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Two Paradigms of Faith. Martin Buber on Judaism and Christianity



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Abstract:

This paper attempts to analyze the place that Christianity occupies within the framework of Martin Buber's thought and to present some of the arguments brought by Buber in order to support his conception regarding Christianity. There is a great number of books, articles and studies belonging to Buber that touch, on different levels, the topic proposed, nevertheless, the most significant for this paper is Buber's book Two types of faith, intended as a comparative analysis of Judaism and Christianity.

Buber's perception on Christianity is characterized by the dualistic perspective that defines his whole philosophy. The two paradigms that represent the basis of Buber's entire thought (the world of Thou and the world of It) are to be found at the basis of "the duality of faith" he postulates. Thus, the analysis will be carried on two different levels, which, however sometimes share common elements.

Introduction

Martin Buber's work can be properly understood only if one takes into account Buber's faith as a Jew and the fact that Buber is first of all, a philosopher of dialogue. What he proposes as a philosophy of dialogue transcends the analysis of any particular subject. Thus, neither can the analysis of Christianity be taken out of the context of his philosophy, nor can it be understood without taking into account his conception on the I-Thou and I–It relations or the philosophy of realization.

The distinction between the two types of attitude that man can adopt towards the Otherness is always present in Buber's analysis of Christianity, but the resort to it is not explicit. In a few words, at the base of Buber's thought is the distinction between two types of relations: the I–Thou relation, the genuine relation that occurs between different and independent parts and creates the "spheres of the between" and the I–It relation that occurs between a subject and an object and has nothing to do with genuine meeting. The relation with God, (the Eternal Thou) is perceived also in these dual terms and the two types of faith that are at the base of the comparative analysis between Judaism and Christianity are paradigmatic for the two fundamental attitudes.

There are some useful methodological clarifications that should be stated before starting the topic of the paper.

The method used by Buber in his analysis is that of a "learned and intuitive reader of the Bible that has called into being a new method which does not dissect and disintegrate the traditional text into various sources, but rather regards every section which

has a unity of content as a unit, seeking only to liberate it as far as possible from what are manifestly later additions and reworkings." (Max Brod: 1967: 324)

The same style, the same keenness for the sense of words and for the particularity of every background is to be found in the book which goes beyond the confines between Judaism and Christianity, Two Types of Faith.

Buber's analysis focuses on two main figures, Jesus and the apostle Paul. In his study concerning the role of Paul in Jewish-Christian polemics (The Myth of the Traditional View of Paul and the Role of the Apostle in Modern Jewish-Christian Polemics) Daniel L. Rangton mentions the fact that "Buber's treatment was focused more on the faith systems of these two figures, than on any historical reconstruction of the men themselves. (...) Buber did not directly address the question of the reliability of the historical sources. But since he assumed throughout a good familiarity with Romans, and since there was almost no reference made to Acts, it comes as no surprise that Buber's Paul was presented as highly Hellenistic in character." (Daniel L. Rangton: 2005: 82)

The Duality of Faith

Thenceforth, the paper will bring into attention several elements that are present in Buber's demarche of presenting the figures of Jesus and the Apostle Paul as essential for the arising of Christianity. From the very beginning, it must be said that Buber's relation with Christianity is extremely complex causing thus different reactions from both Christian and Jewish thinkers. Buber wants to go beyond the image of Jesus proposed by Christianity and Judaism. This attempt should be perceived as coming from a Jewish thinker, as he defines himself, this precaution being required in order to avoid misplacing Buber either too close to Christianity, because of his friendly attitude towards Jesus, or in the middle of the Jewish tradition that rejects both Christianity and Jesus.

In Two Types of Faith Buber makes a distinction between Emunah and Pistis, which represent the cores of Judaism on one hand and of Christianity on the other.

As Buber announces from the foreword, the subject of the book is the "duality of faith". In fact, this is the premise from which Buber starts: there is a great diversity of contents of faith, but there are just two fundamental forms which can be illustrated by two simple life facts: on one hand, the fact that I trust someone, without being able to offer sufficient reasons for my trust in him; on the other hand the fact that, also without being able to give sufficient reason, I acknowledge a thing to be true. The difference between the two types of faith is the difference between trusting somebody and believing somebody. On one hand, we have the trust that God is always present, that he is close to the soul, and on the other hand, the belief that God exists, the belief from the Epistle to Hebrews. (Biemann: 2002:108)

None of these types of faith has a rational fundament, rationality representing, says Buber, just a part of the being, while "I believe" implies the entire being. (Buber: 1951: 8)

The relation of trust is grounded on the contact of the entire being with the one whom I trust, while the relation of recognition is based on an act of acceptance by the entire being of the fact perceived as being true. Thus, the two forms of faith are introduced: Emunah, the Jewish faith that implies the trust in God and Pistis, the Christian faith whose center is the believing in Christ. Around this distinction Buber builds his attempt to analyze Jesus, situated between his jewishness and the Apostle Paul. Buber

presents Jesus as belonging to classic Judaism, beside the prophets and a part of Pharisees.

The two types of faith imply two different manners of believing: the believer can find himself in the relation of faith or he can convert to it. Buber demonstrates that in the Synoptic Gospels the term faith is still used as Emunah. In St. John's Gospel and especially at Paul the faith starts to receive the Greek connotations of Pistis. The faith as recognition of something as true is alien to the Judaic spirit, being a Hellenic abstraction.

This conceptual structure that combines Greek and Judaic origin elements concurs with the moment of the emergence of Christianity as is conceived today, with the ending of the "immediate relationship with God."

Buber considers that the first way of believing characterizes the primitive period of Israel, while the second characterizes the early period of Christianity. Thus, the people of Israel emerged from the unification of several tribes with their common God, unification that implies the trust in a permanent contact. Christianity begins as Diaspora and mission, and the admittance into the Kingship of God has become an "act of conversion". The two types of faith have different natures but Buber admits that there are also common elements.

Buber describes the "Jewish soul" as an ellipse whose foci are in fact essential elements for the understanding of Emunah. One focus is the primeval experience that God is wholly raised above man, and yet that he is present in an immediate relationship with man. To know these things at the same time represents the living core of every believing Jewish soul. (Biemann: 2002:109) Thus, the fear of God shouldn't be understood as a fear that affects the relationship, but as trembling in face of God's incomprehensibility. "The fear of God is the creaturely knowledge of the darkness to which none of our spiritual powers can reach, and out of which God reveals himself. Therefore, the fear of God is rightly called the beginning of knowledge." (Biemann: 2002:109) This is just the beginning because it is a sort of gateway that leads to the knowledge that man receives from entering a mutual relation with the incomprehensible God. It is the knowledge from I and Thou, a knowledge that has nothing rational, but allows through grace the nearness of the totality of the other's being. (Buber: 1996:61) The act of faith implies a dialogue that God has with the believer through his whole life.

The second focus of the "Jewish soul" is the basic consciousness of the fact that God's redeeming power is at work everywhere and at all times but that there is no final state of redemption. The faith is a continuous process and does not belong, as happens with Pistis, to the moment when the believer says I believe. (Biemann: 2002:111)

A trait of Judaism is also a temporal tirade composed by three moments: creation, revelation, redemption. The originar Christianity, especially, John's Gospel tries for the first time to knit revelation and redemption. The light that shines in the dark is at the same time revelation and redemption, because, through his coming into the world, God reveals himself and the soul is redeemed. (Biemann: 2002:104)

The two centers of Judaism, firstly, the God as absolute exteriority, yet that reveals himself in mutual relationship with the believer, and, secondly, the continuity of human history directed towards fulfillment and decision, represent the elements that differentiate it from Christianity. (Biemann: 2002:113)

The analysis of the two centers of Judaism contains, eventually, the essence of the critique addressed to Christianity. The tensive unity of distance and closeness that exist in the relation of God with man is resolved by Christianity by affirming the unification with man. The second tension, between God's omnipresent redemptive power and the

unredeemed state of the world is annulled by Christianity through Jesus Christ, that represents the change from absence of redemption to redemption, even if proleptic and partial. "One can clearly feel that for Buber, the Christians, with both this foci, cross a sanctified, inviolable border." (Rothschild: 1996:117)

The elements that compose the Jewish soul are to be found, in different forms, in Two Types of Faith, where Buber analyzes the Bible, compares the two types of faith and argues in favor of placing Jesus and the beginning of Christianity in the area of Emunah type of faith. As a personal confession, Buber's words from the Foreword reflect the special relation he has with Jesus:

"From my youth onwards I have found in Jesus my great brother. That Christianity has regarded and does regard him as God and Savior has always appeared to me a fact of the highest importance which, for his sake and my own, I must endeavor to understand... I am more then ever certain that a great place belongs to him in Israel's history of faith and that this place cannot be described by any of the usual categories." (Buber: 1951:12)

The usage of the word brother can stun in different ways both Christians and Jews and suggests that Buber and Jesus are similarly related to God, who is their father. (Novak: 1988: 126) Thus, he rejects both Judaic and Christian views, his Jesus being the inheritor of the prophetic tradition. The daring usage of the term and, of course, the perspective proposed on Christianity as a product of Paul's action have as result various reactions coming from Christians, many of them presenting Buber's work on the topic as a great attack against the core of Christianity. And, obviously, in a certain measure, this reticence is understandable, due to the fact that, unlike his friend, Franz Rosenzweig, "Buber could not acknowledge the equal validity of Judaism and Christianity, one as being already in the eternity of God, the other as being the historical way to God". (Friedman: 1985: 429).

As it is already stated, Buber realizes a comparative analysis, using applied methods and focusing on the sacred texts. Useful for the presentation of Buber's conception is the example he gives in order to bring new arguments in favor of the thesis mentioned from the very beginning. He presents the relation between the Synoptic stories and a similar fragment from John's Gospel, which speaks about the conceiving of faith. To the question that Jesus asks concerning who he is in the opinion of men and of the disciples, Peter answers, in the synoptic texts: "Thou art the Anointed-One", or "God's Anointed", or "the son of the Living God". In John's Gospel the question and the answer are missing and Jesus has no doubts. The words are said by Peter in other context. What was said in the synoptics in a direct relationship has become a disciples' declaration regarding Jesus' nature. Buber evaluates what was lost and what was gained in the course. "The gain was the most sublime of all theologies; it was procured at the expense of the plain, concrete and situation-bound dialogicism of the original man of the Bible, who found eternity, not in the super-temporal spirit, but in the depth of the actual moment. The Jesus of the genuine tradition still belongs to that, but the Jesus of theology does so no longer." (Buber: 1951:34)

The essence of Judaism, which is the immediacy of the biblical faith, is excluded with the emergence of Christianity, by two essential elements brought by Paul: the demonocracy, to which God's justice has given over this aeon, and the mediatorship of Christ's saving grace at the threshold of that which is to come. (Friedman: 1954:11)

An important element in Buber's analysis is the relation with the existence or the inexistence of God in the two types of faith. The proof of the existence of God is alien

to the man of the Old Testament, because the conception of a "non- being" of God is beyond what he can conceive. Moreover, says Buber, the category of the things that cannot be seen, as an "absolute non-percebility" of the eternal things is also alien to the Old Testament. Even if the God of the Old Testament is invisible, he shows Himself in manifestation that man experiences, and does not interprete without affecting his invisibility. Thus, the believer differs from the heathen not by "a more spiritual view of the Godhead, but by the exclusiveness of his relationship to his God and by the reference of all things to Him." (Buber: 1951: 39)

Again, distinction is highlighted between to believe that God exists and to believe that God is here. For the New Testament in general "the existence of God is 'not something to be taken as a matter of course, but an article of faith; man does not feel the nearness of God, but he believes in it'. (Buber: 1951:38)

In Christianity the choosing between faith and non faith belongs to the present, to a moment; on the other hand, the Judaic realization of faith does not happend in one unique decision, but in the totality of the events that compose life. For Israel, says Buber, everything depends on what is to be realized. Faith is in fact the proving of trust within the totality of life, the Old Testament paradigm being Job, because "there is no true life for him but that of a firmly establish convenant between God and man".

The analysis of the book of Job and particularly the four views on Gods relationship with man's sufferings also emphasize this idea. The first view that appears in the Prologue, presents God as the God that works on the basis of enticement. The second is the God of Job's friends. "This is the dogmatic view of the cause and effect in the divine system of requital: suffering points to sin." (Buber: 1968: 194-6). Another view is that of the God of the protesting Job that works against every reason and purpose. The fourth is the God of revelation, the God that speaks from the tempest. This is a particular revelation to the individual, as an answer to the individual sufferer concerning the question of his sufferings. This God is different from the ironical and unreal view in the Prologue and also from the logical perspective of the friends. In contrast, Job's view is real and so to speak, the negative of truth; as well, the fourth view, of the voice speaking from the tempest is the supralogical truth of reality. Accordingly, Buber states that Job is deeply rooted in the primitive Israelite view of life and this assertion may be a reason for placing Job in the paradigm of the Jewish type of faith. (Buber: 1968: 194)

Buber's attempt to approach Jesus in a manner that differs from the traditional Judaic and Christian ones should be seen in the context of his perception of the law, and especially of the law in the framework of the relation between God and man. (Novak: 1988:126)

Referring to his own attitude toward the law, Buber, in an address to a Christian auditory said: "My point of view with regard to this subject diverges from the traditional one: it is a not a-nomistic, but neither is it entirely nomistic". Further, he makes an important clarification: "For the teaching of Judaism comes from Sinai (...) but the soul of Judaism is presinaitic. (...) Jewish law put on the soul, and the soul can never again be understood outside of "the Law"; yet, the soul itself is not the Law." (Biemann: 202:107). Thus, Buber's relation with the term is complex and difficult to grasp. He is neither an anarchist, because he does not deny the validity of the law; nor an anti-nomian, because he affirms the normative character of God's presence to human creatures. He does not reject the Law itself, but the ordering of the present relation I-Thou with God through the structure of the Law which can only be from the past is associated with the I-It relation and signals a transformation of the relation between God and man into

a subject-object relation. (Novak: 1988: 127-8)

In the analysis of the term law from Two Types of Faith Buber asserts that Paul distinguishes between two types of life, depending on the nature of the perception of God: a life determined by law or by faith. Through Jesus' coming into the world, the law is surpassed, men are redeemed from the "curse of law" and the rigid life in law is replaced by the life in faith. This faith divided from law does not exist in pre-Christian era. As it is already mentioned, the law is essential for the Judaic soul, but it must not affect the authentic dialogue closing it in the harshness of subject-object relationship. But we can say that the law suggests the regulation of an active relationship with the alterity, a relationship that occurs between and does not limitate itself to the interiority of "I believe that."

Starting in Antiquity the essential element of Judaism was the deed and not the faith, this also being the fundamental difference between Orient and Occident: the connection between man and God is for the first one the deed, whereas for the second, the faith. This difference is stronger in case of Jews. (Buber: 1996:44)

In Two Types of Faith Buber signals the slippery nature of this "Judaic activism", which can imply a weak presence of the divine grace. "But it is not so. We are not less serious about grace because we are serious about the human power of deciding, and through decision the soul finds a way that will lead it to grace." (Biemann: 2002:100).

The deed, this essential trait of Judaism points out to the important role played by the idea of unity of human life. This unity rejects the separation of the ethical sphere, conceived as a relation with the world, from the religious one, separation that is so familiar to the Occidental spiritual history. The centrality of unity within Judaism involves the fact that "the ethical life has entered into religious life and cannot be extracted from it. (...) In the last resort, "religious life" means concreteness itsel - the whole concreteness of life without reduction - grasped dialogically, included in dialogue." (Biemann: 2002: 101). At this point, it is important to mention the famous text entitled The question to the Single One where Buber addresses some interesting challenges to Kierkegaard's category of Single One. The genuine relation with God cannot ignore the world. Emunah, the trust in God demands the presence of the Other, of the world, here meaning the Alterity which man must genuinely meet. The world, a very important concept in Buber's philosophy, is in fact the way to God.

An interesting analysis of the usage of the term world in Buber's philosophy is proposed by Remi Brague. He distinguishes several meanings of the term, such as: the things of the material universe; the human affairs, the sphere of interhuman, but also the realm of fallen realities that separates us from God. (Paul Mendes- Flohr: 2002: 139). Buber's affirmation from I and Thou illustrates this variety of meanings: "Men do not find God if they stay in the world. They do not find him if they leave the world. He who goes out with his whole being to meet his Thou, and carries to it all being that is in the world finds him who cannot be sought." (Buber: 1996:127)

The religious texts in which religion is conceived as a way of being in the world are strangely neglected by Buber even in Two Type of Faith, says Remi Brague. He is referring to the Gospel of John, where Christian ethics is conceived as a way of staying in the world but living in it as Christ did, and faith is said to be a victory over the world. (Paul Mendes- Flohr: 2002: 146)

Thus, the real faith means "holding ourselves opened to the unconditional mystery which we encounter in every sphere of our life and which cannot be comprised by any formula." This mystery approaches us as our personal experience, as life. To believe

is to meet the mystery of the world, to engage into it. (Buber: 1997:49)

A different distinction made by Buber is used by Dan Avnon in order to introduce another aspect of Buber's attitude towards Jesus. It is the distinction between two types of history (Jewish history): an ordinary history and a real one, a history "seen from above", apparent, produced by ordinary participants, events, conflicts and a history "seen from below", hidden, the history of the events that develop between Adam and Elohim. In this context, Jesus is seen by Buber as a servant of YHVH who revealed himself and his wisdom to a generation not prepared to fathom the depths of understanding he was eager to share. His inaccurate intervention in history led to an effect that was the diametric opposite of his intention: incomplete interpretations of his historical presence led to an institutionalized religion that, in fact perpetuated the separation between Adam and Elohim that Jesus, as a servant of YHVH, sought to bridge. (Avnon: 1998: 100-105)

Maurice Friedman also brings this aspect into discussion when he speaks about Jesus' messianic consciousness, but he thinks that his messianic consciousness was used by Paul and John as the beginning of the process of deification. On the other hand, Jesus "undoubtedly did not see himself as anything other than the hidden servant. And even in the end, he did not hold himself divine in the sense in which he is later held." (Friedman: 1954:11)

In order to better clarify the context of the discussion we should mention the distinction made by Buber between religion, a construction that preserves nothing essential from the direct relationship with God, a collection of rules, rites, behaviors that don't have anything from the divine presence and religiosity, that implies genuine relation with God and the presence of this relation in all aspects of life.

Starting with this distinction, Donald J. Moore describes Buber as a "prophet of religious secularism." The critique made by Buber to the institutionalized religion is studied in detail. Of course, this critique is better understood if it is situated in the context of his whole thought, since, "unless we understand his criticism as one rooted in his Jewish faith, and unless we understand something of his philosophy of dialogue which in its self strongly reflects his interpretation of Judaism, we will not be able to grasp the full dimension of the criticism he directs against the structure of religion and at the same time his deep reverence for the religious spirit of man." (Moore: 1974:3)

In order to argue in favor of his position, Moore uses all elements that Martin Buber identifies as fundamental for the distinction between religiosity, as genuine relation with God and religion, as "objective history of God." The most important element is exactly the type of faith that touches the believer. Finally, starting from this point, the other components entailed by the relationship with God are brought into attention. At the base of the distinction religion-religiosity is another distinction, between trust and belief. On this ground Moore builds an important part of his analysis. Also, the presence and the importance of dogma is an element of difference. Obviously, Buber asserts that there is a Jewish dogma but that it has a secondary role, the central one being played by the genuine meeting with God. "Whatever is enunciated in abstract in the third person about the divine, on the thither side of the confrontation of I and Thou, is only a projection onto the conceptual construct plane which, though indispensable, proves itself again and again to be inessential." (Biemann: 2002:89)

Essential in Buber's analysis is the Sermont on the Mount, which, as he himself says, has a fundamental link with the type of faith from the Old Testament. The starting point is the fragment from the Sermont on the Mount: "Therefore you shall be per-

fect as your Father in heaven is perfect" (11:14). In the Old Testament this commandment appears five times. It is based on a divine quality and invites to imitate God. The commandment is addressed in the first case to the disciples, and in the second case, to Israel assembled around Sinai: "Ye shall be holy, for I am holy". If the disciples are told how at the end of the world man can and must reach the divine through effort for perfection, the people are told because, and are given enough credit and considered able to fight the big fight for the sake of the divine sanctity. The address to the people concerns the life of the chosen people, while the words addressed to the disciples arise out of the eschatological situation, which demands and makes possible something extraordinary.

In Luke's Gospel, we find compassionate instead of perfect. According to Buber this term is similar to Pharisees' words: "Be thou compassionate and merciful as He is compassionate and merciful." In the Old Testament perfection has a different meaning and refers to the degree of devotedness to God and not to a general human attribute.

Moreover, Buber refers to Jesus' words from the Sermont on the Mount: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law of the prophets; I have not come to abolish but to fulfill." According to Buber, Jesus does not want to bring a new law; the law is still the old one, but it is understood in the absolute sense. This sense implies reinforcing the importance and the sanctity of the deed, which was its main traits and was diminished by the rigour of the Law.

In respect to the New Testament commandment to love one's enemy, Buber considers that it finds its roots in the Old Testament commandment to love one's neighbour. Buber notices that in the Sermont on the Mount the world usually translated by "as yourself" is absent, but is not missing in the reply to the scribe. Buber considers that the specification does not refer to the manner or the measure to love, because the love of yourself is totally alien for the Old Testament. The meaning would be "conduct thyself in such a way as if it concerned thyself". So, there is no difference between to love and the proof of love.

The universality of the commandment of love is found at the Pharisees. In this sense, Buber gives several examples, such as: "Whoever hates a man is as if he hated Him Who spake and the world was". (Buber: 1951: 73). These examples are similar to Jesus' commandments, and they show the founding of the morality on the reality of faith. Thus, asserts Buber, "the saying of Jesus about love for the enemy derives its light from the world of Judaism in which he stands and which he seems to contest; and he outshines it." (Buber:1951:75)

The primitive Christian teachings have the same content as the prophets' one: the sanctity of the deed and of the immediate relation with the Absolute. In fact, this is the main idea that resumes Buber's attitude towards Christianity. "It could with greater justification be called original Judaism – though in a different sense than that of the historical term – for it is much more closely related to Judaism than to what is today called Christianity. (...) whatever was not eclectic, whatever was creative in the beginnings of Christianity, was nothing but Judaism. This revolution of ideas had burst into flame in a Jewish land; it had first stirred in the womb of ancient Jewish communal societies, it had been spread by Jewish men, the people they addressed were, as is repeatedly proclaimed, the Jewish people and no other; and what they proclaimed was nothing else than the renewal, in Judaism, of the religiosity of the deed." (Buber: 1996:45)

Simultaneously, Buber suggests a similarity between the primeval Christianity and Hasidism. Nowadays, Christianity and Hasidism have very little in common with what they did at their origins. They both appeared as an attempt to renew Judaism and to

emphasize the importance of the deed. "And just as early Christianity had not wanted to abolish the law, so Hasidism too did not want to abolish it, only to fulfill it (...) to transform it from the rigidity of a formula into the fluidity of the immediate." (Buber: 1996:49)

Another essential part in Buber's attempt from Two Types of Faith is the analysis of prayer. As a conclusion regarding the fundamental Christian prayer, Buber reinforces the opposition between Jesus and the Apostle Paul when he asserts that with Paul, Jesus' conception about the immediate relation implied by the prayer is missing, here the prayer being mediated by Christ. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus' words about the nature of the prayer have a genuine oral tonality and catch the real meaning of the prayer. "For your Father knows what ye need before ye ask Him", but He wants man to address Him directly, through the prayer. The oral tonality and the directness don't characterize the prayer mediated by Christ.

The opposition between Jesus and the Apostle Paul is the basis of Buber's view about Christianity and had provoked various retorts. For example, Ekkehard W. Stegemann emphasizes the fact that it is incorrect for Buber to deny Paul and to ascribe only to Jesus the Jewish type of faith. Buber misunderstands the fact that "the Christian faith concept did not change until the Christian tradition was transformed into Latin language and culture, especially in the fourth century." Moreover, "a great deal of what Buber would detect in Paul might, upon closer view, to be a retrojection for a later history of Paul's reception in Christianity. Some of what Buber recognizes in Jesus also pertains to Paul." (Rothschild: 1996:120)

An interesting investigation of Martin Buber's conception regarding Christianity is proposed by the Swiss theologian Emil Brunner and underlines some points similar to the ones we have mentioned above. At the end of his analysis, Brunner mentions several aspects, acceptable or problematic, for a Christian theologian, we must remind that.

Thus, regarding the antitheses that exist, according to Buber, between the two types of faith, Brunner considers that they are the result of a penetrating analysis and of an objective scientific study in comparative religion, that Buber's criticism strikes at the Christian doctrinal tradition, which, indeed, came about a kind of belief determined by the principle "that something is true", in opposition to the faith-principle of the biblical Emunah. Moreover, Brunner states that Buber renders Christians a great service by making clear that the teaching of Jesus, understood in connection to the Jewish faith, cannot be the basis of a faith in countradiction to the Jewish one. Rather, what divides the two parts is the faith in Jesus as the Christ. (Schilpp, Friedman: 1967:313-314)

However, Brunner also emphasasis the fact that he has reproaches against Buber' analysis. While Buber says that Paul forsakes the Old Testament faith of obedience by making a historical event the object of faith, Brunner criticizes that Buber, "in the presentation of Jewish faith, leaves the factor of historical revelation as good as out of consideration. The faith of Israel is based upon the fact that, by way of deeds and words, still more so in events which, through the prophets, became the Word of God for Israel, Yahweh revealed is name." The Christian theologian considers that Pistis, which, for Buber, is the mark of Hellenization of faith, "is not a precondition of faith, but an aspect of an indivisible act in which man opens himself to the self-communicating God."(Schilpp, Friedman: 1967: 315)

Brunner considers that for Paul, the event of the cross is not, as Buber affirms, the object of an abstract act of faith that has nothing to do with the living relation between man and God, but it is an event in which "occurred a self communication of God in

which God addresses man as a child of God in spite of his sin." This faith does not have a Gnostic Hellenistic nature, but is of the same kind as the trust and obedience of the Old Testament believer. Furthermore, due to the fact that this faith is "a daring to go out of one's self", "a looking away form oneself, even from the pious believing self, and a depending solely upon the grace of God," whereas, the believer from the Old Testament "is always gazing on himself and focusing on rightness of this his trust," this faith "exhibits in complete purity what trusting in the Lord in the Old Testament always intended but could never fully attain." (Schilpp, Friedman: 1967:316)

Nevertheless, Brunner affirms that Buber's "excuse" is offered by Paul's gnostic terminology and also by the fact that "the Christian Theology itself did not succeeded in interpreting the Christian faith in such a way that it was understood primarily as an act of obedience"; in addition to this, he feels that he shares a common front with Buber in the spiritual battle against the danger represented by fundamentalist tendencies in both traditions.

There is a large variety of elements and aspects that are used by Buber in order to sustain the main distinction that founds his conception regarding the duality of faith and the association with Judaism, respectively with Christianity. Even if we are aware that the argumentation comes from a Jewish thinker and that this strong background transcends Buber's conception, we cannot deny the fact that it stands firmly and makes possible, even for Christians, to accept, even though with additional specification, as we already saw, the duality of faith.

Contemporary paulinism

The last chapter of the Two Types of Faith returns to contemporary times and introduces a new idea. In Christian history, states Buber, one can identify periods dominated, at various degrees, by paulinism. Paulinism means not only a system of though, but "a mode of seeing and being which dwells in the life itself" (Buber: 1951:162)

The trait of paulinism, unacceptable to Buber, felt so even nowadays, is Paul's answer to the problem of evil. He creates two Gods: a God of wrath and one of deliverance, the last one almost disappears behind Christ. "Although the Christian Paulinism of our time softens the demonocracy of the world, it too sees existence as divided into 'an unrestricted rule of wrath' and 'a sphere of reconciliation." (Friedman: 2002: 331)

The paulinism that characterizes the contemporary period is one of the unredeemed, a paulinism that eliminates the place occupied by the divine grace. This paulinian attitude conquers also non-Christian milieus. The same as with Paul, in these milieus develops the experience of a world at the disposal of an incontrollable power; the only thing that lacks is the manifest will to redeem the world, Christ.

Buber explicitly stated that Paulinism, this pessimistic world-view that combined a belief in an unredeemed cosmos controlled by inevitable forces with a powerful sense of personal alienation, could be found in both Christian and Jewish thought (and in secular culture, too). But, Daniel L. Rangton distinguishes in Buber's assertions, despite his protests, the trace of some apologetic tendencies because Buber undoubtedly believed that the tendency was more pronounced in Christianity than in Judaism. (Rangton: 2005: 84).

Buber illustrates his idea by proposing a relation between the paulinian view with some pessimistic nuances about the world and the world in Franz Kafka's novels. Both

The Trial and The Castle use the symbol of the door from the parable of the man who waits before a certain open gateway which leads to the world of meaning to be admitted until his death when he is told that the door was opened for him, but now it will be closed. The symbol is elaborated in the first novel in the dimension of time and in The Castle in the dimension of space. In the first case it suggests the lack of perspective in man's relation with his own soul, and in the second case, man's relation with the world. The world presented by these novels is "a world handed over to a maze of intermediate beings - it is a Pauline world except that God is removed into the impenetrable darkness and that there is no place for a mediator". (Buber: 1951:166) However, a quoted passage from Kafka speaks about man destined eventually to the paradise and suggests the shy and quiet manner used in order to express the antipaulinianism of this paulinist Jew, perceived by Buber not only as a nihilist author.

But Kafka knows God's hiddenness, and he describes most exactly from inner awareness 'the rule of the foul devilry which fills the foreground.' Kafka, the Jew, also knows that God's hiding Himself does not diminish the immediacy: 'In the immediacy He remains the Saviour and the contradiction of existence becomes for us a theophany. (Friedman: 2002:331) "This is the appearance of Paulinism without Christ which at this time when God is most hidden has penetrated into Judaism, a Paulinism therefore opposed to Paul." (Buber: 1951:169)

The contemporary society crisis affects, differently, both types of faith. Different in their nature, they differ also in their origin and in the crisis that affects them.

So, the Jewish Emunah takes roots in the history of the people, while Pistis in the history of the individual. Emunah is man's persistence in his relation with a guide, which although invisible, manifests himself. The personal Emunah of each individual is a part of the people and extracts its power from the living memory of the people concerning the fact that it was guided from the very beginning. The present crisis of this type of faith is caused by the fact that the faithful people are divided in two unconnected parts: the religious community and the nation. At the personal level, the crisis manifests through the lack of spontaneity and through its replacement with elements that belong to the sphere of Pistis and present a logical or mystical character. The only possible remedy is the renewal of the national faith. (Buber: 1951:171)

Pistis had emerged from the historical experience of the people and entered the individual's soul. Buber admits that this faith offers the possibility of rising to a complete renunciation, to a mystique of the communion of the being with the one that he believes in. In spite of the irrational basis, the character of his type of faith has a logical nature: to-accept-as-true and to-recognize-as-true what a sentence proclaims as an object of faith. This act has a truly Greek origin and is the action of a being kept apart from his people. Jesus speaks to the individual, but he hints at the community. The example given by Buber in this respect is the verse where Jesus speaks about the lost sheep. On the other hand, Paul doesn't mention the belonging to a national reality. The individuals become Christians as a result of an individual act of faith that has a Hellenic basis. The crisis emerges because of the disproportion between the sanctification of the individual and the lack of sanctity of his community, disproportion that is felt also by his soul.

Conclusion

The tone used by Buber to conclude his analysis is somewhat more optimistic,

characterized, as observes Max Brod, by a "patient trust"; the philosopher asserts "that there is a way which leads from rigid Paulinism to another form of Pistis nearer to Emunah. The faith of Judaism and the faith of Christendom are by nature different in kind, each in conformity with its human basis, and they will indeed remain different, until mankind is gathered in from the exiles of the 'religions' into the Kingship of God. But an Israel striving after the renewal of its faith through the rebirth of the person and a Christianity striving for the renewal of its faith through the rebirth of nations would have something as yet unsaid to say to each other and a help to give to one another – hardly to be conceived at the present time." (Buber:1951:173-4)

Buber's relation with Christianity is complex[1] and differs from his relation with Jesus. Buber goes beyond the traditional views about Jesus (the Christian one making too much of him and the Jewish one too little) (Novak: 1988: 126), and perceives him as a paradigm of an I-Thou relation with God "...how powerful, even overpowering is Jesus' I-saying, and how legitimate to the point of being a matter of course! For it is the I of an unconditional relation in which man calls his You "Father" in such a way that he himself becoming nothing but a son . . . I and You remain; everyone can speak the You and then become I; everyone can say Father and then become son; actuality abides." (Buber: 1996:116)

In an address delivered to a group of Christian theologians, Buber made an statetment that resumes, in a way, his attitude toward Christianity: "What have you and we in common? If we take the question literally, a book and an expectation. To you the book is the antechamber, to us is the sanctuary but in this place we can dwell together and together listen to the voice that speaks here. (...) together we can redeem the imprisoned word." (Biemann: 2002:113) Hence, Buber considers that Judaism and Christianity are united by a hope, the hope for "a unity to come to us from God".

Nevertheless, the most important aspect in the relation between Judaism and Christianity is the fact that they are premessianically distinct. Judaism and Christianity are different, the types of faith that characterize each of them are different, and this is what Buber successfully attempts to demonstrate. And even if Buber's attitude towards Paul is rather harsh, Buber renders the Christians a service (a Christian theologian admits that) by making clear that the teaching of Jesus, understood in connection to the Jewish faith, cannot be the basis of a faith in counterdistinction to the Jewish one.

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Notes:

1 This complexity is sustained by Maurice Friedman in the article Martin Buber's Influence on Tewntieth Century Religious Thought, where he analyses the great influence Buber's thought had and still has on many important Jewish and Christian Thinkers, but also the misinterpretations of Buber's philosophy.