

THE *Thou* MEETS ME THROUGH GRACE—it is not found by seeking. But my speaking of the primary word to it is an act of my being, is indeed *the* act of my being.

The *Thou* meets me. But I step into direct relation with it. Hence the relation means being chosen and choosing, suffering and action in one; just as any action of the whole being, which means the suspension of all partial actions and consequently of all sensations of actions grounded only in their particular limitation, is bound to resemble suffering.

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, nor can it ever take place without me. I become through my relation to the *Thou*; as I become *I*, I say *Thou*.

All real living is meeting.



THE RELATION TO THE *Thou* IS DIRECT. No system of ideas, no foreknowledge, and no fancy intervene between *I* and *Thou*. The memory itself is transformed, as it plunges out of its isolation into the unity of the whole. No aim, no lust, and no anticipation intervene between *I* and *Thou*. Desire itself is transformed as it plunges out of its dream into the appearance. Every means is an obstacle. Only when every means has collapsed does the meeting come about.

WHAT IS THE ETERNAL, primal phenomenon, present here and now, of that which we term revelation? It is the phenomenon that a man does not pass, from the moment of the supreme meeting, the same being as he entered into it. The moment of meeting is not an "experience" that stirs in the receptive soul and grows to perfect blessedness; rather, in that moment something happens to the man. At times it is like a light breath, at times like a wrestling-bout, but always—it *happens*. The man who emerges from the act of pure relation that so involves his being has now in his being something more that has grown in him, of which he did not know before and whose origin he is not rightly able to indicate. However the source of this new thing is classified in scientific orientation of the world, with its authorised efforts to establish an unbroken causality, we, whose concern is real consideration of the real, cannot have our purpose served with subconsciousness or any other apparatus of the soul. The reality is that we receive what we did not hitherto have, and receive it in such a way that we know it has been given to us. In the language of the Bible, "Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." In the language of Nietzsche, who in his account remains loyal to reality, "We take and do not ask who it is there that gives."

Man receives, and he receives not a specific "content" but a Presence, a Presence as power. This Presence and this power include three things, undivided, yet in such a way that we may consider them separately. First, there is the whole fulness of real

mutual action, of the being raised and bound up in relation: the man can give no account at all of how the binding in relation is brought about, nor does it in any way lighten his life—it makes life heavier, but heavy with meaning. Secondly, there is the inexpressible confirmation of meaning. Meaning is assured. Nothing can any longer be meaningless. The question about the meaning of life is no longer there. But were it there, it would not have to be answered. You do not know how to exhibit and define the meaning of life, you have no formula or picture for it, and yet it has more certitude for you than the perceptions of your senses. What does the revealed and concealed meaning purpose with us, desire from us? It does not wish to be explained (nor are we able to do that) but only to be done by us. Thirdly, this meaning is not that of "another life," but that of this life of ours, not one of a world "yonder" but that of this world of ours, and it desires its confirmation in this life and in relation with this world. This meaning can be received, but not experienced; it cannot be experienced but it can be done, and this is its purpose with us. The assurance I have of it does not wish to be sealed within me, but it wishes to be born by me into the world. But just as the meaning itself does not permit itself to be transmitted and made into knowledge generally current and admissible, so confirmation of it cannot be transmitted as a valid Ought; it is not prescribed, it is not specified on any tablet, to be raised above all men's heads. The meaning that has been received can be proved true by each man only in the singleness of his being and the singleness of his life. As no prescription can lead us to the meeting, so none leads from it. As only acceptance of the Presence is necessary for the approach to the meeting, so in a new sense is it so when we emerge from it. As we reach the meeting with the simple *Thou* on our lips, so with the *Thou* on our lips we leave it and return to the world.

FRANZ ROSENZWEIG: HIS LIFE AND THOUGHT
PRESENTED BY NAHUM N. GLATZER

In my thinking about this, another differentiation occurred to me: the differentiation between what can be *stated* about God and what can be *experienced* about God. What can be stated objectively is only the very general formula "God exists." Experience, however, goes much further. What we can thus state—or even prove—about God is related to our possible "experience" in the same way that the empty announcement that two persons have married, or the showing of the marriage certificate, is related to the daily and hourly reality of this marriage. The reality cannot be communicated to a third person; it is no one's concern and yet it is the only thing that counts, and the objective statement of the fact of marriage would be meaningless without this most private, incommunicable reality. And so even the bare fact of marriage does not become real save where it leaves the sphere of what can be objectively stated and enters the secret pale of the festive days and anniversaries of private life.

It is exactly the same with what man experiences about God: it is incommunicable, and he who speaks of it makes himself ridiculous. Modesty must veil this aloneness-together. Yet everyone knows that though unutterable it is not a self-delusion (which a third person might well think it! It is your own fault if you run within striking distance of the psychologist's knife! Why did you blab?). Here, too, it is man's own experience—utterly inexpressible—that is the fulfillment and realization of utterable truth. All that is needed is—to undergo this experience.

And now I suggest that the matter of the details of the Law is analogous to the wealth of experiences, of which only that experience holds which is in the act of being undergone, and holds only for him who is undergoing it. Here too there is no rigid boundary in the relationship between God and man. Here too the only boundary lies between what can and what cannot be expressed. What can be expressed, what can be formulated in terms of theology, so that a Christian too could understand it as an "article of faith," is the connection between election and the Law. But an outsider, no matter how willing and sympathetic, can never be made to accept a single commandment as a "religious" demand. We wholly realize that general theological connection only when we cause it to come alive by fulfilling individual commandments, and transpose it from the objectivity of a theological truth to the "Thou" of the benediction: when he who is called to the reading of the Torah unites, in his benediction before and after the reading, thanks for the "national" election from among all the nations with thanks for the "religious" election to eternal life.

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6. The Content of Revelation

A Note on a Poem By Judah ha-Levi

All that God ever reveals in revelation is—revelation. Or, to express it differently, he reveals nothing but himself to man. The relation of this accusative and dative to each other is the one and only content of revelation. Whatever does not follow directly from this covenant between God and man, whatever cannot prove its direct bearing on this covenant, cannot be a part of it. The problem has not been *solved* for the visionary who beheld the vision; it has been *dissolved*.

[*Judah ha-Levi*, p. 174]

God in search of man

by Abraham Joshua Heschel

A philosophy of Judaism

TWO KINDS OF WONDER

Wonder or radical amazement is the chief characteristic of the religious man's attitude toward history and nature. One attitude is alien to his spirit: taking things for granted, regarding events as a natural course of things. To find an approximate cause of a phenomenon is no answer to his ultimate wonder. He knows that there are laws that regulate the course of natural processes; he is aware of the regularity and pattern of things. However, such knowledge fails to mitigate his sense of perpetual surprise at the fact that there are facts at all. Looking at the world he would say, "This is the Lord's doing, it is marvelous in our eyes" (Psalms 118:23).

That "wonder is the feeling of a philosopher, and philosophy begins in wonder" was stated by Plato⁴ and maintained by Aristotle: "For it is owing to their wonder that men both now begin and at first began to philosophize."⁵ To this day, rational wonder is appreciated as "*semen scientiae*," as the seed of knowledge, as something conducive, not indigenous to cognition.⁶ Wonder is the prelude to knowledge; it ceases, once the cause of a phenomenon is explained.⁷

But does the worth of wonder merely consist in its being a stimulant to the acquisition of knowledge? Is wonder the same as curiosity? To the prophets wonder is *a form of thinking*. It is not the beginning of knowledge but an act that goes beyond knowledge; it does not come to an end when knowledge is acquired; it is an attitude that never ceases. There is no answer in the world to man's radical amazement.

"STAND STILL AND CONSIDER"

As civilization advances, the sense of wonder declines. Such decline is an alarming symptom of our state of mind. Mankind will not perish for want of information; but only for want of appreciation. The beginning of our happiness lies in the understanding that life without wonder is not worth living. What we lack is not a will to believe but a will to wonder.

Awareness of the divine begins with wonder. It is the result of what man does with his higher incomprehension. The greatest hindrance to such awareness is our adjustment to conventional notions, to mental clichés. Wonder or radical amazement, the state of maladjustment to words and notions, is therefore a prerequisite for an authentic awareness of that which is.

Radical amazement has a wider scope than any other act of man. While any act of perception or cognition has as its object a selected segment of reality, radical amazement refers to all of reality; not only to what we see, but also to the very act of seeing as well as to our own selves, to the selves that see and are amazed at their ability to see.

The grandeur or mystery of being is not a particular puzzle to the mind, as, for example, the cause of volcanic eruptions. We do not have to go to the end of reasoning to encounter it. Grandeur or mystery is something with which we are confronted everywhere and at all times. Even the very act of thinking baffles our thinking, just as every intelligible fact is, by virtue of its being a fact, drunk with baffling aloofness. Does not mystery reign within reasoning, within perception, within explanation? Where is the self-understanding that could unfurl the marvel of our own thinking, that could explain the grace of our emptying the concrete with charms of abstraction? What formula could explain and solve the enigma of the very fact of thinking? Ours is neither thing nor thought but only the subtle magic blending the two.

What fills us with radical amazement is not the relations in which everything is embedded but the fact that even the minimum of perception is a maximum of enigma. The most incomprehensible fact is the fact that we comprehend at all.⁸

JUDAISM AS A CIVILIZATION

MORDECAI M. KAPLAN

It is true, no doubt, that in Judaism the religious practices were for a long time interpreted as constituting the means of attaining a share in the world to come, or salvation. This conception of the religious practices operated as a powerfully motivating force in Jewish life, but it would never have succeeded in gaining its traditional importance in the Jewish consciousness, if there had not already existed the need for self-identification with the Jewish people. That need met with fulfillment in the very practice of the *mitzvot* apart from any end which they were regarded as serving. This fact renders the survival of Jewish civilization independent of the traditional belief in other-worldly salvation.

The most important inference to be drawn from the intuitional approach relates to the manner of our response to the need for adjustment as Jews to the changed conditions of life. The Neo-Orthodox Jew meets the challenge of the modern environment by a reaffirmation of his faith in tradition. He bases his veneration of the content of Judaism on the high authority of those from whom that content is derived. Their authority, in turn, it is assumed, is validated by the supernatural revelation of God's will. The Reformist Jew rejoices to find in Judaism truths of universal application, the unity of God, the brotherhood of man, the supremacy of righteousness. But for the Jew who approaches Judaism as a civilization, the test for any form of adjustment will not be whether it conforms to the accepted teachings of revelation, nor whether it is consistent with the universal aims of mankind. His criterion will be: does that adjustment proceed from the essential nature of Judaism? Will it lead to the enrichment of the content of Judaism? Is it inherently interesting? The thing that makes Judaism a vital reality for him is not a regimen of conduct or a system of thought. He realizes that the force of a social heritage lies not in its abstract and universal values, but in its individuality, in its being unalterably itself, and no other. This individuality he knows from within. It is an immediate and untransferable experience. It is as interesting to him as anything that is part of his own personality can be.

It is the feature of interest, rather than that of supernatural origin or rationality, which is—which must be—the essential factor in the approach to Judaism. That interest can be achieved only if

Judaism is intensely related to one's own personality. The Jew must so identify himself with every facet of Jewish life that all aspects of it find their reflection in him. The Jew cannot live Judaism as a civilization unless the past of his people becomes his own past, unless his entire being becomes a nerve that reaches out to the life of his people, and is aware of their every experience. The one who is actively and recognizably interested in Judaism, though he may reserve his judgment as to the absolute or final worth of the particular Jewish meanings to which he has for the time attached his interest, makes a valuable contribution to Jewish life in his very attitude.⁷

Accepting Judaism as a unique form of experience does not preclude the admission of non-indigenous elements. Jews will be justified in seeking to heighten that very uniqueness by leaving the way open for the assimilation of forms and values that Judaism may not now possess. None of the arts in past Jewish life had a scope sufficient to fix definitively the limits of these arts as they may develop in Jewish civilization in the future. The way is thus left open for Jewish artists to assimilate the forms of other civilizations for their own uses, as Jewish painters without waiting for the sanction have already done. There must obviously be some criterion for the difference between healthful assimilation of non-indigenous forms and the passionless and sterile imitation of such forms. Ahad Ha-Am⁸ has dwelt on the difference, but no criterion has yet emerged.

Ultimately, the difference between a uniqueness that is trivial and abnormal and a uniqueness that is spiritual fulfillment is determinable only empirically. We cannot say before the fact whether a particular attempt to intensify Jewish experience will produce results that are outlandish or those that enrich Jewish life. In this respect, we can proceed only from faith, and from the desire to make Jewish experience spiritually satisfying. *When Jewish life shall have developed a law of its being, we shall have some criterion for determining the spiritual value of the aspects and elements of Jewish experience.* And this law will emerge only when Jewish life becomes an experience of infinite variety.

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Man has come to understand that the act of contemplating reality in its wholeness does not place him outside reality. He now realizes that the inter-relatedness which is the source of his awareness of godhood operates within him, no less than outside him. *Thus is eliminated the very need of making any dichotomy either between the universe of man and the universe of God, or between the natural and the supernatural. There is only one universe within which both man and God exist.* The so-called laws of nature represent the manner of God's immanent functioning. The element of creativity, which is not accounted for by the so-called laws of nature, and which points to the organic character of the universe or its life as a whole, gives us a clue to God's transcendent functioning. God is not an identifiable being who stands outside the universe. *God is the life of the universe, immanent insofar as each part acts upon every other, and transcendent insofar as the whole acts upon each part.*