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'THE DEATH OF GOD' IN THE THOUGHT OF RICHARD L. RUBENSTEIN

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A B S T R A C T

No contemporary Jewish theology can be meaningful if it ignores the two decisive watershed events for twentieth century Judaism, namely, the Holocaust and the re-establishment of the State of Israel. Richard L. Rubenstein's theology is rooted in these two *kairoi*. In addition to this, his theology is highly subjective and the origins of traumas in his own life are seen to be reflected in those of the life of his people. For this reason, details of his life and work are presented in the introduction to this thesis.

With the Holocaust as his focus and point of departure, Rubenstein has declared the death of the God-who-acts-in-history. He was unable to reconcile the Nazi attempt at *Judenvernichtung* with the existence of the traditional God of theism who chose Israel and who acts purposefully in history.

His major statement of the nineteen sixties was set out in *After Auschwitz*. Despite the death of the traditional God of theism, he insisted on observance of traditional Jewish ritual, particularly priestly ritual, for the attainment of authentic Jewish selfhood.

Two central motivations for both the rejection of the traditional God of theism and for the retention of ritual, were his insistence on the capacity of the irrational to move men, and the belief in the centrality of guilt feelings in men.

Life was seen as bracketed between two oblivions. His theology was devoid of eschatological hope. A God-concept remained in the form of Holy Nothingness or the cannibal Earth Mother. He was deeply influenced by Freud and the Existentialists.

Great stress was placed on the irrational aspect of the Holocaust, and Christianity's mythic structure which designated the Jew as deicide, was seen as one of the potent causative factors for anti-Semitism.

Rubenstein's current thought has moved beyond the confines of the Jewish implications of the Holocaust to probe its wider implications for the world. He now views the Holocaust in terms of 'calculating rationality' as the culmination of a radical secularisation of

consciousness which he sees as having originated in the Bible. His concern is with a functionally 'godless' world in which a Holocaust could take place. The Holocaust and other large-scale massacres are perceived in terms of bureaucratically organised population riddance in the face of the intractable problem of global population redundancy.

The aim of this thesis is to examine and reflect the progression of Rubenstein's thought from the nineteen sixties to the present and to evaluate his theology as a viable way of life for modern secularising Jews.

Section One constitutes an attempt to present Rubenstein's theological and intellectual development. Chapters II, IV, V and VI deal with various aspects of his thought such as his views on secularisation, on man and religion, on God, eschatology and history, and on power. Chapter I deals with the roots of secularisation and the atheistic trend in modern theological thinking as a backdrop to Rubenstein's theology. An excursus into the psychoanalytic theories of Freud was undertaken in Chapter III because of the immense influence of Freud on Rubenstein's early thought.

Section Two constitutes a critique of Rubenstein's views in relation to other theological responses to the Holocaust. It also examines the viability of his theological proposals for a meaningful Jewish life after the Holocaust.

The conclusion of this thesis is that although the normative Jewish theology of history shows the most authentic path for Jews to follow, Rubenstein's views of the nineteen sixties constitute a meaningful option for Jews who, after the Holocaust, are unable to retain belief in the theistic God of history. This was made possible by Rubenstein's emphasis on the need for ongoing Jewish practice. His current theology is too pessimistic to offer any realistic options for continuing Jewish life. Its main contribution is that it gives us insight into the possible causes of our world's malaise in an attempt to contain man's destructiveness.

I declare that this thesis is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other University.

The financial assistance of the Human Sciences Research Council towards the costs of this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed or conclusions reached are those of the author and are not to be regarded as a reflection of the opinions and conclusions of the Human Sciences Research Council.

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Jocelyn Louise Hellig

.....Fourth..... day of .....July..... 19 82.....

for my husband Michael

and our children

Farrel, Adena and Carmel

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P R E F A C E

My attention originally was drawn to the thought of Richard L. Rubenstein by my esteemed colleague and supervisor Professor Ben Engelbrecht in 1975.

I displayed an initial resistance to studying the 'death of God' which seemed too negative a subject, and at the time, *passé*. After years of grappling with the mere *idea* of the study I read *After Auschwitz*. My interest was stimulated immediately by Rubenstein's provocative, unorthodox and deeply sincere theology. I made the interesting discovery that many ideas which had been dormant in my mind for years were presented here in an arresting style with penetrating lucidity. In addition, I learned of areas which were totally new to me and ironically I, as an orthodox Jewess, found that my attitude to Judaism and its rituals was clarified for the first time by a radical theologian!

Whilst many theologians abroad are familiar with Rubenstein's theology, few people in South Africa realise that there *is* a prominent Jewish 'death of God' theologian. Several of those who are aware of his thought, know little of its wide range and content. I felt compelled to share my discoveries and began to write my thesis in 1978.

After four years of intensive study my initial negativity has turned into enthusiasm, my reluctance into a joy of coming into contact with a mind which provokes wide ranging intellectual stimulation.

During 1979 I initiated a correspondence with Dr. Rubenstein which has been deeply enriching for me. He has supplied me with a wealth of material, both published and unpublished, revealing his shift in focus from the nineteen sixties up to the present. His letters are characterised by the most disarming candour. He does not flinch from revealing to me the progression of his intellectual development, no matter how controversial, as well as

the details of his private world.

The results of my encounter with Rubenstein's thought are presented here for a Ph.D. degree. I wish to share my discoveries with South African theologians both Jewish and non-Jewish, for I believe that Rubenstein's thought in all its phases will be of immense interest and significance to both. Rubenstein has moved from a preoccupation with the Jewish implications of the Holocaust to its global implications. In the process his bonds with Judaism appear to be loosening. During the nineteen sixties he seemed to be clinging tenaciously to Judaism, and whilst he does not appear to have broken all ties with Judaism, he might well be on the brink of doing so. In a letter dated 2 May 1982 he informed me that although he retains membership of his local reform congregation he and his family have withdrawn almost totally from any and all Jewish activities. His attendance at synagogue is limited to *Kol nidre* evening and the only other Jewish activity he maintains is the first night of Passover.

He also informed me that he is the Founder and President of a new research institute, The Washington Institute for Values in Public Policy, which was both his idea and a direct outgrowth of his shift in interest from Jewish thought to political and social theory. His current research is to lead a task force of ten scholars on the subject, 'The World-Wide Impact of Religion on Contemporary Politics'. I personally shall follow his career with interest, in whichever direction it develops, both religiously and intellectually.

I am deeply indebted to Dr. Rubenstein for his generosity and cooperation whenever I had any queries and for supplying me with so much invaluable material for the writing of this thesis. I also wish to express my gratitude to my supervisor Professor Ben Engelbrecht for his constant support and patience during my years of study. He was always a willing listener and his counsel always sobering. Professor Lewis A. Hurst and Dr. Schneir Levin provided me with much interesting literature and gave me several valuable suggestions as they followed my progress throughout this

study. I wish to thank Mrs. Yvonne van Rensburg for her dedicated interest and efficiency in the typing of the manuscript. My very special thanks are due to my husband Michael and my three children who at all times were supportive and who have had to make several domestic sacrifices particularly in the final phase of this study.

S E C T I O N O N E

When the Lord saw that man had done much evil on earth and that his thoughts and inclinations were always evil, he was sorry that he had made man on earth, and he was grieved at heart. He said, 'This race of men whom I have created, I will wipe them off the face of the earth - man and beast, reptiles and birds. I am sorry that I ever made them.'

Genesis 6:5-7

I N T R O D U C T I O N

RUBENSTEIN : HIS LIFE AND WORK

During the nineteen sixties the 'death of God' movement came to prominence, receiving its main impetus in the United States of America. It was a predominantly Christian movement, its major exponents being Thomas J. J. Altizer, William Hamilton and Paul van Buren. Richard L. Rubenstein was the most outspoken Jewish representative of the movement. His ideas on the death of God were formulated independently, but he soon came to perceive both similarities and distinct differences between his views and those of such theologians as Hamilton, van Buren and Altizer. His statements arose out of a Jewish milieu and his convictions about the death of God grew out of a response to the annihilation of six million Jews in Nazi Europe. He was horrified and deeply moved personally by the disclosures of the details of the death camps and his most persistent preoccupation has been, and still is, with the Holocaust. He has spent his life attempting to understand that catastrophe, initially in terms of its implications for Jewish theology and the problem of theodicy, but more recently, in terms of radical secularity, the modernisation process, and the problem of population redundancy and programmes of massive population riddance.

His primary assertion was that *we are living in the time of the death of God.* The statement that God is dead is an assertion which exceeds human knowledge. It reveals nothing about God, and is only significant in what it reveals about the maker of the statement. 'The death of God is a cultural fact. We shall never know whether it is more than that. I am implying that the ultimate relevance of theology is anthropological. Though theology purports to make statements about God, its significance rests on what it reveals about the theologian and his culture. All

Lowell family of Boston). His parents had broken away from the Jewish tradition regarding it as both outmoded and un-American to be Jewish. They also suffered financial deprivation as a result of the Great Depression. The family's religious and financial position played a great part in moulding Rubenstein's life and attitudes.

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1. Rubenstein, Richard L., *After Auschwitz : Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism*, The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1966, 'Death of God Theology and Judaism', p. 246.

2. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'The Making of a Rabbi', p. 208.

3. This is an observation which has also been made by Klaus Rohmann. See Klaus Rohmann, *Vollendung im Nichts? : Eine Dokumentation der Amerikanischen Gott-ist-Tot-Theologie*, Benziger Verlag, Köln, 1977, p. 96. 'Wollten wir daarauf verzichten und die Gedanken Rubenstein's von seiner Person abstrahieren, so würden wir seine Aussagen verfälschen.'

   Details of Rubenstein's life have been ascertained from *After Auschwitz*, 'The Making of a Rabbi'; *Power Struggle : An Autobiographical Confession*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1974; *My Brother Paul*, Harper and Row Publishers, 1972; as well as from articles by Rubenstein and extensive personal correspondence.

4. Rubenstein, *Power Struggle*, p. 47.

His mother had high social and intellectual aspirations the achievement of which poverty denied her. However, her aspirations led the family to live in a suburb which was beyond their means resulting in self-reproach by his father who was constantly surrounded by wealth which he was unable to provide. While, on the one hand, wanting to be like his father, he found in that a condemnation to a life of poverty in the midst of wealth. To compensate for the intense personal shame he felt, he made every effort to become more like his mother than his father and he placed great emphasis on intellectual superiority.[5]

The family's poverty and their deracination from the Jewish tradition led to the fact that Rubenstein did not have a Bar Mitzvah. This was to have profound and far-reaching effects on his emotional and intellectual development, for in Rubenstein's view nothing could match the power of the archaic rite or perform the emotional work the rite automatically accomplishes. 'Perhaps if I had had a Bar Mitzvah I might never have become seriously interested in Jewish life', he stated. 'I might simply have taken my Jewishness for granted without experiencing the promptings toward rebellion, negation, and reconciliation which were to preoccupy me for so very long.'[6] He had confirmed neither his identity as a man nor as a Jew at a crucial turning point in his adolescence. Rubenstein was ultimately to come to view as one of religion's most essential functions the marking of the crises of life through appropriate ritual.

Identification of Judaism with Impotence

A crucial event during Rubenstein's youth initiated a desire for flight from Judaism. He was returning alone from a teenage dance at midnight in New York. Three drunk Irishmen were making abusive anti-Jewish remarks which were not directed at the young Rubenstein. Yet he felt the need to intervene verbally and silence them. He was brutally assaulted by them. His parents called the police who were also Irish and anti-Semitic. Their chief concern was not to indict the offenders

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5. Ibid. pp. 21-23.

6. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'The Making of a Rabbi', p. 210.

[illegible]at on. [illegible]ere were some [illegible]

'Apparently there was a limit to the extent to
to escape the absurd destiny of having been bor
Jewishness seemed to have so little meaning.'[8]
could purchase entrance into the non-Jewish wor
fundamental self-falsification, he refused. 'I
of mankind, few things about a man are as
adolescent crisis, I discovered that I co
begun my return to Jewish life. At sixte
contempt was a far greater burden to bear than

A Turn to Reform Judaism

Unitarianism often stresses its theological sim
Judaism which seemed initially to be 'a kind of
For many Jews Reform Judaism has proved to be a
Rubenstein it was to be the way in. He entered
in Cincinnati in 1942 with a minimal Jewish [illegible]

came to know at that stage was classical, anti-Zionist Reform Judaism. 'In spite of the fact that the bloodiest war in mankind's history was then raging, I believed in the progress and enlightenment of mankind. I regarded liberal Judaism, with its lack of ritual, myth, and religious symbolism, as the most rational and therefore the most enlightened of religions.'[11] He especially appreciated classical Reform Judaism's bitter opposition to Zionism and Jewish nationalism. He accepted the belief that Jews differed from their fellow citizens in religious persuasion alone. He shared Reform Judaism's optimism concerning human potentialities and its hope that education and enlightenment would end anti-Semitism. He felt comfortable in deritualised Judaism in which the liturgy was recited in English.

By Summer 1942 the facts of the Nazi death camps became generally known. The revelations of the details of the death camps caused him to reject the whole optimistic theology of liberal religion. People seemed incapable of improvement. 'The evil rooted in human nature would never entirely disappear ... radical evil might lie dormant for long periods but it remained forever capable of disrupting the pathetically weak fragments of reason and decency with which men have constructed their fragile civilization .... Each generation had to confront the choice between good and evil unaided by those who went before.'[12]

He became deeply pessimistic about man, a pessimism which has never left him, and he began to perceive the value of the irrational aspects of religion to deal with man's ultimate questions of origin, meaning and destiny, with particular reference to the ability of archaic ritual to mark the decisive crises of the life of the individual within his religious community. He was particularly shaken by the fact of the death camps because he recognised that the difference between the Germans and other men is not great. Given similar circumstances of political and social stress, most people could commit monstrous crimes. Moral nihilism had become one of the deepest strains in his nature. He had struggled to overcome it since childhood but 'the anarchic creature of infantile desire'[13] within him had never been put to death. It merely had been

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11. Ibid. p. 215. 12. Ibid. p. 216.

13. Ibid. p. 216. (See also *My Brother Paul*, p. 8 for an expression of this inner rage and anger).

of reason and decency with which men have constructed their fragile civilization .... Each generation had to confront the choice between good and evil unaided by those who went before.'[12]

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11. Ibid. p. 215. 12. Ibid. p. 216.

13. Ibid. p. 216. (See also *My Brother Paul*, p. 8 for an expression of his inner rage and anger).

those of Isaac Luria (d. 1572). The insights of Luria and Freud were to influence his views on God as the Holy Nothingness. Rubenstein's views on God and the related problems of history and eschatology, will be discussed in Chapter V of this thesis.

Rubenstein desired to become an Orthodox rabbi but this needed time which he could not afford as he, in the meantime, had married. His wife was of Dutch Jewish parentage who narrowly escaped the brutal revages of Nazism in Holland. He was forced to settle for a compromise which he found in Conservative Judaism. He became drawn toward Reconstructionism, a movement within Reform Judaism, which emphasises the national aspect of Judaism. Personally, he became strongly observant in the spirit of the Orthodox Judaism of the Lithuanian Talmudic scholars. This religious observance ultimately was to become problematic for him. He came to see rabbinic Judaism as a response to defeat and powerlessness resulting from what he

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14. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*. 'The Making of a Rabbi', p. 217. (my emphasis)

15. Ibid. p. 217. 16. Ibid. p. 218.

termed 'the Holocaust of ancient times',[17] the defeat of the Jews by the Romans in 66 - 70 C.E. and 131 - 135 C.E.

After the Holocaust of the twentieth century and the attendant 'death of God', as well as the re-establishment of the State of Israel, Rubenstein no longer feels compelled to observe the restraints of rabbinic Judaism. He interprets rabbinic Judaism as a phenomenon of diaspora existence and he predicts no realistic future for diaspora Judaism. In *My Brother Paul* he confesses his identification with Paul's inability to achieve justification through observance of the Torah.

Intellectual Maturity and Major Publications

Rubenstein completed his studies at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York in 1952 and was ordained as a rabbi. He was active as a rabbi for four years[18] during which time he studied at Harvard University and attained his Master's degree. During this time he was deeply influenced by Paul Tillich and this was to be an abiding influence. From 1956 to 1958 he served as chaplain to Jewish students at Harvard. This was an interim appointment. He worked on his doctorate which dealt with rabbinic responses to the 'Holocaust of ancient times' in the light of psychoanalysis. He attained his Ph.D. at Harvard in 1960. His doctoral thesis was subsequently published in an edited version as *The Religious Imagination, 1968*[19] (his second book). From 1958 to 1970 he served as chaplain to Jewish students at the University of Pittsburgh.

After completing his doctoral thesis in 1960 it became possible for him to spend extended periods of time in study and research in Europe. He has lived in Spain, Holland, France and Italy for periods of three months or longer. He has also been a frequent visitor to the Federal Republic of Germany and has lectured at many institutions there.

In 1965 he became the first Jewish theologian to give a series of lectures at the Catholic University of Lublin, Poland. While he

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17. Rubenstein, 'Brief Narrative of Career' (personal communication).

18. Rubenstein reveals some of the complex tensions between rabbi and congregation and some of the intra-psychic strains in his essay 'A Rabbi Dies', in Jacob Neusner, *American Judaism : Adventure in Modernity*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972. pp. 46 - 59.

19. Rubenstein, *The Religious Imagination. A Study in Psychoanalysis and Jewish Theology*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1968.

was in Poland he visited Auschwitz. On returning from Poland he completed his first book *After Auschwitz*, 1966 (a series of 15 papers). This constituted his major statement concerning Auschwitz and the death of God. There is general agreement in theological circles that the book initiated the ongoing debate on the theological implications of the Holocaust. It has had eleven printings and has been translated into Dutch.

In the Spring quarter of 1970 Rubenstein served as visiting professor of Religion at Florida State University. While there, he accepted an invitation to remain on as Professor of Religion and has been there ever since. In 1977 he was selected as Distinguished Professor of the year at Florida State University and was given the rank of Distinguished Professor, the highest honour bestowed by the faculty of the Florida State University upon one of its members. 'This commendation is granted to a faculty member whose extraordinary accomplishments have markedly contributed to the university's quest for excellence.'[20] In his citation he is regarded as 'a relentless scholar, a superb teacher, and a brilliant thinker'[21] who probes the roots of our religious faith and exposes the tensions of our complex culture.

In 1970 his third book *Morality and Eros* was published. It explores the question of values in a world in which ethical norms can no longer be derived from the revealed will of God. This was followed by *My Brother Paul*, 1972, a psychoanalytic study of Paul of Tarsus. The New Testament is examined as a possible source of anti-Semitism that contributed to the Holocaust. Rubenstein concludes that Paul was not an anti-Semite but that his theology had the unintended consequences of fostering the permanent alienation between Judaism and Christianity.

His fifth book *Power Struggle : An Autobiographical Confession*, 1974, explored the overwhelming impact of the Holocaust on his life and career. Although in autobiographical form, it is a monograph on contemporary religious thought. Rubenstein, as author, is the vehicle for the analysis of theological and historical issues pertaining to the Holocaust.

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20. Citation for Distinguished Professor, June 11, 1979 (personal communication).

21. Ibid.

His most recently published book, *The Cunning of History : Mass Death and the American Future*, 1975, deals with the wider implications of the Holocaust in terms of the Holocaust as an expression of some of the most important demographic, political, sociological and economic tendencies of Western civilisation in the twentieth century. This work marks Rubenstein's shift from the Jewish implications of the Holocaust to the exploration of its wider implications. In it he concludes that we are living in an era of radical secularity which finds its roots in the Bible. This aspect of his thought is discussed in Chapter II of this thesis.

His current project is a promised sequel to *The Cunning of History*. It is under contract to Beacon Press and its tentative title is *The Age of Triage*. Though in this work the Holocaust is not the centre of his concern, the work is, in part, an ongoing attempt to understand that tragedy as one of a series of historical occurrences involving surplus population and large-scale population elimination. As Rubenstein's concern shifted from the Holocaust to related problems of modernisation and surplus population, he became interested in these problems as they affected contemporary developing nations. This led to an important encounter with Asia. He has given important addresses in Korea and Japan and *The Cunning of History* has been translated into Japanese. He has been made aware of a strong parallel between his God-concept and the God-concept of Mahayana Buddhism.

The Psychoanalytic Influence of Sigmund Freud on Rubenstein's Life and Thought

At the age of twelve Rubenstein bought the Modern Library edition of *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*. This early purchase was to be an accurate index of one of his lifelong interests. So pervasive has been Freud's thought on Rubenstein's theological statements of the nineteen sixties, that I have devoted Chapter III of this thesis to an excursus on Freud's psychoanalytic theories, particularly his applied psychoanalysis, as a background to Rubenstein's theological thought of the nineteen sixties.

In many of his works Rubenstein confesses his deep fear of the moral chaos which reigned within his own soul, his fear of death and a desire for omnipotence, and his inability fully to love before he turned to psychoanalysis for help. To cope with his fear of the anarchic

The sudden inexplicable death of his infant son, Nathaniel, on the morning before Yom Kippur in 1950, led to a conversion in him which was to take seventeen years to mature. His willing servitude was born out of a quest for omnipotence. When his three-month-old son died, too young to have given offence to either his earthly or heavenly father, he knew with deeper certainty than ever before that he was doomed to die no matter how well he performed. Paul's similar fears and tensions were overcome by faith in the risen Christ. Rubenstein had no such boon. 'Had I lived in his time, I might have followed him. Once I realized that I had no escape from dying, I had to learn to live life as if I were newly born. My new life was devoid of hope or illusion that the limitations of mortality could be overcome. My analyst was midwife to my rebirth.'[26] It was in 1953 that Rubenstein turned to a psychoanalyst for help. In spite of his early interest in Freud, he originally was openly hostile to

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22. Rubenstein, *Power Struggle*, p. 85. (my emphasis). 23. Ibid. p. 90.
24. Rubenstein, *My Brother Paul*, p. 9. (my emphasis). 25. Ibid. p. 9.
26. Ibid. pp. 17, 18.

psychoanalysis, particularly after he had turned to Orthodox Judaism. His antagonism was a reflection of his resistance to seeking help. Psychoanalysis helped him to regard himself with a less anguished vision. It also gave him the wisdom of learning to trust what he had been given. His life has been seen by him in terms of illness in search of healing. Illness forced him into the path he chose. His illness, his vocation and whatever healing he has attained have all been the expression of a unified striving.[27] Rubenstein has called Freud 'the most influential Jew of the twentieth century'.[28] Having personally entered into the psychoanalytic therapeutic situation, it is not surprising that his theological ideas have been so deeply influenced by Freud's insights concerning God and the human condition.

Judaism and 'the single one'

It is noteworthy that Rubenstein recognises his experience with the law as being obviously atypical. He admits that most Jews are acculturated into their religion as a normal way of life and are not normally driven by the compulsions that afflicted him. He came to Judaism as something of an outsider. His fellow students were at home with Judaism in a way which he could not begin to understand. 'They were also at home with their God. I was not at home with mine.'[29] Orthodox Judaism has always been a communal and familial, rather than an individual way of life. 'There is no place in Orthodox Judaism for the single one, magnificent in isolation, casting aside all familiar relationships the better to enjoy solitary intimacy and fellowship with God.'[30]

He and his first wife, Ellen, failed in their attempt to live an Orthodox life apart from their families and against the acculturation process which had given them their fundamental personalities. In this connection, it is important to note that his parents are viewed by him as prisoners of their own deracination. 'Cast out of the mythic world of their folk inheritance, they were victims of another, more savage mythology, the bourgeois conviction that a man's worth is established by his business success.... Furthermore, had my parents been less alienated from their tradition, they

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27. Rubenstein, *Power Struggle*, p. 130. 28. Rubenstein, *My Brother Paul*, p. 1. 29. Ibid. p. 18.

30. Rubenstein, *Power Struggle*, p. 118.

might have had a somewhat more compassionate view of what was happening to themselves....We would all have had very different self-images.'[31]

Existence as Punitive

In 1961 Rubenstein had a decisive meeting with Dean Heinrich Grueber of the Evangelical Church of East and West Berlin.[32] On referring to Auschwitz, Dean Grueber insisted that it was part of God's plan. He likened Hitler to Nebuchadnezzar and other 'rods of God's anger'. Dean Grueber's conviction was not that of an anti-Semite. He had almost lost his life in the concentration camp at Dachau and was the only German voluntarily to go to Jerusalem to testify at the trial of Adolf Eichmann. Because Rubenstein regarded him as a man of impeccable honesty, courage, integrity and religious faith (and because there are today many orthodox Jews who do not shy away from the Dean's conclusion), his unambiguous declaration that God had sent Hitler to exterminate the Jews unified the intellectual and experiential roots of Rubenstein's growing collapse of faith. It finally brought to expression a thorough-going rejection of the biblical God on his part. 'If indeed such a God holds the destiny of mankind in his power, his resort to death camps to bring about his ends is so obscene that I would rather spend my life in perpetual revolt than render him even the slightest homage. For millenia men have insisted on the poverty of human knowledge before the infinite wisdom of the Divine. Most men have followed Job's example and silenced their bitter complaints. If this God, the God of Auschwitz exists, I could not silence mine.'[33] Rubenstein regards Dean Grueber's insistence on Hitler being God's tool as a manifestation of the incredible extremes to which men are driven when they try to make sense of the surrealistic world of the twentieth century in pre-twentieth century terms. Most men find loss of meaning which accompanies the rejection of an omniscient, omnipotent God of history extremely difficult to bear. Rubenstein refuses to see existence as punitive and would rather opt for a meaningless cosmos in which men suffer unavoidably rather than for the view that suffering is deserved

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31. Ibid. p. 39.

32. This crucial meeting is described in *After Auschwitz*, in the essay 'The Dean and the Chosen People', pp. 46 - 58, and in *Power Struggle*, pp. 10 ff.

33. Rubenstein, *Power Struggle*, p. 11.

suffering dispensed by an angry creator God. The question becomes: 'How is it possible to believe in a just, all-powerful God after Auschwitz?'[34]

Rubenstein's Views and the Jewish World

Soon after the publication of *After Auschwitz* it was reviewed favourably in *The Christian Century*, *Commonweal* and a few Jewish publications.[35] The establishment of Jewish publications, however, largely ignored it. This public ignoring of his work was a response which Rubenstein regards as relatively kind. Beneath the response lay intense anger which led Jacob Neusner to note that Rubenstein has been subjected to a torrent of personal abuse and nearly has been driven out of Jewish life. Neusner interprets this abuse as 'the highest possible tribute on the part of his enemies to the compelling importance of his contribution'.[36]

A characteristically modern response to Rubenstein's work has been bureaucratic excommunication. As his publications became better known it became increasingly difficult for him to secure any position within the Jewish community. Because of the controversial nature of his views he was bureaucratically phased out of Jewish life by the withholding of Jewish funding for posts. He could only pursue his career as a theologian in a community which had very few Jews. He was compelled to become an exile from his own people in order to interpret their religious existence in freedom. He confesses that his estrangement from the Jewish community has had as much to do with his own inner dynamics as with the community's.[37]

Rubenstein's Present Stance

Today he lectures at the Florida State University which has over ninety-five per cent non-Jewish students. Among his intellectual and social contacts

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34. Ibid. p. 13.

35. *After Auschwitz* was given a favourable review in the influential Jewish Journal *Judaism*, Vol. 16, No. 2, Spring 1967, pp. 233 - 236 by Arnold Jacob Wolf.

there are virtually no Jews. Jewish observance therefore would be out of context in his present situation although he has an affiliation with the Reform Jewish congregation in Tallahassee. Months can go by without him speaking to a Jewish person, with the exception of his wife, Dr. Betty Rogers Alschuler Rubenstein, who has given him much support and inspiration. (His first marriage ended in divorce in 1963).

His most recent focus of interest is Asia with particular reference to the problems of religion, modernisation and population redundancy. He has formed valuable contacts with two religious leaders of the East, Swami Muktananda of Ganeshpuri and the Rev. Sun Myung Moon. He sees these two men as polar opposites to one another. The first is regarded as an exemplary prophet, the latter as a genuinely charismatic leader with the basic qualities of the Korean shaman figure. Despite the very bad press which Moon has received Rubenstein regards him as a genuine religious energiser and activator.[38]

Rubenstein claims to be committed to total honesty in his analysis of religion generally and Judaism in particular. He does not believe in the long-range viability of diaspora Judaism and will state his intellectual conclusions openly no matter which persons or institutions may be offended. While at one time he had a deep interest in Israel as the polar opposite of diaspora powerlessness, Israel appears to have ceased to be a focus of his interest. He wishes the Israelis well and would not wish to see Israel perish, but he has no real interest in Israel or in Israeli scholars.

In a letter dated August 21, 1981 Rubenstein told me that he was due to give the annual lecture on Jewish theology at the 92nd Street Y-M-H-A. in New York City in October 1981. Previous lecturers have included Borowitz, Fackenheim and Wiesel. His respondents were to be Jacob Neusner and Michael Wyschogrod. This encounter would compel him to focus on his current relationship to Judaism which is not without its problems. He has, from time to time, lectured at temples and other Jewish institutions, but has had no real contact with mainstream Jewish institutions or activities in years. Initially he resented the fact that there were major conferences on the holocaust or Jewish theology in which his ideas were discussed but to which he was not invited. He eventually came to terms

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38. Personal communication, letter dated 21 August 1981.

with the separation realising that, as he was not on the same wavelength as mainstream Judaism, it was pointless for people to talk past one another. 'Nevertheless, there has been one problematic aspect of the separation: I have made a contribution to contemporary Jewish theology, yet for several years I have not formulated my position on any aspect of the questions of religion which were for so long central to my concerns. I would add that religion continues to be the center of my concern, and more than any other contemporary theologian I have stressed the importance of personal experience for religious faith, while I have remained relatively silent about the relation of my recent, overwhelmingly important personal experiences and my religious position. This may well continue, but not necessarily.'[39]

Rubenstein is fully cognisant of the radical nature of his stance and that there is something explosive occurring within his own religious sensibilities. 'We are quintessential outsiders but we would have it no other way. Perhaps I serve to define the limits of what is Jewish. By rejecting me, the Jewish community has defined its limits.'[40] He points out that according to Kai Erikson, the son of Erik Erikson, and Yale sociologist, it is the function of the deviant to define the limits of what constitutes appropriate behaviour or belief for a group.

Rubenstein has cautioned me to the fact that since he is by nature and preoccupation involved in religious life, he suspects that there is an explosive element in his thinking and that he has by no means spoken his last word concerning the religious question. 'Keep in mind that there is an explosive element in my thought that has yet to surface. It may never surface as I am a cautious man who is almost as conservative politically and socially as he is radical religiously. By explosive I mean not only my rejection of normative Jewish categories... I also mean my perceptions of the need to break out of the meaninglessness of radical secularization and the death of God... Let us never forget my fundamental assertion that it is the biblical religions that inevitably led to secularization and the death of God. Let us also remember my original response to Altizer that "if God is dead I will not dance at the funeral." *The Cunning of History* is a death-of-God book. When I make the assertion there that the death camps express some of the dominant tendencies of

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39. Ibid. 40. Ibid.

civilization in the twentieth century, I am only reiterating in a more sociologically sophisticated way what I said in *After Auschwitz* when I said that we live in the time of the death of God. But such a world is an impossibility. One way or another, the death of God cannot be the final answer. I am convinced that the biblical religions are not the answer either...on the contrary, without significant revision, they are the beginning of the problem.'[41]

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Apart from the chapter on Freud and the chapter on Rubenstein's views on God, history and eschatology which have been mentioned above, other chapters will deal with secularisation and atheism as a backdrop to Rubenstein's radical views; Rubenstein's attitude to secularisation; Rubenstein's views concerning religion and man as presented in *After Auschwitz*; and the reality of power and the fantasy of theology.

Section Two, the critique, will examine Rubenstein's conclusions concerning God and the Holocaust in relation to other responses, both Jewish and Christian, to the problems of theodicy. His protests and proposals will be discussed in an attempt to determine to what extent his pronouncements can be isolated from his subjectivity and constitute a meaningful and viable theological option for modern Jews.

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41. Ibid.

C H A P T E R I

All utterances about the nature of God are nonsensical.

A. J. Ayer

SECULARISATION AND ATHEISM : THE ANTI-METAPHYSICAL TREND IN CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGICAL THINKING

Richard L. Rubenstein has been classified as one of the four most influential radical theologians in America of the nineteen sixties[1] and more specifically as the leading Jewish death of God theologian of that decade.[2] He reached his radical conclusion as a result of his inability to reconcile the horrifying attempt by Nazis to destroy European Jewry during World War II with the existence of an omnipotent God of history. He could come to no other conclusion than that the God of history is dead.

Radical theology must be viewed against the problem of the existence of evil and against the backdrop of the tendency toward secularisation - so characteristic of our times.

Each of the four major radical theologians, Altizer, Hamilton, van Buren and Rubenstein, has been working through his own dilemma with respect to what he can and should believe and do in his role as a theologian. Sontag and Roth[3] see the crisis of the death of God movement as having been

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1. Frederick Sontag and John K. Roth, *The American Religious Experience*, Harper & Row, New York, 1972, p. 203.
2. Klaus Rohmann, in his study of American death of God theology, in *Vollendung im Nichts?* indicates that Rubenstein's theology largely has been overlooked, yet in a German Lutheran article, he was called 'der führende judische "Gott-ist-tot" Theologe in Amerika'. (This has been quoted from C. E. Braaton, 'Radikale Theologie in Amerika heute', p. 56) on p. 26 of Rohmann's book.
3. Sontag and Roth, op. cit.

precipitated by the fact that the once-powerful religious traditions in which these theologians were trained and worked would no longer relate meaningfully to their personal experience. Their traditions share the affirmation of the transcendence, omnipotence and holiness of God. The corollary of this theological outlook is that the world is God's creation, a creation which he judged to be good, but that its culture is under judgment. Faith in, and experience of, the love of God endow life with meaning and man's task is to live in conformity with the will of God. 'God transcends time and history, and yet he is active in them. His will is sovereign and good, and the shape of history ultimately reflects his loving control.'[4]

A credibility gap has arisen between this traditional theological perspective and the actual *experience* of the radical theologians. The credibility gap has also resulted from the fact that men seem to find it progressively less necessary and significant to speak and think in terms of God at all.

Experientially, problems arise in two areas. Firstly, seemingly insurmountable problems and confusions arise when an attempt is made to reconcile the traditional concept of God with the problem of the existence of evil. Existence is too ambiguous and fragmentary, too full of evil, to allow us to discern God's loving activity in history. There is little corroboration in the facts of contemporary life to discern God's caring intervention. If God's judgment occurs anywhere in history, it appears to take on horrible and needlessly wasteful forms of punishment that leave him unworthy of worship.[5] Would not rebellion and indifference, rather than obedient faith, be man's most honest response? Secondly, God's fixed nature threatens the reality of man's freedom, creativity and responsibility. However, the reality of man's freedom is simply undeniable from the human perspective. It would appear, therefore, that man's actual experience seems to be victorious over faith and one result of this has been the emergence of the death of God movement.

Conceptually, God seems to be increasingly irrelevant in the affairs of men. Their concerns are directed at this world, with little reference to God. Human life has been naturalised and secularised. Citizens of

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4. Ibid. p. 203. 5. Ibid. p. 204.

the secular city appear to feel little care about, or need for, God. Sontag and Roth maintain that it is hardly surprising that a theologian observing and living through experiences such as these should turn to 'the provocative and richly ambiguous concept that God is dead'[6] as an idea worth exploring in depth.

Rubenstein made his first statement concerning the death of God in the theological environment of the nineteen sixties. Marty and Peerman[7] affirm that the theology during that decade was more world centred and less church centred than in the years preceding it. Theologians were obsessed with the attempt to pin down the meaning of *the secular*.

Marty and Peerman suggest that no one writing in the field of theology today can avoid placing the question of secularisation at the head of his agenda. The secular must be analysed as a possibility for theology. This applies even more to radical theology in which the very subject of theology, God, *became the fundamental question and problem.* As *Time* Magazine pointed out, the Christian atheists of the death of God movement 'were waking the churches to the brutal reality that the basic premise of faith - the existence of a personal God, who created the world and sustains it with his love - is now subject to profound attack'.[8] God himself is in question.

Vernon Pratt[9] sees radical theology as one of the many attempts to de-supernaturalise supernatural religions. He suggests that the scientific conceptual framework with which we now live has no place for the supernatural. The secularisers of religion have to face this issue and perform their task because the notion of the supernatural no longer has any meaning in his view.

Groping Beyond the Secular

Marty and Peerman point out that 'death of God' talk was, in fact, very short-lived. By the time the popular press and the general public

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6. Ibid. p. 205.
7. Martin E. Marty and Dean G. Peerman, eds., *New Theology No. 4.* MacMillan Company, New York, 1967, p. 10.
8. *Time*, April 8, 1966, p. 50.
9. Vernon Pratt, *Religion and Secularisation*, (Papermac) Macmillan, St. Martin's Press, 1970.

became aware of the movement, serious journals had already begun to weary of the subject. However, the public stir caused by the pronouncements of the death of God had a fortuitous effect. The movement and the moment had salutory effects and constructive purposes. 'They certainly enlarged the scope of theological debate : and - miracle of miracles - they succeeded in making theological themes in the precise and formal sense of the term a matter of public discussion.'[10] Theologians, on the whole, were not shocked or disconcerted by death of God language, but neither were they satisfied with it. Marty and Peerman suggest that theologians want to go 'beyond the secular' (though only by going *through* it). They are cautiously re-appraising the category of 'religion', which was regarded with much suspicion both by the generation of Karl Barth and by the more radical era posthumously dominated by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. They see the world around them to be astoundingly secular and yet astonishingly fertile 'religiously' : in the new nationalism of the new nations, in the durable presence of world religions, in the quasi-spiritual strivings of men, alone and in community, and in the superstitions as well as in the genuine gropings and hungers of 'secular men' in a technological society.[11]

This groping beyond the secular is visible in both Jewish and Christian theology. A 'post-secular' awareness is present in the thinking of Wolfart Pannenberg, for instance. He states: '...there is a widespread awareness that science alone cannot cope with the consequences and side effects of scientific discoveries, especially in their technological

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10. Marty and Peerman, op. cit. p. 11.

11. Ibid. pp. 12, 13. (See also Seymour Siegel, in his article 'Theology for Today', *Conservative Judaism*, Vol. 28. No. 4, pp. 37 - 53, observes that despite the technological progress of our century, the dropping of moral restraints, the social upheaval which characterises our times, the ravaging effects of 'future shock', man has become increasingly drawn to the transcendent, even while *professing the secular*. Siegel regards ours as the most credulous of all generations seeking *some* kind of religious belief. If people abandon old religions they are prone to accept new cults, often of the most bizarre variety. See p. 40.)

(See also Andrew M. Greeley, *Unsecular Man : The Persistence of Religion*, Delta Books, New York, 1972; Peter L. Berger, *A Rumor of Angels : Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural*, Doubleday Anchor, Garden City, New York, 1970. For the problem of 'future shock' see Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock*, Bantam Books, 1970.).

application. Frightened earlier by the development of nuclear weapons and later by the threat of ecological disaster and by the dangers involved in modern biochemical techniques, many scientists have been led by a sense of responsibility for the application of their work to look for moral resources that can be mustered in order to prevent, or at least reduce, the extent of fatal abuse of the possibilities provided by scientific discoveries. At this point then the churches are appreciated once more as moral agencies that should help human society in responsibly dealing with the potentials of science and technology.' Although theology has lost the "war" between itself and science, as Pannenberg asserts, 'it would seem appropriate if the renewed interests of scientists in religion and especially in a dialogue with Christian theology were accompanied by some sense of surprise that Christianity is still around'.[12]

A similar groping beyond the secular is also reflected in the writings of Jewish scholars. Eugene B.Borowitz, in his article 'Hope Jewish and Hope Secular'[13] asserts that Jewish theology has adopted a post-secular stance. He points out the importance of a small group of Jewish intellectuals who, having come through atheism, socialism or ideological Zionism, or secularist indifference, now seriously seek the meaning of Jewish faith. That they exist and care as they do is what provides the social reality to this post-secular stance of Jewish theology. Borowitz points out that 'In concern if not yet in theological substance they know why they are Jewish'.[14]

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12. Cf. Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'Theological Questions to Scientists'. in *Zygon, Journal of Religion & Science*, March 1981, Vol. 16, No. 1. pp. 65 - 66.

13. Eugene B. Borowitz, 'Hope Jewish and Hope Secular', *Judaism*, Vol. 17, No. 2, Spring 1968, pp. 131 - 147.

14. Ibid. p. 134. Borowitz cites a number of young Jewish scholars who participated in a symposium on the condition of Jewish belief. Rubenstein participated in this symposium, 'The State of Jewish Belief : A Symposium', *Commentary*, August 1966, pp. 71 - 160. Rubenstein's contribution can be found on pp. 132 - 135.

New Theology

Rubenstein, despite the apparent radicality of his statements, is not a secularist. Nevertheless, work such as Rubenstein's cannot be discussed without reference to, and examination of the meaning of the secular. Radical theology is one branch of modern New Theology which attempts to talk of God from an anti-metaphysical or atheistic world view. Atheistic theology is only one of a variety of alternatives in contemporary theological thinking. It would be wrong to underestimate its influence but, on the other hand, it would be equally mistaken to think that it has conquered the field or that it will ever do so. Although it manifests within itself a vast heterogeneity of viewpoints, it is nothing more than one particular trend of thought within the context of contemporary theological thinking. Even among the radical theologians there is little agreement concerning the reasons for God's death.

Atheistic theology or theology of secularisation takes as its point of departure the observable and undeniable fact that the world view of many people of our time has become totally horizontalised. They have lost awareness of powers 'above' and 'beyond' this world. For them there is no transcendent background world as origin, meaning or as determining the destination of the world and the reality of our sense experience. Even if such a transcendent background world does exist, it appears to remain outside the realm of man's knowledge. Only the empirical world, the world of sense experience, weaned from all metaphysical thirst and desires is important.

It should be stated, however, that no theology can unconditionally subscribe to such an immanent world view without giving itself up. Through the ages theology has been confronted with this world view. The genealogy of this conception of reality can be traced back to the earliest manifestations of philosophical thinking, at least to the materialism of pre-Socratic times. Theology has, through the ages, determined its own position in relation to this world view. Understandably, theology's attitude to it has been predominantly negative. It is also understandable, however, that this attitude has made theology, in the eyes of many who hold this world view, a study of doubtful credentials, obstructive to the purposes of science and outdated, if not downright harmful.

On the other hand, there have always been theologians who have realised that theology could retain meaning only if it could keep pace with the patterns of life and thought that obtain in any time in which it finds itself. There have always been theologians whose *avant garde* positions were only adopted hesitatingly by conservative orthodoxy, often too late. Our own time attests to the existence of such *avant garde* thinkers. Three of the most notable and influential have been Paul Tillich, Rudolf Bultmann and Dietrich Bonhoeffer.[15]

During the nineteen sixties, an awakening appears to have occurred among the theologians. One after the other they seem to have realised, with disillusionment and despair, and often with a sense of liberation and celebration, the wide impact and acceptance, and also the quality of truth in an exclusively immanent world view. Theology was faced with a moment of truth : How does one talk about God in and to a world that has lost all awareness and understanding of God? The question also implies another question: To what extent can theology agree with this world view without uprooting itself?[16] It soon became clear that a new way of thinking had entered theology, not

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15. Rubenstein regards Tillich's views as highly influential on his own thinking. He calls Tillich 'the father of modern radical theology' in an introduction to his article 'The Symbols of Judaism and the Death of God', *After Auschwitz*, p. 226. He here admits his indebtedness to Tillich's thought. In 'Judaism and "The Secular City"' he points out Tillich's remarkable ability to confront the patterns of modern life and produce a theology which embraced and could speak meaningfully to it. He says: 'An important part of Tillich's greatness was his ability to endow with theological meaning the universal dissolution in two world wars of the old certainties of European civilization. Tillich had known the stability which had preceded the breakdown. He had the courage to confront the breakdown and discern within it possibilities of theological renewal.' *After Auschwitz*, 'Judaism and "The Secular City" ', p. 206.

16. For a lucid discussion of the anti-metaphysical trend in contemporary Christian theology, cf. H. M. Kuitert, *De Realiteit van het Geloof*, Kampen, 1968: *Revolte in de Theologie:*, Een bundel beschouwingen over de zogenaamde vernieuwingstheologie onder redactie van Prof. Dr. G. C. Berkouwer en Prof. Dr. A. S. van der Woude, Nijkerk, 1968. (In this volume see particularly H. M. Kuitert, 'Achtergronden van de zogenaamde vernieuwings-theologie', pp. 31 ff., G. C. van Niftrik, 'Theologische revolte (pp. 19 ff.) and A. F. N. Lekkerkerker,'Wear staan wij nu?'; and A. F. N. Lekkerkerker, *Nieuwe Theologie*, 's-Gravenhage, 1968, particularly pp. 155 - 208).

entirely unrelated to the past and characterised by va
of radicality. It has all been subsumed under the co
New Theology or Theology of Renewal. Radical theology
branch of this 'New Theology'.

Radical Theology, as an expression of New Theology, se
biblical faith, its relevance and authority, within th
thought-patterns of the present technical and atheisti
has 'come of age'[17]. As man now lives his life in a t
context, and not vertically directed towards God, the
God-concept of theism, and all notions attached to it,
behind. A supernatural concept of God must be abandon
be proclaimed dead in order that he may be horizontali

Secular Man

In his discussion of Jewish hope and secular hope Bor
that hope in the biblical sense is unacceptable to mod
Though biblical Judaism too, knows dissatisfaction wit
has faith that it will be transcended in time to come,
trust because it knows a vertical reality. It believ
be transcended because it believes in a transcendent
paths diverge. Secular man, by popular definition,[18]
transcendent reality. His hope for the future lies in
of men's capabilities. With the improved techniques
time will bring, man will be able to overcome problems
not soluble. This represents only faith in man and h
perhaps too, a trust in nature's accommodation to man,
to change things may change the quality of existence.
still be called horizontal factors.[19]

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17. Dietrich Bonhoeffer's often quoted words from
Ergebung, München/Hamburg, 1968[5] (Publishers Sieb
Taschenbuch Verlag).

18. Eugene Borowitz points out that in describing sec
we have come to a fundamental methodological prob
is insoluble and yet unavoidable. 'Out of the pl
evidence available, how do we know exactly what t
mentality is? How can we be certain that we are
about modern man rather than our fantasies concer
'Hope Jewish and Hope Secular', p. 140.

19. Borowitz, 'Hope Jewish and Hope Secular', p. 139.

John Macquarrie[20] points out that there are two poles in the discussion on secularisation. The one is God, the other, secularity. Theology means 'God-talk' and therefore cannot fail to discuss God. Yet theology must make itself understood in a secularised world that seems to get along very well in many ways without God. The theologian cannot avoid speaking about God, nor can he avoid the responsibility of addressing himself to his own world and of speaking the language of his time. One cannot read much contemporary theology without encountering the word 'secular'. He regards it as a new catch word to be ranked with 'kerygma', 'Heilsgeschichte' and 'demythologisation' - words which have dominated twentieth century theology. There is a common concern by Christian writers with the problem of secularity, but there is no common mind on the subject or even to what is meant by the term 'secular'.

There, however, is general agreement that the present age is increasingly characterised by secularity. Macquarrie suggests that in our busy world we can live, for the most part, on the level of the 'everyday' at which our limited problems, goods and enjoyments are handled without reference to God. He believes, however, that there are times when we are jolted out of the everyday and compelled to ask questions about our own being. These questions are always present, but are rarely specifically asked. He believes that we all have ontological convictions which lead to questions concerning God. In this connection, he cites the large numbers of books concerning God, eagerly snapped up by the general public. One of the most notable of these is John Robinson's *Honest to God* which sold about one million copies. *Time* magazine affirms this observation. Writing at the time when the death of God movement had become popularised it states: ' "God is the question that interests laymen the most," ... Last month the University of Colorado sponsored a teach-in on God, featuring William Hamilton and Dr. George Forell of the University of Iowa's School of Religion; more than 1,700 people showed up for the seven hour session - a greater turnout than for a recent similar talkfest on Viet Nam. At the University of California at Santa Barbara, students and faculty jammed two lecture halls to hear Harvey Cox talk on 'The "Death of God" and the Future of Theology'.

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20. John Macquarrie, *God and Secularity*, 'New Directions in Theology Today', Vol. III, Butterworth Press, London, 1968.

'If you want to have a well-attended lecture,' says Rabbi Abraham Heschel...'discuss God and faith.' Ministers have found that currently there is no easier way to boost Sunday attendance than to post 'Is God Dead?' as the topic of their next sermon.'[21]

This indicates people's search for an answer to an overt or slumbering question. It proves that the question of God is still with us. Macquarrie suggests that the word 'God' has become elusive and therefore any question concerning God, hard to formulate. People, therefore, cannot say exactly what they are asking about but, in asking the question of God, man must already have some idea of God, for 'every question has its direction and it is impossible to seek anything without having some understanding of what is sought, however vague and minimal that understanding might be'.[22] The present age is characterised by secularity, and, at the same time, a thirst for meaning in God.

Indeed, the atheistic theologians show an acute awareness of God, and, as Ben Engelbrecht points out, 'it is quite clear that their theological work and the presentation of their views reflect their struggle to clarify the question: "Who and what is God for the world and for man today?" They confess their unbelief in the traditional theistic conception of God, at least as they interpret traditional theism, and in this sense they are a-theists, non-theists, or, as they are sometimes also called "post-theists"; but their rejection of the "theistic" God goes hand in hand with a passionate search and longing for the real and true God. One of the remarkable features about this conception of the God for whom they wait, and in connection with it, true religion as they think it should be practised in the world, is that certain essential elements from the traditional views about faith and religion can be recognised in it'.[23] He goes on to suggest that their reactions to the distortions of traditional faith are over emphasised and, as often happens when a badly neglected truth or an aspect of it is rediscovered, these elements are expressed with the *Entdeckerfreude* of people who have discoverd them for the first time. But the atheistic theologians

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21. *Time*, April 8, 1966, p. 53.
22. Macquarrie, op. cit. p. 19.
23. B. Engelbrecht, unpublished paper entitled 'The Reasonableness of Atheism in Contemporary Theological Thinking'.

of our time are not the first to take up the sword against the *Lückenbüsser Gott* (the stop-gap God) of a distorted, popular theistic conception. The Hebrew prophets had done it long before, and since them every theistic theologian who was worth his salt. Similarly, they were not the first to adjudge as sheer ungodliness all holy directedness of pious souls toward a heavenly God under conditions of social injustice and absence of neighbourly love. Amos and Jesus had done so, and since them every theologian who had but the faintest notion of who God really was.[24]

Engelbrecht points out that secular theologians, and death of God theologians, in particular, seem to have in mind the death of a specific God. According to them it is the traditional God of theism in whom they see a projection of an outdated and antiquated religiosity, the god, therefore, of a particular conception that has lost its meaningfulness; or a god who is no longer the expectation but the possession of a pious minority and a stranger to the secularised majority; or the god of a religious and theological jargon that is no longer understood in a scientific age; or the god who dismisses man from his responsibility for the world; or the god whose service demands contempt for this temporal, material world and who directs man's aims and desires toward an otherwordly, heavenly destination. This God is dead.[25] But, he suggests, one must question whether this God has ever existed and whether traditional and conservative theists have not always been aware of his non-existence.

It is interesting to note that Pratt discounts the attempts of Cox, Vahanian, Hamilton and Altiser to de-supernaturalise supernatural religion for the very reason that he believes that they do not speak in secular terms and do not display a loss of the notion of the supernatural as he understands it. Speaking of Hamilton in particular he states: 'Too clearly we see that what distinguishes Hamilton's position from classical atheisms is its theism'.[26]

At the same time it is suggested by Marty and Peerman that a number of modern theologians are united by their empathy for the secular and

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24. Ibid. 25. Ibid.

26. Pratt, op. cit. p. 34. This aspect of death of God theology will be discussed in greater detail later.

atheist thought of their time and their involvement in its problems, but they emphasise that these same theologians are not content with its solutions. In compiling their essays for *New Theology No. 4* dealing with 'Beyond the Secular: Chastened Religion' they assert: 'The authors included in this volume are not intent on repudiating the main line of today's worldly, secular theology: indeed, they are a part of it; they have traversed the terrain which death-of-God theologians inhabit.' The compilers have not scoured among the defensive, crabbed, and cramped little magazines to find last holdouts against the theological agenda of our time. They recognise that here and there grand-scale metaphysicians are to be found; 'people to whom talk of "the supernatural" comes as easily as it did to medieval men may well be on the scene and may well be writing; arcane pietists are arguing their own case. More power to them!'. But they have corralled articles by people who want to be honest to God, who want to know the secular meaning of the Gospel, who have walked the streets and surveyed the towers of the Secular City and who want to be both humanists and theologians.[27]

Radical theology must be seen against the backdrop of secularisation and even if man is groping beyond the secular, secularisation must be seen as one of the hallmarks of modern Western society. If theologians are to speak meaningfully, they must speak in terms which are comprehensible to their readers and listeners. The theologian is thus conditioned by at least two forces, his readers and audience and his theological and philosophical antecedents. The phenomenon of secularisation has had manifestations in both these areas.

Ninian Smart points out that 'modern man has come increasingly under the spell of non-religious and anti-religious ideas'.[28] While in the past any protest against religion was sporadic and did not gain majority allegiance, in the modern period, powerful restatements of atheism and agnosticism have had wide success. Social and intellectual forces have combined to promote a widespread practical atheism.

According to Pratt every age has its own conceptual framework.[29] We are conditioned by our conceptual framework as were previous generations.

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27. Marty and Peerman, *New Theology* No. 4, p. 12.
28. Ninian Smart, *The Religious Experience of Mankind*, The Fontana Library of Theology & Philosophy, 1974, 4th Impression, p. 647.
29. Pratt, op. cit. p. 50.

The intellectual framework of the last half century has altered so radically that whereas fifty years ago an intellectual might have entertained doubt about the truth of Christianity, today many would find it obviously false. What was an open question for the sceptic, David Hume, and considered a matter for lively debate, is for many no longer even worthy of consideration.[30]

There is no doubt that secularisation has had a marked influence on modern theology and philosophy. There is no doubt either, that it has become firmly entrenched in the thinking of the common populace of the Western world. While it is difficult to pin down the characteristics of the average secularised man, it must be noted that millions of individuals share a secularised world view. Smart describes the average secularised population very aptly as 'people who live in a large, gentle twilight-zone between religiousness and agnosticism'.[31] He suggests that they no longer attend church or synagogue, that they do not feel themselves called upon to belong to any religious organisation, and that although they have inherited much of the anti-clericalism of the humanist movement, they do not share its intellectual presuppositions. The majority of them profess a vague belief in God or some controlling power behind the cosmos. However, they feel that formal worship of such a being has little importance. He believes that their emphasis is on ethics rather than on ritual, and that they generally turn to prayer under conditions of stress. They have become alienated from the churches as a result of inter-denominational rivalry, and because of an awareness of the existence of several religions and creeds, they have become distrustful of dogma. Having no real desire to deny God, they also do not wish to define his nature too closely. 'They have reverence for a Creator; but they feel him to be distant and detached. They often think it is presumptuous for man to put himself in the centre of the cosmic picture by supposing that God came down to bring about his salvation.'[32] They recognise the abiding relevance of Christian moral values, but they reject puritanism. Smart suggests that they are 'post-Christian folk' who are not atheists. They 'are more against

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30. Ibid. p. 7.
31. Smart, op. cit. p. 667.
32. Ibid. p. 668.

religions than religion, and more against the respectability of Sunday observance than against the recognition of God which it is intended to express'.[33] They do not have a marked sense of sin, but they admire saintliness. Uncertain of Christ's divinity, they believe that he was greatly better than other men. They suspect that creeds are pernicious and that Christianity was a far simpler thing in Jesus' teaching than it is in its modern manifestations. They worry about death and hope for an afterlife, but they do not feel a division between heaven and hell. Having belonged to a Christian environment, they react against its regimentation. They are sceptical, but they are not atheists.

Smart is convinced that such men far outnumber the committed atheists and explicit agnostics. The latter belong to the more intellectual stratum of society. But their thoughts have become part of a climate of opinion which has penetrated into all parts of the modern Western community. The notion that there is some incompatibility between science and religion is widespread. Science with its great prestige derived from the practical benefits of technology and the awesome mumbo-jumbo surrounding the expert, has acquired an authority which is thought to supersede that of religion. For many young people, this is the picture presented by the current state of our civilisation. Thus although the overt atheists and agnostics are, and have been, relatively few, the influence of their thinking has been formidable.[34]

Despite this picture of the rather negative and uncertain state of religion in the Western world, it must be noted that there are many individuals whose world view is determined by the directedness of their lives to a transcendent reality and who remain devout theists. I have also suggested that a large number of secularised individuals are both fascinated and troubled by the question of God and that atheistic theologians appear to be searching for God in one sense or another.

The Meaning of Secularisation

Secularisation reflects a trend away from other-worldly attitudes. It has many shades of meaning ranging from a concentration on this-worldly matters within a theistic context to a total loss of any concept of the

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33. Ibid. p. 668. 34. Ibid. pp. 668, 669

supernatural. Its causes are many and varied and there seems to be little agreement on this matter.

Pratt, who represents the thinking of the Logical Positivists, has a rigid and radical view of secularisation. He sees secularisation as having two aspects.[35] The first is a social process which is reflected in the waning of religious institutions such as churches and synagogues. This aspect is empirically verifiable and is an obvious mark of a secularising society. The second is an intellectual process which applies to a general orientation of mind. As men now have a solely terrestrial horizon they no longer even think in terms of 'the Supernatural'. Our entire world view and conceptual framework has altered and no coherent account of the supernatural can be given. There was a time when belief in God was universal; but since then atheism or agnosticism has passed from being the faith of a tiny harassed minority and has become a respectable credo - even, almost an orthodoxy, while in the last few years any statement which uses the word 'God' if only to question or deny his existence, has been attacked from the theological left as old-fashioned on the grounds that the term is simply meaningless.[36]

Logical positivism regards as meaningful only those statements which are logical, empirically verifiable, or mathematical tautologies. Ethical, aesthetic and religious statements are regarded as meaningless, the most favourable evaluation that can be made of them being that they have emotional value. They convey something which gives information only concerning the state of mind of the maker of the statements, and are not cognitive in themselves.

Empirical verifiability as a criterion for the validity of judgments may be regarded as a *sine qua non* for the natural sciences. If, however, it becomes the criterion for the acceptance or rejection of everything as either true or false, it determines the world view as such. According to this world view, which can be called the scientific world view, only those statements and beliefs which can stand the test of the principle of verification within the empirical world are true. Such a scientific world view implies that an intellectual, scientific development forms the foundation of industrialisation and urbanisation, and the rapid emergence

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35. Pratt, op. cit. pp. 5 ff. 36. Ibid. p. 8.

of a society in which the supernatural has disappeared and lost its meaning completely for the secularised masses, unless it continues to exist in the form of crude superstition.

Thus, people's absence from church or synagogue is not the decisive factor when considering secularisation. What is decisive is their occupation while so absenting themselves. Such occupation is determined by a particular world view and a distinctive way of life resulting from that world view.

Harvey Cox represents a more moderate view of secularisation than that of Pratt. Cox has linked urbanisation with secularisation. The 'rise of civilization and the collapse of traditional religion are the two main hallmarks of our era and are closely related movements'.[37]

Pratt cites some of Cox's marks of secular society in his explication of secularisation. Pratt points out that some of Cox's marks of secular society, like anonymity and mobility, connect secularisation and urbanisation in a factual as opposed to a conceptual way. They are marks of an urban society rather than secular society proper. However, Cox's stress on the more conceptual characteristics of secularisation such as pragmatism and profanity are marks of secular society as such. These characteristics form part of its conceptual framework.

Cox states: 'By *pragmatism* we mean secular man's concern with the question "Will it work?". Secular man does not occupy himself much with mysteries. He is little interested in anything that seems resistant to the application of human energy and intelligence'.[38] Modern secular man judges ideas by the results they will achieve in practice. The world is thus viewed, not as a unified metaphysical system, but as a series of problems and projects. By *profanity* Cox refers to secular man's 'wholly terrestrial horizon', the disappearance of any supramundane reality defining his life. *Pro-fane* means literally 'outside the temple'[39] - thus 'having to do with this world'. By calling him profane, Cox does

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37. Harvey E. Cox, *The Secular City*, SCM Press, Ltd. London, 1965, p. 1.
38. Ibid. p. 60.
39. More accurately, pro-fane means 'before the temple'.

[illegible] importantly different from that in which [illegible] natural phenomena were not discredited because of science's findings, but because its methods ruled them out. Whereas pronouncements of authority were valid in the past, science insisted on referring to observation, experiment and reason. Pratt quotes Basil Willey in suggesting that a major fruit of the scientific revolution was a distrust of all tradition, a determination to accept nothing as true merely on authority, but only after experiment and verification.[42] Supernatural phenomena obviously fail the reproducibility criterion, for if they did not, we would not distinguish them from non-supernatural events. Pratt is convinced that science eliminated 'supernatural' phenomena because of a basic incompatibility of presuppositions, and that without any implications for man's experience, all talk involving 'the Supernatural' has become in consequence meaningless.[43]

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40. Ibid. pp. 60, 61.

41. Pratt, op. cit. p. 11.

42. Pratt, op. cit. p. 14. Quotation from Basil Willey. *The Touch of Cold Philosophy*, pp. 373 - 374. in R. F. Jones, ed., *The Seventeenth*

It is interesting to note that Cox suggests a similar view somewhat differently and with a different emphasis. Having noted that urban civilisation and the collapse of traditional religion are the main hallmarks of our era, and that they are closely related movements, he asserts that urbanisation 'constitutes a massive change in the way man live together, and became possible in its contemporary form only with the scientific and technological advances *which sprang from the wreckage of religious world-views.*'[44] Secularisation, 'an equally epochal movement, marks a change in the way men grasp and understand their life together, and it occurred only when the cosmopolitan confrontation of city living exposed the relativity of the myths and traditions man once thought were unquestionable'.[45]

Whichever way one looks at the problem, the single factor which emerges clearly is that the habits and mind of secular man are permeated by the ethos of modern science. The rise of science and modern technology has placed the faith of many in question. Religious faith has been replaced for many by a faith in science. On the other hand, the rise of science may be seen as a direct consequence, and modern technology as the end product, of the biblical view of creation and biblical monotheism.

Cox points out that *saeculum* is one of the two Latin words denoting 'world', the other being *mundus*.[46] The English word 'secular' derives from the Latin word *saeculum* meaning 'the age'. It thus has an element of temporality in it. *Saeculum* therefore is a time-word which is used frequently to translate the Greek word *aeon*, which also means 'age' or 'epoch'. *Mundus* is a space-word used to denote the Greek word *cosmos*, meaning 'the universe' or the created order. There is an ambiguity between the two Latin words *saeculum* and *mundus* reflecting the difference between the Hebrew 'time view' of reality and the Greek spatial view of reality. The Hebrews viewed the world in terms of history, a series of events beginning with creation and heading toward a consummation. For the Greeks the world was a place or location. Happenings of interest could occur within the world, but nothing significant ever happened *to* the world. In the Greek view, there was no such thing as world history. The Hebrews, on the other hand, perceived

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44. Cox, op. cit. p. 1. (my emphasis). 45. Ibid. p. 1.
46. Ibid. p. 18.

existence temporally. Cox points out that the tension between the Greek spatial view of reality and the Hebrew temporal view, has plagued Christian theology from its outset. He asserts that the impact of Hebrew faith on the Hellenistic world, mediated through the early Christians, was to temporalise the dominant perception of reality. 'The world *became* history. *Cosmos* became *aeon*; *mundus* became *saeculum*.'[47]. From the beginning of its usage the word 'secular' denoted something vaguely inferior. It denoted this world of change as opposed to the eternal religious world.[48] Cox maintains that this usage of the word departs ominously from biblical categories. The word 'secular' therefore has the connotation of this-worldliness and can be maintained within the biblical concept of reality.

Cox sees secularisation as a descriptive term with a wide and inclusive significance. The word secularisation 'implies a historical process, almost certainly irreversible, in which society and culture are delivered from tutelage to religious control and closed metaphysical views',[49] a basically liberating development.

He cautions us not to confuse the term with 'secularism' which is the name for an ideology, a new closed world view which functions very much like a new religion. While secularisation finds its roots in the biblical faith itself and is to some extent an authentic outcome of the impact of biblical faith on Western history, this is not the case with secularism. Like any other 'ism', it menaces the openness and freedom secularisation has produced; it therefore must be watched carefully to prevent its becoming the ideology of a new establishment.[50]

Clearly there is a distinction between secularity (or secularisation) and secularism. The former encompasses the attitudes of modern science and deals with this-worldly concerns. It is a universal attitude in civilised countries and in this sense it is used by theology to denote an outlook which is not necessarily incompatible with belief in God. Secularism, on the other hand, is a more rigid attitude of those who hold that only through science can we have trustworthy knowledge, and only tangible and human affairs of this world are worthy of attention.

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47. Ibid. p. 18. 48. Ibid. p. 19. 49. Ibid. p. 20.

50. Ibid. p. 21.

The secular thus has different emphases and meanings for different scholars and schools of thought. Taking the above caution to be valid, one would have to consider the possibility that Pratt's view of secularisation would, in fact, have to be termed secularism.

The Jewish Roots of Secularisation

To the extent that secularisation means 'this-worldliness' Louis Jacobs suggests that the 'frank and joyous acceptance of life in all its manifestations is a typical Jewish theme. Judaism certainly does not reject the secular and Jewish thinkers are not unnaturally puzzled at what all the fuss among Christian theologians is about. Judaism agrees with the sentiments expressed in Bonhoeffer's often quoted saying about " man come of age". It only disagrees that for Judaism man has always been of age.'[51] He, however, points out that despite this attitude, Judaism does not accept a secular view of human life without a religious dimension. He regards the term 'secular Judaism' which appears to mean acceptance of Jewish ethical standards and a Jewish way of life, without any belief in the religious teachings of Judaism, as a serious distortion. At the heart of Judaism 'is the belief that God *is* and that all of man's activities can be sanctified by his awareness of the tremendous truth'.[52] He suggests that while Judaism embraces the secular it cannot be identified with secularisation. Citing Micah 6:8 he affirms that God wants man to do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with his God. The secularist is able to fulfil the first two requirements but the believing Jew adds to these the dimension of the sacred. It is God who asks these things of him and when he tries falteringly to walk humbly it is with God that he is trying to walk.[53]

Eugene B. Borowitz traces some of the origins of the modern process of secularisation which have taken place in Judaism.[54] He refers to secularisation in its narrower sense, thus including elements of secularism. He points out that with the Emancipation of the Jews from ghetto existence which began at about the end of the eighteenth

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51. Louis Jacobs, *What does Judaism say about...?* Keter Publishing House, Jerusalem, 1973. p. 274.

52. Ibid. 53. Ibid. p. 275.

54. Eugene B. Borowitz, 'Hope Jewish and Hope Secular', op. cit. pp. 131 ff.

century, 'Judaism underwent a steady process of secularization, in the contemporary limited sense of that term'.[55] He sees this as being associated with the radical change in the political status of the Jews. Only with the emergence of a secular as opposed to a Christian state, was it possible for Jews to have full rights as citizens. Jews obviously welcomed this development and took advantage of its new opportunities for civil participation. This political secularisation was amplified by urban concentration of Jews and their movement into universities wherever this was permitted. As the nineteenth century proceeded, this process moved toward self-consciousness. Traditional Judaism saw the need to explain itself to the surrounding world, or what is the same, having adopted the style of general society, it now had to explain itself to itself in society's terms. This meant using the language of secular philosophy to talk about Judaism, and, while German idealism was more hospitable to religious interpretation than today's secular philosophy is, the very *process* of employing a philosophic hermeneutic made demands for the transformation of Judaism.[56] Orthodox, as well as Reform Judaism, was affected by the modern secular spirit. The effects were internal as well. In Reform Judaism the liturgy was translated into the vernacular, 'the legal disciplines were reduced to subjective desirables, and the clergy lost its aura of infallibility'.[57] In orthodox circles observance of Jewish civil law gave way to the use of the government's legal procedures and a general as well as a Jewish education became acceptable, 'both unthinkable courses of action a century before'.[58] Borowitz suggests that the decades since have only increased this involvement with secularity.

He suggests that the process took a much more radical turn at the hands of those Jews who felt that modernity meant some kind of scientific or materialistic positivism. 'By the last quarter of the 19th century many Jewish intellectuals knew that God was dead and religion hopelessly outmoded.'[59] Their substitutes for Jewish faith were effective in the Jewish world. They took the form of Socialism, Zionist nationalism or Socialist Zionism. Jewish religious concepts were demythologised into politics, while the prophets were reduced to agitators for social justice.

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55. Ibid. p. 131. 56. Ibid. 57. Ibid. 58. Ibid. pp. 131 - 132.
59. Ibid. p. 132.

Galut, exile, was a matter of political geography rather than equally the metaphysical alienation of God and man in this world. *G'ulah*, redemption, they took back to its early sense of reacquiring one's national land in Palestine instead of equally meaning the establishing of the Messianic Kingdom. The State of Israel is the fulfilment of that secularisation of Judaism.[60]

Borowitz indicates that these European activities came to the United States of America much later and that the high point of American Jewish secularisation was reached just before World War II. He points out that by that time there were enough American-born Jews and aspiring young immigrants in the universities or involved in the general secular culture to provide a positive intellectual inducement for giving up one's ancestral religion. This movement was given tremendous force by its linkage to the psycho-social pressures generated by the cultural distance between the immigrant Yiddish-speaking older generation and their American offspring. 'As a result, for Jewish youth Americanization meant non-observance of Jewish law: sophistication meant atheism.'[61] He points out that though this attitude may not have affected the majority of the young Jews, it was sufficiently wide-spread to cause concern. This resulted in a quest by Jewish spokesmen for secular syntheses which elaborated naturalist, functional, non-metaphysical explanations of Jewish faith (like Mordecai Kaplan and his development of Reconstructionism), or in experiments with other, even less God-orientated forms of humanism.

One of the dominant themes of Borowitz's article is that for Judaism secularisation is nothing new. Borowitz marvels at the revolution the secular realm has apparently initiated in both Protestant and Roman Catholic circles, because he has lived with, and vicariously made his own, the difficulties of the Jewish community since the beginning of the Emancipation a century and a half ago. 'We thought that the church was in the world and part of culture while we were still emerging into them. Now we wonder what kind of spiritual ghetto Christianity seeks emancipation from. Usually Jews borrow theological patterns from their neighbors. For a change, a theological movement seems to have passed

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60. Ibid. 61. Ibid.

through Judaism before reaching Christianity, almost certainly because we are structured as a folk or a people and not as a church. We could not therefore, even in pre-Emancipation days, be as separate from the "secular" as Christians have felt themselves to be.'[62] From the Jewish experience of many decades of secularity 'it is both sad and astonishing to hear it being welcomed by Christians as a religious aid of Messianic proportions'.[63] Borowitz also finds it fairly significant that, despite substantial publicity to a community generally recognised as highly secularised, the very few Jewish death of God advocates have had very little acceptance. 'I attribute this to the social fact that, while to others to hear of religious atheists sounds new and radical, to us it is somehow very old fashioned. Atheism is where we all were in the '30s and the '40s, in the days when we still thought university rationalism would redeem the world. That is what those of us who care about Judaism seriously turned away from; to revive it now for a new Judaism seems strangely behind the times.'[64]

Borowitz, however, realises the need to accommodate to contemporary secularity and to speak to modern man in a modern way. His reservations lie in his conviction that in Jewish experience translation of the service makes it not only understandable, but also unbelievable to many. Turning law into a matter of individual decision leads not only to willing compliance, but to gross non-observance, almost to anarchy. Humanising the authorities, he argues, makes them not only more approachable, but less influential in most people's lives. A religious concern with the secular style of our time may solve some of our older pressing problems and so may be necessary, but it will also lose us many of the old values we have treasured and create problems which will then demand newer solutions. This is what brings us to the post-secular stage.[65]

Despite the fact that Rubenstein writes from a vastly different position from that adopted by Borowitz, it is remarkable how many of the above-mentioned concerns with the problem of secularity find a parallel in Rubenstein's thinking. This will become apparent particularly in relation to Rubenstein's views on the translation of the liturgy into the vernacular, and in his own struggle with the observance of Jewish law.

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62. Ibid. p. 133. 63. Ibid. 64. Ibid. p. 143. 65. Ibid. p. 133.

Rubenstein, in addition to some of the above-named causes of the development of secularisation in Judaism, adds the advent of biblical criticism. He suggests that for the modern Jew the problem of secularisation and urbanisation has been aggravated by the rise of biblical criticism. Because Judaism has at its centre the conviction that God gave the Torah to the Jews as a guide of conduct for their lives, unitary divine authorship which reflected a harmonious point of view was essential if the Jew was to feel secure that in his Jewish religious practice, he in fact, was fulfilling the will of God. With the advent of biblical criticism, this conviction was attacked at its roots. The Jew is still expected to live according to the Torah, even though its divine validation has been removed.[66]

He is also convinced that the whole problem of modern secularisation has been aggravated greatly for many individuals by the loss of their personal God after the Holocaust. This aspect becomes the dominant motif in his thinking. Interestingly, while this forms the fulcrum of his theology, it has not been discussed by the other death of God theologians. Borowitz states that it 'is characteristic of Judaism that if any new statement of atheism was to move the Jewish community since World War II it had to come on the basis of what happened in history rather than because philosophers worry whether statements about God can have significant intellectual content. Jews, for all their intellectuality, do not seem so rationalistic as to consider linguistic problems a compelling reason for saying God is dead. And, in turn, they have been amazed that the major death-of-God thinkers have not discussed the unparalleled destruction of Jews under Hitler as a reason for disbelief in God. That alone has agitated the Jewish community whenever it sought to speak of Jewish faith.'[67]

From the above-mentioned discussion it can be seen that secularisation in its narrow sense means a loss of any meaning in the supernatural. In a wider sense, it means this-worldliness and in this latter sense it can

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66. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'The Meaning of Torah in Contemporary Jewish Theology', p. 113 f.

    This aspect of Rubenstein's thinking receives fuller treatment in Chapter IV of this study, dealing with his views on Judaism after the death of God.

67. Borowitz, 'Hope Jewish and Hope Secular', op. cit. p. 143.

be expressed within theism, or attempt to break out of theism. Its major manifestations and hallmarks are a scientific world view, urbanisation, and the general profanity and pragmatism of modern man. Modern times attest to a distinct loss of meaning in old religious categories and traditions due to the credibility gap between the traditional view of God and man's actual experience in the world. Judaism's experience in the world led it to encounter manifestations of secularisation in its narrower sense before it had any noticeable impact on Christianity. The Holocaust has been decisive for Judaism since World War II, and has influenced secularisation. Whilst reactions to the question of God's responsibility in relation to the Holocaust may differ, no meaningful Jewish theological statement can be made in isolation from the reality of the catastrophe, and the very real questions arising out of God's indifference to, participation, or even complicity in, the Holocaust.

The Biblical Roots of Secularisation

Cox, with a great deal of justification, sees secularisation as arising in large measure from the formative influence of biblical faith on the Western world.[68] He discerns three main sources of secularisation in (a) creation as the disenchantment of nature, (b) the Exodus as the desacralisation of politics, and (c) the Sinai Covenant as the deconsecration of values.

The Disenchantment of Nature

Cox correctly points out that the Hebrew view of creation signals a marked departure from a magical world view. It separates nature from God and distinguishes man from nature. The Genesis account of creation taught the Hebrews that the magical vision, by which nature is seen as a semi-divine force, has no basis in fact. God is sole creator of both nature and man. Nature is made available for man's use.

Huston Smith affirms this by pointing to the underlying conviction contained in the three key assertions about nature in the opening

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68. Harvey Cox, *The Secular City*, op. cit. pp.17 ff.

chapter of Genesis:

> *God created...the earth;*
> *God said: Let (man) have dominion...over all the earth;*
> *And behold, it was very good.*

We find an appreciation of nature, blended with confidence in man's power to transform nature for the good, that is unique in any literature of the age. It was, as we well know, an attitude destined to bring results, for it is no accident that modern science first jumped to life in the Western world.[69]

Hooykaas[70] propounds the thesis that the development of modern science finds its impetus in the biblical view of creation. He points out that the Bible knows nothing of nature as a divine power, but knows only of creatures who are absolutely dependent for their origin on the will of God. 'Consequently, the natural world is admired as God's work and as evidence of its creator, but it is never adored. Nature can arouse in man a feeling of awe, but this is conquered by the knowledge that man is God's fellow-worker who shares with Him the rule of the fellow-creature, the "dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth...". Thus, in total contradiction to pagan religion, nature is not a deity to be feared and worshipped, but a work of God to be admired, studied and managed.'[71] In a comparison of pagan and biblical religions there is a fundamental contrast between the ideas concerning God and man. In the biblical view, God and nature are no longer opposed to man, but man, together with God, confronts nature. The denial that God coincides with nature also implies the denial that nature is God-like.

The great difference between the biblical concept of a transcendental creator evoking the world out of nothing by his free will, and the Greek concept of growth and generation by immanent divine nature, had far-reaching consequences. The ultimate development of the science of nature depended significantly on which of these two concepts would emerge as its background. Hooykaas is convinced that both the Greek and Hebrew views

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69. Huston Smith, *The Religions of Man*, p. 262. Perennial Library, Harper & Row, 1965.

70. R. Hooykaas, *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science*, Scottish Academic Press, 1973. (cf. also A.A. van Ruler, *Die christeliche Kirche das Alte Testament*, München, 1955, pp. 82 ff.)

71. Hooykaas, op. cit. pp. 8, 9.

contributed to the development of modern science, and that the confrontation of Graeco-Roman culture with biblical religion engendered, after centuries of tension, a new science. He has no doubt that most scientists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries 'may have been unconscious of the fact that the metaphysical foundations of their discipline stemmed, in spite of all secularization, in great part from the biblical concept of God and creation'.[72] Modern science preserved the indispensable parts of the Graeco-Roman heritage, but it was directed greatly by different social and methodological conceptions which stem largely from a biblical world view. He also suggests that a significant part, in the development of modern science, was played by the biblical view that matter is not inferior, and that the craftsman and labourer, as well as manual work, are to be honoured. This released science from some of the factors in Greek philosophy which hampered it. The biblical authors do not praise the *otium* (leisure) which, according to the philosophers, was a characteristic and virtue of the life of the Greek citizen.[73]

Cox states that 'the disenchantment of the natural world provides an absolute precondition for the development of natural science. Since... technopolis, today's technical city, would not have been possible without modern science, disenchantment is also an essential precondition for modern urbanization. Science basically, is a point of view. However highly developed a culture's powers of observation, however refined its equipment for measuring, no real scientific breakthrough is possible until men can face the natural world unafraid.'[74]

As a subject for subsequent elaboration, I must point out that modern science and technology, made possible by this world view, has led to a world view in which God is no longer discernible to many. It must also be noted that Rubenstein's attitude to this aspect of biblical monotheism is negative.

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72. Ibid. p. 26. (cf. also W. Pannenberg, op. cit. p. 66 : "The so-called methodological atheism of modern science is far from pure innocence. It is a highly ambiguous phenomenon. And yet its very possibility can be regarded as based on the unfailing faithfulness of the creator God to his creation, providing it with the inviolable regularities of natural processes that themselves become the basis of individual and more precarious and transitory natural systems...").
73. Ibid. p. 84.
74. Cox, op. cit. p. 24.

The Desacralisation of Politics

In discussing the desacralisation of politics as a result of the Exodus, Cox points out that no one rules by divine right in secular society, whilst in pre-secular society, everyone does. As a consequence, significant political and social change is almost impossible in societies in which the ruling regime is directly legitimated by religious symbols, in which the ruler is believed to be divine or a direct expression of the divine intention. Political change depends on a previous desacralisation of politics.[75]

The process is closely related to the disenchantment of nature. 'Since nature always repeats itself, while history never does, the emergence of history rather than nature as the locus of God's action opens a whole new world of possibilities for political and social change.'[76] The Exodus delivered the Hebrews from a sacral-political order of the pharaohs into history and social change. Cox correctly sees it as the central event around which the Hebrews subsequently organised their whole perception of reality.

Any temptation, during the period of the Hebrew monarchy, to return to sacral politics was countered by the prophets. The Exodus event had made it forever impossible to accept, without reservation, the sanctions of any monarch. Cox is fully aware of the ever-present danger of a relapse into a neo-sacral political structure. National Socialism in Germany and Fascism in Italy represented relapses of catastrophic proportions. In the light of this, it is difficult to accept Cox's optimistic belief that 'the presence today of desacralizing currents of the biblical faith and of the movements deriving from it suggests that in the urbanized technological world of tomorrow, no significant reversal of the trend toward secularization can be expected'.[77]

This relapse into neo-sacral politics, it will be seen, occupies a great deal of Rubenstein's thought on the group behaviour of the Germans prior to, and during World War II.[78] He is greatly impressed by Freud's views on group surrender of the super ego, in which a human leader is endowed

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75. Ibid. p. 25. 76. Ibid. 77. Ibid. p. 30.

78. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter IV dealing with Rubenstein's attitude to religion.

with god-like properties. He is also deeply pessimistic about man and his very real potentialities for evil. In the light of the tragic consequences of National Socialism's encounter with the world, and the universal suffering it caused, this relapse should not be considered as an isolated aberration, but as a potential consequence of man's inherent nature. As such, its recurrence, in one form or another, should be recognised as a real possibility, and its occurrence as a warning of the depths to which humanity may sink in expression of the demonic. Also, in his most recent thought, Rubenstein has suggested that with the breaking of residual moral barriers achieved by the Holocaust, it invites repetition. He also sees it as the outcome of biblical secularisation.

The Sinai Covenant as the Deconsecration of Values

Cox believes that modern man has come to the realisation that all things are relative. He cites Tillich's description of this age, characterised as it is by the disappearance of securely grounded values, as the 'land of broken symbols'.[79] Simple ethical certainty, available to previous generations, will not be possible again. No previous generation has had to live in the glaring light of this realisation. 'Secular man's values have been deconsecrated, shorn of any claim to ultimate or final significance.'[80] The relativisation of all human values is, according to Cox, one of the integral dimensions of secularisation. He sees it stemming, in part, from the biblical opposition to idolatry, instituted at Sinai. The Hebrews were forbidden to worship, or to take with any real moral seriousness, anything which could be fashioned by man himself. The Bible does not deny the reality of the gods and their values; it merely relativises them. It accepts them as human projections, as the 'work of man's hand', and in this sense is very close to the modern social sciences.

It was because they believed in Yahweh that, for the Jews, all human values and their representations were relativised.[81] Cox suggests that the iconoclasm which runs through biblical faith provides the basis for constructive relativism. 'Iconoclasm - and therefore a kind of relativism -

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79. Cox, *The Secular City*, op. cit. p. 31. 80. Ibid. 81. Ibid. p. 32.

is the necessary and logical consequence of faith in the Creator.'[82] He sees this iconoclasm as making possible an attitude by which the national, racial, and cultural idolatries of the age can be put in their place allowing secular man to note the transience and relativity of all cultural creations and of every value system without sinking into an abyss of nihilism.

These thoughts are reminiscent of the conviction of Tillich when he says: 'Idolatry is the elevation of a preliminary concern to ultimacy. Something essentially conditioned is taken as unconditional, something essentially partial is boosted to universality, and something essentially finite is given infinite significance (the best example is the contemporary idolatry of religious nationalism). The conflict between the finite basis of such a concern and its infinite claim leads to a conflict of ultimates; it radically contradicts the biblical commandments....'[83] Cox sees historical relativism as the end product of secularisation and as the non-religious expression of what Jews and Christians have expressed in their opposition to idolatry.

Cox then poses the legitimate question concerning 'those myriad modern men who feel the full weight of relativism but have no faith. Must it not be conceded that, for them, Ivan Karamazov is right when he says that if God is dead, then everything is possible?'[84] Cox admits that there is a real danger that a relativisation of values can lead to ethical anarchism and metaphysical nihilism, but this need not necessarily be the case. He calls for maturity in dealing with this problem, regarding nihilism as the adolescent phase of the relativisation of values. Nihilism 'swings back and forth from a giddy celebration of the freedom man has when the gods are dead to a wistful longing after the return of a world of secure and dependable meanings and norms. In psychoanalytic terms, the nihilist displays a deep ambivalence toward the authority figure represented by God and traditional values. Having rejected the father, he still cannot achieve maturity and self-actualization. Nihilism therefore sometimes becomes a kind of diabolism. The nihilist uses his newfound freedom from the tyranny of God not to become a true man but to revel in all the things the dead God once forbade.

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82. Ibid. p. 33.

83. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, p. 16. James Nisbet & Co., Ltd., 1968, Combined Vol. (1, p. 16).

84. Cox, *The Secular City*, p. 33.

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82. Ibid. p. 33.
83. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, p. 16. James Nisbet & Co., Ltd., 1968, Combined Vol. (1, p. 16).
84. Cox, *The Secular City*, p. 33.

Nihilism has in effect a new god, the nihil, the negative shadow of the dead God.'[85]

It will be shown that this tendency toward nihilism in man plays a significant part in the thinking of Rubenstein.

Cox sees nihilism as the equivalent in the ethical realm of man's vengeful onslaught against nature which can follow its disenchantment regarding both responses as adolescent reactions to liberation from previous restraints. Real mastery of this newfound freedom requires maturity, and that 'all men be drawn into the secularization process so that no one clings to the dangerous precritical illusion that his values are ultimate'.[86] The mutual discovery by all parties concerned that their own value systems are only relative puts all parties into the same boat and supplies the common experience and outlook which can become the basis of a new social consensus upon which man can live with the realisation that ethical standards can be man-made. Man 'can accept the fact that value systems, like states and civilisations, come and go. They are conditioned by their history and claim no finality.... They can be altered and modified. But insofar as they represent a consensus and provide a fabric of corporate life, they should not be tampered with frivolously or capriciously. Secularization places the responsibility for the forging of human values, like the fashioning of political systems, in man's own hands. And this demands a maturity neither the nihilist nor the anarchist wishes to assume.'[87]

Cox firmly believes that the roots of secularisation lie in the Bible and this clearly means that those whose present orientation to reality is shaped by biblical faith can hardly enter the lists as adversaries of secularisation. Our task is to nourish the secularisation process and prevent it from hardening into a rigid world view. We constantly should be on the alert for movements 'which attempt to thwart and reverse the liberating irritant of secularization'.[88] Releasing men 'to maturity is the work of the God of Creation, Exodus and Sinai. Calling them to maturity is the task of the community of faith.'[89]

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85. Ibid. p. 34. 86. Ibid. 87. Ibid. p. 35. 88. Ibid. p. 36.
89. Ibid. p. 36.

Rubenstein's View of Secularisation

Rubenstein affirms the biblical origins of secularisation but finds no reason to rejoice in its effects. His view of modern secularisation is negative and pessimistic and, unlike Cox, he has no hope for man or the world which is subjected to him. The disenchantment of nature has had disastrous effects resulting in the total dehumanisation of man. Man's vicious onslaught against nature and his fellow man cannot be seen simply in terms of an adolescent phase in a developmental course growing toward responsibility and maturity.

In no sense can Rubenstein share Cox's optimism concerning man and the liberating effects of secularisation. Rubenstein views secularisation not as a liberation, but as an illness resulting from, and inherent in, the Judaeo-Christian tradition, albeit an unintended and unforeseen result. He sees no 'cure' for the illness which he calls Judaeo-Christian civilisation, save total world-wide catastrophe in which hundreds of millions will perish and civilisation as we know it will disappear. Rubenstein therefore is convinced that the traumatic 'cure' of the illness will prove to be infinitely worse than the disease itself.[90] The idea of calling the Judaeo-Christian tradition a disease is not in any way strange. 'After all, for all their limitations biblical men and women understood that, far from being an achievement, civilization requires a Savior to extricate mankind from it.'[91]

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90. Rubenstein, 'Reflections on the Holocaust'. (This essay, received as personal communication, is a revised version of an essay which appeared in *Christianity and Crisis*, March 3, 1975).

91. Ibid.

C H A P T E R II

Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the whole horizon?

Friedrich Nietzsche

Seen in retrospect, history appears innocent and almost comfortable. Everything lasted for so long then and in an unexplored world there was so little to be destroyed. Today there is only a moment between decision and effect, and, measured by our potentialities, Genghis Khan, Tamerlane and Hitler seem pitiful amateurs.

Elias Canetti

RUBENSTEIN AND SECULARISATION

In his most recent works[1] Rubenstein is concerned with the problem of radical secularity, its implications and causes. When he speaks of the 'death of God' he refers to the death of a particular image of God on the one hand, and to the radical secularity of our times, on the other. He perceives as a fact the disappearance of God from the affairs of men for all practical purposes. Radical secularity implies the removal of ever more areas of human thought and behaviour from religious control, particularly in the public decision-making sectors of the society, an increasing tendency to rationalise behaviour and consciousness, and the

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1. Rubenstein, R. L., *The Cunning of History*, Harper & Row Publishers, 1975, and Rubenstein, *The Age of Triage* due for publication at the end of 1982. Information from *The Age of Triage* in this thesis is derived from the prospectus for the book which was sent to me by personal communication. Rubenstein uses the term 'triage' to denote selectivity according to a system of priorities of those people who will be assisted, and those who will be allowed to perish, or even be annihilated, by peoples who have monetary or other power.

fact that our traditional ethical, legal and theological categories fail us when we attempt to apply them to the Holocaust.

The Holocaust is and always has been the focal point of Rubenstein's concern. It is the event which has shaped his career as a theologian.[2] He has stated: 'I can fairly be described as a man with a single problem rather than a single discipline. My problem has been the Holocaust.'[3] During the nineteen sixties his concern with the Holocaust was primarily theological. He addressed himself mainly to the problem of the reconciliation of the existence of an omnipotent beneficent God of history who chose Israel and the fact that millions of Jews perished in the death camps of the Nazis as a deliberate act of genocide. He dealt with this problem in *After Auschwitz* and *The Religious Imagination*. During the nineteen seventies and currently, his concerns have moved beyond the strictly theological significance of the Holocaust to embrace its historical, political, sociological and economic significance in a secular world. He is intent on exploring the question of the full implications of the destruction of European Jewry during World War II for the understanding of contemporary civilisation. 'The Holocaust serves as a datum by which we can test the credibility of our conceptions of God, man and the political order. Since the Holocaust is as much a product of European civilization as the railroad, Goethe's *Faust*, Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, the nuclear bomb and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, we ignore it at our intellectual and spiritual peril when we attempt to understand ourselves and our world.'[4] He does not see the Holocaust as an accidental aberration of civilisation but as an intrinsic expression of the problem-solving methods of the modernisation process within modern civilisation. In turn, he sees modern civilisation as an unintended consequence of biblical monotheism and its values.

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2. Rubenstein, R. L. *Plenary Address to the College Theology Society*. This is a national American organisation of Roman Catholic teachers of religion in colleges and universities. The address which was given in 1979 gives a good idea of the development of Rubenstein's thought (personal communication).
3. Personal correspondence with Rubenstein, letter dated July 5, 1979.
4. Rubenstein, *Reflections on the Holocaust*, op. cit.

The Death of an Image of God

During the nineteen sixties Rubenstein proclaimed the death of the God who acts in history *not* because he believed that Auschwitz rendered belief impossible, but because he insisted that no compromising ambiguities should be introduced into our interpretation of the doctrine of the sovereignty of God and the election of Israel when the question of God and the Holocaust is considered. He saw no way to avoid the conclusion that, if these doctrines are affirmed with the seriousness they deserve, Auschwitz must be seen as a purposeful expression of God's will. He states: 'I have never objected to those who can honestly affirm that the destruction of Europe's Jews was an expression of divine purposes. My quarrel has been with those who have attempted both to affirm the radical sovereignty of the God of covenant and election and to deny that God could be the ultimate author of the Holocaust.[5] Rubenstein insists that *if* God is sovereign, and *if* he has chosen Israel, then it is ridiculous to pretend that he was uninvolved in so overwhelmingly central an event in Israel's history as the Holocaust.

There is a point in theological reflection at which a certain literal-mindedness is inescapable if theological propositions are to retain more than emotive significance. The Holocaust is regarded by Rubenstein as such a point. If one cannot accept the Holocaust as the deliberate intention of God, one must at least be prepared to reject the doctrine of covenant and election, and perhaps the doctrine of absolute sovereignty as well. Rubenstein has argued that if one believes in the biblical God 'one had better be prepared to pay one's theological dues all the way'.[6] Finding himself unable to pay those dues, he concluded that he had no other choice but to reject not God, but the belief that God had chosen Israel.[7] In place of the biblical God who acts in history Rubenstein's idea of God is maternal, earthly, with much indebtedness to the mystics and to Freud. God is not seen as a problem-solver but as unifying ground.

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5. Rubenstein, *Plenary Address*.

6. Ibid.

7. This aspect of Rubenstein's thought is discussed in greater detail in Chapter IV dealing with his views on religion and also in Chapter VIII.

The Radical Secularity of our Era

Even though Rubenstein has moved beyond the strict confines of theological reflection in his current philosophy, it must be noted that his work still retains theological significance. 'When I wrote that we live in the time of the death of God, I meant that we live in a radically secular era.'[8] His analysis of secularity is illuminating in that he sees a causative link between the biblical view of the world and God, and the dehumanising aspects of modern consciousness which made the death camps possible.

Rubenstein regards the Holocaust as a strictly modern enterprise. It could only have taken place in the twentieth century with its ethos and the consciousness which has culminated in it. He is currently exploring the type of world in which the Holocaust and other mass killings can and do take place. He points out that despite hostile treatment of Jews throughout almost two thousand years of history, Christians never resorted to outright genocide. It was only with the Wansee Conference, January 1942, that systematic extermination of Jews was decreed. Prior to that time the traditional way of handling of Jews by Christians was by conversion and/or expulsion. Initially the maxim had been 'You shall not live among us as Jews' (conversion). It then became 'You shall not live among us' (expulsion). It was only under Hitler that the decree became 'You shall not live' (extermination).[9] Rubenstein believes that to explain the Holocaust as being *primarily* a reflection of anti-Semitism is inadequate. Other factors inherent in the modernisation process must be examined in order to understand more fully the reasons for the Holocaust. He in no way underestimates the part played by anti-Semitism in the Holocaust but he takes the Holocaust beyond the confines of theology and the history of religion in order to examine the full implications of the Holocaust for modern man. In so doing he

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8. Rubenstein, *Plenary Address*.

9. Rubenstein, *The Cunning of History*, p. 5. (See also Rubenstein, R. L. 'Psychohistorians Discuss Psychohistory, Comment by Richard L. Rubenstein', *The Journal of Psychohistory*, Vol. 6, No. 4, Spring 1979, pp. 545 ff. Cf. Hilberg, Raul., *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Quadrangle Press, Chicago, 1967, pp. 3, 4.).

examines the modernisation process and the related movement of secularisation, both in his view being essential pre-requisites for the Holocaust to have taken place.

The twentieth century has witnessed a quantum leap in the destructive capacities of man in both weaponry and human consciousness, but the death-dealing capacity of the twentieth century has been reckoned mainly in terms of technological advances in weaponry and too little attention has been paid to the 'advances' in social organisation and attitude that have made this destructive capacity both possible and tempting. Taking full account of the development and role of technology as such, Rubenstein understands it within the wider context of the change in human attitudes in the twentieth century.

Taken together, technological progress, radical secularity, bureaucracy and the triumph of functional rationality are all part of the modernisation process which made the Holocaust possible. With the Holocaust a hitherto unbreachable moral barrier was successfully overcome, and in the light of this rupture of residual moral barriers, it invites repetition. Apocalyptic destruction has its own peculiar contagion.[10] Auschwitz has enlarged our understanding of the state's capacity to do violence and henceforth, Rubenstein suggests, the elimination of millions of citizens will forever be one of the capacities and temptations of government especially under conditions of extreme stress.[11] In Rubenstein's view one of the most stressful situations with which governments have to contend is the fact of population explosion and population redundancy.[12] Defining surplus population as one which for *any* reason has no viable role in the society in which it is domiciled,[13] Rubenstein sees this as one of the most intractable problems of the

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10. Rubenstein, *Morality and Eros*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1970. p. 12. Cf. *Reflections on the Holocaust*.

11. Rubenstein, *Reflections on the Holocaust*.

12. *The Cunning of History* and *The Age of Triage* deal with this specific problem within the wider context of modernity and radical secularity.

13. Rubenstein, *The Age of Triage*, Prospectus. Rubenstein does not see superfluous population as an absolute concept. It is not necessarily a function of a society's numerical strength, but a function of a society's capacity or incapacity to utilise its human resources. A group or person is superfluous only when excluded from a meaningful role within society. 'The Elect and the Preterite'. pp. 357, 358.

modern world and one of the root causes behind large-scale population elimination programmes of the twentieth century.[14] The destruction of Europe's Jews is regarded as one of a series of modern historical occurrences involving the elimination of millions of men and women from their home communities. It is also the most dramatic of such occurrences.[15]

The Modernisation Process and Functional Rationality

The modernisation process is defined by Rubenstein as 'the growth and diffusion of a distinctive set of institutions and values rooted in the technological transformation of the economy. It also can be understood as an expression of the triumph of functional rationality, a rationality of means rather than ends, as the predominant mode of problem-solving in human affairs.'[16] Modernisation requires an economy in which the value of all goods and services, without exception, can be calculated in monetary terms, 'the most rational method of calculation devised by men'.[17] Relying on insights of the sociologist Max Weber,

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14. In *The Age of Triage* Rubenstein, using the Holocaust as his starting point, examines other programmes of mass slaughter such as the massacre of the Armenians during World War I, the Cambodian genocide of our times, and the destruction of the peasant class by Stalin. He sees these programmes in terms of modern methods of problem-solving in the face of population explosion and the resultant massive population redundancy. Thus, *The Age of Triage* is not a book *about* the Holocaust as such, but in it, an attempt is made to explain the world in which such an event, and similar events can take place. Solutions to the threat of massive human superfluity which might be undertaken by the decision makers, according to Rubenstein are: (a) millions may be condemned to reliance on public assistance with little hope of ever escaping from poverty; (b) sterilisation programmes - a 'clean' if long-term strategy; (c) the death of millions through some form of Malthusian misery such as famine, epidemic or nuclear war, any of which may be welcomed by some governments; (d) in an *extreme* economic crisis, large-scale bureaucratically administered population riddance as described here.

15. Rubenstein notes that one of the dominant themes of Hitler's programme of genocide was *Lebensraum* and although the *Lebensraum* programme as such was directed at the Slavs, the concept is certainly in line with a desire for population riddance.

16. Rubenstein, *The Age of Triage*, Prospectus.

17. Rubenstein, *Plenary Address*. Rubenstein also points out that 'we have currently no realistic alternative but to continue to regard profit as the appropriate end of economic enterprise in our system'. *Plenary Address*.

Rubenstein suggests that the market community fosters the most impersonal relationships between human beings, the reason being that the orientation of the market is to the commodity and only the commodity. Thus, participants in the market community do not look towards the persons of each other. There are no obligations of brotherliness or reverence and no spontaneous human relations characteristic of personal unions. Absolute depersonalisation, essential to the market economy, is contrary to all the elementary forms of human relationship.[18]

This dehumanising tendency has become the dominant mode of treating a work force in order to attain the greatest profit with a minimal financial expenditure. Thus, emotions in human relations have been subdued and the result is the triumph of functional rationality. Rubenstein defines functional rationality as the methodical attainment of a practical end by means of a precise calculation of adequate means.[19] In the attainment of a practical end decision-making bodies in business corporations or political institutions are unlikely to consider the health or happiness of the labour force. There is no appeal to the sanctity of human life, or to religious principles as long as financial profit is regarded as the appropriate end of all economic enterprise. All goods and services are calculated in monetary terms. Thus, in the service of this ideal, thousands of individuals may be

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18. Rubenstein, *The Age of Triage*, Prospectus. Weber points out that 'In a perfectly rational money economy, no extrinsic value, not even that of the laws of a God of Justice and morality can be permitted to impede the free functioning of the market place'. Quoted in Rubenstein *The Age of Triage*, Prospectus. See Weber, Max, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, eds., Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, New York, 1968. Vol II, pp. 636 - 637. Cf. Fromm, Erich, *To Have or To Be*, Abacus, 1979, which points to Western man's obsessive need to have and possess rather than to live authentically.

19. Rubenstein, *Plenary Address*. Rubenstein is indebted to Max Weber for this definition. Weber, 'The Sociology of World Religion' in *From Max Weber : Essays in Sociology*, Transl. and eds., Hans Gerth and C. Wright, Mills Oxford University Press, New York, 1946, p. 293. Max Weber suggests that rationalisation involves 'the methodical attainment of a definitely given practical end by means of an increasingly precise calculation of adequate means'.

placed at risk in a polluted environment or rendered unemployed. While the decision-makers may be decent and religious in their private lives, their public decisions rest on a calculus of trade-offs between anticipated benefits and financial well-being on the one hand, and the hazards of pollution, radiation and unemployment on the other. In such a calculus the lives of individuals are not considered to be sacred.

The Holocaust is thus interpreted as an important expression of the triumph of functional rationality and as a successful attempt to rid Germany of the intractable problem of surplus population. The modernisation process has resulted in the development of technology which has rendered millions of people economically redundant. Where modernisation 'leads to the rationalization of human action, as it does under our economic system, it also presupposes thorough-going secularisation, at least in the public sphere. Once purposes of collective action have been defined by either government or business, behavioural constraints deriving from religious traditions can only serve to impede the employment of the most rational means for attaining whatever end is envisaged, even if that end is the elimination of unwanted sectors of the population.[20] Rubenstein is unimpressed by the effects of private religious convictions or by statistics which claim to validate continuing religious conviction among individuals when it comes to the type of corporate problem-solving tactics discussed above.

Riddance of unwanted population such as took place during World War II could only occur under cover of war, but more importantly, it required the secularisation of consciousness, the triumph of functional rationality and a suitable body of functionaries to accomplish the task. It was only during the twentieth century that a corps of functionaries with a fully rationalised depersonalised consciousness became available for the new tasks. A heightened capacity for systematic murder by individuals devoid of all feelings of guilt or responsibility for the dead has been noted by students of the overall phenomenon of twentieth century mass destructiveness.[21]

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20. Rubenstein, *Plenary Address*.

21. Ibid.

Bureaucracy and Dehumanisation

This leads directly to a consideration of the role played by bureaucracy in the death-dealing capacity of the twentieth century in general and of the Holocaust in particular. Rubenstein examines the Holocaust as a highly successful bureaucratic venture in the elimination of surplus population.

In 1916 Max Weber made the observation that when a fully developed bureaucracy stands under the principle of *sine ira ac studio* (without scorn or bias) its specific nature, which is welcomed by capitalism, is dehumanisation. A successful bureaucracy is dependent on elimination from official business of love, hatred and any purely personal, irrational and emotional elements which escape calculation. He suggested that this is the specific nature of bureaucracy and that it is appraised as its specific virtue.[22] Thus, faced with a problematic surplus population, Germany's extermination programme could only be achieved under a well organised bureaucracy in which human feelings could be permitted to play no part.

The Jews in Germany did not constitute a useless, redundant sector of the German population but because of their alien religion and the demonic mythic structure which had been applied to them by the Christian Church for almost two thousand years[23] they could easily be displaced to allow those, less alien than the Jews, to achieve a useful status in the German economy. It is, therefore, a misunderstanding to see the exterminators of the Jews simply in terms of being bullies and sadists. Although there were bullies and sadists at every level of the Nazi movement, and Nazi propaganda was calculated to foster emotions of hatred and aggression against the Jews, the extermination project as such, began in earnest only when a disciplined, bureaucratically organised SS took over from the bullies and street hoodlums. Random, emotion-laden anti-Jewish actions were discouraged after *Kristallnacht* (November 10, 1938) and hatred gave way to planning, organisation and method.

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22. Rubenstein, *Reflections on the Holocaust.* (See also *The Cunning of History*, pp. 22 ff.)

23. Rubenstein's views on the demonic mythic structure imposed on the Jews by the Church is discussed in greater detail in Chapter IV.

Only then was it possible to carry out the extermination project with maximum efficiency and minimum cost to its perpertrators, an imperative of the triumph of functional rationality.[24]

Another hallmark of bureaucracy is a blind dedication to the fulfilment of assigned duties by personnel regardless of human cost. Bureaucratisation of the extermination project enabled German personnel to proceed with their horrendous tasks unimpeded by feelings of guilt.[25] The SS at Auschwitz demonstrated that with adequate planning there is no limit to the obedience a well organised police or military bureaucracy can exact from its personnel.

Rubenstein points out that Weber, who wrote on bureaucracy in 1916 as part of a larger attempt to understand the social structure and ethos of modern civilisation, would have been unlikely to have envisaged the extent to which bureaucracy could be taken during World War II. Rubenstein, however, understands the Holocaust as an expression of some of the most profound and deeply-rooted tendencies of contemporary civilisation, particularly in relation to the problem of bureaucratic domination. He insists that the Holocaust is neither a throwback to primitive behaviour, nor is it an event which is wholly at odds with Western civilisation, but it is an expression of modernisation and an outgrowth of it. It is not an accidental feature of the modernisation process but intrinsic to it.

According to Weber, modern bureaucracy can be understood as the outcome of the related processes of secularisation, disenchantment of the world and rationalisation.[26] As mentioned above, the secularisation process

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24. Rubenstein, *The Cunning of History*, pp. 22 - 35.

25. Rubenstein points out in *Reflections on the Holocaust*, that Adolph Eichmann revealed at his trial in Jerusalem, 1961 that he felt neither guilt nor responsibility for his part in the Holocaust and that he would have had a bad conscience only if he had failed to carry out orders. Erich Fromm, for the same reason regards Eichmann as the arch bureaucrat. (See Fromm, *To Have or to Be*, p. 181, where he states that Eichmann "neither hated nor loved anyone. Eichmann 'did his duty'").

26. Rubenstein. *The Cunning of History*, pp. 27 ff.

involves the liberation of many wider areas of human activity from religious domination. Disenchantment of the world occurs when 'there are no mysterious forces that come into play, but rather that one can in principle, master all things by calculation'.[27] Rationalisation involves 'the methodical attainment of a definitely given and practical end by means of an increasingly precise calculation of adequate means.'[28]

In line with Cox, Rubenstein asserts that the earliest culture systematically to 'disenchant' the world was the biblical culture of the Israelites. The Genesis creation account expresses that disenchantment. In ancient Israel both the natural and the political orders were progressively desacralised. The domain of the sacred was relegated to the sphere of the transcendent monotheistic deity. With this step a beginning was made toward that secularisation of consciousness that could and did culminate in modern times with the most radical disenchantment - dehumanised, rationalised forms of modern political and social organisation which included the extremity of bureaucratically administered death camps.

Rubenstein suggests, rightly, that the necessary corrective was present in the biblical world in that all human activity stood under the judgment of a righteous, transcendent deity who had receded into the supra-mundane sphere. He points out, however, that in the modern world, that supra-mundane deity has, for all intents and practical purposes, disappeared. Thus, in such a world men and women are left entirely to their own devices, and given the power, there is no limit to the extremities of their exploitation of one another, including mass murder, in the attainment of desired ends.

The dehumanised attitudes of a fully rational bureaucracy could only come about if the disenchantment process became culturally predominant. God and the world had to be so radically disjoined that it could become possible to treat both the political and natural orders with uncompromising dispassionate objectivity. This disjunction, Rubenstein argues, occurred with the triumph of Protestantism, particularly, Calvinism, and its insistence on the radical transcendence of God.[29] Protestantism thus brought to full development the secularisation of consciousness implicit

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27. Rubenstein, *Reflections on the Holocaust.* 28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.

in biblical Judaism. In so doing, it opened the path to the present radical secularisation of consciousness which made it possible to eliminate millions of people who had been rendered superfluous by bureaucratic definition, and who had by the same means, lost all religious and moral significance as individuals, only to become mere objects of bureaucratic problem solving.[30]

It must be emphasised that it is not Rubenstein's intention to blame Protestantism for the institution of the death camps. His aim is to illustrate the fact that the secularised cultural ethos which permitted the perfection of rationalised bureaucratic mass murder was an *unforeseen* and *unintentional* consequence of the Protestant doctrine of God's radical transcendence which, in turn, was an outgrowth of biblical monotheism. The doctrine of God's radical transcendence thus becomes an indispensable precondition of the secularisation process. Rubenstein refuses to see the Holocaust as an anti-religious explosion of alien pagan values in the heart of the Judeao-Christian world. He also notes that it was not perpetrated by a group of lunatics on the fringes of society, but by people who formed the core of the professional stratum of German society. It cannot be viewed as an accident, and although Nazism has many roots,[31] Rubenstein is convinced that in some of its essential features it was an unintentional outgrowth of the Judeao-Christian tradition itself.

In this regard Rubenstein makes it clear that there is a difference between the *manifest* values proclaimed by a tradition and the *cultural ethos* generated, albeit unintentionally and unconsciously, by that same tradition. The Judeao-Christian tradition proclaims an ethic of an irreducible element of dignity in all persons as children of the Creator. Nevertheless, beyond all conscious intent, that same tradition has produced a radical secularisation of consciousness involving abstract calculating rationality that can eradicate every vestige of human dignity in all areas of human interchange.

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30. Rubenstein, *Reflections on the Holocaust*. Cf. *The Cunning of History*, p. 29.

31. Some of the roots of Nazism are discussed in greater detail in Chapter IV concerning Rubenstein's views on religion and man.

Of the two elements that together have moulded Western culture, classical humanism of the Graeco-Roman pagan world, and the Judeao-Christian religious tradition, it is the latter which has led to the secularisation of consciousness, disenchantment of the world and dehumanised bureaucratic objectivity. Rubenstein insists that there is an irrefutable link between the rationalising, secularising ethos of biblical religion and the twentieth century world of systematic, bureaucratised mass slaughter. He suggests that theologians tend to focus too narrowly on the problem of theodicy when reflecting on the theological significance of the Holocaust and regretfully sees other issues as being equally significant, one of them being the possible biblical origins of the culture that produced the death camps. If this hypothesis has any merit, Cox's optimism concerning the Secular City must surely give us pause!

The Elect and the Preterite

Rubenstein argues that the Judeao-Christian tradition has encouraged the dichotomous structural division of society into the elect and the preterite by which he means, more specifically, a division between the secret-bearing elite and the large inarticulate mass of outsiders.[32] Preterition is defined as the passing over of the non-elect or non-election to salvation. Governing elites perceive themselves as the chosen or elect while the rest of humanity is viewed as passed over or damned.

In a society in which worldly success is believed to certify divine election, worldly failure is likely to attest to a double rejection - by man and by God. If poverty reflects God's justice, the poor have failed life's supreme test and are therefore seen both as social rejects and as objects of divine rejection. Rubenstein holds this view of American society's self-evaluation, particularly when applied to the ruling elite.[33]

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32. Rubenstein, 'The Elect and the Preterite', *Soundings*, Vol. 59, No. 4, Winter 1976, pp. 357 - 373.

33. Ibid. p. 362. Cf. H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*, Hamden, Con., The Shoestring Press, 1954, p. 96., and Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1972, pp. 789. Niebuhr and Ahlstrom are among the many observers who have made this point.

Rubenstein bases his view on an interpretation of the Calvinist work ethic. He points to the writing of Richard Barnet who observed that the American elite from 1940 to 1967 has displayed a homogeneity of background which has been Calvinist.[34] It has also been observed that their privileged status has been interpreted as divinely certified. Their Calvinism 'long ago left the confines of the sanctuary and entered the worldliest precincts of secular society. One need not be formally a Protestant to be a secularized Calvinist. Any American, be he Protestant, Catholic or Jewish, who has achieved elite status is likely to conduct the business of life in accordance with the Puritan work ethic and the Calvinist division of mankind into the elect and the preterite.[35] This structural dichotomy bears a strong resemblance to the biblical division of the world into the elect and the damned, particularly in the Calvinist variant of biblical religion.[36] Rubenstein suggests that the similarity in social structure and doctrine may *not* be entirely fortuitous.

Dominant elites, whether in government, the economy or the academy, tend, firstly, to be in possession of jealously guarded secret knowledge or information, secondly, humility is not one of the hallmarks of bureaucratic elites, and thirdly, they arrogate to themselves godlike power to decide the fate of millions, a fate from which they are exempt. The convergent structural and religio-mythical elements in American society could influence the way superfluous population might be handled in an extreme economic crisis. Bureaucratic population riddance may be both the most 'rational' and most 'economical' measure by which to counter population surplus. The Holocaust has shown that a dominant elite can deal with the problem in this manner in that disposal can be confined to controllable groups and the temptation to large-scale murder can become irresistible particularly if the victims are perceived as deriving from different racial or ethnic backgrounds from the elite.

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34. Rubenstein, 'The Elect and the Preterite', p. 362, Richard J. Barnet, *Roots of War*, Baltimore, Penguin Books, 1973, p, 48, pp 68 ff.

35. Rubenstein, 'The Elect and the Preterite', p363.

36. Ibid. p. 362.

Could there be a direct link between this draconian method of problem-solving and the Calvinist work ethic and/or the ideology of Social Darwinism? Both secular Calvinism and Social Darwinism are employed as legitimating ideologies for propagating the 'survival of the fittest'. 'Briefly stated, Social Darwinism holds that the concept of justice is illusory, that victory deservedly belongs to the strong and the fit, and that nature must constantly eliminate the weak and the unfit in order that the race survive.'[37] It is noteworthy that Social Darwinism was the one ideology to which Hitler was committed throughout his career.[38]

Citing Bakan and Hofstadter's observations,[39] Rubenstein suggests that Social Darwinism is a secularised form of Calvinism in which 'survival of the fittest' is the Darwinian equivalent of the Calvinist 'salvation of the elect'. In both systems the poor and the weak simply fall by the wayside. 'Darwin's vision resembles the biblical theology of history. The plight of those who suffer must be viewed from the larger perspective of the Great Plan.[40] While in the Bible God is the author of the Plan, in Darwin's view it is 'Nature'. 'What the Calvinists do in the name of God, the Social Darwinists do in the name of a strangely providential "Nature".'[41] In both views history derives its meaning from the fate of the fortunate few. '*Of greatest importance is the fact that both Calvinism and Darwinism provide a cosmic justification for the felicity of the few and the misery of the many.*'[42] It is this feature which may result in the ultimate danger to society. An elite of Calvinist background would probably regard it as exceedingly difficult to 'squander' scarce resources on the impoverished, who are viewed as the obvious objects of God's wrath.

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37. Rubenstein, 'Moral Outrage as False Consciousness', *Theory and Society*, 9, (1980), p. 752.

38. Ibid. This observation was made by Hans-Gunter Zmärlik in 'Social Darwinism in Germany, Seen as a Historical Problem', in Hajo Holborn, ed., *Republic to Reich : The Making of the Nazi Revolution*, Random House, 1972, pp. 435 - 474.

39. Rubenstein, 'The Elect and the Preterite', p. 364. David Bakan, *The Duality of Human Existence*, Chicago, Rand, McNally, 1966, and Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1955.

40. Rubenstein, 'The Elect and the Preterite', p. 365.

41. Ibid p. 369. 42. Ibid. p. 365.

Darwinist ideas were especially appealing to success-orientated men who had taken their chances in a highly competitive industrial society in which all honour went to the victors whilst the losers were relegated to economic and social obscurity. Victory was seen in terms of 'merely the working-out of a law of nature and a law of God'.[43] Niebuhr observed that Calvinism 'repelled' the poor and gave 'religious sanction to the enterprise of the business man and the industrialist by regarding it as a divine calling'.[44]

Rubenstein points to links between Darwin and Protestantism as well as to links between Darwinism and Protestanism, if not Calvinism directly. Darwin was deeply influenced by Thomas Malthus' 'Essay on Population'. To the extent that Darwin's idea of natural selection was clarified by Malthus' reflections on population, it becomes a strange 'theodicy'.[45] It is noteworthy that the full title of Darwin's great work was *The Origins of the Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (1859). Although he did not contemplate any Nazi-type programme for the preservation of favoured races, at the core of Darwin's theory is the postulation of 'a process of selection in which value judgments play no part'.[46] Survival is not dependent upon virtues such as humility and Christ-like *agape* but on characteristics seen to be sinful in original Christianity, such as aggression and avarice. Malthus postulated that population

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43. Ibid. p. 364. This was a statement made by John D. Rockefeller in a Sunday school address and is cited by Rubenstein from Hofstadter, op. cit. p. 45.

44. Rubenstein 'The Elect and the Preterite', p. 369, citing H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*, op. cit. p. 96.

45. Darwin credited Malthus with being the source of the idea of natural selection. Malthus saw behind the scarcity of food and the geometric growth of population a providential design of the Creator. Darwin replaces the notion of a Creator with a providential 'Nature'. Rubenstein points out that on the surface Darwin's theories appeared to be anti-Christian, yet he sees Social Darwinism as a secularised form of Calvinism particularly with regard to the survival of the fittest.

46. Rubenstein, 'The Elect and the Preterite', p. 363, citing Hans-Gunther Zmarlik, 'Social Darwinism in Germany, Seen as a Historical Problem', in *Republic to Reich*, ed., Hajo Holborn, New York, Pantheon, 1972, p. 440.

increases geometrically while food resources increase arithmetically. He understood this as an expression of the wise and providential design of the Creator. As mankind's original sin is 'torpor', inertia and laziness, unless goaded by scarcity and necessity, both the imbalance between population and subsistence and the misery and evil required to keep population in check are part of God's plan. In his wisdom God has inflicted the goad of necessity and scarcity upon mankind. 'Malthus agrees with both the Calvinist and the Social Darwinist position that those who survive are those chosen to survive, as well as its bleak corollary. One of the many reasons why Malthus is a crucial figure is that he anticipates the Social Darwinist position and reveals the powerful convergence of religious and scientific themes in that overwhelmingly important philosophy of life.'[47]

Malthus' ideas on population are still the indispensable starting point of the contemporary population debate and his views on the support of the indigent are among the earliest expressions of the point of view that favours cutting adrift those who do not have the resources to feed themselves. Malthus argued that public relief only serves to aggravate the problem of surplus population. Feeding the indigent would increase their numbers which would lead eventually to exacerbation of general scarcity and misery. Opposition to public assistance for the poor has remained a consistent theme in Social Darwinist theory to this day.[48]

Social Darwinism (and/or secular Calvinism) has not been discredited as a governing ideology of the elites. 'On the contrary, it gains in apparent plausibility every day the world economy worsens. The decision-making elites are precisely the groups to whom an ideology dividing mankind into the fortunate chosen few and the damned majority is most appealing.'[49] If population explosion further endangers the world the possibility exists that Social Darwinism or some version of secular Calvinism will gain greater plausibility among the dominant elites. Social Darwinism could provide the legitimating ideology required for massive population riddance. 'Furthermore, the plausibility of Social Darwinism is enormously enhanced by the fact that its roots are to be found in both the predominant religious and scientific traditions of

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47. Rubenstein, 'The Elect and the Preterite', p. 366.
48. Ibid. p. 367. 49. Ibid. p. 368.

our culture.'[50]

Through his emphasis on Calvinism and Social Darwinism as legitimating ideologies of the greatest utility to decision-making elites, Rubenstein wishes to make manifest the depth of our psychic, cultural and religious resistances to any effective social or political transformation, at least on the part of those with decision-making power, although our religious and cultural heritage would tend to work against such transformation. Increased misery would confirm rather than discredit ideologies such as those discussed above. Hoping that he does not err on the side of pessimism, yet fearful lest 'we be tempted to an optimism which our situation hardly warrants'[51] Rubenstein fears that mankind may yet be destined to render full account for having accepted a religious ideology 'that denies the mystery and magic of the natural order and divides the human order into the elect and the damned'.[52]

A Moral Law at Auschwitz?

In his analysis of the Holocaust Rubenstein poses the painful question as to whether any law was in fact broken, and therefore any crime committed at Auschwitz. He suggests that if there is any law which transcends the law of nations, any natural or God-ordained law binding on all persons, it was not operative at Auschwitz. Firstly, the person with the highest moral and religious authority during World War II, Pope Pius XII, did not regard the Holocaust as worthy of a single protest and, secondly, for the most part, the perpetrators of the Holocaust were restored to places of dignity in German society after the war. He asks: 'If there is a law that transcends the laws of the sovereign state, does it have any functional significance if it is devoid of all penalty when violated?'[53]

With this disturbing thought in mind, he concludes that we live in a world which is functionally Godless. Biblical man stood in awe of God and his law, but this is no longer true of decision-making elites. It appears that if a 'higher law' does exist, it safely can be ignored.

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50. Ibid. p. 369. 51. Ibid. p. 371. 52. Ibid. p. 371.
53. Rubenstein, *Reflections on the Holocaust.* Cf. *The Cunning of History*, pp. 64 ff.

It is apparent that no law that mattered was broken at Auschwitz, hence no crime was committed in a functionally Godless world. As to whether something worse than a crime was committed, it seems that our traditional ethical, legal and theological categories fail us when applied to the Holocaust. 'The process of secularization thus ends where it began. In the beginning secularization involved the demystification and limitation of the sovereign's power. In the end the secular state has dethroned all mystifications of power save its own. When unchecked, the modern state has the power to become the only true god on earth. It has the capacity to arrogate to itself the ultimate power of divinity, the power to decide who shall live and who shall die, as it did under Hitler and Stalin.'[54]

The Night Side of the Judaeo-Christian Tradition

Rubenstein suggests that theologians miss the point when, on examining the Holocaust, they fail to perceive that the causes of our predicament lie *in* the Jewish and Christian traditions. The Judaeo-Christian tradition therefore is viewed as an intrinsic *part* of the problem and cannot be applied as therapy for the situation.[55] Although it undoubtedly possesses a good and worthy side, the 'night side' of the Judaeo-Christian tradition was revealed in the world of the death camps in the society of total domination engendered by that tradition.[56]

Abolition of this tradition would be both unrealistic and impossible. We are enmeshed in it in both its religious and secular forms and it is only conceptually distinct from ourselves. If [illegible] it could be overcome is through world-wide catastrophe in [illegible] civilisation as we know it would disappear. We have the weapons [illegible] this destruction about and such an eventuality therefore, is feasible. The 'cure' of the illness called the 'Judaeo-Christian tradition' would thus be infinitely more traumatic than the disease itself.

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54. Rubenstein, *Reflections on the Holocaust.*
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.

The Advance of Technology

A consideration of Rubenstein's attitude to secularisation would not be complete without reference to some of his earlier views on technology. In *Morality and Eros*,[57] he began to examine the implications of technology for our age. He, as yet, had not arrived at his conclusion concerning bureaucratic domination and mass slaughter, but began to perceive the alteration in human self-awareness which has resulted from the techno-cultural revolution of our times. Neither then, nor now, was technological progress perceived as an unmixed blessing.

Morality and Eros is a work in which Rubenstein considers ethical values after the death of God. In this work he argued that the techno-cultural revolution of our times has radically altered our identities. Unlike our grandparents, we no longer have the security of being rooted in primary religio-cultural communities with their accompanying insurance of social and religious stability and sense of identity. The rapid advance of technology has exploded and reshaped our view of ourselves in the world. Technological advancement lies at the root of our transformation and confusion in four specific areas which are all interrelated. Rubenstein identifies these as (a) the sexual revolution which has resulted from the availability of the pill, (b) the communications revolution, (c) the collapse of authority, and (d) a development in our perception of time which he designates as 'the end of days.'

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57. *Morality and Eros* was published in 1970. It represents Rubenstein's attempts to answer some of the most pressing ethical and moral questions raised after the death of the God who acts in history. The contents of the first chapter which are discussed here deal with the transformation in man's nature as a result of the present technological age. Rubenstein's views as presented here culminate in his thoughts on modernity and technology as elaborated in *The Cunning of History*. In *Morality and Eros*, pp. 22, 23, Rubenstein suggests that man has been thrown back on his own resources and will have to attempt to create a new system of values to deal with the stresses and opportunities of our times. There will be various different systems of insight with which to confront the human situation. *Morality and Eros* is an attempt to formulate one such system in the face of the death of God and radical secularity.

(a) The availability of 'the Pill' and other contraceptive devices has eliminated the most real deterrent to liberal sexual gratification. Freud regarded civilisation as inimical to sexual gratification in that he believed that an advanced complex social structure would lead to heightened individual repression. Repression would be the price paid by society for achieving and maintaining civilisation. Freud feared, however, that this heightened repression could lead to an explosion of frustrated energies which would result in the possible destruction of the social order. Rubenstein suggests that in the light of the sexual revolution, the validity of Freud's views seems doubtful. Sexual hedonism has not been frustrated by civilisation. In fact, technology has made sexual freedom, practically, if not psychologically, feasible for the first time in human history. Technology cannot abolish the psychological ground for sexual repression, but at the same time, technology has abolished the most important practical justfication for postponement of sexual gratification by consenting adults. It has, therefore, raised new moral questions in relation to sexual practice in the secular world.

(b) The communications revolution has resulted in the shrinking of the world in the perception of human beings. Radio, television and the motion picture have resulted in the child's ability to apprehend the world in the form described by Marshall McLuhan as 'the global village'.[58] Viewers have a more intimate encounter with political leaders than they would have had without technology. This often leads to the directing of irrational emotions toward them, frequently resulting in violence. In fact, the frequent depiction of violence on television exposes the young to a literal pornography of violence. Through the zoom lens of the camera

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58. Rubenstein, *Morality and Eros*, p. 4. See Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media*. McGraw-Hill, New York, 1965, and McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Message*, Bantam Books, New York, 1967.

we are exposed to sexual intimacies hitherto unavailable for mass consumption. This has led to dissatisfaction with sexual denial. Man no longer needs to be satisfied with scarcity and repression.

Rapidity of communication has altered our sequential experience of time. Rubenstein reminds us of the 'unreal' nature of the screening of a world-renowned figure walking on television at the same time as his burial is taking place. He suggests that archaic pre-literate man experienced time non-sequentially and that we are increasingly sharing the time sense of archaic man.[59]

(c) The collapse of authority in politics, religion and morality pervades contemporary culture. Totalitarian domination of the state apparatus has replaced genuine charismatic authority and remains an ever-present danger in any advanced industrial community.[60]

There is marked evidence of the collapse of authority in the student rebellions of the nineteen sixties. Students today are well educated and they have never known what it means to stand in awe of political leaders. Through television they have felt on familiar terms with political leaders since childhood. Above all, however, failure of establishment leaders to prevent two world wars, mass genocide and large-scale racial injustice as well as their failure to prevent the threat of ecological disaster has left the young with little

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59. It is interesting to note that Rubenstein sees this alteration in time sense partially as a consequence of technology. He states: 'In part this shift is a result of the decline of the linear, typographical mentality which predominated during the cultural supremacy of the printing press. Electronic technology has altered our sequential experience of time. There was something ghostly about the way Martin Luther King addressed us on television as we watched the mule wagon carry his casket to his grave. Archaic, preliterate man tended to experience time nonsequentially. We too increasingly share his time-sense.' *Morality and Eros*, p. 14.

60. Rubenstein suggests that anonymous bureaucrats are increasingly taking over leadership in place of genuine charismatic leaders such as John and Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, all of whom were felled by assassins' bullets. *Morality and Eros*, p. 8.

reason to follow willingly those in power. Rubenstein thus sees the world-wide student revolt as an expression of distrust of those in power.

The breakdown in authority has also come at a time when young (and old) are able to enjoy the benefits of the secular city such as anonymity, mobility and unprecedented personal freedom. Because our religious traditions no longer speak meaningfully to us as a result of the revolutionary cultural changes to the present era, the authority of the clergy has diminished and their leadership has become inadequate. They frequently are suspicious about, and hostile to, the recent changes in human behaviour patterns. Their primary function, in Rubenstein's view, is to act as preservers of tradition and maintainers of continuity. They form an indispensable link with the past.[61]

Most importantly, the collapse of authority cannot be divorced from the question of the death of God. 'The ultimate consequence of the death of God is that we stand nakedly alone when deciding matters of right and wrong. Authority and tradition are no longer decisive in personal decision-making.'[62] Ethical decisions are no longer determined by divine command or religious norms, but by what the individual wants and what he feels he can afford materially and psychologically. 'The death of God is a symbol of the collapse of ultimate authority, especially in the ethical and religious spheres. The death of God is not something that has happened to God. It has happened to us.'[63]

The corollary of this view is that if men face their predicament they will realise that they are dependent on their own resources with which to create values and structures by which they can live. Nevertheless, moral nihilism is not the appropriate response to the death of God. With the collapse of authority

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61. Rubenstein, *Morality and Eros*, p. 21. Rubenstein cites the Babylonian Talmud *(Tractate Shabbat, 112b)* 'If they (the wise men and religious scholars of earlier generations) were like angels, we are like ordinary men. If they were like ordinary men, we are like donkeys.'

62. Rubenstein, *Morality and Eros*, p. 10. 63. Ibid.

man has absolute freedom, but it is absolute only insofar as man is prepared to assume responsibility for the decisions he takes. He must always be aware of the ethical and moral limits inherent in the human condition. These limits are not the expression of the arbitrary will of an alien God, but are inherent in the very structure of possibilities available to man as a social and biological organism.[64]

(d) Rubenstein's conception of the 'last of days' is closely linked with the above-mentioned considerations. Both Judaism and Christianity have regarded the present world order as in some way incomplete and marked by excessive suffering. Each has contrasted this world with some notion of a world to come, thus contrasting world and kingdom. The Jewish view of the kingdom is completely worldly. It envisages God's kingdom as a restored Zion in which God will reign supreme and in which his people will dwell in perfect harmony with his ways. The biblical view rests on the conviction that God will ultimately transform the human condition. However, this view, according to Rubenstein, refuses to accept a certain inexorable necessity which defines and limits the human condition. In his interpretation, the inauguration of this period requires no divine agency. It also contains many elements inimical to human happiness, which indicates that unlike the traditional view which asserts that the last of days will be characterised by unending felicity, human suffering is a reality which must be faced.

Imbuing the term 'last of days' with totally different content and meaning Rubenstein asserts that the most significant result of technology is that we may already be living in the time of the last of days. 'I believe that our era can be described as the time of the *last days*.'[65] Its worst aspect is the possibility of mega-murder of entire nations by dehumanising technological means. Hand to hand combat had built-in restraints which would now no longer be operative. The technology of mega-murder is paralleled by promotion of the health sciences so that humanity 'seems bent upon creating a population surplus at the very

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64 Ibid. 65. Ibid. p. 11.

moment that that surplus is disposable with the least technical or moral impediment. The collapse of authority severely limits the effectiveness of religious or moral restraints on large-scale nuclear aggression.'[66] Relations between East and West rest on a tenuous 'balance of terror' which always stands the risk of exploding under a suicidal psychotic political leader resolving to take the world with him in an apocalyptic act of self-destruction. Auschwitz and Hiroshima were two highly successful experiments in mass death. In the light of the occurrence of such events and with heightened technology since those two events, every day is potentially the last day for mankind because of mankind's incredible inventive genius.

As a corollary to his view of the last of days, Rubenstein cannot accept a belief in personal immortality. He, and others in his position, live each day as potentially the last day. 'We never lose sight of the radical contingency of our beings nor do we ever elude the encompassing Nothingness in which we will inevitably be dissolved.'[67] This fact should be confronted without any attempts at deception if man is to live this life fully and authentically. Man can and should live in the present. Technology has helped remove many of the obstacles to gratification in this world, thus making this world the dominant category, therefore 'at the gut level' many men feel that this life is the only life they will ever have. Contemporary man has the growing capacity to live a life appropriate to his body. 'Increasingly, men find themselves incapable of experiencing time as linear, future-oriented, and goal directed. This shift is related to the categories of world and kingdom.'[68] Although Western men have inherited the biblical view of linear time, they find themselves unable any longer to share this temporal sensibility. Rubenstein asserts that our time-sense resembles that of the archaic pagan world. Time is increasingly experienced as cyclical. Though the life of the individual is linear, the life of the species is repetitive and cyclical. An

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Ibid. p. 12. 67. Ibid. p. 13. 68. Ibid. p. 14.

individual may transform the conditions of his life within the inexorable limits of human biology, but 'the dream that the species could ever be transformed by the abolition of pain, suffering, and death has an element of pathetic and unrealistic fantasy about it. Were pain and death abolished, the species would cease...The species survives by means of the life and death of the individual'.[69] Species time requires an unending repetition of individuals. According to Rubenstein, there is no coming kingdom; there is only the world constantly replenishing itself.

'*Now* has become the decisive temporal category',[70] and there is a significant relation between the shift in time-sense and the new hedonism. Linear time reflects a search for fulfilment in the future, and, as such, is both repressive and a confession of the failure of the present order in its compensating hope for the future. Within the given limitations of the human situation men should emphasise present realisation of bodily gratification. Citing Norman O. Brown,[71] Rubenstein suggests that 'resurrection of the body' should take place. Brown imbues the idea of resurrection with contemporary substance. Men with resurrected bodies would not be estranged from their own skins. They would be liberated from death in life rather than from death, and would be free to enjoy bodily pleasure unhindered by neurotic repression. Such men could accept death for men do not fear death because they find their own annihilation intolerable, but because they have not fully lived the life proper to their bodies. Rubenstein warns, however, that he who accepts the body completely must also bow before the inevitability of pain, suffering, disease and the final triumph of death. The last days will be a time of return and an end to bodily alienation.

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69. Ibid. pp. 14, 15.

70. Ibid. p. 16. It should be noted that *now* is also the decisive temporal category according to the true intention of the Bible. 'Secular' means 'this-worldly'.

71. Brown, Norman, O., *Life Against Death*, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, Conn., 1959. pp. 307 ff.

One of the most agonising aspects of the last of days, which has been created by technology, is the abolition of labour. The abolition of labour renders millions of men and women vocationally superfluous. Few entailments of the new technology are as potentially disastrous. With Rubenstein's prevailing view that the Holocaust and other programmes of mass murder are attempts to rid the world of unwanted population groups, his observation in *Morality and Eros* retains validity. 'Our most agonising problem may very well be our extraordinary freedom... Biblical man sinned by placing his own will before God's. Contemporary man is by no means without his limits but his will need no longer be restrained by the will of God.'[72] Paraphrasing Dostoevsky's Ivan Karamazov, Rubenstein suggests that 'whether or not God is dead, practically everything is now permissible'.[73]

'If by the death of God we mean the triumph of the secular spirit and its rationalising modes of behavior and consciousness, we can hardly rejoice at all that that triumph has meant.'[74] That triumph has meant dehumanisation, the measuring of human worth in purely monetary terms and an advanced technology which has rendered millions of men and women vocationally superfluous resulting in the intractable problem of population surplus. It has also meant the growth of a consciousness which has made possible practical bureaucratic annihilation of surplus population. One of its most fearsome implications is the threat of irreversible damage to the ecosphere by drastic nuclear pollution. Given the temporal horizons of our culture, this could render large population centres uninhabitable for thousands of years.

It has been suggested by Rubenstein that the measure of human worthlessness and redundancy has reached such depths that the secular rationality which defines worth in monetary terms is now pushing beyond itself in an attempt to reconstitute a religious definition of worth. He perceives a religious response to the

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72. Rubenstein, *Morality and Eros*, p. 19.

73. Ibid. pp. 19, 20.

74. Rubenstein, *Plenary Address*.

feeling of superfluity in the emergence of millenarian cults. Those rendered redundant by the secular spirit may adopt new forms of religious consciousness which offer them hope. They may, or may not succeed in their quest. The Jim Jones cult is a pertinent example of a sect which failed. Jones' promised heaven on earth was hell from the very start. Instead of a New Heaven and a New Earth the People's Temple found a dead end. Their bizarre sexual acts symbolised their total break with the values of the world which had rejected them. Judged worthless by the standard methods of society, they were tempted to reject its behavioural norms. The mass suicide of the sect in Guyana demonstrates what a group of people might do if they or their leaders came to regard the negative aspects of their condition as irreversible.[75]

The 'final irony of the triumph of practical rationality might be that, in an era of irreversible transformation and mass impotence, the decisive model might be neither Moses, nor Jesus, nor Buddha, nor Mohammed but Samson'.[76] Self destruction might be the ultimate temptation or solution to our predicament and the destructive resources available to tomorrow's Samsons might be infinitely greater than those available now.

The Scientific World View

There seems to be little doubt that the *Weltanschauung* put forward by the biblical view of man and creation released man to promote the development of science and modern technology. However, in the light of the above-mentioned observations one must question the ultimate benefits of modern technology. Can they be seen in terms of the liberation of man? Is their outcome an unqualified success? One must also ask the question whether man has not in some way overstepped his limits and made of technology, and thereby himself, a deity. With his emphasis on the methods of science he has ceased to be able to view the supernatural. Vernon Pratt suggests that as a consequence of the scientific method, the supernatural has become incomprehensible to man.[77]

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75. Ibid. 76. Ibid.
77. Pratt, Vernon, *Religion and Secularisation*, op. cit.

An old Jewish legend, which predates the technological era by centuries, is enlightening with regard to this problem. Samuel E. Karff[78] relates that when Israel's Weizmann Institute acquired its second computer, the staff, on groping for an appropriate nickname for it, came up with the unanimous decision to call it 'The Golem'. In Jewish folklore a *golem* is a man-made robot. It is said that the prophet Jeremiah and a companion once searched for the sacred formula to create such a *golem*. They savoured success when a robot suddenly appeared before them. Etched on its forehead were the Hebrew words *Adonai Elohim Emet*, 'God the Lord is truth'. Bearing a knife in its hand, the robot scratched out the letter *aleph* from the word *Emet* thus making the inscription read *Adoinai Elohim Met*, 'God the Lord is dead'. Karff points out that this remarkably perceptive legend embraces the fear that a new age of unprecedented human self-assertion will destroy the traditional image of man. At the same time, the traditional image of God is distorted.

Martin Buber has observed the dangers present in our age. In his *I and Thou* he has described the two possible attitudes to the world characterised by the I-It and the I-Thou. The I-It is the attitude which must necessarily be adopted for scientific knowledge and progress. 'The primary connexion of man with the world of *It* is comprised in *experiencing*, which continually reconstitutes the world, and *using*, which leads the world to its manifold aim, the sustaining, relieving, and equipping of human life.'[79] Buber emphasises that the 'primary word *I-It* is not of evil - as matter is not of evil. It is of evil - as matter is, which presumes to have the quality of present being. If a man lets it have the mastery, the continually growing world of *It* overruns him and robs him of the reality of his own I, till the incubus over him and the ghost within him whisper to one another the confession of their non-salvation'.[80] Without derogating the I-It attitude as such, Buber warns: 'And in all the seriousness of truth, hear this: without *It* man cannot live. But he who lives with *It* alone is not a man.'[81]

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78. Karff, Samuel E., 'Man's Power and Limits in a Technological Age', *Judaism*, Spring 1974, p. 161.
79. Buber, Martin, *I and Thou*, p. 38.
80. Ibid. p. 46. 81. Ibid. p. 34.

Buber, in his *Eclipse of God* described the tenor of the age through which we are living. 'In our age, the I-It relation, gigantically swollen, has usurped, practically uncontested, the mastery and the rule. The I of this relation, an I that possesses all, makes all, succeeds with all, this I that is unable to say Thou, unable to meet a being essentially, is the lord of the hour. This selfhood that has become omnipotent, with all the It around it, can naturally acknowledge neither God nor any genuine absolute which manifests itself to man as of non-human origin. It steps in between and shuts off from us the light of heaven.'[82]

It must be noted that while Buber did not see the modern era as an unmixed blessing, he could at least look forward to the possibility of improvement in the situation. 'Such is the nature of this hour. But what of the next? It is a modern superstition that the character of an age acts as fate for the next.'[83]

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82. Buber, Martin, *Eclipse of God*, p. 129. Rubenstein has a negative view of Buber's failure to confront the Holocaust as a *central* theological issue. In 'Buber and the Holocaust : Some Reconsiderations on the 100th Anniversary of his Birth', *Michigan Quarterly Review*, Spring 1979, pp. 382 -402, Rubenstein suggests that because Buber does not take into consideration the very real issues of dignity and power in the Jewish historic situation, and instead offers utopian admonitions and even rhetoric, he fails to deal realistically with life and death problems. Rubenstein considers Buber's teachings irrelevant to the tragedies of his time. Yet, he confesses: 'Of one thing, however, I am certain. We needed him. Why, I do not know.' (p. 402).

    Even if Rubenstein's views in this regard have merit, I am convinced that Buber had great insight into the human situation as it relates to the depersonalising attitudes engendered by the scientific world view. Rabbi Joseph Sternberg, in an address at Temple Ansche Chesed, said of Buber: 'The postwar world was plunged into profound philosophic and experiential perplexity, both individual and collective. Armed with technological weaponry, equipped with scientific advances, engaged in automatic activity, man stood in danger of losing his soul. Martin Buber came to find it for him.' Quoted by Aubrey Hodes, *Encounter with Martin Buber*, Penguin Books, London, 1975, pp. 100, 101.

83. Buber, Martin, *Eclipse of God*, p. 129. Buber indicates that there may be some hope in his words: 'Something is taking place in the depths that as yet needs no name. To-morrow even it may happen that it will be beckoned from the heights, across the heads of the earthly archons. The eclipse of the light of God is no extinction; even to-morrow that which has stepped in between may give way.' *Eclipse of God*, p. 129.

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Rubenstein, in his unsparing analysis of modernity and its fruits, offers a view which is almost totally devoid of hope. He is deeply apprehensive concerning technological civilisation's ultimate denouement, which he sees in terms of world-wide apocalyptic catastrophe. He stresses that his concluding scenario is one which could quite conceivably unfold. The only hope he can offer is that his envisaged scenario may not necessarily come about, but his hope is tempered by the conviction that the delicate balance of terror between East and West is tenuous and that mankind will only rid itself of its weaponry through use.[84] His message is undeniably pessimistic. His aim, however, is not to be entirely pessimistic but to examine the general phenomenon of mass destructiveness in our age in order to understand our hazards. He is convinced that only by fully comprehending our culture's inherent dangers can we hope to overcome them. In the shadow of the Holocaust he suggests that a suitable aphorism for our times can be: 'The dreams of reason bring forth monsters'.[85] It seems that he believes that somehow we can defeat the monster we have created when he states cryptically that 'every thinker who has ever seriously reflected on the "death of God" has awaited the moment of divine rebirth'.[86]

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84. Rubenstein, *Morality and Eros*, p. 12.

85. Rubenstein, *Plenary Address*.

86. Ibid.

C H A P T E R III

Human kind cannot bear very much reality.

T. S. Eliot

God is the highest subjectivity of man abstracted from himself.

Ludwig Feuerbach

AN EXCURSUS INTO THE PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORIES OF SIGMUND FREUD AS A BACKGROUND TO RUBENSTEIN'S THINKING OF THE NINETEEN SIXTIES

As a theologian who feels the need to speak meaningfully to the men of his time, Rubenstein has been moulded decisively by events and thinking of the twentieth century. The most significant historical events which shaped his theology are the Holocaust and the re-establishment of the State of Israel, while the most influential intellectual movements upon his thought of the nineteen sixties are existentialism and psychoanalysis.[1] His first four major works, *After Auschwitz*, *The Religious Imagination*, *My Brother Paul*, and *Morality and Eros*, led me to the inescapable conclusion that the Freudian element was the most dominant aspect of his thought and that the other influences were conditioned by his deep indebtedness and loyalty to the monumental edifice of Freud's psychoanalytic insight. This reliance on Freud overshadows, and to a great extent, explains his radical theological standpoint.

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1. Richard L. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, p. xi.

For this reason, any examination of Rubenstein's theology cannot be complete without a consideration of psychoanalysis and its influence on his thinking. Perhaps it is not entirely surprising that the 'Godless Jew'[2] who stood as an intellectual colossus in the early decades of the twentieth century was to exert a seminal influence on the most prominent Jewish 'death of God' theologian (and, therefore, the most outspoken 'Godless' Jew) of the nineteen sixties.

The most obvious influences on his current thought seem to be the philosophies of Max Weber, G. W. F. Hegel and Friedrich Nietzsche. However, as I find Rubenstein's message of the nineteen sixties to be the most viable in terms of the maintenance of Judaism, and as that message is deeply Freudian and functional in its emphasis, the development of psychoanalysis will be described. The general direction of Rubenstein's Freudian leanings will be indicated and will receive fuller consideration in the chapters which follow.

SIGMUND FREUD

Before discussing Freud's influence on Rubenstein it will be necessary to indicate some of Freud's central psychoanalytic theories, not only as he applied them to religion, but as they described the human personality. In fact, Freud's psychosocial and religious theories can only be understood when seen against his conception of the individual psyche. Freud, the undisputed founder of psychoanalysis, was also the originator of applied psychoanalysis in that application of psychoanalytic insights to social and cultural phenomena began with Freud himself. Rubenstein makes extensive use of Freud's subsequent applied psychoanalysis.

Sigmund Freud (b. 1856 - d. 1939), undoubtedly one of the most influential and controversial thinkers of the twenteith century, opened the way to a new, comprehensive understanding of the human

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2. In private correspondence with Pastor Oscar Pfister, 1928, Freud wrote, 'Why was it that none of the pious ever discovered psychoanalysis? Why did it have to wait for a completely Godless Jew?' Quoted by David Stafford-Clark in the prelude to his book, *What Freud Really Said*, Pelican Books, 1967. Also in Gordis, R., 'The Two Faces of Freud', *Judaism*, Vol. 24, No. 2, Spring 1975, p. 200.

mind through psychoanalysis. Psychology was established as an independent science in the middle of the nineteenth century. According to Hall and Lindzey,[3] Freud challenged the traditional psychology of his day by positing the idea of the unconscious in a discipline which had previously confined its investigation to the study of consciousness in normal adult human behaviour. Watson,[4] extending the history of psychology to antiquity, suggests that the interpretation of psychology prior to Freud as concerning itself exclusively with conscious experience is inaccurate. The influence of unconscious phenomena had been a theme throughout the ages from Plato's sleeping beast through Augustine's limitless room of memory to Aquinas' inability to view the soul apart from awareness of its acts as well as in the thought of Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz and others. Freud, therefore, did not discover the unconscious. His originality lay in the fact that none of the above-mentioned thinkers grasped the crucial importance of unconscious motivation in human behaviour or found as efficient a way to study it as well as did Freud. Freud's contribution lay in his insistence on the immense power and influence wielded by unconscious factors on conscious human behaviour. Based on a model by Fechner, Freud likened the mind to an iceberg in which the visible area above the water represents consciousness while the far greater part, below the surface of the water, represents the vast dark domain of the unconscious in which 'are to be found the urges, the passions, the repressed ideas and feelings - a great underworld of vital, unseen forces which exercise an imperious control over the conscious thoughts and deeds of man'.[5]

Psychoanalysis was launched as a movement in as decisive and controversial a manner as a new religion or political movement

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3. Hall, Calvin S. and Lindzey, Gardner, *Theories of Personality*, (2nd. Edition), John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1970, p. 30.
4. Watson, Robert I. *The Great Psychologists from Aristotle to Freud*, (2nd. Edition), J. B. Lippincott Co., 1968, p. 459.
5. Hall and Lindzey, op. cit. p. 30.

would be.[6] It had its ardent supporters and vehement critics. Freud's ideas were subjected to the most thorough and bitter criticism during his lifetime. He was frequently vilified and misunderstood, an attitude which still prevails in some circles.[7] However, with indomitable courage and honesty he continued, throughout his life, to state his findings in publications extending over a period of more than forty years, to revise his theories whenever necessary, and to accept human nature without revulsion, as he found it and not seeing it as he would have liked it to be.

Freud was a product of the positivistic thinking of the nineteenth century. He was devoted to science as the supreme expression of rationality, as the sole road to truth and valid knowledge, and, above all, as the prime remedy for human ills. His scientific curiosity was directed at human concerns, psychological and cultural, and how these evolved, rather than toward the physical and biological sciences. 'It comes as something of a surprise that Freud - sensitive prober of dreams, outspoken defender of sexuality, patient interpreter of the neurotic and the insane - should have regarded his life's work as an inevitable extension of the positivistic tradition in which he was trained as a medical student.'[8]

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6. George A. Miller, *Psychology, The Science of Mental Life*, Pelican Books, 1967, p. 257, suggests that when Freud broke with Adler in 1911 and with Jung in 1913 it was more than a scientific disagreement about the evidence and conclusions that could be based on the evidence; it was also a personal quarrel, a political defection, and a religious heresy. See also Reuben Fine, *A History of Psychoanalysis*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1979, where he gives the distinct impression that psychoanalysis is analogous to a religion.

7. It is for this reason that sympathetic Freudians such as Stafford-Clark, op. cit., attempt to convey the true undistorted message of Freud. It reflects a sad irony that he feels it necessary to quote from T. H. White's *The Once and Future King*, Fontana Books, p. 302, in his prelude: 'Merlyn, the magician and prophet of hindsight and foresight, speaks: "Psychoanalyse her," he said eventually, beginning to spin. "But, Merlyn, wait! How are we to do this thing?" "The usual method." "But what is it?" they cried in despair. He disappeared completely, his voice remaining in the air. "Just find out what her dreams are, and so on. Explain the facts of life. But not too much of Freud."'

8. Miller, op. cit. p. 249.

Largely as a result of Descartes' thinking in the seventeenth century, great emphasis had been placed on the power of human reason which was to culminate in the very optimistic views of man put forward by the thinkers of the Enlightenment and such movements as Utilitarianism.[9] Freud revolted against, and showed quite clearly the inadequacy of, the mechanistic conceptions of man which characterised nineteenth century European thought. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, along with several other young intellectuals like Emile Durkheim, William James, Henri Bergson and Max Weber, Freud rebelled against contemporary social thought and reoriented it by expanding the conception of science as it applies to human beings. Freud was destined to become the most influential of these rebels for the twentieth century. Yet although he was a rebel, he was a loyal one. Using the methods of positivism he evolved new ideas but the material upon which his observations were made and his theories were built are as old and universal as the human race.

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9. According to Miller, op. cit., p. 250, the Utilitarian philosophy consists of four simple propositions:-

   (i) All that anybody wants is to be as happy as possible, to maximise his own happiness.

   (ii) It is morally good for him to maximise his happiness as effectively and as intelligently as he can.

   (iii) Society must be organised so that maximising his own happiness is always the most beneficial thing for his fellow men.

   (iv) It is possible to calculate the quantities of pleasure and pain expected from different kinds of behaviour and to arrange society so as to produce the greatest happiness for the greatest number.

Repression

Freud, as a young doctor in Vienna, was one of the first medical men to take hysteria[10] seriously. Because the condition was characterised by the presence of physical symptoms without accompanying physical signs, it offered little of pure medical interest. Doctors ignored it and society frowned upon it. Freud, like Janet, made the important discovery that hysteria was precipitated by psychological factors, but unlike Janet, he also made a daring leap by asking the most probing question as to whether powerful unconscious mechanisms, which he saw as the only possible explanation for hysteria (as well as the phenomenon of hypnosis) could

(a) exist in all human beings, and

(b) play an important part in their lives of which they were not aware. This led to the conclusion that the difference between 'neurotic' and 'healthy' is that the healthy have a socially acceptable form of neurosis.[11]

Having made this important step, he evolved a method of investigation and treatment known as free association. It was to become a decisive foundation for psychoanalysis, and it remains the principal method by which unconscious motives are uncovered. The technique of free association rests on the fundamental assumption that there are two

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10. Hysteria is a medical diagnostic term for

    (a) illnesses characterised by the presence of physical symptoms, (b) the absence of physical signs or any physically observable pathology, and (c) behaviour suggesting that the symptoms fulfil some psychological function.

    It is therefore a psychoneurosis in which unacceptable impulses are repressed and therefore unconscious, but which find outlet through bodily symptoms such as abnormal sensations like paralysis which occur without any apparent injury to the nervous system.

11. Norman O. Brown, *Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History*, Wesleyan University Press, (7th printing), 1970, p. 6.

ways in which ideas are associated in the human mind - either logically, which is characteristic of ordinary rational thought, or emotionally, typically found in dreams and fantasies. The emotional association of ideas is employed in Freud's technique which reveals thoughts deeply embedded in the unconscious. During analytic sessions, free association used in conjunction with interpretation of dreams and analysis of faulty and haphazard actions led Freud to every one of the principles which he was finally to incorporate into psychoanalysis as he defined it.

The 'Royal Road' to the Unconscious

The interpretation of dreams, or dream analysis through free association was regarded by Freud as the 'royal road' to a knowledge of the unconscious and as the securest foundation of psychoanalysis.[12]

Psychoanalysis assumes that dreams have an underlying psychological meaning and that analysis of dreams can be the key to an individual's emotional life. Freud saw dreams as normal processes at work in the normal individual but also exemplifying processes at work in the formation of neurotic symptoms. In dream life the child that is in man pursues its existence. Freud saw the function of dreams as the preservation of sleep and for this reason, wishes unacceptable in the waking state would be disguised in symbolic form to pass the censor.[13] Wishes which would normally waken the sleeper would be represented as fulfilled in hallucinatory and often symbolic form. The modification of the content of dreams is unconsciously performed and is called dream work. Nightmares and anxiety dreams constitute failures in the dream work. Dream analysis constitutes the reverse of dream work.

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12. Stafford-Clark, op. cit. p. 51.

13. The censor, in Freud's earlier formulations was the mental agency responsible for dream distortion and repression. The theoretical ancestor of the superego, it represents an endopsychic selective agency which functions as a barrier to prevent repressed impulses, memories and ideas from coming into consciousness.

An important consequence of Freud's interpretation of dreams was that it led to the possibility of explaining unconscious elements in religious myths and symbols in analogous fashion, an aspect which was greatly elaborated by Jung. The unconscious makes use of particular symbolism which also underlies men's myths and fairy tales. The unconscious wishes and fears of mankind could be revealed by examination of mythical and ritual symbols.

During treatment, Freud often encountered what he perceived to be an involuntary resistance on the part of the patient to the communication of some ideas.[14] This resistance led him to believe that memories which evoked pain or guilt were forced into the unconscious and censored by a mechanism which he called repression. He subsequently came to see repression as the foundation stone upon which the whole structure of psychoanalysis rests and he devoted his whole life to the study of this phenomenon. In the Freudian perspective 'the essence of society is repression of the individual, and the essence of the individual is the repression of himself'.[15]

Infantile Sexuality

Freud's analysis of several patients and the information revealed to and interpreted by him convinced him that the most important factor in the make-up of the human psyche was sexuality in its broadest sense.[16] He found buried sexual memories in all his patients and concluded that repressed sexuality, the unconscious denial of a

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14. Willi Hoffer's theory of resistances has given support to the vitality of this Freudian insight.

15. Brown, op. cit. p. 3.

16. Sexuality has a very broad meaning for Freud. In psychoanalytic theory 'sex' and 'sexual' are widened so that they include phenomena which have no direct bearing on reproduction.

    Brown, op. cit. pp. 25, 26, suggests that the sexual instinct is the energy or desire with which the human being pursues pleasure but that the pleasure sought can derive from pleasurable sensations in any organ of the body. Freud attributed the capacity to yield such pleasure (erotogenic quality) to all parts of the surface of the body.

forbidden and now forgotten sexual desire or experience lay at the root of most neuroses. This led him to the concept of infantile sexuality, the exploration of children by indiscriminate and anarchistic fashion of all the erotic potentialities of the human body in pursuit of pleasure.[17] It is also the innocent unformed and excruciating passion of the child for the parent.[18] His theory was met with derision and protest which was not alleviated by the fact that he described the sexuality of infants as 'polymorphously perverse' by which he meant that sexuality in infants and young children is innocent, ignorant and undifferentiated and also capable of an infinite variety of incomplete fulfilments.[19] Norman O. Brown points out that the 'perverse' components of infantile sexuality also include the pleasure of touching, of seeing, of muscular activity and even the passion of pain.[20]

Convinced that sexual life begins soon after birth, Freud saw the individual as growing through a predetermined developmental series of sexual stages between which there is no sharp break. Freud was probably the first psychological theorist to emphasise the developmental aspects of personality and, in particular, the decisive role played by the first five years of life in the formation and basic character structure of the person.

From birth until the fifth year of life the child passes through successive oral, anal and genital (or phallic) psychosexual stages. These stages are determined by changes in libidinal direction and localisation expressed in changing modes of pleasure-finding in different erogenous zones. This is followed by a latent period from five to eleven. During adolescence the dynamics of the first five years of life erupt again and then settle down as the adolescent gradually grows toward adulthood.

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17. Brown, op. cit. p. 27. Richard Wollheim points out the extreme reluctance with which Freud arrived at the theory of infantile sexuality. See Richard Wollheim, *Freud*, Fontana Modern Masters, (5th Impression), 1979, p. 38 f.

18. Stafford-Clark, op. cit. p. 25.

19. Ibid. p. 80.

20. Brown, op. cit. p. 30.

During the genital phase which, according to Freud, takes place between the ages of three and five, the child's behaviour is marked by the Oedipus complex.[21] The Oedipus complex was to become central to Freud's understanding of personality and also to his views on religion. It is also a pivotal theme in much of Rubenstein's thinking.

The Oedipus Complex

Named after the mythical Greek prince of Thebes, Oedipus - who unwittingly killed his own father and married his mother - the Oedipus complex denotes a group of largely unconscious ideas which are centred around a desire to possess sexually the parent of the opposite sex and direct death wishes at the parent of the same sex. It represents the symbolic playing out of the Oedipus legend in the life of every boy.[22]

Rubenstein points out Freud's belief that 'the son's ambivalent yearning to become like the father by violently displacing him in the affections of the mother, was the nuclear component in all neurotic strivings.'[23] Freud also believed that this phenomenon occurred universally, that it is built into humanity phylogenetically, and that it lies at the root of a great deal of unconscious guilt. The child fears the father's punitive power to castrate him for his incestuous longings for the mother. Brown suggests that the Oedipus complex, and with it the whole of infantile sexuality, succumbs to the castration complex.[24] It is through the castration complex that infantile sexuality is transformed into normal adult sexuality. The castration complex also establishes a reservoir of sexual energy which

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21. The theory of the Oedipus complex arose before the theory of psychosexual stages and was discovered by Freud during self-analysis which he undertook from 1897.

22. Freud's theory is weakest when dealing with feminine psychology. The equivalent complex in girls is rarely referred to as the Electra complex and it culminates in fear of genital injury or the phenomenon of penis envy. It has been suggested that Freud's relative silence on feminine sexuality reveals a blind spot in his own personality.

23. Richard, L. Rubenstein, *The Religious Imagination*, p. 2.

24. Brown, op. cit. p. 118.

cannot achieve expression in normal adult activity. Through sublimation, therefore, it creates culture. Finally, it is the mechanism by which the infant's dependent love of the parents is transformed into the adult's dependent love of social, religious and moral authority. 'In general, inasmuch as neurosis is caused by repression of infantile sexuality, the castration complex is the key to the human neurosis.'[25]

After the termination of the Oedipal period the individual is left with many conflicts which are modified and hidden by repression, while some become internalised in the superego. The Oedipus complex remains a vital force in the personality throughout life and determines the individual's attitude to relations with the opposite sex as well as attitudes to people in authority, morality and religion.

Although Freud gave increasing attention to the importance of the pre-Oedipal mother in his later writings, he continued to emphasise the Oedipal conflict in the formation of personality and neuroses. While he constantly revised his ideas he did not always abandon earlier formulations which seemed inconsistent with later developments. Thus psychoanalysis never became a closed or finished system. The attitude to the father in the Oedipal phase and the guilts arising from it remain crucial to Freud's theory especially as it was applied to religion in *Totem and Taboo* and, later, in *Moses and Monotheism*.

Freud recognised that the first object of human love and dependence is the mother (or a mother substitute). It is she who satisfies all needs for feeding, warmth, protection and love. In Freud's view the human being has originally two sexual objects: himself and the woman who tends him. In the earliest oral phase, exemplified by the infant at its mother's breast, there is little if any distinction between the infant and the outside world. Love is characterised by incorporation, a relation of being at one with the world. As Brown so aptly puts it, 'In the unreal, protected situation of human infancy, the infant develops an unreal sense of reality. Reality is his mother, that is to say, love and pleasure; infantile sexuality affirms the union of the self with a whole world of love and pleasure...the primal experience of

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25. Ibid. p. 119.

union of the self with a world of love and pleasure sets the pattern for all human love.'[26] The aim of normal adult loving is the restoration of the primal condition in which the ego-libido and object-libido cannot be distinguished.

This motif, it will be seen, becomes extremely important in the thinking of Rubenstein, both in terms of man's strivings being basically regressive and cyclic in character and also in terms of his view of the primal origins of religion as lying in a maternal matrix.

Closely related to this earliest phase of human development is the idea of infantile omnipotence, another area of Freudian thought which receives extensive treatment in Rubenstein's understanding of religion. It is believed that infants experience omnipotence of thought which means that by thought alone the external world can be manipulated. Freud believed that omnipotence of thought underlies magic and religious practices as well as obsessional neuroses. Omnipotent fantasies, in which the individual believes himself to be omnipotent, also occur in the infantile stage. At this stage the infant is unable to experience directly, even in imagination, the possibility of love for the mother free from aggressive, destructive and defiant impulses.

Rubenstein suggests that man's greatest desire is for infantile omnipotence, and therefore as a corollary, the displacement of God. Without God, there would be an end to all moral restraints. He frequently mentions the anarchic tendencies and archaic infantile yearnings for omnipotence present in all human beings.[27]

The Structure and Dynamics of Personality

Freud built up his psychoanalytic theory over a long period constantly modifying and adding to it as new clinical evidence presented itself to him. It is difficult to separate his theories as all elements work

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26. Ibid. p. 45.

27. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, pp. 12, 13, 14, 16, 21.
Rubenstein, *The Religious Imagination*, p. xix.

together in intricate interaction. It is also beyond the scope of this thesis to trace the chronological adaptations to Freudian theory. However, it is necessary to give a brief description of the psychical apparatus of personality and the theory of the instincts, two inextricable aspects of personality. Rubenstein's understanding of man implies the tremendous impact of intrapsychic tensions and the force of id impulses. He also sees man's strivings as regressive in nature. His God-concept is deeply indebted to Freudian insights, both in terms of the God he rejects, which may be seen as a Freudian illusion, and the God he accepts, which is a return to 'Nothingness' which parallels the death instinct.

The psychical apparatus consists of the id, the ego and the superego, a late elaboration of Freud's original division of mind into unconscious and conscious components. This division also included the preconscious component. The preconscious is that which is capable of consciousness without special effort.[28] The id, ego and superego are difficult, if not impossible to disentangle. Behaviour emerges as a product of the three segments in interaction and is rarely the product of one segment alone.

The Id

The Id, the Latin word for 'it' used by Freud's translators to denote his *das Es* is historically the heir to the unconscious. It is the oldest psychical component in that it contains everything that is inherited and present at birth including the instincts. The id is the unorganised part of the psychic apparatus and forms the matrix within which the other two systems, the ego and superego, become differentiated. As a reservoir of psychic energy, it supplies the power for the functioning of the other two systems.[29] The most

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28. Watson, op. cit. p. 475.
29. With his deterministic and positivistic background, Freud invests the word 'energy' with a particular meaning. He saw no difference, except in form, between energy used by the body for physical function and that used for psychic function. Freud saw psychic energy as a fixed quantum supplied by the id. He likened the ego's relation to the id to a rider on horseback. The rider has to hold the superior strength of the horse in check with his own strength. In the case of the ego, it must use borrowed forces. C. Rycroft, *A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, p. 38, Penguin Reference Books, 1972.

primitive and inaccessible part of the psychic apparatus, it represents the inner world of subjective experience and knows nothing of reason or logic, objective reality, the external world or the passage of time. Harbouring repressed erotic impulses and childhood memories that constantly seek conscious expression, it is the storehouse of vastly opposing impulses which exist side by side and thus cause intrapsychic tensions. One of the principal characteristics of the id is its intolerance to increases of energy experienced as uncomfortable states of tension. Therefore when the tension level is raised, either by external stimuli or internal excitation, the id functions in the service of the pleasure principle by returning the organism to its prior comfortable level. It achieves this by primary process functioning, the formulation of images that will gratify its demands. These are wish-fulfilment images most characteristic of dreams and fantasies. A significant aspect of primary process mental functioning is that it does not differentiate between fantasy and objective reality. Rubenstein points out that men 'often feel as guilty for offences committed in fantasy as those they actually commit'.[30]

As the id has no access to, or knowledge of objective reality and is therefore always incapable of satisfying its own desires, a second psychical system, the ego, comes into operation.

The Ego

The Ego refers to the organised, rational part of the psychic apparatus which comes into existence to allow the human organism to perform realistic transactions with the external world and is the historical descendant of the conscious component of Freud's earlier theory of mind (although it also contains the preconscious). It differentiates between wish-fulfilment images and the actual perception of objects in the outer world which will satisfy needs. The ego obeys, and is limited by the reality principle and, by distinguishing between images in the mind and objects in the external world, operates by means of secondary process functioning. Its task is to keep the organism alive and to obtain satisfaction by the best and least dangerous method.

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30. Rubenstein, *My Brother Paul*, p. 12.

Unconscious id demands are controlled by the ego until appropriate means for gratification are found. The ego has no energy source of its own and is supplied with energy by the id through the process of identification.[31] The ego can never be independent of the id and its repressed passions, neither can it be free of the limitations of the external world or the demands of the superego. The ego is the reactive agent serving three masters - the id, the superego and reality. When the ego is unable to cope with the stimuli from its three masters it is flooded with anxiety. To avoid these anxieties the ego resorts to various defence mechanisms. Repression, or forcing the idea out of the conscious mind is the most common and most pivotal for Freudian theory. In the formation of religious beliefs and practices the two main defence mechanisms are regression and projection. Regression returns the individual to an earlier, less threatening stage of existence while projection attributes the source of anxiety to the external world rather than to the individual's own id or superego.

It will be seen that defence mechanisms play a prominent role in Rubenstein's understanding of human religious response. Another defence mechanism which pertains rather to a study of the normal than the neurotic, is also important in religion. It is of great importance in Rubenstein's view of rabbinic Judaism. This is sublimation, a concept which will be given fuller treatment below.

The Superego

The Superego emerges as the third component of personality, representing moral values and prohibitions. As a response to parental

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31. Identification is a difficult concept but one which is central to psychoanalysis. It is an unconscious mental process whereby we can invest our instinctual energies in particular images by adopting them as our own, by identifying ourselves with them. Miller, op. cit. p. 373. Identification can be primary, secondary, projective and introjective. The last three, unlike primary identification in which the infant is unable to separate his identity from that of others, are all defensive. Rycroft, op. cit. p. 67. When someone uses identification as a defence mechanism he identifies himself with someone who seems desirable or admirable, someone who appears to be invulnerable to the danger which lies at the cause of the anxiety.

punishment and rewards parental moral standards are internalised or introjected into the individual. The superego is the internal representative of the traditional values and ideals of society as transmitted to the child by the parent or other authority figures. With the formation of the superego parental control is replaced by self control. It strives for perfection rather than pleasure and represents the ideal rather than the real. There are two sub-systems of the superego, conscience and ego-ideal. The ego-ideal represents that which is approved and rewarded and the self's conception of how he wishes to be. Behaviour that is in conflict with the ego-ideal evokes shame. Parental punishment is incorporated into the other sub-system, the conscience, and causes a sense of guilt. Miller points out that for Freud guilt (anxiety aroused by threats from the superego) is the motive force behind all social solidarity.[32] The vast burden of guilt shared by every civilised person is what keeps society intact. The problem of guilt and its expiation occupies a great deal of Rubenstein's thought.

The basic functions of the superego include:-

(a) inhibition or prohibition of id impulses, particularly those of a sexual or aggressive nature,

(b) persuading the ego to strive towards moral perfection and to substitute moralistic for realistic goals,

(c) critical self observation and self punishment for negative behaviour or thoughts and self praise as a reward for virtuous thoughts and deeds.

Introjected mandates include consciously recognised standards although many superego mandates are unconscious. The superego has a tendency to oppose the id and the ego in making the world over in its own image. It is like the id in being non-rational and like the ego in attempting to exercise control over the instincts. Unlike the ego, which postpones instinctual gratification the superego tries to block it permanently.[33]

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32. Miller, op. cit. p. 266.

33. Hall and Lindsey, op. cit. p. 35.

The Oedipus complex is very important for superego development and especially in the development of religious beliefs. Fear of castration for unacceptable incestuous impulses, and hostility felt against the father, conflict with feelings of love and dependence on the father. These conflicts induce introjection into the superego of parental prohibitions against aggression and incest. By this means the child defends himself against sexual fantasies and imagined threats of punishment by driving his incestuous desires into the unconscious, or repressing them. Identification with parental ideals determines future identification with moral values set by other authority figures, teachers, political leaders and religious teachers and authorities. Thus, the individual's ego-ideal is moulded in conformity with the norms and moral values of his social group.[34] The repression of the Oedipus complex causes the superego to undergo its final development. 'The superego is the heir of the male Oedipus complex. It is the bulwark against incest and aggression.'[35]

Stafford-Clark raises a pertinent problem in relation to Freud's view of the superego and his explanation of the origin of conscience as deriving from the child's reaction to his early environment and parental attitudes. Freud's view 'makes no provision for any inherent or absolute appreciation of right and wrong, and is in this sense independent of fundamental religious or moral significance'.[36] To equate the superego with conscience as Freud did is to carry over into the conscious mind the primitive oversimplifications characteristic of unconscious mental processes. The primitive and irrational quality of superego judgments thus renders them totally inadequate as a basis for conscience as a whole. It is arguable that our ultimate source for morality can be merely the distorted relics of infantile experience and memories. The origin of morality would then have no deeper roots than the parents' own conscience derived in turn from their parents before them.

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34. Ernest Wallwork, *Sigmund Freud*, In the Section *Psychoanalysis and Religion*. Roger A. Johnson, *et al*, eds., *Critical Issues in Modern Religion*, p. 265. Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1973. p. 265.
35. Hall and Lindzey, op. cit. p. 52
36. Stafford-Clark, op. cit. p. 168.

The Theory of the Instincts

An instinct is a quantum of psychic energy which is the force behind tensions caused by the needs of the id. Freud used the word *Trieb* which connotes 'drive' or perhaps more adequately 'instinctual drive'. An instinct is 'an inborn psychological representation of an inner somatic source of excitation'.[37] An instinct has four features, a source, an aim, an object and an impetus. The source is biological and the aim is to remove bodily excitation. The object of the instinct relates to the appearance of a wish and its fulfilment while the impetus denotes the force or strength which is determined by the underlying need. An instinct's aim is essentially regressive and conservative in nature in that it returns the individual to the prior state which existed before the appearance of the instinct. It conserves the equilibrium of the organism by abolishing excitations. Its aim is tension reduction. An instinct can be seen as a repetitive process starting with excitation and ending in repose.[38]

In the early years of psychoanalysis Freud paid greatest attention to the life instincts which he called libido. The life instincts serve survival of the individual and propagation of the species. Sex, hunger and thirst serve this category. The sexual instinct was seen to be the motivation behind most human behaviour. Several instincts make up the sex instinct. In childhood they remain relatively separate from each other but after puberty they tend to fuse together in the service of reproduction.

Freud saw libidinal fixation occurring in psychosexual development and also regression to an earlier stage of development. The concept of a limited quantity of sexual energy or libido and of its compulsive fixation at levels short of maturity provided Freud with the basis for his general theory of neuroses. Freud used the term 'cathexis' to denote attachment of libido to various objects or complexes. The greater the cathexis in one area, the less available libido remained

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37. Hall and Lindzey, op. cit. p. 36.

38. Ibid. p. 37.

at the disposal of the individual, so that the earlier or more complete the fixation, the less chance there was of sexual maturity for the individual concerned.[39]

Late in his career, after the theory of instincts had gone through several stages and after long deliberation, Freud concluded that there are only two basic instincts or groups of instincts, the life instinct which he called 'Eros' and the destructive instinct which led him to the death instinct, 'Thanatos'.

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 1920, based on his clinical observations of 'repetition compulsion' of unpleasant anxiety-provoking situations, and his conviction, after World War I, that aggression was as sovereign a motive as sex in human behaviour, Freud arrived at the concept of the death instinct and that the goal of all life is death. The death instinct, like all instincts, is a drive towards reinstating in nature the former state of affairs, but in this case the ultimate aim is the return of organic or living matter to its inorganic or unorganised state. Life, a preparation for and roundabout way to death, has its own instinctual drive towards this end. Paul Ricouer suggests that instead of a clear delimitation between Eros and Thanatos there is an overlapping of roles. While in one sense everything is life, in another, 'everything is death since self-preservation is the circuitous path on which each living substance pursues its own death'.[40] Herbert Marcuse points out the 'outstanding and frightening event' in Freud's realisation of the fundamentally regressive or conservative tendency in all instinctual life. 'Freud cannot escape the suspicion that he has come upon a hitherto unnoticed "universal attribute of the instincts and perhaps of organic life in general", namely, "a compulsion inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things...a kind of "organic elasticity" or "inertia inherent in organic life".'[41] The

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39. Stafford Clark, op. cit. pp. 95, 96.

40. Paul Ricouer, *Freud and Philosophy*, p. 292. Transl. Denis Savage, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1970, (2nd Printing, 1972), p. 292.

41. Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilisation : A Philosophic Inquiry into Freud*, Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1970, pp. 37, 38.

'original goal of the instincts remains - return to inorganic life, "dead" matter'.[42]

Aggression, which had previously been associated with sexual activity, was now seen as a derivative of the death instinct. Aggression is self-destruction turned outward against substitute objects.

The life and death instincts and their derivatives often fuse together, neutralise or replace each other: eating, for example, represents a fusion of hunger, a life drive, and destructiveness. The whole character of the instincts 'authorizes us to place inertia on an equal footing with the life instinct'.[43] However, it must be pointed out that while Freud elaborated the ramifications of libido extensively, he left the death instinct relatively undeveloped. In fact, he admitted that he did not know to what extent he believed in it.[44]

Stafford-Clark notes the overtones of despair which characterise some of Freud's last writings concerning the future of the human race and its beliefs and he suggests that while Freud never loses compassion for or faith in the individual his pessimism owes 'something to this daemonic concept which he himself had created or released, and which could bring so little comfort to him or anyone else'.[45]

The regressive nature of the instincts and the striving of all living organisms to return to the quiescence of the inorganic world is a recurrent theme in Rubenstein's thinking. His view of man is influenced decisively by this inherent tendency towards aggression and destructiveness both of the self and others. His thinking owes much to Freud's conception of the death instinct and instinctual life in general.

Freud : Applied Psychoanalyst and Myth Maker

Freud's concern was not only directed at the intrapsychic conflicts of the individual. He extended his concern to psychosocial and cultural issues and their evolution. Wallwork points out that curiosity of this kind inevitably leads beyond strictly empirical

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42. Ibid. p. 115

43. Ricoeur, op. cit. p. 289. 44. Ibid. p. 311.

45. Stafford-Clark, op. cit. p. 160.

over the Germans and Austrians prior to and during World War II.

Group Psychology stresses identification between members of the group,[48] identification of the group with a leader, and the group's relationship with a common enemy. These three factors work in conjunction with one another to diminish disruptive effects of rivalry between members of the group. For Freud 'men are not gentle creatures who want to be loved, and who at the most can defend themselves if they are attacked; they are, on the contrary, creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness. As a result, their neighbour is for them not only a potential helper or sexual object, but someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity for work without compensation, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate

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46. Wallwork, op. cit. p. 256.

47. Ibid.

48. A group may be defined as a number of persons united for some purpose or possessing common interests, aspirations, functions, or fears which enable them to be differentiated as a social entity both by themselves and by others.

him, to cause him pain, to torture and kill him. *Homo homini lupus*'.[49] As a consequence of this primary mutual hostility of human beings, civilised society is constantly threatened with disintegration. The justification for man's hostility is achieved by two mechanisms, rationalisation and projection. Rationalisation is the process by which a course of action is given *ex post facto* reasons which not only justify it, but also conceal its true motivation. Antipathy is thus rationalised, not by acknowledging its basic selfishness, but by ascribing it to a love of justice or sense of reality. The rationalisation is then strengthened by projection. This is an unconscious group activity in which unpleasant feelings in the self such as feelings of guilt or inferiority are attributed to others. This aspect of group behaviour receives extensive treatment in Rubenstein's analysis of the Jewish situation in Germany in *After Auschwitz*.

It is important to note that Freud based all of his theories on actual case histories. Application of these theories to art and to social criticism followed empirical observation and analysis. Freud did not learn about sublimation from his study of Leonardo da Vinci, nor did he posit the basic irrationality of man by observing his religious or political behaviour. Application of the methods of psychoanalysis to interpretation of art, literary work or social institutions possibly helped to validate and confirm the usefulness of psychoanalytic insights, but artistic productions and social institutions themselves formed no part of Freud's empirical data.[50] Freud's analysis of the human predicament led him to speculate about the past and future of mankind. The controversial works in which his main ideas concerning man's religion and its origins are elaborated, are *Totem and Taboo*, 1913, *The Future of an Illusion*, 1927, *Civilization and its Discontents*, 1930, and *Moses and Monotheism*, 1939.

Freud regarded the Oedipus complex as central to personality formation and as the 'nuclear component in all neurotic strivings, including

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49. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, Transl. Joan Riviere. Revised and newly edited by James Strachey, The Hogarth Press, London, 1963, p. 48.

50. Hall and Lindzey, op. cit. p. 61.

religion which he took to be a collective obsessional neurosis'.[51] Based upon clinical case histories, the theories he evolved were extended theoretically to the origins of religion. Freud believed that his assumptions concerning the Oedipal conflict were justifiable on the basis of his experience as a clinician and Rubenstein points out that his subsequent hypothetical reconstruction of the primal origins of religion was logically inescapable.[52]

Totem and Taboo

In *Totem and Taboo*[53] Freud presents his hypothesis concerning the origins of religion. The theme was later taken up again in *Moses and Monotheism*, the last book he completed, and was extended into Judaism and Christianity. Ricoeur sees *Moses and Monotheism* as a completion and reinforcement of the repetitive and regressive theory of *Totem and Taboo*.[54] *Totem and Taboo*, a compilation of four essays, has a subtitle which exemplifies Freud's thesis: 'Some points of agreement between the mental life of savages and neurotics.' He speculates on the origin of taboos in religion by drawing parallels between primitive totemic tribes and the compulsion neuroses of his day, particularly those in which prohibitions are present.

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51. Richard L. Rubenstein. 'Psychoanalysis and the Origins of Judaism', *The Reconstructionist*, December, 1960, p. 11.

52. Ibid.

53. *Totem and Taboo*, Transl. James Strachey, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1960, was one of Freud's least popular and most imaginative works. The primal horde theory which received such round criticism was based on the work of no less a scientist than Charles Darwin.

    In *Totem and Taboo*, p. 100, Freud suggests that psychoanalysis will 'not be tempted to trace the origin of anything so complicated as religion to a single source'. Also in *The Future of an Illusion*, Transl. W. D. Robson-Scott. Revised and edited by James Strachey, The Hogarth Press, London, 1962, p. 19, he states 'In *Totem and Taboo* it was not my purpose to explain the origin of religions but only totemism'.

    Freud saw the parallels between obsessional neurosis and religious practices of totemism as being so marked that '[i]f the term 'obsessional neurosis' had never been invented in Western civilization it could have been translated entirely from primitive tribes by calling it "taboo sickness" '. *Totem and Taboo*, p. 26.

54. Ricoeur, op. cit. p. 244.

Freud drew parallels between compulsion neuroses and totemic taboos.[55]

(1) The prohibition has no rational explanation, lacks motive, and violation of it produces anxiety which is out of all proportion to the reasons for violating it.

(2) The prohibition is associated with touching or contact of some sort.

(3) Prohibitions are maintained by internal necessity.

(4) Prohibitions are easily displaced from primary objects to substitute objects which are in some way associated with them.

(5) Violation is expiated by carrying out stereotyped ceremonial acts, the commonest of these being repeated washings.

Freud had found an answer in psychoanalytic theory to compulsion neuroses. The above-mentioned similarities led him to posit a psychoanalytic explanation for taboos associated with totemism. In *The Future of an Illusion* he claims to have searched only for the origins of taboo and not of religion. I, however, find it an inescapable conclusion that he was in fact extending his findings to the origin of religion.[56]

A totem is usually an animal (though it may also be a plant) from which a tribe believes itself to have descended and with which it has strong ties of kinship. There are some associations of the totem with the tribal god and killing or consumption of it is strictly forbidden with the exception of rare occasions, usually one day of the year on which it may be killed and consumed in a ceremony resembling a sacramental rite. Through incorporation of the totem the members avow the taking into themselves of the qualities which the totem symbolises. There is a great deal of ambivalence apparent in totemism in which the totem is totally forbidden with the exception of one particular occasion on which it is obligatory.

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55. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, pp. 26 ff. Cf. William Alston, 'Psychoanalytic Theory and Theistic Belief'. In Hick, John. ed. *Faith and the Philosophers*, MacMillan, New York, 1966, pp. 65, 66.

56. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, p. 19.

Freud noted this ambivalence to objects associated with compulsion neuroses. This suggested that unresolved sexual conflicts, for example, a desire to touch the genitalia,[57] which was strongly prohibited by parental authority, were repressed and a desire then arose which sought a substitute object, connected by means of association with the original object. The desire becomes unconscious while the prohibition remains 'noisily conscious'.[58] With the substitution the desire and the prohibition become unconscious. Thus the tendency to touch the substitute object and the fear of doing so derive from sources forgotten by the conscious mind.

A similar substitution is apparent in totemism. Freud found a clue to this displacement of emotion onto an animal in his well known case of 'Little Hans', a five year old boy whose ambivalent fear and awe of horses was seen to be a symbolic expression for his fear of and admiration for his father. His emotions had been displaced onto horses.

A noteworthy feature of totemism is its association with exogamy, indicating a prohibition against incest. The taboos associated with totemism are twofold. They are against the killing of the totem animal and against incest. Freud saw these taboos as similar to those prohibitions which under normal circumstances were introjected at the conclusion of the Oedipal phase.

Stafford-Clark suggests that obsessional neuroses are a defence against incestuous wishes and rebellions of childhood and in the same way, 'religious practices are a defence against the same fear, now spread among the entire community as a sense of guilt for their aggressive and rebellious wishes against the sexual morality of their community'.[59] Desires remain but are repressed. The ambivalence to the totem, as in the case of neurosis, is derived from long forgotten sources.

The Primal Crime Hypothesis

Freud produced a speculative, imaginative and original account of the beginnings of human history in order to find a primordial trauma from which the original taboos could have emerged. This is known as the

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57. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p. 29 (n). 58. Ibid. p. 30.
59. Stafford-Clark, op. cit. p. 181.

primal crime hypothesis and is regarded by Rubenstein as 'one of the most potent aetiological myths of the twentieth century',[60] and also as the 'most far-reaching attempt to give a dynamic explanation to religious phenomena'.[61] According to Freud's theory early man lived in primal hordes, each under the tyranny of one dominant male. The females were his property and only he had access to them sexually. As soon as the male offspring were old enough to be a sexual threat they were killed, driven out or castrated. Motivated by anger and intense sexual need these young males banded together to achieve as a group what they had failed to achieve singly, to overthrow the father and attain his power. They killed him and then partook of his body. The father was hated and feared, but he was also honoured as an example to follow. The cannibalistic act assumed identification with the father by incorporation of part of him. Linking this with his clinical observations Freud said: 'This cannibalism need not shock us; it survived into far later times. The essential point is, however, that we attribute to those primaeval people the same feelings and emotions that we have elucidated in the primitives of our own times, our children, by psychoanalytic research.'[62]

Freud postulated, as Rubenstein points out, 'that the brothers were distinguished from other species by the intense *regret* which they thereupon experienced, and by the mechanism of *denial* whereby they attempted to repress conscious memory of the dead.... Though the father was no longer present, he was, psychically, infinitely more present than while still alive. The death of the father was denied and the terror of his invisible presence was felt as never before.'[63] The ironically victorious sons were now dominated by guilt and also by the standards assumed to be those of the father. The sons prohibited for themselves what previously had been prohibited by the father. Realising that they had to renounce instinctual gratification if their achievement was to be of any value the beginnings of morality and law

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60. Rubenstein, 'Psychoanalysis and the Origins of Judaism', op. cit. p. 13.

61. Ibid, p. 11.

62. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, Transl. Katherine Jones, The Hogarth Press, London, 1951, p. 131.

63. Rubenstein, 'Psychoanalysis and the Origin of Judaism', op. cit. p. 12.

came into force. 'Each renounced the ideal of gaining for himself the position of the father, of possessing his mother or sister. With this the taboo of incest and the law of exogamy came into being.'[64] They revoked their deed by forbidding killing of the totem, the substitute for the father 'and they renounced its fruits by resigning their claim to the women who had now been set free. They thus created out of their filial sense of guilt the two fundamental taboos of totemism, which for that very reason inevitably corresponds to the two repressed wishes of the Oedipus complex'.[65] Strengthened by guilt, which as suggested earlier is in Freud's view the determinant of civilisation, the dictates of the father returned in disguised form as totemic taboos. Also, as Rubenstein asserts, 'Two forces prevented complete suppression of the memory of what had happened: the feeling of guilt by the brothers demanded catharsis of confession, and the Promethean feelings of triumph demanded the repetition of the victory. The totem sacrifice, in which an animal was substituted for the original human victim, made it possible for both contradictory motivations - regret and triumph - to intersect in a single deed, the sacrificial act of confession and re-enactment through the use of a surrogate victim.'[66]

It is doubtful whether Freud actually believed in the historicity of this account. He indicated, with some ambivalence, that this was part of the inheritance of the human race. Stafford-Clark suggests that Freud pleads poetic licence and that whether 'it happened or not, it is important, because it corresponds to the myths and dreams of all the human race. If it corresponds to the myths and dreams of all the human race, it must have happened. Freud the myth-maker has come a long way from Freud the scientist'.[67] Rubenstein states, 'I do not believe that an original divine-human parricide ever occurred as a historical or proto-historical event. I do believe that Freud has offered us a powerful and definitive myth that expresses some of the most significant and inescapable conflicts to which all men are forever condemned and which they unconsciously express in their religious life'.[68]

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64. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, op. cit. p. 132.
65. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p. 143.
66. Rubenstein, 'Psychoanalysis and the Origin of Judaism', op. cit. p. 12.
67. Stafford-Clark, op. cit. p. 184.
68. Rubenstein, *The Religious Imagination*, p. xii.

Rubenstein makes extensive use of the primal crime myth in his understanding of man's dependence on Promethean self-assertion in his religious attitude. He also sees it as central to sacrifice and the Eucharist.

In the conclusion of *Totem and Taboo*, Freud developed his famous hypothesis about inheritance of unconscious racial guilt for the primal murder. This now discredited hypothesis suggests that all religions are attempts to palliate inherited guilt for the murder of the primal father. In *Moses and Monotheism* Freud supplemented his theory of inherited racial guilt by adding the notion of the return of repressed racial memories. He attempted to find in the origins of Hebrew monotheism a return of the repressed memories of the primal crime.

Moses and Monotheism

In *Moses and Monotheism* Freud uses the same principles to explain the development of religion up to Christianity. The collective ambivalent feelings for the father become repressed and, like all repressed material, seek conscious expression. The repressed material is expressed in disguised form. Eventually the animal was replaced with a personal deity thus bearing a closer resemblance to the original father. 'To represent that father as a personal deity is obviously closer to the truth of the matter, closer to an actual reinstatement of the father, and Freud suggests that this development was abetted by the fact that in the course of time the bitterness against the father abated and his image became a more ideal one, especially since, as none of the brothers could attain to his power and status, that status came to be an unattainable ideal for them. But the hostility had not disappeared.'[69] The primeval father is most fully restored in monotheism which was attained by the Jews. *Moses and Monotheism* offers important considerations regarding the origin of monotheist religions in general. Freud tries to make a plausible reconstruction of a murder that would be for monotheism what the primal father had been for totemism, and which could be a continuation, reinforcement and amplification of the

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69. Alston, op. cit. p. 69.

primal murder. 'The transition to monotheism required the renewal of the killing itself, so that the father figure might be strengthened and sublimated, the guilt increased, the reconciliation with the father exalted, and later, in Christianity, the substitute figure of the son magnified....Finally, the religion of St. Paul completes this return of the repressed and relates it to its prehistoric source by giving it the name of original sin: a crime was committed against God and death alone could redeem it.'[70]

In *Moses and Monotheism* Freud presents theories regarding

(a) the killing of Moses by the Jews. He believed Moses to have been an Egyptian, who, influenced by Akhnaton, attempted to impose monotheism on the Jews. He was murdered, following the pattern of the primal crime. Alston suggests that with the murder of Moses the Jews were 'sensitized for a more complete return of the repressed material and so gradually came to accept the doctrine of their great leader'.[71] They oscillated between obedience to and hatred for the remembered image of the primordial father. The motive for accepting Moses' laws was the same as that which motivated the primal horde in *Totem and Taboo*.

(b) As pure ethical monotheism is unstable and attempts reconciliation with the father without taking adequate account of the presence of guilt and hostility, the deficiency is remedied in Christianity which takes its point of departure from man's original sin and the atoning death of Christ. But though the son dies he is resurrected, becomes the centre of worship, and hostility to the father remains triumphant. Of Holy Communion Freud says 'The ambivalency dominating the father-son relationship, however, shows clearly in the final result of the religious innovation. Meant to propitiate the father deity, it ends by his being dethroned and set aside. The Mosaic religion had been a Father religion; Christianity became a Son religion. The old

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70. Ricoeur, op. cit. p. 246.

71. Alston, op. cit. p. 70.

God, the Father, took second place; Christ, the Son, stood in His stead. Just as in those dark times every son had longed to do.'[72]

(c) Freud puts forward poignant views on anti-Semitism which are echoed in Rubenstein's *After Auschwitz*. One of the persistent features of anti-Semitism in the accusation of deicide. Freud sees this accusation against the Jews in psychoanalytic terms. 'The poor Jewish people, who with its usual stiff-necked obduracy continued to deny the murder of the "father", has dearly expiated this in the course of centuries. Over and over again they heard the reproach: you killed our God. And this reproach is true, if rightly interpreted. It says, in reference to the history of religion: you won't *admit* that you murdered God (the archetype of God, the primaeval Father and his reincarnations). Something should be added, namely: "It is true, we did the same thing, but we *admitted* it, and since then we have been purified." Not all accusations with which antisemitism pursues the descendants of the Jewish people are based on such good foundations.'[73]

Other motives for anti-Semitism are either obvious or lie deeper and spring from secret sources. These, according to Freud, include the Jews' stubborn survival despite all attempts to eradicate them, unconscious acceptance that the Jews are in fact the chosen people which results in the operation of sibling rivalry, and an aloofness or separation from other people. One of the customs which marked off their aloof position, that of circumcision, made a disagreeable, uncanny impression on others. According to Freud, the explanation for this is that it reminds them of the dreaded castration idea and of things in their primeval past which they would fain forget.[74] Another important explanation for anti-Semitism offered by Freud is taken up by Rubenstein in his explanation of German anti-Semitism. Freud calls

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72. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p. 141.

73. Ibid. p. 145.

74. Ibid. p. 147.

the imposition of Christianity the most recent motive of the series. All people who 'now excel in the practice of antisemitism became Christians only in relatively recent times, sometimes forced to it by bloody compulsion...under the thin veneer of Christianity they have remained what their ancestors were, barbarically polytheistic. They have not yet overcome their grudge against the new religion which was forced on them, and they have projected it on to the source from which Christianity came to them'.[75] The Jewish milieu in which the Gospels are set facilitated such a projection. 'The hatred of Judaism is at bottom a hatred for Christianity, and it is not surprising that in the German National-Socialist revolution this close connection of the two monotheistic religions finds such clear expression in the hostile treatment of both.'[76] Rubenstein sees a great deal of German anti-Semitism as a direct result of the imposition of Christianity upon the Teutons.

Other Factors in the Genesis of Religion

The theories put forward in *Totem and Taboo* and *Moses and Monotheism* are historically fantastic. However, Wallwork asserts that the validity of Freud's major contribution to the study of religion is not affected by 'these dubious metapsychological hypotheses regarding the primal murder, inherited guilt, and the return of repressed racial memories'.[77] Freud himself suggests in *Civilization and its Discontents* that the decisive point is not whether the father was actually killed, inasmuch as the universal Oedipus complex binds *all* individuals to experience guilt.[78] 'Had Freud applied this insight to his cultural studies of religion, he might well have dispensed with the primal horde, inherited guilt, and the racial unconscious, and simply observed that the unconscious memories and Oedipal conflicts mirrored in totemism, Judaism, and Christianity stem from common experiences in infancy.'[79]

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75. Ibid.
76. Ibid. p. 148.
77. Wallwork, op. cit. p. 274.
78. Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, p. 68.
79. Wallwork, op. cit. p. 274.

By 1910 Freud had already given an indication of the strong unconscious factors in the genesis of religion in his study of Leonardo da Vinci.[80] He was convinced that the individual's relationship with God was predetermined by the relationship with his earthly father. Repressed ambivalent emotions of love and fear, obedience and rebellion, hatred and dependence, returned in religious symbols and rituals.

In this work he also hints at an obscure connection between the phallic mother and the role of mother goddesses to which he later alluded in *Totem and Taboo*. 'I cannot suggest at what point in this process of development a place is to be found for the great mother goddesses, who may perhaps in general have preceded the father-gods.'[81] This undeveloped area in Freud's thinking is the most important area of departure in Rubenstein's Freudian thinking. Rubenstein asserts that Freud's primal crime hypothesis is 'not primal enough' and that the facts as known 'increasingly suggest that the earliest religions were matriarchial'.[82]

In his work on Leonardo, and others, Freud discusses sublimation, a concept which assumes great significance in Rubenstein's understanding of Rabbinic Judaism. Rubenstein states that sublimation is 'the characteristically Jewish way of handling the stresses of the unconscious'[83] (a view also hinted at by Freud[84]), and he regards Paul's break with Judaism 'as largely resulting from his failure to handle the dilemmas of the unconscious by means of sublimation'.[85]

Sublimation, as described by Freud, is a complex phenomenon. It is an important ego function through which a sexual impulse or its energy is unconsciously deflected so as to express itself in a non-sexual and socially acceptable activity. It is a term which is often used loosely

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80. Freud, S., *Leonardo Da Vinci : A Study in Psychosexuality*, New York, Random House, 1947. First published in German, 1910.
81. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p. 149.
82. Rubenstein, 'Psychoanalysis and the Origin of Judaism', p. 14.
83. Rubenstein, *The Religious Imagination*, p. 63.
84. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p. 138.
85. Rubenstein, *The Religious Imagination*, p. xiii.

to denote any substitution of what appears to be a 'higher' for a 'lower' satisfaction. Freud pointed out that the development of civilisation was made possible by such diversion of instinctual energy into socially acceptable and culturally creative channels. 'Sublimation, in fact, takes on protean forms with law, order, social progress, interaction, and achievement as areas of manifestation.'[86]

According to Stafford-Clark sublimation 'was Freud's hope for the creative future of humanity. He saw it as an alternative to neurosis, indeed as the alternative which creative man had always found when the dammed-back libido sought other paths for expression'.[87] He rightly points out that Freud did not believe that displaced sexual energy was the sole source of artistic creativity, nor that the creative ability of the artist could be wholly explained by the mechanism of sublimation. He did, however, 'believe that the highest excursions of the human spirit, in the worlds of creative art and science, gained their impetus at the human level from the reserves of libidinal energy converted to their use'.[88]

In *Civilisation and its Discontents* Freud talks of sublimation as a means of fending off suffering. 'The task here is that of shifting the instinctual aims in such a way that they cannot come up against frustration from the external world. In this, sublimation of the instincts lends its assistance. One gains the most if one can sufficiently heighten the yield of pleasure from the sources of psychical and intellectual work. When that is so, fate can do little against one. A satisfaction of this kind, such as an artist's joy in creating, in giving his phantasies body, or a scientist's in solving problems or discovering truths, has a special quality which we shall certainly one day be able to characterize in metapsychological terms. At present we can only say figuratively that such satisfactions seem "finer and higher". But their intensity is mild as compared with that derived from the sating of crude and primary instinctual impulses; it does not convulse our physical being. And the weak point of this method is that

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86. Watson, op. cit. p. 479.
87. Stafford-Clark, op. cit. pp. 164, 165.
88. Ibid. p. 165.

it is not applicable generally: it is accessible to only a few people. It presupposes the possession of special dispositions and gifts which are far from being common to any practical degree.'[89]

Rubenstein displays disillusionment with this limiting aspect of sublimation. In his study of Paul and in his own personal confessions,[90] he shows the inapplicability of sublimation to some individuals. Another recurrent theme in his writing is a denigration of the so-called 'higher' aspects of religion in favour of a recognition of man's basal instincts and methods most suitable for dealing with and expiating these realities.

Religion: an Obsessional Neurosis

A more thoroughgoing study of infantile needs in religion was put forward in *The Future of an Illusion* and elaborated further in *Civilization and its Discontents*.

The main theme of *The Future of an Illusion* is that man's relationship with his father is decisive in the formation of religious beliefs. Developing his theme beyond the primal crime hypothesis, Freud turns to the age-old human feeling of dependence and the need for protection. Religion is an infantile prototype of which it is only the continuation.[91] Freud points out that in early infancy it is the mother who satisfies the child's hunger and becomes its first love object and protection against anxiety. In the function of protection, however, 'the mother is soon replaced by the stronger father who retains that position for the rest of childhood'.[92] The child experiences ambivalent feelings of fear as well as longing and admiration for the father. These emotions are repressed. The adult is, however, at the mercy of his repressed feelings, of destructive natural forces and of moral demands made upon him.

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89. Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, pp. 16, 17.
90. Rubenstein's writing has a distinct 'confessional' quality about it.
91. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, p. 13.
92. Ibid.

The ego becomes flooded with anxiety.[93] 'When the growing individual finds that he is destined to remain a child forever, that he can never do without protection against strange superior powers, he lends those powers the features belonging to the figure of his father; he creates for himself the gods whom he dreads, whom he seeks to propitiate and whom he nevertheless entrusts with his own protection.'[94] Man regresses to an infantile stage so that he may be protected by a father he both fears and loves. The humanisation of natural phenomena helps man to react to them and to be a little more than defenceless in that he can apply the same methods 'against these violent supermen outside' as those he employs in society. He can 'try to adjure them, to appease them, to bribe them, and, by so influencing them...rob them of a part of their power'.[95] Thus, through projections of this sort, man can deal by psychical means with his own senseless anxiety. Death is overcome in that death itself 'is not extinction, it is not a return to inorganic lifelessness, but the beginning of a new kind of existence which lies on the path of development to something higher.'[96]

With this regression and projection of a divine being of which his own father is the prototype man follows the infantile model by realising that he must adopt the same methods of establishing good relations with God as he did with his own father. God must be appeased and if his wishes are denied hostility and punishment ensue. Feelings of ambivalence, love, fear, hostility are directed at the deity in analogous fashion as to the human father. Religion thus became 'the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity; like the obsessional neuroses of children, it arose out of the Oedipus complex, out of the relation to the

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93. Freud distinguished three types of anxiety, a crucial concept in psychoanalytic theory:-

(i) *Objective anxiety* in which real objective danger arouses anxiety.

(ii) *Neurotic anxiety* - a fear aroused by instinctual forces and that the ego will not be strong enough to prevent the impulsive discharge of instinctual energy.

(iii) *Moral anxiety* aroused by recognition of danger from conscience. It appears as feelings of guilt or shame, either at actions already perpertrated, or those merely contemplated.

Modern Analysts would also differentiate existential anxiety or *Angst*, which is part of the human condition.

94. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, p. 20. 95. Ibid, p. 13. 96. Ibid. p.15.

father'.[97] Humanity develops an illusion as a source of comfort in the face of helplessness. The 'primal father was the original image of God, the model on which later generations have shaped the figure of God'.[98] Original sin and a sense of guilt were related to primitive inherited shame going back to the primal crime.

It is important to clarify what Freud meant by an illusion. I quote his own words: 'An illusion is not the same thing as an error.... What is characteristic of illusions is that they are derived from human wishes....Illusions need not necessarily be false - that is to say, unrealizable or in contradiction to reality....Thus we call a belief an illusion when wish-fulfilment is a prominent factor in its motivation, and in doing so we disregard its relations to reality, just as the illusion itself sets no store by verification.'[99]

But Freud suggests that religion is like a narcotic or intoxicant without which men who have been brought up on the sweet or 'bitter-sweet poison'[100] of religion from childhood could not endure the cruelties of reality. Appealing to the sovereignty of reason he asks: 'But what of the other men, who have been sensibly brought up? Perhaps those who do not suffer the neurosis will need no intoxicant to deaden it. They will, it is true, find themselves in a difficult situation. They will have to admit to themselves the full extent of their helplessness and their insignificance in the machinery of the universe; they can no longer be the centre of creation, no longer the object of tender care on the part of beneficent Providence...surely infantilism is destined to be surmounted....Need I confess to you that the sole purpose of my book is to point out the necessity for this forward step?'[101]

Even if man, for the moment, remains incapable of giving up the illusion, Freud asserts the view that 'civilization runs a greater risk if we

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97. Ibid. p. 39. 98. Ibid. p. 38. 99. Ibid, pp. 26, 27.

100. Ibid. p. 45.

101. Ibid. It is interesting to note that in letters dated 21 August '981 and 20 June 1980, Rubenstein admits that he finds participation in worship at the Reform Synagogue in Tallahassee 'infantilizing'. He, however, found great meaning in participation in Shinto rituals in Japan where he was purified and participated, 'in good pagan fashion', in the ritual. (by personal communication).

maintain our present attitude to religion than if we give it up'.[102] Healthy adulthood and maturity demand, for Freud, the abandonment of religion.

Homo Homini Lupus

In *Civilization and its Discontents*, written three years later, this theme is elaborated. The need for these illusions is re-examined in terms of man's instinctual drives and their outcome. Freud speaks of the universality of suffering....'We are threatened with suffering from three directions: from our own body, which is doomed to decay and dissolution and which cannot even do without pain and anxiety as warning signals; from the external world, which may rage against us with overwhelming and merciless forces of destruction; and finally from our relations to other men. The suffering which comes from this last source is perhaps more painful to us than any other.'[103]

Homo homini lupus, man's inhumanity to man, constitutes the greatest danger and becomes a dominant theme in the book. This harshness of life is another name for the helplessness of the ego in its primal situation of subjection to its three masters, the id, the superego and reality. To the threefold nature of anxiety and fear, *Civilization and its Discontents* adds the further trait: 'man is basically a "discontented" being, for he cannot achieve happiness in a narcissistic manner and at the same time fulfil the historic task of culture which his aggressiveness impedes; this is the reason why man, threatened in his self-regard, is so enamoured of consolation'.[104] This theme can be seen in *The Future of an Illusion*. Culture steps in to meet man's needs and the new face of civilisation is not one of proscription but of protection 'and the benevolent visage is the visage of religion'.[105]

Discontent, however, remains. One of the reasons lies in man's confrontation with the absurd commandment to love his neighbour as himself, and the impossible demand to love his enemies (the absurdity

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102. Ibid. p. 31.
103. Freud, *Civilisation and its Discontents*, p. 14.
104. Ricoeur, op. cit. 250. 105. Ibid.

and impossibility being inherent in Freud's view of man). Freud sees this aggression as a derivative of and the main representative of the death instinct. Thus the evolution of civilisation represents a struggle between Eros and Death. 'This struggle is what all life essentially consists of, and the evolution of civilisation may therefore be simply described as the struggle for life of the human species. And it is this battle of the giants that our nursemaids try to appease with their lullaby about heaven.'[106]

Civilisation can only be ensured by communal renunciation of instinctual gratification, the renunciation of aggression being the hardest privation of all. Guilt, particularly common guilt, would be one way of enforcing this renunciation, to employ internalised violence against externalised violence. Stafford-Clark makes an interesting observation: 'The easiest way to make it effective would be to displace the aggression from the ego to the super-ego, and then to introject the super-ego not simply into each individual but into the community, into their communal values and beliefs. In fact a new system of ethics would have to take the place of the old; and it is hard to see how psychoanalysis itself could escape the invidious distinction of becoming a new religion'.[107]

As suggested earlier, Freud regards guilt as the most important problem in the development of civilisation and the price paid for advance in civilisation is a loss of happiness through a heightening of the sense of guilt. In the last analysis, civilisation's discontent is the sense of guilt produced by it. Religions have never overlooked the part played in civilisation by a sense of guilt and they claim to redeem mankind from this sense of guilt, which they call sin.[108]

Freud's vision of mankind is a mournful but compassionate one. While his final conclusion is that the price of culture and civilisation is individual suffering and guilt and renunciation of instinctual drives, he holds out a tenuous hope that the neurosis of culture may itself derive from the punitive nature of a collective superego which may some

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106. Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, p. 59.
107. Stafford-Clark, op. cit. p. 187.
108. Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, p. 73.

day be accessible to communal analysis.[109]

Rubenstein within the Freudian Circle

Freud's view of religion is hostile and his view of man pessimistic. Wallwork points out the three-pronged nature of Freud's challenge to religion.[110]

Firstly, his view of man was clearly incompatible with the classical religious doctrine that man's aesthetic, moral and religious attributes transcend the realm of nature and scientific explanation, and that man's superior nature was divinely ordained. Freud mined the depths of the unconscious to find hidden sources of moral behaviour and religious belief, and to solve the riddle of man's superiority over the animals. Secondly, Freud challenged the validity of many religious beliefs by unmasking their 'real' but unconscious origins, the most obvious area being divine providence which he regarded as an illusion to satisfy man's innate need for protection. Although speculative philosophers like David Hume and Ludwig Feuerbach had arrived at similar conclusions their suggestions could be dismissed as the products of speculation. It was difficult to disavow the magnitude of Freud's evidence for his conclusions in view of the scientific basis of his clinical observation. Thirdly, Freud challenged the assumption that the ultimate effects of religious beliefs and practices yielded positive benefits. From his clinical observation Freud found that religious beliefs and attitudes were often dysfunctional in that they impoverished the believer's ability to cope in a mature and rational manner with threatening forces, and that religious prohibitions often caused people to live overly guilt-ridden, unhappy and unfulfilled lives. An anxious adult, seeking security, projects the illusion of a loving father God who, in turn, makes impossible moral demands. Providence and forgiveness of the Oedipal sin are gained at excessive psychic cost and repression of id impulses, which in their turn engender neurotic anxiety and bizarre symptoms. A vicious cycle of anxiety, repression, projection, moral repression and anxiety is thus set in motion.[111]

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109. Stafford-Clark, op. cit. p. 187.

110. Wellwork, op. cit, pp. 252, 253. 111. Ibid. p. 272.

Wallwork's objections to Freud's view of religion lie precisely in these three areas.[112] He questions the accuracy of Freud's portrayal of man as being determined by intrapsychic forces beyond his control. He also asks whether conscious thoughts and deeds can reasonably be assumed to be determined by sexual and aggressive impulses and unconscious memories of infantile conflicts. Are man's moments of intellectual creativity spurious and is a sense of moral responsibility rarely illusory? He maintains that in Freud's view man is devoid of an irreducible personal centre, a seat of genuine spiritual creativity, decision, action and energy, and in view of the widespread experience of the existence of this irreducible centre, Freud's conception of man, while having validity, is incomplete.

Secondly, he questions Freud's view of God as a projected illusion. This view does no justice to the non-parental religions and also takes no account of the mature and valid contributions of the great theologians from Augustine to Tillich, who, examined on their own terms, do not reflect the primitive fantasies described by Freud.

Thirdly, although religion has resulted in repressive attitudes Freud ignores the finer qualities such as trust, kindness, love and forgiveness which can also be seen as the fruits of religion. His view of the infantile mode of religion, while fitting in with some religious practices of some individuals, does not cover universal modes of religion. Pointing towards Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Erik H. Erikson, Wallwork suggests that some forms of religious belief contribute precisely to that form of psychological maturity which Freud had in mind. By his ruthless criticism of the childish irrationality of religion Freud inadvertently contributed to the emergence of more appropriate figures for human awe, devotion and service as represented in Bonhoeffer's contrast of immature 'religion' with mature Christian faith and Erik H. Erikson's view of religion as a 'profound inner conviction of the trustworthiness of oneself within a trustworthy universe'.[113]

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112. Ibid. p. 276.

113. Wallwork, 'Erik H. Erikson', Johnson *et al*, op. cit. p. 338. In the same work, Roger A. Johnson, in the chapter on Dietrich Bonhoeffer, points out that for Bonhoeffer the terms *religion* and *religious* have a special and particular connotation. Instead of referring to *all* forms of belief and practice and ecclesiastical institutions they refer to a personality type.

Freud's attitude to religion nevertheless reveals his own cherished beliefs and values. These include his personal atheism, his compassionate sensitivity to moral injustice combined with his pessimistic view of man, and his commitment to truths revealed by science. These beliefs and values were endangered by the superstitious immoral and non-verifiable elements in popular religion. Freud's view certainly helped to enlarge our understanding of the unconscious factors which play a part in religious belief. Anxiety and helplessness do play a part in religion and religious institutions have often resulted in excessively repressive moral codes causing oppressive guilt.

Stafford-Clark correctly views psychoanalysis as a method of study, research and treatment which can be based on solid claims and as a discipline which has undoubted validity. He however, regards Freud's philosophical theories, beginning with the concept of the death instinct and proceeding to the origins of morality and religion as the unfettered speculation of their originator.[114] He suggests that no hypothesis regarding the occurrence of religious beliefs, no matter how valid or convincing, affects the essential validity of the beliefs themselves. Freud, he points out, never challenges the validity of religious beliefs and nowhere does he *prove* or even seek to prove that religious belief is illusory.[115] Nevertheless, Wallwork suggests that Freud's demonstration of the 'real' but unconscious origins of religious illusion constitutes a serious challenge to their validity.[116]

An important related consideration is put forward by Alston.[117] He asks whether Freud's naturalistic explanation of religion renders theistic belief unacceptable. Acceptance of Freud's explanation of God as an illusion and religion as a universal obsessional neurosis of humanity could, if taken to the extreme, show that religious beliefs can no longer be considered serious candidates for acceptance. As a live issue at present, and as the only theory which attempts to spell out in any detail the psychological mechanisms involved in religion, Alston regards Freudian theory as being 'in possession of a larger segment of the complete explanation than any other',[118] although he admits that no theory of

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114. Stafford-Clark, op. cit. p. 198. 115. Ibid. p. 199.
116. Wallwork, op. cit. p. 270.
117. Alston, Hick, Ed., op. cit. pp. 63 - 102. 118. Ibid. p. 65.

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116. Wallwork, op. cit. p. 270.
117. Alston, Hick, Ed., op. cit. pp. 63 - 102. 118. Ibid. p. 65.

religion which proceeds in terms of any one sort of factor can possibly present a complete explanation of religious belief.

After a careful logical explanation he concludes that 'even if the psychoanalytic theory of the causal basis of theistic belief is correct, there seems to be no reason to say that therefore religion is a happy alternative to a neurosis; and therefore there is no reason for suggesting, on these grounds, that theistic belief is false, probably false, or unworthy of serious consideration'.[119] It is still possible to distinguish causal explanation of a belief from disproof of that belief.[120]

Freud made it quite clear what he meant when he used the word 'illusion', and that it does not necessarily deny the reality behind the illusion. Also, Alston reveals the logical fallacy inherent in the view that acceptance of the psychoanalytic approach to religion renders theism unworthy of consideration. However, as Alasdair MacIntyre[121] points out, Freud treats religion as a form of belief known independently to be false and therefore to be explained as a misconstruction. In the same way that the Christian moves within a circle of justifying reasons in relation to religious beliefs, assessing matters in his own terms, the convinced Freudian moves within a similar circle which exists on the same level as a religious system. There is a prior attitude toward religion which affects the elucidation of it. He suggests that Freudianism, in the sense in which it provides a ground for rejecting Christianity is far more than a theory. *If we accept the Freudian explanation of religion we are already moving inside the Freudian circle.*[122]

Rubenstein appears, in my opinion, to be moving within the Freudian circle which determines his approach to religion, to man and to the death of God. Rubenstein adopts a naturalistic approach to religion. There is no evidence in his writing of a transcendent deity who *reveals*

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119. Ibid. pp. 98 f.

120. Ibid. p. 102.

121. Alisdair MacIntyre, Hick, ed., op. cit. p. 111.

122. Ibid. (my emphasis).

himself to humanity.[123] There are elements of the functional approach to religion in his thought. He sees religion as representing a return of the repressed to human consciousness.[124] These aspects of his thought will be elaborated in the next chapter.

Rubenstein has been intimately involved in psychoanalysis.[125] Miller points out that it is easy for the outsider to be critical of Freud's ideas in that Freud had little to say to someone who is not personally involved in psychoanalysis. Those who are involved are usually less confident in their criticism.

Once one is involved in the psychoanalytic expedition back to childhood and personal commitment to the therapeutic process is given and honesty is attempted, 'it is no longer so obvious what is reasonable and what is absurd. There is some merit to the claim that the criticism of

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123. In a recent article 'Religion and History : Power, History and the Covenant at Sinai' to be published in Jacob Neusner, ed., *Take Judaism For Example. Studies Toward the Comparison of Religion*, University of Chicago Press, 1982 (forthcoming), Rubenstein states that 'there is no reason to doubt that Moses had a revelatory experience...and that experience became the basis for the covenant between the new God and the escapees'. (p. 14). This statement is an unusual one for Rubenstein, as in his other works one gains the distinct impression that God is *not* a revealing God.

124. Norman O. Brown also sees religion, and more particularly Protestantism, as a return of the repressed to consciousness. Psychoanalysis may claim that it represents a fuller return of the repressed than does religion. It may claim that alienation is about to be overcome and that the return of the repressed is about to be completed. 'But this superior wisdom does not authorize psychoanalysis to dismiss religion as neurotic. As Freud pointed out, there is "not only method in madness, but also a fragment of historical truth". If we take seriously the position that human history is the history of a neurosis, then psychoanalysis (unless Freud was sent to us by God) is inside the neurosis, and the neurosis itself must always have contained those "attempts at explanation and cure" which Freud at the end of his life came to regard as the only basis for therapeutic hope.' Luther is a stage in the process which leads to Freud. 'The neurotic process and the historical processes are dialectical.' Brown, op. cit. pp. 231, 232.

125. Rubenstein, *The Religious Imagination*, pp. xix f. and *My Brother Paul*, p. 18.

psychoanalysis is best left to those who have experienced it'.[126] Rubenstein's personal commitment to the therapeutic process of psychoanalysis and his acceptance of Freud's applied psychoanalytic theories must therefore be seen as inextricably bound.

Freud's view of man was undoubtedly culture-bound. His view of primal man was bound by the bias and maladjustments of the middle-class European family of the early twentieth century. He insisted that the primal horde and killing was not an allegory but an event which recurred thousands of times before civilisation could be achieved. Each child is destined to overcome the battle with his own father in his lifetime. His emphasis on the immense force of unconscious factors in human conduct made the old faith in the inevitability of human progress through man's constant growth of knowledge and understanding sound like an innocent myth concocted to amuse little children.[127]

Freud was a man of genius, compassion and abiding influence. Hall and Lindzey attribute his tremendous impact and influence to the fact that his ideas are challenging, that his conception of man is both broad and deep, and that his theory has relevance for our times. 'Freud may not have been a rigorous scientist nor a first-rate theoretician, but he was a patient, meticulous, penetrating observer and a tenacious, disciplined, courageous, original thinker. Over and above all of the other virtues of his theory stands this one - it tries to envisage a full-bodied individual living partly in a world of reality and partly in a world of make-believe, beset by conflicts and inner contradictions, yet capable of rational thought and action, moved by forces of which he has little knowledge and by aspirations which are beyond his reach, by turn confused and clear-headed, frustrated and satisfied, hopeful and despairing, selfish and altruistic; in short, a complex human being. For many people this picture of man has essential validity.'[128]

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126. Miller, op. cit. pp. 264, 265.

127. Ibid. p. 267.

128. Hall and Lindzey, op. cit. p. 72.

C H A P T E R IV

The highest form of the comic arises precisely when the individual comes directly under the infinite abstraction of 'pure humanity', without any of those intermediary qualities which temper the humour of man's position and strengthen its pathos, with any of the concrete particulars of organization which the levelling process destroys....Man's only salvation lies in the reality of religion for each individual.

Søren Kierkegaard

RUBENSTEIN'S VIEWS ON MAN AND RELIGION AS PRESENTED IN *AFTER AUSCHWITZ*

We now turn from Rubenstein's Freudian background to his views on man and religion. During the nineteen sixties Rubenstein addressed himself to the specifically Jewish issues arising out of the Holocaust, primarily exploring their theological significance. In his more recent work the focus is not on the Holocaust *per se* but on what we can learn from the Holocaust about our current situation in the larger world and he thus investigates its political, historical and sociological implications. 'I am currently concerned with larger issues', he states. 'I would, however, stress that this represents a development rather than a leap from one sphere to another. The connecting link is, of course, the Holocaust,....'[1]

My first encounter with the thought of Richard L. Rubenstein resulted from my reading of *After Auschwitz*. In that major work of the nineteen sixties he propounded his views on the death of the God who acts in history and in the wake of that event he formulated the way in which

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1. Rubenstein, Personal communication, letter dated 5 July 1979.

Jews could live meaningfully. In *After Auschwitz* he spelled out a functional rationale for maintaining Jewish practice in terms of communal and individual needs, an approach which could meet the needs of modern Jews because it maintained the essence of Jewish practice. However, there has been a significant change in his thought generally and specifically in his own personal response to Jewish observance. This became particularly apparent in *Power Struggle*, his autobiographical confession. I must confess that at the time of reading that work I experienced some confusion with regard to his stance in relation to Jewish ritual practice. His shift in thought was accompanied by a personal abandonment of Jewish observance which I was unable to reconcile with his views as propounded in *After Auschwitz*. His stance and development have been greatly clarified by personal correspondence.

Firstly, he pointed out that already in an early work, *The Religious Imagination*, he argues that one of the most important needs served by rabbinic tradition is that of disciplining Jews so that they are not tempted to express their counter-aggressive tendencies in the face of their overlords, either Roman or post-Roman. Rabbinic Judaism is therefore seen as a response of the Jewish community to the conditions of defeat and powerlessness that followed the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E.

Secondly, in *Power Struggle* he asserts that rabbinic authority is based ultimately on a Roman political decision. His question is whether *he* has any reason to be bound by that decision.[2] He sees in the Jewish prayer book a representation of the situation, hopes and yearnings of a bitterly defeated people who look forward to the day when its religious and political institutions will be restored and defeat will be turned into victory. 'Thus, the institutions of rabbinic Judaism were from the start designed to be *interim* institutions that were meant to come to an end with the restoration of Jewish autonomy in Israel. Put differently, implicit in the nature of rabbinic Judaism was an urge towards *closure* at some future date. When I stood at the Wall on Tisha b'Ab in 1967, it was my conviction that closure had taken place.'[3]

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2. Rubenstein, Personal communication, letter dated 30 April 1980.

3. Ibid.

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2. Rubenstein, Personal communication, letter dated 30 April 1980.

3. Ibid.

Thirdly, Rubenstein understands rabbinic Judaism as having been formulated as a result of Yochanan's bargain, the fruit of that political decision, namely, the bargain with Caesar that the powerlessness of the Jews would never be used to destroy them, if they complied with Caesar's law. The bargain was kept, more or less, until Hitler took advantage of Jewish powerlessness to exterminate European Jewry. 'I would argue that, as the conditions which provided the social basis for rabbinic Judaism had been altered and no future Caesar could ever be trusted, the religious movement in Judaism predicated on Jewish powerlessness and Caesar's trustworthiness is no longer tenable.'[4]

Fourthly, Rubenstein regards diaspora Judaism as having no long-term viability. It is a doomed community, not necessarily by violence, but by increasing intermarriage and defection. Inasmuch as Jews constitute a middle-class minority, Rubenstein views them as ultimately redundant as he does all middle-class minorities. He is convinced that the Judaism which will arise in Israel will be quite different from diaspora Judaism.

Fifthly, he remarks on his 'bureaucratic excommunication' as a result of his views. 'I became totally *persona non grata* within the Jewish community. As a result I teach at a university which is over 95% non-Jewish and, except for my wife, months go by without my even speaking to a Jewish person.'[5] He also lives in 'an overwhelmingly fundamentalist Protestant'[6] city with a population of 150 000. He has stated that Judaism must be practised within a community if it is to be meaningful.[7] His situation is such that in April 1980 he did not feel that he could belong to a congregation, and that any Jewish observance would be out of context.[8] Later in 1980 he felt obliged to join the reform temple as a member so that he could be in some way affiliated to the Jewish community.[9]

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4. Ibid. 5. Ibid.
6. Rubenstein, Personal communication, letter dated 21 August 1981.
7. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'The Symbols of Judaism and the Death of God', p. 236, where he states 'Religious symbols cease to be meaningful unless they are appropriated in the shared life of a community....There is an interdependent relationship between Jewish identity, Jewish history, and Jewish traditions.'
8. Rubenstein, Personal communication, letter dated 30 April 1980.
9. Rubenstein, Personal communication, letter dated 16 September 1980.

In August 1981 he stated that he is a member of the local reform congregation (as there is no other), but in view of his clearly stated theological views 'this affiliation is more a gesture to the social proprieties of middle-class America, in which every respectable person belongs to the "church of his choice" than it is an act of inner commitment'.[10] At the simplest level he finds the service infantilising and this is aggravated by the fact that almost none of the congregants have any responsible knowledge about their history or about Judaism except at the crudest and most primitive level. Although their lives have been overwhelmingly affected by their being Jewish, they have no perspective on this constituent of their identity.[11]

In a letter I once remarked on the harshness of the American Jewish community in relation to his bureaucratic excommunication to which Rubenstein replied: 'I am a little concerned that you do not deal too harshly with the Jewish community for the parting of the ways with me. Communities have instincts concerning who can speak for them. They understood that I did not belong. They were entirely correct. Had I been a non-ordained academic or business man, they might have wanted to claim me in any event, but I was ordained and that made a difference. Also you are writing about me, hopefully, in mid-career and the story is by no means complete.'[12]

I had written this chapter on *After Auschwitz* before having inaugurated a most fruitful correspondence with Dr. Rubenstein. Despite the fact that so much of his thinking has changed, I find no substantial reason to alter significantly the contents of my analysis of the book. It remains, in my opinion, a valid representation of Rubenstein's thought at that time and may have the advantage of being presented 'freshly', as it was perceived, with none of the later accretions having come to my knowledge at that point. This, and the following chapter, represents the basis of Rubenstein's thought of the nineteen sixties.

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10. Rubenstein, Personal communication, letter dated 21 August 1981.
11. Ibid.
12. Rubenstein, Personal communication, letter dated 20 June 1980.

Life Experience as a Basis for Theology

Richard L. Rubenstein is of the profound conviction that there can be no substitute for 'the agonizing crucible of life's experiences for meaningful theological statement'.[13] For this reason, there can be no Jewish theology which is fundamentally out of contact with the actual life of the Jewish people. The decisive moments as lived in the Jewish present, or *kairoi*, assume great significance in his thought. There are two such moments for the Jewish people in the twentieth century, the Holocaust and the re-establishment of the State of Israel. Neither event can be ignored in any meaningful theological statement.

For Rubenstein the problem of God and the death camps is the central and decisive question for Jewish theology in the twentieth century. He regards the way in which this problem in Jewish history is treated as the one pre-eminent measure of the adequacy of all contemporary theologies.[14] He expressed amazement at the silence of contemporary Jewish theologians on the question of God and the death camps,[15] and concluded, unwillingly and sadly,[16] that the God-who-acts-in-history died at Auschwitz.[17] He is convinced that if there is a God of history, he must also be the author of Auschwitz, and Hitler an instrument of his will, an idea which is too obscene for Rubenstein to accept. Man's vision of God and himself has been impaired permanently by the death camps. The belief that Jewish misfortune is the result of punitive visitation of the God who acts in history is a dysfunctional response to the Holocaust. Few ideas in Jewish religious thought have been more decisively mistaken, in spite of their deep psychological roots, than the terrible belief that God acts meaningfully in history.[18] The question for Rubenstein thus becomes: how to speak of religion in the time of the death of God.[19]

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13. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'The Supernatural Jew', p. 177.
14. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Making of a Rabbi', p. 223
15. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Symposium on Jewish Belief', p. 153.
16. Rubenstein, op. cit. Ibid. p. 152. Cf. Rubenstein, *The Religious Imagination*, p. xiv.
17. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, pp. 130, 153, 204, passim
18. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Judaism and "The Secular City" ', p. 204.
19. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, pp. 205, 153, 191, passim.

Rubenstein states quite clearly that theology is a subjective discipline. It reveals less about God than about the men we are. Its aim is to help others to clarify their thoughts in the face of common experience and thereby to contribute to self-understanding.[20] He rightly states that 'No man can really say that God is dead. How can we know that? Nevertheless, I am compelled to say that we live in the time of the "death of God". This is more a statement about man and his culture than about God. The death of God is a cultural fact'.[21]

For Rubenstein God is totally unavailable as a source of meaning and value. There is no vertical transcendence.[22] There has been a breach between present day perspectives and those of our ancestors which can never be healed. The experiences of the twentieth century have been radically different from previous experience and the theologian of today must invest theology with the way he feels about the ultimate questions of life.[23] This absence of God is felt by many. Rubenstein and the Christian death of God theologians share the experience of the radical secularity of our times.

With the rise of the modern metropolis, increasing urbanisation and advances in technology, there has been a concomitant loss of a religious dimension. Harvey Cox suggested that urbanisation is related to secularisation.[24] Some of the main characteristics of his technopolis are anonymity, mobility, pragmatism and profanity. While Cox is aware of the loneliness and alienation caused by anonymity and mobility he celebrates these attributes of modern society. Rubenstein questions this celebration. He points out the deep need man has for primary groups,[25] and questions the actual existence of the secular city in

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20. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, p. x.

21. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Symposium on Jewish Belief', p. 151.

22. Rubenstein, op. cit. pp. 205, 151.

23. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'Death of God Theology and Judaism', p. 244.

24. Harvey Cox, *The Secular City*, op. cit. pp. 4, 5 ff.

25. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, pp. 199, 221, and p. 28. He bases his ideas in this respect on the thought of the German sociologist Ferdinand Tonnies who wrote on man's need for *Gemeinschaft* (primary groups) as opposed to *Gesellschaft* which denotes contractual and rational associations typical of the modern period. Cf. Thomas F. O'Dea, *The Sociology of Religion*, Prentice-Hall, 1966, p. 36.

that what appears to be a metropolitan community turns out in reality to be a series of relatively small sub-communities separated by race, religion, national origin and economic circumstances.[26] He asks the pertinent question as to whether the proliferation of suburban churches and synagogues (a seeming anomaly in this secular age) is not a partial response to this need for primary groups.[27]

For the modern Jew the problem of secularisation and urbanisation has been aggravated by the rise of biblical criticism. Jews can no longer accept at face value the myths concerning the divine authority of traditional beliefs and practice. At the heart of traditional Judaism lies the conviction that God, the omnipotent Creator, gave the Jewish people the Torah as a guide of conduct for their lives. Basic to this belief was the conviction that the Torah is a unitary document which expressed a harmonious point of view. Any apparent contradictions in the Torah were solved in the oral law. Thus, guided for two millennia by rabbinic interpretation, the Jew could rest secure in the knowledge that his conduct was in accordance with the will of God. Righteousness was the result of obedience to God's will as revealed in the Torah, while sin constituted the lack of conformity with his will. Biblical criticism attacked this conviction at its roots and proved to be far more damaging to Judaism than to Christianity. For Christianity the Christ-event is central to affirmation. Unitary authorship of the Bible is not decisive. The Jew, on the other hand, has now to live according to the Torah, but without the previous assurance.

This already difficult situation has been further exacerbated for many by the death of their personal God after Auschwitz. The patriarchal God of monotheism has died for many, beyond all hope of resurrection.[28] Rubenstein points out three main responses to this new situation.[29] Firstly, there is a fideistic dogmatism which ignores biblical scholarship. Secondly, there is rejection of Jewish practice with a massive defection from Judaism. The third response is to find a new rationale for continuing to fulfil that sector of Jewish religious belief and practice which remains meaningful. In his major work of the

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26. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'Judaism and "The Secular City"', pp. 198, 199.
27. Ibid. op. cit., 'The Making of a Rabbi', p. 221.
28. Ibid. op. cit. 'The Symbols of Judaism and the Death of God', p. 227.
29. Ibid. p. 227. See also op. cit. 'The Making of a Rabbi', p. 223.

nineteen sixties, *After Auschwitz*, Rubenstein chose the third way of response. For him the problem was how to continue Jewish religious practice after its traditional validation had become altogether transparent. Theology, as he understood it at that time, must be able to give religious meaning after the death of God, in the face of urban civilisation and the population explosion, and in the light of modern technological progress. Rubenstein's task was formulated as how to speak of religion in the time of no God. As will be seen, he did this through maintaining traditional Jewish religious forms. However, his reasons for maintaining these forms are functional, their function being primarily psychological.

The Functional Approach to Religion

Thomas F. O'Dea states that it is 'an axiom of functional theory that what has no function ceases to exist. Since religiou has continued to exist from time immemorial it obviously must have a function, or even a complex of functions'.[30]

Religion is one of a number of institutions in the complex of social institutions and it, like the others, has both manifest and latent functions in maintaining the equilibrium of the social system as a whole. It maintains the ongoing equilibrium of the individual personality within the social system and culture. Man needs something 'beyond' the empirical, 'something that transcends experience' or a 'transcendental reference'.[31] Functional theory sees such need as arising out of the three fundamental characteristics of human existence; contingency, powerlessness and scarcity, and the consequence of these three characteristics, frustration and deprivation.[32]

J. Milton Yinger suggests that a good starting point for the functional approach to religion may be Tillich's definition of religion as that which concerns us ultimately.[33] Although there are disagreements about what contitutes ultimate problems, he suggests that most people would

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30. Thomas F. O'Dea, *The Sociology of Religion*, op. cit. p. 4.

31. Ibid. 32. Ibid. p. 5.

33. J. Milton Yinger, *The Scientific Study of Religion*, The Macmillan Company, 1970, p. 6.

accept the following as being among the fundamental concerns of human societies and individuals. How shall we respond to the fact of death? Does life have some central meaning despite the suffering and the succession of frustrations and tragedies it brings with it? How can we deal with the forces that press in upon us, endangering our livelihood, our health, and the survival and smooth operation of the groups in which we live - forces that our empirical knowledge cannot handle adequately? How can we bring our capacity for hostility and our egocentricity sufficiently under control to allow the groups within which we live to be kept together?[34] Yinger sees these questions as 'deep-seated emotional needs springing from the very nature of man as an individual and as a member of society'.[35] It will be seen that it is precisely this type of ultimate concern which preoccupies Rubenstein in his search for meaning in religion after the death of God.

The functional theory looks at man in society and recognises the contributions of personality psychology. As O'Dea points out, personality systems are not 'situationless' egos (or even 'situationless' combinations of egos, ids and superegos) but they exist within socially structured situations.[36]

Yinger sees religions as having been built to carry the 'peak load'[37] of human emotional difficulties. Religion, therefore, is a permanent aspect of human society which is unlikely to disappear no matter how enormous its range of variations. Religion is rooted in two spheres of fundamental needs - individual and group needs. The human being is endowed with the power of language and is therefore capable of anticipating the future, which includes the foreknowledge of his own death. He is also able to verbalise ideal states and create standards. Yet he is always threatened with failure, frustration and lack of fulfilment. Problems of this nature tend to loom up overwhelmingly as absolute evils. 'Religion is man's attempt to "relativize" these difficulties by interpreting them as part of some larger good, some conception of the absolute that puts the individual's problems into new perspective, thus to remove or reduce their crushing impact.'[38]

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34. Ibid. 35. Ibid. p. 7.

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34. Ibid. 35. Ibid. p. 7.

36. O'Dea, op. cit. p. 3

Yinger goes on to suggest that at the same time man's social relations are beset by similar problems in that fear and frustration can lead to disrupting hostilities unless they can be interpreted as part of a shared experience. In addition to this, there is a tendency of each individual to regard his own personal joys and desires as 'absolute goods' which threaten the patterns of mutual adjustment that social life requires. 'Religion is the attempt to relativize the individual's desires, as well as his fears by subordinating them to a conception of absolute good more in harmony with the shared and often mutually contradictory needs and desires of human groups.'[39] Generally, certain kinds of beliefs and action develop from this double rooting of religion:

(1) Failure and frustration are symbolically re-interpreted. Failure is only apparent and death is not what it seems.

(2) Religion brings each individual into a fellowship in which shared experiences are emphasised. This spreads the burden of one's fears and frustrations and thus becomes 'a kind of psychic insurance policy'[40] and lays emphasis on shared and universally available values - the scheme of salvation - rather than upon scarce values. This makes the inevitable failures with regard to the latter seem less important. Based on this, another aspect of religion emerges in that some of the values it upholds become superempirical which means 'that they are beyond the reach of constant refutation by the facts of immediate experience'.[41] Men believe 'in an effort to sustain life and hope and to give more meaning to existence'.[42]

Religion is thus, according to Yinger, 'a system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggles with these ultimate problems of human life. It expresses their refusal to capitulate to death, to give up in the face of their frustrations, to allow hostility to tear apart their human associations'.[43] The more positive elements of religion like celebration, positive affirmation, ecstasy and thanksgiving need

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39. Yinger, op. cit. p. 15. 40. Ibid. p. 16. 41. Ibid. 42. Ibid. 43. Ibid. p. 7.

also to be taken into account for a full understanding of religion. But, according to Yinger, the 'most positive affirmations achieve their power in the context of the defeat of tragedy by faith. The ode to joy - whatever cultural form it takes - is a celebration of this ultimate victory. Glory is tragedy seen through a religious prism. They are part of the same fundamental facts of human existence'.[44]

Rubenstein interprets religion as performing a definite function in the lives of individuals in society. The decision to participate in the religious community rests on forces which have little to do with rational argument. An important psychoanalytic insight is that there is a psychological function in religious myth and ritual, namely, in their capacity to objectify and dramatise the unconscious strivings of the individual in a significant social structure. The crises of life are emotionally overdetermined and it is through myth and ritual that men express at both conscious and unconscious levels, the crises of life.[45]

Rubenstein does not maintain that any one religion is 'truer' than any other. All religions have truth for their believers - truth in terms of psychological function.[46] Judaism possesses the greatest truth for Jews and is the only path to their personal authenticity. Rubenstein suspects that many individuals remain Jewish because they have concluded that self-contempt and self-falsification are too great a price to pay for safety.[47] He personally feels compelled to affirm his own identity as a Jew. He sees no particular virtue in this decision[48] but finds that it is his only pathway to authenticity as a human being.

His task as a Jewish theologian is to speak meaningfully of Judaism for the present age. Jewish theology must understand the religious act whereby the Torah remains the decisive centre of Jewish life.[49] In searching for a new rationale for maintaining Jewish belief and practice,

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44. Yinger, op. cit p. 8
45. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'Judaism and "The Secular City"',p. 195.
46. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Symposium on Jewish Belief', p. 148.
47. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Making of a Rabbi', p. 233. 48. Ibid.
49. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Meaning of Torah in Contemporary Jewish Theology', p. 117.

Rubenstein has found the insights of depth-psychology particularly useful. He points out that Freud distinguishes between the latent and manifest content in his analysis of dreams, finding the latent content most meaningful. Similarly, in the ritual act the latent content is the most meaningful. Freud spoke of religion as a group neurosis. He disparaged it at one level, but at another, he pointed to the degree to which religion reflects the deepest fears, aspirations and yearnings of the individual and group. Freud continued to believe in the psychological truth of religion, though he ceased to believe in its historical truth.[50] With this in mind, Rubenstein suggests that the modern Jew, having lost all faith in the historial justification of his faith, will find that psychological justification offers the most fruitful path for a contemporary rationale for Jewish belief and practice.

Since Rubenstein's view of man is predominantly Freudian, he understands religion in terms of psychological function. Religion in the time of the death of God 'is the way we share and celebrate both consciously and unconsciously, through the inherited myths, rituals and traditions of our communities, the dilemmas and crises of life and death, good and evil. Religion is the way we share our predicament; it is never the way in which we overcome our condition'.[51] It is man's pathetic attempt to make a meaningless word meaningful, a psychologically indispensable but futile attempt, as the human condition cannot, in fact, be overcome.[52]

Rubenstein's View of Man

Theology, according to Rubenstein, is primarily an anthropological discipline which, though it purports to make statements about God, rests on what it reveals about the theologian and his culture.[53] For this reason Rubenstein's view of man assumes great significance in any examination of his thought. Before dealing with this, however, it must be pointed out that Rubenstein's thought contains many intersecting lines and many inter-linked ideas and it is difficult to isolate any

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50. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Symbols of Judaism and the Death of God', pp. 229 f.
51. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Death of God Theology and Judaism', p. 263.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid. p. 246.

one aspect of this thinking from the whole. In an attempt to clarify the various strands of his thought, I have decided to begin with his view of man. This will be followed by an examination of the importance of the mythic structure in Judaism and Christianity. Following this, I shall give an exposition of his views on religion and its function in the modern period. His ideas on God, eschatology and history will be presented in the following chapter.

Irrational Man

For Rubenstein, as for Freud, man is a creature of inescapable unconscious conflicts which he barely understands and can less control, consequently 'no contemporary theology will speak with any degree of relevance or accuracy to the human condition if it fails realistically to assess the profound capacity of the irrational darkly to move men'.[54]

As the Holocaust is so central to his theology, Rubenstein has examined the psychological roots of the death camps. In his examination he has come to the shocking but extremely honest realisation that most men are more like the Germans than unlike them. The difference between the Germans and other men is not great. Most men would commit the same sort of atrocities under similar conditions. His analysis of this extreme situation reveals his view of man in general. Nazi Germany revealed the full potential of the demonic in humanity.

Inner Lawlessness

Rubenstein believes that inner lawlessness is universal and that socially compliant behaviour is achieved through an inner struggle against regressive anarchic tendencies. Frequently citing Ivan's statement in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, 'If God does not exist, all things are permitted', Rubenstein sees displacement of God as mankind's most demonic fantasy.[55] 'The murder of God is an immensely potent symbol of man's primal desire to do away with his impediments to instinctual gratification.[56] Thus, as in Judaism and Christianity all restraints

derive from God's lordship over the created world, the wish to murder God is the terminal mythic expression of mankind's ineradicable temptation to moral anarchy.[57] A world without God would be a world without impediment to gratification of desire no matter how perverse or socially harmful. Murdering God only makes sense when all values derive from him. It thus would make no sense within paganism.

However, as a concomitant to this demonic side of human nature, man would willingly ascribe to others, and destroy them for what they most fear in themselves.[58] In a careful analysis of the mythic structure of both Judaism and Christianity Rubenstein concludes that the Jews are represented quite unambiguously in the New Testament as deicides.[59] He sees the Jewish doctrine of election as an important component of anti-Semitism. Though Jews were hated before Christianity, the pathological hatred for them under Christianity must be seen as in part related to one of the oldest conflicts between Jew and Christian, namely, who has the right to be reckoned as the elect of the Lord. Christian anti-Semitism therefore is understood in terms of the dynamics of sibling rivalry.[60]

Anti-Semitism : A Rebellion against God

In line with Freud's views on anti-Semitism as represented in *Moses and Monotheism*, Rubenstein interprets Nazism's intense hatred of Judaism as being, in part, a hatred of Christianity. Through Christianity, the Jewish God had been imposed on the Germans, which, in turn, deposed the Teutonic folk gods. The resentment against this dethronement of the Teutonic gods by Christianity was displaced onto the mother religion. Hitler had a hatred and contempt for Christianity and German alienation could only be terminated, by an end to the Jewish God of Christianity. As it would have been difficult to uproot the Christian church the Nazis could vent their anger on the infinitely weaker Jews thus achieving a cheap victory for Teutonism.

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37. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Religion and the Origins of the Death Camps', p. 12, 13.
58. Rubenstein, op. cit. pp. 31. 78, passim.
59. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Religion and the Origins of the Death Camps', p. 12.
60. Rubenstein, op. cit. pp. 9, 10, 147, passim.

Under threat men are inclined to find safety in the death of another.[61] The real and fantasied catastrophes after World War I upset the balance in Germany. Unable to face the full impact of reality there was a massive regression into a fantasy world accompanied by the search for a magic foe upon whom all the real and imagined evils could be blamed. The Judas story of Christianity helped to create the psychological ground which made it possible for the Germans, under stress, to see the Jews as their ultimate enemy. In times of stress the Judas image is magnified, regression occurs, and primary process mental functioning supersedes secondary process mental functioning. In the search for a magic betrayer, the accusation of deicide against the Jews has always been creditable in Christian lands. It is a contemporary restatement of the old mythic drama.[62] The most important casualty under such circumstances, Rubenstein avers, is the community's sense of responsibility for its own destiny. Killing of the other is the most primitive form of social encounter. 'It hearkens back to earliest infancy when the child relates to the world primarily by means of the mouth, and eating and sleeping are its primal modes of activity.'[63] For the Nazis total destruction of the 'enemy' became the only possible alternative when victory could not be envisaged.

Rubenstein is impressed greatly by Freud's death instinct which serves to take the organism as far back as to its original state, ultimately to the state of quiescence before birth. 'All masochism, sadism, hostility, destruction violence...are thought to be an expression of the death instinct.'[64] Hitler's will was not life enhancing. It was the attempt to embody the fantasy of a paradise lost, a time before all restraints. The death camps have demonstrated that mankind's perverted fantasies are more deeply rooted in aggression than in sexuality. The Jews were so totally dehumanised that very rarely did sexual feelings intrude. Sadism and anality have also been found to be related. The Germans have always been proud of their orderliness.[65] Rubenstein points

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61. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Religion and the Origins of the Death Camps', p. 17.
62. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Person and Myth in the Judaeo-Christian Encounter', p. 72.
63. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Religion and the Origins of the Death Camps', p. 37.
64. Benjamin B. Wolman, Comp. & Ed., *Dictionary of Behavioural Science*, Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1973, p. 383.
65. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'Origins of the Death Camps' p. 38.

out that the most outwardly disciplined individuals are often the most rebellious inwardly.[66] Judaism as a religion of law represented much that such outwardly disciplined but inwardly rebellious men resented most, and this was aggravated by the Church's claim that men had been liberated by the Gospel. The choice of Hitler as a leader was extremely telling. His infantile fury offered the simplest and most infantile method of dealing with real or imagined enemies - by extermination.

Surrender of the Superego

Freud was awesomely prophetic in describing the behaviour of groups under an all-powerful leader to whom they could surrender all judgment and rationality. Firstly, cruelties normally not permitted could be allowed. Secondly, a regression to infantile, illogical and magical thinking takes place. Thirdly, there is identification with, and absolute submission to, the will of the leader and a total surrender of the superego.[67]

Those who accused the Jews of the demonic subsequently set up the most demonic environment known to men, the extermination camp, an environment in which God was dead and all things permissible. For Freud, God is the projected superego of the people.[68] Hitler now acquired a god-like ability to determine right from wrong in the eyes of his followers, simply on the basis of his anarchic, archaic and totally destructive will. Right and wrong were measured in terms of obedience to the *Führer*. This, according to Rubenstein, explains the persistent disclaimer of responsibility which has been such a striking aspect of the Nazi reaction after World War II.[69] While Rubenstein by no means absolves the Nazis from responsibility for their atrocities, he sees the disclaimer as more than simply an insincere dodge. He suggests that breaking the oath of fidelity to the *Führer* was tantamount to rebellion against God. The Nazis, in their mass psychosis, were bound by primal libidinous ties as members of a psychically homogeneous group. The oath could not be broken to the leader of the *Volk*-community without their entire moral

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66. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Religion and the Origins of the Death Camps', p. 38.

67. Ibid. p. 24. 68. Ibid. p. 25. 69, Ibid. pp. 25 ff.

universe, primitive and atavistic as it was, falling apart. A giant ritual murder ensued. German popular culture had long ago designated the villain-enemy-victim. The death camps became the *anus mundi* in which the Jews were dehumanised and reduced to faeces.[70] In a regressive search for a paradise lost, a longing to which Rubenstein believes we are all heirs,[71] the Nazis created a world in which they could be free to soil at will, a world in which God was negated. In this hell on earth the Germans rid themselves of God and avenged His death simultaneously.

However, reality will always have the final say, even if it is only in the grave. Something in all of us finds reality unbearable and every time we retreat from a mature confrontation with the limitations of this real world, this tendency to retreat is strengthened.[72] 'Ultimately the end to all restraint has no other meaning than the end to existence, for, of necessity, to be something is to be something definite, concrete and limited. Only death and nothingness are without limit.'[73] Hitler eliminated (and finally embraced) reality by destroying himself. The Nazis won only a fantasy war. Nothing real had been achieved.

Rubenstein concludes that the death of God does not create a world of instinctual freedom. It has the power to unleash the death instinct, hitherto held in check by important and indispensable safeguards. We tend to refrain from anti-social behaviour largely because of the fear of ourselves and not only because of fear of God.[74] Rubenstein states cryptically that the 'final lesson may very well be that there is more realistic pleasure in the disciplines and norms of the Living God than in all the freedoms of the Dead God'.[75]

Like Freud, Rubenstein is extremely pessimistic about man. He believes that the night-side of human existence was revealed at Auschwitz and that man is not capable of much change in that he has not developed more insight or rationality. The challenge to theism comes, not from nature or science, but from man. 'Man is a problem to himself.' Every organism has its tragic flaw. Man is essentially a tragic, ironic

figure of extremely limited possibili
worldly salvation is an illusion. 'In
advance is also a retreat; salvation
of ability on the part of the mature
is and has and to learn to love his
universe which is *not* so constituted
Nevertheless, radical pessimism need
or psychologically. There is someth
satisfying about making the best of a
In the long run reality is more comfo

The Tragic Vision

Rubenstein points out the difference
theologians and himself, in that they
He regards rejection of the tragic vi
'success story' and views American th
orientated. However, everything huma
invincibility is not an attribute of
ultimately come. The fact that the
possibility of the tragic sense of li
inability to regard human loss as sig
possible only when something perishes
Every life lost is tragic in some
regarded in some way as unique and i
that if we have lost the tragic sense
sterilised the impact of death. When
the service of technopolis the tragi
not to a new optimism, but to a deper
of life as well as death.[78]

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76. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'He
of Evil', p. 90.

77. Ibid.

78. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Death of
This view has been amplified in
which stress dehumanisation as
of consciousness. See particul
The Age of Triage (forthcoming)

The Centrality of Guilt Feelings

Guilt feelings in men are as central to Rubenstein's thought as they were to Freud's. His rationale for maintaining Jewish practice is largely rooted in his conviction that all men are guilty, that men are greatly troubled by this sense of guilt even though they may often appear to be indifferent to moral and religious failure, and that without religious ritual performed within the religious community, guilt tends to isolate the deviant, cutting him off from the community. As guilt is an attribute of all men we would indeed be a 'lonely crowd' if we do not acknowledge guilt as the shared predicament of mankind.[79] Guilt is incurred in every act of existing,[80] and because men are basically not capable of improvement, guilt can only be partially overcome, but never completely eliminated.

It is largely because of his belief in the crippling power of guilt that Rubenstein has posited the death of the God of history. After the exile in 70 C.E. which resulted in an alienation from the land of Israel for almost two thousand years, two forces converged to create guilt and self-blame as the dominant psychological motifs of Judaism. The stronger force was the Jewish mythic structure which saw in every misfortune the hand of an angry and punitive God. This resulted in self-blame. The lesser element in the creation of guilt feelings was the Christian theological tradition which interpreted alienation from the land as God's punishment of a deicidal community. In both traditions dispersion was equated with Jewish guilt and punishment Only an end to Jewish guilt could bring about an end to Jewish alienation.[81] Rubenstein interprets Zionism as the breaking of this largely self-imposed chain of sin and punishment by reuniting the people with their ancient homeland. Zionism, in his view, put an end to the interpretation of necessary insecurity as being the result of punishment resulting in guilt with its impediment to realisable joys.[82] Rubenstein

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79. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Atonement and Sacrifice in Contemporary Jewish Liturgy', p. 98.

80. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Meaning of Torah in Contemporary Jewish Theology, An Existentialist Philosophy of Judaism', p. 116.

81. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Rebirth of Israel in Contemporary Jewish Theology', p. 134.

82. Ibid. p. 136.

views historical man with his Lord of history as being estranged from nature. All suffering was seen as the payment of a debt exacted by an angry Master. Even the vicissitudes of nature were interpreted as punishment, not born of necessity, but of God's wrath. Thus only supra-mundane terror and guilt were real. His main thesis is that to the necessary and ineradicable anxieties were added unnecessary fears and anxieties imposed by the biblical view of history.[83] This was exacerbated by the Jewish doctrine of election which further magnifies Jewish guilt-feelings before God.[84] Man, therefore, must overcome his history in order to halt the process of dehumanisation that ensues from this view of God and history.[85]

Rubenstein avers that guilt incurred in fantasy is as real as objective guilt. Religious rituals like the *Yom Kippur* service in Judaism and the confessional in Roman Catholicism deal with rational and irrational guilt on the conscious and unconscious levels. But as guilt is largely unconscious and irrational in origin, rational insight is of little value in expiating it. Ritual remains the most effective means to deal with the problem of guilt. Jews and Christians are both united and separated in guilt. All men are inescapably guilty. Rubenstein understands the Christian yearning to overcome guilt through belief in the saving power of Christ, but he does not believe that Christ or any power can, in fact, redeem men. The function of the religious community, both Jewish and Christian, therefore, is the absurd, pathetic attempt, for which there can be no substitute, to make a meaningless life meaningful. He considers the attempt to be ultimately futile, but psychologically indispensable.[86] Through our respective traditions we are taught our true situation and we concentrate on our shared predicaments that guilt, alienation and finitude are common human attributes. 'Nothing so humbles us and teaches us our true station as do our traditions.'[87]

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83. Ibid. p. 135.
84. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Symposium on Jewish Belief', p. 148.
85. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Rebirth of Israel in Contemporary Jewish Theology', p. 135.
86. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Death of God Theology and Judaism', p. 263.
87. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Person and Myth in the Judaeo-Christian Encounter', p. 78.

We should be able to acquire the capacity to enjoy our physical possessions and live within our own bodies through removing alienating guilts. The tragedy of historical man is not his sinfulness or arrogance; these are but reaction formations to his debted submissiveness. The real tragedy is that even when he goes through the motions of seeming to find pleasure, his guilt-ridden, wrath-begotten universe makes even the taste of permissible joys a sin. In failure to find joy in the permissible, man is driven to the impermissible, never finding satisfaction or rest until only aggression, acquisition and self-destruction are for him the way of the world.[88]

Guilt and Existentialism

To his deeply Freudian view of man Rubenstein has added the insights of existentialism. Existentialism has given philosophy a whole new host of concerns for rational analysis. Among these are care, anxiety, guilt and conflict. These aspects of existence cannot be dismissed in the twentieth century. Rubenstein is impressed by the absurd facticity in the way we are thrown into the world. No one is in a position to choose his community or religion at birth, and the only choice that remains to him is how seriously he takes his inherited tradition.[89] We are all thrown absurdly into the universe, into a world which knows no warmth, concern, care, love or fellowship save that which we bestow on one another.[90] Jewish identity is an absurd 'given'. Jews are thrust into the world with an inherited *mythos* which includes the doctrine of the election of Israel. Rubenstein cannot accept this mythically based doctrine, but he knows no way to be rid of it. The Jewish situation with its *mythos* and tradition is the only one relevant to the Jew and the only appropriate vehicle through which the Jew can achieve authenticity.

For Rubenstein to be human is to be locked in alienating finitude from which death is the only exit.[91] He agrees with Camus and Sartre in their

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88. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Rebirth of Israel in Contemporary Jewish Theology', p. 141.
89. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Person and Myth in the Judaeo-Christian Encounter', p. 63.
90. Ibid. p. 80.
91. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The "Supernatural" Jew', p. 185.

analysis of the broken condition of human finitude, a condition that we must endure without hope. He concurs with Camus that to hope means to resign oneself and life is not resignation. He shares with Camus the choice of human solidarity in an absurd and meaningless cosmos over the choice of a God who acts meaningfully in history, and before whom men are inescapably guilty. If God acts meaningfully in history, suffering and tragedy must be interpreted as in some way reflecting his will. This becomes a deeply disturbing problem inherent in the prophetic, Deuteronomistic view of God and history. It suggests the idea that because men suffer they deserve to suffer.[92] Such a view deprives men of the consolation that suffering, though inevitable, is neither merited nor deserved. This aggravates human guilt feelings and it is largely for this reason that Rubenstein rejects the God who acts in history as a dysfunctional response to the Holocaust. He prefers an absurd cosmos, where suffering is inevitable, but is not interpreted as the punitive act of an angry God. He, however, parts company with the atheistic existentialists, such as Satre and Camus, in his firm conviction that man still needs religion as the only mode in which to share the human predicament in an absurd and meaningless cosmos. It is only within one's religious community that the human condition can be shared in depth.[93]

Alienation and responsibility are interpreted as being of a piece.[94] Super culture inevitably causes alienation, but it also fosters the development of responsibility and individuality. Alienation is the price that every mature adult must pay for autonomy. An atavist finds alienation intolerable, preferring to surrender his individuality in a primitive folk-culture.[95] Our quest should be for self-realisation, a finding of ourselves as true persons, the only persons we realistically can be, our finite, authentic selves in all the radical insecurity and

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92. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Person and Myth in the Judaeo-Christian Encounter', p. 66 f.

93. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Symposium on Jewish Belief', p. 154.

94. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Religion and the Origins of the Death Camps, A Psychoanalytic Interpretation', p. 26.

95. Ibid. pp. 26, 27.

potentiality of life, as given to mortal man.[96]

Most men, it would seem, remain captive to their warring impulses, in Rubenstein's view. Few men have the courage and moral fibre to become really mature, independent and autonomous. In his attempt to analyse human behaviour as a cause of the Holocaust he admits that this is not the sole explanation of the phenomenon.[97] He also recognises that his attempt to understand is at times extreme. But, he rightly says, 'it is hardly as extreme as the phenomenon it seeks to explain'.[98] It must be remembered that Rubenstein sees most men as sharing the same problems and human characteristics. His analysis of the Nazi mentality must be understood as normative for all men as they would all be capable of the same type of behaviour under the same type of conditions. His analysis is not undertaken in order to blame. It is done in order to point out the inherent danger in the human condition. Understanding of this common condition could help to make us aware of our aggressive potentialities.

This leads to an examination of the mythic structure of Judaism and Christianity, for it is in this area that Rubenstein finds much of the potentially explosive material which leads to friction and rivalry between the Jew and Christian.

The Mythic Structure in Judaism and Christianity

In Rubenstein's explication of the causes of the Holocaust the Jewish and Christian mythic structure play a decisive role. Though there is an infinitude of pain in the exploration of this question, neither the Christian nor the Jew can avoid it.[99] The death camps and the unspoken acquiescence of the world to the Holocaust led Rubenstein to see a relationship between the Christian theology of history and the deep

logic in Christian theology when pushed to an extreme which ends with justification of, if not incitement to, the murder of Jews?'[100] The roots of the death camps therefore must be sought in the mythic structure of Christianity, which, in turn, is based on the mythic structure of Judaism. This assertion, he is careful to point out, must not be regarded as an imputation of guilt against Christianity for the death camps. It would be a vast over-simplification to suggest that Christianity was responsible for the death camps.[101] Rubenstein interprets Nazism as profoundly anti-Christian but as dialectically related to it.[102] Christianity ironically supplied for Nazism the villain-enemy-victim in Nazism's vast anti-Christian explosion. The Nazis took Christianity very seriously in the one area which designated the Jew as deicide. The Nazis were able to negate Christianity and its values, while using the Christian myth of Jewish villainy for their own purposes. The death camps were the terminal expression of Christian anti-Semitism.[103]

The Doctrine of Chosenness as a Cause of Anti-Semitism

As I have noted previously, each man is thrown absurdly into his religious community with its inherited *mythos*. The individual is in no way responsible for this *mythos*. He did not create it and cannot be easily rid of it. The Jew inherits the doctrine of election at birth. Rubenstein sees the ultimate cause of Christian anti-Semitism as lying in the Jewish doctrine of election. Unable to accept this doctrine, he regards it as a fantastic claim which the Gentiles, and particularly the Christian world, took seriously.[104] With the establishment of Pauline Christianity election passed from the 'Old' Israel to the Church as the 'New' Israel. The real problem derives therefore from the rivalry between Jew and Christian as to who is the Father's beloved child, in a situation closely resembling the dynamics of sibling rivalry.

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100. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'The Dean and the Chosen People', p. 48.
101. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Religion and the Origins of the Death Camps', pp. 3, 21.
102. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Dean and the Chosen People', p. 47.
103. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Religion and the Origins of the Death Camps', pp. 19 f.
104. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Symposium on Jewish Belief', p. 147.

It is important to note that, in Rubenstein's view, the doctrine of election is not a doctrine of racial superiority. If anything, it has been the source of millennia of pathetic and unrealistic self-criticism by Jews. Their performance was never seen as good enough and every disaster was interpreted as merited punishment of a sinful people by an angry God. The doctrine served to magnify Jewish guilt feelings before God.[105] As such, it is a dysfunctional doctrine in Judaism.

However, Rubenstein is of the firm conviction that it may be impossible for Christians to remain Christian without taking the doctrine of election seriously and seeing the Jew in mythic, magic and theological categories. 'The Christian Church must insist on the separate and special character of the Jewish people in order that its claims concerning the significance of Jesus may gain credence.'[106] He states quite bluntly that 'unless Jews have a supernatural vocation the Christ maker absolutely no theological difference'.[107]

The Deicide Accusation

Rubenstein points out that Christianity begins its independent career with a murder and the Jews provided both the incarnate deity and his murderers.[108] The New Testament places the onus of guilt quite squarely upon the Jews for the murder of Christ. Furthermore, Matthew 27:25 nominates the event as a continuing source of guilt for posterity.[109] Despite the modern Christian attempt to spread the blame of deicide to the whole of humanity, Rubenstein asserts that the New Testament leaves no room for doubt as to who the culprits were. Deicide was a new crime and the image of the Jew as deicide became a significant component of anti-Semitism and ultimately of the death camps. 'Only the terrible accusation, known and taught to every Christian in earliest childhood

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105. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Symposium on Jewish Belief', p. 148.
106. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Dean and the Chosen People', p. 56
107. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The "Supernatural" Jew', p. 186.
108. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Religion and the Origins of the Death Camps', p. 9.
109. Ibid. p. 12.

that the Jews are the killers of Christ can account for the depth and persistence of this supreme hatred.'[110]

Rubenstein suggests that an accusation of deicide implies that the deicides are utterly beyond law and that the accusation as put forward in the New Testament was subsequently amplified by Christian theologians and philosophers. While Paul showed a kinship with, and compassion for his erring brethren, subsequent Christian thinkers such as Justin Martyr, unwittingly added to the demonic picture of the Jews, thus developing material which constituted secondary myths concerning the demonic nature of the Jews. In such myths the Jew was seen as anti-Christ, devil's spawn, sorcerer, Satan, magician, cannibal and murderer.[111] Justin Martyr, 'an otherwise decent philosopher', suggested that Jews needed the Law because of their inner lawlessness. Rubenstein regards him as an excellent intuitive psychologist in that all men are characterised by inner lawlessness. However, Justin Martyr unfortunately turned a universal conflict into a special and particular Jewish proclivity toward evil by displacing a universal human tendency to moral anarchy onto the Jews.[112]

The Dilemma Inherent in the Doctrine of Chosenness

There is an insoluble and tragic dilemma in the Judaeo-Christian doctrine of election, in that Jews cannot be viewed as mere humans. 'As long as Jews are thought of as special and apart from mankind in general, they are going to be the object of both abnormal demands and...decisive hatreds.'[113] There is a polarity in the Christian view of Jews. The Jew is seen in mythic terms as either the best of saints or the worst of sinners.[114] In times of stress, as in the rise of Nazi Germany, the demonological interpretation becomes the more potent.

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110. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'Religion and the Origins of the Death Camps', p. 20.

111. Ibid. p. 29. 112. Ibid. p. 14.

113. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Dean and the Chosen People', p. 56.

114. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Person and Myth in the Judaeo-Christian Encounter', p. 71.

as his neighbour, but in the case of the Jew, there is a different level of expectation. Rubenstein observes that as long as there is Christianity it would seem that Jews will be the potential objects of special and ultimately pernicious attention which can always explode in violence.[116] The supernatural vocation of the Jew imposed by the mythology of Christianity has resulted in a dehumanization of the Jew. The importance of the Jew is exaggerated out of all realistic proportions.[117] He is not regarded as a normal human being possessing the average spectrum of vices and virtues. The Jew is regarded as a myth rather than as a real person by the Christian.[118] The Jew has been condemned to the domain of the sacred by Christians where he can alternately be praised as Jesus-like and condemned and murdered as Judas-like.[119] Thus, philo-Semitism is as unrealistic and pernicious as anti-Semitism, for it destroys the Jew's most precious attribute, his simple humanity.[120]

Rubenstein asks the probing question: 'Does the way the Jews regard themselves contribute to the terrible process?'[121] Convinced that as long as the Jews uphold the doctrine of election they cannot blame Christians for viewing them through the prism of mythology of history,[122] he believes that both traditions should be demythologised so that both Jew and Christian can each accept his own humanity. He is fully aware

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115. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Dean and the Chosen People', p. 57

116. Ibid. pp. 56, 57.

117. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Religion and the Origin of the Death Camps', pp. 9, 10.

118. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Person and Myth in the Judaeo-Christian Encounter', p. 71.

119. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The "Supernatural" Jew', p. 186.

120. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Dean and the Chosen People', p. 58. Cf. *After Auschwitz*, 'Person and Myth in the Judaeo-Christian Encounter', p. 71.

121. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Dean and the Chosen People', p. 58.

of the difficulty involved in surrendering a myth which has infused a people's existence with meaning for over two thousand years. With the demythologisation of Judaism Christians will be able to view Jews as persons rather than as myths. He views Zionism in the light of such demythologisation in that it is a factual rejection of the centuries of alienation and self-blame. After the experiences of the twentieth century Rubenstein can neither affirm the omnipotent God of history, nor maintain its corollary, the election of Israel. 'Jews do not need these doctrines to remain a religious community.'[123] One of the lessons of the death camps is that the Jews should not have to possess special virtues. Rubenstein insists that Jews must demythologise their religious ideology and affirms that he himself has made that alteration in his own perspective. However, he sees no way in which Christians can demythologise their conception of Israel. In this dilemma the tragedy of the Judaeo-Christian encounter becomes explicit.

Rubenstein recognises that the believing Christian cannot avoid claiming that he is a member of the New Israel, the truly elect of God. Even the death of God theologians in Christianity and Judaism cannot avoid this Law-Gospel conflict. The conflict has an Antigone-like quality from which there is no way out save moral and psychological modesty, and the realisation that the Christian has been thrust as absurdly into his community as the Jew has into his.[124]

Rubenstein has been drawn to Reconstructionism as it does not assert that Jewish existence is validated by a special relationship to God, rather than by Israel's natural historical existence as a people. Reconstructionism asserts the primacy of the peoplehood of Israel above religion. Rubenstein welcomes the ethnic and non-privileged character of Judaism as put forward by Reconstructionism. It is not wrong, irreligious or impious to suggest that there is no special pre-eminence possessed by Judaism which justifies Jewish existence, in his view. 'If Jewish existence is not self-validating, there is a real danger that what we take to be theological justification of our

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123. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Person and Myth in the Judaeo-Christian Encounter', p. 69.

124. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Symposium on Jewish Belief', p. 147.

existence may turn out to be extensions of thoroughly unhealthy and irrational non-Jewish myths about Jews and Judaism.[125] For two thousand years the conviction that Judaism is specially related to the divine, was commonplace in both Judaism and Christianity. Jews interpreted it as special love and Christians as the rejection of the chosen people in favour of the New Israel for the crime of rejecting the Christ. The facts of history were offered as proof of this divine rejection. 'Too often the human psyche has attempted to make reality conform to its myths.'[126]

The Holocaust : A Giant Ritual Murder

In his typically Freudian view of man Rubenstein points out that deicides would not be considered beyond commission of the most heinous of crimes. When under threat, one finds safety in the death of another.[127] There is a kernel of truth in the accusation that the Jews wanted to kill God, or had done so symbolically, in that all men are possessed of the same yearning for infantile omnipotence.[128] In times of stress regression occurs and in Nasi Germany there was a displacement of blame onto the Jews instead of acceptance of reality. 'The darker aspects of the myth came to the fore.'[129] Drawing from secondary myths concerning the demonic nature of the Jews the Germans were able to identify in the Jews an enemy equal to the sapping of Germany's strength, secretly causing her defeat and gloating in the triumph of her victors. An omnipotent enemy was needed for what was to be history's greatest ritual murder.[130] The Judas image of betrayer made even kindly acts of Jews seem suspect, particularly in the eyes of children. In times of stress there is a tendency to regress to infancy. In the German regression from super-culture to a *Volk*-community there was a social analogue of this process.[131] On the other hand, because of the polarity in the view of the Jews the Jesus-image also caused bitterness. Because of

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125. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'Reconstructionism and the Problem of Evil', p. 84.

126. Ibid. p. 85.

127. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Religion and the Origin of the Death Camps', p. 13. Cf. p. 10. See also p. 17.

128. Ibid. p. 21. 129. Ibid. 130. Ibid. p. 29. 131. Ibid. p.30.

the innate viciousness in all men, they tend to dislike extreme virtue in others, which to some degree is regarded as inhuman. Because of the mythic view of the Jew, his more virtuous aspects had also to be condemned.[132]

The Jews were the actors in the mythic drama of the Passion of Christ. One can hate God for the virtue he commands, yet displace one's murderous feelings onto the Jew, his murderer. The Jew, therefore, plays the role of scapegoat or sacrificial victim. The death camps of Germany thus became the acting out of a huge ritual murder in which the perpetrators were convinced that by elimination of the Jews Germany's safety could be vouchsafed.[133]

One of the futile tragedies of the situation was that the Jews always dealt with the deicide problem at the manifest level, protesting their innocence, which rendered the response irrelevant.[134] Seldom did they understand that the accusation was an attempt by the accuser to deny his own lawless temptations, by ascribing them to the Jews. In fact, the denial made matters worse. One of the worst aspects of the two-thousand-year-old Judaeo-Christian encounter is the mutual incapacity to understand what is vital to the other. 'There was apparently no way in which Jew and Christian could simply acknowledge the problem of overcoming inner lawlessness to be a universal one. Each side could only bolster its own uncertain conviction of virtue by blackening the other. This dreary procedure has yet to be terminated.'[135]

True dialogue is impossible as long as each group is committed to its religio-historical myths. Referring to the Christ-event in the relationship of Jews and Christians Rubenstein states: 'Not only do the mythic contents of our religious faiths impede meaningful community, they absolutely preclude it.'[136] Rubenstein feels no blame or anger. Myths and legends are not easily invented. He also feels that he has no

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132. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Person and Myth in the Judaeo-Christian Encounter', p. 71.

133. Ibid. p. 74.

134. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Religion and the Origins of the Death Camps', p. 16.

135. Ibid.

136. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Person and Myth in the Judaeo-Christian Encounter', p. 75.

consequence beyond his own projects, those of his family and of his community. Without choice, he has an unwanted superordinate significance for others, simply because he was born a Jew, and largely because the Christians took his ancestors seriously when they claimed for themselves a special religious destiny. He does not blame the Christians for refusing to demythologise their tradition, but undertakes this task for himself and for his community. However, as he cannot persuade Jews to demythologise their tradition, he can hardly expect others to do so.[137]

The Secular : A Solution to the Problem?

Rubenstein claims that it is a particular German characteristic to demand utter metaphysical consistency.[138] This consistency can be highly creative but, in relation to the Judaeo-Christian mythic structure, it can also result in the loss of life through a murderous logic which destroys what it cannot countenance.[139] He suggests that in America pragmatism often predominates, resulting in friendly relations which also tend to suffer in times of stress. Pragmatism demonstrates that people are better off when they develop tolerance for ambiguity which allows them freedom in encounter which utter theological consistency would withhold.[140]

Another way out would be secularisation. Rubenstein is convinced that the root of Jewish atheism and secularisation in modern times has always been that Jewish suffering could not be separated from the Judaeo-Christian conflict.[141] He does not agree with this choice in that one cannot place one's hope in secular society. A society of myth is repleced by a society of calculation and contract.[142] What

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137. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Person and Myth in the Judaeo-Christian Encounter', p. 75.

138. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Dean and the Chosen People', p. 57.

139. Ibid. pp. 57, 58.

140. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Person and Myth in the Judaeo-Christian Encounter', p. 76. 141. Ibid.

142. Rubenstein is of late even more pessimistic about placing one's faith in a society of calculation and contract. However, as calculating rationality is the mark of modern Western society which he sees as an outgrowth of biblical monotheism, he calls now for a radical act of disbelief, for the cultivation of individual talents which will enable one to survive in an increasingly savage world.

modern man really needs is a society of persons. All men are guilty. Whilst we cannot share the Christian myth because of the Jewish conviction that Jesus was no more than another Jew, we all yearn for the healing which the myth implies. 'Since we cannot be brothers in promise, let us at least be brothers in need.'[143] Through our respective traditions we share only the complex intersection of promethean self-assertion and pious submission which all men feel before the 'incarnational reality of the Divine'.[144] The Christian myth separates Jew and Christian, but what it points to unites them. Secular society makes no such knowledge of guilt possible because it lacks a sense of the tragic in refusing to see that all men are destined to falter and fall. The success-orientated secular society produces a pathetic illusion of success, when, in fact, humans remain relatively constant. Through the primacy of love, within our traditions, we must seek the meeting of true persons rather than seeing each other in terms of myths or abstractions. Our greatest need is to know who we are. If we concentrate less on what our religious inheritances promise and threaten, and more on the human existence we share through these traditions, we will achieve the superlative yet simple knowledge of who we truly are.[145]

The Christian mythic structure will continue to play a vitel role in Jewish Christian relations. The Judas story is destined to play a decisive role in poisoning Christian relations with Jews. The Passion of Christ is a pivotal and highly emotional aspect of Christianity. It rehearses the 'terrible tale of the Jewish betrayal and the Jewish murder of the Jewish God'.[146] Likewise, the doctrine of election will continue to divide Jew and Christian. The doctrine describes a covenantal relationship which demands that the Jew behaves in a spiritually consistent way as a member of the chosen people. The biblical view of history interprets God's work as evident in history. As a consequence, the Holocaust must be seen as being God's will.

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143. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'Person and Myth in the Judaeo-Christian Encounter', p. 80.

144. Ibid. p. 79. 145. Ibid. p. 78.

146. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Religion and the Origin of the Death Camps', p. 31.

The difference between the Jewish and Christian views will rest on interpretation of history and sin. Rubenstein points out that Christian clergymen have, on the whole, been reluctant to take the logic of their theology to its hideous conclusion.[147]

Rubenstein refuses to see Jews in the old mythic perspectives. Life need have no meta-historical meanings to be worthwhile. However, Jews should keep their traditions, not because they are better or more

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147. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'The Dean and the Chosen People', p 53.

The view that the Holocaust finds its roots in Christian theology is not peculiar to Rubenstein. For example, Eliezer Berkovits, in an article entitled 'Judaism in the Post-Christian Era', *Judaism*, Vol. 15, No. 1, Winter 1966, pp. 74 - 84, states: "A straight line leads from the first act of oppression against the Jews and Judaism in the fourth century to the holocaust in the twentieth." p. 77. ... "Without the contempt and the hatred for the Jew planted by Christianity in the hearts of the multitude of its followers, Nazism's crime against the Jewish people could never have been conceived, much less executed. What was started at the Council in Nicea was duly completed in the concentration camps and the crematoria." p. 77.

The view that the Jews were an accursed people for the crime of having killed Jesus can be seen in several works, many of them by Christian authors. See, for example:

Malcolm Hay's *Thy Brother's Blood*, Hart Publishing Co., Inc., New York, 1975;

Rosemary Ruether's *Faith and Fratricide : The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism*, The Seabury Press, New York, 1974;

Paul van Buren, *Discerning the Way : A Theology of Jewish Christian Reality*, The Seabury Press, New York, 1980, pp. 4 - 5, 47 - 48 and 51;

F. G. Bratton, *The Crime of Christendom : The Theological Source of Christian Anti-Semitism*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1969;

and

Friedrich Heer, *God's First Love : Christians and Jews over Two Thousand Years*, Transl. by G. Skelton, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970.

Berkovits adopts an extremely hard line maintaining that dialogue between the Christian Church and Jews is impossible, fruitless and pointless. By comparison, Rubenstein is moderate. He realises the insoluble difficulty inherent in the situation, but desires insight from both Jews and Christians in order to defuse a potentially murderous and hostile situation.

pleasing to God, but because they are 'ours and we could not with dignity change them for any other. By the same token, having lost the need to prove that what we have is better than what others are or have, we have gained a reverence for other men's sacred traditions. This is a corollary of our belief that these traditions are not matters of original choice but are part of the absurd givenness of every concrete, limited human perspective'.[148]

Jews can never be entirely at home in a Gentile world. There is a special quality to Jewish alienation which differs from the alienation of others. Jews are destined to be strangers and wanderers on earth to the end of days.[149] But Rubenstein refuses to appease the irrational mythology which the Christian world has constructed of the Jew. By affirming himself as Jewish he can liberate himself from what he regards as a futile and degrading servility. The only way to live free of such distortion is through self-acceptance as a Jew.[150]

Jew and Christian are divided by the absurd thrownness (*Geworfenheit*) of their concrete historically determined situations. There is no way for the Christian to confront the holiness of God save through the Christ and the paths of sanctity in which he is the decisive figure. For the Jew, no religious way exists but through the Torah as its traditions have been inherited, reflected upon and transmitted throughout Jewish history. The agony of both situations is made more painful since Jew and Christian are heirs to and participants in a conflict which is no longer of either's making. While both Judaism and Christianity can dwell outside of God's truth, only one of the conflicting traditions can conceivably dwell within it, at least with regard to the question of the Christ. 'We are locked in a tragic conflict from which there is no way out.'[151] Tragic encounters can lead either to murder or to moral modesty and mutual enrichment. Ultimately the benefit of the painful consideration of the two opposing mythic structures will be that with

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148. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'Person and Myth in the Judaeo-Christian Encounter', p. 70.

149. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Making of a Rabbi', p. 218

150. Ibid. p. 224.

151. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Person and Myth in the Judaeo-Christian Encounter', p. 63.

an awareness into the explosive potentialities of religious ideologies, we will be able to moderate their destructiveness.

Religion in Ruberstein's Thought

The Centrality of the Torah

Nineteenth century Judaism was characterised by a great deal of social and theological instability. Jews were entering the secular society of contract and commerce at the same time as the rise of biblical criticism. Full participation in society demanded curtailment of the sacramental aspects of Jewish life. The decision to 'reform' Judaism was rooted in economic and social reality as much as it was in any purely religious need for change. There was a tendency in Judaism general and in Reform Judaism in particular, to emphasise the moral and ra aspects of the Torah at the expense of the sacerdotal. This acc ng to Rubenstein, served a dual need. It 'addressed the Jew mor tically in his economic activities and it sought to guide him ag their misuse at a time when Jews were stressing the minimal differences separating them from their neighbors. In addition, the new stress on the moral aspects of the Torah provided an unconsciously formulated defense against the Judas-image of the Jew which an increasingly secular society not only failed to repress but actually magnified'.[152]

With the rise of biblical criticism there was a new freedom to question and reformulate Judaism. Refutation of Mosaic authorship of the Torah removed the old assurances that the Jew's acts were meaningfully related to God's will. Jewish intellectuals thus used the strategy of emphasising the spirit rather than the letter of the Torah in an attempt to retain meaning. The abiding relevance of the moral elements of Torah were stressed. *Imatatio dei* was reduced to fulfilment of the ethical deed. Those aspects of the Torah which were irreducible to the moral demand were discarded. The old sacrificial order and *kashruth* were rejected. 'The opaque, the irrational, and the mystical were equated with the "primitive", and a pseudo-evolutionary mythology

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152. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'The Meaning of Torah in Contemporary Jewish Theology, An Existentialist Philosophy of Judaism', p. 114.

was employed to obscure their frequently continuing relevance. Whatever in the Torah dealt with the dilemmas of bodily existence and sought to root Jews in the vicissitudes of earth and human biology became an acute embarrassment. The ancient longing of Judaism for an existence in its own earthly sphere was rejected as inconsistent with the "higher", "spiritual", forms toward which Judaism had "evolved". What remained was a desiccated, unimaginative moralism with little symbolic or mythic power.'[153]

Nevertheless, the Torah still remains decisive in all three branches of Judaism, Orthodox, Conservative and Reform, even though there is no assurance that all, or any part of it expresses God's will explicitly and unambiguously. Today, at the heart of Jewish life therefore, there is 'an ineradicable tension between fixed form (the Torah) and personal subjectivity which all must endure'.[154] Rubenstein has, in his explication of this dilemma, pinpointed the agonising ambivalence and tension felt by many secularised Jews. In his total reversal of the liberal Jewish emphasis on the moral aspects of Judaism, he has given a convincing rationale for the maintenance of those Jewish traditions which remain opaque, irrational and even embarrassing.

The Importance of the Priestly Aspects of Religion

His deepest conviction with regard to man is that man is not capable of much improvement through homiletic exhortation. The substitution of exhortation for sacerdotal aspects of religion in liberal Judaism (which finds its parallel in Protestant Christianity) presumes that religiously inspired choice of virtue is a real option available to mankind.[155] Because Rubenstein understands man as a creature characterised by inescapable warring conflicts he finds that the archaic, irrational and opaque elements in religion remain the most meaningful. Terms like 'higher' and 'advanced' are deceptive and presuppose an implicit standard of reference which reveals more about the person making the judgment than it does about the true nature of the subject

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153. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Meaning of Torah in Contemporary Jewish Theology, An Existentialist Philosophy of Judaism', pp.116 f.

154. Ibid. p. 117.

155. Rubenstein, Introduction to *After Auschwitz*, 'Atonement and Sacrifice in Contemporary Jewish Liturgy', p. 96.

matter at hand.[156] Rubenstein reverses the thought of the nineteenth century, favouring priestly over prophetic religion, in his conviction that it is the priestly rituals which help us to pass through the crises of life such as birth, puberty, marriage, sickness and death. He concludes that the religious rituals, lacking in the ethical, are often most meaningful in that they dramatise our feelings concerning these important areas and ultimate concerns of life.[157] In the time when men no longer experience vertical transcendence, the Synagogue and Church retain meaning. It is simply *because* he believes the human to be so ultimately hopeless and unredeemed at present that he sees the primary role of religion as being priestly, thus offering men a ritual and mythic structure in which the abiding realities of life and death can be shared. As long as men are born, pass through the crises of transition, experiencing guilt, fail as they must, grow old, and die, traditional churches and synagogues will be irreplaceable.[158]

For the Jew the Synagogue is the institution which makes meaningful and dramatises the decisive moments of life. For Rubenstein, the Synagogue is the only institution which is psychologically and culturally appropriate for his personal need.[159] Although he admits this to be a subjective choice, he suspects that the Synagogue holds the same importance for many other Jews in that traditional Jewish liturgy, using the fewest possible alterations, is the most appropriate vehicle for expression of conscious as well as unconscious feelings toward the crises of life. Myth and ritual are the domains in which we express and project our unconscious feelings concerning the dilemmas of existence and in which the decisive moments of existence can be shared at the conscious and unconscious level. It must be noted that Rubenstein does not indicate clearly the separation between the function

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156. Rubenstein, Introduction to *After Auschwitz*, 'Atonement and Sacrifice in Contemporary Jewish Liturgy', p. 96.

157. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, pp. 146, 147, 205, 206, passim.

158. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Judaism and "The Secular City" ', pp. 205, 206.

159. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Making of a Rabbi', p. 222. This was the case during the nineteen sixties. Today he is inclined to find synagogue ritual infantilising.

of myth and that of ritual.[160] It seems that rituals, with their accompanying myths, give expression to ultimate concerns by appealing the latent as opposed to the manifest level of human consciousness. The fact that myth and ritual are no longer regarded as true at the manifest level is entirely irrelevant to their central function.

I shall examine Rubenstein's views on the centrality of Torah, sacrifice and the religious community in order to clarify this exposition of his view concerning priestly religion.

Torah, Sacrifice and the Religious Community

Rubenstein is greatly saddened by the death of God, and he is convinced that Jews need Torah, tradition and community more than when God's presence was meaningfully experienced, otherwise the slender fabric of human decency may disappear altogether.[161] As the Christian death of God theologians stress the centrality of Christ and the Gospel, Rubenstein proclaims the indispensability of Torah. Rubenstein believes the Torah to be sacred but not divinely revealed.[162] All of its six hundred and thirteen commandments are equally binding and yet we have the freedom to accept or reject any or all of them. The situation of the modern Jew is absurd, tragic and free. Paradoxically, this situation allows Jews in the modern period to recapture the Torah for the first time as their decisive religious text. Jewish religion is inseparable from Jewish identity. Jews are what they are as a result of their history.[163] Part of this history is that the Jews accepted the Torah

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160. Rubenstein sees myth in the same light as ritual in that it deals with the deepest psychic dilemmas of life both consciously and unconsciously. Thus, Rubenstein prefers the emotional mode of Catholicism over the Protestant rational approach. For example, through the Protestant rejection of Mary a myth was swept away, but Protestantism also lost a mythic way of coming to terms with the awesome and terrible realities of femininity and maternity. An opportunity was lost for providing men with a religio-cultural context in which their most archaic conflicts could be expressed and partly dealt with. *After Auschwitz*, 'Judaism and "The Secular City"', p. 197.

161. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Symposium on Jewish Belief', p. 155. 162. Ibid,p.145

163 Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'The Meaning of Torah in Contemporary Jewish Theology, An Existentialist Philosophy of Judaism', p. 119.

as their decisive religious text for their concrete being-in-the-world. Jews are heirs to that text and to all the conflicts it has engendered. The canonicity of the Torah made Christianity's way impossible for Jews and the Torah has thus had terrifying consequences in the lives and deaths of millions of Jews. Rubenstein asserts that even if God had not commanded it 'it is the inheritance of the house of Jacob. It is part of us as Jews, and to deny it is to deny an important element of ourselves'. However, the doubt about its divine authority results in great religious insecurity and its commandments are difficult to follow because of the breach between our culture and its antecedents. There is no way we can avoid our freedom. We hold the Torah as holy yet 'cannot and will not eliminate the subjectivism, the voluntarism and the consequent anxiety'[164] which have triumphed in all contemporary Jewish religious groups in fact, if not in theory.

Rubenstein acts upon his freedom before the Torah in that he interprets that freedom as speaking for himself and not for others. He opposes the nineteenth century rejection of embarrassing parts of the Torah. What this generation finds embarrassing may not be so found by future generations. Each generation must be left to make its own choice and commitment. The inherited corpus must be left intact for future generations to confront it with the same freedom as we have. The so-called barbarities in the Torah in no way equal the barbarities of the twentieth century. The Torah must be kept completely intact. Its unity is part of our facticity as Jews. 'We can rid ourselves of it only by being quit of our Jewishness.'[165] Rubenstein views the Torah as a repository of norms which, because of its origins in the psychological strivings of the Jewish people, is largely appropriate to its function.[166] The wisest course both theologically and practically is to recognise both the binding character of all the commandments of the Torah and our total freedom before them. 'If we must live without God, religious law is more necessary for us than ever. Our temptation to anarchic omnipotence and the total indifference of the cosmos to our deeds call

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164. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Meaning of Torah in Contemporary Jewish Theology, an Existentialist Philosophy of Judaism', pp.120 ff.

165. Ibid. p. 122.

166. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Symposium on Jewish Belief', p. 145.

forth the need for a set of guidelines to enable us to apprehend the limits of appropriate behavior. Without God, we need law, tradition and structure far more than ever before.'[167] Rubenstein cannot accept the Christian view that there has been a transformation in the human condition. He agrees with the Pharisees that there is no alternative but to remain faithful to the Law, even though it was and remains a difficult instrument.

The Sacrificial Tradition in Judaism

In his emphasis on the value of priestly religion Rubenstein finds great promise in the sacrificial tradition of Judaism, an area which is the source of much embarrassment among liberal Jews. Thus, sacrifice ought to be retained as the central element in Jewish religious life.

Firstly, Rubenstein observes that sacrifice is universally accepted in the majority of religions of mankind. He regards prayer and exhortation as late expressions of a tendency which is not universal.[168] He concludes that sacrifice has universal psychological function.

Secondly, with Rubenstein's presupposition that men wish to overthrow God, sacrifice becomes a surrogate for man's unconscious desire to do violence to God. In sacrifice man overcomes God and at the same time submits and recognises his inevitable victory.[169] Related to this aspect sacrifice highlights the tragic intersection of contradictory motives in religion. Sacrifice is a violent and bloody deed in which an innocent victim is killed for the benefit of all. The sacrificial act thus becomes a thinly disguised surrogate for man's real desire which is 'both to end the crime and continue its commission. Promethean self-assertion and penitent submission awesomely interact'.[170] This element of sacrifice is closely associated with Freud's primal crime hypothesis. After the cannibalistic murder of the father, the brothers

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167. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Death of God Theology and Judaism', p. 259.

168. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Atonement and Sacrifice in Contemporary Jewish Liturgy', p. 93.

169. Ibid. Introduction to 'Atonement and Sacrifice in Contemporary Jewish Liturgy', p. 92.

170. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Atonement and Sacrifice in Contemporary Jewish Liturgy', p. 99.

were distinguished from other species by intense regret, and by denial whereby they attempted to repress conscious memory of the deed. Yet the crime continued to obsess the brothers and the murdered father was projected into the heavenly sphere and imagined to be a heavenly father. According to Freud, the origins of religion lay in mankind's ambivalent feelings toward this crime. Two forces prevented complete suppression of the memory of the event: the feeling of guilt demanded catharsis by confession and the Promethean feelings of triumph demanded repetition of the victory. Freud saw this duality as characteristic of the religion of his day. 'Certainly one of the most significant insights suggested by the myth is that religion itself is an inescapable balancing of moral submissiveness with Promethean self-assertiveness.'[171] Freud has also shown that the religious rite is more than gross and deceived superstition and that it is, in fact, rooted in the tragic ironies of the human predicament. It therefore is possible to 'find heightened meaning in religion as a decisive and fundamental expression of the human predicament'.[172]

Rubenstein suggests that it is psychologically illuminating that Christianity depicts itself as commencing its independent career with such a crime. Freud saw in the sacrificial death of Christ a 'return of the repressed'. Freud also asserted that the cannibalistic aspects of the primal crime are repeated in the Catholic Mass which he regards as both a symbolic repetition of and a ritual catharsis of the original crime. Even though Freud's myth, according to Rubenstein, may tell us little of human and religious origins, it intuits a great deal concerning the awesome ambivalence men feel toward those who symbolise authority and civilisation. 'The murder of God is an immensely potent symbol of man's primal desire to do away with his impediments to instinctual gratification.'[173] Herein lies Christianity's amazing mythic power 'for in the crucifixion we behold the symbolic acting out of this deepest wish'.[174] If Freud is correct, the sacrificial cult offers a dramatic catharsis wherein mankind's oldest and darkest crime is continually confessed through symbolic re-enactment and, in the

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171. Rubenstein, 'Psychoanalysis and the Origins of Judaism', *The Reconstructionist*, December 2, 1960, pp. 1, 12, 13. 172. Ibid. p. 13.

173. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'Religion and the Origins of the Death Camps, A Psychoanalytic Interpretation', p. 12.

174. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Person and Myth in the Judaeo-Christian Encounter', p. 73.

process, again abjured. Rubenstein only accepts the primal crime hypothesis partially, suggesting that its significance lies in the way it hints at the many dimensions of conscious and unconscious concern which are dramatised in the sacrificial act. He maintains that Judaism cannot afford to ignore this multidimensional character of human strivings which sacrifice highlights.

Thirdly, and most importantly, sacrifice acts as a catharsis and a binding force. The *Yom Kippur* service which symbolises the most important aspect of sacrifice and atonement in the Jewish calendar, enables Jews to come to terms with failure to fulfil religious and moral standards considered to be binding on all. The sacrificial ritual brings about the communal knowledge that man is not alone in his failings. Moral failure is thus shared. All men are seen as guilty and sins committed in fantasy as well as in reality are confessed. No one comes away from the ritual with a sense of success and attainment, but with a sense of moral failure. Thus, the community is united in the knowledge that guilt is the shared predicament of mankind. There are few guilts as difficult to bear as that of isolation in guilt from one's peers. In Rubenstein's view *Yom Kippur* is merely palliative. It does not guarantee renewal, but it avoids the anguish of isolated guilt, denoting guilt as a common problem rather than as a hidden secret. Despite resolutions made and not kept, *Yom Kippur* is not futile. The character of the day gives it perennial value in that sacrifice focuses on shared failure and common resolutions for the future.

Fourthly, one of the main functions of sacrifice is that man's inherent tendency toward aggression is channelled, in order to prevent uncontrolled irrational violence.[175] Rubenstein interprets *kashruth* (the Jewish dietary laws) in the light of sacrifice as it is deeply rooted in, and a result of, the sacramental aspects of Jewish existence. In *kashruth* it is recognised that eating is emotionally over-determined. *Kashruth* deals with the problem of orality. 'Here as well as in every other significant human striving, normative Judaism has always been responsive to the covert and unconscious as it has to the conscious and rational. The key to the understanding of Judaism's basic method of dealing with such problems is that Judaism never sought to abolish what

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175. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, pp. 73, 99, passim.

in any event could not be abolished. Instead it sought to limit and channelize emotions and strivings which become hopelessly destructive without such limitation. This is true of *kashruth* which makes of every meal a sacramental act; it is also true of the sacrificial order of tradition.'[176]

Rubenstein suggests that a religion of exhortation reaches only the rational conscious area of the mind. It is addressed to the ego and says nothing to the unconscious elements in the makeup of the participants. It is also inclined to be aesthetically impoverished, lacking opportunity for emotional expression. It is not addressed to moral and religious failure. Exhortation serves cruelly to rub salt into pathetically open wounds in that man recognises his guilt and knows that he cannot reach the required expectations.[177] Exhortation to improvement heightens the individual's isolation in an already fragmented society. Exhortation, therefore, cannot end the sense of alienation which very frequently attends guilt. The unspoken conviction of the sacrificial system is that individuals are more likely to repeat their failings and characteristic mode of behaviour from generation to generation than to improve upon them.[178] Therefore, even though in a rational society sacrifice seems to be needless destruction, it plays an extremely significant role on an unconscious level. It has now been relegated to the verbal sphere, but it remains effective in a similar way to the therapeutic value of psychoanalysis which is also undertaken on the verbal level. The priest is pessimistic about human nature, unlike the prophet who seeks to improve it.[179] The priest tries to make the best of an imperfect creation. Rubenstein is of the opinion that most rabbis function largely as priests and that if we take controlled magic out of religion the result will not be greater rationality. Rather, the result will be devastatingly uncontrolled irrationality. The total abolition of sacrifice can only be damaging for, when the thin veneer of rationality disappears in times of stress, regression occurs. This can result in outbursts of magic in which guilt and anger are expressed by unrestrained killing of the 'alien'. It is in this light that Rubenstein interprets the Holocaust.[180]

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176. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Atonement and Sacrifice in Contemporary Jewish Liturgy' p. 100. 177. Ibid. p. 102. 178. Ibid. p. 106.

179. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, pp. 106, 146.

180. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Atonement and Sacrifice in Contemporary Jewish Liturgy', p. 107.

At a time when rationality seems to have won the day there is more violence and inhumanity than ever. A literal pornography of violence floods the mass media. Rubenstein insists that we dare not alter the prayer book in line with what is currently believed to be 'higher' as opposed to 'primitive'. We dare not transmit our presuppositions in this area to future generations.[181] What Rubenstein regards as the present false theory of sacrifice attempts to suppress important aspects of the human personality. He interprets Judaism as retaining meaning on every level of existence. In normative Judaism neither prophet nor priest won the day. Each has found a place in a tradition which was 'wise enough to endure the tension between them rather, than falsely choose one in preference to the other'.[182] Problems of orality, aggression and sadism were brought into the domain of the sacred where they could be regulated and dealt with, rather than ignored.

Rubenstein admires paganism's approach to sacrifice. In sacrificial death, paganism accepts its own guilt for sacred violence blaming no outsider for a deed which is regarded as a sad and bloody necessity. Pagan cultic religion was rooted in the reality of human biology and psychology. In paganism violence is channelled and in a limited act of violence, one dies for all. In Nazism, on the other hand, there was an irrational explosion of repressed forces, therefore to call Nazism paganism is an injustice to paganism. Nazism was an inverted and demonic transformation of Jewish and Christian values, combined with a romantic hankering after a paganism it never understood.[183]

In the final analysis, Rubenstein suggests that Jews should turn to the wisdom of the rabbis rather than to the blood of the pagan or the idealism of the rationalist with regard to the place of verbal forms of sacrifice in the Jewish tradition.[184] The symbols of life which are

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181. Ibid. p. 108. It is this very 'rationality' which Rubenstein currently sees as the underlying cause of the problem. See *The Cunning of History*.

182. Ibid. p. 109.

183. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'Religion and the Origins of the Death Camps, A Psychoanalytic Interpretation', p. 18.

184. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Atonement and Sacrifice in Contemporary Jewish Liturgy', p. 111.

represented in traditional religion must be kept intact otherwise the symbol makers of death will take over.[185] If the symbol makers of life neglect their task, the symbol makers of death will give man what he thirsts for most, an integrated psyche in which his personal goals, both conscious and unconscious, are at one with the larger community. Symbols of death contain much power.

Marking the Decisive Crises of Life within the Community

Because Rubenstein interprets religion as the way we share the decisive times and crises of life through the inherited experience and norms of our community he attributes decisive importance to Judaism's *rites de passage*. These rituals appeal to the latent level of mental functioning and give profound expression to our feelings at these decisive times in our lives. He places great stress on the function of such rituals as the Bar Mitzvah[186] and the mourning rites[187] in the life of the individual and group, viewing them as deeply rooted in psychological need. Bar Mitzvah confirms the adolescent boy's manhood and his newly acquired masculine role. It forces away the clinging to infancy. The boy is reconciled with his father after the difficult Oedipal period, through identification. The father, having experienced the same rite, encourages the son's progress toward manhood instead of impeding it. At the same time the parents experience the Bar Mitzvah as a formal *rite de passage* into middle age. Rubenstein regards Barmitzvah as a puberty rite which would remain indispensable to Jews even without God. Similarly, the mourning rituals in Judaism confront man with the reality of death and affirm death so that the survivors can take up the task of living realistically when the time of healing begins. In addition, the community shares the mourner's terrible burden.[188]

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185. Ibid. p. 110.

186. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, pp. 234, 212, passim.

187. See Rubenstein, 'A Rabbi Dies' for the importance of the funerary ritual in Judaism. See also *Power Struggle*, pp. 36 ff, and *After Auschwitz*, 'The Making of a Rabbi', pp. 210 ff, for Rubenstein's intense sense of deprivation at not having participated in the Bar Mitzvah ritual.

188. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'The Symbols of Judaism and the Death of God', p. 237.

Because the archaic rituals are of such crucial importance to Judaism, Rubenstein is almost tempted to reassert their divine origin and authority.[189] But he is of the firm conviction that religious rituals and symbols cease to be meaningful unless they are appropriated in the shared life of the community. Contemporary Jewish theology cannot, in his view, ignore the question of the meaning of the Synagogue in our times. Though the Synagogue is an inadequate institution in which many modern Jews cannot feel entirely comfortable, it remains indispensable. 'In such really important aspects of human experience as birth, adolescence, mating, guilt and death, our fundamental experiences tend to remain the same as those of primitive man. If anything we are at a disadvantage in our secular culture.'[190] Prayer is regarded by Rubenstein as ineffectual on its own, but interwoven with ritual it becomes a common sharing of ultimate concern in the religious community. Translation of the prayer book into the vernacular is a response to the rational. Rubenstein maintains that we need drama, grandeur and mystery. Traditional religion is the most appropriate vehicle for expressing conscious and unconscious feelings toward the crises of life. One may perhaps even call them *kairoi* in the life of the individual.

The Sobering Weight of Traditional Religion

The unconscious was not invented by Freud. Basic human responses to the human condition were dealt with long before the twentieth century. Ritual and myth express the most abiding concerns of man in a form which can be understood by individuals at all levels of intellectual attainment. These rituals and myths no longer have to be seen as being true at the manifest level of human functioning. As I have said earlier, that is irrelevant to their central function.

We have been far more successful at mastering the physical world than we have in dealing with the emotional crises arising out of the developing personalities of individuals in our culture.[191] Traditional religion would perform this function, and our time betrays its impoverishment in its failure to find a place for the totality of the

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189. Ibid. p. 235. 190. Ibid. 191. Ibid. pp. 234, 235.

human psyche in religious life.[192]

It is in this functional light that Rubenstein interprets all religion, but he applies his views to Judaism in particular. We need tradition to point to our tragic flaws. 'The whole weight of religious tradition with its insistent and dramatic reiteration of God's holy majesty and the finitude and creatureliness of man, reminds me over and over again of what I am. Furthermore, it does more than teach us these lessons at the conscious, intellectual level. It allows us to share these truths in the many dimensions which religious ceremony at its highest can elicit. We can in religion share the reality toward which the myth points, but which it can never adequately attempt to express without incurring the sin of idolatry.[193] In our subjective response to the Torah there is an inner connection between our modern absurd freedom before the facticity of existence in the world and the mysterious awe with which our ancestors experienced God's presence. The Torah points with words to a reality before which words are helpless.[194]

This leeds to a consideration of Rubenstein's view of God which will follow in the next chapter.

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192. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'Atonement and Sacrifice in Contemporary Jewish Liturgy', p. 111.

193. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Person and Myth in the Judaeo-Christian Encounter', p. 80.

194. Ruberstein, op. cit. 'The Meaning of Torah in Contemporary Jewish Theology, An Existentialist Philosophy of Judaism', p. 127.

C H A P T E R V

The threat of mortality that hangs over us sterilizes everything. Only the cry of anguish can bring us to life; exaltation takes the place of truth.

Albert Camus

GOD, ESCHATOLOGY AND HISTORY IN THE THOUGHT OF RUBENSTEIN

God

The most prominent aspect of Rubenstein's thinking is his rejection of the theistic God of history. The existence of human evil is the most potent argument against the existence of such a God. The greatest challenge to belief in the God of history is the question of God and the death camps. The current debate of Holocaust theology began with the question concerning the possibility of reconciling the jealous God of the covenant with the fact of the death camps. Can Auschwitz, it is asked, be, in any sense, a meaningful expression of God's involvement in history?[1] Rubenstein has concluded that in 'reality, the only conception of God that *cannot* be reconciled with Auschwitz is the Biblical God of the covenant as understood within Judaism. Such a God must be moral, at least to the extent of keeping faith with his covenant. *Those whom he causes to suffer must suffer for proper cause.*'[2] Rubenstein finds it difficult, if not impossible, to see what failing could justify Auschwitz as the divine response to a breach of the covenant as it is understood in Judaism. Other conceptions of God such as Hegel's *Geist* or the pagan divinities need not be moral. The Jewish concept of God does not make allowances for the 'dark of divinity' which is difficult to reconcile with the God of the covenant.[3]

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1. Rubenstein, 'Emil Fackenheim's Radical Monotheism', *Soundings*, Vol. 57, No. 2, Summer 1974, p. 245.

2. Ibid. p. 247. 3. Ibid. p. 247.

Rubenstein has concluded that a theistic God is not necessary for Jewish religious practice. He, however, does not interpret the death of God as a cosmic liberation but is deeply saddened by it. Unlike Hamilton and Altizer, he is unable to rejoice in the death of God. 'If I am a death of God theologian, it is with a cry of agony.'[4]

Rubenstein is grappling with the profanity of our times and to that extent, he shares a common perspective with the Christian radical theologians. Working independently of Hamilton and Altizer he reached his own conclusions concerning the death of the God of theism. He was extremely embarrassed when Hamilton labelled him a death of God theologian, both because of the inadequacy of the term, and because of its Christian origin.[5] 'In Judaism God simply does not die. The symbolism upon which the metaphor of the death of God rests is of obvious Christian origin.'[6] The absence of God is felt, yet it is impossible for Jews to use the words 'God is dead' because of their alienation from the symbolism of the cross.[7] All radical theologians experience the radical secularity of our times and all have been influenced by the same thinkers. After Nietszche it is impossible to avoid his language to express the total absence of God from our experience. Thus, the death of God is an unavoidable term which

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4. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'Death of God Theology and Judaism' p. 263.

5. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Symposium on Jewish Belief', p. 152. Eliezer Berkovits in 'Death of a God', *Judaism*, Vol. 20, No. 1, Winter 1971, pp. 75 - 86, points out why death of God theology is not a basically Jewish movement. Neither the problems nor the conclusions drawn from them are in any way new. What is original is the formulation of a not very original atheism as a theology. p. 76. He points out, for example, that in Judaism there is no competitive relationship between God and man. Man is called to responsible safe-keeping of the earth. Berkovits sees the 'emasculation' of man, and hence his loss of freedom as a consequence of the doctrine of Original Sin. The 'delayed parousia' exacerbates fallen existence and human alienation. Modern man desires the death of God who will not let him *be*. The Christian radical theologians' emphasis on the historic figure of Jesus is seen as an old-fashioned humanism.

6. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'Death of God Theology and Judaism' p. 244.

7. Ibid. p. 245.

Rubenstein uses against his will. He has no better way to express the void where God once stood,[8] and has concluded that we live in the time of the death of God. He perceives the vitality of death of God theology as lying in the fact that it has faced more openly than any other contemporary theological movement the truth of the divine-human encounter of our times. 'The truth is that it is totally nonexistent.[9] Rubenstein suggests that the death of God theologians depict an indubitable cultural fact in our times. God is totally unavailable as a source of meaning or value. There is no vertical transcendence. The problem for Rubenstein is not how to think of God in a secular way, but how best to share the decisive crises of life, given the cold, unfeeling, indifferent cosmos that surrounds us, and given the fact that God the Holy Nothingness offers us only dissolution and death as the way out of the dilemmas of earthly existence.[10]

Radical theology errs in its assertion that God is dead. Such a statement exceeds human knowledge and reveals more about the maker of the statement than about God. In fact, it reveals nothing about God. The statement ought, therefore, to be formulated from the viewpoint of the observer. To declare that we live in the time of the death of God is more precise. The death of God is a cultural fact and we shall never know whether it is more than that.[11]

Rubenstein thus makes the dual assertion that man cannot really make judgments about God's death as it is beyond his knowledge, and that a divine-human encounter is totally non-existent in our times. However, he has not abandoned belief in God completely, as can be seen from his statement above concerning God, the Holy Nothingness. One of the main tasks in this chapter is to attempt to convey Rubenstein's God-concept.

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8. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Symposium on Jewish Belief', p. 151 f.
9. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Death of God Theology and Judaism', p. 245.
10. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Judaism and "The Secular City" ', p. 205.
11. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Death of God Theology and Judaism', pp. 246, 151, passim. The cultural *fact* of the death or absence of God is brought out very clearly in *The Cunning of History*. God is dead, for all practical purposes, in the affairs of men. Man appears to be free to do as he pleases and 'play God' in his decisions concerning his fellow men and the world.

It is a problematic area in his thinking. Firstly, he uses the Freudian frame of reference which makes refutation of his ideas difficult as he moves within the Freudian circle. Secondly, his statements are often contradictory, which causes difficulty to the reader, but at the same time, indicates his own inner struggle, and grappling for meaning in God.[12]

Robert Gordis has stated, 'For Rubenstein there is no God and Israel is His witness'.[13] As can be seen from the previous chapter, there is little reason to quibble about the second part of the statement as it contains much truth, certainly as far as Rubenstein's thought of the nineteen sixties was concerned. However, it is necessary to examine Rubenstein's writing to assess to what extent the first part of the statement is true.

Rubenstein : Secular Humanist or Atheist?

It must be noted initially that Rubenstein is neither a secular humanist nor an atheist.[14] In his conviction that the Torah must remain at the centre of Jewish life despite all uncertainties concerning divine validation, Rubenstein explains why the above secular alternatives are unacceptable. He sees secular humanism and/or extreme atheism as the most radical alternatives to the observance of Torah. Despite his rejection of them he regards both these positions as intellectually respectable and as having the virtue of unambiguous clarity.

He rejects secular humanism because he regards it as unmindful of the full determinants of the person which root each individual irrevocably in a definite situation involving the shared vicissitudes of history, culture and psychological perspective. It involves a dilution of the facticities of existence and concentrates on what the individual shares with all men. 'The grandeur and the degradation of twentieth-century

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12. This grappling for meaning in God has become more apparent in his most recent statements in correspondence. The world of the death of God is ultimately an impossibility. Rubenstein wishes to break out of the 'Iron Cage' of godlessness.

13. Robert Gordis, 'A Cruel God or None?', *Judaism*, Vol. 21, No. 3, 1972, p. 2[illegible].

14. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'The Meaning of Torah in Contemporary Jewish Theology, An Existentialist Philosophy of Judaism', pp.117 ff.

Jewish life are too much a part of the fiber of our beings for contemporary religious Jews to regard as meaningful any philosophy which ignores the actualities of present-day Jewish fate and destiny. One must be a particular kind of man with a limited, concrete life situation to be a man at all. The conception of humanity in general is a meaningless and tragic abstraction.[15] Although Rubenstein does not state this, I would imagine that another objection he would have to secular humanism is its faith in man. Rubenstein is far too pessimistic about man to adopt such a philosophy, in my opinion.

The other alternative, atheism, combined with some sort of nationalism, has been elected by many Jews, particularly those living in Israel. Rubenstein rejects this choice because although the Jewish atheist recognises and shares with other Jews the essential particularity and 'thrownness' (*Geworfenheit*) of the Jewish situation, the limitation of Jewish atheism is that it offers no way of sharing actively or participating with other Jews in the wisdom, aspirations, remembrances and insights of earlier generations, thus cutting him off from the past. 'Only he who can also experience or empathize with the agonies and the yearnings of past Jewish generations in their awesome confrontation with the God of Israel can truly partake of the fullness of Jewish experience.'[16]

The Meaning of God as a Variable in Human Experience

An important key to Rubenstein's understanding of God lies in his conviction that the meaning of God in human experience is a variable which is inevitably altered by radical changes in that experience.[17] Arguments for or against the existence of God are far less significant than the existential matrix out of which such affirmations or denials flow.[18] The life situation changes religious sentiment. Rubenstein chooses two periods of Jewish history to illustrate this change in religious sentiment and the resultant views about God.

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15. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, Ibid. p. 118.
16. Ibid. pp. 118, 119.
17. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Rebirth of Israel in Contemporary Jewish Theology', p. 131.
18. Ibid.

The first is the period of the decisive formation of rabbinic Judaism in the first three centuries C.E. The second is the twentieth century with its two great *kairoi*,[19] the Holocaust, and the re-establishment of the State of Israel.

The rabbis of the first three centuries C.E. had no alternative but to experience defeat in terms of the will of an omnipotent and angry God who was punishing the Jews for their sins. 'In terms of the logic of Biblical and Rabbinic Judaism, God could very well be blamed for Jewish disaster since as the All-powerful He is responsible for it. Yet there is too much anxiety involved in blaming God. As bitter as is self-accusation, it is both safer and less anxiety-producing. Self-blame relieves a primary emotional need - the need to counter-aggress against one's enemy when the only safe place to counter-aggress is against oneself. Above all self-accusation *explains* and *offers hope*. In such a psychic world there may be anxiety, but it is not a world devoid of hope.[20] A defeated Jewish community's leaders could not entertain the luxury of doubt. After the Hadrianic war the Jews were a defeated, beleaguered minority under extraordinary pressure to maintain internal unity. 'Doubts were the sort of luxury which a minority community could not embody in action. Furthermore, the need to find some meaning and, consequently some hope was very great.'[21] With the Holocaust, under totally different conditions and in a very different historic situation, Rubenstein believes that the God of history has died beyond all hope of resurrection. Responses to catastrophe in the first three centuries C.E. are no longer valid. In fact, he finds them dysfunctional. With the rebirth of the State of Israel, there will be a new conception of divinity in which the old earth divinities will be reasserted. Earth will become central to the spirituality of Israel. Earth's fruitfulness, its vicissitudes, and its engendering power will once again become the central spiritual realities of Jewish life, at least in Israel.[22] In 'place of the Lord of history punishing man for attempting to be what he was created to be the divinities of nature will celebrate with mankind their "bacchanalian revel of spirits in whom no member is drunk".[23] After these decisive events in the twentieth century 'Jewish paganism

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19. Rubenstein uses the phrase 'moments of *Kairos*' which is tautologous.
20. Rubenstein, 'God's Omnipotence', *Judaism*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1960, p. 127.
21. Ibid.
22. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Rebirth of Israel In Contemporary Jewish Theology', p. 136. 23. Ibid. p. 137.

represents the most viable religious option available to the contemporary Jew'.[24]

The Torah records for us the encounter of Israel with God's terrible holiness.[25] God's presence was once meaningfully experienced.[26] However, as part of this experience, there was also an awareness of the negative aspects of divinity and in the Torah there are strange atavistic elements which have not been repressed. Rubenstein, with his preference for the archaic, stresses the negative elements of deity because he feels that they have not received the attention which twentieth century experience suggests they deserve.[27] There is no element of the Torah which is without relevance for our times no matter how cruel or atavistic it seems.[28] The Torah points with words to a reality before which words are helpless. The Torah never entirely suppressed anything, including the pagan gods.[29] Rubenstein is not embarrassed by these elements as were the nineteenth century reformers. In fact he favours them. He sees grandeur in the Torah in that it never permitted a split to occur in the human psyche. Yahweh never won entirely over Baal and Astarte, therefore the Jews were never cut off from their inner life and the powers of earth which engendered it. Paganism was transformed but never entirely removed. Having learned much of the futility of repression after Fraud, Rubenstein admires this tension in the Torah. The Torah intuitively and instinctively understood the paradoxical truth that one can best overcome atavisms and primitivisms in so far as they are destructive, by acknowledging their full potency and attractiveness and channelling their expression to eliminate their harm.[30]

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24. Rubenstein, *The Religious Imagination*, p. xix

25. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'The Meaning of Torah in Contemporary Jewish Theology, An Existentialist Philosophy of Judaism', p. 127.

26. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, op. cit. pp. 153, 127, passim.

27. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Meaning of Torah in Contemporary Jewish Theology, An Existentialist Philosophy of Judaism', p. 127.

28. Ibid.

29. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Atonement and Sacrifice in Contemporary Jewish Liturgy', p. 109.

30. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Meaning of Torah in Contemporary Jewish Theology, An Existentialist Philosophy of Judaism', pp. 123, 124.

Rubenstein affirms, on the one hand, that the Torah records the encounter with God's terrible holiness, that something happened at Sinai and in the Jewish experience, but on the other, he does not believe that a Divine-human encounter took place at Sinai.[31] Nor does he believe that the norms of Jewish religious life possess any superordinate validation.[32] However the tradition of Divine revelation is not meaningless. 'It has psychological truth rather than literal historical truth....Somehow the Jewish people structured their personal and group norms by objectifying the parental image, projecting it into the cosmic sphere, and interpreting these norms as deriving from the objectified group parent.'[33]

Quite clearly there is a tension in Rubenstein's view of divinity. He sees the Torah as a genuine record of an encounter with God's terrible holiness because at one time God's presence was meaningfully experienced. Simultaneously, he understands the biblical God as a projection in the Freudian sense. He favours a naturalistic point of view, but from this viewpoint he finds 'the suggestion that a God-idea does something toward the creation of meanings both extraneous and unnecessary. From the psychological point of view it may very well be possible to show that dependence upon a God-idea for meanings is to some degree unhealthy. To seek to find life's meanings with the support of a God-idea is to lean upon a crutch. Men can and ought to learn to stand on their own resources'.[34]

The Freudian Basis of Rubenstein's Understanding of Rabbinic Judaism

In examining Rubenstein's God-concept, it is necessary to look once again at the Freudian basis of his thinking. He understands religion as the bulwark against human guilt and anxiety.[35] Religions offer mankind radically different psycho-dynamic instrumentalities with which

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31. As I have pointed out in a note in Chapter III (N. 123), Rubenstein has no reason to doubt that Moses had a revelatory experience. See 'Religion and History : Power, History and the Covenant at Sinai'.

32. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'Symposium on Jewish Belief', p. 145.

33. Ibid.

34. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Reconstructionism and the Problem of Evil', p. 88.

35. Rubenstein, *The Religious Imagination*, pp. xiii, 69 ff, 67, passim.

to cope with the problems arising out of the fact that human institutions are 'fundamentally endangered by the ineradicable hostility, aggression, and rivalry of the generations within the most indispensable and intimate unit of human civilization, the family. The oldest and the most decisive myths and rituals of mankind are devoted to giving expression to and limiting the destructiveness of this problem'.[36] Thus, the God-concept put forward by the various different religions of the world appears to be in accordance with the way they choose to handle the ultimate concerns of human existence relating to the dynamics of family hostilities and interrelationships.

Rubenstein applies Freudian analysis to the legends of the rabbis of the first three centuries C.E.[37] The way in which they elaborated on the Torah and its ambiguities in the relatively free form of *Aggadah* reveals their psychological concerns. As this was the period in which normative Judaism received its decisive stamp, analysis of its concerns assumes significance for the normative responses in Judaism thereafter.

Judaism found a specifically Jewish way to respond to stresses which arise within the family. This is the way of sublimation,[38] one of the recognised ego defences against anxiety. Paul's break with Judaism arose out of his inability to handle the dilemmas of the unconscious by means of sublimation.[39] Judaism and Christianity are seen as psychologically preoccupied with the same problems, but they use different psychic instrumentalities to cope with these common areas of ultimate concern.[40] Rubenstein therefore sees a great deal of anxiety arising out of the dynamics of the family and believes that this anxiety is expressed and reflected in religion. His examination of the legends of the rabbis aims to reveal these anxieties and at the same time to relate them to the specific historic situation of their time.

In his analysis of rabbinic legend he concludes, like Freud, that the origins of religious and personal anxiety are rooted in the family situation. However, he differs from Freud in concluding that the child's

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36. Rubenstein, *The Religious Imagination*, p. 65.
37. This task is undertaken in *The Religious Imagination*.
38. Rubenstein, *The Religious Imagination*, p. xiii.
39. Ibid. Rubenstein has dealt extensively with this problem in *My Brother Paul*. 40. Ibid.

encounters with its maternal environment are far more decisive than fear of the father. Thus, he departs from Freud's suggestion in the primal crime hypothesis that fear of the father is dominant. While fear of the father is present in the *Aggadah*, Rubenstein finds that it is not primary. 'An older more archaic terror of the Great Mother goddess was consciously suppressed in rabbinic Judaism. It did not thereby lose any of its overwhelming power.'[41] Rubenstein exhibits a marked inclination toward a female aspect to divinity.

The *Aggadah* arose out of a particular historic situation with its psychological conditions in the first three centuries C.E. This situation has become paradigmatic for the Jewish situation in the Western world ever since. The rabbis found it impossible to reject the omnipotent God and affirm an absurd cosmos. 'Theirs was not yet the time of the death of God. He who rejects God rejects hope. Hope was precious to the defeated and beset Jewish community after the Roman war....No community can live under conditions of defeat without hope or the God of hope. The path of doubt and denial was not realistic. Self-blame, self-punishment, heightened guilt, and the resolve to make peace with the omnipotent and inscrutable Lord of history offered the only viable option for the Jewish community. It was certainly the only psychologically tenable alternative.'[42]

The Rabbinic Response to Catastrophe as Dysfunctional in the Face Of Auschwitz

The rabbis produced a response to the 'most decisive Jewish catastrophe before Auschwitz - the defeat of the Jews by the Romans in 70 C.E. and 135 C.E The ancient and the modern catastrophes are inextricably connected'.[43] Judaism was politically and religiously defeated. Politically, the Jews were deprived of control over their own destiny. Religiously, defeat resided in the Jewish view that God had punished a sinful people, and in the Christian view that a deicidal people had been rejected by God. 'A process of estrangement from its ancestral homeland resulted in the two-thousand-year night of Jewish existence as a rejected and despised minority in the homeland of others. The terrible events leading up to Auschwitz began in 70 C.E.'[44]

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41. Rubenstein, *The Religious Imagination*, p. xiv. 42. Ibid. p. 136.
43. Ibid. p. xv. 44. Ibid. p. xv.

Rubenstein finds the rabbinic response to this situation of defeat adaptive in its time. He is convinced, however, that though it was functional then, it has ceased to be useful today, and he is unable to share their religious and ideological responses to ancient misfortunes.

In his response to the Holocaust he reasserts those elements of the Torah which have been subjugated to the God of history. Taking as his point of departure the history of the Jews in the twentieth century, he has concluded that the God of history died at Auschwitz. Rubenstein asserts that this 'does not mean that God is not at the beginning and will not be at the end. It does mean that nothing in human choice, decision, value, or meaning can any longer have vertical reference to transcendent standards. We are alone in a silent unfeeling cosmos. Our actions are human actions. Their entailments human entailments. Morality and religion can no longer rest upon the conviction that divinely validated norms offer a measure against which what we do can be judged'.[45] The end of the God of history does not spell the end of all gods. Rubenstein believes in God the Holy Nothingness, known to the mystics, out of which we have come and to which we shall ultimately return. Ommipotent Nothingness is the Lord of all creation.[46]

God the Holy Nothingness

Rubenstein was drawn to the Jewish mystics, particularly to the doctrine of God put forward by Isaac Luria and his followers. They saw existence as alienation. Even God the Creator could exist only through an act of self-diminution, *tsimtsum*, of the absolutely simple Ground of existence into himself, leaving thereby a space for the created world. The primal act of creation was one in which that which was All, and therefore not a discrete limited thing, withdrew into himself so that both he and the created world could be limited and defined by each other.[47]

Rubenstein has exchanged the atheistic nihilism of his youth for a mystical nihilism. 'To be all that there is, as God was in the beginning and will be in the end, is equivalent to being, so to speak, absolutely nothing. In the beginning God dwelt in the womb of his own omnipotent

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45. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, The Making of a Rabbi', pp. 224, 225.
46. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, pp. 154, 225, passim.
47. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Making of a Rabbi', pp.218 ff.

nothingness. The first act of creation was an act of self estrangement whereby the revealed God, in contrast to the primordial hidden ground, and the created world came into existence.[48] All conscious existence is beset by a conflict between the desire for survival, identity and individual self-maintenance and the yearning to return to its source in God's nothingness. 'Redemption is return; existence is exile.'[49] Our identity is purchased at the price of estrangement. We know who we are only insofar as we know who we are not. We fear and crave redemption because its reward and price are the same, disappearance of the individual into the Source from which he came. Rubenstein sees this as similar to Freud's secularised version of the same desire in the death instinct, the desire to return to the quiescence which preceded our existence. Freud used the metaphor of the conflict between Eros and Thanatos. Rubenstein perceives both thought systems as pointing to the same reality.[50]

In this view of God as the Holy Nothingness, Rubenstein has emphasised the negative aspects of God as understood in the Torah. The Torah records the way in which the Jews understood divinity with its positive and negative elements. 'Where the holiness of God is real, the tragic element inherent in existence can never be ignored.'[51] God's holiness is more than a moral force. 'He who makes alive is He who slays by His very presence.'[52] God can redeem only by slaying. There is no hope for us beyond the time allotted to us.

The Essential Finitude of Human Life

As a corollary human life is essentialy finite. Life is bracketed between two oblivions[53] and there is no hope or salvation. There are 'absolutely no grounds for eschatological hope'.[54] This radical pessimism need not be crippling in that man can live without deceptive

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48. Ibid. 49. Ibid. 50. Ibid. p. 220.

51. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'The Meaning of Torah in Contemporary Jewish Theology, An Existentialist Philosophy of Judaism', p. 125.

52. Ibid. 53. Ibid. p. 119.

54. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Death of God Theology and Judaism', p. 258.

myths of an immortal soul. We live in the present without future hope. But the realisation that we only have one another will show that we need each other more than ever. We are united with present and past generations in a community of faith, and more strongly in a community of shared predicament and ultimate concern. Our greatest need is to know who we are. Man's greatest sin is his refusal to recognise and be himself. As in paganism, *hubris* is man's sin against his limits. *Hubris* characterises man's refusal of the ecstasy and passion of existence as well as his insistence on too great an estrangement of it. When all sins have been reduced to their final term, man's greatest sin will be seen to be his sin against his own being, his pathetic refusal to recognise and be himself.[55] *Hubris* never implied total lawlessness as implied in deicide. It was followed by inevitable *nemesis*.[56] A removal of concentration on future rewards results in a greater concentration on self-knowledge in this life. After having passed through the crises of life aided by ritual in the community, and by the sobering knowledge of our tradition, we finally return to the Holy Nothingness from which we came.[57]

'The death of God does not cancel death. It heightens our sad knowledge that no power, human or divine can ultimately withstand the dissolving onslaughts of omnipotent Nothingness, the true Lord of all creation!'[58]

Rubenstein understands God as the Ground of all being. As such he paradoxically 'does everything and nothing. He does nothing in that He is not the motive or active power which brings us to personal self-discovery or to the community of shared experience. Yet He does everything because He shatters and makes transparent the patent unreality of every false and inauthentic standard. God, as the ultimate measure of human truth and human potentiality, calls upon each man to face both the limitations and the opportunities of his finite predicament without

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55. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'The Rebirth of Israel in Contemporary Jewish Theology', p. 137.

56. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Religion and the Origins of the Death Camps, A Psychoanalytic Interpretation', p. 19.

57. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Person and Myth in the Judaeo-Christian Encounter', pp. 78, 79.

58. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Death of God Theology and Judaism', p. 257.

disguise, illusion or hope'.[59] God no longer stands before us as the final censor but as the final reality before which and in terms of which all partial realities are to be measured. 'The last paradox is that in the time of the death of God we have begun a voyage of discovery wherein we may, hopefully, find the true God.'[60]

After the Holocaust we are totally and nakedly alone, unable to expect succour or support from God or our fellow creatures. 'No men have known as we have how truly God in His holiness slays those to whom He gives life.'[61] Man is nothingness before the awesome and terrible majesty of the Lord. But Rubenstein accepts this nothingness and even rejoices in it, for in finding nothingness, we have found ourselves and the God who alone is true substance.[62] He states, 'We did not ask to be born; we did not ask for our absurd existence in the world; nor have we asked for the fated destiny which has hung about us Jews. Yet we would not exchange it, nor would we deny it, for when nothing is asked for, nothing is hoped for, nothing is expected, all that we receive is truly grace.'[63]

Just as the Holocaust marks the death of the God of history for Rubenstein, the re-establishment of Israel marks the rebirth of long forgotten gods of the earth within Jewish experience. He regards an insightful paganism as the only meaningful religious option remaining to Jews after Auschwitz and the rebirth of Israel.[64] He advocates a mystical paganism which utilises historic forms of Jewish religion as the most promising approach to Jewish religion in our times.[65] Paganism needed no theistic creator God. 'In spite of its vulgar caricatures, paganism is an honorable and reasonable religious path. It is the religion of most Americans, Christian and Jewish, lay and

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59. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Symbols of Judaism and the Death of God', p. 240.
60. Ibid. p. 241.
61. Rubenstein op. cit. 'The Meaning of Torah in Contemporary Jewish Theology, An Existentialist Philosophy of Judaism', p. 128.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid. pp. 128, 129.
64. Rubenstein, op. cit. Introduction to 'The Rebirth of Israel in Contemporary Jewish Theology', p. 130.
65. Ibid.

clergy, though they are seldom aware of it.'[66] With the return of the people of Israel to the realities of the soil, earth will become central to the spirituality of Israel although the ancient Canaanite gods will not supplant worship of Yahweh. What Rubenstein calls 'an old-new understanding of God'[67] will in his view be inevitable. There will no longer be a transcendent Lord of nature controlling it as if it were a marionette at the end of a string, but God will be seen as the source of life and nature, the being of beings which ephemerally and epiphenomenally is nature's self-expression. God will be seen as one, but will participate in nature's vicissitudes and necessities rather than to create them outside of his solitary perfection. The unity of God will continue to be maintained for the Lord of history has given insight into the partial and tentative character of all polytheistic representations of the life and source of the cosmos (though Rubenstein views a return to polytheism as having real attractiveness).[68]

The Demonic Side of Divinity

The new understanding of God will inevitably have to confront the dark demonic side of divinity. Rubenstein points out that the ancients recognised in the word 'holy' (*kadosh* or *sacer*) a hidden awesomeness which transcended all categories of goodness, virtue and morality. For the Lord of history there can be no such issue because all guilt and darkness rest on man's side.[69] In the religion of nature, man feels a unity with nature and accepts a demonic aspect to reality and divinity as an inescapable concomitant of life and existence. 'To say that God

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66. Rubenstein, *The Religious Imagination*, p. xiv. In *Power Struggle*, p. 163, Rubenstein suggests that both he and his congregation (when he was a rabbi) were practising a pagan cult rooted in the vicissitudes of *earthly, biological* existence, veiled by a pretence of serving a male sky god. His congregants were unconsciously pagan. He was becoming consciously pagan.

67. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'The Rebirth of Israel in Contemporary Jewish Theology', p. 139.

68. Ibid. p. 140. Rubenstein here, seems to display an ambivalence. Unity of God cannot be held simultaneously with polytheistic representations of the life and source of the cosmos.

69. Ibid. p. 140.

and nature are at one with each other, that they are alive and life engendering, is to affirm the demonic side not alone in us, but in divinity as well.'[70] Thus, the tragedies and ambiguities of existence cease to reflect historic man's wilful rebellion as they become internalised in the self-unfolding of divinity. 'Virtue ceases to be a choice of separable alternatives; it becomes an overcoming. The contradictory character of existence in contrast to the logical symmetry of essence, makes goodness and virtue an overcoming in us as well as in divinity. The very character of life makes the divine source a ceaseless self-striving in which the unending negativities and affirmations of existence follow one another and in which individual forms of life are expressions of the self-construction and self-separation of divinity. Life on life is thrust forward in divinity's ceaseless project to enjoy its hour and then to become the consumed substance of another life.'[71]

Rubenstein suggests that this view of divinity makes tragedy and destruction inescapable. But, though it ascribes an ontic quality to evil, it possesses far more compassion than the terrible view that evil is an entirely free act of will. It endows with proportion and measure both the loving and the demonic in man.

The Influence of Existentialism on Rubenstein's God-concept

At this point of the discussion it is logical to consider the influence of existentialism on Rubenstein's God-concept. He was influenced greatly by Camus and Satre. In a lucid exposition of Camus' *The Plague*[72] Rubenstein has amplified his rejection of the God of history and his concern with human guilt. Camus describes a plague of immense proportions which breaks out in the city of Oran and, in complete indifference to vice and virtue, consumes thousands. Examined in the light of the Judaeo-Christian interpretation of catastrophe, the plague would have to be viewed as the representation of the punitive anger of God visited upon a sinful city. This perspective is represented in the novel by Father Paneloux who interpreted the disaster in the only terms

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70. Ibid. 71. Ibid.

72. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'Person and Myth in the Judaeo-Christian Encounter', pp. 66 ff. Cf. *The Religious Imagination*, pp. 132 ff. See Camus, Albert, *The Plague*, Transl. by Stuart Gilbert, Penguin books, 1977.

meaningful to him. 'For Father Paneloux, as for all Deuteronomists who have preceded him, human suffering could be understood only as the problem of human guilt and its retribution. The tragedy of suffering was aggravated by the conviction that, because men suffered, they deserved to suffer.'[73] Camus is unable to share this view. While he accepts the tragedy and the inevitability and gratuitous absurdity of suffering, he refuses to consent to its justice. Father Paneloux is ultimately broken by the painful death of a child. He is unable to explain the event within his Prophetic-Deuteronomistic interpretation of history. Camus represents him as dying, not as a result of the plague. but because he knows no way of reconstituting his world which has now been shattered.

Camus prefers human solidarity in an absurd cosmos to the view that man is inescapably guilty before God. 'He would rather live in an absurd, indifferent cosmos in which men suffer and die meaninglessly but still retain a measure of tragic integrity than see every last human event encased in a pitiless framework of meaning which deprives man of even the consolation that suffering, though inevitable, is not entirely merited or earned.'[74] He rejects the God of the Judaeo-Christian tradition in the face of suffering of the innocent, and chooses an absurd cosmos which preserves a measure of human solidarity and dignity. Rubenstein concurs with this choice of human solidarity in an absurd and ultimately tragic cosmos. He parts company with Camus' atheism in the view that simply *because* human existence is so absurd, hopeless and tragic the religious community must be treasured as the vehicle in which ultimate concerns of life can be expressed and shared.[75]

Rubenstein by no means overlooks the extraordinary psychological difficulties involved in accepting such a universe in which fate is arbitrary and gratuitous as such a point of view 'seems to go completely against the structure of the human psyche'.[76] This view implies the denial of hope, an attitude which could not possibly be adopted by the beset and overwhelmed community which characterised Judaism of the first three centuries C.E. However, when the terms of Jewish existence became such 'that self-determination and self-realization were again tenable alternatives, there was bound to be a change in sentiment. Many

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73. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'Person and Myth in the Judaeo-Christian Encounter', p. 66. 74. Ibid. p. 67. 75. Ibid. p. 68.
76. Rubenstein, 'God's Omnipotence', *Judaism*, Vol, 9, No. 2, p. 128.

were quick to abandon the religion or at least the disciplines of Moses while retaining their Jewish identities...Perhaps, too, some have acquired such inner resources of strength that the alternative of an irrational and only partly understood universe no longer frightens them. Their need to make the effort after meaning in the cosmos may very well diminish as they come to find greater inner meaning. With this diminution, there may also come a diminution in Israel's pathetic and gratuitous need to blame itself for all of its misfortunes. Before God man may not be entirely in the wrong'.[77]

God is the Ground of being, but also the focus of ultimate concern.[78] Such a God is inescapable after the death of the God of Jewish theism. Though many still believe in the transcendent, theistic God of patriarchal theism, in Rubenstein's view they do so 'ignoring the question of God and human freedom and God and human evil. For those who face these issues the Father-God is a dead God. Even the existentialist leap of faith cannot resurrect this dead God after Auschwitz.[79] God as the focus of ultimate concern and the ground of being is the measure against which we can see our own limited finite lives in proper perspective. Idolatory thus remains, for Rubenstein, the confusion of a limited aspect of things with the ground of the totality.[80] Rubenstein, deeply influenced by Paul Tillich, believes that we should not endow a partial and limited concern with the dignity and status reserved for what is an ultimate concern. If awareness of God as the Ground of all being does that, it will serve the most important of all tasks. As such, 'God can make us truly free'.[81] We must accept our finitude and need no deceptive myths of an immortal soul. 'We are finite. He is eternal. We shall perish. He remains ever the same.'[82] We confront our human nakedness in truth and honesty before him. Our voyage of self discovery is aided through Jewish insistence on tradition and ritual. Judaism refused to turn the regard of the Jews away from the only life they will ever know, the life of the flesh in this world. 'God as the focus of ultimate concern challenges us to be the only

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77. Ibid. p. 128.
78. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'The Symbols of Judaism and the Death of God', p. 238.
79. Ibid. 80. Ibid.
81. Ibid. 82. Ibid. p. 239.

persons we realistically can be, our authentic finite selves in all of the radical insecurity and potentiality the life of mortal man affords.'[83]

The Earth as a Cannibal Mother

Closely associated with Rubenstain's view of God as the Holy Nothingness from which man comes and to which he must ultimatley return, is his view of the earth as a cannibal Mother. He is deeply impressed by the maternal image in religion and adoration of the Mother. 'Religions have come and gone, but the adoration of the Mother has never ceased... - and with good reason, for She who gives birth announces the hour of death in that very moment....Neither Judaism nor Christianity could entirely suppress the awesome knowledge that Earth is a Mother, a cannibal Mother who gives forth her own children only that she may consume the fruit of her own womb. Almighty Necessity has never ceased her omnipotent reign. We are born but to perish. We are more than the fools of the gods; we are their food...The Kingdom lies ahead of us, but it is not...new reality....It is the Nothingness out of which we have come and to which we are inescapably destined to return.'[84]

There are distinct indications, particularly in the works written after *After Auschwitz*, that Rubenstein favours the maternal aspects of deity despite his statements that 'God in his holiness is beyond both the masculinity of the Judaeo-Christian tradition and the femininity of the pagan goddesses. The old problem of patriarchal and matriarchal religion evaporates in this final reality'[85] and 'The holiness of God knows neither masculinity nor femininity, it knows only life, fecundity, death, mystery, and wonder'.[86]

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83. Ibid.
84. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'Death of God Theology and Judaism', p. 258.
85. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Meaning of Torah in Contemporary Jewish Theology, An Existentialist Philosophy of Judaism', pp. 125, 126.
86. Ibid. p. 127.

Rubenstein certainly stresses the importance of the role of the mother in the development of religion. He finds Freud inadequate in this one area: his failure to give heightened emphasis to the importance of the mother in the development of religion and society.[87] Rubenstein asserts that to argue that the role of the mother is more decisive than the father in the formation of religion 'is to refine Freudian theory, not to negate it.'[88] Freud's primal crime hypothesis simply is not primal enough.[89] The facts as now known increasingly indicate that the earliest religions were matriarchal rather than patriarchal and that patriarchal religion appeared only at a relatively late historical period. This suggests that the Bible is replete with evidence of the continuing attraction of matriarchal religion down to the Babylonian captivity, and of the extraordinary difficulties encountered by patriarchal religion before it became dominant. Judaism is regarded generally as a sternly patriarchal religion. Fertility, birth, death and rebirth are dominant themes of matriarchal religions. Freud's myth represents the dominant themes and conflicts of patriarchal religion. In Rubenstein's view an analysis of religion must push back to elements beyond the phallic level, namely, the pregenital level of development, thus pushing beyond patriarchal religion to the origin of matriarchal religion.[90]

Rabbinic Fear of the Great Mother

In his analysis of rabbinic anxiety Rubenstein suggests that fear of the Great Mother goddess remains, despite belief in a father deity. The way in which sinners were punished, as related in the *Aggadah*, indicates that there was far greater fear of the mother than of the father in rabbinic Judaism. Orality is associated with the mother in the early pre-Oedipal period of life. Oral activities are emotionally overdetermined in Judaism. The dietary laws tend to confirm the hypothesis that, no

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87. Rubenstein, *The Religious Imagination*, p. 15.

88. Ibid. p. 20.

89. Ibid. p. 94. See also Rubenstein, 'Psychoanalysis and the Origins of Judaism', *The Reconstructionist*, Vol. 126, No. 15, p. 14.

90. Rubenstein, 'Psychoanalysis and the Origins of Judaism', op. cit. p. 14.

matter how preoccupied the rabbis were with phallic and Oedipal matters, they were far more insistently and continuously concerned with oral strivings and anxieties of the pre-Oedipal period.[91]

Rubenstein points out that in the religions of the world the mother goddess has two sides. She is the loving giver and sustainer of life. At the same time she is also an incomparably hideous and terrifying ogress. 'She inspires infinitely greater terror than the God of Judaism at His worst. The unmeasured terror inspired by the great cannibal Earth-Mother reflects the child's first confrontation with its environment unaided by previous learning. The child's project is not merely to eat but so to consume its environment that the hideous pains of hunger which thrust it into reality will be appeased and sated. Its greatest unspoken fear, unrefined by experience or concept, is that this nourishing environment will do unto it as it has done. The cannibal child is in terror of a cannibal world, the world of the Mother. It is that world which we see objectified in the religions of the Great Mother.'[92] Rubenstein asserts that we all retain something of that world in later life.

In the legends of the rabbis, punishment for sinners in the form of incorporation into the earth reveals a great deal of anxiety. One of the most vivid forms of incorporation is death by drowning. These fears correspond to the decisive fears of matriarchal religion.[93] The Great Mother as earth, womb and tomb, gives birth to and consumes her own children. Rubenstein states: 'I would not dispute that the God of rabbinic Judaism was essentially a Father-God and was so regarded by the rabbis. Nevertheless, the evidence of the legends suggests that earlier archaic feelings toward the mothers were never lost and actually remained a very significant component in the new piety.'[94] The religious disciplines of Judaism were defences against the permissiveness of the Mother and the terrible price she exacted for her giving of freedom.[95] The biblical talion principle, often interpreted as cruel, in fact introduced limitation and measure. The Father God 'even at his

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91. Rubenstein, *The Religious Imagination*, p. 94.
92. Ibid. p. 95.
93. Ibid.
94. Ibid. p. 96. 95 Ibid.

most punitive is an agent of limitation and measure in contrast to the unmeasured terrors of the pre-Oedipal mother'.[96] Thus, Rubenstein sees Judaism's turning from the mother to the father in religion as the work of the ego defending itself against infinitely greater archaic fears.

The rabbinic legends also suggest that She who was repressed incessantly returned, not only in the worst fears of the rabbis, but also in their deepest yearnings. The Father God as Creator is the Author of order out of chaos. His creative activity prevents a return of the cosmos to chaos. Man is His co-worker in maintaining order and preventing a disintegration of the world into chaos. In the oldest mythologies, undifferentiated chaos is the abysmal mother out of which earth, sea and the world of man arise. The Father God is responsible for the creation of order out of disorder, this being one of his most important functions.[97]

The rabbis were aware of the threat of the return to original chaos. It was at the same time threatening and seductive. It was feared and yet desired. The Jew was seen as God's partner in bringing about the Kingdom which for Rubenstein is nothing other than the rule of order, measure and equity. Having a potent and very real awareness of the dissolving nothingness out of which we have come and to which we must return, the rabbis attempted to 'create those forms, limitations and structures which are indispensable to every human activity of significance. For the rabbis, every meaningful encounter contained some element of choice between chaos and cosmos. Forsaking the Goddess who engendered in them their deepest chaotic anxieties, they turned hopefully to the Lord of creation and his statutes, ordinances, and commandments'.[98]

All aspects of divinity are manifold aspects of the same 'faceless Abyss'.[99] This assertion, in addition to Rubenstein's view that the faceless Abyss knows only life, fecundity, death, mystery and wonder, and his stress on the centrality of the earth in religion, suggests a

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96. Ibid. p. 98. 97. Ibid. p. 99.

98. Ibid. pp. 99, 100.

99. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'The Meaning of Torah in Contemporary Jewish Theology, An Existentialist Philosophy of Judaism', p. 126.

leaning toward the matriarchal elements of deity. Whether he prefers this element to that of Holy Nothingness is a moot point. That he finds maternity in divinity an awesome reality is beyond doubt. 'While Judaism has wisely asserted the ultimate unity of the God of nature and the God of history, our times are peculiarly suited for a rediscovery and a reaffirmation of the primordial powers of earth and fatality that have on occasion bedecked themselves in the guise of the God of history.'[100]

Rubenstein and the Presence of Divinity

Rubenstein undeniably feels the powerful presence of divinity. Perhaps there is no vertical transcendence, but his remark that a divine-human encounter is totally non-existent is ambiguous in the light of the statements he makes about God. 'Many are the appellations men have given to God. Not the least of them is Truth.'[101] The Torah 'points with words to a reality before which words are utterly helpless'.[102] 'No people has come to know as we have how deeply man is an insubstantial nothingness before the awesome and terrible majesty of the Lord.'[103] 'Truth is finally known, if at all, by God alone.'[104] Theology will 'turn its face to the light of the Lord that it may better re-enter the darkened cave of human striving, there to help create...a true community of persons rooted in human solidarity and helpfulness. If the fruit of the supernatural vocation is arrogance, contempt, censure and harshness, would not God Himself prefer that we forsake it and find ways of truly making every man our brother?'.[105] Finally, 'I am aware of His holiness. I am struck with wonder and [illegible]re His Nothingness but I cannot love Him. Perhaps, in the [illegible] have is silence'.[106]

In view of this type of statement, constantly made throughout his works, Rubenstein retains a God-concept and a very real form of encounter with the divine. In relation to his view concerning God the Holy Nothingness

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100. Ibid. p. 123.
101. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Reconstructionism and the Problem of Evil', p. 90.
102. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Meaning of Torah in Contemporary Jewish Theology, An Existentialist Philosophy of Judaism', p. 127.
103. Ibid. p. 128.
104. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The "Supernatural" Jew', p. 188. 105. Ibid.
106. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Death of God Theology and Judaism', p. 264.

he states, 'Although some of my critics have regarded my language as indistinguishable from atheism, my intent has been to stress the utter inadequacy of all verbal formulations before the divine reality. I have in actuality merely returned to a very archaic insight concerning the mystery and namelessness of God. My critics have also reiterated the very ancient response of those who find the final mystery of God both intolerable and threatening. My conception of God's Nothingness is not that of a void. It is a conception of the plenum out of which the totality of all that has existed, does exist, and will exist is derived. When our religious ideologies finally begin to transcend the intimacy of our childhood memories within the nurturing family, we arrive at the domain of final mystery, before which silence alone is the adequate response'.[107]

There is a persistent tension between Rubenstein's real awareness of God and the fact that he seems to have substituted the Freudian projection of a Father-God with Freud's all-powerful Thanatos. At times, despite his disclaimers, one cannot help wondering whether Rubenstein's Holy Nothingness is anything more than almighty Thanatos. If this is so, then Robert Gordis' statement that for Rubenstein there is no God and Israel is His witness must be considered as true. However, if one looks at the whole body of Rubenstein's writing, one must concede that his God is similar to the God of the mystics, dating as far back at least as to Plotinus. Is also has a marked resemblance to the Buddhist affirmation of Nirvana, viewed in its positive sense as the totality of being.[108]

It is true that the theistic Father-God has died for Rubenstein. If there is a God of history, he must be the ultimate author of Auschwitz. 'I am willing to believe in God the Holy Nothingness who is our source and our final destiny, but never again in a God of history.'[109] A God-concept thus remains, although the link between that God and Israel as his witness is somewhat strained.

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107. Rubenstein, *The Religious Imagination*, pp. 144, 145.

108. Rubenstein, in a letter dated 20 June 1980, told me that he had been approached by the Asians because his religious position bears such a strong similarity to that of Mahayana Buddhism, a similarity of which he was previously unaware and, therefore, did not intend.

109. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'Judaism and "The Secular City"', p. 204.

Rubenstein's view that religion in its traditional form still remains most meaningful, despite the death of the God of history, and that it must be expressed within the community, certainly contributes to the retention of meaning for Jewish practice in our secularised age. Rubenstein advocates a mystical paganism which utilises historic forms of Jewish religion as the most viable approach for modern Jews.

There remains the rather incongruous attachment to traditional Jewish religious forms in spite of the fact that the traditional Author of those forms no longer exists. In addition, if the authors were in fact human, the incongruity still remains, because responses to the historic situation in which the traditions were formed are no longer seen to be valid by Rubenstein.

Judging from the evidence, it would therefore be more correct to say that for Rubenstein, 'There is no theistic God of history and Israel is His witness'.

Eschatology

Every theology must deal in some way with the problem of eschatology. Rubenstein's eschatology is in keeping with his God-concept. Just as he rejects the God of theism, he rejects the traditional Jewish view of the end of days. In his opinion the rabbis viewed the end of days with a Deuteronomistic interpretation to the problem of suffering. He maintains, however, that a 'God who tolerates the suffering of even one innocent child is infinitely cruel or hopelessly indifferent'.[110] Our ancestors solved this problem by projecting a future world wherein the cruelties of this world could be rectified,[111] however, this eschatological yearning is a vain and futile illusion.[112] The need for it implies a strong criticism of God's government of this world.[113]

Implicit in any eschatology are the problems of the meaning of life and the nature of redemption. In an examination of Rubenstein's eschatological views, these questions must be considered.

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110. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Reconstructionism and the Problem of Evil', p. 87. 111. Ibid.
112. Rubenstein, op.cit. 'Judaism and "The Secular City" ', p. 193.
113. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Reconstructionism and the Problem of Evil', p. 87.

Rubenstein sees life as bracketed between two oblivions.[114] To 'be human is to be locked in a condition of alienating finitude from which death is the only exit'.[115] The human condition is unredeemed in the present and ultimately hopeless in that nothing lies beyond the existential horizon.[116] The world of the death of God is a world devoid of hope and illusion. People grow old, decline and die. The death of God has not cancelled death.[117]

Rubenstein interprets life in terms of exile. 'Redemption is return; existence is exile.'[118] Life is characterised by pain, evil and suffering which can only be ended by ending life. Life is a system of needs, and therefore a want of perfection. One perfects a system of needs by ending need. This would be tantamount to ending all motive for motion, passion and change. Only in terms of the phenomenology of the psyche is death nothingness. Death ends the needs and instabilities of the organism. It unites the organism's constituent parts with the encompassing environment. The consummation of history can only be a return of all things to God's Nothingness.[119]

The Jewish situation exaggerates what is common to all men. Jews remain in exile awaiting the messiah. They disagree with Christianity on this issue as Christians believe the messiah to have come. Rubenstein perceives a sadness in the Jewish rejection of the Christian claim. It rests upon the tragic wisdom which asserts the inevitability of pain and evil, along with the real moments of joy and fulfilment as long as life continues. By asserting that the messiah is yet to come, Jews affirm of any given era that his redemption has yet to begin.[120] The Pharisees were correct two thousand years ago when they sadly concluded that the promise of radical novelty in the human condition was a pathetic but understandable illusion, that the old world goes on today as it did yesterday and will tomorrow.[121]

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114. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, pp.90, 119, passim.
115. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The "Supernatural" Jew', p. 185.
116. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Judaism and "The Secular City"', p. 205.
117. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Death of God Theology and Judaism', p. 257.
118. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Making of a Rabbi', p. 219.
119. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The "Supernatural" Jew', p. 184.
120. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Making of a Rabbi', p. 220.
121. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Death of God Theology and Judaism', p. 264.

Life is a process of dying. Even in moments of the joys of the flesh one finds death. Love and death are inseparable themes through history and literature.[122] Celebration of joys of the body carries with it the certain knowledge that this vessel of delight must disappear as if it had never been.[123] Our task in life is to accept ourselves and our finitude. We need to learn to dwell in our own bodies with grace, acceptance and, at the same time, renunciation at times. We need no deceptive myths of an immortal soul.[124]

'Redemption is return',[125] a return to Holy Nothingness similar in nature to the goal of Freud's death instinct which returns the organism to the quiescence which preceded existence. Because only death can perfect life and end its problems, and God can only redeem by slaying, there is no beginning and end of creation. Rubenstein concludes that death is the messiah. 'There is only one Messiah who redeems us from the irony, the travail, and the limitations of human existence. Surely he will come. He is the Angel of Death. Death is the true Messiah and the land of the dead the place of God's true Kingdom. Only in death are we redeemed from the vicissitudes of human existence. We enter God's Kingdom only when we enter His holy Nothingness. Eschatology has absolutely no meaning in terms of earthly existence. I do not desire to enter God's kingdom, because I prefer the problematics of finitude to their dissolution in the nothingness of eternity. No actual historical event can be identified with the coming of His Kingdom.'[126] Rubenstein proposes an 'anti-eschatology' because eschatology is a sickness with which man conceals from himself the tragic and ultimately hopeless character of his fate.[127] Redemption is to be found in death. However, there is no need to welcome the messiah. The world is not large enough for both mankind and its Redeemer.[128]

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122. Ibid. p. 257. 123. Ibid.
124. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Symbols of Judaism and the Death of God', p. 239.
125. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Making of a Rabbi', p. 219.
126. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'Judaism and "The Secular City"', p. 198.
127. Ibid.
128. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Death of God Theology and Judaism', p. 261.

Rubenstein is of the profound conviction that life, with all its finitude and limitation still has a great deal of potentiality for man to do and create.[129] He has lost all illusion and hope of consolation and he believes that Judaism must not seek 'pathetic compensation in an imaginary future for a life unlived in the now'.[130] He maintains that Jews must either adopt this position or return to a theology which must praise God for the death of six million.[131]

The very hopelessness of our human situation 'calls forth our strongest need for religious community. If all we have is one another, then assuredly we need one another more than ever. Even the old religious assurances of redemption and resurrection have decisive meaning for those who are nevertheless undeceived concerning man's fate. They are the most significant index of the extent to which only the religious community in modern society constitutes a domain in which the aspiration, the hopes, the tragedies, and the guilts of the human condition can be continuously and meaningfully shared. If we cannot unite with previous generations in a community of faith, we are the more strongly united with them in a community of shared predicament and ultimate concern. Nor could we, at this late date, invent a better medium in and through which we could remain so united with our own and past generations'.[132]

The Return to Zion

Rubenstein states in *After Auschwitz* that in his earlier thought he interpreted Israel's rebirth as the beginning of redemption. He no longer so regards Zionism. 'I see existence as co-terminous with exile and the grave as the real place of redemption.'[133] Zionism represents a Jewish expression of the twentieth century's return to

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129. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Making of a Rabbi', p. 221.

130. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Person and Myth in the Judaeo-Christian Encounter', p. 70.

131. Ibid. Rubenstein is guilty of careless rhetoric in this instance. Judaism does *not* praise God *for* the death six million. With intense difficulty, and often rebellion, it praises him *despite* the Holocaust.

132. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'The Meaning of Torah in Contemporary Jewish Theology, An Existentialist Philosophy of Judaism', p. 119.

133. Rubenstein, op. cit. Introduction to 'The Rebirth of Israel in Contemporary Jewish Theology', p. 130.

primal origins. Zionism's real significance lies in the fact that twenty centuries of self-distortion, self-estrangement and self-blame have ended for a people now free to live life at every level of emotional and cultural experience.[134]

Properly understood then, messianism is an attitude toward time and history rather than a type of political movement. Its most characteristic feature is the desire to bring time and history to an end. 'The goal of messianism is neither the end of man nor of civilization; its real goal is the end of historical man.'[135] However, he sees Zionism as an attempt to make a circle out of a process which previous generations had regarded as linear and progressively developmental. The goal of many of the twentieth century's strivings has been to put an end to the development of historical man.[136]

Zionism is often misunderstood in that the end of history is taken to mean the end to suffering or tragedy. This misses the point, because in Rubenstein's view, messianism's real meaning is the proclamation of the end of history and the return t nature and nature's cyclic repetitiveness. It is a return to nature's vicissitudes rather than abolition of nature's tragic and inevitable necessities. Nature's inevitabilities are thus interpreted as part of the tragic course of existence itself rather than God's retaliation against human sinfulness.[137] With Zionism Jews are able to accept life's present joys and sorrows and cease to see gratification as taking place in the future.[138] Zionism is not an end to insecurity but an end to the interpretation of insecurity as guilt. With Zionism the Jews who 'gave historical religion to mankind and who have suffered most bitterly from it are today the first to put an end to history and begin post-historical existence'.[139] Thus, the turning of the people of a religion of history to a religion of nature is interpreted as an experience of *kairos* fully in keeping with the twentieth century's desire to return to primal origins and primal circularities. This will bring with it the realisation that the task of the modern Jew in Israel is to cast off

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134. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'The Rebirth of Israel in Contemporary Jewish Theology', p. 133.

135. Ibid. 136. Ibid.

137. Ibid. P. 135. 138. p. 136. 139. p. 135.

desire for distant utopias and enjoy the fullness of being in the present.[140]

Rubenstein rejects the enthusiastic optimism and apocalyptism of the Christian secular theologians like Cox and Altizer. Against his deepest yearnings he feels compelled to end with tragic acceptance rather than eschatological hope that still pervades his Christian brother after the death of God.

History

Some of Rubenstein's views on history have already appeared in the above discussion. His concept of history is one of the most problematic areas in his thinking. He explains that in both the Jewish and Christian view, history is interpreted as the unfolding of the divine drama of mankind's salvation. The Christ event has, however, been the cause of a deep and persistent division which has not ended in our times.[141] The argument that God acts in history and punishes his people for their wrongs was a view that was put forward by the prophets, the rabbis and the church fathers. Its logic cannot exclude the Holocaust. Sin of the Jews in Christian

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140. Ibid. p. 136.

141. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'Person and Myth in the Judaeo-Christian Encounter', p. 65.

In the final chapter of this thesis I shall return to Rubenstein's concept of history and a possible alternative to what he proposes. Suffice it to state here that much of his cynicism about the belief in a God who acts in history could be precluded by a less idealistic approach to both history and salvation. The fact that God acts *in history*, i.e. that salvation is a *historical* concept, merges the divine and the human element to such an extent that history remains essentially ambiguous, not in spite of salvation but because of God's intervention in history. "Salvation", therefore, is as ambiguous as history itself and should be clearly distinguished from any notion of an eschatological redemption of the world. The rift between Jews and Christians, for instance, is thus to be interpreted not as a "defeat" of salvation in the historical sense, but as a result and a product of it.

Cf. Engelbrecht, Ben. *Ter ville van hierdie Wêreld : Politiek en Christelike Heilsbelewing in Suid-Afrika*. Tafelberg, Cape Town, 1982, p. 128.

interpretation was due to failure to heed the Christ. In the Jewish view sin constituted failure to comply with divine commandments.[142] 'Jewish theology has since earliest times been peculiarly sensitive to Jewish history.'[143] The history of the death camps cannot be ignored in any meaningful theology. Rubenstein interprets the monumental indifference of most Israelis to traditional forms as an instinctive association of Jewish ideology with the European experience and its degrading catastrophic finale. 'They understandably want no part of it. Their own experience has not been one of defeat or the need for theological self-justification. Above all, they refuse to see the European disaster as a working out of God's retribution.'[144] Had they accepted this, they would also have had to accept the rabbinic corollary that alienation from the Jewish ancestral homeland was caused by a want of Jewish piety.[145]

Rubenstein is convinced of the need to demythologise the Jewish theology of history.[146] He believes that this demythologising process is apparent more in deed than in ideology, particularly in Israel. 'The meaning of the restored Zion is that the normative theology of history traditionally identified with prophetic and Rabbinic Judaism has been effectively demythologized.'[147] The demythologising has not yet appeared in most contemporary expressions of Jewish theology but, in Rubenstein's view, actions speak more loudly than words and he sees the enormous difficulty involved in a people surrendering a myth which has infused its existence with meaning for over two thousand years 'until a way is found to incorporate the newer, demythologized *Weltanschauung* into its religious and institutional structure'.[148]

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142. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'Person and Myth in the Judaeo-Christian Encounter', pp. 65, 66.

143. Ibid. p. 68. 144. Ibid. 145. Ibid. pp. 68, 69.

146. Rubenstein seems to have overlooked the fact that Jewish history, particularly biblical history is *essentially* coloured by myth. Without its mythological quality, it would be inconceivable as history or revelation. G. van der Leeuw coined the most suitable expression in this regard, namely, 'mythhistorie'. See *De Primitieve Mensch en de Religie*, Groningen/Batavia, 1937, p. 184.

147. Rubenstein, op. cit. 'Person and Myth in the Judaeo-Christian Encounter', p. 69. 148. Ibid.

The 'dehumanization of the human spirit is the final term in historical man's self-estrangement. The death camps of the twentieth century may yet prove to be no aberrant accident representing a soon-to-be-forgotten fortuity. They may prove to be the terminal expression of man's historical existence. Unless mankind overcomes its history, these may truly prove to be the foretaste and substance of things to come'.[149] In its deepest sense Zionism is seen as anti-historical. It reflects a desire to return to the soil from which the Jew was alienated two thousand years ago. The yearning to return and have a creative union with earth's powers began with alienation.[150]

Rubenstein advocates a demythologisation of Jewish history and a return to a religion of nature. In the religion of history he sees only man and God as being alive. 'Nature is dead and serves only as the material of tool-making man's obsessive objects.'[151] Nature does not exist to be enjoyed or communed with but to be changed and subordinated to man's wants which brings neither happiness nor satisfaction. In the religion of nature man is once more at home with nature and its divinities, sharing their life, limits and joy. The concomitant of the devitalisation of nature is the dehumanisation of man and a total loss of *eros*.'Historical man knows guilt, inhibition, acquisition, and synthetic fantasy, but no *eros*'.[152] The return to the soil of Israel promises the people a return to *eros* and its ethos where man can find his true place and expression in the cosmos.

In the religion of history every generation is different from previous generations. 'In addition to its own burden of guilt, it must bear the guilts of all who have preceded. The effect is darkly cumulative.'[153] However, in the religion of nature all generations are essentially the same in that they grow, create, ripen and finally return to become the substance of other individuations which will repeat the cycle.

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149. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'The Rebirth of Israel in Contemporary Jewish Theology', p. 135.

150. Ibid. p. 134. 151. Ibid. p. 136.

152. Ibid. p. 137.

153. Ibid.

'Nature and man are one; nature is man's true being and strength; man is nature's self-reflective expression. Fertility, fecundity, and joy are nature's piety rather than God's sins.'[154]

Rubenstein cautions us by saying that an enthusiasm for nature must be tempered by an understanding of the necessity for the historical period.[155] A return to the earth does not cancel out the gains made by and in the historical period, it simply ensures that the fruits of that period will be enjoyed for the first time. The paradox of unending acquisition accompanied by joyless repression is the key motif of the historical period. We can learn from the past, but must never be enslaved by it.[156]

There is a persistent tension in Rubenstein's thought on history. The previous paragraph reveals an inescapable indebtedness to the biblical religion of history which is impossible to overcome. Rubenstein's entire theology has its starting point in the vicissitudes of history, yet he would overthrow it. He is fully aware that no Jew can ignore history,[157] yet he wants to assert an 'old-new' religion in which the God of history is dead and man is at one with nature. He appreciates the advantages of the biblical view of history, yet does not want to be enslaved by it. He wishes to negate that very quality in the Bible which led to secularisation and the development of technology, the de-demonisation of nature. He prefers a return to a cyclic view of time and nature, thus putting the demons, or more precisely, gods, back into nature.

He has not made it clear just how man is to overcome his history, and it is highly debatable whether it would be at all possible. In a letter dated 23 May 1979, I asked Rubenstein whether Western man, imbued as he is with the linear view of history, can ever turn to thinking in terms of cyclic recurrence or repetitiveness to which he answered:

> 'Today, I would agree with you that western man can no longer give up his linear view of history, because he can no longer give up that view's unintended consequence,

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154. Ibid. 155. Ibid. 156. Ibid. p. 138.

157. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'Death of God Theology and Judaism', p. 252.

> namely, technological civilization. However, I am apprehensive concerning technological civilization's ultimate denouement. Ultimately history will prove to be circular rather than linear, but it will become circular when the human drama burns itself out. Since that will involve apocalyptic horror and catastrophe, I hope that the illusion of linearity can be kept going for as long as possible. The restoration of circularity could today only be possible with a return to a subsistence economy, clearly no longer possible.
>
> I saw the rebirth of Israel as an attempt to end history...it was, the history of the Diaspora, but as we plainly see, history continues in Israel. I do not regret or recant my basic insight. If anything, I now see the return to circularity in more tragic terms than ever before. The dialectic of history is now world wide. It has escaped its religious origins and has been secularized in technological civilization, but it is a) a fall b) its end must be catastrophe. I take very seriously the biblical doctrine of the fall at the level of symbolic intuition.'[158]

In his most recent thinking such as that represented in *The Cunning of History* Rubenstein elaborates his views on biblical history. He views the Holocaust as the unintended and unforeseen result of the biblical view of nature and history. The Holocaust, ironically, represents the advance of civilisation and *not* a regression to atavistic barbarity. The Holocast was the outcome of the very secularisation of consciousness propogated by the biblical view of history and nature.

Alexander Bardosh and Alan Rosenberg[159] have suggested that the '*cunning* of history' lies in the fact that it has managed to transform man, with the aid of his rationality, into a thing that can make

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158. Rubenstein, Personal communication, letter dated 5 July 1979.

159. Alexander Bardosh and Alan Rosenberg, 'The Universe of Death', *Cross Currents*, Vol. 30, No. 3, Fall 1980, a review essay on Leon Poliakov's *Harvest of Hate* and Richard L. Rubenstein's *The Cunning of History*.

itself irrelevant through bureaucracy and technology. 'History's cunning has finally conned man into the irony of believing that his ultimate mastery lies in his ultimate destruction. Auschwitz has shown that, within the nature of modern man, there is a capacity for evil greater than what was previously thought to be possible. Rubenstein seems to believe that, as long as the outlook of modernity behind Auschwitz prevails, there can be little choice between the future holocausts of other Auschwitzes, or one final, nuclear holocaust.[160] There is a universal quality to the Holocaust and ultimately we must understand its transforming quality within Western civilisation.

160. Ibid. p. 282.

C H A P T E R VI

Would Christians behave differently in our place? ...Why, then should people demand the impossible of the Jews?
...is the Jew once again worth less than another? Oh, it is sad, that once more, for the umpteenth time, the old truth is confirmed: "What one Christian does is his own responsibility, what one Jew does is thrown back at all Jews".

The Diary of Anne Frank
(Monday, 22nd May, 1944)

THE REALITY OF POWER AND THE FANTASY OF THEOLOGY

The concept of power, particularly as it relates to human dignity, has been a recurring theme in the writing of Rubenstein. It has become one of the dominant foci in his current thinking. He is deeply concerned with the problem of power and dignity as determined by political realities of the world. The Holocaust, which remains his point of departure, is examined within the context of power allocation. He sees powerlessness as playing a decisive role in the Jewish responses to the outside world and as culminating in the Holocaust.

All present Jewish theology has become Holocaust theology. The Holocaust has become the central issue which confronts Jewish thought. Holocaust theology raises a fundamental issue: If God is the all-powerful Actor in the drama of human history who elected Israel as a distinct people, how shall we understand God's role at Auschwitz? Contemporary Jewish theology therefore begins with the classical question of covenant and election and God's action in history, a question which is common to both Jewish and Christian thought. Rubenstein suggests that in most theologies, both Jewish and Christian, the response has been the same. Auschwitz has been interpreted as divine chastisement for having rejected divinely sanctioned mediations. In Christian terms this means

rejection of Jesus,[1] in Jewish terms, infidelity to the Holy Torah. Although Rubenstein departs from this particular response very markedly, he nevertheless confronts the problem raised by it. He cannot accept as valid any theology which fails to take seriously the explosive realities of the twentieth century.

In *Homeland and Holocaust*[2] Rubenstein argues that Jewish theologians have failed to give adequate religious meaning to the two monumental and towering events of twentieth century Jewish history, the destruction of European Jewry and the establishment of the State of Israel.[3] He claims that the theological categories of modern Jewish theologians are inadequate to the explosive realities of Jewish history of this century.[4] He has a minimalist view of theology as capable of offering credible ultimate legitimations and finds its analytic functions more credible.[5] The ultimate import of theology seems to be its relevance to human self-understanding. The test of good theology would seem to be preeminently practical: *Does it deepen and help to clarify the individual's manifold insights about himself, his community, his religious and ethical values, and his place in the time-table of life in such a way that he can realistically function with minimal conflict between his biological, psychological, and cultural needs, his actions towards others, his beliefs, and his ultimate aspirations?* The wise theologian speaks about God the better to understand himself and his fellowmen. If theology does not enhance our capacity to work

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1. Rubenstein, 'Buber and the Holocaust: Some Reconsiderations on the 100th Anniversary of his Birth', *Michigan Quarterly Review*, Spring 1979, p. 383. (Referred to hereafter as Buber Anniversary Article)
2. Rubenstein, 'Homeland and Holocaust', from *The Religious Situation, 1968*, ed. D. R. Cutler, Beacon Press, Boston, 1969.
3. Among the theologians whose categories are found to be inadequate by Rubenstein are Emil Fackenheim, Arthur A. Cohen, Jacob. J. Petuchowski, as well as Martin Buber.
4. Rubenstein, 'Homeland and Holocaust', p. 40. Rubenstein does not spell out the theological categories in question. The normative Jewish theological categories are that:
   (i) God is supreme and active in history,
   (ii) there is a special relationship between God and Israel, Israel being the chosen people, and
   (iii) normative Judaism accepts the existence of a covenant which implies reward and punishment.
5. Rubenstein, Personal communication, Letter dated 5 July 1979.

and to love, it is an expression of disturbed fantasy.[6] Rubenstein's analytical and functional theological perspectives colour his mode of thinking and establish the frame of reference in which he is to be understood. He states: 'I do not find most contemporary Jewish theologies intellectually defensible.'[7]

Theology, according to Rubenstein, must be *embodied* theology. The theologian must be involved with his theology in a very real sense, his involvement and sincerity being gauged by whether he really means what he says. Likewise, theology must be pertinent to the events and vicissitudes of history. This being the case, any meaningful theology will be forced to confront the very real problems associated with the role and allocation of power in political affairs, one of the primary determinants of historic events.

Rubenstein claims to be committed to total honesty and lack of ambiguity in his analysis of the past and future of Judaism. Ambiguity would mean failure in terms of his task as a rabbi[8] and theologian.[9] He has tried to state his belief as honestly and completely as he can, no matter who might be offended or what institutions, religious or communal, might be adversely affected.

A noteworthy feature of Rubenstein's theology is that he has a tendency to move from an analysis of his own past and its problems to an analysis of the problems in the history of his people. Klaus Rohmann, on making this observation, questions the extent to which Rubenstein has been able to transcend his subjectivity.[10] It is no accident that

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6. Rubenstein, 'Homeland and Holocaust', p. 61.
7. Rubenstein, Personal communication, Letter dated 5 July 1979.
8. Rubenstein, *Power Struggle*, pp. 1, 48.
9. Rubenstein, Personal communication, Letter dated 30 April 1980.
10. Rohmann, Klaus, *Vollendung Im Nichts? : Eine Dokumentation der Amerikanischen Gott-ist-Tot Theologie*, Benziger Verlag, Köln, 1977, pp. 99 f.

    In *The Religious Imagination* Rubenstein affirms that theology is a highly personal projection of the theologian's unconscious. All theological discourse, therefore, is projective. He speaks as a theologian 'in the hope that it may prove possible to push beyond subjectivity at some level', p. 144. I am not convinced that Rubenstein has transcended his subjectivity despite the *possible truth* which may be embodied in many of his statements.

Rubenstein entitled his confessional autobiography *Power Struggle*. In this work he records his personal struggle with power and impotence in terms of his vocation, his relationship and struggle with Judaism, and by extension, the Jewish community. There is a profoundly confessional element in this work which can also be observed in other works such as *After Auschwitz*.[11] In *Power Struggle* he records his search for personal power in his desire for a vocation for the summit. He sought the power of the priest in order to control the way in which others would view him. He also records his personal struggle with Judaism which, from an early age, he saw as being characterised by powerlessness and which he identified with impotence.[12] He in fact turned away from Judaism because of this association with impotence. He later returned to Judaism, seeing in the disciplines of traditional Judaism a welcome alternative to the moral chaos regnant in Europe during World War II. He acknowledges his yearning for omnipotence[13] and refuses to show dependence upon anyone outside of himself. He admits that this attitude was later to manifest itself in his refusal to humble himself before his people's ancestral Father-God.[14] He also admits an initial repulsion by the powerlessness of Jesus, a repulsion which ceased when he came to know the power of Jesus' career and person.

The Defeat of the Jews in 70 C.E. : A Decisive Trauma

Aware that some of these characteristics were symptomatic of *dis-ease*, he searched for the traumatic event in his life which was responsible for it. He attempts, in analogous fashion, to locate the traumatic event in the life of his people which shaped their distinctive beliefs, personality structure and social organisation. He sees traditional

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11. In *Power Struggle* , p. 27, Rubenstein admits to this confessional element. 'And isn't it also possible that the confessional elements in my theological writings have arisen in part from the same motives, the desire both to be seen and control the way people regarded me?'

12. Ibid. p. 26, 24, 32, 33

13. Ibid. p. 32. He notes this as a characteristic of mankind. See *After Auschwitz*, and Chapter IV in this thesis dealing with Religion and Man in the thought of Rubenstein.

14. Rubenstein, *Power Struggle*, p. 32.

Judaism as being afflicted by sickness in certain of its aspects.[15]

The defeat of the Jews by the Romans in 70 C.E. was the traumatic event *par excellence*. After their defeat they were condemned to be wanderers, unwanted guests, always uncertain of the duration of their tenure in a host country. The political powerlessness which ensued had disastrous effects, ultimately culminating in the Holocaust. The Holocaust was the devastating consequence of Jewish powerlessness. He states quite unambiguously that the 'fires that incinerated the corpses at Dachau were lit by Titus' when he placed his torches against the Temple in Jerusalem. The fires burned slowly and, at times, were barely visible but they were never extinguished. 'Titus won his victory. Hitler ended what Titus began.'[16]

Emphasising the effects of powerlessness on all subsequent Jewish history, Rubenstein is convinced that the 'world is the arena in which men and women of unequal power confront each other'.[17] Dignity is always dependent upon power and openness; mutuality and acceptance are only possible between those possessed of relatively equal power.[18] Mutual acceptance in the real world can therefore never ignore the claims of class, caste, status and power. In the world in which we live much will be forgiven the powerful because it is not *sin*, but *powerlessness* which is man's ultimate failing.[19]

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15. Rubenstein, *The Religious Imagination*, p. 183. Talking of the rabbinic *Aggadah*, Rubenstein states, 'Admittedly, there was much sickness in the legends.' However, he sees the *Aggadah* as projecting neurotic fears, objectifying them and thereby making them the property of the entire community rather than allowing them to fester in the isolated individual. 'Even the sickness of the *Aggadah* was a stage on the way to health.' Ibid. p. 183. In our demonic times Rubenstein believes that it may yet be possible to find in the world of the *Aggadah* an irreparably lost haven of human truth.

16. Rubenstein, *Power Struggle*, pp. 190, 191. Cf. Rubenstein, *The Religious Imagination*, p. xv.

17. Rubenstein, 'Buber Anniversary Article', p. 397.

18. Ibid. p. 397. Rubenstein suggests that the difficulty inherent in Jewish/Christian dialogue has been exacerbated by the fact that those with power cannot talk on equal terms with those without power. *Homeland and Holocaust*, p. 46.

19. Rubenstein, *Power Struggle*, p. 66.

Rubenstein's views on power assume great significance when examined against the two great *kairoi* of the twentieth century. Both the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel are rooted ultimately in the catastrophic defeat of the Jews by the Romans in 70 C.E. Patterns of belief and behaviour which emerged as a result of that tragic event culminated in the Holocaust. The establishment of the State of Israel is seen as a fundamental reversal of the state of powerlessness epitomised by the Holocaust, therefore, the return to Zion has turned the intervening two thousand years of Jewish history into a parenthesis.[20]

Rabbinic Judaism, a Religion in Search of Meaning

In accordance with his functional view of religion Rubenstein suggests that religion represents an audacious attempt to view the entire universe as humanly meaningful.[21] Judaism did this by asserting the existence of a divine creator who continues to guide the destiny of his creation. The Jews gave meaning to existence by positing the existence of a principal Actor as well as sub-actors (people and nations) in the world. The Jews played the principal role among the sub-actors. However, a distinctive feature of this particular attempt to impose meaning on naked experience was the claim that misfortune and death are inflicted upon the subordinate actors by the First Actor as a punitive response to their failure to comply with his will. Death and misfortune, as negative features of existence, threaten meaning. These negative categories of existence were endowed with meaning by interpreting them as the just response of a providential creator. By this means humanity was rescued from meaninglessness.[22]

The Judaeo-Christian tradition asserts that death is punitive. Death is not seen as intrinsic to the biological processes of living organisms but as a punishment inflicted by the First Actor *ab extra* on the

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20. Rubenstein, *Homeland and Holocaust*, p. 41.
21. Rubenstein, 'Jewish Theology and the Current World Situation', *Conservative Judaism*, Vol. 28, No. 4, Summer 1974, p. 9. Rubenstein here cites Peter Berger's *Sacred Canopy*.
22. Rubenstein, 'Jewish Theology and the Current World Situation', op. cit. pp. 9, 10.

subordinate actors. Both Paul and his Jewish contemporaries shared a common belief that the human condition was flawed at the outset by Adam's original offence against creation. Both yearned for an identical release from indebtedness. *Homo religiosus* thus understood, has a need to annul indebtedness.[23]

Normative Judaism interprets human mortality as punitively inflicted. Rubenstein suggests that in the light of this view, it is not surprising that Jewish thinkers applied punitive interpretations to crisis experiences in Jewish history. In the wake of the crisis of 70 C.E. it was imperative for the survival of the Jewish community that

(a) the disaster be interpreted meaningfully, and

(b) that a practical programme be promulgated in order to preserve that meaning and foster hope.

Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai (first century C.E.) and his followers at Yavneh supplied both the interpretation and the programme of action. They interpreted the defeat of the Jews as punishment, the Romans playing the role of instruments in the divinely ordained punitive design.[24] An entire religious culture was based on this response, a culture which endured for two thousand years, and to which all Jews are heirs.[25] Rubenstein is aware of the fact that the only group capable of meeting the challenge of spiritual and political reconstruction was the Pharisaic group under Yochanan ben Zakkai. The Pharisees, who had opposed the rebellion, concluded realistically that it was impossible for the Jews to overcome Roman power. They thus entered into a bargain with the Romans by which they could survive and also endow their religious [illegible]stence with meaning. Rubenstein places great stress upon this religio-political decision which he names 'Yochanan's bargain'.[26]

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23. Rubenstein, 'Buber Anniversary Article', p. 391. See also Rubenstein, *My Brother Paul*, pp. 144 - 173.

24. Rubenstein, 'Jewish Theology and the Current World Situation', *Conservative Judaism*, Vol. 28, No. 4, Summer, 1974, pp. 10, 11.

25. Ibid.

26. Yochanan's Bargain is a recurring theme in Rubenstein's exposition of his views on the origin of Jewish powerlessness. See also Rubenstein, *Power Struggle*, pp. 172 ff. ; Rubenstein, *Homeland and Holocaust*, 'Jewish Theology and the Current World Situation', 'Buber Anniversary Article', and *The Religious Imagination*.

Yochanan's Bargain and its Consequences in Jewish History

Yochanan 'taught his community how to remain intact after they had been stripped of the Temple cult, their sovereignty and all control over their political destiny'.[27] The Romans were not intent on extirpating Judaism as a religion or on exterminating the Jewish community. The post-war policy of the Romans towards the Jews was to reconstitute limited self-government through loyal and non-seditious agents, a role which Yochanan and his followers assumed.[28] A bargain was struck between Yochanan and Vespasian. Rubenstein suggests that although the story of the bargain might be apocryphal it contains psychological truth and has continued to be ingrained in the consciousness of every rabbi.[29]

The story relates that Yochanan met the soon-to-be emperor Vespasian outside the walls of besieged Jerusalem. Because it was forbidden to hold the dead in Jerusalem for even one night, Yochanan's disciples were able to smuggle their master out of the city in a coffin, pretending that he was dead.[30] According to tradition, Vespasian knew of Yochanan's opposition to the rebellion and he was therefore willing to receive the rabbi. Yochanan's main concern and sole request was for a spiritual centre for Judaism at Yavneh. In essence, the terms of the agreement reached were that the 'Pharisees under Yochanan gave the Romans the tokens of submission they demanded, foreswearing all resort to power in their dealings with their overlords. The Romans permitted the reconstituted community internal autonomy'.[31] Thus, with backing of Rome, the rabbis assumed leadership over stricken Israel's religious life. However, in later generations real power would be passed to the monied classes while the bargain would still be operative. Rubenstein regards the arrangement as no less than a collaborationist

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27. Rubenstein, *Power Struggle*, pp. 172, 173.
28. Rubenstein, 'Jewish Theology and the Current World Situation', *Conservative Judaism*, Vol. 28, No. 4, Summer 1974, pp. 172, 173. See also Neusner, Jacob, *From Politics to Piety*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1973, pp. 147, 153. Neusner claims that there is evidence of Roman reconstitution of limited self-government by the Jews, if not under Yochanan, then surely under Gamaliel II, p. 147.
29. Rubenstein, *Power Struggle*, p. 173.
30. Ibid. p. 176. The event is assumed to have taken place during 67 or 68 C.E. 31. Ibid. p. 173.

bargain![32] Yochanan's bargain served a two-fold purpose. The disaster was interpreted in terms of God's just punishment for ingratitude and disobedience, thereby giving meaning to the catastrophe. At the same time, Yochanan gave the Jewish people the only programme for improving their lot that was realistic in their situation.

The programme which was formulated by Yochanan was one characterised by religious autonomy at the cost of political power. Exile, degradation and powerlessness became normative for Jews from that time onwards as an ingrained strategy for survival. Normative Judaism is very largely a fruit of that strategy. Whilst rabbinic Judaism is rooted in the Bible, the rabbinic world was vastly different from the biblical world. Interpretations of catastrophe as punitive were less counter-productive in biblical times than in rabbinic times because political and social life, particularly with regard to power, had altered radically.

The Cost of Yochanan's Bargain

It is Rubenstein's profound conviction that Yochanan's bargain radically transformed the Jewish people. A great price, both political and psychological was paid for Roman backing of the religious autonomy of the Jewish community.

From the point of view of religious expression, in the place of an altar of stone upon which bloody offerings were slain, Jewish religious life focused exclusively on bloodless worship and a bloodless book.[33] Verbal surrogates increasingly took the place of concrete experience with a congruent shift in the ratios of sensory intake. Verbal recitation of sacrificial laws took the place of sacrifice. Verbal memory of life in Zion took the place of the actual life of the people in its own land. Although this shift from the real to the verbal is usually considered to be an 'advance' from the material to the spiritual Rubenstein is convinced that this is not the case and that there was as much loss as gain in the enforced shift.

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32. Rubenstein, 'Jewish Theology and the Current World Situation', *Conservative Judaism*, Vol. 28, No. 4, Summer 1974, p. 12.

33. Rubenstein, *Power Struggle*, p. 174. Rubenstein's preference for sacrificial or priestly Judaism, over prophetic Judaism has already been noted in Chapter IV dealing with his views on religion.

Power Allocation as Opposed to the 'God Hypothesis'

One of the marks of rabbinic Judaism is its excessive emphasis on behavioural restraint. The rabbis imposed an extraordinary measure of religious discipline in every aspect of human behaviour. While most theologians are content to interpret this as having at its source God's will and as leading ultimately to a more meaningful relationship between man and God, Rubenstein prefers a more functional perspective. He is aware of the fact that most Jewish theologians reject his view. Nevertheless, he posits the view that one should at least consider the possibility that Jewish religious practice is rooted primarily in biological, psychological and cultural needs rather than in a divine-human encounter.[34] Rubenstein suggests an alternative to the 'God-hypothesis' as a partial explanation for the self-imposition of behavioural restraints. Power allocation lies at the root of his explanation.

Rubenstein argues that in societies and classes devoid of power the problem of masculine identity becomes particularly acute. Powerlessness therefore had disastrous emotional consequences for Jewish men and women. Unable, because of lack of real power, to assert their masculinity in the larger world, Jewish men asserted, and possibly exaggerated, their masculine prerogatives within the community. 'The Jewish God was a masculine God. The Jewish religion stressed the prerogatives of the male in two domains of fundamental importance over which the Jews had any measure of independence or power, worship and learning.'[35] The family, the very centre of Jewish emotional security, was always threatened by the powerlessness of the head of the household. Rubenstein attributes the rabbinic submission of females to the fact that Jewish masculinity was challenged decisively by the defeats of Roman times and perhaps earlier.[36]

Because the Jews lacked power over their own destiny, they were compelled to control their counter-aggressive hostilities. Jews had to contain their rage. They were therefore trained to distrust

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34. Rubenstein, *Homeland and Holocaust*, pp. 46, 47.
35. Rubenstein, *Power Struggle*, pp. 165, 166.
36. Ibid. See also Rubenstein, *The Religious Imagination*, pp. 52, 53.

motional spontaneity by extremes of behavioural discipline.[37] The 'feeling' side of life had to be rigidly controlled. The mind could be developed 'even over developed' but feelings, especially feelings of release had to be contained. Jews were trained from cradle to grave never to let go. Mental energy and calculating rationality, the kind in which Lithuanian Talmudists excelled, took priority over the body and its urgencies. Despite the many romanticised accounts of the beauties of Jewish family life, the marital results were disastrous.[38]

Jews and the Servile Consciousness

Jews, quite naturally, were embittered with their persecutors. However, they could never retaliate because they lacked power. They could only retaliate in fantasy such as the celebration of the demise of pharaoh at the Passover Seder ceremony or the defeat of Haman at the celebration of Purim.[39] They had no power to prevent their degradation. They were,

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37. Rubenstein, *Homeland and Holocaust*, p. 47. See also Rubenstein, *Power Struggle*, p. 166. Stanley Rothman in 'Group Fantasies and Jewish Radicalism : A Psychodynamic Interpretation', *Journal of Psychohistory*, Vol. 6. No. 2, Fall 1978, confirms this observation. He asserts that Jewish marginality has had consequences for Jewish personality. Surrounded by an enemy too strong to fight, Jewish males could only survive by controlling the urge to strike back at their tormentors. The Jewish family, then, began to place tremendous emphasis upon inhibiting the *direct* physical expression of aggression by male children. He believes that the standard stereotype of the 'emasculating' Jewish mother may have its roots here. p. 224. Jews usually seek occupations which do not require aggression and which usually demand higher levels of intellectual attainment. Interestingly, he suggests that Jews were seldom alcoholics as it was not safe to act in an unseemly or abandoned fashion in a Christian environment. pp. 224, 225.

38. Rubenstein, *Power Struggle*, p. 168.

39. Moshe Davidowitz, in 'The Psychohistory of Jewish Rage and Redemption as Seen Through its Art', *Journal of Psychohistory*, Vol. 6, No. 2, Fall 1978, confirms this view in that he points out that Jews can only deal with rage in a veiled manner. Unable to express it in the larger world, they can only express it in the internal community. The demonic is therefore imploded and dealt with through historic analogies. This is often expressed in art forms in documents such as the *Haggadah* for Passover, pp. 273 - 284.

in actual life, compelled to resort to prayer, petition and pleading as their primary resources. Lacking power to save themselves, they were constrained to look for restraint and compassion in others. Surrender, appeasement and withdrawal became the classic modes of Jewish relations with the non-Jewish world. Rubenstein views Yochanan's bargain as having imbued the Jewish people with a servile consciousness. The Romans represented the lordly victors whilst the Pharisees represented a servile consciousness which prefers limited existence subject to the overlords' sufferance to no existence whatsoever. Using the same conceptual framework, Rubenstein contrasts the Zealots with the Pharisees. The Zealots express the lordly consciousness. They had contempt for servile existence and would rather die by suicide than submit to Roman rule and limited existence.[40]

The psychological cost of Yochanan's bargain in terms of repression and guilt was great. 'Guilt was built into the ethos of rabbinic Judaism.'[41] The cost of viewing misfortune as the punitive design of a providential creator is guilt and blame. However, it is, above all, for the servile consciousness imbued by Yochanan's bargain that Rubenstein rejects its function. The Pharisees, in contrast to the Zealots, accepted the risks of total powerlessness and created a culture predicated upon that powerlessness. They trained Jews to eschew force and aggression in their relations with their neighbours and their hosts. They took a calculated risk in that it was always possible that the Jews would be objects of violent aggression.[42]

'Two millennia of Jewish history had taught the community what were the optimal adaptations to the challenge of the powerful against the powerless.'[43] Every single indignity visited upon the Jews in the diaspora during the two thousand years after Yochanan's bargain, including the horrors of the Holocaust, was an 'absolutely predictable consequence' of the conditions accepted by their classic religious leaders. The Pharisees consented to lead a community whose dignity and

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40. Rubenstein, 'Jewish Theology and the Current World Situation', *Conservative Judaism*, Vol. 28, No. 4, Summer 1974, p. 12.
41. Rubenstein, *The Religious Imagination*, p. 162.
42. Rubenstein, 'Buber Anniversary Article', p. 395.
43. Rubenstein, *The Religious Imagination*, p. xvii.

security rested upon the power, the interests, and the whim of strangers, who, more often than not, regarded the Jews as enemies. The Pharisees took the daring risk that Caesar would be a trustworthy master.[44] It could not be guaranteed that all heirs to Caesar could be trusted with his unlimited power over the Jews.

Although Rubenstein's inclination is clearly toward the lordly consciousness and response of the Zealots, it would be a misunderstanding of his thought if one read into his writing any outright condemnation of Yochanan's policy *for its time*. Displaying a measure of ambivalence with regard to Yochanan's response, he acknowledges that Yochanan's bargain was expedient for its time and was, in reality, the only viable option available to Jews. He states, 'I know my ancestors had no alternative and that I owed my existence to their exercise of self-control'.[45] He also claims that 'Yochanan's bargain was a good one'[46] as the alternative was mass suicide. However, it was only an adequate response when it was redeemed by genuine faith.[47] The Jews at the time were convinced that the self-repression they had to endure was divinely ordained.[48]

The majority of contemporary Jewish thinkers accept the God-hypothesis and ignore the role of aggression in forming the characteristic responses of normative Judaism. This is particularly striking in the light of the fact that Jews have been the victims of so much aggression.[49] Yochanan's bargain was effective until the twentieth century because it was almost never the intention of those who dominated the Jews to exterminate them. Despite the fact that there were elements in Christian doctrine which could have led to genocide,[50] their potency was blunted by the moral restraints which the Church imposed on itself in its dealing with the Synagogue. The Church was harsh, but never genocidal.[51] With the

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44. Rubenstein, 'Buber Anniversary Article', p. 395.
45. Rubenstein, *Power Struggle*, p. 167.
46. Ibid. p. 174.
47. Ibid. p. 184.
48. Rubenstein, *Homeland and Holocaust*, p. 48.
49. Ibid. p. 48.
50. See Chapter IV of this thesis which deals with the demonic mythic structure which has been imposed upon the Jews by the Church based on the deicide accusation.
51. Rubenstein, *Power Struggle*, p. 179.

Holocaust residual moral barriers have been crossed, and having been crossed, genocide remains a temptation inviting repetition.

The rabbinic system worked, with some exceptions until modern times when the bargain broke down. Rubenstein insists that it is myopic to see the Nazi regime as a throwback. The Nazis represent the quintessence of a certain modern political spirit.[52] The Nazis were not pagans for the pagans knew moderation and made no virtue out of excess. The Nazis were Satanic anti-Christians who inverted traditional values, yet were dependent on them.[53] They were apostles of excess. Devoid of all ethical or religious restraints they enacted the Final Solution by using a perfected technology of death to exterminate the Jews. The modern developments of a perfected technology, a secularisation of consciousness and the problems of redundant population rendered the German plan feasible. Its feasibility was increased by conducting it under cover of war. Yochanan's bargain failed the Jews utterly in the face of the Final Solution. The reaction of the Jews was in keeping with the two thousand year old strategy of compliance and appeasement of those in power.

Rubenstein regards this as the most profound misreading of the character and intentions of an enemy by any people in all of history.[54] Hitler was seen, mistakenly, as a mediaeval anti-Semite in modern dress. Jews pleaded, attempted bribery, and finally complied with Nazi orders.[55] The strategy of powerlessness failed. In fact, the normative Jewish response simplified the Nazi's task.

Jews behaved, on the whole, as if Yochanan's bargain still held. They were fixated on their previous experience and did not realise that they could not keep the bargain alone. They were unable to distinguish between persecution and extermination. 'As a result, they became the

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52. Rubenstein, *Homeland and Holocaust*, p. 48. See also Chapter II of this thesis which deals with Rubenstein's views on secularisation.

53. Perhaps 'Pseudo-Christians' is a more appropriate term. See Chapter IV of this thesis which deals with the demonic mythic structure placed upon the Jews.

54. Rubenstein, *Homeland and Holocaust*, p. 49.

55. Hilberg, Raul, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Walter H. Allen, London, 1961, pp. 666 ff.

unwitting accomplices in their own undoing. The work of the exterminators was almost effortless. Defencelessness was no longer a defence. It had become an invitation to Auschwitz.'[56] Fidelity to Yochanan's bargain had become an invitation to genocide after the Nazis changed the rules. The Germans intuitively knew how to take advantage of Yochanan's bargain for their own purposes. In Rubenstein's view the only response to such an enemy is to fight to the death as the Zealots did at Massada.

The failure of the Jews actively to resist the Nazi onslaught has been a persistent theme in discussion of the victims' response.[57] Rubenstein is aware of the fact that there were individual attempts to resist the Nazis but that group activity was rendered impossible because of lack of support from the local population. Yet he is insistent on a totally negative evaluation of the Jewish response to the Nazis, seeing it as servile and compliant. The Jews were, therefore, accomplices to their own destruction.[58]

By the time the Jews recognised the Nazis as an entirely novel and unforeseen adversary, it was too late. The Jews paid the ultimate price for impotence and compliance fostered by Yochanan's bargain. The Holocaust is the primary exemplification of the fate of the powerless in a world where power and interest alone are determinants, despite contrary mythologies. Rubenstein states, quite correctly,

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56. Rubenstein, *Power Struggle*, pp. 175, 176.

57. See Arendt, Hannah, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, The Viking Press, Inc., New York, 1963; and
Bettelheim, Bruno, *The Informed Heart*, The Free Press, formerly of Glencoe, Illinois, now of New York, 1960.

58. Rubenstein, *Dimensions of the Holocaust : Past and Future*, A Course Syllabus, prepared as a Research Fellow at Yale University, with the support of the National Humanities Institute, New Haven, Connecticut, 1977.
(Received by personal communication).

that no power on earth was concerned with the fate of the Jews.[59]

Power and Human Evil

As a concomitant to his views on power, Rubenstein emphasises the human potentiality for evil. Abuse of power as an expression of human evil was exemplified in the Holocaust. He refuses to see the Germans as possessing a special proclivity toward evil, but views it as the common characteristic of mankind. He sees evil as expressing itself in concrete historical events. In relation to power and evil, Rubenstein cannot accept theologies such as that of Martin Buber. He takes Buber to task for failing to come to terms with concrete historical issues.[60]

Buber suggested that Eichmann's crimes were as much crimes against humanity as against the Jews. Rubenstein points out that Eichmann was not charged with responsibility for annihilating an abstraction 'humanity' but for fulfilling the Final Solution of the Jewish question in Europe, *Endlösung der Judenfrage in Europa*, quite clearly pointing toward the deliberate annihilation of the Jews. Rubenstein, contradicting some of his earlier ideas on humanity as expressed in *After Auschwitz*, regards 'humanity' as a term of

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59. Rubenstein, *Power Struggle*, pp. 66. An exemplification of the indifference of world powers to the fate of the Jews can be seen in the outcome of the conference at Evian, 1938. See Peggy Mann's article 'When the World Passed on the Other Side', *The Guardian, Weekly*, May 7, 1978, pp. 17, 18. Mann deals with the monumental indifference of thirty-two nations who met at Evian to decide the fate of Europe's Jews. 'They decided to do nothing.' p. 17. This clearly gave Hitler *carte blanche* to go ahead with his programme to make Germany *judenrein*. As few of the countries showed any willingness to help the Jews by absorbing them, the thirty-two 'nations of asylum' as they were called, contributed to the destruction of the Jews.

See also Martin Gilbert's *Auschwitz and the Allies*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1981, which stresses the indifference of the allies to the plight of the Jews despite a knowledge of the facts of the death camps.

See also Robert McAfee Brown, 'The Holocaust; the Crisis of Indifference', *Conservative Judaism*, Vol. 31, Nos. 1 & 2, Fall-Winter 1976, pp. 16 - 20.

60. Rubenstein, 'Buber Anniversary Article', op. cit.

such broad generality as to be without meaningful content. He rightly emphasises the fact that the Final Solution was welcomed by a goodly proportion of 'humanity' as long as the Germans did the dirty work. The Holocaust was a convenient operation for world powers as long as their police and armed forces were not directly involved.[61] By talking in terms of crime against humanity Buber diminishes the significance of real violence done to real people. In defence of Yochanan ben Zakkai, Rubenstein sees Buber's theology as lacking relevance in response to disaster, Yochanan's teachings were relevant to the crisis of his time. He assisted in the reconstruction of the community after misfortune. Rubenstein believes that one looks in vain for equal relevance in Buber's message after the Holocaust.[62]

Yochanan's bargain had been a timely response to the negativities of exile. Rubenstein regards it as, at best, an attempt by a beaten people to accommodate itself to the consequences of defeat which entailed its transformation into a defenceless community of nomadic wanderers. The cost of the bargain in terms of distortion of emotions and an over-emphasis of the abstract intellectual aspects of life has resulted in an impoverishment which Rubenstein believes Jews barely understand. In the light of this view Rubenstein contradicts himself when he asserts that there was 'nothing pathogenic about the culture Yochanan fostered as long as it was reasonable to expect that the bargain would be kept'.[63] This contradiction is particularly obvious in that he notes that repression of sexuality, artistic imagination and normal aggression were an integral part of traditional Jewish culture and were the emotional costs the Jew had to pay to stay alive in an alien and hostile world.[64]

Nevertheless it is quite clear that the psychological and emotional cost is not the main reason why, in Rubenstein's view, the bargain no longer offers a basis for Jewish religious life. The bargain made

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61. Rubenstein, 'Buber Anniversary Article', op. cit. p. 401. See also Rubenstein, *The Cunning of History*.
62. Rubenstein, 'Buber Anniversary Article', op. cit. p. 402.
63. Rubenstein, *Power Struggle*, p. 176.
64. Ibid.

ense only as long as it was kept by the overlords of the Jews. The general treatment accorded to Jews by the Romans and successor overlords when they were found to be undesirable was conversion or expulsion. The Nazi intention was genocide. The difference between expulsion and genocide characterises the fundamental difference between twentieth century anti-Semitism and its predecessors. Hitler, as a legitimate head of the German Reich, was an heir to the power and authority of the Caesars. He used the power renounced by the Jews under Yochanan as well as the resultant way of 'cowardice and submission'[65] and servile consciousness of the Jews to bring about their degradation and annihilation. Extermination was part of the total price which the Jews paid for their defeat in 70 C.E. The Holocaust, viewed in this light, raises questions about the relationship between power and dignity. He who lacks power to defend himself, yet is required to choose to fight to the death, must be prepared for the infliction of any possible obscenity upon his person. The Zealots of Masada chose death rather than the 'predictable consequences of impotent servility'.[66]

Slavery and the Servile Consciousness

The phenomenon of slavery concerns Rubenstein in terms of the dynamics of the two-sided interaction between the dominant and the dominated. Slavery represents the quintessence of power of one human being over another. The servile consciousness imbued in the Jewish people as a result of the bargain made after the Holocaust of ancient times (70 C.E.) was to result in the actual enslavement of the Jews by the Nazis.[67] The Nazi society of total domination was permitted by the

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65. Rubenstein, *Power Struggle*, p. 176.
66. Rubenstein, 'Buber Anniversary Article', op. cit. p. 396.
67. Rubenstein examines the phenomenon of slavery in the death camps in *The Cunning of History*. He is concerned with the problem of slavery and has recently written a perceptive review of William Styron's novel *Sophie's Choice* in which the motif of slavery is central. *Sophie's Choice* is centred around slavery in general as well as slavery as a phenomenon in Nazi Germany. Styron, in personal correspondence with Rubenstein, commends him for being one of the few critics perceptive enough to discern slavery as the major concern of his novel. (Letter from Styron to Rubenstein dated May 18, sent to me by personal correspondence.).

dominance of a secularisation of conscicusness in the Western world. The particular consciousness developed in diaspora Jews led to a total misreading of the Nazi intentions of dehumanisation followed by annihilation.

Two of the most abiding motifs in the Jewish view of the human condition have been exile and redemption. After the Judaeo-Roman war of 70 C.E. the situation of the Jews was defined 'neither by morals nor by Jewish ideals but by the power of Roman arms'.[68] As power was the ultimate arbiter, those who possessed it could, with impunity, do whatever they pleased, especially to members of alien communities. The Jewish community understood this. Claims of dignity and worthiness were put forth despite the community's actual situation of powerlessness and defeat. 'Indeed, it is possible that the claim to special other-worldly dignity functioned as a compensation for the community's actual status.'[69]

Redemption, as understood in Judaism, is a termination of the alienation of exile and powerlessness. The ultimate reference is always to a 'beyond', whether conceived of in some sphere beyond this life or in some future time at which the negativities of exilic existence will be overcome. This is closely associated with a messianic redemption. Those who yearn for a messianic redemption 'confess thereby their inability to act on their own behalf. They also manifest a fundamental despair concerning the availability of rational means to ameliorate their own condition....Messianism is a religious expression of impotence'.[70] Put differently, diaspora Jewish messianism can be interpreted as an expression of the servile consciousness.

According to Rubenstein, the fundamental choice of the slave is that life at any cost is preferable to death.[71] Judaism is seen as a religio-ethnic culture of servile consciousness in the technical sense that that consciousness was understood by Hegel and Nietzsche. 'As Hegel observed, while the slave submits, he nevertheless works for the

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68. Rubenstein, 'The Human Condition in Jewish Thought and Experience', Address delivered at the University of Denver and to be published by the University of Denver. (Personal correspondence). 69. Ibid. 70. Ibid.

71. Rubenstein, 'The South Encounters the Holocaust : William Styron's *Sophie's Choice*', In Press, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, Fall 1981.

day when the power relationships will be reversed. As Nietzsche understood, the slave's act of submission is an expression of his will to power. Above all, the servile consciousness is only tenable as long as it is sustained by the hopeful vision of the future, by the conviction that the day will surely come when the present degradation will be reversed....Only the slave, never the master, yearns for the day when another will redeem him.'[72] The slave lives for the future. The only justification for becoming a slave is the hope that one, or one's progeny will outlive the conditions and consequences of servitude. It is noteworthy that the prototypical historical memory of the Jews is that of deliverance from Egyptian slavery, and its hope is one of messianic redemption.

The servile consciousness can be delineated by contrasting the responses of Eleazar ben Yair and Yochanan ben Zakkai to the ancient Holocaust, as described by Josephus. Josephus suggested that those who do not prefer death *when death is in their power* must suffer evils, insults and servitude because of their cowardice.[73] Yochanan took the risks associated with limited survival. Eleazar ben Yair chose defiant death rather than to accept the risks.

The Servile Consciousness and Jewish Slave Labour

In Rubenstein's examination of Jewish slave labour employed during World War II it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that there is a causal nexus between the development of a society of total domination and those possessed of a servile consciousness who acquiesce, albeit unwittingly, to becoming slaves. Slavery, though an ancient phenomenon, reached an unprecedented level of rationalisation during the Holocaust. Slaves are fundamentally the animate tools of other men. One of the most important functions of the Nazi death camps was the utilisation of

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72. Rubenstein, 'The Fall of Jerusalem and the Birth of Holocaust Theology', Essay in *Go and Study*, eds. Raphael Jospe and Samuel Z. Fishman, B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations, Washington, D.C., 1980, pp. 227, 228.

73. Rubenstein, 'The Fall of Jerusalem and the Birth of Holocaust Theology', op. cit. p. 227. Quotation from Josephus, *The Jewish War*, Transl. H. St. J. Thackeray, London, 1928, Vol. VII, 381 - 383, p. 613.

ewish slave labour for the promotion of corporate enterprise. From an economic viewpoint the most rationalised and perfect labour force is one which is characterised by minimum cost and maximum profit. This type of labour force was realised in the Nazi death camps. notably Auschwitz.[74] In a situation of population surplus the Nazis could simultaneously further economic gain and rid themselves of excess population. Feeding the camp inmates on minimum subsistence rations they could enforce labour for predetermined short periods and then either allow the slaves to die of starvation and over-work or gas them. They could then draw on the infinitely replenishable pool of death camp slave labour.[75]

A society of total domination, such as that exemplified by the Nazis can only be achieved through the complete depersonalisation of human relationships, the 'specific nature' and 'specific virtue' of bureaucracy.[76] In relating the workings of bureaucracy to modern corporate enterprise Rubenstein perceives depersonalisation to have been accomplished most fully in the use of Jews as slaves in the death camps. Camp inmates had neither political status nor long-term economic value. Slavery has been found to be more humane when masters seek to augment slave numbers, but more particularly, when emotional interaction between master and slave is present. Neither condition existed in Nazi Germany. The Nazis operated under conditions of population surplus and effectively destroyed the possibility of any emotional involvement with death camp inmates. With the institution of Nazi slavery a totally new form of human society was founded. While the camps served solely as extermination

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74. See Rubenstein, *The Cunning of History*, pp. 36 - 67 for a description of the details of the promotion of corporate enterprise and the use of camp inmates as subjects for medical experiments to promote research for German drug firms. See also Hilberg, Raul, *The Destruction of European Jewry*, pp. 567 - 572 and 704 - 715. Note Also Gilbert, Martin., *Auschwitz and the Allies*, for details concerning the synthetic

centres, this was not the case, but when inmates were kept and worked for a predetermined time as slaves, a kingdom of the living dead, the hell of Necropolis, was inaugurated.

Auschwitz served two apparently contradictory purposes. It was both a slave labour and execution centre. However, within the context of Holocaust slave labour there was no contradiction as only doomed slaves could successfully be dealt with as *things* rather than as human beings. There is a link between the old form of slavery of the American Confederacy and Nazi slavery in that they are part of the same developmental continuum in Western civilisation's rationalisation of total domination. Nazi slavery was nevertheless radically different from previous forms in that it was infinitely more rational. It was only in a death camp, with an abundance of freely disposable slaves who are absolutely dominated by the masters that perfect rationalisation could be achieved. Bureaucracy was extremely effective for the perpetrators because no human being could be held responsible for the fate of the slaves. Every segment of the German population was somehow involved in the network of domination which was based on the ideology of the expendability of man. Whereas Christian moral restraints had been operative in American slavery, no such restraints impeded the new masters.

Diaspora Judaism's only defence had become the credibility of its utter defencelessness.[77] Yochanan's bargain only made sense if it was kept by both parties. The Nazis understood this and utilised the insight for their own purposes. They intuitively understood the difference between total rejection, culminating in annihilation, and the previous options which had been open to Jews, the choice between conversion and expulsion. Faced with an enemy with unprecedented intentions, the Jews in Germany reacted according to characteristic patterns of response inaugurated by the rabbis two millennia earlier. The role of the *Jüdenrate* during the Holocaust remains one of the most painful areas for investigation. Less dependent on realistic perceptions concerning the enemy's intentions

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77. Rubenstein, 'The Fall of Jerusalem and the Birth of the Holocaust Theology', op. cit. p. 227.

than on inherited assumptions concerning the way Jews could expect to be dealt with by gentile rulers, the *Jüdenrate* cooperated with the Nazis, thus facilitating the enactment of the Final Solution.

'The business of politics is the distribution of power.'[78] The Jews had no power. The Nazis built up a system of total domination. There is a causal link between diaspora Judaism's servile consciousness and its interaction with the system of total domination. In the face of no real choice and no other option, Rubenstein suggests that defiant death such as that represented by the lordly consciousness of Massada would have been a 'choice' for the doomed Jewish community. Yochanan's bargain had transformed the Jews from a warlike people into docile submissive subjects. It caused them not only to misread the intentions of the new enemy, but to play into its hands.

Job and Auschwitz

The book of Job is the classical text against which the suffering of the innocent is examined and questioned. Rubenstein argues, however, that the use of Job as a metaphor for the experience of the Jews during World War II has, at best, questionable validity.[79] The Holocaust Jews were not like Job in that Job survives, while they did not, and more importantly, that despite all his suffering and degradation, Job retains his adult ego-integrity intact as well as his human dignity. He sits on his dungheap challenging God and man in an affirmation of his innocence. The Holocaust victims were totally powerless. As a result, they were depersonalised and stripped of every shred of human dignity. They were reduced to an infantile level through regression and identification with the aggressor.[80] After having been murdered with an

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78. Rubenstein, 'The Human Condition in Jewish Thought and Experience', op. cit. p. 23.

79. Rubenstein, *Job and Auschwitz*. See also *The Religious Imagination*, pp. xvii, xix.

80. Rubenstein points out that in the process of adaptation to the death camps, common defence mechanisms were employed. The inmates displayed regression to an infantile level of development and identification with the aggressor took place. Aggression was deflected from the enemy to the self. Adult states vanished. In the psychological world of the death camps the SS had become a cruel but infinitely powerful father-image. *Job and Auschwitz*, p. 284.

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