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Judaism of Martin Buber



Martin Buber's ideological work is widely known and at first glance it seems that further reflection on his philosophical thought is unnecessary and unimportant. Buber is undoubtedly one of the most important scholars of the twentieth century. He was an original thinker and a versatile intellectual. During his long and productive life, he contributed professionally to many disciplines. He was active in the fields of biblical studies and translation theory, Jewish mysticism and comparative religion, active in the fields of social philosophy and psychology, and contributed to the fields of education, education and politics. Last but not least, he was instrumental in introducing and popularizing Hasidism and its teachings to the Western world. It cannot be denied that Buber's thought has inspired many scholars, researchers, explorers and philosophers. He directly influenced Christian thinkers of the stature of Paul Tillich, Urs von Balthasar, and Jan Heller. But here the question arises as to the origin of his ideological inspirations. It is pertinent to ask which element or elements influenced the thought and work of this Jewish giant.

Acquiring a Jewish Identity

Martin Buber, born in Vienna on February 8, 1878, was three years old when he had to move from his hometown to Lvov due to the breakdown of his parents' marriage. His mother, Elise Buber, left her husband and son and literally disappeared without a trace, which had a depressing effect on the whole family, but especially on the young Martin, who from that moment on lived with his father's parents.¹ As P. Bouretz writes in *Témoins du futur. Philosophie et messianisme*, here Buber unveiled the world of the Jews of old.² His father's place, as is noticeable from his autobiographical sketches, was taken by his grandfather Solomon, who was one of the last great men of the *haskalah*, a representative of the Jewish bourgeoisie, on the social ascendancy, and, in spite of his great involvement in the spheres of economic life and social affairs, lived at home exclusively in the world of the spirit and of ceaseless study.³ Salomon Buber was one of the leading citizens of the city. He was respected by Jews of all branches of Judaism, both *Mitnagdim*, opponents of Hasidism, and representatives of this mystical movement. His many articles, arrangements, introductions, and midrash notes led Jewish writers and rabbis from all over the world to desire to enter into correspondence with him. Many learned Jewish scholars and rabbis of the period held Salomon Buber in high esteem and spoke of him with due respect.⁴ From the description of his environment, it is evident that Martin Buber was exposed to traditional Jewish culture in his childhood.⁵ He was well acquainted with religious regulations, doctrines, commentaries, and Scripture.

Maurice Friedman, Buber's biographer, in a work chronicling his youth, pointed out that while the great man lived under his grandfather's roof, his roots were firm, even if even at the time he was shaken by some doubts and unanswered questions. However, when he left the house of his childhood, he experienced a real turning point, which was caused by the turbulence of the times.⁶ Buber himself recalled this period by saying:

1 M. Friedman, *Martin Buber's Life and Work. The Early Years, 1878–1923*, Detroit 1988, p. 4.

2 P. Bouretz, *Svědkové budoucího času II. Scholem, Buber, Bloch*, Praha 2009, p. 198.

3 G. Wehr, *Martin Buber in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten*, Reinbek bei Hamburg 1968, p. 11; G. Wehr, *Buber*, Olomouc 1995, p. 10–11.

4 M. Friedman, *Martin Buber's Life and Work. The Early Years, 1878–1923*, p. 11.

5 M. Comins, *A Wild Faith: Jewish Ways into Wilderness, Wilderness Ways into Judaism*, Woodstock 2007, p. 35.

6 M. Friedman, *Martin Buber's Life and Work. The Early Years, 1878–1923*, p. 35.

Up to my twentieth year, and to a lesser extent afterwards, my spirit was in constant and varied motion, determined by one of many influences, always assuming a new form of changing tension and resolution, but without a centre and without increasing substance.⁷

It may be concluded, then, that during his youth he experienced states of confusion and chaos. For Buber, the first impulse for deliverance from the maelstrom of the times came from the youth movement of Zionism⁸, through which he experienced a rebirth in the community.⁹

Martin Buber spent the summer of 1898 with his father Karl in Halych, during which time he discovered Nathan Birnbaum's (pseudonym of Mathias Acher) *Die jüdische Moderne*. This book, in his opinion, completed the synthesis of national and social thought in Judaism.¹⁰ Stefan Vogt, research assistant for Jewish philosophy of religion, in *Subalterne Positionierungen*, states that Buber's connection to the Zionist movement was decisively influenced by his acquaintance with Birnbaum's aforementioned lecture. On the basis of it he formulated the idea that the national liberation of Judaism must emerge above all from a cultural renaissance.¹¹

In the winter of 1898, Buber returned to Leipzig and became politically active in the Zionist movement. He carried out all his activities with patriotic zeal. Although, as M. Friedman writes, he was completely untrained for political activities, he became a mainstay of the movement in Leipzig and even

7 "Bis in mein zwanzigstes Jahr, in geringerem Maße auch noch darüber hinaus, war mein Geist in stetiger und vielfältiger Bewegung, in einem von mannigfaltigen Einflüssen bestimmten, immer neue Gestalt annehmenden Wechsel von Spannungen und Lösungen, aber ohne Zentrum und ohne wachsende Substanz" (G. Wehr, *Martin Buber in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten*, p. 17; G. Wehr, *Buber*, p. 17).

8 Zionism is a political movement that arose in support of the establishment of a Jewish state. It is based on the idea that Jews, wherever they live, constitute one people. Zionism developed in Europe in the nineteenth century against a background of growing nationalism and anti-Jewish sentiment, especially in areas ruled by the Tsar, where the largest number of Jews lived, but also in France, where the Dreyfus Affair exposed Jewish resentment, but equally in modern democracy, where Jews were relatively assimilated. Zionism did not define Judaism on the basis of religion, language, place of birth or culture, but by descent. Zionism is thus an ideology of descent. For early Zionists, the location of the future Jewish state was not essential. Places such as Argentina and Uganda came into consideration. The First World Zionist Congress, chaired by Theodore Herzl in Basel, Switzerland, focused its gaze on Palestine as a result of its desire to align itself with the religious tradition that this is the place where the Messiah will appear and where he will restore the kingdom of God. *Encyclopedia of Race and Racism*, ed. J. H. Moore, New York 2008, p. 240.

9 M. Friedman, *Martin Buber's Life and Work. The Early Years, 1878–1923*, p. 36.

10 M. Friedman, *Martin Buber's Life and Work. The Early Years, 1878–1923*, p. 37–38.

11 S. Vogt, *Subalterne Positionierungen: Der deutsche Zionismus im Feld des Nationalismus in Deutschland, 1890–1933*, Göttingen 2016, p. 50.

formed a local group and union of Jewish students, of which he became the first president.¹² Although Martin Buber joined the Zionist movement a year after the first congress and admired Theodor Herzl as a Jewish hero, his relationship to Zionism was from the beginning different from that of a leader. For Buber, Zionism meant a return to the Jewish roots that Herzl had never had, and an escape from assimilation.¹³ Buber's view was based on a different premise than Herzl's, which was exclusively political and nationalist in orientation. For Buber, the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche and the ideas of cultural Zionism of Ahad Ha'Am became inspirations. Martin Buber sought to bring the Jewish people back to Judaism. However, he did not see Judaism as an ancient tradition, nor as a Jewish ethic. His efforts to shape a personal and humanistic religious Judaism and his contributions to encouraging a renaissance of Jewish creativity made him a prominent representative of spiritual Zionism. Thus, what attracted the young Buber to Nietzsche was his vision of the individual outpouring of creative vitality, which he had read about in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. Buber objected to the political nature of the Zionist movement, which T. Herzl coined, because he was convinced that a pure Jewish culture and authentic Judaism was far more necessary than a separate Jewish state.¹⁴ To the supporters of the Zionist movement in this context he addressed:

If all who belong to us will carry out Zionism not only in words but with their whole being, if they will regard their life as a sacred preparation for something new and wonderful to come, and will live it as such a preparation with sincere earnestness and determination, if there will be a Zion of souls, a great peaceful community of mature and formed people – then you can be sure that the second Palestinian Zion will not be too long in coming.¹⁵

12 M. Friedman, *Martin Buber's Life and Work. The Early Years, 1878–1923*, p. 38.

13 M. Friedman, *Martin Buber's Life and Work. The Early Years, 1878–1923*, p. 41.

14 J. Golomb, *Nietzsche and Zion*, New York 2004, p. 155.

15 “Wenn alle, die zu uns gehören, ihren Zionismus nicht bloß mit Worten, sondern mit ihrem ganzen Sein betätigen werden, wenn sie alle ihr Leben als eine heilige Vorbereitung auf das Neue und Wunderbare, das da kommen soll, ansehen und es als eine solche Vorbereitung mit treuem Ernst und Entschlossenheit auch leben werden, wenn so ein Zion der Seele sa sein wird, eine große stille Gemeinschaft reifer und tatbereiter Menschen – dann, dessen können Sie gewiß sein, wird das andere, das palästinensische Zion nicht lange auf sich warten lassen” (M. Buber, *Das Zion der jüdischen Frau*, [in:] *Die Jüdische Bewegung. Gesammelte Aufsätze und Ansprachen 1900–1915*, Berlin 1916, p. 29).

In March 1898, Buber was delegated by the local division to represent Zionism at a conference in Cologne, which was the organization's headquarters at the time. While there, he obtained a book by the Swiss philosopher and art historian Jacob Burckhardt, *Griechische Kulturgeschichte*, to which he responded by wondering why Jews did not also possess a work of the same content.¹⁶ In 1899, the twenty-one-year-old Martin Buber attended the Third Zionist Congress in Basel as a delegate and outlined a theme that became a guiding theme for him at that moment. More than a political movement, for Buber Zionism represented a certain worldview that must subjugate all Jewish people and transform their spirit and culture.¹⁷

For Buber, Zionism represented inner liberation and purification. In his speech *Das Zion der jüdischen Frau* he writes that the aim of the movement is not to improve the situation of the Jews, but to redeem the nation. Buber emphasized that in order for Zionism to manifest itself in a visible reality, it must first be born in the soul of man.¹⁸

In the context of his involvement with Zionism, it should be noted that if his Jewish education and upbringing had been as superficial as Mordechai Eliasberg suggested at the time, he would hardly have found his way into the movement. Buber's university years were indeed a period during which he became somewhat alienated from his Jewish roots, which had been instilled in him during his childhood, but no amount of "culture" could remove the effect of the years spent in his grandfather's house. Surrounded by the world of midrash, he managed to live a life of amazing concentration of soul and intensity of work.¹⁹

The extent to which Martin Buber presented his grandfather Solomon as a prototype of humanity and Jewishness even within the Zionist movement is evident from the letter he sent him on the occasion of his birthday:

Since I have been away from home, I have made the acquaintance of many persons of culture: artists, poets, and men of science. But I have never seen the childlike magical force of the spirit, the might of a strong and simple striving so purely and beautifully embodied as in grandpapa, never has a scholar and worker with ideas seemed to me so worthy of love (I mean: so worthy of the greatest love.) I can seldom hold back my tears — tears of the innermost veneration — when I think of his

16 M. Friedman, *Martin Buber's Life and Work. The Early Years, 1878–1923*, p. 38.

17 P. Bouretz, *Svědkové budoucího času II. Scholem, Buber, Bloch*, p. 199.

18 M. Buber, *Das Zion der jüdischen Frau*, p. 29.

19 M. Friedman, *Martin Buber's Life and Work. The Early Years, 1878–1923*, s. 38.

beloved face. [...] That your loving kindness, dear grandfather, which has so often lent me comfort and joy and steadiness, shall long be preserved for me is the glowing hope of my heart. The tirelessness and singleness of your creation has often led me back to myself when I have scattered myself in many directions. [...] I cannot show my thankfulness and my love to you better than when I – in my sphere – emulate your manner and place my life, like yours, in the service of the Jewish people. You have drawn forth and utilized treasures from the spiritual life of the Jewish past; as a young an who longs still more for the deed than for knowledge, I have in mind working together with and helping to create the Jewish future. But both are ruled over by the spirit of the eternal people and in this sense I can perhaps say that I shall continue your lifework.²⁰

On the other hand, it should be noted that Buber's joining the Zionist movement did not mean an unqualified affirmation of all things Jewish and an uncritical abrogation of his early dissenting stance. Martin Buber called for a Jewish renaissance, which meant the purification and elimination of those elements of exilic Judaism that he considered an unhealthy degeneration.²¹ Buber described the exile's theological and philosophical fruits in rather harsh rhetoric. It was for him an age of sterile intellectualism, distant from the life and lived hope of achieving unity, an intellectualism nourished by bookish formulas or commentaries on commentaries. What is interesting about Buber's Judaism, according to Gershom Scholem, is that it remains anchored in two temporally immensely distant realms, namely, the world of the Bible and the world of Hasidism. It seems as if he wants to build a bridge that bridges the period of exile. At the same time, Scholem pointed out that Buber's assessment of the exile period was somewhat influenced by Micha Yosef Berdichevsky, a scholarly Talmudist and Hasidic follower who rebelled against the intellectualism of Judaism shortly after he became acquainted with the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche. In attempting to bridge the exile experience, Buber's first step was a radical rejection of halakhic injunctions. He called for a purification of Judaism from the sediments with which rabbinic rationalism had coated it. He stressed that the essence of Jewish faith is decision and not the prescriptiveness of the law.²²

Buber's attitude toward Jewish law proceeded from general assumptions and criteria as well as from specific theological considerations. His inter-

20 M. Friedman, *Martin Buber's Life and Work. The Early Years, 1878–1923*, s. 39.

21 M. Friedman, *Martin Buber's Life and Work. The Early Years, 1878–1923*, p. 39.

22 P. Bouretz, *Svědkové budoucího času II. Scholem, Buber, Bloch*, p. 206–208.

est was concentrated primarily on the religious problems of man in general. It should be noted, however, that Buber's approach to Jewish law does not begin with the assumption that the law need not be observed. This attitude is based on his particular view and approach to revelation, which is more easily understood in the light of the three general positions:

- ◆ man occupies a significant and extraordinary place in the world,
- ◆ spontaneity and lived experience is of far greater value than adherence to a formulated concept,
- ◆ Judaism is a spiritual process.²³

Buber decisively renounced the notion of a Jewish faith that earns and consolidates its monotheistic essence in the encounter with myth. The history of the development of the Jewish religion is, according to him, the history of the struggle between the natural structure of a national mythical-monotheistic religion and the intellectual structure of a rabbinic, rational and exclusively monotheistic religion. Buber's rehabilitation of the myth thus established the counterpoints of its antithesis. On the plane of Judaism's outward manifestations and figures of thought, one finds priests against prophets, rabbis against heretics, and the paralyzing rigidity of the law against the vibrant fecundity of the popular haggadah. Martin Buber pointed to places in the nation's history where the authenticity of Jewish existence resisted the ossification of sacrificial ritual and the fossilization of Scripture and tradition.²⁴

Another attitude that Buber emphasized is the free expression of the inner self, which he considered more desirable than obedience to formulated conditions and religious dogmas. In his view, the personal decision of man is the driving force of human religiosity. Man should unite his convictions and will, and thus actions should flow from his own intention. The intention of an act is therefore more sanctifying than its content. The religious laws, the mitzvot, were not, according to him, ordained by God at Sinai, but were a mosaic of the reinterpretation of human experience with revelation. One is not obligated, then, to live according to the prescribed content, but one is to sanctify one's actions by the intention behind the performance of this-or-that particular act.²⁵

23 B. Kraut, *The Approach to Jewish Law of Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig*, "Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought" 3-4 (1972), p. 51.

24 P. Bouretz, *Svědkové budoucího času II. Scholem, Buber, Bloch*, pp. 209-210.

25 B. Kraut, *The Approach to Jewish Law of Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig*, p. 52.

Reinterpreting the Legacy of Eastern European Hasidism

Buber was born into Judaism, so to speak, and his grandparents' upbringing instilled a sense of pride in his Jewish roots deep in his heart. His sense of belonging to this religious system and its culture was fully developed in his youth, when he became fervently involved in the Zionist movement. Maurice Friedman has stated that one of the means by which Buber exerted the most profound influence on the Zionist movement was his discovery and mediation of Hasidism. Likewise, according to Robert Weltsch²⁶, Buber's discovery of Jewish mysticism was epochal for the West. Through his work, he convinced us that there could be no revival of Judaism that did not contain elements of Hasidic doctrine. Through this revelation, he reinforced the importance of many aspects of the Jewish experience in the Jewish community of Western Europe, and at the same time helped to bridge the growing gap between this world and the Jews of the East.²⁷ The article *Martin Buber and German Jewry: Prophet and Teacher to a Generation in Catastrophe* reacted very positively to the contribution of Buber's Hasidism and the bravura way in which he managed to show the treasures of the great strength and depth of Eastern world Jewry. He presented Buber as a scholar in whom the synthesis of two cultural traditions was personified and thus became a living symbol of

26 Robert Weltsch (1891–1984) was born in Prague into one of the city's oldest and most respected Jewish families. He was a Zionist activist, journalist and essayist. After studying law, he joined the Zionist student association Bar Kochba. From 1910 to 1914, he published articles in Zionist newspapers in the German language, such as the Prague weekly *Selbstwehr* and *Die Welt*. Shortly after the war, Zionist leaders in Germany invited Welcht to Berlin to serve as editor-in-chief of the *Jüdische Rundschau*, the official journal of the Zionist Federation of Germany and one of the most widely circulated interwar periodicals in the Jewish world. In the early twentieth century, he began to advocate in the Zionist Federation, along with Hugo Bergmann, Hans Kohn (his close friends from the Bar Kochba Association), and Martin Buber, a binary plan for the future of Palestine, a plan that called for the creation of a joint Jewish-Arab community, while essentially rejecting the concept of a Jewish nation-state. These objections to the creation of a Jewish nation-state in Palestine constituted only one component of his critical view of the very principle of self-determination for national groups in the multiethnic territories. He considered the actual implementation of this principle after the First World War to be a fatal mistake. D. Shumsky, *Weltsch, Robert, in: The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Weltsch_Robert (10.12.2022).

27 M. Friedman, *Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue. Chapter 26: Buber and Judaism*, <http://www.religion-online.org/book-chapter/chapter-26-buber-and-judaism/> (10.12.2022).

them²⁸. P. Bouretz sensed Buber's strong affinity with Hasidism, too. Among the three fundamental aspects of his Judaism, he included the assertion of „the hidden currents of Jewish existence that emerge from the experience of Hasidism“²⁹.

When in 1904 Buber ended his activities within the Zionist movement, his so-called mystical period began. He devoted himself intensively to the study of Jewish mysticism, especially the aforementioned Eastern European Hasidism. In his writing, his desire to grasp the essence of the Jewish tradition and his tireless efforts to renew and revive his own Jewish culture became very clear. It was in the context of these dimensions of Buber's interest that his new relationship to Zionism, which he understood not primarily politically but primarily in terms of the renewal of tradition, took shape.³⁰ On the question of the meaning of Jewishness for the Jew, he referred to two concepts, namely religion and nationality. On religion, he sought to appeal to the inner reality of Judaism, which alone determines the degree of meaning for its adherents, rather than to its outward manifestations. He did not see the signs of Jewish religiosity in rules, norms, dogmas, or cult. He recognized them in the passion for the divine that brings man out of the periphery and gives him true life, the life of God's witness. In him, faithfulness is transformed into reality because man lives in God's name. In connection with the term nationality, Buber was referring to a sense of solidarity emanating not from without but from within. One's own people is meant to represent for man the unity that is the basis of his self, the self destined by eternity to be part of the chain of being of a given nation.³¹ Buber led the entire community of Jews to a deeper and more intense experience of their Jewishness, in the context of which he was awarded the Goethe-Preis der Universität Hamburg in 1952 for his work in the spirit of true humanity and for his exemplary cultural activity, which served to bring about a mutual understanding of the people and to preserve and continue a spiritual tradition.³²

In connection with Martin Buber's efforts to resolve the issues of the time and society through the richness of his religious tradition, Hošek stated:

28 E. Wolf, *Martin Buber and German Jewry: Prophet and Teacher to a Generation in Catastrophe*, „Judaism“ 4 (1952), p. 348.

29 „of the hidden currents of Jewish existence that come from the experience of Hasidism“ (P. Bouretz, *Svědkové budoucího času II. Scholem, Buber, Bloch*, p. 207).

30 P. Hošek, *Martin Buber a chasidismus*, [in:] M. Buber, *Úvahy o chasidismu*, Praha 2015, p. 93.

31 M. Buber, *The Meaning*, [in:] L. Lewisohn, *Rebirth. A Book of Modern Jewish Thought*, New York 1935, pp. 90–95.

32 M. Friedman, *Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue. Chapter 26: Buber and Judaism*, <http://www.religion-online.org/book-chapter/chapter-26-buber-and-judaism/> [10.12.2022].

Buber's ambition to discover for humanity the most precious treasures of his own Jewish tradition, and to interpret them in a way that brings new light to current issues and problems of twentieth-century Western culture, led him to seek and find a central synthesis of several key impulses of Western philosophy and his own distinctive reinterpretation of the legacy of Eastern European Hasidism.³³

Buber's commitment to Zionism led him to Judaism, as he himself expressed in his essay *Mein Weg zum Chassidismus* (1918). However, this was only the first step in his religious self-awareness, since nationality does not change a person's religion. Buber, by his own account, espoused Judaism before he really knew it. After discovering this fact, his desire to become acquainted with the faith he professed and to penetrate its creative identity became the focus of his interest. On this journey he came again to Hasidism.³⁴ On a general interpretive level, one can discern in Buber the outline of several historical theses that define the central point of his Hasidic narratives and connect him to an overall understanding of Judaism. His Hasidism stands on the ground of myth, and at the same time is in a kind of imaginary duel between myth and rabbinic tradition. Martin Buber's emphasis on mythicism goes back to the ancient history of Judaism (he saw the power and energy of mysticism in the prophets and the Essenes) and contrasts it with the need of Talmudic scholars to codify religious law. The periods of exile of the Jewish people created a strong need for the preservation of the law, resulting in the tightening of myth into kabbalah and folk legends. The task of Hasidism in the eighteenth century became the liberation of myth and the communication of its content to the Jewish world.³⁵ Buber extended this mission to the whole of Western society in the twentieth century, both Jewish and non-Jewish, and sought to show the importance of the Hasidic idea of blurring the boundaries between the sacred and the profane.

The Chassidic way of redemption refers to one important principle that a Chassid should adhere to, and that is *shiflut*, humility. It speaks of the uniqueness of each person, the need to see one's counterpart as oneself, and

33 „Buberova snaha objevit pro lidstvo nejvzácnější poklady vlastní židovské tradice a tlumočit je způsobem, který vnese nové světlo do aktuálních antropologických otázek a problémů západní kultury dvacátého století, jej vedla k hledání a nalézání ustrojné syntézy několika klíčových podnětů západní filosofie a vlastní osobité reinterpretace odkazu východoevropského chasidismu” (P. Hošek, *Martin Buber a chsidizmus*, p. 95).

34 M. Buber, *Má cesta k chasidismu*, [in:] *Život chasidů*, Praha 1994, p. 967; M. Buber, *Mein Weg zum Chassidismus*, [in:] *Werke. Dritter Band. Schriften zum Chassidismus*, Heidelberg 1963, p. 972.

35 P. Bouretz, *Svědkové budoucího času II. Scholem, Buber, Bloch*, pp. 264–265.

the need to feel oneself in others.³⁶ It refers to the necessity of solidarity and love. The contribution of Buber's philosophical work lies in the legacy derived from his anthropology. According to Martin Buber, as stated in his article *Interpersonal Relationships and Human Dignity*, the basis of human existence lies neither in the individual nor in the social whole, but between man and man. In other words, the foundation is dialogue. Buber believed that life is essentially a complex of interpersonal relationships, with the human being capable of building a relationship in the three basic spheres already mentioned several times in the thesis. The initial fact of life is love³⁷, which directs one being against another³⁸ and opens it to relationship. It is not identical with it, but, as Buber pointed out, a relationship without love, i.e. without stepping towards the other, is actually blind love, which bears the name Lucifer.³⁹ It can thus be concluded that where love is not present, neither is relationship.

Conclusion

Martin Buber's form of Judaism is significantly manifested in his translation activity, in which the contours of his dialogical philosophy are evident. For him, the Bible was a living, actual and appealing testimony of man's encounter with God. He understood its stories as invitations to build a relationship. In translating them into German, he sought to capture the existential challenge of the biblical texts and to reveal their inner movement.⁴⁰ In the Bible, Buber saw God's confrontation with man in an intimate personal relationship in which the kind of conversation, that is, their dialogue with each other, is a real give and take. From this a new understanding of faith, religious truth, and religious knowledge emerged. In the context of this information, then, we can say that what one believes or knows is what one has discovered

36 M. Buber, *Vom Leben der Chassidim*, [in:] *Werke. Dritter Band. Schriften zum Chassidismus*, p. 40; M. Buber, *Život chasidů*, Praha 1994, p. 24.

37 Buber makes a very strong distinction between the concept of love and feelings. He defines love as something that happens, where feelings represent what one "has". Feelings dwell in human, but human dwells in love, which is found between the I and the Thou. M. Buber, *Ich und Du*, [in:] *Werke. Erster Band. Schriften zum Philosophie*, Heidelberg 1962, p. 87; M. Buber, *Já a Ty*, Praha 2005, p. 47.

38 K. Chakravarti, A. Roy, *Interpersonal Relationships and Human Dignity*, "Indian Philosophical Quarterly" 2–3 (2002), p. 195.

39 M. Buber, *Zwiesprache*, [in:] *Werke. Dritter Band. Schriften zum Chassidismus*, p. 194.

40 P. Hošek, *Martin Buber a chsidizmus*, p. 97.

when one has encountered and responded to another in the fullness of being. For Martin Buber, this is precisely the idea that the Bible wants to convey through revelation. It is not meant to be information about God, but a series of encounters between God and human beings. Faith, then, does not imply an assenting attitude to its articles and truths, but it is the positive response of man's whole being to God, who confronts him with a personal demand. The postulate of faith is not: believe that certain things are this or that, but choose this day whom thou wilt serve, or come, follow me.⁴¹

41 E. W. Wiest, *Martin Buber*, [in:] G. L. Hunt, *Ten Makers of Modern Protestant Thought. Schweitzer – Rauschenbusch – Temple – Kierkegaard – Barth – Brunner – Niebuhr – Tillich – Bultmann – Buber*, New York 1958, pp. 115–116.

Abstract

Judaism of Martin Buber

The aim of this paper is to analyze the foundations of Martin Buber's Jewish identity. It explores the history and formation of his spiritual life, emphasizing that, in Buber's case, it is a philosophical-religious approach. The specific perception of Hasidism plays a significant role in his thinking. Buber's attitude towards Jewish law is based on both general assumptions and specific theological perspectives. He synthesizes key impulses from Western philosophy with his distinctive interpretation of Hasidism as the essence of Jewish tradition. His research primarily focused on the religious problems of humanity at large. The paper highlights the importance of national and religious awareness for Martin Buber, noting that his thought is deeply intertwined with religious feeling.

Keywords: Buber, Hasidism, Judaism, Zionism, national renaissance

Abstrakt

Judaizm Martina Bubera

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest analiza tła żydowskiej tożsamości Martina Bubera. Artykuł dotyczy historii i kształtowania się jego życia duchowego. Wskazuje na pochodzenie religijnych korzeni Bubera, odzwierciedlając, że w jego przypadku jest to bardziej podejście filozoficzno-religijne. Specyficzne postrzeganie chasydyzmu odgrywa ważną rolę. Stosunek Bubera do prawa żydowskiego opiera się zarówno na ogólnych założeniach, jak i na konkretnych aspektach teologicznych. Tworzy on syntezę kluczowych impulsów filozofii zachodniej i charakterystycznej dla siebie interpretacji chasydyzmu jako esencji tradycji żydowskiej. Jego zainteresowania badawcze koncentrowały się przede wszystkim na problemach religijnych człowieka w ogóle. Artykuł wskazuje na znaczenie świadomości narodowej i religijnej dla Martina Bubera oraz na fakt, że jego myśl jest powiązana z uczuciem religijnym.

Słowa kluczowe: Buber, chasydyzm, judaizm, syjonizm, renesans narodowy

