

ALEX S. OZAR

Yeridah Le-Zorekh Aliyyah: Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik on *Autonomy and Submission*

“Only out of a personal relationship with the Absolute can the absoluteness of the ethical co-ordinates arise without which there is no complete awareness of the self.”

—Martin Buber¹

“If I am not for myself—who will be for me? But if I am for myself, then what am I?”

—Hillel, *Pirkei Avot* 1:14

Premise one: R. Joseph Soloveitchik energetically champions an ideal of personal autonomy as vital to authentic religious life. A robust approbation of human assertiveness, of man’s² quest for independence, dignity, and glory, is a hallmark of R. Soloveitchik’s philosophy and one of his most significant contributions to the broader cause of Jewish thought.³ *Halakhic Man* is suffused with a portrait of man as free, independent, and boldly creative—a *hero*. *Lonely Man of Faith* champions the idea that Judaism embraces, even mandates, humanity’s

1. *The Eclipse of God* (Highlands, NJ, 1988), 129.

2. Though “Man” and related gender-specific terms are used in deference to the source material, effort has been made to incorporate gender-neutral language as possible.

3. For a classic treatment of the issue in general and R. Soloveitchik’s innovations in particular, see David Hartman, *A Living Covenant: The Innovative Spirit in Traditional Judaism* (New York, 1985), esp. 1-130; cf. Alex Ozar, “The Limits of Orthodox Autonomy: Evaluating Rabbi David Hartman’s Moral-Theological Enterprise,” *Tradition* 41,4 (Winter 2011): 47-54.

ALEX S. OZAR is a doctoral student in philosophy of religion at Yale University. His writing has appeared or will be appearing in *Harvard Theological Review*, *Journal of Religious Ethics*, *Tradition*, and *First Things*.

pursuit of majesty and dominion. *The Emergence of Ethical Man* renders the powerfully humanistic verdict that the human person, precisely as an unashamedly natural being, is good, worthy, and eminently capable of transcendence; the spiritual is properly speaking an accomplishment of the corporeal. And throughout the Rav's work, the God-person relationship is depicted as one of loving mutuality, caring, partnership, and covenantal fellowship. Judaism, for R. Soloveitchik, is an ambitious, thoroughgoing exercise in the affirmation of human life and endeavor. He is the very model of a modern Western liberal.

Premise two: R. Soloveitchik energetically champions personal subordination, submission, and sacrifice as vital to authentic human life. For every statement of his praising human liberty, there is another pressing the reality and necessity of man's humility and crushing subordination; the individual is called not toward self-assertion and a joyful march to majesty, but to painful withdrawal, defeat, and self-sacrifice in concession to a radically supreme, authoritarian God. "Man appears as absolutely subordinate, as receiving the commandments and bending under the weight of his burden."⁴ Overawed by the magnitude of God's commanding authority and presence, man kneels in a posture of servility and dutiful obedience, renouncing his desires and the very freedom to choose for himself what he will and will not renounce. Submission supplants liberty, defeat replaces victory, and heteronomy overwhelms autonomy—all in all an apparently devastating affront to independent human self-worth. R. Soloveitchik's philosophy demands of the individual that he prostrate himself humbly at God's feet, and, as Kant says, "Kneeling down or groveling on the ground, even to express your reverence for heavenly things, is contrary to human dignity."⁵

Intriguingly, both premises would appear to be true; the question is whether their conjunction properly enjoins a *reductio ad absurdum*. To be sure, the specter of a tension in the Rav's thought is not likely to itself make headlines, and certainly I am not the first to notice this opposition in particular. "Dialectic, complexity, plurality of demands—these are the fundamental difficulties in studying the Rav, but they also represent his greatness," writes Reuven Ziegler.⁶ For Marvin Fox, central

4. R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *And From There You Shall Seek (U-Vikkashtem mi-Sham)*, trans. Naomi Goldblum (Jersey City, NJ, 2008), 35.

5. Immanuel Kant, "Metaphysical Principles of Virtue," in *Kant's Ethical Philosophy*, trans. James Ellington (Indianapolis, 1983), 99.

6. Reuven Ziegler, *Majesty and Humility: The Thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik* (New York, and Jerusalem, 2012), 91.

to the Rav's teaching was his programmatic refusal to "harmonize the contradictories," and so to "delude ourselves" as to the agonistic forces inherent to human life; put positively, to achieve Jewish illumination is to stand our existential ground and courageously "affirm the contradictory elements."⁷ And if R. Soloveitchik's characteristic intellectual and spiritual virtue was his embrace of dialectical tension, it is no surprise that among the contradictories un-harmonized would appear the paired propositions that, in Fox's words, "We are called to achieve a majestic dignity, and also to experience the redemptive defeat of a higher power."⁸

There is, I worry, something of a tendency among R. Soloveitchik's followers toward excessive valorization on this point—as if bravely weathering the agony of dialectical conflict were the sole valid end of religious devotion, with harmony and clarity left to the spiritual amateur and featherweight. Sometimes a contradiction is just a contradiction, and incoherence is no virtue. What *can* make a contradiction more than a contradiction, into a whole greater than its conflicting parts? One approach: It is most basically a matter of dynamic movement and reflective mutuality, the result not a static solution but a living process of progressive interrelation. A contradiction becomes a *dialectic* when its elements move, respond, and dynamically interact, coming over time to more and more resemble a unitary organism; the dialectical solution to a contradiction is not a fixed list of propositions but a program of ongoing creative development. The result is not a "unity which, turning itself in the circle of seamless sameness, would not be progressive, and, thus, insensate or lifeless"—therefore, the unity "is an immediately creative one."⁹ It is not enough, then, to say that R. Soloveitchik's thinking courageously abjures harmonization. If we are going to prove this case, the evidence most needful is a coherent story of movement and development, a meaningful and purposeful narrative in which the contradictories feature as principal characters. The question should be not whether the conflicting poles are harmonized or not harmonized, but whether the conflicting poles are or are not engaged in a dynamic, purposive, progressively creative process intending harmonization. The reconciliation is not an event,

7. Marvin Fox, "The Unity and Structure of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik's Thought," in *Exploring the Thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*, ed. Marc D. Angel (Jersey City, NJ, 1997), 45-46.

8. *Ibid.*, 45.

9. F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt (Albany, 2006), 19.

but a process; and importantly, not a fact, but an achievement. It is roughly the difference between describing a rock and portraying a *life*. It is in this way that, to borrow the Rav's language from another context, what we have in these opposing forces is not some illegitimate, unstable hybrid, but on the contrary—out of the contradictions and antimonies there *emerges* a radiant, integrated, and nuanced account of man's self-affirmation before God.¹⁰

For R. Soloveitchik, the conjunction of premises 1 and 2 is indeed, I hope to show, made compellingly meaningful through integration within a dynamic, developmental narrative. The varying motifs each find their rightful place in the story of man's evolution over time, each making their own unique contribution, at the appropriate hour, to man's complete emergence as an ethical personality. It all belongs to the process in which man genuinely becomes man.

What is Adam the first out to achieve? What is the objective toward which he incessantly drives himself with enormous speed? The objective, it is self-evident, can be only one, namely, that which God put up before him: to be "man," to be himself. Adam the first wants to be human, to discover his identity which is bound up with his humanity.¹¹

It is a principle, cast in religious terms, with a venerable Aristotelian pedigree: The goal of man, the ultimate end of all his efforts, and the mission charged to him by God, is to become "man," to fully actualize the potential latent in his nature as a human.¹² The story of human development is a *teleology*—a meaningful and purposive process in history toward an end not realized but veritably latent at the start. Here the "ought" follows from the "is": He who fails to achieve the form of the ideal man defaults on the human person's most foundational responsibility; he who realizes his nature's promise, on the other hand, attains the crown of human accomplishment, that is, authentic actuality. "Man craves for self-realization,"¹³ and it is that longing which should serve as the basic, guiding principle underlying man's developmental endeavors. To become fully, authentically human is the elemental challenge addressed to every person.

10. See *Halakhic Man*, trans. Lawrence J. Kaplan (Philadelphia, 1983), 4.

11. *The Lonely Man of Faith* (New York, 2006 [Random House edition]), 14.

12. Lest it be charged that the Rav here refers only to Adam the first, and not the second, the Rav writes explicitly that "Both Adams want to be human. Both strive to be themselves, to be what God commanded them to be, namely, man" (*ibid.*, 24).

13. *The Emergence of Ethical Man* (Jersey City, NJ, 2005), 106.

This kind of process presupposes some determinate vision of the end intended, which may in turn require that the process itself take a determinate form. The specifics of those forms, while present or presupposed in many of R. Soloveitchik's writings, appear most fully, directly, and programmatically in *The Emergence of Ethical Man*, a work whose significance we are only beginning to appreciate. Closely based upon Max Scheler's *Man's Place in Nature*,¹⁴ the posthumously published manuscript profiles the ethical human personality by way of a thematic retelling of *Bereshit* and *Shemot*, supplemented, of course, by an impressive cache of *halakhic* insight. Among other things, R. Soloveitchik here develops a systematic, stage-by-stage account of the development of the human ethical persona wherein, I believe, are organically and dynamically integrated the conflicting-when-static motifs of autonomy and submission. Of course R. Soloveitchik approached the autonomy-submission question at various points from various angles, and various of those are conceptually self-standing and worthy of consideration in themselves.¹⁵ My aim then is not to present *the* but simply one more perspective R. Soloveitchik articulated on this issue—the developmental one appearing most robustly in *The Emergence of Ethical Man*—a perspective I worry has yet to enjoy the attention it is due. I do however believe this perspective is broadly continuous with R. Soloveitchik's ideas in other works, and though I do not argue the point comprehensively, I have made an effort to note the confluence of ideas as appropriate.

Moshe Sokol argues that while R. Soloveitchik was substantially in favor of human independence, the regular appearance in his writing of contrary notions means that R. Soloveitchik's is a mere "ethic of

14. See my "The Emergence of Max Scheler: Understanding Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik's Philosophical Anthropology," *Harvard Theological Review* 109, 2(April 2016), 178-206.

15. In *Halakhic Man*, for example, it is claimed that through the creative energies of halakhic endeavor the halakhic personality can achieve a state wherein it experiences "no consciousness of compulsion accompanying the norm," coming to perceive it "as though it was not just a commandment that had been imposed upon him, but an existential law of his very being" (*Halakhic Man*, 65). The creative participation in a humanity-affirming divine law cultivates the existential experience of the heteronomous law as the individual's autonomous creation, and so the conflict is dissolved. *And From There Shall You Seek* deepens this claim through an extended dialectical analysis of rational, revelational, and halakhic cognition. In this work, the central problematic for the God-seeking person is the oscillation between the attracting love and repelling fear of God, and the mechanics of imitating God and halakhic practice are analyzed as to varying degrees enabling a transcending of the tension through cleaving to the divine.

autonomy” rather than a bona fide “philosophy of autonomy.”¹⁶ In the balance of these pages, I aim to show that in fact, R. Soloveitchik most certainly did articulate a thorough, systematic and critically refined theory of human affirmation, the kind with reasons, arguments, clarity, care, and ambition—all anyone could ever want in a philosophy.¹⁷ His oscillating emphases on assertiveness or submission, majesty or humility, are in a significant sense complementary and harmonious, spinning diverse threads in an organically singular, purposively integral narrative. It is the story of the achievement, over time and through a spiraling series of existential challenges, of the ethical personality’s emergence.

Autonomy Emerging

Our tale begins with man in a state radically distant from any sort of autonomy: Man in R. Soloveitchik’s primordial universe does not so much as “occupy a unique ontic position,”¹⁸ his standing swallowed in confluence, identity, affinity, and conformity with his natural surroundings. To the extent that he is capable of achieving transcendence, rising above and independent of his environment, that transcendence will always be “seen against the backdrop of naturalness,” as a display of colors projected on the canvas of man’s intransigent immanence.¹⁹ It is the sort of state evoked by psychoanalytic theory’s “primary narcissism,” wherein a newborn child simply has no concept of herself as an entity distinct from the world. In the immediate context of creation, man has no independent standing, no unique position apart from the whole of the surrounding universe; he is just another “drop of the cosmos,”²⁰ in the endless sea of creation, one more speck of dust in the universe’s wind.

16. Moshe Sokol, “Master or Slave? Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik on Human Autonomy in the Presence of God,” in *Turim: Studies in Jewish History and Literature Presented to Dr. Bernard Lander*, vol. 1 (Jersey City, NJ, 2008), 275-330.

17. Along the same lines, David Hartman writes: “There is . . . a modern Jewish thinker who seeks not to eliminate one of the two themes by treating it as an inferior form of religious passion, but rather to integrate them together in the religious life of the Jew. . . . In Soloveitchik, both dimensions of the Judaic tradition—the assertive and the submissive—are given full expression. . . . Whereas in rabbinic literature there is no attempt to explain how the two fit together, Soloveitchik seeks to bring the two into a higher ideological unity” (Hartman, *A Living Covenant*, 62). But exactly how the two themes are integrated is never, to my knowledge, fully spelled out.

18. *The Emergence of Ethical Man*, 12.

19. *Ibid.*, 9.

20. *Ibid.*, 14.

R. Soloveitchik continues: “But man is not only identical with the universal source of life, the earth. He is also *enmeshed* within the entire physical environment.”²¹ Granting that man lacks any ontic uniqueness relative to the rest of nature, he *may* prove nonetheless capable of escape from the bonds of uniformity, irrupting into the world as an independent, free-standing self. But at the outset, at least, man is wholly embedded in his surroundings, his would-be presence dissipating quietly into the landscape. In place of conscious, freely chosen, purposeful activity—the mark of genuine individuality—man at this stage is governed exclusively by “automatic push and blind, forced movement.”²² His is “the uniformity of an instinctive anonymous existence,”²³ as he exists not for himself, but for the sake of the species; he is but one more faceless instance of a class. In brief, “The individual constitutes only a medium,”²⁴ which is to say that he is no individual at all. Man, at this essential first stage in his development, lacks autonomy, even basic selfhood, entirely. The founding premise is that man, as an individual, *is* not.

But with that foundation laid, it was God’s will that man rise beyond anonymity and mere species-level subsistence—that he emerge as an independent, individual personality. To initiate the process, God speaks to Adam: “And God blessed them and God said to them, be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 1:28). Content-wise, God does not at this point add anything in excess of the natural, animal drive toward species preservation and expansion; He simply makes instinct explicit. But by no more than addressing man and communicating to him an ethical mission and teleological purpose, God catalyzes the transformation of man’s passive, mechanical drivenness into purposive, planned activity; the blind, instinctive urge to procreate and extend his species’ dominion becomes a conscious, willed stride toward destiny.²⁵ Human existence becomes *teleological*. Through this transformation and the acquisition of conscious purposefulness, he achieves differentiation and hence individuation from his natural environment, his newly attained reflective awareness and proactive directedness establishing him as an independent being.²⁶ Introduced into man’s experience at this point is the capacity to distinguish between his own self and that which is other to it,

21. *Ibid.*, 12. Emphasis added.

22. *Ibid.*, 74.

23. *Ibid.*, 9.

24. *Ibid.*, 72.

25. *Ibid.*, 74.

26. *Ibid.*, 78.

that which is “beyond one’s reach, opposed to and different from man.”²⁷ What this amounts to is “the emergence of subjectivity in man: he encounters nature and begins to face it as something alien and different, thus becoming an individual, unique reality.”²⁸ For every object, in that it is an object, there is a corresponding subject (and vice versa). Through His inaugural address to humanity, God catalyzes man’s developmental journey toward autonomous subjectivity.

In parallel and in concert, man himself takes a broad step toward individual personality in his naming of the animals (Gen. 2:19-20): “Suddenly a schism developed between man-nature and nature: the split implied in the cognitive gesture, the discrepancy involved in the subject-object division.”²⁹ The very act of cognition implies *differentiation*. Where man, at the outset, had experienced both his self and the world as a single, continuous entity, the naming process introduces a categorical distinction between the cognizing subject and the cognized object; man, as a self-apart, classifies the objects that are not of his self. Along with the awareness of self-other division attained through being addressed by God, man, with his own cognitive gesture, himself quickens the debut of his own individuation and resultant autonomous self-standing—the first mile-marker on his journey toward self-realization as a mature personality.

But the introduction of self-other differentiation, by its very nature, provokes the subsequent developmental crisis: If there is an individuated self and an other separate from it, how will, or should, the two interact? Implicit in the cognitive act is an incipient response to the quandary, with man relating to the other, at minimum, as an object. In the mode of a dispassionate scientist, he investigates the other’s features and proceeds to methodically classify and categorize it and its place within his experience, what roles it can and cannot play in his endeavors. The other, at this preliminary stage, is an existential *it*. But what man requires if he is to progress is not only the capacity for assessing and utilizing objects—say, naming a parade of animals—but the further, self-transcending ability to join in partnership with a fellow subject, to relate his *I* to a full-fledged, genuine *thou*.³⁰ The capacity for true I-thou

27. *Ibid.*, 79.

28. *Ibid.*, 81.

29. *Ibid.*, 90.

30. It is worth noting that the pivotal role of the “I-Thou” concept in *Emergence* represents one of the few major breaks from Scheler’s *Man’s Place in Nature*, which is explicitly neutral as to the ethical implications of human personality (see *Man’s Place*

relationship is, on R. Soloveitchik's account, the cornerstone feature of the ethical personality, and though the cognitive ability to differentiate one's self from an other is a necessary condition for and a major step toward achieving relationship with that other, it is surely not coextensive with it. Man, at this early stage, has achieved some independence from nature, but remains effectively enmeshed in it, in that he has yet to fully emerge as a virtuously relational person. Differentiation is of no use absent progression toward a higher-order integration. What we need, then, is a "miraculous bridge"³¹ into the land of ethical personality, some mechanism with which we can transform "man-*natura*" into fully realized, I-thou relationship capable "man-*persona*."³²

Step one in this process is again God's personal address to man. Whereas before, in the blessing to be fruitful and multiply, God had appeared as the cosmic, transcendent "E-lohim" and spoke to man only in his impersonal role as species-representative, God in Gen. 2:16 makes His inaugural appearance under the immanent, intimate aspect of the Tetragrammaton, speaking to man as an I to a thou, thereby stimulating the realization of his personhood: "By the mere fact that he was confronted by God and spoken unto, the I-thou relationship emerges."³³ In what way and by what means? Here an insight from 20th-century psychology is helpful: It is a commonplace in psychodynamic thinking that a vitally important component of an infant's healthy development is the loving, personal engagement of a mother-figure. In a well-known study, psychiatrist Rene Spitz examined cases of children who, having lost their mothers, were placed in foundling homes.³⁴ Left in cribs and fed with mechanically propped bottles, these infants were deprived of any personal, let alone motherly, interaction. The results were devastating: many withered away to the point of death, and those that survived were often severely stunted in their capacity for the most basic emotional engagement. On the other side of the coin, the study illustrated how a

in Nature, 55). R. Soloveitchik, following Martin Buber's critique of Scheler's work, makes the realization of I-Thou relationality not just one possible outcome of but rather essential to the emergence of human personality (see Martin Buber, "What is Man?" in *Between Man and Man*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith [Boston, 1955], 199).
31. *Ibid.*, 108.

32. For R. Soloveitchik's use of these terms, see *Family Redeemed: Essays on Family Relationships*, ed. David Shatz and Joel B. Wolowelsky (New York, 2000), 6-30.

33. *The Emergence of Ethical Man*, 75.

34. Rene Spitz, "Hospitalism: An Inquiry into the Genesis of Psychiatric Conditions in Early Childhood," *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 1 (1945): 53-74.

caring, affectively attuned mother in dynamic, sympathetically engaged interaction contributes powerfully, essentially, and centrally to the formation of a healthy, vibrant child capable of a loving relationship. It is through, and only through, the mother's sensitive reactions to her child's expressions—through her positive recognition of and reactive coordination with the infant's personal self—that the child comes to know that she is a self at all and then that there is an other to whom she can relate. The capacity for love is an achievement of love.

And so, whereas, as we saw, God's initial, impersonal address as cosmic-God to species-Adam in Gen. 1:28 was the catalyst for man's achieving the preliminary step of basic self-other differentiation, it is only with the *personal* speech of 2:16 that God calls Adam to fully relational personhood. R. Soloveitchik writes that prior to His first personal communication to Adam, "God had not appeared as a *personality*—and therefore man could not conceive of himself as a person."³⁵ It was only with the warm caress of God's personal engagement that man understood that he too could be a person, that he as well could relate to the other as a genuine subject, as a full-fledged thou. And importantly, until achieving that capacity, he was as a human incomplete, *deficient*; such an existence "lacks God's sanction and exposes an *imperfect form of being*."³⁶ Becoming a personal being capable of genuine I-thou relationship, then, is a necessary, assertive step forward in man's progressive self-realization, and it is with this that we have the "final liberation of man from his environment, the transformation from natural into metaphysical man."³⁷ Man's freedom from embeddedness and consequent achievement of self-actualization as an autonomous person is precisely a function of his acquiring the capacity to acknowledge and relate to a separately autonomous other in true metaphysical companionship.

Beyond the "mere fact" of personal encounter, God's address to man bore an additional game-changing gift: the prohibition against partaking of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, the world's very first moral command. R. Soloveitchik points to a number of ways in which the new ethical imperative served to broaden man's ontological horizons and further his personalistic evolution. First, the fact that the moral command was unique, in no way coinciding with man's natural instincts—there was simply no biological reason to eschew the fruit of

35. *The Emergence of Ethical Man*, 76.

36. *Family Redeemed: Essays on Family Relationships*, 17.

37. *Ibid.*, 12.

that particular tree—required that man expand his cognitive and motivational consciousness beyond the merely natural and beyond *himself*.³⁸ “Man suddenly experienced the ethical imperative which was prompted by autonomous, unique interests, unknown to natural man,” and it was with this, in addition to his first personal encounter with God, that “man begins to experience his selfhood, his personalistic existence.”³⁹ Answering a call originating of external origin, man acquires conscious self-differentiation and the capacity for purposively acknowledging and responding to another personal thou, acting not towards his own ends but purely in reverent response to the autonomous wish of an other. And it is precisely by transcending his own self in regard for an other that he takes a major developmental step toward maturation as an authentic personality. Autonomy is achieved *through* heteronomy, self-realization in and through self-transcendence.⁴⁰

Further, and particularly vital to our broader inquiry, the command to abstain from the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge spelled an apparent reversal of man’s forward, affirmative march; better, the key event in man’s self-realization is one which radically constrains the expression thereof. Prior to the fateful first injunction, man approached the world with no limits; there was no horizon he could not reach, no treasure he could not claim. But with the command came a dramatic reversal—acquisition was replaced by renunciation, assertion by submission, and unchecked conquest by humbling defeat. As he charged forth in his inaugural thrust at majesty, “Adam met suddenly with God’s moral will, with the moral law which challenges man in numerous cases to do just the opposite, to refrain from advancing and to withdraw, to defy

38. Identifying the moral as essentially extra-natural has a recognizably Kantian ring. Kant, in fact, in his own moral-conceptual retelling of Genesis describes the primordial fruit-seduction in terms similar to what we will see from R. Soloveitchik:

So long as inexperienced man obeyed this call of nature, his lot was a happy one. But *reason* soon made its presence felt and sought to extend his knowledge of food-stuffs beyond the bounds of instinct. . . . But it is a peculiarity of reason that it is able, with the help of imagination, to invent desires which not only *lack* any corresponding natural impulse, but which are even *at variance* with the latter. . . . The outcome of that first experiment whereby man became conscious of his reason as a faculty which can extend beyond the limits to which all animals are confined was of great importance, and it influenced his way of life decisively (Immanuel Kant, *Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss, trans. H.B. Nisbet [New York, 1991], 221).

39. *The Emergence of Ethical Man*, 82.

40. The dynamic is masterfully discussed by John Crosby in his *The Selfhood of the Human Person* (Washington D.C., 1996), esp. 174-217.

the very fantasy that made him man.”⁴¹ In his experience of the primeval “no,” Adam discovers that there is more to the world than his own whim, that negotiating his existence in the world will necessarily require compromising his own pursuits in concession to the will of others. Being a mature person in a world of others means learning to compromise and renounce, not only as a matter of pragmatic-utilitarian negotiation, but as a vitally constituent component of genuine human excellence and flourishing.

That authentic relationship requires sacrifice appears as a pivotal insight throughout R. Soloveitchik’s writings. In the succinct formulation regarding Adam the second’s acquiring a covenantal partner, “This new companionship is not attained through conquest, but through surrender and retreat. . . . [C]ommunicating and communing are redemptive sacrificial gestures.”⁴² The further insight uniquely developed in *The Emergence of Ethical Man* and *Family Redeemed* is that the capacity for companionship through sacrifice constitutes an essential component of what it is to be a truly ethical personality, that developing from man-*natura* into a mature man-*persona* requires the willingness to submit and surrender to the will of the other for the sake of the other. Man’s liberty and autonomy are compromised. His life is now governed, in part, by an external and effectively heteronomous sovereign; he no longer calls all his own shots. But in and through conceding that measure of self-determination, man achieves a new, vitally important stage of personalistic excellence. It is only through sacrifice that man can achieve genuine relationship, and it is only through genuine relationship that man can mature and flourish as an authentic ethical personality.

The humbling of Adam’s assertiveness is, for R. Soloveitchik, one more positive step in the development from natural embeddedness and anonymity to self-realization as an autonomous personality. Restricting man’s freedom in relational concession to an other makes an essential contribution to the progressive process of man’s self-fulfillment, his submissive withdrawal representing the next stage in the flourishing of the complete human personality—a *yeridah le-zorekh aliyyah*. “A man who cannot make the movement of recoil . . . such a person is a man-*natura*, notwithstanding his bold thrust, daring enterprises, grandiose designs, and fabulous exploits . . . all this does not suffice to open up

41. *Family Redeemed*, 11.

42. *The Lonely Man of Faith*, 38.

to man the new ontological personalism of I-hood and thou-hood.”⁴³ The state-of-being constituted exclusively by independent self-assertion is a necessary and important stage in the development of human personality, but it is for all that an infantile, immature stage. Until man is capable of renunciation, withdrawal, and sacrifice, he has yet to become a genuine person, because only a man capable of a full I-thou relationship is a genuine person, and only a man capable of renunciation, withdrawal, and sacrifice can achieve a full I-thou relationship. In short, man achieves an ethically holistic and hence metaphysically complete personality only when he “realizes that to be human means to carry a load.”⁴⁴ Submission, far from the enemy of self-affirmation, appears here as its natural complement; more fully, submission and self-affirmation appear as dynamically, mutually engaged in an organically singular and purposive dialectical process.

But achieving the capacity for relationship is not quite the same as actually having one, and so, with the groundwork of Adam’s personality laid, God observes that it is not good for man to be alone, setting about the work of preparing for him a mate. It is not simply that man, as a “social animal,” is better situated to achieve his ends when in the company of others, or that he is less prone to certain types of neurosis. On R. Soloveitchik’s account, it is not only that solitude is disadvantageous for man, or, as a matter of psychological reality, unhealthy, but that lonely existence is in itself *not good*—it “exposes an imperfect form of being.” A man alone is a man deficient, and so, “another homo-persona is necessary to complete man’s existence.”⁴⁵ Here the story of man’s development climaxes, with Adam in the arms of his beloved companion Eve, in a blessed state of shared, metaphysical coexistence. Man, now fully differentiated, individuated, and driven toward his own affirmation, dignity, majesty, freedom, and autonomy, in the same moment concedes concern, commitment, and a readiness to sacrifice for an other beyond himself—a great leap forward in humanity’s dialectical pursuit of self-realization.⁴⁶ Were he autonomously self-determining only, man would be metaphysically alone, and thus incomplete. Were he submissive and self-sacrificing only, man would be nothing at all—just another

43. *Ibid.*, 14.

44. *Ibid.*

45. *Ibid.*, 17.

46. It is worth noting that God too sacrifices of His glory, limiting Himself for the sake of relationship.

tree in the woods. But with the affirmation of himself in one hand and the recognition of, submission to, and companionship with a partner in the other, we have the first glimpse of man's ethical personality in its coming-to-be.

Demons in Paradise

Readers will recall that the story does not conclude on so paradisiacal a note; the primordial harmony is shattered by the cold, piercing blade of sin. Where did man go wrong? With his achievement of a differentiated, independent, and autonomous personality, man stands at a crossroads. He may at this point elect autonomy and assertive self-determination as his *sole* guiding principles, orienting his life exclusively toward the realization of his freely chosen personal excellence. With this posture, he may well engage in the enterprise of interpersonal community, interacting cordially with others and coordinating with them toward securing their mutual betterment, and he may indeed exhibit robustly ethical behavior, acting in full accord with the dictates of moral reason. But insofar as he refuses to acknowledge any genuine check on his right to autonomous self-actualization, he will perforce remain incapable of rising beyond the level of mere utilitarian community and into the promised land of fully personal metaphysical companionship.

What this means in ethical terms, R. Soloveitchik argues, is that man effectively relates to the other only insofar as it serves the end of his own self-affirmation, treating the other as an object/it rather than a subject/thou. Man, in this sense, may become *demonic*.⁴⁷ He may on a surface level act as a friend, even working toward the good of others, but this is liable to at root be in exclusive, manipulative pursuit of his own ends. To be clear, the claim is not that those ends are purely hedonistic or crassly egoistic; they may well be noble and virtuous.⁴⁸ Even the worship of God through basic love and fear, if unalloyed with full submission, is interpreted by R. Soloveitchik as at root an expression of human self-interest,⁴⁹ though few would condemn those sorts of worship as such. So R. Soloveitchik is not simply making the trivial claim that unchecked egoism and self-centeredness are as moral attributes less than fully

47. *The Emergence of Ethical Man*, 74.

48. Cf. Crosby, *The Selfhood of the Human Person*, 179.

49. See *And From There You Shall Seek*, 48: "The love of God embedded in this longing is a selfish love."

salutary. The issue here is not so much the particulars of how a person acts as it is the more fundamental question of the nature of his personality and existential orientation toward others—not only what he does, but *what kind of person he is*.

R. Soloveitchik did at times express concern regarding the behavioral liabilities of the autonomous personality and subjectively constructed worldview, diagnosing these as the etiology underlying historical horrors from the Crusades to the gas chambers. In a statement aimed at a certain strand of Kant-inspired language, R. Soloveitchik writes that if it “seems to man that he is the author of the commandments” and he “does not feel the pincers of the revelational duress compelling him to adapt to the laws imposed on him by a separate supreme authority,” he is “liable to disgrace himself in public,” and “the end result of this freedom is moral anarchy.”⁵⁰ Without the taming discipline of objective, heteronomous authority, man’s brutish passions are liable to issue in callous and reckless violence. But beyond the potential for destructive behavior the self-legislating personality represents, R. Soloveitchik is here making the further anthropological claim that regardless of the consequences, such a personality is in itself humanly deficient, that it fails to achieve full self-realization as an ethical *man-persona*. A person of impeccable moral comportment may well qualify as demonic in the Rav’s sense if he exhibits an excessive devotion to independence and autonomous self-determination and a corresponding failure to incorporate appropriately humble regard for external authority and a ready willingness to sacrifice in genuine recognition of and relationship with the other.

Serpentine Logic

In focusing on the original sin’s ethical dimension—man’s turn toward demonic self-assertion—R. Soloveitchik does not at all ignore the prominent interpretive tradition emphasizing the aspects of lust and hedonic temptation. But rather than side with one camp over the other, R. Soloveitchik artfully weaves the two together: It is precisely because of man’s hypnotic lust for pleasure that in his mad quest for satisfaction he fails to give due regard to the other.⁵¹ Adam and Eve, obsessed with pleasure, come to regard each other as objects serving their own gratification

50. *Ibid.*, 54. See also *Halakhic Man*, 153 n. 80, for a similar statement in which Kant is mentioned explicitly.

51. *The Emergence of Ethical Man*, 124.

rather than as persons worthy of categorical devotion; in place of ethical companionship appears demonic domination. Man is guilty of

self-absolutization and hypostatization. . . . He ascribes to himself and to his works unlimited worth. He rebels against subjugation to the law, whether natural or moral; he likes to command, to chart his own course without accepting any transcendental counsel, legislating an ethical code of his own, to unravel the cosmic mystery and thus usurp the omnipotence of God and become himself a creator.⁵²

Psychologist Robert Kegan describes a comparable stage of personality development: “An infant discovers that there is a world separate from him, but not until years later does the child discover that this separate world is not subject to him.”⁵³ On R. Soloveitchik’s account, the state of man in his sin is like that of Kegan’s infant; he has achieved independence and differentiation from what is other to him, but has yet to grasp—or, as it may be, has as yet refused to grasp—that the other is not subject to him, that it rightly claims a position beyond that of an object in his service. He has yet to master the art of genuine relationship, and in that way remains as a person incomplete. Man sins precisely in failing to acknowledge any check on his own autonomy, tragically mistaking, as would an infant, his assertive pursuit of self-realization for the end of all things.

Of course, if man is indeed asserting himself as the end of all things, then he is in so doing challenging God’s position as the ultimate lord and sovereign. He is, in effect, aiming to supplant God as supreme ruler. In Augustine’s words, “The sin was a despising of the authority of God.”⁵⁴ And importantly, to Adam’s immature personality, God seemed to be Himself fully party to—even the instigator of—the competition. The snake, in turning Eve toward sin, characterizes God’s prohibition of the Tree of Knowledge as the act of a tyrant ensuring the continued subjugation of his subjects; the impetus for the prohibition was precisely God’s fear of competition, “that they should become like us” and thereby challenge God’s absolute sovereignty. It was a feat of classical psychological projection: the megalomaniac justifies her megalomania by attributing a prior megalomaniacal threat to others. But perceiving God’s gesture as a tyrannical challenge to his own dreams of majesty, man believes his only options are to either slavishly submit to heteronomous subjugation, or

52. *Ibid.*, 22.

53. Kegan, *The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development*, (Cambridge, MA, 1982), 139.

54. St. Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York, 2006), 532.

else to stand tall and fight for his own mastery. Of course it did not have to be that way, but in man's early narcissistic mindset, snake logic ruled. The town wasn't big enough for both him and God, and one of them would have to go.

It's not just the snake: There is a strong tendency in theistic thought to see the conflict between human assertion and divine lordship as a dichotomous, either-or proposition; to insist on man's autonomy is to straightly deny God's sovereignty, and to establish God as master is to crush any semblance of human independence. The position can be a natural following through of Jewish and Christian fundamentals. Here is Paul Tillich on the direct challenge to man's personal standing posed by the very nature of the classical theistic God: "God as a subject makes me into an object which is nothing more than an object. He deprives me of my subjectivity because he is all-powerful and all-knowing....God appears as the invincible tyrant, the being in contrast with whom all other beings are without freedom and subjectivity."⁵⁵

In Jewish thought, Yeshayahu Leibowitz serves as a conveniently clear and candid representative of this stance. Leibowitz distinguishes sharply between "two types of religiosity."⁵⁶ On one end there is an anthropocentric, "endowing religion," aimed at the "satisfying of man's spiritual needs." "Its end is man, and God offers his services to man." On the other, opposite pole, there is a theocentric "religion of *mizvot*," which "imposes obligations and tasks and *makes of man an instrument for the realization of an end which transcends man*."⁵⁷ Leibowitz allows us only the stark choice between a religion whose end is man and a religion which negates man in pursuit of that which transcends him; it is one or the other, middle excluded. In a particularly apt formulation for our discussion, he asserts that the ascription to man of any religious value is utterly incompatible with any recognition of God: "If holiness is incarnate in aspects of natural reality itself, or if forces and drives within man are holy, *there is no room for 'the holy God,'* who transcends natural reality, since then reality itself is divine and man himself is God."⁵⁸ For Leibowitz, we can have either a holy God or a holy man, but not both; the world isn't big enough for the two of them.

55. Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven, CT, 2000), 186.

56. Yeshayahu Leibowitz, "Religious Praxis: The Meaning of Halakhah," *Judaism, Human Values, and the Jewish State*, ed. Eliezer Goldman, trans. Eliezer Goldman, Yoram Navon, et. al (Cambridge, MA and London, 1992), 14.

57. Ibid. Emphasis added.

58. Ibid, 25. Emphasis added.

What would R. Soloveitchik say in response? He would, I think, on the one hand commend Leibowitz for emphasizing the indispensability for genuine religion of a full-bodied recognition of man's obligation to the heteronomous will of a commanding God, but would no less reject Leibowitz's blunt, categorical disbaring of any anthropocentric values. R. Soloveitchik asserts that in the authentic Jewish view, both man and God are proper ends in themselves. Man's striving toward his own personal self-realization need not clash with the due recognition of God's sovereignty, and in fact may play a central role therein. Complementarily, man's submission to God's commanding lordship need not negate man's dreams of personal majesty, and in fact may contribute vitally to that end. Both motifs, properly integrated over time, are essential to genuine religious and moral life. And so where a figure like Pope Benedict writes that "What counts is not the fulfillment of my desires, but of His [God's] will,"⁵⁹ R. Soloveitchik would stress that both ought to count, and interdependently, dynamically so. Insisting on an either/or decision between my will and thine is both ethically and religiously unnecessary, and also deflationary in that it suppresses vital realms of possibility for the relationship between God and man, flattening a dynamic, multi-dimensional world to a static, one-dimensional plane. The God-man relationship is not, or at least need not be, a zero-sum game—to insist otherwise is to succumb to the original temptation toward the original sin.

Relevant here are R. Soloveitchik's repeated polemics in *U-Vikkashtem mi-Sham* and elsewhere against the ideal of "*unio mystica*," the mystical goal of unity with God wherein man is entirely subsumed by the infinite divine. "Mystical philosophers long for immersion in the silence of absolute unity," and "aspire to overcome the variety and uniqueness of man's personality, recommending the negation of people's variegated mental and physical existence for the sake of attaining pure, simple unity."⁶⁰ He responds: "But Judaism, directed by the Halakhah, says, 'This is not the way? . . . Man does not cleave to God by denying his actual essence, but, on the contrary, by affirming his own essence.'" There is room in the presence of God for man in all his multi-colored uniqueness. Cleaving to God and acknowledging His awesome mastery, far from requiring

59. Message Of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI For The Twenty-Sixth World Youth Day (2011), http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/youth/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20100806_youth_en.html

60. *And From There You Shall Seek*, 87.

the nullification of man's selfhood, in fact achieved precisely through "the full realization of his personality" and man's "fulfilling his own essence."⁶¹ To be clear, not just any self-realization and fulfillment will serve as media for cleaving to God, but only those properly bounded by man's recognition of God's greatness and ultimate sovereignty; to the extent that it exhibits "prideful, insolent independence,"⁶² man's self-affirmation surely wins no favor with God. But then we have precisely our thesis: Man's autonomous self-assertion is hallowed if and only if it is duly, dialectically balanced with humility, submission, and sacrifice.

The point is not to deny that God's greatness *could* obliterate man's personal existence. On the level of principle, R. Soloveitchik would agree with Tillich, Leibowitz, and the mystics that man's autonomous standing should indeed be crushed by the very being of the omnipotent Creator. What he insists, however, is that God graciously elects to "constrict" Himself, thereby allowing for man's independent existence and freedom.⁶³ God, at a point in history, lovingly addresses man as a thou, which enables man to gradually become the sort of person capable of thou-regard. Were God to assert Himself fully, He would, as the snake said, be a demonic (if justified) tyrant, denying autonomous subjectivity to any being other than Himself. But because God is truly good and beneficent—the ultimate ethical personality—He willingly and graciously modulates His own self-assertion in calling forth the autonomous subjectivity of man independent. Man, for his part, is simply called upon to reciprocate: to affirm his personality in relation to, rather than conflict with, the ultimate personality of God. In other words, to resist temptation and prove the snake wrong. The point, again, is that for God and man both, autonomy and sacrifice are rightly understood as dialectically, developmentally complementary rather than flatly contradictory concepts. Love precipitates love.

Sacrifice and Relational Autonomy

R. Soloveitchik's developmental narrative reaches a climax with the story of Abraham. Consistent with what we have seen to be a hallmark of his philosophy, the Rav here spares no ink in emphasizing the autonomous, independent, and virtuously self-sovereign character of the first Jewish

61. *Ibid.*, 89.

62. *Ibid.*

63. See *And From There You Shall Seek*, 63.

patriarch. Abraham is colorfully depicted in almost Kerouakian terms; freely roving the landscape with God as a fellow, he is as a charismatic personality, “anarchic, freedom-loving, and anti-authoritarian,” and “prefers spontaneity to artificiality, improvisation to routine.”⁶⁴ To be sure, Abraham’s version of anarchy is not to be confused with a crude lawlessness, as he is profoundly devoted to an ambitious moral law, purpose, and destiny. R. Soloveitchik stresses, however, that, at least for a time, this commitment involved no heteronomous coercion or submission to external authority. “As a free personality, he goes out to meet the moral law with his full collected being; he chances to find it in himself and to consciously adopt it. . . . God encroaches not upon his personal freedom; on the contrary, God helps him to develop his moral spontaneity and creativity.”⁶⁵

But Abraham’s free-spirited revelry and congenial comradeship with God, representing a significant, definitive stage in his religious formation, were to meet a formidable challenge in the *akedah*. By all appearances, God’s commanding Abraham to slaughter Isaac was a radical affront to any sort of human autonomy and self-determination; if there is anything man’s moral conscience can determine on its own, it is that one should not murder innocent children in cold blood. God’s enjoining Abraham to do so, then, demanded of Abraham that he forfeit full allegiance to his personal moral sense in submissive concession to the dictates of an external authority. In other words, it would seem that a central import of the *akedah* story is the blunt rejection of human moral autonomy. This reading has enjoyed an enthusiastic champion in David Hartman, who has in a variety of contexts asserted that the *akedah* involved not only the sacrifice of Isaac, but of Abraham’s ethical personality as well. The episode could not but leave Abraham with a crushed moral spirit and a deadened conscience, less independent, spontaneous trailblazer than submissive, docile servant. For Hartman, lending the *akedah* a prominent place in the Jewish worldview is liable to entail humanity’s lamentable resignation to servile obedience and the complementary forfeit of any independent moral conscience or personality. Hartman, in contrast, prefers “an understanding of the covenantal relationship between God and Israel in which the fullness of the human person is affirmed.”⁶⁶

64. *Ibid.*, 152.

65. *Ibid.*

66. David Hartman, *Israelis and the Jewish Tradition: An Ancient People Debating its Future* (New Haven, CT, 2000), 148.

Like Hartman, R. Soloveitchik does not shrink from acknowledging the starkly heteronomous character of the episode, writing that the God of the *akedah* appears as a “master to whom man is enslaved and who almost ruthlessly lays claim to the entirety of human existence,” and that God’s command meant the “absolute surrender of the servant.” Accepting this premise, it would be natural to expect, with Hartman, that the experience would crush Abraham, leaving nothing in its wake but a submissive servant with no will or spirit of his own. In place of the mutual, two-party covenant, we would have only the exclusive, unilateral dominion of God. But R. Soloveitchik, affirming the philosophical insight we have here worked to identify, strikingly says just the opposite:

The *akedah* became indeed the motto of the covenant and its symbol. . . . From then on, the covenant spelled mutual, inherent, all-inclusive belonging. Man sacrificed himself to God, and God dedicated himself to man. . . . Earlier promises were cast in a new light. Instead of the primitive covenant which embodied a mere utilitarian agreement like any other treaty negotiated between two individuals, a new covenant came into being, a covenant of an existential community of God and man.⁶⁷

Abraham’s gesture indeed represented dramatic submission to God’s authority, but it was precisely that readiness for sacrifice and the total, unconditional commitment it expressed that made for a true, full-blooded relationship of mutuality between man and God—for a genuine covenant. Far from spelling the forfeit of his independent ethical personality, it was precisely the demonstration of humble surrender that crystallized in Abraham the personal moral adequacy and responsibility that are the hallmarks of covenantal life. The *akedah* indeed could have been the end of human moral autonomy, but Abraham’s example shows it does not have to be that way. God is, and people can be, better than that.

Centrally for R. Soloveitchik, not only ethical judgment but the cognitive gesture in general must be redeemed through a cathartic recognition of its proper limits.⁶⁸ Without compromising the human capacity for intellectual achievement, and while committed to the majestic advancement of scientific endeavor, the redeemed mind acknowledges that the foundational mysteries of being itself will always surpass the understanding of the human subject. For R. Soloveitchik, reason cannot on its own comprehend reality as it is in itself, and therefore its

67. *The Emergence of Ethical Man*, 157 n. 2.

68. See “Catharsis,” *Tradition* 17, 2 (1978): 37.

attempt to do so will of necessity be an imperial, self-assertive gesture. In encountering reality, reason “adapts it to its own needs” and “sculpts the ‘given’ with the chisel of categorical concepts so as to prepare it for scientific understanding.”⁶⁹ In subjecting reality to compliance with categories and systems of its own construction, the human mind perpetrates an act of violence against the world; it in a significant sense “eliminates its own object.”⁷⁰ A holistic and morally wholesome cognitive approach, therefore, is one which is vulnerably receptive to the fullness of reality, a world which heteronomously “fills our consciousness, enchants us with its variety of tones and colors, encompasses us completely, oppresses us with all the burdens of otherness, and amazes us with its size and force.”⁷¹ Hans Kelsen expressed the submission and heteronomy inherent in the experience of cognizing subject-independent reality: “The relationship between the object of cognition, the absolute, and the subject of cognition, the individual human being, is quite similar to that between an absolute government and its subjects . . . the subject of cognition, totally determined in his cognition by heteronomous laws.”⁷² It follows that the complete and veridical appreciation of reality on the part of man demands that he concede the limits of his intellect, renounce his imperial attempt at cognitive control, and humbly submit to the external authority of an autonomous world. Regarding cognition in general and moral thinking in particular, R. Soloveitchik insisted that the humanly wholesome approach is one in which the individual person both affirms his own intellectual autonomy and duly respects its proper limits, reverently beholding a reality of which he is not the author. It is not that independent rationality is no virtue, but that “The virtues of independent rational agency need for their adequate exercise to be accompanied by . . . the virtues of acknowledged dependence.”⁷³

R. Soloveitchik, then, essentially grants Hartman’s premise but rejects his conclusion. With Hartman, Soloveitchik endorses a view of

69. *And From There You Shall Seek*, 14.

70. *The Halakhic Mind: An Essay on Jewish Tradition and Modern Thought* (New York, 1986), 88. The insight is central to R. Soloveitchik’s project in *The Halakhic Mind* of developing a non-reductive philosophy of religion with due regard for religion’s autonomous character.

71. *And From There You Shall Seek*, 10.

72. Hans Kelsen, *What is Justice?: Law and Politics in the Mirror of Science* (Berkeley, 1971), 202.

73. Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (Chicago, 2001), 160.

the covenant between man and God wherein “the fullness of the human person is affirmed.” Where the two differ is in their respective evaluations of the implications of an *akedah*-like concession to authority. For Hartman, the sort of submission exhibited by Abraham at the *akedah* can only be antithetical to the affirmation of man and entails the forfeit of any worthy covenant; for R. Soloveitchik, it is precisely in and through such self-sacrificial reverence that man may properly realize his potential as an ethical personality and flourish in true covenantal mutuality and relationship. It may take an Abraham, but the ultimate sacrifice can consummate the ultimate partnership. The insight can be generalized: So long as we zealously refuse any imposition on our autonomy, avoiding any submission of ourselves in full commitment to an other, we will remain deprived of “existential community,” mired instead in the arid sands of utilitarian exchange. But with genuine sacrifice comes authentic relationship, and with authentic relationship comes the virtuously autonomous ethical personality realized.

Conclusion

It is well known that in certain of the R. Soloveitchik’s later essays, the dialectical tension of man’s torn existence appears as a permanent, intractable feature of contemporary religious life. Sometimes, a retreat may be the prologue before a resumed march toward triumph, but sometimes a defeat is just that; sometimes, Moses is denied passage into the Promised Land.⁷⁴ This is certain. But surely we never supposed that man would travel solely on the breezy lanes of eudaemonic tranquility, that he would enjoy the bliss of paradise unmarred by tragedy and defeat. The facts of life are plain to the eye, and they are often plainly tragic—betraying the crude realities of humbling failure, pain, and suffering, repelling any attempt at explanation or resolution toward some higher theodicing harmony.⁷⁵ Our question, however, was not whether these facts obtain in human experience, but whether or not R. Soloveitchik articulated a systematic and critical philosophical framework for integrating and meaningfully processing those facts within a broadly affirming vision of human life—and that, I have argued, he did and did compellingly.

74. “Majesty and Humility,” *Tradition* 17, 2 (1978): 37.

75. Cf. R. Soloveitchik, *Kol Dodi Dofek: Listen—My Beloved Knocks*, trans. David Z. Gordon, ed. Jeffrey Woolf (New York, 2006), 4.

The point here as throughout is that you shouldn't judge a narrative by its ending, or indeed by any isolated point along the way. Sometimes, the journey matters as much as the destination; at the very least, a destination simply is no destination without a journey leading there. On R. Soloveitchik's account in *The Emergence of Ethical Man*, the achievement of ethical personality out of environmental embeddedness and demonic impulsiveness is best described not as a problem's solution, but as an organic, dialectical emergence. Autonomy and submission are not fixed in an event of static harmony, but are to be partnered in a dynamic process of progressive integration; the conflict is less resolved than *redeemed*, and redemption is necessarily a development in time, a purposive evolution of life. Such redemption is never a *fait accompli* but always an ongoing challenge, a project the active pursuit of which animates our progressive flourishing as authentic human persons. Or, as the Rav would say, the realization of ethical personality is a matter not of fate, but of destiny.⁷⁶

76. Thanks go, in an order unreflective of rank or comparative valuation, to Stuart Ozar, Lauren Steinberg, Michael Pershan, Chumie Juni, Shalom Carmy, Menachem Rosenbaum, Meira Mintz, David Shatz, and the anonymous referee for insightful comments and guidance.