

soul of cognitive man, and this soul contradicts all of the desires and strivings of the religious soul. However, these opposing forces which struggle together in the religious consciousness of halakhic man are not of a destructive or disjunctive nature. Halakhic man is not some illegitimate, unstable hybrid. On the contrary, out of the contradictions and antinomies there emerges a radiant, holy personality whose soul has been purified in the furnace of struggle and opposition and deemed in the fires of the torments of spiritual disharmony to a degree unmatched by the universal *homo religiosus*. The deep split of the soul prior to its being united may, at times, raise a man to a rank of perfection, which for sheer brilliance and beauty is unequalled by any level attained by the simple, whole personality who has never been tried by the pangs of spiritual discord. "In accordance with the suffering is the reward" [Avot 5:23] and in accordance with the split the union! This spiritual fusion that characterizes halakhic man is distinguished by its consummate splendor, for did not the split touch the very depths, the innermost core, of his being? There is much truth to the fundamental contention set forth both by the dialectical philosophies of Heraclitus² and Hegel with regard to the ongoing course of existence in general and the views of Kierkegaard, Karl Barth,³ and Rudolf Otto with regard to the religious consciousness and its embodiment in the experience of *homo religiosus*—in particular, namely, that there is a creative power embedded within antithesis;⁴ conflict enriches existence, the negation is constructive, and contradiction⁵ deepens and expands the ultimate destiny of both man and the world.

Our aim in this essay is to penetrate deep into the structure of halakhic man's consciousness and to determine the precise nature of this "strange, singular" being who reveals himself to the world from within his narrow, constricted "four cubits" [Berakhot 8a], his hands soiled by the gritty realia of practical Halakah [see Berakhot 4a]. However, in order to fulfill the task we have set before us in this monograph, we must under-

take a comparative study of the fundamental and distinctive features of the ontological outlooks of *homo religiosus* and cognitive man. For only by gaining an insight into the differences and distinctions existing between these two outlooks will we be able to comprehend the nature of halakhic man, the master of talmudic dialectics.

II

HOW radically different is the approach of *homo religiosus* to God's world from that of cognitive man! When cognitive man observes and scrutinizes the great and exalted cosmos, it is with the intent of understanding and comprehending its features; cognitive man's desire is to uncover the secret of the world and to unravel the problems of existence. When theoretical and scientific man peers into the cosmos, he is filled with one exceedingly powerful yearning, which is to search for clarity and understanding, for solutions and resolutions.⁶ Cognitive man aims to solve the problems of cognition vis-à-vis reality and longs to disperse the cloud of mystery which hangs darkly over the order of phenomena and events.

Cognitive man does not tolerate any obscurity, any oblique allusions and undeciphered secrets in existence. He desires to establish fixed principles, to create laws and judgments, to negate the unforeseen and the incomprehensible, to understand the wondrous and the sudden in existence. Cognitive man establishes a cosmic order characterized by necessity and lawfulness. Any phenomenon which cannot be subjected to the rule of law and principle is relegated to the realm of the nonbeing and nothingness ($\mu\eta\ \delta\upsilon\upsilon$) of the Platonists or, at best, to the hylic matter ($\delta\delta\nu\alpha\mu\upsilon\varsigma$ or $\delta\lambda\eta$) posited by Aristotle.

The common denominator of both the Platonic and Aristotelian views is that the random and the particular are not deemed worthy of being granted the status of the real and

Notes

P A R T O N E

1. Obviously the description of halakic man given here refers to a pure ideal type, as is the case with the other types with which the human sciences (*geisteswissenschaften*) are concerned. Real halakic men, who are not simple but rather hybrid types, approximate, to a lesser or greater degree, the ideal halakic man, each in accordance with his spiritual image and stature. See Eduard Spranger, *Lebensform geisteswissenschaftliche Psychologie und Ethik der Persönlichkeit* (Halle, 1922) [*Types of Man*, trans. P. J. W. Pigors (Halle, 1928)].
2. See Ferdinand Lassalle, *Die Philosophie Herakleitos des Dunklen von Ephesos* [Berlin, 1858; repr. in *Gesammelte Reden und Schriften*, ed. E. Bernstein, vols. 7 and 8 (Berlin, 1920)]; and Georg Brandes's book on Lassalle [*Ferdinand Lassalle* (London/New York, 1911), pp. 32-41]. Lassalle's contention that there is an accord between Heraclitus's philosophy and that of Hegel has not been accepted by historians of Greek philosophy.
3. The father of dialectical or crisis theology.
4. Even though Kierkegaard disagreed with Hegel's philosophy from beginning to end and made it the object of his fierce, stinging attacks, he, nevertheless, accepted from him the dialectical principle (with many significant changes, to be sure). And this concept of the dialectic, which he and Karl Barth introduced into the analysis of the unfolding of the religious consciousness, and this view concerning the antinomic structure of religious experience, which was revised and refined by Rudolf Otto in his book, *The Idea of the Holy*, give the lie to the position that is prevalent nowadays in religious circles, whether in

Protestant groups or in American Reform and Conservative Judaism, that the religious experience is of a very simple nature—that is, devoid of the spiritual tortuousness present in the secular cultural consciousness, of psychic upheavals, and of the pangs and torments that are inextricably connected with the development and refinement of man's spiritual personality. This popular ideology contends that the religious experience is tranquil and neatly ordered, tender and delicate; it is an enchanted stream for embittered souls and still waters for troubled spirits. The person "who comes in from the field, weary" (Gen. 25:29), from the battlefield and campaigns of life, from the secular domain which is filled with doubts and fears, contradictions and refutations, clings to religion as does a baby to its mother and finds in her lap "a shelter for his head, the nest of his forsaken prayers" [H. N. Bialik, "Hakhnisi tahat kenafekh"] and there is comforted for his disappointments and tribulations. This ideology is partially embedded in the most ancient strata of Christianity, partially rooted in modern pragmatic philosophy; but mainly it stems from practical-utilitarian considerations. The advocates of religion wish to exploit the rebellious impulse against knowledge which surges from time to time in the soul of the man of culture, the yearning to be freed from the bonds of culture, that daughter of knowledge, which weighs heavy on man with its questions, doubts, and problems, and the desire to escape from the turbulence of life to a magical, still, and quiet island and there to devote oneself to the ideal of naturalness and vitality. This Rousseauian ideology left its stamp on the entire Romantic movement from the beginning of its growth until its final (tragic!) manifestations in the consciousness of contemporary man. Therefore, the representatives of religious communities are inclined to portray religion, in a wealth of colors that dazzle the eye, as a poetic Arcadia, a realm of simplicity, wholeness, and tranquillity. Most of the sermons of revivalists are divided in equal measure between depicting the terrors of hellfire and describing the utopian tranquillity that religion can bestow upon man. And that which appears in the sermons of these preachers in a primitive, garbled form, at times interwoven with a childish naïveté and superficial belief, is refined and purified in the furnace of popular "philosophy" and "theology" and becomes transformed into a universal religious ideology which proclaims: If you wish to acquire tranquillity without paying the price of spiritual agonies, turn unto religion! If you wish to achieve a fine psychic equilibrium without having to first undergo a slow, gradual personal development, turn unto religion. And if you wish to achieve an instant spiritual wholeness

and simplicity that need not be forged out of the struggles and torments of consciousness, turn unto religion! "Get thee out of thy country," which is filled with anxiety, anguish, and tension, "and from thy birthplace," which is so frenzied, raging, and stormy, "to the land" that is enveloped by the stillness of peace and tranquillity, to the Arcadia wherein religion reigns supreme. The leap from the secular world to the religious world could not be simpler and easier. There is no need for a process of transition with all its torments and upheavals. A person can acquire spiritual tranquillity in a single moment. Typical of this attitude is the Christian Science movement.

It would appear to me that there is no need to explain the self-evident falsity of this ideology. First, the entire Romantic aspiration to escape from the domain of knowledge, the rebellion against the authority of objective, scientific cognition which has found its expression in the biologicistic philosophies of Bergson, Nietzsche, Spengler, Klages, and their followers and in the phenomenological, existential, and antiscientific school of Heidegger and his coterie, and from the midst of which there arose in various forms the sanctification of vitality and intuition, the veneration of instinct, the desire for power, the glorification of the emotional-affective life and the flowing, surging stream of subjectivity, the lavishing of extravagant praise on the Faustian type and the Dionysian personality, etc., etc., have brought complete chaos and human depravity to the world. And let the events of the present era be proof! The individual who frees himself from the rational principle and who casts off the yoke of objective thought will in the end turn destructive and lay waste the entire created order. Therefore, it is preferable that religion should ally itself with the forces of clear, logical cognition, as uniquely exemplified in the scientific method, even though at times the two might clash with one another, rather than pledge its troth to beclouded, mysterious ideologies that grope in the dark corners of existence, unaided by the shining light of objective knowledge, and believe that they have penetrated to the secret core of the world.

And, second, this ideology is intrinsically false and deceptive. That religious consciousness in man's experience which is most profound and most elevated, which penetrates to the very depths and ascends to the very heights, is not that simple and comfortable. On the contrary, it is exceptionally complex, rigorous, and tortuous. Where you find its complexity, there you find its greatness. The religious experience, from beginning to end, is antinomic and antithetic. The consciousness of *homo religiosus* flings bitter accusations against itself and immediately

is filled with regret, judges its desires and yearnings with excessive severity, and at the same time steep itself in them, casts derogatory aspersions on its own attributes, flails away at them, but also subjugates itself to them. It is in a condition of spiritual crisis, of psychic ascent and descent, of contradiction arising from affirmation and negation, self-abnegation and self-appreciation. The ideas of temporality and eternity, knowledge and choice (necessity and freedom), love and fear (the yearning for God and the flight from His glorious splendor), incredible, overbold daring, and an extreme sense of humility, transcendence and God's closeness, the profane and the holy, etc., etc., struggle within his religious consciousness, wrestle and grapple with each other. This one ascends and this descends, this falls and this rises.

Religion is not, at the outset, a refuge of grace and mercy for the despondent and desperate, an enchanted stream for crushed spirits, but a raging, clamorous torrent of man's consciousness with all its crises, pangs, and torments. Yes, it is true that during the third Sabbath meal at dusk, as the day of rest declines and man's soul yearns for its Creator and is afraid to depart from that realm of holiness whose name is Sabbath, into the dark and frightening, secular workaday week, we sing the psalm "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters" (Ps. 23), etc., and we believe with our entire hearts in the words of the psalmist. However, this psalm only describes the ultimate destination of *homo religiosus*, not the path leading to that destination. For the path that eventually will lead to the "green pastures" and to the "still waters" is not the royal road, but a narrow, twisting footway that threads its course along the steep mountain slope, as the terrible abyss yawns at the traveler's feet. Many see "the Lord passing by; and a great and strong wind rending mountains and shattering rocks . . . and after the wind an earthquake . . . and after the earthquake a fire" but only a few prove worthy of hearing "the still small voice" (1 Kings 19:11-12). "Out of the straits have I called, O Lord" (Ps. 118:5). "Out of the depths I have called unto Thee, O Lord" (Ps. 130:1). Out of the straits of inner oppositions and incongruities, spiritual doubts and uncertainties, out of the depths of a psyche rent with antinomies and contradictions, out of the bottomless pit of a soul that struggles with its own torments I have called, I have called unto Thee, O Lord.

And when the Torah testified that Israel, in the end, would repent out of anguish and agony [cf. Maimonides, *Laws of Repentance* 7:5]. "In your distress when all these things are come upon you . . . and you will

return unto the Lord your God" (Deut. 4:30), it had in mind not only physical pain but also spiritual suffering. The pangs of searching and groping, the tortures of spiritual crises and exhausting treks of the soul purify and sanctify man, cleanse his thoughts, and purge them of the husks of superficiality and the dross of vulgarity. Out of these torments there emerges a new understanding of the world, a powerful spiritual enthusiasm that shakes the very foundations of man's existence. He arises from the agonies, purged and refined, possessed of a pure heart and new spirit. "It is a time of agony unto Jacob, but out of it shall he be saved" (Jer. 30:7)—i.e., from out of the very midst of the agony itself he will attain eternal salvation and redemption. The spiritual stature and countenance of the man of God are chiseled and formed by the pangs of redemption themselves.

5. One of the thirteen rules for interpreting the Torah is the contradiction between two verses and their harmonization by a third verse. Therefore, it is not for naught that the Midrash (Gen. Rabbah 56:8 [cited in Rashi on Gen. 22:12]) informs us that after the angel told Abraham, "Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him" (Gen. 22:12), Abraham arose and asked: "Yesterday You told me "For in Isaac shall seed be called to thee" (Gen. 21:12), and today You told me "Take now, thy son, thine only son . . . and offer him there for a burnt-offering" (Gen. 22:2), etc., etc.—i.e., the exalted drama of the *Akedah*, of the binding of Isaac, is reflected not only in the act of self-sacrifice on the part of the father and the son and in the offering up of Isaac as a sacrifice on the altar, but also in the struggle taking place within Abraham's soul. For it seemed to him as though the words of God were contradictory, heaven forbid; nevertheless, he overcame the pangs and torments of contradiction, rose up early in the morning and saddled his ass. When the angel appeared to him and revealed to him the third verse which harmonized the two contradictory verses, then Abraham rose up and questioned. I once heard from my father [R. Moses Soloveitchik] in the name of our great master, R. Hayyim of Brisk [R. Soloveitchik's paternal grandfather], that as long as the third harmonizing verse had not yet been revealed, Abraham had no right to question God's word, and for this reason he contained himself until the end of the epic. The pangs of consciousness of the man of God and the towering and awesome strength of his self-restraint shine forth here in a clear and pure light.

6. Neither the question of the nature of the metaphysical and noetic impulse of cognitive man, which has been extensively discussed by many philosophers—from Aristotle to present-day scholars—nor