query of what one ought to do, Buber states that the study of ethics, aesthetics, psychology, and politics can all aid in directing one's life to what one should find good, and they can help one to choose. And what may I

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⁶⁹. Ibid., p. 121 ff.
The philosophy of religion and the history of faith, theology and metaphysical studies—all these can provide me with beliefs on which to found hopes and aspirations. With all these means to a better life on earth available to man, there remains but one way for him to achieve completeness, and that is, in community.

B. Buber and Kierkegaard

Before approaching this idea of community that Buber will develop along with his dialogical schemata, it is in order to examine his existential thinking. As stated earlier, Buber was mightily impressed with the writings of Søren Kierkegaard, and joined with the other philosophers of the early twentieth century in continuing his investigations into a purely individualistic philosophy. Kierkegaard's rejection of philosophical idealism as opposed to religious faith tied in very closely with the ideas which Buber had gleaned from his study of Hasidism. At the same time the pessimism reflected in the Pauline Christianity of Kierkegaard was directly opposed to the optimism of Hasidism. These two opposed theses had to be amalgamated; somehow Buber felt it necessary to establish an answer that would satisfy both camps, that is, he had to find a way to agree with Kierkegaard in his recognition that the freedom which God has given man is the root

70. See pp. 28 and 30 above.
of all his anxiety and despair, and that, at the same time, this freedom is also the means by which man could arise from that despair, could conquer his fears, could live on this earth in joy. The denouement will soon appear.

1. Kierkegaard and the Baal-Shem-Tov. Kierkegaard himself seemed to follow the Hasidic way of thinking in his own development. He too emphasized that fear of God as a foundation for faith was not enough, that love of God must be added. However, that love of God must have been preceded by fear, for he says, "People reproach others for fearing God too much; quite rightly, for in order really to love God it is necessary to have feared God."\(^{71}\) And it is necessary that the love for God be an all-enveloping, all-consuming, completely faithful love, given with the whole person from the depths of his being. "My eternal consciousness is my love to God," is how Kierkegaard expresses this love.\(^{72}\) And in Kierkegaard's early years he exhibits the same joy in faith that the zaddikim had exemplified.

Without too much effort one can imagine a particular zaddik, with his phylacteries strapped in the prescribed manner to his forehead and arm, the leather ends of the ties flying in the wind, his prayer shawl


\(^{72}\) Kierkegaard, Søren, Fear and Trembling, 1838, Ibid., p. 127.
or tallith whipping round him, dancing with wild gyrations, intensely absorbed in his love-dance to God, exclaiming, "Rejoice, and again I say, Rejoice!"—not a joy over this or that, but full jubilation "with hearts and souls and voices": "I rejoice over my joy, in, by, at, through, of and with my joy"—a heavenly refrain which suddenly breaks in upon our ordinary song, a joy which cools and refreshes like a breeze, a breath of air from the trade wind which blows from the plains of Mamre to the everlasting habitations."\(^7^3\) The actions are typically hasidic, but the words are apostolic and are Kierkegaard's. Being Kierkegaard's words, they reflect his thesis that in faith to God one must bring his entire being, whole and entire; one cannot hold anything or any part of himself in reserve; one cannot feign wholeness before his Maker. In his introductory passage to Søren Kierkegaard's Postscript Professor Bretall states the case quite succinctly, yet inclusively—"If a man, knowing no better, worships an idol, but does it with absolute sincerity and the whole 'passion' of his being, he is nearer the truth than the enlightened individual who has a correct knowledge of God, but holds this knowledge at second-hand and remains unmoved by it."\(^7^4\) Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer (the Baal-Shem-Tov), and Kierkegaard, the suffering Dane, while so


remote from one another in background, personality, and religion, seem to be at one in this quotation from the revered founder of Hasidism: "...if the force of sensual love is so great, how great must be the passion with which man loves God!"\textsuperscript{75}

To this point in the dialectic, existentialism and Hasidism seem to be on the same track--but the ways are soon to part.

C. **Existential Freedom**

Free man as the center of the universe bears his freedom in anguish and pain; his very freedom is at the root of his illness, because the freedom makes him responsible for his every act, his every choice, and he staggers under the weight of that heavy responsibility. He feels that he has not been fully equipped with the necessary strength and stamina, the necessary gut and grit, to withstand the pressures that freedom exerts on his being. As a result his existence becomes unbearable; he falters and fails. And instead of turning toward God for succor, he turns from God; he denies his own God-given spirit and takes refuge from his fears and anxieties in the world of the It. Each step in that direction, away from God, takes him deeper and deeper into the territory of the wilderness of non-meaning. As a further consequence, the Thou becomes more difficult to recognize

and the pain increases.

Every human existence which is not conscious of itself as spirit, or conscious of itself before God as spirit, every human existence which is not thus grounded transparently in God but obscurely reposes or terminates in some abstract universality (state, nation, etc.), or which, in obscurity about itself, takes its faculties merely as active powers, without in a deeper sense being conscious whence it has them, which regards itself as an inexplicable something which is to be understood per se—every such existence, whatever it accomplishes, though it be the most amazing exploit, whatever it explains, though it were the whole of existence, however intensely it enjoys life aesthetically—every such existence is after all despair. 76

The despair of each of us as individuals, which is the result of our having always to choose and always to be responsible for our choices, is seemingly unconquerable. We are, in the words of Jean-Paul Sartre, "condemned to freedom." "And indeed, for Sartre freedom is, like consciousness, a deprivation, a defect..." 77 If we wish to be free, condemned to it or not, and are free, then we must bear the consequences of that freedom; if we wish not to be free, we condemn ourselves to spiritual death. Death, either spiritual or bodily, thus becomes a release from freedom, and it does seem clear to me that we are more surely condemned to the release than to the freedom itself. But the dilemma is frightening in its implications; for to wish

to die is to rebel against God; to live and be free is to suffer.

1. **The Way Out.** It is apparent that existential atheism cannot ever find any way to get off the horns of this dilemma. Such a philosophy is fundamentally nihilistic and condemns itself to that misery; it must give up hope. But existential theism, on the other hand, even if it might or could include a kind of pantheism, in any form, be it Judaic, Christian, Islamic, or even Buddhism or Taoism—any of these could have the answer. If, as the existentialists claim, man is at the bottom of a deep pit, the sides of which are unscalable, being too steep and too slippery for gaining a foothold, then, in my opinion, modern theology can provide the ladder by which man can gain his escape from the abyss. Martin Buber thought he was providing an answer, a means of rescue for man; how efficacious it can be remains to be seen. In any case, I believe that to accept any alternative to giving up hope for mankind, inherently weak as man may be, is far better than no alternative at all. Man need not accept his "condemnation," dejectedly and grievously, careworn and crushed. Hasidism bore witness to a better method for escaping from the Slough of Despond brought on by man's inhumanity. Rather, it may be all to the benefit of mankind to recognize and acknowledge the existential dilemma, so long as this foreknowledge can be used as a warning—can be utilized to bulwark mankind against the future. Existentialism must not
result in the enslavement of mankind; hope must never be removed from man's nature.

Martin Buber's idea that man's completeness comes about only in community is not his exclusive property. Modern philosophers of many different religious backgrounds have expounded the same basic notion in many different ways. What should be noted is that in no case have any of the existential atheists provided this sort of answer; they have only stated the problem of man's freedom versus his finitude most lucidly and patently. In fact, philosophers like Sartre (in his early works) deny the genuine community of love and friendship, and in their approach to the theory of the awareness of others they tend to assert that human communication is doomed to failure. The existential theologians, on the other hand, including Buber, Paul Tillich, Jacques Maritain, and even the Marxian Nicolas Berdiaev, have recognized the seriousness of the problem, have "taken arms against this sea of troubles," and have attempted to restore in man's bosom a smoldering spark of hope for man's tomorrow.

2. The "Tshuvah". The spark that could take fire is for Buber the "turning," the tshuvah of the Hasidim, the "meeting" with God through the "meeting" with man. This tshuvah is composed of repentance, prayer, and love. "Repentance is an inner state that is

78. Ibid., p. 74.
necessary to the turning, but turning should be understood in the literal sense as a directing of the entire self into dialogical relation with all beings, and so into relation with the eternal Thou. "79 "Love involves the I-Thou attitude, that turning to the other which is the heart of dialogue. In this relation, the other, bodied over against the self, is recognized as a unique person, by a self that knows itself to be unique. "80 This identical thought was expressed by the great zaddik Rabbi Yehudah Zevi of Stretyn when he said, "Men can meet, but mountains never. When one man considers himself just a human being, pure and simple, and the other does so too, they can meet. But if one considers himself a lofty mountain, and the other thinks the same, then they cannot meet. "81 Prayer, too, is part of the tshuvah, for it involves one's turning to God with all one's heart and with all one's soul in an effort to "meet" with one's Maker and have the Eternal Thou "meet" one's I. "Every prayer which is more than mere acknowledgement of God's Kingdom, indeed every prayer which in a more or less clearly defined sense is bound up with the hope of its being granted, involves the eternal paradox of man's hope to influence the inscrutable ways and eternal decisions of Providence. "82 This idea of prayer may


80. Ibid., p. 122.


be difficult to conceive in our "scientific" world of today; it may seem to be a "flight from reality." 83 But some of our present-day linguistic analysts find it quite fit to acknowledge prayer, for example, Paul M. Van Buren in his The Secular Meaning of the Gospel (1963--The MacMillan Co., New York, p. 190) says, "Prayer understood as reflection and consequent action may be time-consuming and hard, but it is a perfectly conceivable and logically clear activity."

Man, though an individual, is never alone on this earth. In that is his salvation.

D. Community

1. As Seen by Berdyaev. Nicolas Berdyaev, a Greek-Orthodox philosopher, said, "The greatest religious and moral truth to which man must grow is that we cannot be saved individually. My salvation presupposes the salvation of others also, the salvation of my neighbor; it presupposes universal salvation, the salvation of the whole world, the transfiguration of the world." 84 The same idea occurs in Mahayana Buddhism with its concept of the "bodhisattva," one who seeks enlightenment and salvation for all. 85 Thus, while the root or radix of salvation is in oppression, as Berdyaev holds, man cannot

83. Van Buren, Paul M. (1963) see reference in text forward.
rise above his condition, grievous and tyrannical as it may seem, by himself, solely as an individual. He has need of his neighbor; he must approach other men.

2. As Seen by Maritain. Jacques Maritain, the French neo-Thomist, puts religious-existentiality in another light. Following St. Thomas Aquinas who had declared that the person is that which is noblest and highest in all of nature, Maritain claims, "The paradox of consciousness and personality is that each of us is situated precisely at the centre of this world. Each is at the centre of infinity."\(^{86}\) And he goes on to quote from Mr. Somerset Maugham (in *The Summing Up*, 1938), "To myself I am the most important person in the world; though I do not forget that, not even taking into consideration so grand a conception as the Absolute, but from the standpoint of common sense, I am of no consequence whatever. It would have made small difference to the universe if I had never existed."\(^{87}\) Maritain agrees with Maugham only to the extent of the individual's objectivization of every other individual about him and the placement of the "I" in the world of I-It alone. But in the world of Maritain's Catholicism God becomes the centre, and "religion becomes essentially that which no philosophy can be: a relation of person to person with all the risk,


the mystery, the dread, the confidence, the delight, and the torment that lies in such a relationship. Thus man regains his importance in the great scheme of things only as he relates himself to other men and to his God. In the solitude of individuality he has no value either to the universe or to himself, no matter how important he thinks he is nor how central he considers himself positioned in the universe.

3. As Seen by Tillich. Paul Tillich, too, requires that man revert to his "Godmanhood" in order to find relief from his existential quandary. He translates the primary I-Thou relation into a Love relation: God is Love, God is Being-Itself, therefore Being-Itself is Love, and consequently "the whole process of self-realization and reunion has a divine character." For Tillich sin is the separation of man from his Being and the reunion, the expiation of the sin, can only be accomplished with *agape*, the epitomy of Christian love as exemplified by the life of Jesus Christ. Love is the action which stems from faith, the ultimate concern. Only faith can bring about the completion of man; by faith our everyday lives, eating, drinking, reproducing become sacramental, by faith our spirits become holy, through faith the communities of persons are consecrated. On the level of the individual "the ultimate concern gives depth, direction and unity to all other concerns and, with them, to the whole personality."  

88. Ibid., p. 45.  
89. Ibid., p. 312.  
On the level of man in society "faith is real only in the community of faith, or more precisely, in the communion of a language of faith. Love is an implication of faith, namely, the desire toward reunion of the separated. This makes faith a matter of community. Finally, since faith leads to action and action presupposes community, the state of ultimate concern is actual only within a **community** of action."\(^{91}\)

"Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Jew and Protestant are at one in insisting on the primacy of the person, on his uniqueness and integrity, in the varying relations of life; and each makes this affirmation a cornerstone of his social philosophy. They likewise agree in seeing true personal being fulfilled, not in isolation, but in community; and they all understand community in the same personalistic way, as involving mutual relation of man with man, rather than a system of external institutions in which the self is diminished and distorted."\(^{92}\)

4. **As Seen by Buber.** Martin Buber's contribution to current theological thought and philosophical dialectic is the welding of existentialism with Hasidism. The fact that he was neither an academic philosopher nor a professional theologian in no way detracts from the importance of his contribution. First, he bases his concept of the individual on the mysticism inherent in Hasidism; he restores to man

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91. *Ibid.*, p. 117, the italics are added.

the place in the universe that man rightly deserves. "If the whole universe is an enormous complicated machine," the mystics tell us, then man is the machinist who keeps the wheels going by applying a few drops of oil here and there, and at the right time; the moral substance of man's actions supplies this 'oil,' and his existence therefrom becomes of extreme significance since it unfolds on a background of cosmic infinitude." But this concept of man did not fully satisfy Buber, for the machinist above implies an individual alone. The mystic individual, seeking to become one with the universe, does not represent man, for man is not one with his world, but one in his world; there is a duality in existence--there is man and there is the world. Martin Buber became disillusioned with mysticism "because the unity of absorption in which the self and the absolute are one is inevitably succeeded by the duality of self and world." He became disillusioned with mysticism because for the mystic meaning could not be ascertained except in one way: through his own individual efforts to reach God, to reach Oneness, to attain Nirvana. Along that way all other individuals fall by the wayside, outside the sphere of realization. The mystic is ordained to solitude, imbued as he is with the search for ecstasy. The mystic becomes over-solicitous of self, prepossessed

by internal considerations, oblivious to the world about him. He becomes so concerned with his own involvement with infinity that he loses contact with those about him and thus loses any chance to "meet" with the Ultimate. "Overanxious preoccupation with the meaning of one's own existence can only lead to the kind of intense introspection that sets one still further away from genuine relations to the world. By contrast, the man who responds without excessive self-consciousness to the beings over against him finds the meaning of his own life." 95

The separation of Søren Kierkegaard from the "crowd" was the irritating part of the sombre Dane's philosophy to Buber. Kierkegaard regarded other men as obstacles in his search for salvation. They were obstacles in the same sense as Buber's Thou made into Its, subjects that were ever transformed into objects. The isolated individual could not accept them as companions along the road to salvation for such hitchhikers only added to the difficulties. While Buber agrees with Kierkegaard that man is situated in the misery of his own existential dilemma, he cannot consent to the idea that man living in isolation, living his life as a monologue, by himself, alone, can ever find the answer and leave the misery behind. The fact is that Kierkegaard died still seeking but never finding the answer in this life. From Buber's point of view "all the enthusiasm of the philosophers of

95. Ibid., p. 39.
monologue, from Plato to Nietzsche, does not touch the simple ex-
perience of faith that speaking with God is something toto genere dif-
ferent from speaking with oneself; whereas remarkably, it is not
something toto genere different from speaking with another human
being."96 Again and again he expresses this same repulsion from the
mystical view and his own early view, that only alone can man find
salvation, that only alone can man achieve holiness; only incommuni-
cado from the rest of God's creations can man achieve completeness.
His conclusion is that we cannot escape the torturing dilemma by our-
selves, we cannot even escape ourselves, and we cannot escape from
ourselves—"...being lived in monologue will not, even in the tender-
est intimacy, grope out over the outlines of self."97 His answer, then,
is for man to live his life on this earth in dialogue, in the "turning"
toward other men, in the "meeting" with other minds and souls. From
the lives and teachings of the zaddikim and hasidim, sown in the eight-
eenth century, Buber gleaned his answer—the philosophy of dialogue.

E. Mysticism Denied and Hasidism Restated

1. Hallow the Everyday and Renew the Soul. Buber's search-
ing through his early years is best stated in his own words.

Since 1900 I had first been under the influence of German
mysticism from Meister Eckhart to Angelus Silesius, accord-
ing to which the primal ground (Urzgrund) of being, the nameless,


97. Ibid., p. 20.
impersonal godhead, comes to "birth" in the human souls--then I had been under the influence of the later Kabbalah and of Hasidism, according to which man has the power to unite the God who is over the world with his shekinah (cloud, spirit), dwelling in the world. 98

But finally in the philosophy of dialogue he dropped the idea of man's cosmological importance, demoting this thought to a position below the more important one that man's significance stems from his influence on other men, depends on his recognition of other men not as objects to be used for his own power and aggrandizement, but as subjects to whom he could contribute from his own life-store, his own life-force. The zaddikim had taught the way toward salvation not only by teaching but by living, by the examples of their own lives. They had placed themselves second behind the wants of their followers, and their followers had seen the teaching, had taken heed to the lessons, and had bent their wills toward the zaddik; each had given to the other what was needed. Only in this way was their completeness realized. "Man can become whole not in virtue of a relation to himself but only in virtue of a relation to another self. This other self may be just as limited and conditioned as he is; in being together the unlimited and the unconditional is experienced." 99 Thus Buber took from Kierkegaard the central importance of the individual and from the Hasidim

98. Ibid., p. 184.

99. Ibid., p. 168.
the importance of the "other" and combined them into his philosophy of dialogue. This was his prescription for the existentialist thinker to recover from his illness by using the medicine of "turning" toward the "other."

2. Philosophy in a Way Replaces Religion. Buber himself tried to "hallow the everyday" in his own life. As a result he was caught up in the controversy between the orthodox-religious element in Judaism and the semi-religious portion, the Jew by birth rather than by practice. "The secular majority of the population rejected his religious orientation; the religious elements of the population, who were rigorously Orthodox, rejected him because of his own non-observance." Many years earlier, the very Hasidim that he had studied and had verily immortalized, had rejected him, for he could not accept the rigor, though he extolled the fervor, of their religious observance. It must, of course, be realized that the Hasidic movement of the period between 1760 and 1810 had been truly heroic, characterized by great enthusiasm. It had sprung forth among a people deep in despair, despairing as individuals, despairing as a nation. Buber likens the arrival of Hasidism in eastern Europe to the establishment of the State of Israel after the cataclysm of Adolph Hitler. He says, "From the moment when a national disaster appears inevitable, and

especially after it has become a reality, it can, like every great torment, become a productive force from the religious point of view.

...But the new acting force is nothing less than the force of extreme despair, a despair so elemental that it can have but one of two results; the sapping of the last will of life, or the renewal of the soul. 101

That "renewal of the soul" produced a galaxy of rabbinic-saint-mystics following the disaster of Sabbattanianism; that same "renewal of the soul" produced the national heroes of Israel following the Hitleric plague. The history of Hasidism from that early period of inspired productivity has been a steady flight from the hallowing of the everyday into a more and more restrictive dogma. While he lived there was not the least possibility of Martin Buber's being accepted into the hasidic fold, or of even being honored though not included. In death, the possibility has become an impossibility, for his writings live after him, and throughout his life he was opposed to dogma and restriction.

He wrote, "God desires no religion; He desires human people, men living together, the makers of decisions vindicating their right to those thirsting for justice, the strong having pity on the weak, men associating with men." 102

Early Hasidism intrigued Martin Buber, the degeneracy of present-day Hasidism repelled him. What he meant by 'meeting' is

102. Ibid., p. 172.
the spontaneous encounter between two individuals, or on a different-worldly level, the encounter between the I and the Eternal Thou. Present-day Hasidism has displaced the essence of the Torah, the essence of the Talmud, the essence of the Kabbalah, with a scrupulously literal interpretation of the rabbinical precepts and laws. The deeper meaning of these tomes of law and ethics has been lost in the intricate ritualistic code of living which the modern (modern used in the time sense and not in the progressive sense) Hasidim practice. After the Baal-Shem-Tov and his disciples had passed from the scene, and as the number of zaddikim increased and set up their own hasidic communities, there was a gradual shift of emphasis from the earlier teachings giving rise to much argument and complaint between competing zaddikim and their varied schools of thought. What had begun as a revolt against rabbinism and dogma deteriorated into dogma and legalism, until today the hasid is unrecognizable in relation to his forebears. Orthodoxy in Judaism is not the orthodoxy of the hasid; it does not approach the hasid's idea of stringency and obedience to the Law of Moses, the law as he interprets it. The modern world passes the twentieth century's hasid by, for any communication between the hasid and the outside world can only serve to interfere with his progress toward God and salvation via his own religiosity. Such a locked-in religion is anathema to Buber. "It is fearfully difficult to preserve the possibility of spontaneous encounter in the midst of an
intricately elaborate religious regimen. "103 He adds, "I have given up the 'religious' which is nothing but the exception, extraction, exaltation, ecstasy; or it has given me up. I possess nothing but the everyday out of which I am never taken."104

Martin Buber accomplished his wish in life: he lived in the everyday, he loved the world, and he saw his Zionist dreams come true before his eyes when the new State of Israel was established and recognized. He lived his teaching, showing by example how man can complete himself on this earth. He accepted the challenge of existentialism, was not shaken by the infinitude of the possible, willingly shouldered the responsibility for his choices, sought again and again for the right way. He showed that the searching for the right way was the way for man. He showed that man needed the man who stood next to him on the journey, for only with the aid of that man could the way be found. From out this existential dread and anxiety one could find an exit only by realizing that the man next to one was in the same condition, and that together they might find the way. By establishment of "dialogue" with his neighbor, by a "turning" toward his neighbor, by a "meeting" with his neighbor--by these means can man find the companion that would be his aid and succor through the journey. By taking


refuge from his fears and tremblings in his neighbor's bosom can man find some relief. At the center of the world there is more than one individual who bears the responsibility of freedom. All men are there and their salvation comes only communally.

Seek thy neighbor, man, seek thy friend; through him alone can thou reach the Thou; through his Thou, man, eternal joy can be had. Seek thy neighbor, man, find him out. God is in him.
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Am-Haaretz--literally, people of the earth; the poor and uneducated, farmers.

Baal-Shem-Tov--traditional name (also Besht) given to Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer, born about 1700, died May 22, 1760, founder of Hasidism.

Chasid--see Hasid.

Haggadah--civil and ritual law of rabbinical literature, includes all decrees and usage without definite authority of the Scriptures.

Halakah--legal portion of Jewish tradition.

Hasid--literally, pious one; member of an Hasidic community, follower of the Baal-Shem-Tov.

Hasidism--religious movement which arose among the Polish Jews in the 18th century in which sentiment and emotion of faith replaced religious dogma.

Kabbalah--esoteric or mystic doctrines concerning God and the universe.

Midrash--exegesis which attempts to penetrate into the spirit of the Scriptures beyond the literal sense.

Rav--teacher, learned one, skilled in disputation on Jewish law.

Rebbe--endearing term for Hasidim, especially the Zaddikim.

Shulchan Aruch--Code of Jewish Law, 613 precepts which govern the lives of the orthodox Jew.

Talmud--entire body of Jewish literature devoted to teachings and interpretations of Torah, including Midrash.

Torah--the written law, Five Books of Moses, Scrolls of the Law, Pentateuch.
Tshuvah--the "turning," changing of one's life, attitudes, and personality; returning to God's way through meeting one's fellow man.

Zaddik--righteous one, mediator between God and the ordinary people, a healer.

Zohar--commentary on the Pentateuch, central text of the Kabbalah, mystical in nature.
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