8

The Tragic Grace of Everyday Reality

Buber's friendship with Rosenzweig marked the crystallization of what he referred to as the third and ultimate station in the maturation of his understanding of Judaism.[1] The first had been inspired by the vision of the cultural rebirth of the Jewish people, though he soon concluded that culture is "but the by-product of a life process" and cannot be simply "willed into existence." "Culture develops like an individual's personality"; it evolves naturally from the "primal ground of one's life." The "primal ground of the life of the Jewish people must, then, be first aroused anew. This is what we [mean] by religious renewal." This he came to identify as his second station, one shaped by his increasing belief that the desired spiritual renewal should be distinguished from the normative structures of institutional religion. Rather it should seek to re-tap the primordial spiritual sensibility that had given birth to Jewish religiosity, which, alas, had been overwhelmed and suffocated by rabbinic Judaism. Hence, Buber concluded that "only when religion strives to overcome itself," and no longer advocates the "kingdom of religion" but affirms "God and his kingdom," will Israel's foundational religiosity regain its hold on the life of the Jewish people. What the spiritual renewal of Jewry—indeed, of all humanity—requires is neither "culture" nor "religion" (nor even religiosity), but a firm grounding in "the whole of reality, inclusive of man and God in the world, the encounter with God in the world, the redemption of the world *through* man."[2]

It is in the reality of "the lived everyday," therefore, that genuine spiritual renewal is to be realized. According to Buber's friend the Protestant historian of literature Wilhelm Michel, this insight—the core idea of the third and ultimate station of Buber's evolving conception of Judaism—was his seminal contribution to German thought. In a small volume in 1925, *Martin Buber: Sein Gang in die Wirklichkeit* (Martin Buber: His way into reality), Michel hailed him as "the pioneer of the way to the eternal other side of mysticism, namely, to new, capacious facets of reality."[3] Buber's "way into reality," Michel argued, had rescued German thought from the cul-de-sac of an idealized quest for pure inwardness.

Buber chiefly credited this development in his thinking to his beloved life partner, Paula, whom he regarded as his most unyielding critic and a bastion of intellectual and emotional integrity; the poem he wrote for her on his fiftieth birthday (see Chapter 1) attests to his gratitude to Paula as his truest *Gesprächspartner*, his ever-present dialogical companion.

Paula's unbending integrity and insight not only made her Buber's most trusted critic and intellectual collaborator, but as the realist of the two, she also early on had a more sober view of the threat posed by the rise of National Socialism than did her husband (who initially deemed it a passing setback for German democracy). While he clung to the belief that the devotees of the German humanistic tradition would rally their fellow citizens to resist the allure of Hitler's diabolical nationalism, Paula keenly observed how easily decent and upright Germans were sucked into the vortex of Hitler's shrewdly choreographed madness. In her diary, she recorded her observations of her respectable, bourgeois neighbors in the small west German town of Heppenheim, in which she and her family had lived since 1916, on the basis of which she would write (upon the Bubers' immigration to Palestine in March 1938) a 650-page novel. The name she would give the novel, *Muckensturm*—doubtless an allusion to *Der Stürmer*, the vehemently anti-Semitic Nazi weekly—literally means an "assault of mosquitoes." Its subtitle is no less significant: "A Year in the Life of a Small Town." It was, as Buber later insisted, not an indictment of Heppenheim per se, but rather of the average German. The novel included individuals of courage who reached out to Jews and offered support.

Paula, of course, was not able to publish the novel in Hitler's Germany. In fact, starting in 1935 she was expressly prohibited from publishing any of her writings in Germany, for that was when she was officially expelled from the German Chamber of Writers, whose imprimatur was necessary before an author could send anything to press. The reason for her expulsion was provided in a letter addressed to her by the president of the Nazi writers' guild:

> By virtue of your marriage to Martin Buber, who is of the Jewish religion, you are considered Jewish. Moreover, according to your own declaration, although you are a full-blooded Aryan, you were converted on March 26, 1934, to Judaism by the rabbinate of the Berlin community. Clearly you feel yourself to belong more to the Jewish race than the Aryan. On these grounds, I cannot grant you the requisite permission to participate in the cultural life of the Third Reich.[4]

The conversion to which this letter refers was Paula's second formal adoption of Judaism. Prior to marrying Martin in April 1907, she had converted in January of that year, apparently under the auspices of a liberal rabbi. The second conversion was through the orthodox rabbinate of Berlin, and was likely a defiant gesture to dispel any ambiguity about her solidarity with the beleaguered Jewish people.

In September 1941, Buber would write from Jerusalem to Thomas Mann, who lived at the time in Pacific Palisades, California, to request his assistance in finding a U.S. publisher for Paula's novel.[5] Although impressed by Buber's detailed description of his wife's novel and tempted by the opportunity to read the manuscript, Mann replied that unfortunately it was highly unlikely an American publisher would undertake the translation of such a lengthy volume.[6] It was only after World War II that *Muckensturm* would be published, in Switzerland—as with all of Paula's previous novels and short stories, under the male pseudonym Georg Munk.[7]

For his part, Buber's initial assessment of the prospects of National Socialism and Hitler's regime did not last long. With the boycott of Jewish-owned businesses beginning on April 1, 1933, just two months after Hitler was appointed chancellor of Germany on January 31, troops of the Sturmabteilung (SA), the so-called "Brown Shirts" of the paramilitary wing of the Nazi Party, marched menacingly through Heppenheim, demonstratively stopping in front of the Bubers' home. A week later, the Reichstag passed a "Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service," barring non-Aryans from serving in governmental institutions. Anticipating the dismissal of Jews from teaching positions, in October 1933 Buber resigned his professorship at the University of Frankfurt.

Buber was not naïve about the depths of German anti-Semitic sentiments, even among intellectuals. He was acutely aware of the paradox of the Enlightenment, which, while promoting Jewish emancipation, had also engendered what the philosopher Ernst Bloch called "metaphysical anti-Semitism," characterized by a repudiation of Judaism as alien to Christian and European spiritual and ethical sensibilities.[8] The trappings of learned discourse gave the contempt of Judaism and thus Jews a veneer of respectability. And in the throes of assimilation, western Jews had become estranged from their ancestral religion, so they themselves often perceived Judaism through the distorted and hostile lens of the educated European.

With the contemptuous context of metaphysical anti-Semitism in mind, Buber would devote himself to retrieving for the educated Jew—and non-Jew—of the West the spiritual core of Judaism. Long before the rise of Nazism, his writings on Judaism were subtly encoded with responses to prevailing defamations of Jews and Judaism. Among the notes he made in preparing the "Three Addresses" he delivered to the Bar Kochba student association in Prague, there are several folio sheets with citations in three parallel columns from the writings of Werner Sombart, Otto Weininger, and Houston Stewart Chamberlain, each asserting that Jewry is utterly bereft of any competence for mysticism and religious mystery, and noting the Jews' putative lack of a genuine understanding of German culture.[9] The fact that Weininger was himself a Jew only underscored the tragedy of Jewish deracination.

In his Prague addresses, as in his early writings on Hasidism, Buber implicitly appealed to the cosmopolitan humanistic values of the German educated classes. Anyone who recognized the essential human truths in the teachings of the Zen masters, or the legends of the pre-Christian Celts and Finns, might also come to see Jewish mystical tradition as a fount of universal wisdom. Such recognition, he had hoped, would lead to a sense of shared humanity with the Jews. But the chauvinistic nationalism unleashed by World War I—and the consequent intensification of metaphysical as well as vulgar anti-Semitism—

forced Buber to reassess his strategy of rehabilitating the image of Judaism and the Jew in the forum of educated European opinion.

Along with Rosenzweig, Buber had concluded that apologetics, inherently tendentious as they are, lacked the dialogical dimension of frank, open encounter taking into account the theological and existential differences that separate Jew and Christian. As Rosenzweig put it in a 1924 letter to Buber, "Today we are entering or rather are already in a new era of persecutions. There is nothing to be done about that, neither by us nor by the well-intentioned Christians."[10] "Even if apologetic thinking," Rosenzweig held, could overcome the constraints of its original polemical motive, it could not move past the barrier imposed by abstract theoretical categories to point to the lived reality to which it referred. "If one wants to understand a spirit," he wrote, "one cannot abstract it from its adhering body."[11]

In consultation with Rosenzweig, Buber organized a series of theological encounters between Jews and Christians at the Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus in Frankfurt. Both men were wary of these dialogues simply dissipating into the platitudinous drivel of liberal understanding. But though authentic exchange cannot be contrived or forced, the conditions for open, spontaneous, and meaningful interfaith dialogue can be organized. The first step in maximizing the likelihood of frank theological dialogue was to solicit the participation of Christians and Jews who were up to the challenge. The second step was novel: Jews would present before Christians their understanding of Christianity, and Christians in the presence of Jews would reveal their conception of Judaism. Buber and Rosenzweig hoped that this format would encourage the charitable, open-minded attitude conducive to a dialogical appreciation of the spiritual and existential reality of the other faith community.

The planned interfaith colloquium, however, eventually took place not at the Lehrhaus—which, while sponsoring a substantial number of lectures and courses by Jews on Christianity, rarely succeeded in soliciting Christians speakers on Judaism—but instead in the pages of Buber's *Der Jude*.[12] In a series of four Lehrhaus lectures on Christianity, Buber outlined the thematic parameters that he and Rosenzweig believed would foster genuine religious exchange. "One should speak about Jewish and Christian faith, rather than speaking about Judaism and Christianity"—not about doctrine or abstract theological concepts, but the way of faith as experienced by Jews and Christians.

A special issue of *Der Jude* in 1924 was devoted to "Judentum und Christentum." Of the twelve participating authors, five were Christians. Two other themed issues, "Judentum und Deutschtum" and "Antisemitismus und Volkstum," also contained articles by both Jews and Christians that touched on relations between the two faith communities. But with few exceptions, the Christian authors failed to sympathetically transcend the theological divide; in the pages of *Der Jude*, these Christian theologians and scholars repeated the negative images of Judaism that since the Enlightenment had often appeared in the work of German philosophers and theologians. They continued to hold tenaciously to the prevailing view of postbiblical Judaism as a religion beholden to a deficient conception of God, legalism, and dry ritual—in a word, what was derisively called Pharisaism. They also frequently contended that Judaism, as a fundamentally this-worldly faith, was bent on fostering secular activism, noting the propensity of Jews for leftist politics. Buber was clearly perturbed and disappointed, not only by the tone of most of the Christian contributors to *Der Jude*, but especially by their failure to transcend a polemical mode of discourse inflamed by metaphysical anti-Semitism: "I have once again . . . noted that there is a boundary beyond which the possibility of [dialogical] encounter ceases and only the reporting of factual information remains. I cannot fight against an opponent who is thoroughly opposed to me, nor can I fight against an opponent who stands on a different plane than I."[13]

The reluctance of German Christians to engage Jews and Judaism on their own terms was immeasurably deepened by a radical shift in post–World War I German-Protestant thought, from an emphasis on the Christian's ethical responsibility for the social realm to a reaffirmation of the New Testament promise of individual salvation through Christ—a promise that highlighted humanity's fallen state and its utter dependence on God's grace and deliverance. The efficacy of the moral deed and the meaningfulness of history, accordingly, were increasingly called into question. The emerging religious mood suggested that human action was of little meaning; one's only hope was divine salvation. This radical departure from the this-worldly optimism of liberal theology led to a growing interest in Marcion of Sinope, who had been long held by Christianity to be a heretic. Marcion elaborated the Pauline distinction between law and grace with a far-reaching gnostic (and ultimately anti-Semitic) twist: the God of the Hebrew Scriptures—the God of Creation—is not identical with the true God, who is essentially alien to this fallen world, and whose promise of redemption from the torments of life in this world is granted in the person of Jesus, the Christ. The God of the Old Testament, then, is the God of law and earthly justice; the God of the New Testament is the God of love and salvation. In his own time, Marcion had urged the Christian church to dissociate itself from the God of the Jews and creation, and to affirm the Father of Jesus, the God of truth and hope.

While Buber saw that antipathy to "the Jewish Bible" inevitably fostered the hatred of Jews, he was also deeply concerned with the fate of the biblical text itself and the core existential meaning to be derived from it. When he and Rosenzweig set out to translate the Hebrew Scriptures, they understood their task as rescuing not only the God of Creation, but also the Hebrew Bible itself. As Rosenzweig wrote to Buber: "The situation for which the neo-Marcionites have striven to achieve on the theoretical plane has in practice already been attained. When the Christian today speaks of the Bible, he means only the New Testament, perhaps together with the psalms, which he then tends to believe do not belong to the Old Testament. Thus, in our new translation of the Hebrew Bible we are becoming missionaries."[14] In accepting this "mission," Buber noted: "Although I am a radical opponent of all missionary work, I allowed myself to accept the mission, for it appertains to neither Judaism per se nor Christianity per se, but rather to the primal truth they share, on whose rehabilitation the future of both depends."[15]

For Buber, the neo-Marcion attempt to discredit the Old Testament and the God of Creation strikes at the very core of Western civilization and its humanistic foundations—namely, the presupposition that history and morality are ontologically and existentially meaningful. The abrogation of this premise, abetted by the neo-gnostic disdain for the mundane order celebrated by the Hebrew Scripture as Creation, breaks open the floodgates of cynicism and nihilism. Buber maintained that Western humanism was ultimately rooted not in Greek *Sophia* but in the biblical concept of Creation, and thus the struggle against neo-Marcionism—which Buber and Rosenzweig regarded as the most pernicious form of metaphysical anti-Semitism—was much more than a question of securing the dignity and honor of Judaism (though the two were not unrelated). Biblical humanism, as Buber explained in October 1934 to an audience of German Jews in the throes of the initial Nazi assault on their humanity, affirms that "the world is creation, not a reflection, not semblance, not play. The world is not something that must be overcome. It is a created reality"—the realization of which requires human partnership in God's work.[16]

Buber and Rosenzweig's translation of the Hebrew Bible, then, was not simply another translation, but their attempt to capture in German the unique cadences, inflections, and texture of the Hebrew, and thus revive for both and Jew and Gentile the power of the Word spoken by God to Israel. Through this "colometric" translation (the rendering of the "cola" or the speech units of the original Hebrew), they hoped, the abiding dialogical voice and thus the Presence of God—and God's ever-renewed relationship with the world of creation—would be palpably evident. For both of them, the God who speaks in the Hebrew Scriptures is not merely the God of Israel: He is the God of Creation, and thus the shared destiny of all who inhabit the world. In rejecting Marcion's original exhortation to jettison the Old Testament, Buber and Rosenzweig noted, Christianity in effect had long acknowledged that the concept of Creation was essential to the universality of the promise of salvation.

In affirming the God of Creation, the two were not utterly alone in Weimar Germany, as witnessed by an ecumenical journal with which they were both associated. Founded in 1926 at Buber's initiative, it was indicatively called *Die Kreatur* (The creature), and edited by a very deliberately chosen trio: a Jew (Buber), a Protestant, and a Catholic. Initially conceived of by the Protestant theologian Florens Christian Rang, the journal was originally to be called "Greetings from the Lands of Exile," to reflect the view that the monotheistic faiths are locked in doctrinal and devotional exile from one another, an exile from which they will be liberated only at the end of time when all the contradictions that blight earthly existence will be overcome; until then, they can only greet one another in a dialogical spirit. "What is permissible," as noted in *Die Kreatur*'s inaugural foreword, "and at this point in history mandatory, is dialogue . . . the opening or emerging of one's self out of the severity and clarity of one's self-enclosedness, a conversation on matters of common concern for created being."

Buber's acquaintance with Rang dated back to the Forte Circle of 1914 and its quixotic and stillborn effort to prevent the conflagration that became World War I. Rang, a former Protestant minister, had become aligned with right-wing German nationalism when the war broke out, but in the aftermath of the carnage, underwent a religious crisis that brought him to reject nationalism and embrace a messianic critique of politics. Numerous intellectuals were drawn to and praised his religious writings and especially his critical philosophy of politics; Walter Benjamin hailed Rang as "the most profound critic of German culture since Nietzsche," and Buber himself regarded Rang "as one of the noblest Germans of our time."[17] Like Benjamin, Buber was a close friend of Rang; indeed, Rang was among the very few of Buber's correspondents whom Buber addressed with the familiar pronoun *Du*.

In a letter of March 1924, Rang declined an invitation from Buber to participate in the special issue of *Der Jude* on "Judaism and Christianity," responding that at that juncture in Jewish-Christian relations, though conversations and relationships were important, genuine interfaith dialogue was untenable because most Christians knew so little about the lived reality of Jewish spirituality and teachings that sharing their opinions would serve no one.[18] By contrast, Rang held that what was possible, indeed urgent, at this historical juncture was a forum for Jews and Christians to affirm what they have in common as God's *creatures*. Upon Rang's death at the age of sixty just a few months later, Buber took it upon himself to realize Rang's vision of a post-theological ecumenical journal. In the course of his discussion with the young Catholic publisher Lambert Schneider about the proposed new translation of the Hebrew Bible, Buber broached the idea, and a month later, Schneider wrote Buber that he was eager to publish the proposed quarterly, with the first issue to appear the coming autumn.[19]

In consultation with Rosenzweig, Buber chose the title for the journal, *Die Kreatur*, which in German connotes all living created beings. Buber immediately moved to identify a Catholic and a Protestant as coeditors, successfully recruiting Josef Wittig, a recently defrocked priest, and Viktor von Weizsäcker, a Protestant physician and a close friend of Rosenzweig. As von Weizsäcker wryly observed, "the Catholic was no proper Catholic, the Protestant no proper Protestant, and the Jew no proper Jew"—for each editor was critical of the institutional expressions of their respective faith communities.[20] True to Rang's vision, *Die Kreatur* would eschew confessional theology, and the journal's Jewish and Christian authors (Catholic, Protestant, and Russian Orthodox) would "go together without merging, working together without living together," and affirm that "there is a unity of prayer without a unification of those who pray."[21] Religious differences would neither be ignored nor highlighted. Rather, as Buber—the journal's principal editor—expressed it, *Die Kreatur* would give voice to the existential bond that ultimately unites individuals of religious faith, irrespective of theological and creedal commitments: "A time of genuine religious conversations is beginning, not those so-called fictitious conversations where none regard and address his partner in reality, but genuine dialogues, speech from conviction to conviction, but also from one open-hearted person to another open-hearted person. Only then will genuine common life appear; not of an identical content of faith that is alleged to be found in all religions, but of the same situation, of anguish, and of expectation."[22]

Die Kreatur—published as an elegantly printed quarterly from 1926 to 1929—provided a forum for some thirty-six authors of diverse backgrounds, such as the syncretistic Russian Jewish religious thinker Lev Shestov; the Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev, who spawned a weave of Marxism and orthodox Christianity; Ernst Michel, a representative of the left-wing Catholic "Awakening" movement; Jewish authors associated with Rosenzweig's Lehrhaus, and Rosenzweig himself; Christian thinkers, such as Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, who shared Rosenzweig's and Buber's quest for a "New Thinking"; advocates of educational reform and psychoanalysis; and Rang himself (in posthumously published essays). Significantly, Buber did not solicit articles for *Die Kreatur*, but relied solely on submissions by authors who shared and were inspired by the journal's vision. Indicative of the enthusiasm engendered by that vision was a letter to Buber by Walter Benjamin, who had submitted an unsolicited essay on "Moscow," in which he hoped "to give voice" to the city's "creaturely aspect" (*das Kreaturliche*).[23] With the publication of his article in *Die Kreatur*, Benjamin wrote Buber: "I need not tell you how happy I am to be represented in [the journal] next to [an article by] Rang. . . . I should like to assure you expressly once again that I am ready to contribute to *Die Kreatur* in the future."[24]

Unfortunately, *Die Kreatur* and its distinguished cadre of authors could not stem the tide of neo-Marcionism, which Buber believed played a role in paving the way for National Socialism's virulent anti-Semitism. In a laconic lament, he noted that with Hitler's seizure of power, Marcion's gnostic denigration of the world of creation "was put into action; not however by spiritual means but by means of violence and terror."[25]

In the course of his theological encounters with Christians, Buber would experience the limitations of genuine dialogue, even with liberal Christians who resisted the seductive pull of neo-Marcionism. On January 14, 1933, two weeks before Hitler's appointment as chancellor of Germany, the Jüdisches Lehrhaus of Stuttgart sponsored a public dialogue on "Church, State, People, and Jewry" between the liberal Protestant theologian Karl Ludwig Schmidt and Buber.[26] Under the inspired leadership of Leopold Marx, who regarded himself a disciple of Buber, the Stuttgart Lehrhaus, since its founding in 1925, had been active in promoting interfaith understanding. The theme and guidelines of the Buber-Schmidt encounter were carefully considered. Buber asked that his Christian partner in the dialogue bracket his theological preconceptions and allow Judaism to speak for itself. This position was already implicit in Buber's objection to Schmidt's suggestion that the title of the program make reference to the "Synagogue" as the theological counterpart to the "Church." "Synagogue" is a term, Buber insisted, that is not at all in accord with the Jewish people's self-understanding. The Jews experience themselves as a living reality and faith, not as just a theological abstraction or an ecclesiastical religion bound by creedal doctrines and liturgical practices as implied by the term "synagogue." For Buber, the acknowledgment of the Jewish people as a living historical—and, hence, spiritually dynamic—entity was a crucial element in the struggle against theological prejudice and metaphysical anti-Semitism. To underscore the experienced reality of the Jews, he preferred the term "Israel." Schmidt was ultimately willing to compromise only with the term *Judentum*, which in German denotes both Judaism and Jewry.[27]

With regard to the structure of the dialogue, the director of the Stuttgart Lehrhaus instructed the speakers to treat the assigned themes in a "manner strictly substantive and to the point, neither polemically nor apologetically." This formulation was probably a guarded understatement of the sponsor's anxious desperation to foster a new type of interfaith encounter in a Germany darkened by the gathering clouds of a political apocalypse. As Buber later recalled, the debate was taking place in an "atmosphere of impending crisis." It was thus deemed crucial to identify a Christian who would engage Buber in a cordial and conciliatory dialogue.[28]

On the face of it, Schmidt seemed to fit the bill. A professor of the New Testament at the University of Bonn, he was sympathetic to Buber, having written warm reviews of his writings on Hasidism and messianism. Theologically, he was a liberal and forward-looking; the journal he had edited since 1922, *Theologische Blätter*, was widely considered the most distinguished organ of contemporary liberal Christianity. And the very fact that at a fateful hour in German history he dared to accept an invitation to address a Jewish audience testified to his liberal credentials and his civil courage. (Later, in 1935, due to his vociferous opposition to the Nazification of the church, he would be forced to forfeit his professorship and leave Germany.)

Schmidt's opening remarks initially demonstrated an effort to meet the expectations of his Jewish hosts.[29] He cited Buber on the need for partners in dialogue to speak on the "same plane"; he expressed a desire "to live together with you as Jews—as we must, as we wish—for you are our brothers in the whole world so also in our German fatherland." But it soon became clear that Schmidt's liberal affirmations were marred by his deep ambivalence toward the Jews, both theologically and socially. While condemning political and racial anti-Semitism as "wild and confused," he sternly reminded his audience that "Jews and Christians live in the same state not merely as separate religious confessions, but also as ethnically and racially apart." At this point he turned to Buber and (echoing many of the contributors to the *Der Jude* issue on Judaism and Christianity) asked, "How can one explain that the Jews, whose conservative sense we praise, have played and continue to play such a great role in revolutions?" Further, he absolved Christian theology of any responsibility for the framing of "the Jewish question," and even argued that "it would be an ostrich policy to deny the racial-biological and racial-hygienic problems which arise with the existence of the Jews among other peoples."

Theologically, he affirmed that Judaism should be taken seriously by Christians, not just with respectful tolerance, but also with an earnest regard for its religious claims. Problematic for his Jewish audience, however, was his insistence that Christians for their part should honor the Jews as God's people to whom Christ was initially sent. And he proclaimed that Jews must understand that the Christian whose faith is grounded in Scripture and the experience of Jesus Christ has no choice but to proclaim the Gospel to the Jews. Turning to his hosts at the Lehrhaus and specifically to Buber, Schmidt begged them to understand his intent was not polemical, but simply scriptural:

> Jesus of Nazareth had struggled against his contemporary Jewish Church in the name of the true Church [and] included heathens in this Church because he did not find in Israel such faith. . . . All this, we Christians if we truly stand within the Church, must let be said. The living Church of Jesus Christ cannot relinquish its claim: *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus* [there is no salvation outside the Church] is not only Roman Catholic dictum but a general Christian and Evangelical principle.

Schmidt went still further to argue that, with respect to their present anguish, the Jews must realize that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is their true succor, not Zionism, which not only was devoid of practical feasibility, but also—by advocating a political solution to *die Judenfrage*—erroneously treats the Jews as a natural nation and secularizes Jewish history, and thus disfigures and perverts the nature of Jewish destiny, which constitutes a divine scandal. The true Israel, he argued, cannot base its existence on blood, but solely on the call of God. Also, Zionism in his view was actually exacerbating anti-Semitism: "The modern world reacts to Zionism—which is national or even racist—in a correspondingly racist manner," he claimed—although he conceded that "it must not be forgotten that racial anti-Semitism in the modern world is pre-Zionist." At this critical moment in Jewry's anguished history, he believed, it was especially important to remind Jews that "Jesus, the Messiah, rejected by his people, prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem. It has been destroyed so that it will never again come under Jewish rule. Until the present day, the Jewish diaspora has no center." The Church, "Israel after the spirit," is Jewry's ultimate center and eternal refuge. With these words, Schmidt concluded his opening statement.

Buber was now invited to take the podium. In listening to Schmidt, he apparently realized something about the very premises of interreligious dialogue that required urgent clarification, and parted from his prepared text. (In his previous writings on the subject, this understanding had been an inchoate insight, but it seems here to have gained sudden clarity.) As in medieval disputations, Schmidt had tenaciously focused on the Christological question: the reality of the Christ event, versus Israel, and the attendant questions of the divine punishment of Israel and its destiny in exile. Israel was thus challenged to explain its obdurate stubborn rejection of Jesus Christ. But the very act of setting one's claim to revealed truth—which by definition is absolute and exclusive—against that of another revealed truth was inherently problematic; the opposing faith claims are by definition antagonistic and irreconcilable. Any theological encounter that pursues a confrontation on that level, no matter how cordially and respectfully conducted, can only produce discord and tension that "cannot be resolved . . . by human speech, by human willingness to come to terms, no matter how comradely." What is needed, Buber argued in his reply to Schmidt, is a totally new approach to interfaith encounter, which, while respecting the integrity and authenticity of the respective faith experiences of revealed truth, at the same time avoids futilely pitting irreconcilable truth claims against each other. To go beyond this impasse, Buber proposed to Schmidt:

> We can attempt something very difficult for the person with religious ties . . . we can acknowledge, as a mystery, what someone else confesses as *his* faith-reality, contrary to our own existence, contrary to our knowledge of our own being. We are not capable of judging its meaning, because we do not know it from within as we know *ourselves* from within.

In responding to Buber's appeal for theological humility and the withholding of judgment of other faith commitments, Schmidt insisted that it was in fact unreasonable to expect Christians to compromise the truths they experience through the person of Christ. "From the very beginning of Christianity, a sharp conflict [with Judaism] has existed. . . . We Christians must never tire of keeping this one conflict alive." With this defiant assertion of Christian supersessionism, Schmidt turned the podium back over to Buber.

Buber was clearly flabbergasted that a highly respected liberal Christian had proved to be an incorrigible supersessionist, bent on maintaining the church's theological antagonism toward the Jews—an antagonism that he could not put aside even temporarily for the purpose of dialogue on other grounds. Rebuffed in his plea for a radically new approach to Jewish-Christian encounter, Buber decided to forgo his prepared text. As recorded by the stenographer, Buber's concluding words, uttered with a palpable passion, took on the quality of a hymn, a testimony of faith. Referring to the imposing twelfth-century cathedral of Worms in whose shadow is an equally ancient Jewish cemetery, he mused, "I live a short distance from the city of Worms," and when visiting,

> I always go first to the cathedral. It is a visible harmony of members, a whole in which no part deviates from perfection. . . . Then I go the Jewish cemetery. It consists of cracked and

> crooked stones without shape or direction . . . there's not a jot of form; there are only the stones and the ashes beneath the stones. The ashes are there, no matter how thinly they are scattered. The corporeality of human beings, who have become ashes, is there. It is there. It is there for me . . . as corporeality deep in my own memories, far into the depths of history, as far back as Sinai.
>
> I have stood there, united with the ashes, and through them the patriarchs. That is a remembrance of the divine-human encounter that is granted to all Jews. From this the perfection of the Christian house of God cannot separate me; nothing can separate me from the sacred history of Israel.
>
> I have stood there and have experienced everything myself; all this death has confronted me: all the ashes, all the desolation, all the wordless misery is mine. But the covenant has not been withdrawn from me. I lie on the ground, prostrate like these stones. But it has not been withdrawn from me.
>
> The cathedral is as it is. The cemetery is as it is. But nothing has been withdrawn from us [Jews].

Israel may be rejected by fellow human beings, humiliated and defamed. Compared to the magnificent power of the Church, Israel may indeed be humbled and destitute. But, Buber passionately asserted, its relationship with God remains firm.

Jewry's spiritual fortitude would soon be dramatically tested. Upon being granted "temporary" plenary powers by the Reichstag on March 24, 1933, Hitler ordered a boycott of Jewish-owned commercial establishments. Within days of the boycott of April 1, 1933, the National Socialist government passed a series of laws in quick succession that incrementally deprived Jews of civil rights. Buber viewed this initial assault on the dignity of German Jewry as a trial testing the spiritual and moral resilience of both Jew and (non-Jewish) German.

"The Jewish person today," he wrote in early April, "is inwardly the most exposed person in our world. [As for the Germans,] the tensions of the ages have selected [the Jew]. . . . They want to know whether human beings can still withstand [these tensions] and they test themselves on the Jews. . . . They want to learn through the Jews' destiny what a human being truly is."[30]

For Buber, "the hour and its judgment" was undoubtedly brought home to him by the experience of his two granddaughters, whose parents—Rafael Buber and Margarete Thüring (later Buber-Neumann)—had separated in 1925.[31] Since 1927, the girls had been placed by court order in the care of their grandparents Martin and Paula. Judith, the youngest granddaughter, later recalled that as a nine-year-old in school, her relationships with her fellow students suddenly changed with the rise of the Nazis to power. The four Jews in her class were assaulted during recess in the school courtyard. Literally adding insult to injury, she was barred from joining a school trip. Her eleven-year-old sister, Barbara, was no longer addressed by her name, but simply "you there" (*die da*).[32] Judith and Barbara also witnessed the parade of SA paramilitary troops menacingly stopping in front of their grandparents' home in Heppenheim, and later Paula being brought to the local police station for interrogation. In an article published in May 1933, Buber observed that:

> Children experience what happens and keep silent, but in the night they groan in their dreams, awaken, and stare into the darkness: The world has become unreliable. A child had a friend: the friend was taken for granted as the sunlight. Now the friend suddenly looks at him strangely, the corners of his mouth mock him: Surely you didn't imagine that I really cared about you?
>
> A child had a teacher, a certain one among all others. He knew that this person existed, so everything was alright. Now the teacher no longer has a voice when he speaks to

> him. In the courtyard the space that leads to him is no longer open. . . . What has happened? A child knows many things, but he still doesn't know how it all fits together. . . . The child is fearful, but he can tell no one of his anxiety, not even his mother. That is not something that can be told about. He cannot ask anyone either. No one really knows why everything is the way it is.[33]

With the trauma in mind that his granddaughters experienced as the dark clouds of Nazi rule had begun to envelop Germany, Buber entitled this article simply, "Die Kinder" (The children).[34] Extrapolating from the child's experience of being suddenly branded an undesirable outsider. Buber concluded the article by adumbrating a strategy for "spiritual resistance" to the Nazi program of defaming the Jews and systematically removing them from the body politic of Germany and its cultural and social life:

> For its spirit to grow, a child needs what is constant, what is dependable. There must be something there that does not fail. The home is not enough; the world must be part of it. What has happened to this world? The familiar smile has turned into a scowl. I know nothing else but this: to make something unshakable visible in the child's world. Something that cannot fail because it is creating something constant and dependable that is not subject to the vicissitudes of current history. . . . Something that is ours; something that cannot be snatched away from us.[35]

This "something," Buber cautioned, cannot be construed as "replacing one nationalistic image of man with another nationalistic image," for Jews are "a different edition of the genus 'nation.'" Israel is sui generis: "Having been reduced and abandoned [over the centuries], we have remained impervious to categorization. I do not say this with self-assured pride; I say it with fear and trembling. This fate belongs historically to Israel—this fate of being thus entangled in the fate of the peoples [of the world] and thus discharged from it: being thrown out of it and remaining part of it in this way."[36]

In this hour of distress, Israel is confronted with the challenge to renew "the original covenant through which it came into being"—not as a badge of pride, or "one of the emblems on the pennants of the earth"; the covenant is "not a thing to be boasted about." Affirmation of the covenant does not simply—or necessarily—entail adherence to a given body of religious practices. "It is more than form and substance." One must, of course, teach one's children "Jewish substance," and encourage them "to form their lives in a Jewish way—but that is not enough. You must begin with yourselves. It needs to be realized in our personal, interpersonal, communal reality." Buber concludes this essay with an impassioned plea that poignantly echoes his own motherless youth: "It is up to us to make the world reliable again for the children. It depends on us where we can say to them and ourselves: 'Don't worry. Mother is here.'"[37]

To provide that "unshakable support," Buber here envisioned not a Jewish state but Jewish learning, and drew upon a concept of popular education (*Volkserziehung*) developed in Germany in the aftermath of World War I, focusing on extramural education for adults. Buber, along with colleagues in the German movement of adult education, turned to the teachings of the Danish pastor and educator Nicolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig, the father of adult education. With particular concern for the adult population of rural Denmark, Grundtvig had founded "Folk Schools" devoted to promoting "learning for life." Learning, Grundtvig held, should be a spiritual process that enhances community, not one that merely equips us with individual expertise and vocational qualifications. His educational vision had gained a powerful resonance decades earlier when he urged his fellow compatriots not to bemoan their defeat in the war of 1864 with Prussia, but rather to confront the crisis as an occasion for spiritual renewal; what was lost without would be regained from within. This message again found a receptive audience in Weimar Germany as its population emerged from the ignominy of the Treaty of Versailles after World War I.

Buber felt that adult education as envisioned by the Danish pastor would similarly prepare German Jewry to confront the assault on their dignity and self-esteem, nurturing their inner, spiritual resources in order to brave the collapse of the world in which they had felt secure—or hoped they would be. He viewed adult education as an essential tool for the survival of what might be ahead: "If one wishes to [simply] bring one's personality through the crisis intact, then it is bound to crumble, for then the crisis would have what it wants—an object that is brittle enough to be cracked by it."[38] The retrieval through education of the foundational spiritual resources of Judaism, he believed, would serve as the desired "something," that would be, in his words, worthy of eternal trust.

Buber associated Grundtvig's legacy with Rosenzweig's conception of Jewish learning, and regarded his late friend's pamphlet of 1917 *Zeit ists* (It is time) as a providing a programmatic springboard for the envisioned spiritual resistance.[39] In November 1933, upon reopening the Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus (which had effectively closed its doors with Rosenzweig's death in December 1929), Buber cited Rosenzweig's speech at the original inauguration of the Lehrhaus in 1920: "The need demands deeds. It is not enough simply to sow the seeds, which perhaps will yield in the distant future their fruit. Today the need is urgent. And today the means of help must be found."[40] Buber observed that "only today thirteen years later, because of the situation in which we find ourselves have [Rosenzweig's] words revealed their full significance. Only today do we truly know from the very foundations of life that need and its demand for action."[41]

In conjunction with renewing the activities of the Lehrhaus, Buber put forth various proposals to advance a comprehensive program of adult education to the Reichsvertretung der deutschen Juden (Reich representation of German Jews), which was created in September 1933 to represent German Jewry at large before the National Socialist government and to organize Jewish cultural life (within the limits that the regime imposed on the Jews). After intense negotiations with the Reichsvertretung president (Rabbi Leo Baeck) and executive director (Otto Hirsch), Buber's proposal for the establishment of a Center for Jewish Adult Education (Mittelstelle für Jüdische Erwachsenenbildung) was approved. Charged with directing the Mittelstelle, Buber explained its objective in a circular composed in June 1934:

> The concept of "Jewish adult education" might have been understood even a short time ago to mean "elements of education" or "cultural values" that were to be passed on to those growing up and to the grown-up—for instance, giving an idea of "higher education" to those who were not privileged to obtain it, or to initiate those not familiar with Jewish subjects into some general knowledge of this community. When we gave this name to our newly founded experiment we obviously meant something else. The issue is no longer equipment with knowledge, but mobilization for existence. Persons, Jewish persons, are to be formed, persons who will not only "hold out" but will uphold some substance in life; who will have not only morale (*Haltung*), but moral strength (*Halt*), and so will be able to pass on moral strength to others; persons who live in such a way that the spark will not die. . . . What we seek to do through the educating of individuals is the building of a community that will stand firm, that will prevail, that will preserve the spark.[42]

To nurture that spark, he set out to train a cadre of teachers and youth leaders. Drawing particularly on young adults who had been prohibited from attending German educational institutions, Buber organized “Lernzeiten” (periods of learning), retreats held for a few days in rural areas throughout Germany. These retreats, which were usually kicked off with lectures by Buber and the core staff of the Mittelstelle on various themes in Jewish cultural history, were devoted to the reading of texts—principally biblical, which for many was their first encounter with the Hebrew Scriptures. Buber often led these seminars himself, in which he sought to teach the “art of reading slowly” (*die Kunst langsam zu lessen*) and with particular attention to the biblical word in the context of its spokenness (*Gesprochenheit*). This attention “endows it with a concrete [existential] embodiment. The commanding word of the Bible is not a [written] sentence, but an address”—a personal address.[43]

Accordingly, Buber emphasized that “in discussing a text from Jewish literature, such as the Bible, I acknowledge that no interpretation, including my own, coincides with the original meaning and that my interpretation is conditioned by my being.”[44]

> If I attend as faithfully as I can to what it contains of word and texture, of sound and rhythmic structure, of evident and hidden connections, my interpretation would not have been made in vain, for I find something, have found something. And if I show what I have found, I guide one who lets oneself be guided to the actuality of the text. I place the one whom I teach before the effective powers of the texts, the effect of which I have experienced.[45]

No one reading is, therefore, authoritative. Nonetheless, the fostering of diversity was not merely a question of tolerance but rather, in Buber’s words, “making present the roots of community and its branches” and creating “solidarity, living mutual support and living mutual action.” He viewed this as a model of community, not merely an “amalgamation of like-minded [people]" but rather a collective that "masters *otherness* in a lived unity."[46]

This educational vision of a "great community" embracing multiple opinions and positions was in consonance with the founding objective of the Reichsvertretung as an umbrella organization of German Jewry, representing Zionists and liberals, orthodox and reform Jews alike. During the five years he was at the helm of the Mittelstelle, Buber specifically addressed his fellow Zionists only once, in an unpublished lecture in December 1934 before the Zionist Association of Frankfurt about "the pedagogical problem of Zionism." At the outset of the lecture, he acknowledged what had been for him a deeply personal issue over the many years of his membership in the movement, and conceded that he was unable to deal with it in a purely objective manner: "I would be doing myself a disservice if I would do so." As such, "it is a problem that does not lend itself to an absolute solution"; one can at most clarify the problem.[47]

What was the problem? The premise of pedagogy, Buber argued, must be distinguished from that of politics and sociology. Whereas the principles guiding politics and sociology are inherently "hegemonic" and corporate, pedagogy is both "concealed" and directed to the education of individuals: the proper role of the educator is thus fundamentally different from that of a political thinker or sociologist. Within the context of Zionism, however, education was all too often merely a handmaiden of politics and sociological analysis. Buber identified this as the pedagogic problem of Zionism: While Zionism has the task of transforming the Jewish people and healing it from the spiritual and psychological torments wrought by exile, "education always applies to individuals. It cannot be otherwise; education takes place between one person and another."[48]

Buber put forth here a distinction between "small" and "great" Zionism. Small Zionism deems it sufficient merely to transplant the Jewish people to their ancestral homeland, and thereby, with the grace of political and social sovereignty, redirect their destiny to happier pastures. The advocates of a "great Zionism," however, want something more: a Jewish commonwealth that will promote the construction of a "'genuine human community' (*Gemeinschaft*)," in accordance with the people of Israel's founding biblical mandate. This vision, of what Buber called elsewhere "biblical humanism," sets the true normative horizon of Zionism, dissolving the divide between the profane and the sacred, the public and private.[49] He rejected the claim of many of his fellow Zionists that, while this goal was a worthy one, such community could only be realized after—and could wait for—"the firm establishment of Jewish settlement in Palestine." Here, the "sociological principle rules." By setting their immediate objective sights only on Jewish settlement, these well-meaning Zionists perforce were confusing propaganda with education.

The "nationalization" of the Jew as a Hebrew-speaking pioneer (*chalutz*) may be necessary for the settlement project, "but this is hardly enough," said Buber. Nor is it enough to "live together politically" and to inculcate a "national consciousness":

> As I have already said, the work of the educator is inherently problematic, bordering on the tragic. The educator must ever again experience resistance, self-centeredness, and an unwillingness to change. The educator will recurrently experience moments in which he gives up and despairs. Nonetheless, I have a strong heartfelt feeling that these unsuccessful individuals, the educators, will from time to time be heard. In the world in which we live today, it certainly does not seem that the pedagogical principle could prevail. It seems that it would forever be defeated, that it will be politicized.
>
> But it only seems so. For the pedagogical principle en-

> dures beneath the surface in the dark, inner, secret precincts of being. For thirty-three years and more, we the representatives and defenders of the pedagogical principle have criticized what took place [within the Zionist movement]. But our critical posture is one of hope.[50]

"It is a hopeful critique," he continued, for as severe as the critique may be, it pointed to what was still possible.

In his addresses to the wider German-Jewish public, Buber amplified these autobiographical reflections and his critique of Zionism—and indeed, all ideologies that he perceived as bifurcating the public and the personal. In a lecture at the Lehrhaus in February 1935, he insisted that the pedagogical principle bears on the entire reality of one's life, and thus is antithetical to ideological education, for in promoting the adoption of political positions, ideologies tend to neglect the personal and interpersonal demands of everyday life. Buber distinguished between the "fictitious conviction" (*Fiktivgesinnung*) of an ideology, and a "real conviction" (*Realgesinnung*), which attunes one to taking responsibility for the concrete realities of life. "My group cannot deprive me of this responsibility, nor should it."[51] This individual responsibility for the concrete, everyday reality in which one finds oneself yielded a central concept in Buber's thought, *Bewährung*—the "proving of the self" that "exists only in the factual moment. Biblical humanism," he wrote, "cannot raise the individual above the problems of the moment; it seeks instead to train one to stand fast in them, to prove oneself in them."[52]

Buber would travel throughout Germany teaching his fellow Jews and delivering lectures that included his barely disguised criticism of the Nazi regime. While, according to Ernst Simon, who worked closely with Buber to establish the Mittelstelle and to lead the spiritual resistance to National Socialism, the Nazi authorities had initially "seemed hardly to interest themselves" in Buber's activities, they gradually became more vigilant.[53] The turning point was an address Buber delivered at the Berlin Philharmonic in the winter of 1935. Before an audience of two thousand that filled the imposing concert hall on Bernburger Straße in the Kreuzberg district of Berlin—a hall that would be destroyed by British bombers on January 30, 1944, the anniversary of Hitler becoming chancellor—he spoke of "The Power of the Spirit." The life of the spirit, Buber observed, was under assault, due to a distorted concept of the spirit that had ruled Western civilization since the ascendancy of Pauline Christianity, which had severed the spirit from the totality of being, "which comprises and integrates all one's capacities, powers, qualities, and urges." The neo-pagan liberation of the elemental forces of life—hunger, sex, and the will to power—from a Pauline, indeed, gnostic conception of the life of the spirit, he observed, had inexorably led to a nihilistic glorification of these forces.[54]

In contrast to both the Pauline suppression of corporeality and its neo-pagan glorification, he argued, the Judaic conception of the spirit is informed by an affirmation of the world—in its totality—as created. Accordingly, "the world is not something that is to be overcome. It is a created reality, but created to be hallowed"; consequently the elemental forces of life, of reality, are neither to be suppressed nor glorified, but sanctified and transformed by the spirit. "In the reality system of Judaism," which Buber said designates as reality the "basic unity of social, family, and personal life," the world is to be rendered holy. To highlight the political intent and implications of his lecture—his critique of the nihilistic glorification of power, and of course his attention to what Judaism has to offer the world—Buber concluded with an allegory that was not included in the printed version of the lecture.[55] The enduring power of the spirit, he notes, is to be illustrated by the defeat of the Assyrian army that laid siege to Jerusalem. As reported by the prophet

Isaiah: "Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger and the staff in whose hand is My indignation. I will send him against an ungodly nation . . ." (Isaiah 10:5).

Unbeknownst to Buber, scattered among the mostly Jewish audience was a large contingent of the Gestapo upon whom the allegorical allusion of Buber's concluding remarks was not lost. On February 21, 1935, Buber received orders from the Gestapo forbidding him to lecture at both public and closed forums of the Jewish community. On March 5, 1935, the ban was extended to all teaching activity. On July 30, 1935, he was notified that he was permitted to resume teaching, but not to give public lectures.[56] The restrictions on his educational activity did allow Buber to engage more fully in scholarship, particularly on the Hebrew Bible, and to develop further his conception of theopolitics as first articulated in his 1932 volume, *Königtum Gottes* (Kingship of God).[57] In this book, which Buber conceived as a critique of the ultra-conservative jurist Carl Schmitt and his notion of political theology as sanctioning the ascription of divine power to a human sovereign, Buber argued that the Hebrew Bible instructs that only God exercises absolute authority, which cannot be transferred to any human being or political institution. Buber advanced this thesis only one year before Hitler assumed dictatorial powers.

What had been merely a vague premonition soon became a frightening reality, a development that Buber ascribed in large measure to the pervasive neo-gnostic contempt of his generation for the concrete realities of everyday existence—a contempt that he believed fostered both a nihilistic political ethos and, alternatively, a studied detachment from the world. For Buber, the latter posture was represented by Søren Kierkegaard, whose writings had increasingly captured the imagination of German intellectuals in the post–World War I period. In a 1936 philosophical essay, Buber questioned the Danish philosopher's concept of the "Single One," who detaches from the crowd in order to secure existential and religious integrity.[58] To seek God's love by fleeing the crowd, Buber argued, is in effect to abandon one's fellow creatures. As challenging as the life of the crowd may be, that crowd is comprised of our fellow human beings who are the foundation of the divinely created order. Hence, contrary to Kierkegaard's quasi-Marcion premise, "God and man are not rivals."[59] Indeed, "creation is not a hurdle on the road to God, it is the road itself. We are created along with one another and directed to a life with one another. Creatures are placed in my way so that I, their fellow creature, by means of them and with them find the way to God. A God reached by their exclusion would not be the God of all lives in whom all life is fulfilled."[60] Buber summarized this credo with a quotation from his wife, Paula, that he placed on the book's title page: "Verantwortung ist der Nabelstrang zur Schöpfung"—responsibility is the umbilical cord of creation.

Although the Nazi authorities forbade the distribution among the general public of books authored by Jews—even in fields like botany and entomology—Buber hoped that his message would somehow be heard beyond the tyrannically imposed confines of a Jewish readership. This hope was fortified by his overarching sense of responsibility to his fellow human beings, Jews and non-Jews alike: "Nothing must dissuade us from standing by [non-Jewish] members of the German nation in unbroken personal integrity, without reservation and free of animosity, wherever we encounter them, in such a way that we are able to see and recognize one another. Even today, especially today, even though it has been made cruelly difficult for us, human openness is a dire need."[61]

Openness to non-Jews, he felt, was integral to spiritual resistance to the Nazi program to deprive the Jews of their humanity. Buber himself made a concerted effort to maintain relationships with Germans who refused to heed Hitler's call to yield their own humanity. Throughout the dark years of the

Third Reich, he conducted an active correspondence with, among others, the novelist Hermann Hesse; Protestant theologians Ernst Lohmeyer, Albert Schweitzer, and Karl Barth; Catholic theologian Ernst Michel; the psychoanalyst Hans Trüb; and the philosopher Rudolf Pannwitz. (Significantly, each of Buber's "Aryan" correspondents by then no longer resided in Germany.)

The National Socialist authorities also prohibited the publication of Jewish-authored books by "Aryan" publishing houses. Among the approximately thirty privately and publicly owned Jewish publishing houses in Germany in this period, the most active and dynamic was the Schocken Verlag, in which Buber was to play a seminal role as an adviser and author. In 1933, Buber and his wife attended a social evening in the Berlin home of Lambert Schneider, who had been recently recruited to serve as managing editor of the Schocken Verlag. Buber and Schneider had had a close working relationship ever since the Catholic publisher had contracted with Buber and Rosenzweig to translate the Hebrew Scriptures, a project he brought with him to his new position. In the course of the evening, the conversation turned to the fate of Jewish authors and publishers under National Socialism. As reported by Schneider, Buber mused, "We have to learn how to live in the catacombs. What is required of writers like us is to write so subtly that those in power won't immediately detect our resistance and grab us by the scruff."[62]

The challenge was to publish works advancing the revitalization of Jewish culture without provoking the ire of the Nazi authorities. The strategy adopted by the Schocken Verlag was to publish anthologies of literature representing traditional Jewish culture and thought. These ostensibly apolitical volumes were selected in a way that they, in effect, served as a new body of midrash; the themes of the works chosen were intended to mirror the contemporary concerns of the beleaguered German

Jewish community. Toward the end of 1933, six months after the Nazi burning of a Jewish book in April 1933, the Schocken Verlag inaugurated a series of relatively short volumes presenting representative texts of classical Jewish and modern Jewish cultures. At a rate of two volumes per month, these "Schocken Bücherei" sold between five and ten thousand copies each. By the time the publishing house was closed in 1938 by Nazi decree, eighty-three titles had been released. Tellingly, the first volume was entitled *Tröstung Israels* (The consolation of Israel), and presented Buber's translation of Isaiah 40–55. These "songs of the suffering servant" are read by traditional Jews as referring to the Jewish people. Echoing this theme, Buber presented in another volume a translation of twenty-three psalms. Giving it the title *Out of the Depths I Cry to Thee* (a line from Psalm 130), he explained in the preface that this selection of psalms represented the biography of Israel.

Upon receiving notice that the Gestapo had extended its ban to all of his teaching activities, Buber planned a visit to Palestine. Less than a month later, he and Paula arrived by ship in Haifa on April 1, 1935, where they were greeted by their son in-law, Ludwig Strauss, who in January of that year had settled in Jerusalem; his wife, Eva (Martin and Paula's daughter), and their two young sons would join him in May. From the detailed letters about their time in Palestine that Paula wrote to her fourteen-year-old granddaughter Barbara, the first of which is dated April 5, it is evident that she and Martin were enthusiastic about what they experienced.[63] As their ship, the *Roma*, docked in Haifa, it was joined by two other vessels. There were some four thousand passengers in all—among them many athletes who had come to participate in the Second Maccabiah, the Jewish Olympics, which was to be held in Tel Aviv from April 2 to April 10. Among the 1,300 athletes from twenty-six countries was a delegation of 134 German Jews, who at the last moment received permission from the Nazi authorities to travel to Palestine. Paula described with amusement the chaotic, four-hour scrabble of looking for one's suitcases among the voluminous heap of baggage.

Toward evening, they began "a splendid journey under a star-filled sky" to Jerusalem. Perhaps just to appeal to her granddaughter's fantasy, Paula told her that they rode on camels and donkey-pulled carts as they ascended the Judean hills to Jerusalem. They arrived at midnight at the home of their hosts. "Aunt Eva will be living very close to here in a district of new streets, new houses. Everywhere there is the hustle of building. . . . Already on the first morning, we went to the bazaar in the Old City. . . . [It is] just like in a Thousand and One Nights. I go there every day. Everything is behind the city walls; the high, vaulted streets are bustling with old Arab, Jewish, Armenian, and other pedestrians. . . . I believe no other place on the earth is like Jerusalem. I could spend the entire day wandering through the city." Paula then let Barbara know that her father, Rafael—who had the previous year emigrated to Palestine with his second wife, Ruth—would be visiting them in Jerusalem. A member of a kibbutz in the Jezreel valley, Rafael had gained a reputation as a highly skilled worker (he had studied agronomy and farming machinery in Germany in preparation for his emigration to Palestine), and had been duly praised by the Zionist officials in Jerusalem whom Paula and Martin met. "You can well imagine how proud this makes us. He has found here the place for which he was destined." In the same letter, she reports of her visit with Martin to the Ben Shemen Youth Village, founded by Buber's disciple Siegfried Lehmann in 1927.

Paula concluded her letter with an exuberant evocation of the "truly paradisical landscape"—the waft of fragrant orange groves, the majesty of the olive trees, "some dating back to the Roman period." "Liebes Bärbchen," Paula added, "you should not suffice with this report, but prepare yourself for next year." The thrust of this letter and the ones that followed suggest that Paula was preparing her granddaughters—Barbara and her younger sister, Judith—for their prospective emigration to Palestine along with Paula and Martin, their guardians. Indeed, in a subsequent letter, Paula assures Barbara that she will enjoy life in Jerusalem.

The letters also attest to Paula's and Martin's attempt to acquaint themselves with the Arab population of Jerusalem. A Hebrew University professor of philosophy and former member of the Bar Kochba circle of Prague, Hugo Bergmann, arranged for Arab acquaintances, a sheikh and his son who spoke reasonable English, to take them to places that "European tourists on their own would never see." Their Palestinian hosts also took them to a Muslim wedding. The colorful ceremony and joyous festivities brought tears to Paula's eyes. A Muslim teacher, also a friend of Professor Bergmann, arranged for Paula and Martin to sit on the stage reserved for the Arab dignitaries of Jerusalem and witness the Festival of Nabi Musa (the Prophet Moses)—a festival that entailed a procession, led by sword dancers under green banners of the Prophet Muhammed, from Jerusalem to the Tomb of Moses near Jericho. What Paula did not tell her fourteen-year-old granddaughter was how troubled she and Martin were by the deteriorating relations between the Jews and Arabs.

Less than two weeks after they arrived in Palestine, Paula and Martin would have to cut their visit short. On April 13, Paula informed Barbara that her great-grandfather, Carl Buber, was deathly ill. On April 23, Paula and Martin boarded a ship to Athens, whence they were to board a train to visit Martin's father in Lemberg. But it was too late; he had died on April 18. Upon learning of the death of Buber's father, at the age of eighty-seven, Rabbi Leo Baeck, the president of the Reichsvertretung, wrote him a letter of condolence, dated May 21, 1935: "I sincerely sympathize with you in your mourning of your father. The fluid line between past and present becomes a more definite dividing line when one loses one's father—only then, and even if he passes away at an age when the son is already looking at grandchildren." To these moving words, Rabbi Baeck added that Otto Hirsch, the executive director of the Reichsvertretung, told him about "the concerns you brought back from Palestine."[64]

These concerns deepened in the spring of 1936 with the outbreak of the Arab Revolt against British colonial rule in Palestine, sparked by the Mandatory government's seeming encouragement of Jewish immigration. The Arab population perceived this as British collusion with the Zionist leadership to create a Jewish majority in Palestine and strengthen the Zionist claim to exclusive sovereignty in the country. The October 1935 discovery in the port of Jaffa of a large arms shipment destined for Jewish paramilitary forces served to exacerbate these fears. The uprising began in mid-April 1936 with an attack on a convoy of Jewish vehicles, followed the next day by Jewish revengeful assaults on Arabs, unleashing a cycle of violence. The ensuing Arab general strike lasted until October 1936, but not before the death of hundreds of Jews and thousands of Arabs, as well as numerous British casualties.

In June 1936, Buber wrote to Hans Trüb, a Swiss psychoanalyst and close friend since the mid-1920s, that he and Paula were "very dejected by the course of events in Palestine. Events of which I have for long warned and foretold, which makes the matter that much more distressing. I have in the past days collected my warnings in a small volume, in order to arouse anew the conscience [of my fellow Zionists]."[65] The volume Buber referred to is *Zion als Ziel und als Aufgabe. Gedanken aus drei Jahreszehnten* (Zion as goal and task: Thoughts of three decades).[66] In the preface to this slim anthology of eighty-seven pages, Buber seeks to remind his readers that Zion is both a geographical and spiritual goal. Hence, "one can arrive at Zion only through Zion"—a paradox, he argues, that needs no explanation to a "healthy human understanding," but eludes those who are in thrall of the dubious political logic that currently rules the world. Following the "howl of wolves," he wrote, leads one only to the company of wolves.

The selection of writings in this volume, ranging from 1900 to 1932, is arranged thematically rather than chronologically. The first is a text, "Three Stations," referred to at the beginning of this chapter. It traced the trajectory of Buber's Zionism as a movement of spiritual renewal, from its earliest conception of a cultural renaissance to his ultimate realization that genuine religious and spiritual renewal must be grounded in the lived everyday reality of individuals and community. (As he put it in a lecture to the Frankfurt Lehrhaus in 1934, "Israel is renewed not only by what they say but by the totality of their existence.")[67] The concluding text of the anthology is the address on nationalism that Buber delivered at the Zionist Congress of 1921. In this address, he warned of the political perils of aligning the quest for a national home with the imperialistic interests of the newly established British Mandate, especially in the face of the resolute and understandable opposition of the Arab population of Palestine. To secure the moral and spiritual integrity of Zionism, he cautioned the movement to be wary of assuming the posture of a self-righteous, egocentric nationalism. Such a "hypertrophic" nationalism would undermine the very cure—the restoration of national dignity and spiritual renewal—that Zionism sought to offer the ailing Jewish people. Moreover, a myopic preoccupation with the problems of one's own nation invariably narrows one's moral consciousness, obscuring the humanity of other peoples, especially of one's enemies. The exaltation of a self-enclosed, parochial nationalism as morally self-sufficient distorts the original purpose of Zionism: to heal the afflictions of the Jewish people and thereby enable it to serve "the Sovereign of the world, who is the Sovereign of my rival, and my enemy's Sovereign, as well as mine."[68]

Despite his misgivings about the direction that the Zionist project had taken, Buber sought to reassure his colleagues in Jerusalem that "in no case shall I give up on Palestine."[69] For their part, his "friends in Palestine," as Gershom Scholem wrote Buber, "are convinced that—in this country and in the education of the young generation in Jerusalem—even more decisive things are at stake than in [Germany]. You must be here if you do not wish to forgo having an influence on the country."[70] In a later letter, he emphasized: "Your voice is bound to carry weight."[71] Writing Buber on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday, David Werner Senator, a member of the Executive of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem, added to his greetings an appeal for Buber to hasten his emigration to Palestine: "You do not know and perhaps cannot estimate how eagerly some people here are awaiting you. For there are people here who believe that a person of your cohesive ability can bring together and thereby activate energies that exist today in invisible and inert form, and thus cannot be manifest and effective. We find ourselves in a tragic situation of realizing our aims in a transformed world that is no longer ours. Perhaps your wisdom and goodness can help us to find a way out of this confusion, which has made a person like me, for example, profoundly pessimistic. Come very soon!"[72]

Buber himself doubted that he could meet these expectations. To be sure, he had found a receptive audience in Nazi Germany, especially among Jewish youth. From her exile in Paris in 1935, the twenty-nine-year-old Hannah Arendt wrote an article in French attesting to Buber's impact on her generation of German Jews:

> When almost two years ago, the German Jewish community, in its entirety, had to respond to the isolation imposed by the laws of exception, and the material and moral ruin of its collective existence, all Jews, whether they liked it or not, had

> to become aware of themselves *as Jews*. At that decisive moment, anyone who knew the situation intimately was bound to feel anxious about the most difficult question: will one succeed in giving this new ghetto, imposed by the outside, a spiritual content? Will one succeed not just in organizing these Jews superficially, but also linking them together by a *Judaic* bond, and making them real Jews once again?. . . Is there a leader who is more than a propagandist for Zionism, more than an eminent expert on Jewish problems, more than an excellent Judaic scholar and historian, and more than a living representative of Jewish culture—in short, someone who is all these things and more? In that sense, in our day, *Martin Buber* is German Jewry's incontestable Guide. . . . He was able to win over the youth because he didn't bury himself or Judaism under a great past, but knew how to rediscover the living roots of this past to build an even greater future.[73]

Arendt and others may have felt certain about Buber's significance, but Buber himself was not so sure. When at the end of March 1938, Buber finally emigrated to Palestine to assume a professorship at Hebrew University, he did so with a "heavy heart," uncertain whether at the age of sixty he could acquire in Hebrew the rhetorical and pedagogical skills to be an effective guide in the linguistic and political culture of his new home.[74]