CONTRASTING STYLES IN JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHIZING

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It is the thesis of this paper that there are certain characteristics that tend to differentiate between Jewish and Christian styles in philosophizing about subjects pertaining to religion. This will be related to conjectures as to what it is in each faith that may have contributed to these differences.

Some rather obvious difficulties must be admitted at the outset. For instance, this is not the sort of case that can be proved. The most that can be hoped is that some of the ideas presented may be worth thinking about. Also, there are exceptions to what is being claimed. For example, Hume would in some ways fit more comfortably into my portrayal of Jewish philosophizing and Spinoza into the Christian, and they are not insignificant exceptions. Despite that, I think I have a point, and will argue in fact that Hume and Spinoza exemplify the claim advanced at a deeper level.

It should be emphasized that this has to do with *style* of philosophizing insofar as that is influenced by either the Jewish or Christian faith. It is not about content, conclusions or logic, but rather about mood and tone, tacit assumptions and hopes, as to what may be achieved by scrutiny of the intellectual dimensions of religion.

Let it be observed, also, that any philosopher's writings ought to be examined for what he says and the cogency with which he supports his case, whatever his religion, if any. It is assuredly a tricky business to pretend to know the extent to which a particular philosopher was influenced by his religious heritage. Hence what follows is worthy of consideration only with respect to trends which have had, as I see it, a certain persistence. It should also be clear that many things in philosophy have very little direct connection with religion, so we are limited here to religious philosophy and areas of inquiry that have a bearing on religious thought.

I

To begin with, there is in Jewish philosophizing a certain skepticism, or rather reluctance, as regards systematic philosophical theology. A fairly typical statement by Rabbi Joshua Loth Liebman illustrates this.

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> I read Aristotle and Augustine, Philo and Saadia, Descartes, Berkeley, Kant, and Hegel, and while I admired the towering systems which their words constructed, I found no answer for the hungry heart.[1]

He goes on to say that he did find this in the Hebrew prophets. It sounds anti-intellectual, but Rabbi Liebman was by no means anti-intellectual, despite the fact that he was a successful popularizer of technical thought. You can match his statement with similar ones by Christian pastors, but most frequently you read on among them to find that there is plainly an anti-intellectual stance. This agnosticism in Jewish thought does not characteristically lead to anti-intellectualism.

Maimonides' view was that "the negative attributes of God are the true attributes."

> All we understand, is the fact that He exists, that He is a Being to whom none or all His creatures is similar, who has nothing in common with them, who does not include plurality, who is never too feeble to produce other beings, and whose relation to the universe is that of a steersman to a boat; and even this is not a real relation, a real simile, but serves only to convey to us the idea that God rules the universe; that is, that He gives it duration, and preserves its necessary arrangement.... In the contemplation of His essence, our comprehension and knowledge prove insufficient; in the examination of His works, how they necessarily result from His will, our knowledge proves to be ignorance, and in the endeavor to extol Him in words, all our efforts in speech are mere weakness and failure.[2]

How very like that are the words of Franz Rosenzweig. Book One of his *magnum opus* begins with the words, "Of God we know nothing," and a bit later he says, "God is therefore initially a Nought for us, his Nought." Further on, of course, he defines God's essence as "infinite Yea." This is somewhat clarified by his claim that

> God has a nature of his own, quite apart from the relationship into which he enters, say, with the physical "world" outside himself.[3]

This seems to me a stance or style of approach that is well in accord with Maimonides and in one respect with Spinoza. It also agrees with

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[1] *Peace of Mind*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946, p. 159.

[2] Guide of the Perplexed, trans. M. Friedländer, Trübner ed., 1885, pp. 171-212. Cf. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, where despite the wealth of detail, this position of the negative attributes of God but positive knowledge of His Law is maintained. *The Code of Maimonides*, var. translators and dates, New Haven: Yale.

[3] *The Star of Redemption*, trans. by W. W. Hallo (from second ed. of 1930), New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970.

Saint Thomas' idea of "Divine Theology" as humanly unknowable, but there is a significant difference between these Jewish thinkers and Saint Thomas as to the truth and articulatable certainty of natural theology. I would describe the Jewish tendency as veering toward mysticism or what I call "meta-metaphysics."[4] The affirmation of the nought which cannot be articulated further is basic, whereas in Saint Thomas it is merely an acknowledgement of the limitations of human reason.

This can be compared with Buber's assertion about the Eternal Thou:

> God cannot be inferred in anything – in nature, say, as its author, or in history as its master, or in the subject as the self that is thought in it. Something else is not "given" and God then elicited from it; but God is the Being that is directly, most nearly, and lastingly, over against us, that may properly only be addressed, not expressed.[5]

And it has a certain similarity with Bergson's exposition of the élan vital, which is known by intuition, not intellectual cognition, and not genuinely expressible in language, although he has a good deal to say about it.[6] And is it not very like Wittgenstein's familiar conclusion in the *Tractatus*?

> *How* the world is, is completely indifferent for what is higher. God does not reveal himself *in* the world.... There is indeed the inexpressible. This *shows* itself; it is the mystical.[7]

Spinoza, as has been noted, is somewhat different. God is absolute substance consisting in infinite attributes. Although Spinoza has much to say about God, the human mind knows only two modes: extension and thought. In his letter to Hugo Boxel, he wrote:

> ... I do not say that I know God entirely, but only that I understand some of His attributes, though not all, nor even the greater part of them, and it is certain that our ignorance of the majority of them does not hinder our having a knowledge of some of them.[8]

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[4]By "meta-metaphysics" I mean to suggest any systematic scheme of universal or general categories governing all possible knowledge, but which disclaims the possibility of knowledge about God or the "true" nature of the world. It would, for instance, deny the possibility of any validity attaching to either the metaphysics of Aquinas or Whitehead.

[5]*I and Thou*, trans. R. G. Smith (second ed.), New York: Scribner's, 1958. See pp. 99-102.

[6]Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. by T. E. Hulme, New York: Putnam's, 1912.

[7]*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1922. 6.432 and 6.522.

[8]In the *Ethics* Spinoza is even more emphatic about the infinity of unknown attributes of God. The quotation cited is from the edition edited by John Wild, *Spinoza Selections*, New York: Scribner's, 1930, p. 456.

What interests me about Spinoza in this connection is that his confession of partial ignorance does not lead either to suspicion of the power of the intellect or inability to live decisively and make affirmations about what he does know. After all, he held that belief in "miracles and ignorance are equivalent," and that salvation is the intellectual love of God.[9]

Samuel Alexander, who owed much to Spinoza, presents us with an awkward difficulty in his conception of God as a cosmic nisus toward deity. But even there I am able to salvage a partial point in that "deity" is the next – unrealized and unknowable – level of existence.[10] By way of contrast, Teilhard de Chardin, whose basic metaphysics was in so many ways like that of Alexander, had very definite things to say about his vision of the future under the spell of the "Omega point."[11]

There are some examples. To them I should like to add my own impressionistic judgment based on personal experience. When I have been in Jewish groups discussing philosophical matters, it has repeatedly struck me that the style of thought is different from the usual Christian groups. It is a difference in the way of going about the task of thinking and discussing. More than once after explaining my views and engaging in lively argument, I have received this reply by way of summation: "Well, it is as you say, 'nobody knows.'" But that agnostic affirmation in no way blocks clear decision in the face of live options.

II.

I have already indicated something of the contrast between this style and the Christian, but some additional observations and examples may be in order to sharpen it. There are many philosphers whose rearing included a substantial Christian influence who are agnostic about many matters, including the unknown or unknowable attributes of God. But generally I think you will find them then developing religious views based on faith or else finding an undisturbed tranquility based on their agnosticism, much as Cicero did in *De Natura Deorum.* Often there is a paradoxicality in this – just as there is a paradox in the Jewish pattern, but a quite different one –, such as was suggested in Irwin Edman's characterization of Santayana's creed: "There is no God, and the Virgin Mary is His Mother."

Consider as another example Hume's *Enquiry,* in which he demolished belief in miracles, which would appear to put his position

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[9]*Ibid.*, p. 473. The subject of ethics is neglected in this paper for lack of space. Examination of that would require another essay.

[10]*Space, Time and Deity,* London: Macmillan, 1920, Vol. II, p. 365.

[11]*The Phenomenon of Man,* trans. Bernard Wall, New York: Harper and Row, second ed., 1965, pp. 268 ff. and *The Future of Man,* trans. N. Denny, New York: Harper and Row, 1964.

close to Spinoza's, but he then concludes: "Our most holy religion is founded on faith, not on reason." Despite having defined miracle as violation of natural law, he asserts:

> Mere reason is insufficient to convince us of its [the Christian religion's] veracity: and whoever is moved by *faith* to assent to it is conscious of a continued miracle in his own person. . .[12]

I find it difficult to believe that Hume himself was deeply persuaded by this, but he always seemed to want to draw back from appearing to undermine the possibility of Christian certainty, as long as it did not claim to be based on empirical reasoning. This may explain that surprising comment at the end of the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion,* where he sides with Cleanthes, when throughout he appears to have stated Philo's skeptical views more powerfully and convincingly.

With Kant you have the familiar removal of any possibility of establishing theological principles on an empirical base. The effect of this is to remove central religious beliefs from any possible disproof derived from the advance of science. Then in *The Critique of Practical Reason,* he provides his pragmatic basis for permissible belief in God, immortality and freedom, and especially God as the pragmatic sanction for the categorical imperative. Like Hume, he leaves room for faith assertions and, indeed, a mode of assurance about them that is distinctively different from intellectual certitude. Kierkegaard and Schleiermacher, in their very different ways, also give a central place to the experience and avowal of faith certitude. And more recently we find Dewey and Whitehead both expressing dissatisfaction with Bergson's "intuition" and presenting their concepts of God in definite terms.

In this diverse group, you have something different from a reluctance to categorize and characterize God in positive terms. The Jewish influence is somewhat uncomfortable about claims to know or ability to state the nature of God, but that does not impede the ability then to make definite assertions about that perspective and way of life which can be called religious. The Christian influence is somewhat uncomfortable about leaving the former in a state of uncertainty or unknowability and the latter if expressed too definitely.

Furthermore, the Jewish style is uncomfortable unless argument takes place; debate functions almost like a sacrament that confers authenticity. In Christian style, despite all the controversy that has marked its history, there is a certain uneasiness about religious debate. Thus in the Christian milieu it becomes far more important to have

[12] *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding,* Sec. 10.

a disputed matter settled. These generalizations, if supportable, are not meant to cancel out the obvious historical and contemporary fact that there are many different styles within both Judaism and Christianity. It is only in the most general and loose sense that one can speak of either a Jewish or Christian sytle.

This latter observation about controversy is illustrated nicely in a familiar story in the Babylonian Talmud. Rabbi Eliezer was engaged in heated argument and finally in exasperation he cries out, "If the law agrees with me, let this tree prove it." The tree leaps a hundred cubits (some say four hundred). The other judges retort: "No proof can be adduced from a tree." This is repeated with a stream that runs backwards and the walls which begin to fall, but being rebuked by Rabbi Joshua, remain leaning. Finally a Heavenly Voice agrees with Rabbi Eliezer, to which Rabbi Joshua, unimpressed, replies, "The law is not in heaven! It was given on Monut Sinai. We pay no attention to a Heavenly Voice." Later on one of the rabbis who had been present meets Elijah, who is something of a commuter between heaven and earth. So he asks, "What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do at that point?" To which Elijah replies, "He laughed with joy, saying 'My sons have defeated Me.' "[13]

The point is that it is not possible to imagine a story quite like that, with that lesson given, occupying an honored place in historic Christian sacred writings. It is distinctively Jewish. The story is used by Edmond Cahn in connection with his argument that man is on his own when it comes to the use of reason to devise legal and ethical systems. The Torah may have been given, but the applications of law to particular circumstances remain a continuous debate in which honest and pious men may and should differ. "The prophets of past ages deserve honor," he says, "precisely because they surpassed their predecessors in applying the moral constitution to the problems and conflicts of the cultures in which they lived."[14] The implication for the present generation is clear.

But the most significant thing of all about the Talmudic story is that it does not tell us which of the rabbis was right.[15] It finds a certain security in the stance, "Who knows?" And that, I submit, is a

[13]Edmond Cahn, *The Moral Decision: Right and Wrong in the Light of American Law*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1956, pp. 311 f.

[14]*Ibid.*, p. 314.

[15]An objection was made here as to the point of the story. "Why does either of them have to be right? Why can't they both be right?" That may well be the significant point, but it is a perfect example of the Jewish mood. My claim is that the Jewish style tends to be comfortable leaving the matter there; the Christian style, historically, tends to be quite the reverse. Abelard's *Sic et Non*, which highlighted disagreements among the early fathers of the church, was not favorably received.

stance in which classical Christianity finds not security but insecurity.

Now both Christians and Jews – or thinkers who have been influenced significantly by one or the other – are going to have to deal with both the unknown and that which they are willing to affirm or find it necessary to affirm on some basis. But Judaism tends to be ill at ease with *formulations* of certainty, and Christianity tends to be so without them. And Judaism tends to comfortable with disagreement, whereas Christianity tends to be uncomfortable with it. And quite possibly thinkers who regard themselves as entirely emancipated from either religion nevertheless remain under the influence of this difference in mood and style. At least, that is the way it looks to me.

On this latter point of disputation, I am reminded of an incident related by a teacher at a Jewish boys' school. They were being taught soccer and since they had never played it, the lesson began with an explanation of the rules. Before the exposition could be finished, the boys began arguing about the rules and whether they were as they should be. That, I submit, is exquisitely Jewish.

In interfaith gatherings it is not unusual to find Jewish participants in vigorous debate and Christians appearing to be in greater agreement than they in fact are. Each side is apt to misinterpret the other – the one appears querulous, the other dissembling – when it is really a difference in style of procedure. Of course when dialogue gets into authentic confrontation and communication both of these tendencies are modulated into true listening and open expression of honest differences. It sometimes seems to me that Jews will argue infuriatingly about moral rules, but keep them, while Christians easily accept the rules and their sanctions, but meanwhile find ways to circumvent them. That is probably a gross exaggeration, but it suggests something of the difference in style that I claim to find. Once again let me stress the fact that within both Judaism and Christianity there are all sorts and degrees of individual style and of schools of thought. The extreme degree here would be on the one hand the person who is merely argumentative and on the other the person who is two-faced, and no doubt examples of each could be found in any ethnic or religious group. What is to the point is not those extreme cases, but that Christians sometimes misinterpret sincere and purposive disputation as being mere querulousness and Jews sometimes misinterpret an irenic style as being hypocritical agreement.

III

Are there factors in the two heritages which at least partially explain this alleged difference in style?

One thing in Judaism may be the proscription against idolatry, taking the Lord's name in vain and at times the reluctance to pronounce or write the divine name. It would be simplistic to derive the meta-metaphysical bent from this, but perhaps the same sort of reluctance exhibited in these proscriptions contributed to an intellectual reluctance among philosophers to enter too confidently into the area of presumed knowledge about God.

Second, the rabbinic style lends itself to debate and lively interchange. The task of human reason is interpretation and application of the Law. This could logically have led to a view of the Law's applications as clear and unambiguous, but as a matter of historical development, they were understood in creative and diversely rich forms which require *sine qua non* vigorous debate. Brandeis exemplified this understanding in civil law: "thinking is not a heaven-born thing . . . It is a gift men and women make for themselves. It is earned, and it is earned by effort."[16] It is acutely ironic that Christians have seen Judaism as rigidly legalistic, when in fact it has often been situational and particularistic, while grounded in precedents but not mechanically ruled by them. There is an aversion to creed; as Rabbi Rubenstein says, "Judaism is more than a system of beliefs," which is one of the few things Jews would emphatically agree about. The traditional teachings are characteristically mediated through the wisdom of a pious and just man. And there is a skepticism about counsellors: ". . . some give counsel in their own interest. . ." And there is that common sense trust in one's own judgement: "And establish the counsel of your own heart, for no one is more faithful to you than it is. For a man's soul sometimes keeps him better informed than seven watchmen sitting high on a watchtower."[17]

Third, there is a predilection for the epigramatic form of statement. This is almost like the Zen koan, which one is supposed to meditate on, but not explain. An attempt to explain it is telling evidence that one has missed its significance altogether. It may be a story instead of an epigram in which the point or application often seems less than plain and one suspects that there is no point in that sense, but rather in the sense of being an invitation to deeper pondering. Henry J. Cadbury has a chapter on "The Jewishness of the Gospels," which is

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[16]In "The Curse of Bigness."

[17]Ecclesiasticus 37:7f., 13f.

most illuminating.[18] Much Christian misunderstanding of their own gospel teachings results from failure to understand that some of the parables and cryptic sayings were not designed for sermonic exegesis, but to arrest habitual lines of thought and provoke new and fresh considerations, somewhat after the manner of Wittgenstein's "don't think—look!"

Consider how different is the style of classical Christianity. First of all, you had there an interest in creed, the correct verbal formulation of belief on matters of the greatest importance. Can it be that even those Christians who have a great aversion to creeds and their purpose of defining the borders of permissible error, nevertheless have had a hidden propensity toward correct verbal formulations?

Second, there is the historic interest in salvation by faith, which often has been understood (actually, misunderstood) as meaning intellectual assent to doctrinal statements. I recall a conversation years ago with a French Catholic. He had been offended by a baccalaureate sermon, because it was not orthodox. I chided him and said I knew perfectly well he was a nihilist and not orthodox in his convictions. He was hurt and replied, "Of course, but that has nothing to do with it. A baccalaureate sermon should be orthodox and contain no heresy." My protestant bias was equally horrified by that – inclined perhaps toward the indefensible nonsense that it doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are sincere, but if not that bad, at least holding that one must affirm what is sincerely believed in the depths of his heart. But both these positions, you see, place a singular importance on "belief" and the *content* of faith propositions.

This may have something to do with Christian discomfort over argumentative disagreement. For if salvation hinges on correct belief, there is a subtle lure to the person of goodwill to make it appear that a disagreement is either about a trivial issue or is not really a disagreement. Disagreement approaches a precipice of peril. The other side of that coin, historically, has been that if disagreement cannot be dismissed in that way, then the heresy must be fought and denounced rather than entertained and argued through.

Third, there is the historic Christian focus on conversion, which is so foreign to most Jewish history. This lends to Christian influence on philosophy a somewhat deliberate effort toward persuasion aimed at

[18] *The Peril of Modernizing Jesus*, New York: Macmillan, 1937, chap. 3. On this aspect of the topic I find an article by Robert Gordis, "Re-Judaizing Christianity," most illuminating. There is an abundant literature on the Jewishness of early Christianity. C.f., e.g., C. G. Montefiore, *Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teachings*, New York: Macmillan, 1930; G. F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*, Cambridge: Harvard, 1927-30; Hugh V. Schonfield, *The Passover Plot*, London: Hutchinson, 1965.

achieving conviction and some sense of failure if agreement of conviction has not been reached. Jewish writers can be equally dogmatic or blunt, but possibly without the implicit tone of defeat where the salvation of agreement has not been reached. A few years back Christians were wont to bewail "the scandal of division." By way of contrast there are many Jewish jokes like the one about the lone man on an island who built two synagogues, and explained, when rescued, "You don't think I'd set foot in that other one?" Again, one can think of strands of history that contradict the patterns I have outlined, but I claim they are scarce as compared with the typifying ones.

To some extent the "God is dead" movement typified this. Among the protestant exponents you had not only the exposition of their views, but a tone that suggested that either the reader had to agree or he was hopelessly out of it. There was a distinctly conversionist style that was evident. This caused confusion by virtue of the fact that these evangelists disagreed so remarkably as to what it meant to say, "God is dead," but that has seldom inhibited Christian polemic about the true or saving faith, *so long as the slogan remains intact.* Very different is the tone of Richard L. Rubenstein, despite his place within that wing of "radical theology." His tone is very much in the manner of "this is how I see it," almost as if he would be surprised if the reader agreed.

> In attempting to express the inexpressible, we are compelled to utilize imprecise, metaphorical language. When I suggest in admittedly inadequate terms that God is the Holy Nothingness, I am attempting to assert that the divine abyss out of which we have come is beyond discrete thinghood.[19]

It is in this sense that I have suggested that Jewish religious philosophy *tends* to veer off into mysticism or meta-metaphysics, whereas the Christian *tends* to veer off into creed or conversionism, and not infrequently into grandiose schemes like Leibniz's theodicy. It is precisely this attribute of ineffability that I have in mind with regard to the former and of definitive formulation in the latter. Christianity, to be sure, has its share of mystics, but its theology is always trying to incorporate, digest and domesticate them, whereas Judaism has often found its culmination in avowals about the eclipse of God and the inexpressible but without diminishing thereby the residual human tasks of ethics and hopeful adjustment, or what Rubenstein calls undeceived and stoic lucidity. At this point I must direct attention to my avoid-

[19] "The 'Nothingness' of God," *Christian Century*, Feb. 21, 1968. Rubenstein does not mean that God is "nothing," but rather in the classic sense of "the void."

ance of any comparison between Jewish and Christian mystics, as such. The reason is that I am unable to find any significant and persistent differences between them, despite all the extraordinary differences among mystics in both groups. And that is due to the nature of mysticism itself. What is significant for our topic is the way mysticism is regarded and the influence it has on thinking patterns in the intellectual scrutiny of religious subjects.

IV

Given these differences in styles of thought, which are exemplified not only in religious writers but have had an indirect influence on thinkers without religious interest, who were conditioned by one or the other faith in their nurture, it is not surprising that misunderstandings have arisen due to differences of style. I have in mind not those gross and incorrigible distortions that have blemished their confrontations down through the centuries, but to the subtle distortions that occur when the intent has been for clear understanding. But when differences of style in thought are not recognized, the patterns and purposes are distorted all the same. I have already alluded to some of these, but others may be added.

First, a rather minor example, which is chosen because it is so clear. Whitehead was eminently a man of goodwill, and as far as his feelings about Jews were concerned, he wrote a piece in *The Atlantic* at a very crucial time calling attention to their plight under Hitler. Yet in *Dialogues of Alfred North Whitehead,* he says that "Jews are singularly humourless."[20] He seems to have been lacking in direct experience with Jews in their own social and religious milieu, on their own ground, as it were. He thought of Judaism in that truncated Christian fashion which imagines that you can understand Judaism by reading the Hebrew Bible, as if you could understand Methodism by reading only Wesley's *Sermons* or Congregationalism by reading Calvin's *Institutes.* The humor Whitehead sought would have been found abundantly in Jewish homes and religious gatherings. There is a vast difference in ethnic style between the Victorian Anglican rectory where Whitehead was brought up and almost any of the sundry varieties of Judaism, and nowhere would this difference be more pronounced than in the humor characteristic of each. This may account for Whitehead's inadequacy when he occasionally dealt with Judaism, although he was a most insightful observer of religious concerns generally.

[20]*Op. cit.,* transcribed by Lucien Price, Boston: Little, Brown, 1954, p. 59; cf. 355-357.

The other example is drawn from Feuerbach and is more serious. Whatever you think of his conclusions, I think it must be conceded that he was attempting to look at religion without illusion. However, when it comes to Judaism, he becomes a most parochial German protestant.

> Every tendency of man, however natural—even the impulse to cleanliness—was conceived by the Israelites as a positive divine ordinance. From this example we again see that God is lowered, is conceived more on the type of ordinary humanity, in proportion as man detracts from himself. How can the self-humiliation of man go further than when he disclaims the capability of fulfilling spontaneously the requirements of common decency? The Christian religion, on the other hand, distinguished the impulses and passions of man according to their quality . . . The Christian religion distinguishes inward moral purity from external physical purity; the Israelites identified the two. In relation to the Israelitish religion, the Christian religion is one of criticism and freedom. The Israelite trusted himself to do nothing except what was commanded by God; he was without will even in external things; the authority of religion extended even to his food. The Christian religion, on the other hand, in all these external things made man dependent on himself.[21]

The depth of misunderstanding and misinterpretation here can hardly be exaggerated. Apart from the historical and scriptural contortions involved, it is singularly innocent of any awareness of Jewish style and character. It is the sort of gross distortion that can only aid hostile prejudice and abet persecution. This painful example underscores the claim that even the thinker whose intent is to understand clearly and to psychologize without fear or favor can fall into the most fantastic and vicious distortions. When Dagobert Runes writes of Christians:

> Sometimes they speak sweet words of love and charity, but these are evening words, in the parlor or in public lectures. But their morning words, from the pulpit and in the Sunday schools, are words of hate and words of contempt.[22]

he has over-extended his generalizations and confused that ignoble sort of hypocrisy, worthy of condemnation, with a religious style

[21] *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. George Eliot, chap. 1, sec. 2.
[22] *The Jew and the Cross*, New York: Philosophical Library, 1965, p. 17.

which, fortunately, has its examples, too, of goodwill and brotherhood in both rhetoric and act.

V.

This brings us to the significance of dialogic interchange, which, as we all know, has been going on for some time. So productive has been the interchange, in fact, that the generalizations I have indulged in are obscure at best in the contemporary situation.

There has been a very considerable impact, back and forth, between the two faiths. Also, the contemporary religious scene has been undergoing remarkable changes; the direction and eventual outcome are far from clear. Many examples of reciprocal influence could be cited. John Dewey had a very considerable influence on Mordecai Kaplan and Reconstructionist Judaism.[23] Paul Tillich's thought had profound effect on Jewish thought in several quarters. In the opposite direction, Ernst Bloch provided the philosophical underpinning for Christian theologies of hope that dominated the past decade. Martin Buber, I would judge, had as deep an influence on the personal faith stance of Christian students as anyone through several years. It is not suggested that dialogic encounter will, or should, result in an undifferentiated amalgum, but it can and should work against severe distortions and, beyond that, enrich the quality of thought.[22] Each has things to learn and appreciate from the other, but the way the contribution is received and absorbed will be for the recipient to decide in his own manner. On the Christian side, I am confident – indeed it has been obvious for some time – that a better understanding of Judaism leads to a better self-understanding and grasp of the meaning of its own heritage. I am not qualified to guess at what contemporary influences in the opposite direction might be.

All this is complicated by the confusion of contemporary currents. In much of organized Christianity there is a marked decline of interest in either creedalism or conversionism, but at the same time, there is a strong resurgence of both in such phenomena as the Jesus movement. What that betokens for any influence on religious philosophy, I have no idea, although my opinion (and hope) is, not much. A genereration from now it will be possible to look back and draw some reasonable conclusions. If the past is a reliable guide, I am confident that interchange, debate and dialogue among people of goodwill, whose desire is to share, learn and understand with empathy, will lead to results of

[23]Dewey's influence extended to many other movements and facets of thought, as abundantly illustrated in Sidney Hook, ed., *John Dewey: Philosopher of Science and Freedom*, New York: Dial Press, 1950.

creativity and depth for all concerned. In that effort, I am convinced that insightful appreciation of contrasting *styles* of philosophizing – not to be confused with substance or purpose – will be essential. And, indeed, in genuine dialogue an appreciation of another's style, and why it has developed as it has, is an important dimension of true understanding of his faith stance. I must say that I am far more confident of the validity of these concluding statements than I am of the broad generalizations in which I have indulged.