Elements of Dialectic Theology in Rabbi Soloveitchik's View of Torah Study

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R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik's (1904-1993) approach to Torah study is usually identified with both the Neo-Kantian emphasis on abstraction, creativity, and autonomy, and the Mitnaged tradition of analytic mastery of the talmudic corpus. This intellectualist stance ignores the significant role that noncognitive elements play in Soloveitchik's approach to Torah study. This paper will address the other equally important elements in his view of Torah study, the axiological and emotional elements of anticipation, humility, encounter, and love. Specifically, this paper will show that these elements are predominately dependent on dialectic and Neo-Orthodoxy thought.

The dialectic theology movement of the 1920s, led by Emil Brunner (1889-1966) and Karl Barth (1886-1968), protested against identifying Christianity with ethical activity in the social realm or as another aspect of liberal culture. In order to defend faith from the erosive force of modern disbelief, they placed faith outside of society, even outside of religion. Furthermore, under existentialist influence, they said that this faith was non-communicable, creating a dichotomy between faith as private and culture as public. Hence, they were against natural theologies, even those of medieval thinkers.1

Emil Brunner focused his thought on showing how revelation is greater than any personal experience of homo religiosus. Incorporating much of the then contemporary existentialism, Brunner presents natural man as one who, while seeking meaning in the despair of an unredeemed existence, passes through a changed perspective into accepting

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revelation. Karl Barth, a member of the Swiss Reformed Church teaching in a Lutheran seminary, framed his career in opposition to society's powers. Barth presents the abyss between man and God as so great that only revelation can provide religious knowledge. For Barth, natural man is helpless and in need of a redemptive act of faith based on humility and submission.

On the problem of the role of the Word of God in a modern age, the dialectic theologians belong to a broader trend of Neo-Orthodoxy, which sought to overcome the liberal limiting of religion to human criteria. Neo-Orthodox theology especially felt that Kant left no room for revelation of God in ordinary language. As early as 1918, Karl Barth criticized the excesses of liberalism through a pessimistic stance concerning the reliability and validity of human reason. God's Word, Barth argued, is a personal encounter based on the religious experience of the interpreter, not a revelation of information. To avoid reading the Bible as cognitive information, Barth taught that the Bible in itself is not God's revelation; rather, it stimulates such an experience when someone accepts it through faith. Interpretation is thus seen primarily as resulting from faith and encounter with God. The Bible contains the record of past revelations and the promise of future revelations, but the reader receives the Word of God only when God speaks to the reader, who in turn needs to respond; one needs, as Gogarten taught, an I-Thou relationship with the text.2

In addition to the challenge of Kant, modern historical method raised a similar one to the Bible as the Word of God. Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923) responded to this challenge by noting that historical accounts are never completely certain, only probable, and can always be revised. Barth agreed with this assessment, yet tried to secure faith from the uncertainties of critical history. He affirmed that God's revelation actually broke into history. Still, he saw no reason why the text of Scripture should be immune to criticism. Let historians expose error upon error; Barth's faith remained unshaken. They could only criticize the Bible; they could not get their hands on the Word of God, the personal revelatory encounter that would happen through the Bible.

2 On Gogarten's definition of I-Thou, see below, n. 67.
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at God's good pleasure. Also, since the words of Scripture are not as important as an event, much historical and factual information in the Bible could be false according to this view. One could demythologize the text from its ancient Near East context, leaving the eternal Word of God.

Principally, Barth calls for the recognition of humanity's limited standing with respect to God's Word. Human beings, while not forbidden from bringing to bear their tools of philosophy and critical exegesis, are always required to subordinate the text and the meanings found there to God's self, who is always 'other than' the words we humans use to express God's will. To express the tension between achievement and humility before the Divine, dialectic theology uses paradoxical concepts such as the impossible possibility, the absolute transcendence of God in contrast with the self-disclosure of God, faith as a gift and yet an act, eternity entering time. Kierkegaard germinated this paradox of Neo-Orthodox thought by his paradoxes of truth:

Truth is precisely the contradiction between the infinite passion of the individual's inwardness and the objective uncertainty. If I am capable of grasping God objectively, I do not believe, but precisely because I cannot do this, I must believe. If I wish to preserve myself in faith, I must constantly be intent upon holding fast the objective uncertainty [...] It's rather a 'leap' that reason's own humility - its self-knowledge of its limitations - sets up and even cries out for.4

Barth continues this approach of humility before the Divine.

In contrast to the role of event, paradox, and humility in the thought of Karl Barth, Emil Brunner organizes his doctrine of the Christian life around the concepts of regeneration and conversion, rather than justification; he finds the Word of God more apt to express the totality of the new creation. In faith, man possesses the new being and does

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3 This 'interested exegesis' is further developed in Church Dogmatics vol. 1, part 2, pp. 695-740, under the title of 'Freedom under the Word of God'.
not merely believe in it; this new being belongs to the transcendental rather than to the empirical self. For Brunner, the Word of God creates a confronted personality who moves beyond the realm of dignity into that of holiness.

Since the present article is based on, and a continuation of, a prior one, which established the influence of dialectic theology on the basic categories of Soloveitchik's thought, I will not repeat here my discussion of this topic. Rather, I will limit my comments to those elements that are concerned with the study of Torah and the similarity to dialectic theology's accentuation of the word of God as primary bearer of revelation.

Soloveitchik's essays of the 1940s predominately use a Neo-Kantian model of knowledge to describe Torah study, while his essays and addresses from the late 1950s until the 1970s show the marked influence of dialectic theology. Therefore, I am not using here the classic Neo-Kantian essay 'Halakhic Man', or 'U-Beqashtem mi-Sham', but the essays written under the spell of dialectic theology from the late fifties until the seventies. These lectures are reflective of the influence Soloveitchik had on his students, who knew his thought from his oral shḥurim (lessons). I will deal with five essays: three from Shiurei HaRav, 'The Unique Experience of Judaism', 'Torah and Humility', and 'On the love of Torah'; another with a similar title, "Al Ahavat ha-Torah ve-Nefesh ha-Dor'; and finally, the recently published 'Torah and Shekhinah'. I will refer to other essays as needed. I shall also deal with the hermeneutical questions of dialectic theology. How is Torah

5 See A. Brill, 'Triumph without Battle: The Dalectic Approach to Culture in the Thought of Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik', to be published in a collection of essays on Rabbi Soloveitchik by the Van Leer Institute, Jerusalem.
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study different from other acts of reading? Soloveitchik wanted to show that despite being a cognitive act, Torah study is experiential. A full analysis of Soloveitchik's conception of Torah study would require studies on his use of Neo-Kantian and Maimonidean as well as dialectic thought in his formulation of philosophy of prayer, community, ritual, and revelation. The present article consists of a modest attempt to round off some observations made in the earlier one on the general influence of dialectic thought on Soloveitchik.

In constructing his homilies on Torah study, Soloveitchik freely combines the approaches of both thinkers, sometimes emphasizing Barth's humility, at others Brunner's catharsis; at times Barth's event and at others Brunner's conversion of personality. As a working rubric, the beginning of 'The Unique Experience of Judaism' is Barthian, while the end follows Brunner. 'Torah and Humility' and 'On the Love of Torah' both predominately follow Barth, "Al Ahavat ha-Torah ve-Nefesh ha-Dor', follows Brunner, whereas 'Torah and Shekhinah' freely mixes both thinkers. I wish to note from the outset two important differences between Soloveitchik's thought and Neo-Orthodox thought. Whereas Neo-Orthodox thinkers reject the application of Neo-Kantianism to religion and emphasize experience over cognition, Soloveitchik accepts both Neo-Kantian abstraction and Neo-Orthodox encounter, without cognitive dissidence. Second, Barth can sidestep biblical criticism because he considers the text of the Bible as an entrance into the Word of God, but holds that the Bible itself is a mere human product. In contrast, Soloveitchik claims a divine status for both the text and the message of the Bible.

The Unique Experience of Judaism
In his lecture from 1973 entitled 'The Unique Experience of Judaism', Soloveitchik presents an exposition of the role of time consciousness in the study of Torah, followed by a coda on the uniqueness of halakhic Judaism. To state my conclusions up front, the entire first part of the essay on experiential time, especially the role of recollection and anticipation, resembles the themes of classic Lutheran Advent and Easter sermons, as formulated by Karl Barth. In order to counterbalance the use of Christian theologians, Soloveitchik's coda presents the
uniqueness of Judaism, desiring to show here that Judaism differs from his Christian sources. Yet even in this coda, Soloveitchik's formulation shows dependence on Emil Brunner's critique of liberal Christianity.

Soloveitchik's essay opens with a short presentation on the existential meaning of time, in which he claims the illusory nature of the present. In the present moment, past and future are already found. Youth orients itself to the future, while the old recollect the past. Hence, Judaism consists of recollection and anticipation. Soloveitchik contextualizes past and future as pertaining to Torah study, where the student of Torah needs to have a sense of recollection when he learns and has to look for an experiential meaning to the past. Soloveitchik writes that a religious understanding of a text can only be an experience of an event and cannot suffice on intellectual cognition:

As a matter of fact this is the only way to study the Bible. Intellectual analysis, while indispensable, will not suffice to uncover the spiritual kerygma of the Bible. Only one who can read between the lines, who can experience the biblical event and can establish communion with its characters can discover and fully comprehend the biblical message. [...] For the non-Jew, there are merely archeological facts. For the Jew, they are experiential facts. Biblical stories are in our present.

For Soloveitchik, we should follow a logic of the heart, where 'ancient events must be understood in modern categories, and current events must be interpreted via biblical categories'. This passage almost approximates Barth's discourse on the need to experience the biblical past in the present as an event, and we find similar lines of thought in Brunner. As stated in my prior paper, I will leave the immense task

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7 'If I have a system, it is limited to a recognition of what Kierkegaard called the "infinite qualitative distinction" between time and eternity'. See Karl Barth, preface to the second edition, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Oxford 1933, p. 10. In contrast, elsewhere Soloveitchik treats the infinite as another form of finite subjectable to a system.


9 'Unique Experience', p. 128.

10 On biblical criticism, see K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 1, part 2, p. 466,
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of line-by-line comparisons to future researchers. It is important to note that already at this point in the essay, Soloveitchik presents Torah study as the recollection of a biblical event and not the rabbinic corpus, and that he presents Torah study as experiential and not Neo-Kantian abstraction. Further, Soloveitchik affirms that philological and historical approaches are subservient to experiential memory.

Soloveitchik then discusses the role of the future in Torah study, the requirement for anticipation akin to that of a mother waiting for the return of a child:

Experiential anticipation means that the Jew anticipates an event not just because it is bound to occur [...] it means that the Jew becomes excited [...] as if the future had already actually taken place. The future is experienced as reality and is integrated into the frame of reference of reality even before it occurs. The mother who learns of her child's unexpected homecoming experiences the joy of his 'resurrection' even before opening the door.\(^\text{11}\)

Notice the terminology; we need to experience 'the joy of resurrection' before it occurs. Anticipation of the resurrection is not traditional Jewish homiletical fare; rather, these themes do show up in a traditional Lutheran pre-Easter sermon. Also, notice the contrast to Heidegger and other existentialists who emphasize the present and explain anticipation as our thrown situation in the world conceptualizing the future as opening our horizons. Here, 'anticipation' reflects a Barthian theological understanding of biblical events and messianic future.\(^\text{12}\)

Another crucial element in this essay's presentation of Torah study is that the study of Torah is a pre-experience. Soloveitchik writes, 'Experiential memory commits the Jew to reliving his past, and

where he castigates those attached to the false idea blindly opposed to the Bible; also, see E. Brunner, *Divine Imperative*, p. 240, on history in the present.

11 'Unique Experience', p. 128. This should not be conflated with Mircea Eliade's return to archaic time outside of ordinary time. For Barth, the biblical proclamation points to our future and is experienced in the present. On the distinctions between Barth's listening for proclamation and Eliade's sacred humanism, see Paul Ricouer, *Figuring the Sacred*, Minneapolis, 1997, chap. 2.

experiential anticipation, the requirement of pre-experience, commits the Jew to the future.13 While Heidegger conceives of understanding as something that exists prior to cognition, Karl Barth, similar to Soloveitchik, requires a preconditional horizon of experiencing the biblical event before approaching the text. Soloveitchik's statements that reading should combine past and future do reflect the Heideggarian language that swept through Weimar Germany, but his approach is closer to those of both Barth and Brunner.14

Soloveitchik envisions a study of Torah where, in the act of study, we emulate the freshness of the young child. He returns to this theme at the end of “Al Ahavat ha-Torah', where he describes his own returning to childhood when studying.15 In another essay, his eulogy for Rav Ḥayyim Heller, 'Mah Dodekh mi-Dod', Soloveitchik paints a very evocative portrait of the 'halakhic man-child', which can also describe his own thought:

The adult is too clever. Utility is his guiding light. The experience of God is unavailable to those approaching it with a businesslike attitude. Only the child can breach the boundaries that segregate the finite from the infinite. Only the child with his simple faith and fiery enthusiasm can make the miraculous leap into the bosom of God. […] When it came to faith, the giants of Torah, the geniuses of Israel, became little children, with all their ingenuity, gracefulness, simplicity, their tremors of fear, their vivid experiences and their devotion to them. […] Whenever [Moshe] fell before God, he cried like a child. Who can fall before his father, raise his eyes to him alone, to seek consolation and salvation, if not the child! […] The mature, the adult, is not capable of the all-embracing and all-penetrating outpouring of the soul. The most sublime crown we can give a great man sparkles with the gems of childhood.16

13 ‘Unique Experience’, p. 129.
14 See E. Brunner, *Divine Imperative*, p. 122, on the combining of past, present, and future.
15 ‘Al Ahavat ha-Torah’, p. 209.
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The true halakhic scholar must have a childlike quality (qatnut demohin). He criticizes those approaches of traditional learning that are all intellect. Since Soloveitchik probably was not a reader of the wonder child (yenuqa) stories of the Zohar, presenting a positive image of childlike Torah, the likely source for these ideas is to be found elsewhere. Augustinian ideas of rebirth are found in Martin Luther's Small Catechism, which exhorts the necessity to be reborn each day: 'The beginning of a life of faith [is one] in which each day our human nature should be drowned through daily repentance; and that day after day a new self should arise to live with God in righteousness and purity forever'. Yet, for Soloveitchik, the source was Karl Barth, specifically Church Dogmatics, which discusses similar issues; Barth even presents the Shema in Deuteronomy as the requirement for study of the Bible to love God with all your heart as a childlike quality renewed each day. Both Barth and Soloveitchik present an image of childhood denuded of sentimentality and nostalgia for the actual narrative experience of childhood. I would not make much of the kabbalistic terminology, especially since Soloveitchik reverses mohin degadlut into qatnut demohin, and, unlike Kabbalah, he glorifies childlike thought to the detriment of mature thought (mohin degadlut).

As a coda to this exposition of Barth on recollection, anticipation, childlike status, and pre-experience, Soloveitchik concludes by pointing out the uniqueness of Judaism. He claims that 'no other religious denomination understands lomdus or has anything comparable to it. [...] Halakha [...] is best understood as a mode of thinking, a way of interpreting man and his environment'. Only Judaism is cognitive and intellectual. The essay ends by Soloveitchik comparing lomdus to physics. How these two conflicting models of the childlike experience of biblical events and scientific lomdus can both apply remains

17 For an example of the current reading of Soloveitchik, see H. Schachter, Nefesh HaRav, Jerusalem 1994, who takes this discussion on needing a childlike quality to mean that Soloveitchik mandated simple faith without philosophy.
18 Martin Luther, The Small Catechism.
19 On the Shema as having the ever newness of a child's love, see K. Barth, Church Dogmatics, vol. 1, part 2, p. 381; cf. the obedience of a child in E. Brunner, The Divine Imperative, p. 151.
20 'Unique Experience', p. 129.

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unresolved. Barth, it should be noted, rejected the latter in favor of the former.

Soloveitchik presents Judaism as an acting community, consisting of mitzvot, in which he finds three differences from Christianity. First, Judaism posits no distinction between the sacral and the secular since it has civil laws as religion, hoshen mishpat. 21 Describing the second difference, Soloveitchik states that: 'Detail is important in Judaism. The model for the religious ritual in Judaism is the mathematical model, the characteristic of which is precision'. He rejects the Conservative movement in Judaism because in his opinion the movement relies on aesthetic categories of overall configuration that ignore detail.22 And, noting a third distinction from Christianity, Soloveitchik claims, 'Jewish observance consists mainly of inaction rather than action. […] This is especially true in the realm of sexual morality where enormous self-control is necessary'.23

The first and third points, on the lack of differentiation between the sacred and the secular and the role of inaction, I have already dealt with in a prior paper.24 Here I wish to focus on the second element, the role of detail in religion. Brunner writes on this topic:

All 'values' are derived from the human personality in its psycho-physical being. […] The question which Kierkegaard raises in his profoundly thoughtful exposition of the story of Isaac is certainly justified: 'Does there exist a theological suspension of the ethics?' This question reminds us that true ethics cannot be conceived in a legalistic general manner, by means of a principle. […] Obedience to the Divine Command - or, what comes to the same thing: the love which God commands - in order to be real must often assume remarkable disguises. […] In this sense there is no teleological suspension of the ethical because the truly divine […] is identical with the truly human, with humanity. On

21 Ibid., p. 131.
22 Ibid., p. 132.
23 Ibid., p. 133.
24 See my 'Triumph without Battle' (above n. 5).
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the other hand, all that is ethical, by which we mean all that we can perceive directly, is permanently suspended by the Divine Command. For the Christian is never called to act on general principles, but always in accordance with the concrete commandment of love.²⁵

This is important because Soloveitchik takes his emphasis on detail from Brunner, ‘for the Christian is never called to act on general principles’. Brunner, like Soloveitchik, writes that Christianity's demands are not in the generalities but in the details. However, the difference between the two thinkers is that for Brunner the details are known through love, through our internalization of the general commands, while for Soloveitchik, the detail of halakhah needs to be formulated with mathematical precision and the love is the required depth state concurrent with this mathematical precision. For both Brunner and Soloveitchik, the religious command supercedes the ethical, as Kierkegaard advocates a teleological suspension of the ethical. Yet, for Brunner, the Christian finds the religious command in the moment, while for Soloveitchik the student of Torah finds the Divine command in the halakhic system as a whole, in which one system replaces another. Soloveitchik obviously felt the need to stress the moment, or else halakhah would be a legalism. Yet, for Brunner, all rules are legalism and physics does not have a depth state to its study. For Soloveitchik, rules do not negate love and are needed in order to apply to details as is the case in physics.²⁶

In order to maintain the law and avoid legalism, Brunner formulates the dialectic of law and experience as a personal love of God residing behind the commandments. Actions create concrete order, while the human experience of love reveals the true expression of the law itself:

²⁶ On the tension between following details from love and following them from legalism, see Brunner, ibid., p. 138. For an extended discussion of the responsibility on the individual to provide details and the contrast between law, repentance, and personal guidance, see ibid., pp. 134-144. Barth requires one's inner self and outer self to be as one, contra Luther; see the extended discussion in Eberhard Jungel, Karl Barth: A Theological Legacy, Philadelphia 1986, p. 122. This would mandate majestic man to show his humility in community, not just in the heart. 275
The commandment of Love is not only the heart of the law, it is also its end. [...] One who is filled with the love of God does not need to be commanded to love God; we cannot 'order' such a person to do this or that, as the law does. Love - and this is the paradox - is the one thing signified in all these commandments, but by that very fact it cannot be commanded, and does not come into existence through the command.

On the other hand, the concrete order that God wills, which He establishes with the Creation, and requires man to respect, does not refer, like the commandment of love, to the motive, the heart, the disposition - but to definite ways of human behavior, necessary actions which are given in the order of creation.27

There seems to be an influence of Brunner's distinction between love and action on Soloveitchik's formulation of his famous differentiation between of action and depth state, ma'aseh and qiyyum, where beyond the external action of a mizvah, the true fulfillment resides in a separate emotional state. A full comparison of their theologies of commandment remains beyond our present scope, but we can nevertheless note the theological milieu in which Soloveitchik formulated his ideas about mitzvot and we see how Soloveitchik utilized, in his critiques of Conservative Judaism, Brunner's negative portrayal of liberal Protestantism as lacking both detail and submission before the divine command.

On the Love of Torah: Impromptu Remarks at a Siyyum

In his essay 'On the Love of Torah: Impromptu Remarks at a Siyyum', delivered in 1973, the spontaneous remarks reflect what a student would have heard regularly. Soloveitchik inspires his listeners to relate to Torah as a living personality, with whom one is fascinated and to whom one is committed. These ideas are dependent for their source on the similar concepts in Barth's presentation of the devotion to the humanity of Christ to overcome objectification of God's Word.

27 On God's desire for works, see Brunner, Divine Imperative, p. 188; idem, Creation and Redemption, Westminster 1979, p. 224.
Soloveitchik wrote that Torah, for the Torah scholar, unfolds as a dialogue with another person, as meeting a friend.28 Returning to themes from Brunner, Soloveitchik also advocates one to be continuously involved in Torah and to maintain an awareness of it:

Ve-hagita (in the verse Ve-hagita bo yomam va-laylah) refers not to actual study of Torah, but to the mitzvah of latent awareness of Torah. Higayon does not refer to thinking in the sense of pure intellectual detached thought. Rather, it refers to awareness of personal desires, wishes, and concerns; it refers to a deeply felt longing and questing [...] there should always be an awareness of the appreciation of Torah as the highest value.29

For Brunner, religion is not just an uninspired intellectual doctrine (or revelation and textuality); religion consists of a longing. Similarly, for Soloveitchik, Torah study needs to be passionate and consuming. Brunner writes, 'to use the expression of Kierkegaard faith is passion, a passionate interest. [...] This integration of all functions takes place [...] in the personality as a whole'.30 While Soloveitchik portrays that the goal of Torah study does not attempt to be in touch with my ordinary emotions of feelings, wants, and needs; religious emotion aspires to a Kierkegaardian passion that transcends daily concerns. Following Brunner, Soloveitchik ignores his own Neo-Kantian writings, to define the cognitive to include passion, reflection, and volitional decisions, and he portrays the opposite of cognition as uneducated, compulsive, and emotional.

28 'Love of Torah', p. 181. Soloveitchik also discusses topics that are not the concern of this paper: kedusha awareness, extra time for Shabbat and the curious nature of a lamdan ('Remarks at a Siyyum', pp. 182-183; 'Mah Dodekh mi-Dod', pp. 70-75). On the theological importance of personification, see K. Barth, Church Dogmatics, vol. 3, part 2 passim, where Christ as a living person is stressed, as well as the idea that if the Bible is an event then there can be no objectification. Cf. E. Brunner, Divine Imperative, p. 240, on the union of visible and invisible.

29 'Love of Torah', p. 183, on being involved and p. 185, on distant awareness.

30 On the need for a passionate approach, see Brunner, Divine Imperative, p. 160. As mentioned at the start of the essay, I am not reproducing my last essay, but it is worth comparing Soloveitchik and Brunner line by line to show the direct usages of Brunner's phrases and organization.
Soloveitchik's 'Al Ahavat ha-Torah', opens with a statement on the need for individuality and then launches immediately into a discussion of redemption. This linkage between individuality and messianism echoes Brunner chapter headings in which individuality and redeemed existence are coextensive.31 More substantively, Soloveitchik portrays Torah as freedom of thought and of will (הרשות ה公办), similar to Brunner's statement that we find freedom from law by thought and will.32 In Brunner's words:

Reason can only realize itself in freedom - that is, in the fact that man seizes the opportunity provided by his own powers, in the fact that he transcends the given in reaching out after that which is not given - the 'Idea'. This freedom is the life-element, indeed, if one may venture to put it so, it is the real substance of reason. [...] It is precisely this freedom, which is characteristic of man.33

For Soloveitchik, this cognitive freedom provides the foundation of our lives. This cognition does not include sense, imagination, or practical application, rather, the uplifting and majestic experience of cognition and creativity.34 Following Brunner, for Soloveitchik, when the Talmud holds that Torah is not in heaven, it means that the Torah reflects human creativity.35

Soloveitchik designates two aspects to Torah study: grasping the idea and actual experience, Neo-Kantianism and existentialism. The ability to read the Neo-Kantian thought of Herman Cohen as a Lebensphilosophie was common in the writings of dialectic theologians; hence, Soloveitchik followed Brunner's lead of cross-contextual use of the terminology of Cohen and Kierkegaard. The experiential element

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31 Ibid., p. 122.
32 Ibid., p. 78.
33 Ibid., p. 485.
34 'Al Ahavat ha-Torah', pp. 409-410.
35 On creativity, see Brunner, Divine Imperative, p. 486. On this adaptation of Brunner's definition of the image of God as creativity, see my paper mentioned above, n. 5.
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of Torah study in this essay consists of the catharsis that comes from the study of Torah itself. To avoid misunderstanding Soloveitchik, it is instructive to compare current approaches such as that of Paul Ricouer, who discusses the need for a catharsis of one's personal narrative combined with the narratives of one's culture. In contrast, Brunner and Soloveitchik conceive of catharsis as the affect of eternal wisdom beyond the human narrative and therefore lacking the catharsis of both Ricouer's personal sense of narrative and the cultural narrative.36

Brunner critiques the liberal position that looks for values; even Max Scheler's quest for religious values is inappropriate for a dialectic faith position.37 For Soloveitchik, halakhah does not offer intuitions into values, rather scientific and objective knowledge, or, in his words, halakhah has 'sharpness'. In these statements rejecting the worth of philosophy of Max Scheler and supporting a pure halakhah beyond human values,38 Soloveitchik uses for his texts out-of-context readings of Tanya, where our cognitive mind grasps God, and the Nefesh ha-Hayyim on pure cognition. Kabbalistic worlds, once shorn of their theurgy, become Neo-Kantian idealism. As in other of his readings of Eastern European texts, Soloveitchik leaves out many of the value statements and metaphysics that support the original statement - in this case, the return of the soul and moral struggle from Ḥabad, and confronting the cosmic order from R. Hayyim of Volozhin. The presentation also leaves an opening for finding support in the Divine Idea in Maimonides.39

In the same essay, Soloveitchik criticizes pragmatism stating that the opposite of pragmatic consideration was the sacrifice of Isaac ("aqedah), done from purely ideal motives.40 The exact same statement, using the sacrifice of Isaac as a critique of liberal religion can be found in Brunner's Divine Imperative, where he uses Abraham to prove

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37 Brunner, Divine Imperative, pp. 582-4.
38 "Al Ahavat ha-Torah", p. 208.
39 "Al Ahavat ha-Torah" has parallels to 'Torah and Humility' connecting Maimonides to Tanya and Nefesh ha-Hayyim.
40 Ibid., p. 213.
that there is no human value to religion; religion does not serve man.\footnote{Brunner, \textit{The Divine Imperative}, pp. 194-6, especially the bottom of p. 196 on using the sacrifice of Isaac as a paradigm of religion.} One finds similar convergence between Soloveitchik and Brunner on rejecting liberal ceremonialism and sentiment as a source of values.\footnote{Ibid., p. 195.} For Soloveitchik:

> The young American generation [...] is not totally engrossed in the pragmatic, utilitarian outlook. [...] To the degree that average people in our society attain higher levels of knowledge and general intelligence, we cannot imbue them with a Jewish standpoint that relies primarily on sentiment and ceremony.\footnote{‘Al Ahavat ha-Torah’, as appears in \textit{Divrei Hashqafa}, p. 78.}

Soloveitchik's own critique of liberal Judaism was also based on Barth's critique of liberal Protestantism.\footnote{Barth, \textit{Church Dogmatics}, p. 17.} For Barth and Soloveitchik, if religion is centered on man, then the religious act is mere human ceremony. There can be no religious experience without Torah because of the need for revelation. Thus, we cannot approach Judaism in a holistic, aesthetic way but need to understand the uniqueness of Torah through the details, where uniqueness means outside of human culture.\footnote{‘Unique Experience’, p. 132.} The answer to Conservative Judaism was not to critique historical studies but to offer abstraction and religious experience, which do not center on man.\footnote{There are echoes of Niebuhr readings of Scripture as daily life.}

In an important passage for understanding Soloveitchik's claims about Torah, he paints a picture of Torah as reaching the 'depths of the human personality' and eliciting a tempest of fiery emotions. Yet, it is essential to note that the depths are not a narrative self, but a metaphysical realm that merges Bergsonian \textit{élan vital} with the Kabbalah. Whereas Brunner's Neo-Kantianism would reject these emotional raptures, and Bergson's vitalism would reject the 'freedom of thought' in formalism, Soloveitchik has no problem citing both with comfort.\footnote{Max Scheler saw German philosophy as a direct choice between Bergson or Neo-Kantianism, while Brunner, as a Neo-Kantian, openly rejects both Bergson's}
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When a person delves into God's Torah and reveals its inner light and splendor […] and enjoys the pleasure of creativity and innovation, he merits communion with the Giver of the Torah. The ideal of clinging to God is realized by means of the coupling of the intellect with the Divine Idea which is embodied in rules, laws and traditions. […] However, halakhic knowing does not remain sealed off in the realm of the intellect. It bursts forth into one's existential consciousness and merges with it. […] The idea turns into an impassioning and arousing experience; knowledge into a divine fire; strict and exacting halakhic discipline turns into a passionate love burning with a holy flame. Myriads of black letters, into which have been gathered reams of laws, explanations, questions, problems, concepts and measures, descend from the cold and placid intellect, which calmly rests on its subtle abstractions and its systematic frameworks, to the heart full of trembling, fear and yearning, and turn into sparks of the flame of a great experience which sweeps man to his Creator.48

This enthused passage uses a language of direct experience of the Torah within one's consciousness, not as a revelation of God, but an experience of the Divine Idea portrayed as the letters of the text. Soloveitchik's actual metaphors of inner light and splendor are derivative of the Zohar cited in Mitnagedic and Hasidic works. Yet, in order to create this portrayal, Soloveitchik replaced the sefirotic hierarchy with a reverse movement from the cold, placid intellect of the higher realms to the flames of human experience. Here, as above in the discussion of the 'childlike mind', Soloveitchik glorifies the lower realms, normally regarded by the orthodox Kabbalist as imperfect. Similarly, in 'Mah Dodekh mi-Dod' and 'Torah as Shekhinah', Soloveitchik uses other-worldly kabbalistic and mystical terms to apply to this worldly activity.49

Indeed, for Soloveitchik, Torah study consists of an arousing experience - fire, love, fear and trembling - yet unlike Karl Barth, who has similar passages in his presentation of the divine will, Soloveitchik does not have the New Testament proof texts that Barth had in mandating a need for personal revelation (2 Timothy, Peter, and Corinthians). Instead, Soloveitchik must rely on Eastern European kabbalistic thought. In this individualistic passage, he appears to imply that abstraction leads to an arousing experience; a phenomenology of the conflicting mental processes is not offered.50

This portrayal of study as bursts into existential consciousness seems to echo Bergson and possibly William James51 (and has recently been compared with profit to Bion).52 Soloveitchik moves freely from secular psychological metaphors into religious ones; more importantly, he transfers these inspirations from individualism to Brunner's consideration of the human relationship to God as Creator and Redeemer.53

Torah and Humility

In 'Torah and Humility', an essay from 1971, Soloveitchik presents a classic dialectic theology formulation of the role of humility before

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75-90. In its midrashic usage, zimz um refers to God's concentrating His presence in the world as in Exodus Rabbah 34:1; in its Lurianic kabbalistic usage, it refers to God's withdrawing, contracting His presence. It is interesting that Soloveitchik reads bursts of inspiration as romantic personal creativity, similar to Gershom Scholem's Romantic theory of revelation.

50 Soloveitchik's emotional and poetic arousal does not seem similar to the kabbalistic and revelatory experiences of raptures, dreams, visions, and conjunctions described by the Vilna Gaon, Tanya, Rav Nahman, or R. Zadok.

51 The concept of inner self in Soloveitchik may be from William James's The Varieties of Religious Experience, New York 1902. Compare the following from James: 'Does the normal evolution of character chiefly consist in the straightening out and unifying of the inner self. The higher and the lower feelings, the useful and the erring impulses, begin by being a comparative chaos within us - they must end by forming a stable system of functions in right subordination. Unhappiness is apt to characterize the period of order-making and struggle' (p. 167).

52 On the psychological aspects of Soloveitchik's thought, see H. Ben-Pazi, 'Psychoanalytical Aspects of Soloveitchik's Philosophical Inquiries' (forthcoming, Van Leer Institute).

God's Word as the essence of Torah study.\textsuperscript{54} Contrasting the role of knowledge in the secular world to Torah knowledge, he finds that secular knowledge leads to arrogance, while Torah demands humility.\textsuperscript{55} Soloveitchik emphasizes that the divine word creates the natural realm, then the human realm of dignity, and thirdly the covenantal order of holiness. Even though Soloveitchik does not label the realms, the first one represents the Kantian domain of the natural order, which he presents by using the midrashim about God creating the world by means of Torah; the second one corresponds to the dignity of man as described by Brunner; and the third corresponds to Barth's need for humility. Soloveitchik removes the tensions that emerge from the union of these three realms. The Divine as grounds for the natural order creating a natural law is the classical liberal theology anathema to the dialectic theologian,\textsuperscript{56} the human realm of dignity remains in dialectic tension with the natural realm for Brunner; the realm of humility exists as entirely outside human culture and expresses human limitation before the infinite creator for Barth. Hence, for Barth, there is an antithesis between divinity and humanity, the infinite and the finite. Yet for Soloveitchik, the natural order, dignity, and humility all work together in a Torah culture; the problematics dissolve.

For Soloveitchik, unlike for Barth, the text itself expresses the Divine. 'Wherever a letter appears, the Torah appears, and we find inherent sanctity. Where there is no letter, there is no intrinsic sanctity'. Unlike ordinary books, the letters of the Torah have a special status as the divine power of creation. Yet, Soloveitchik continues the passage

\textsuperscript{54} http://www.vbm-torah.org/archive/humility.htm (see above, n. 6).
\textsuperscript{55} In the current cultural wars about Soloveitchik's legacy, secularism is portrayed as arrogance and should know its limits, while Torah offers true knowledge and is humble.
\textsuperscript{56} Liberal theology especially that of Hermann Cohen, continued to play a significant role in Soloveitchik's thought despite the dialectic influence. He uses liberal theological themes that identified religion with the cultural realm, such as God as ground of the natural order, revelation as the realization of this order in the human realm, and the messianic vision of human abilities. In dialectic thought, there is a rejection of the natural order, revelation as confrontation, and messianism as a realization of a prior event with implications for the future. Soloveitchik has both elements. The influence of liberal religious thought on Soloveitchik requires its own analysis. Some of the parallels between Leo Baeck and Soloveitchik have already been noted in the literature.
and limits this status to the Written Law, whereas the Oral Law, the creator of personality, consists of ideas. Soloveitchik writes:

We have a written Torah and an oral Torah. The Written Torah has its kedusha crystallized in the tangible, physical written word. What about the Oral Torah? There the word is not objectified in a scriptical form. God, in His infinite wisdom, wanted the word to be interwoven in an abstract thought system, and not in a sign system alone, as in the Written Torah. […] The Oral Torah operates in a more subtle manner, transmitting sanctity through study and its relation to the mind of the student. Apparently, Torah study, aside from being an intellectual, educational endeavor, enlightening the student and providing him with the information needed to observe the Law, is a redemptive cathartic process - it sanctifies the personality. It purges the mind of unworthy desires and irreverent thoughts, uncouth emotions and vulgar drives. The parchment of Talmud Torah is the human mind, the human heart and personality. Indeed, a new dimension is added to human experience through the study of Torah: sanctity.

In this Brunner influenced passage, the Oral Torah is not only the basis of abstraction and intellectualism, and the source of the law, but also a cathartic process that allows man to overcome his natural uncouth emotions and vulgar drives and replace them with sanctity. Instead of dialectic theology's emphasis on scripture, Soloveitchik develops a panoply of images for divine Scripture, based on rabbinic Judaism - teacher, oral law, halakhah, learning, man as sefer Torah - and in other texts, mitzvot, tradition, and public Torah reading. Judaism finds God's word in a community of education.

For Soloveitchik, Torah study leads to a creation of individual personality, as a means of self-cultivation, and to the molding of a specific type of person; it is 'the art of writing God's living word on the passionate vibrant human heart, and impressing God's image on the receptive and questing human personality'. For Brunner, this would not necessarily be mastery of a text, but for Soloveitchik it is both simultaneously intellectual and self-cultivating. Whereas Karl Barth rejected the intellectualist approach to religion as gnostic and presents
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the reading of Scripture as experiential, Soloveitchik slides between two tiers, consisting of an intellectual and an emotional religion. Everyone has to have access to religion, which he justifies using the language of rights combined with the idea of all human beings standing in need of salvation; redemption is offered to all.

But now there is a dilemma. Knowledge, all knowledge, is essentially esoteric; it is not equally available to all. What about the dull people, the sluggish people, the intellectually slow; are they to be denied the companionship of God? Religion cannot be esoteric. The experience of God, to hear His whisper, is a basic elementary right of every human being. Without religion there is no salvation, without faith there is no redemption, and everyone is entitled to salvation. But if the link between God and man is the intellectual Torah gesture, how can the experience of God's companionship be achieved by all?

Soloveitchik's answer to this universal need involves the cultivation of a love of Torah, similar to the agape relationship between a parent and child:

The relationship between us and Torah is that between a child and his mother. We identify with Torah, we cherish her, we are committed to her, like a little child who identifies with his mother and cannot distinguish between his own identity and hers. In this way, a bond is created between God and man: not only man who studies, but all those who love Torah and feel awed by her, both the aristocrat of mind and spirit, and the simple anonymous individual.

The second half of the essay turns to the theme of humility. Soloveitchik, following Barth, sees the quest for holiness as grounded in humility. Barth placed as his starting agenda, 'in its presence the first need is for humility'. For Soloveitchik, 'The bridge is defeat, which inevitably

57 In 'Confrontation', Tradition 6 (1964), Soloveitchik places revelation and redemption with Adam and not Sinai following Barth's lead.
58 'For the will to which the conscience points is purity, goodness, truth, and brotherhood as the perfect will of God. It is a will, which knows of no subterfuges,
must accompany *kedusha*. There is no end to the quest for the finite before the infinite; here is the paradox of human finite existence before the infinite Divine. 'You are human, you must lose. You must be defeated'. For Soloveitchik, 'In the very movement where *kedusha* exults, "I am near God, I am a great being", it decrees its defeat'.

Soloveitchik describes this defeat as having five steps. In this essay, I am pointing out the dialectic elements in this litany, but his thought also resonates with Dostoyevsky's ideals of selfless love, humility, self-restriction, and compassion. The exegeses of these texts on humility are significant. The original authors used the Pauline letters, especially Ephesians 4: 1-16 and Philippians 2:5-11, which delineate the stages of humility and the ancillary virtues of gentleness, patience, love-agape, and peace. As a substitution, Soloveitchik uses Psalms 2:3 and Song of Songs about the limitations of human quests without providing full support texts on the virtues themselves (and Soloveitchik leaves out the virtue of peace).

The first of the five steps for Soloveitchik is, 'the feeling of dependence [...] an awareness of one's inadequacy and failure [...] expressed through gratitude and loyalty'. Unlike Kierkegaard's individualism, Soloveitchik's dependence is closer to Barth's humility, which leads to accepting the authority of the Church. For Soloveitchik, our human limitations necessitate teachers, fellows, the tradition, and master guides.

The second step follows Barth's adaptation of the Kierkegaardian principle of intellectual caution and accepting the limits of reason:

The second step is intellectual circumspection and caution. A *talmid hakham* is careful in the rendering of halakha. Only ignorant and arrogant people think that all questions are answerable. The humble *talmid hakham* does not proclaim high-sounding theories, sweeping statements about ethics and philosophy. 59

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59 Cf. Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, pp. 130-131, where Kierkegaard presents the view that any serious person makes decisions of faith 'with dread and humility at the awesome responsibility one takes upon one's shoulders when reservations, nor preliminary compromises. [...] In its presence the first need is for humility'; see Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, pp. 24, 26.
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The third step is classic Barth: ‘The third step is ethical modesty. There is not only intellectual dependence, but moral inadequacy as well, a readiness to admit errors and understand the view of others’. For Barth and Soloveitchik, humility makes us willing to admit that we may be wrong and that we can learn from others.

The fourth step is a catchall, expropriating in a free metaphoric manner the term ξίμως, to include many themes - e.g., retreat, supererogatory restraint, no indulgence in the physical realm, and the need not to discuss emotions:

The fourth step is called ξίμως. The humble man must know how to recoil, to retreat; he must know the art of self-contraction, even when not required by the letter of the law. Indulgence in luxury manifests pride and vanity. […] Emotional life should remain the secret of the Torah personality.²⁸⁷

The fifth step concerning the need for love towards others as a sign of humility is not technically about Torah, but I include it in order to provide a full account of the five steps:

The fifth and final step is ḥesed, generosity. The same way I expect and depend on others to help me, I must extend help to others. I must open myself up to embrace the other. Ḥesed is an overflow of kindness, love, enthusiasm, which cannot be contained within, like a river which overflows its banks and inundates the environs.

Following Kierkegaard, Soloveitchik portrays the lover as being in the debt of love because s/he has already received the love of God. And this is a debt one should not try to pay off. Rather than denigrating divine love in order to protect the dignity of the person, Kierkegaard

²⁸⁷ An analysis of Soloveitchik’s avoidance of discussing emotional life and his contention that it is incommunicable is beyond the scope of this paper. In the interim, see the distinction between experience and meaning in Paul Ricouer, *Interpretation and Theory*, pp. 1-24, where he discusses that communication overcomes solitude. We communicate meaning (content), not our experience; experience is private, meaning is public. For Ricouer, there is a fallacy of the absolute text that treats the text as not coming from communication.
allows love to humble the person. In the relationship of love we find equality among all persons because in this state the individual must be willing to give up his or her own self for the other.\textsuperscript{61}

**Torah and Shekhinah**

In the essay 'Torah and Shekhinah' in *Family Redeemed*, Soloveitchik expresses his view that education comprises two elements: independence leading to growth and relationship.\textsuperscript{62} Soloveitchik presents this dichotomy using the fixed gender roles of Barth and Brunner; the male represents growth and time, while the female stands for love and timelessness.\textsuperscript{63} As above, in his consideration of Torah study as event (in the essay 'The Unique Experience of Judaism'), the father's Torah represents reconciliation, and the mother's Torah embodies timeless anticipation. It is important to note that these symbolic valences are not in accordance with the traditional ones of midrash and kabbalah.

For Soloveitchik, the mother's love is based on latent awareness and deeply felt longing, while the father's love allows freedom to develop a self. Soloveitchik goes further and states that this pattern of female and male corresponds to the Divine. For these ideas, I have numerous analogous passages in both Barth and Brunner, using Barth's dualistic gender distinctions and Brunner's passionate commitment to the Word of God.\textsuperscript{64} An important difference between Soloveitchik and his sources is, however, that for Brunner, the community coheres due to love, not because of the fixed commandments; in contrast, Soloveitchik places this entire tension in the act of studying Torah. He naturally avoids the supersessionism of love replacing law and therefore

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{61} Compare similar passages in Soren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, Princeton, NJ 1946.
\item \textsuperscript{62} *Family Redeemed*, New York 2000, pp. 158-180.
\item \textsuperscript{63} 'Torah and Shekhinah', p. 169.
\item \textsuperscript{64} On gender issues in Soloveitchik, see C. Kehat, 'Gender Relations and Gender Equality in Rabbi Soloveitchik's Thought' (forthcoming, Van Leer Institute).
\item \textsuperscript{65} On love as freedom, see Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, pp. 117, 301, 307; on faith as Kiekegaardian passion, see p. 160; on love in community, see p. 129. On Barth's view of love as response, see *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 4, part 2 [§68]; on Gospel (love) and law as two connected elements, see p. 771; on the relationship of Neo-Kantianism and existentialism as parallel to that of Old Testament legalism and New testament love, see *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 2, part 2 [§ 37].
\end{itemize}
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has both law and love simultaneously. The dialectics are internal within the same person and not as different elements in history or society.

In one of Soloveitchik's creative homiletical readings, he introduces the same distinction of male and female into Maimonides' *Code*. According to his interpretation, the first seven laws of *The Laws of Torah Study* concern the giving of knowledge, while law number eight teaches about relationship. Laws one through seven generate an I-It relationship of knowledge acquisition, while law number eight mandates the continuous need to study Torah as a relationship of orderliness, an I-thou relationship; it affects personality evocatively without digressing into subjective mystical fantasy. The first seven are esoteric and elite based on one's ability to acquire knowledge, while the eighth law teaches the need to be democratic and exoteric, based on sincerity and intensity.

In this context, when Soloveitchik quotes the I-Thou qualities of love generated from studying Torah, many Jewish readers assume that he is referring to Buber's I-Thou, when in fact he follows Friedrich Gogarten as cited in Brunner, where I-Thou is defined as a relationship in which God takes precedence over the human as an otherness and as transcendent. In other places, Soloveitchik uses the phrase in the Buberian sense; here, however, it is in the Gogartenian sense. Soloveitchik employs I-Thou both ways without differentiation.

Another point from 'Torah and Shekhinah' which contributes to an understanding of Soloveitchik is that the essay advocates a Judaism of *eros*, yet cites passages from Kierkegaard, Barth and Brunner, for whom *eros* is socially negative because it leads to an *idea-fixe*. Hence for them *agape* is preferable. Soloveitchik treats his formulation of Judaism as though the insertion of *eros* into a dialectic argument is a terminological change alone. He wants Maimonidean *eros* but does not draw the implications of the distinction between *eros* and *agape* to

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66 For Rambam's concept of love of God, see *Shemonah Peraqim*, chapter 5; *Book of the Commandments*, pos. com. 3; *Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah* 2:1-2; *Hilkhot Teshuva*, chapter 10; *Guide of the Perplexed* III.51. For a study of this notion see H. Kreisel, *Maimonides' Political Thought*, Albany 1999, pp. 225-266.

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show why *eros* does not lead to a naturalistic obsession with the self or to natural theology, as claimed by dialectic theologians. For example, Barth considers knowledge that derives from human accomplishment based on *eros* driving the intellect as gnosis and not divine love, whereas Maimonides is in favor of gnosis and accomplishment.

Finally, Soloveitchik's tension of abstract knowledge and existential commitment bespeaks a similar tension in Weimar German authors as diverse as Hermann Hesse, Thomas Mann, and S. Y. Agnon (especially in *A Simple Story* and *The Betrothed*).

**Torah Study**

Soloveitchik's position on Torah study contains Mitnaged and intellectual positions, where *Torah lishmah* meets Neo-Kantian science. Yet, as this essay has shown, Soloveitchik's writings contain just as much the notions of affect, love, anticipation, and recollection. To understand the role of Neo-Kantianism in Soloveitchik's thought, one should take note of Avinoam Rosenak's recent study that documents the influence of Herman Cohen's Neo-Kantianism on Soloveitchik, even on his halakhah, and points out that he followed scientific analogies. Furthermore, Cohen's own legacy to dialectic theology is his claim that a theology could not be limited to textual sources but needs to be constructed from reason, consisting of theological arguments, not scientific ones. Cohen writes:

> The universality, which becomes the fundamental condition for the religion of reason, seems to be contradicted by our intention to derive the latter from the sources of Judaism, as if only out of these literary sources that the religion of reason could originate. […] The source does not shut itself off from other religious monuments, but rather becomes an original source for other

68 On Barth's opinion that human accomplishment in religion is gnosis, see Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 1, part 2, pp. 134-135, 659.

69 On Maimonides and gnosis, see the bibliography of works cited in my *Thinking God*, New York 2002, appendix 2.

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sources, [...] Only insofar as the original source has such an undeniable spiritual and psychological advantage must this supremacy of reason in the primary origin of the sources of Judaism remain indisputable.\footnote{H. Cohen, Religion of Reason out of the Sources of Judaism, S. Kaplan trans., Atlanta 1995, p. 8.}

According to Cohen, a theological author uses the Jewish texts for psychological reasons, not as the origin of his thought, which derives from reason. In sum, Cohen's liberal theology was based on rational \textit{eisegesis} and autonomous construction of the sources.

In considering the hermeneutical questions in Soloveitchik's presentation of Torah study, the tension between the approaches of Herman Cohen and his student Karl Barth is a good starting point to understand the tension between intellectual and affect in Soloveitchik's exegesis. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing is usually credited with formulating the position that truth does not rely on historical events, because the eternal truth is greater than history. Herman Cohen followed Lessing in his abstract conceptual approach. Karl Barth rejects this position because it would make truth universal and human.\footnote{T. E. Provence, 'The Sovereign Subject Matter: Hermeneutics in the \textit{Church Dogmatics}', in: D. K. McKim ed., \textit{A Guide to Contemporary Hermeneutics: Major Trends in Biblical Interpretation}, Grand Rapids, MI 1986, p. 251. Also helpful for comparisons to Soloveitchik is G. W. Bromiley, 'The Authority of Scripture in Karl Barth', in: D. A. Carson and J. D. Woodbridge eds., \textit{Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon}, Grand Rapids, MI 1986.} For Barth, when reading Scripture one does not start with the conceptual human dimension of the word, rather with the divine nature of the word. Therefore, for Barth, the historical past needs to be interpreted by the present faith, yet we need to preserve past and present as two elements, not just an existential present but also a sense of the events of the past. In his \textit{Epistle to the Romans}, the two, past and present, can be bridged as one history.\footnote{T. E. Provence, 'The Sovereign Subject Matter', p. 257.} In his \textit{Church Dogmatics}, however, Barth rejected the positions he took in \textit{Epistle to the Romans} in favor of a revelation greater than the historical experience. The existential historical element receded for three reasons: (1) Barth was against pure experience; instead, truth is the inspired word of God; (2) he felt that the word of God

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
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\item[73] T. E. Provence, 'The Sovereign Subject Matter', p. 257.
\end{thebibliography}
needs to be historical, but the history of the Word of God, not man's history; (3) he felt that one can do history without historical study, since Scripture is religious history as an act of God. On all of these points, Soloveitchik remained closer to the existentialism of the *Epistle to the Romans* and thereby sought to articulate a vision of Jewish past known in the present.

According to Thomas Provence in his study of Karl Barth's hermeneutics, for Barth, the text of the Bible does not have special hermeneutic; one can use standard literary-historical methods because the words do not carry any special sanctity. The goal for a Christian hermeneutic is for the words to become an image of the event before us. The special hermeneutic of the Word of God within Scripture, in contrast to hermeneutics of other works, has two differences: First, there is no limit on possibility; hence, miracles are possible. Second, the biblical text is majestic; all other texts are not. For Soloveitchik, the first problem of miracles and supernaturalism was not a concern of his. He was willing to tacitly accept much of the Maimonidean Jewish agenda regarding natural science. But the second issue was prime in his mind. Torah study can only be approached as a special hermeneutic, based on the image of the event before us. One does not use literary and historical method, but *ḥiddush* and analysis.74

For Barth, God so utterly transcended this world that His Word could not simply be available in a book. Rather, God's Word broke in when 'a free divine decision is made […] is taken and used as an instrument in the hand of God, i.e., it speaks to and is heard by us as the authentic witness to divine revelation and is therefore present as the Word of God.'75 In contrast, Soloveitchik takes a liberal position in his acceptance of Neo-Kantian creativity, while Brunner and Barth are conservative and reject applying the scientific method to the divine Word. Yet, Soloveitchik does not employ the experimental method of the secular scientist, rather eisegetic construction, considered as divine.

For Soloveitchik, the choice of accepting the majestic status of the rabbinic corpus reflects one's act of submission. Soloveitchik follows

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74 Nevertheless, he does appear to allow some use of parallels to literary characters.
75 Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 1, part 2, pp. 457, 530.
Barth's requirement of an understanding, and even a pre-understanding, of the special nature of the text of the Bible, and Brunner's stance to combine creativity with Kierkegaardian passion and catharsis. Thomas Provence points out the importance of circular thought for Barth, the need to seek the event of Christ in the Bible, and the idea that the Bible can only be read through prior faith in Christ. The words are ordinary, yet the Christian should consider the subject of the Bible as extraordinary from Christ.76 As noted above, for Barth, revelation means obedience and a direct relationship to the original event, while for Soloveitchik, revelation also elicits creativity as found in Brunner, who continued the romantic assumption that the reader's relationship to the text takes precedence over the reader's relationship to the living voice of God. The reader-scholar is the active miner whose vigorous efforts are the means by which the valuable ore is brought to the surface. It is the responsibility of the student of scripture to locate and squeeze truth from the text.77

An important point in understanding Soloveitchik is that the text of the oral law does not define the truth; the presence of God is not in the text but in its conceptual analysis. In this point he follows Dilthey, as accepted by Brunner, that the meaning of words comes from a process of understanding of the original. For Soloveitchik, the word functions as an event that transcends the text and word, because Judaism does not look for meaning in external symbol or institutional church. Scripture gives witness to revelation but is not revelation itself. Hence, Soloveitchik follows the hermeneutic of Schleiermacher and Dilthey, where one seeks a lived experience or event, not the word itself. In Barth's *Epistle to the Romans*, the reading of the text is of God, based on Calvin, where God wills His Word to be known. Soloveitchik lacks this pneumatic element.

In a similar direction that contrasts with Barth, Soloveitchik does

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77 In contrast, Barth's idea that Scripture becomes the Word of God when God so wills, does not differ much from Calvin's view that the Holy Spirit only deigns at times to work graciously through the Word. In both cases, the important work of God is the one that occurs now, one that does not necessarily accompany the Bible. See, for instance, Calvin, *Institutes*, p. 247 (III xxiv 8).
not have a need for grace for exegesis. For Barth, however, there are difficulties on the path to understanding - the complexity of the subject matter, human sin, limits of methodology that preclude understanding, and the object of the Bible as greater than the knowing subject - hence exegesis needs grace. For Soloveitchik, man excels in his ability for majestic and creative thought without sin, while man's fall and loneliness are not epistemological and occur solely due to man's unconfronted modern life or the alienation of modernity.

An important question on Soloveitchik's use of Barth is that for Barth the Christian tradition speaks in a single voice. However, a single voice approach to Judaism impoverishes the rich diversity of the rabbinic and halakhic world, let alone the diversity of Jewish thought. Also, Barth's need for the spirit's interior witness runs dangerously close to the risk of privatizing the interpretive process. How does Soloveitchik avoid this danger? He does it by not granting the dialectic elements of the event any normative voice; the normative comes from the Neo-Kantian elements. It is interesting to note, nevertheless, how Soloveitchik formulated a Protestant dialectic Torah that incorporates their theological points: creativity, an emphasis on the Word, not the church, obedience, anticipation, Torah as event and grace, and freedom from law through intellect and volition.

Conclusion
Soloveitchik's approach is neither subjective like that of Franz Rosensweig, who wanted to encourage Jews to let the texts speak to their own personal experiences, nor detached like that of Moritz Steinschneider, who wanted the encounter with Jewish texts to be objective and philological. Instead, Soloveitchik offers a Neo-Kantian approach to knowledge in which one is personally involved in the

78 In an oral communication with Prof. Larry Kaplan in May 2004, Kaplan points out, based on his study of Soloveitchik and that of a recent graduate student of his, that Soloveitchik deletes Barth's need for grace in exegesis.
eternal typological aspects of revelation. One learns to internalize the Torah as an event, as a person, and with childlike freshness. One studies Torah with anticipation, humility, encounter, and with love. His hermeneutics are a special hermeneutic; a Jew does not treat Torah like other texts. Soloveitchik's position of avoidance of personal narrative sets itself up far from both Rosensweig's position and, more germane to the current discussions, Soloveitchik's position is distant from Ricouer's hermeneutic, which takes account of the narratives of our lives. Even though Soloveitchik's views hold emotional elements, his thought should not be confused with the enthusiasm of Hasidism (or Neo-Hasidism), the *eros* of Maimonides, the call to prophetic sympathy of Heschel, the narrative of Freudian analysis, or the narrative sense of self of modern literature and psychology.

A prime example of Soloveitchik's affective hermeneutic in practice is his depiction of the Passover Seder. In his portrayal, the Seder consists of an internalization of an eternal event, an educational event for the whole family with audio-visual effects, recognition of different types of approaches to learning, and a heightening of human joy and gratitude until we raise our voices in song.\(^8\) A further example is to be found in his lectures regarding the public reading of the Torah (*qeriat ha-Torah*), which he treats as revolving around the experience of eternal events. For example, he champions the practice of Maharam of Rothenberg to stand during Torah reading, since the reading represents a reenactment of the revelation at Sinai, where the Jews stood to receive the Torah.\(^8\) It is interesting to note that he did not actually follow this custom; the experiential reading of the text was more important than the practice.

These elements, collectively and individually, create for Soloveitchik an approach to Torah that removes Torah study from a secular activity to a special religious one. His reading of dialectic theology was enough

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to create an approach to the unique status of Torah that can combine heart and mind, human and divine, existentialism and Neo-Kantianism, historical events and abstraction, creativity and humility, freedom and submission - a functional and ideological use of dialectic theology that Soloveitchik sought and achieved.