

Scotus than the Scotist mind to understand Thomas. Burrell's ultimate failure seriously to engage, sympathetically or otherwise, with positions other than his own rendered this *apologia* for the virtues of dialogue strangely self-defeating.

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Joseph B. Soloveitchik *The Emergence of Ethical Man*, Michael Berger (ed.). (Jersey City NJ: Ktav Publishing House, 2005). Pp. xxii + 214. £20.00 (Hbk). ISBN 088125 873 3.

Feted as the figurehead of the form of Judaism that became known as modern orthodoxy, Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik (1903–1993) gained a reputation as one of the foremost Jewish thinkers of the twentieth century. This status, which transcended denominational and religious divides, was based on a relatively small number of philosophical and theological essays. Since his death, however, a number of Soloveitchik's unpublished manuscripts have entered the public domain through the *MeOtzar HoRav* series, under the expert stewardship of David Shatz and Joel Wolowelsky. *The Emergence of Ethical Man (EEM)*, edited by Michael Berger from ten handwritten notebooks, is the fifth and possibly most significant volume of the series so far.

*EEM* focuses on Soloveitchik's abiding interest in elucidating 'religious anthropology ... within the philosophical perspective of Judaism' (xii), as he himself describes it in a letter excerpted in a helpful editor's introduction. Part 1 utilizes the opening chapters of Genesis, a text Soloveitchik returned to many times, to put forward an account of man that emphasizes his continuity with the natural world. Part 2 begins with the central question of how man emerges as a unique ethical being out of these entirely naturalistic origins and continues with an account of the corruption of the ethical personality through sin. Finally, Part 3 deals with the rehabilitation of man through a description of the various manifestations of what Soloveitchik terms the 'charismatic personality' as embodied in Abraham and Moses.

While naturalistic elements have always been present in Soloveitchik's work, they appear far more marked in *EEM*, and he is keen throughout Part 1 to distance himself not only from Greek and Christian views, but also from the widely held Jewish view that insists on a qualitative metaphysical distinction between man and nature. As Berger notes in his introduction, the work is 'revolutionary in that

it breaks with traditional metaphysical categories that are the warp and woof of medieval Jewish commentary and philosophy, and instead bases its analysis purely on the categories of the natural and social sciences' (xxi), an observation that is entirely borne out by what follows.

The basic point in Part 1 is that 'man may be the most developed form of life on the continuum of plant-animal-man, but the ontic essence remains identical' (47). Indeed, in his account of the famous biblical idea that man is made in the image of God (*tzelem elohim*) he explicitly rejects what he takes to be the metaphysical and transcendental Christian reading of the term *tzelem*. Instead, in a description that surpasses even the strongly scientific elucidation of the term in 1965's *The Lonely Man of Faith*, Soloveitchik insists that *tzelem* 'signifies man's awareness of himself as a biological being and the state of being informed of his natural drives' (75–76).

The impression one gains that Soloveitchik's naturalism is more pronounced here than in his published writings on Genesis is probably in part down to the anthropological perspective from which he is writing. Thus, in his 1964 essay *Confrontation* where Soloveitchik takes his favoured typological approach, 'natural man' is derided as a hedonically minded pleasure seeker. The contrasting anthropological perspective of *EEM* means that 'natural man' is used as a descriptive anthropological category and thus there is no call for any such evaluative judgement. In *EEM* it is, for Soloveitchik, simply a true description of the nature of man.

With the naturalistic context in place, Part 2 turns to the emergence of ethical man. Firstly, in order to experience the ethical norm, external divine intervention is necessary. Only through the divine command can man transcend his natural biological self and experience the ethical. This is because the ethical imperative has to be 'experienced as both a must and as something that may be resisted or ignored' (81), and this normative pull cannot derive from nature since, as Soloveitchik notes, 'biological motivation is neutral as far as ethical standards are concerned' (87). So, on the one hand Soloveitchik retains a fact/value distinction such that an 'ought' can never arise from an 'is'. He can only conceive of value emerging from a realm beyond the natural and given the religious framework of his thinking, God is naturally the source of value. Yet Soloveitchik insists on retaining his naturalism at the human level, concluding Part 2 by saying that 'the ethical personality is not transcendent. It only reconsiders its own status in a normative light, conceiving the natural law as identical with the moral law' (144). So man remains a biological rather than metaphysical being, but man's unique ethical *perspective* emerges through his encounter with the divine imperative.

What is most important about this divine imperative is its role as a condition of the freedom necessary for the emergence of the ethical personality. The divine imperative does not play a Euthyphro-like role of defining the good. Instead,

we find in more Kantian fashion talk of the divine imperative as a necessary condition of freewill and the normative 'must'. Indeed, the echoes of Kant are unmistakable in much of what he has to say about 'universal natural morality' (154), whether when referring to the charismatic man who 'refuses to obey an external authority ... [but] discovers the ethos himself' (153), or when writing that 'the *postulate* of freedom is necessary ... for the legitimation of the very essence of the ethical experience' (77, emphasis added).

The further stages of the emergence of the ethical similarly revolve around the 'postulate of freedom'. Thus, Soloveitchik's second stage requires that man conceive of himself as separate from nature, and through this consciousness of otherness, as a subject standing against an object, he understands that he is a free being (78). And in an interesting parallel with much contemporary Jewish thought from Buber through to Levinas, the full emergence of the free ethical personality requires the third stage of confronting the 'thou' through the creation of the other. Interestingly for Soloveitchik scholars, though Buberian elements have long been detected in Soloveitchik's writings, *EEM* is the first work to explicitly reference his works, albeit not in relation to this particular issue.

Soloveitchik goes on in Part 2 to give an account of 'the Fall' and consistent with the naturalism of Part I, 'Man's sin consisted in betraying nature ... . Naturalness is moral, unnaturalness is sin' (141). A close reading of the Genesis text yields for Soloveitchik the idea that sin arose as a result of the seduction of humanity by pleasure, causing a split in a once harmonious personality. In what is more than a nod to Kierkegaard, Soloveitchik describes how pursuing an unbridled hedonism that respects no boundaries causes man's ethical self to split from his esthetic self. This schism in man's personality means that repentance is achieved through the 'rebirth of a harmonious personality by returning to God and *eo ipso* to one's own selfhood' (136–7). *EEM*'s detailed working out of his view of sin supplies us with a natural corollary for the similarly naturalistic view of repentance familiar from Soloveitchik's other works.

It is in Part 3 of the book, probably its most original section for those familiar with Soloveitchik's writings, that we find him return to a more typological approach in his account of the rehabilitation of the ethical personality through 'charismatic man'. The 'charismatic personality' achieves the restoration of the human personality to its original unity through realizing the covenant with God in history. Soloveitchik traces his development through an analysis of the biblical personalities of Abraham, and in particular Moses, who moves through a number of stages of development. At this point, though no less rich and suggestive, the thread of the argument becomes more difficult to follow and it seems less completely developed to this reviewer. Though this can only be pure speculation, given that we are reading a work that Soloveitchik never published, one wonders whether this section of the text had been less worked through.

What is abundantly clear, though, is the characteristically Soloveitchkian conflict that we find in the attempt to realize the covenant, which is thwarted by a natural reality that does not simply yield to a covenantal teleology. In parallel to the redemption of the individual, therefore, the realization of the covenant requires that two orders, this time the natural human and the charismatic historical, are brought into harmony. And it fell to Moses, in his guise as the apostolic personality, to begin the process of redeeming the tension between the two. And again in characteristic style, we find man in this world at the centre of this covenantal history. Thus, 'God worked through Moses in order to introduce man into the sphere of historical creativeness. Let man himself attempt to realize the covenant' (184).

As a number of writers have noted, this 'this-worldly' emphasis in Soloveitchik's work meant that he did not pay much attention to eschatological questions. It is particularly striking therefore that ultimately, with its talk of covenantal realization, Part 3 is all about a lengthy historical process of messianic redemption. Nonetheless, the 'this-worldly' approach retains its hold throughout, most notably in what is his lengthiest reflection on immortality. Thus, we are told that 'Abraham did not conquer death in the metaphysical transcendent sense. His immortality is through and through historical' (169). And again 'the first concept of immortality as coined by Judaism is the continuation of a historical existence throughout the ages ... . The deceased person does not lead an isolated, separate existence in a transcendental world. The identity persists on a level of concrete reality disguised as a people' (176). While he is careful to note that this is only the 'first' concept of immortality, it is the only one that he discusses. Moreover, this is all given a messianic aspect when combined with the view that 'the realization of the moral goal is not to be found within the bounds of an individual life span. The individual may contribute a great deal to the fulfilment of the ethical ideal, yet he can never attain it. A moral *telos* is gradually realized in a historical process' (168). In a naturalized eschatology that owes much to one of Soloveitchik's most significant philosophical influences, Hermann Cohen, what begins as a view of immortality as continued historical existence culminates in the covenantal realization of a messianic moral vision.

Of all the volumes to have seen the light of day so far in this series, this one is probably the greatest treasure trove for Soloveitchik scholars. It genuinely advances and refines themes familiar from his published works, and throws up all sorts of further questions for research, particularly regarding his intellectual influences. Though we are not informed of the dating of these manuscripts, much of the material in *EEM* obviously parallels that contained in the more 'existentialist' works of the 1960s. Yet we also see a continuation of his earlier fascination with Kant and Hermann Cohen, all of which should be of particular interest for Soloveitchik scholars. But in addressing general questions regarding the place

of the ethical in the religious sphere and as an example of how a contemporary thinker committed to an orthodox religious tradition can attempt to make philosophical sense of it in a non-apologetic manner, it is also entirely accessible to the non-Jewish reader and would act as an excellent introduction to Soloveitchik's oeuvre.

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Heather Widdows *The Moral Vision of Iris Murdoch*. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005). Pp. 190. £45.00 (Hbk). ISBN 07546 3625 9.

This book aims to provide a clear but critical outline of Iris Murdoch's work in moral philosophy. In one sense, it achieves its task: each of the six main chapters focus on one undeniably central element of her thinking – touching in turn on her notions of the individual, of everyday moral experience, of the good, of the developmental structure of the moral life, and of art and religion in their relation to ethics; and the final chapter sketches in some reasons for scepticism about the overall package just constructed. But the discussion of each element, although rarely inaccurate, and certainly sensitive to the fundamentally religious nature of Murdoch's vision, is nevertheless superficial. In each case we are told that Murdoch rejects a variety of common contemporary assumptions about the relevant aspect of ethics, but we are not always told why, and we are very rarely given any sense of how one might argue for or against Murdoch's views, or indeed those she opposes. The real depth and complexity of the issues is rarely signalled, and never demonstrated; and in this sense what is really at stake, philosophically speaking, in these controversies remains essentially unclear – even, one might say, less clear than it would be if one simply read Murdoch herself, however apparently unsystematic her essays may be.

One might think that the relative brevity of the text is to blame. But there is no particular reason why it should not have been double its present length, if the author really thought that the subject matter demanded it; and in fact, the degree to which Widdows persistently repeats herself in her exposition – articulating the same claims in a number of barely different, and often clumsy, ways without thereby making any progress – suggests that these already short chapters could usefully have been made even shorter by judicious editing. Since, moreover, the sketch of Murdoch that results seems to differ in no significant respects from that portrayed in earlier and rather more substantial treatments of this material