

*ANNOUNCING A WAY OF BEING HUMAN AS A
RESPONSE TO TOTALITARIANISM:
THE CLARION CALL OF JACQUES MARITAIN AND
MARTIN BUBER*

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Based on the insightful and timely work of Jacques Maritain and Martin Buber, the initial purpose of this paper is to suggest an interpretation of totalitarianism in the twentieth century which establishes what may prove to be the fundamental cause of this intrinsically incestuous and destructive phenomenon. As viewed here, totalitarianism is a symptom which reveals a malignant way of being. All realities which are labeled totalitarian reflect a way of being which quite literally permeates every conceivable dimension of private and public existence. Prior to, during, and immediately following the events of World War II, Jacques Maritain, the Roman Catholic with a wife who converted to Roman Catholicism from Judaism, and Martin Buber, the Jew with a wife who converted to Judaism from Roman Catholicism, offered a profound insight into the modern way of attempting to be human. Being human today, based on the Enlightenment notions of autonomy and rationalism, entails a form of individualism which is controlled by appetite and a false sense of security through what claims to be rational and certain. In 1925, referring explicitly to Cartesian rationalism, Maritain argued that such certitude inevitably abdicates in favor of anti-intellectualism and voluntarism.¹ Indeed, all too often in our century the individual appetite serves the collective appetite in the name of some pseudo-scientific certainty. Ideology, the justification or rationalization for materialistic interests, is established, and we see that individualism and totalitarian collectivism are two sides of the same coin. As Buber pointed out in an address

¹ See Jacques Maritain, *Three Reformers; Luther, Descartes, Rousseau*, (London: Sheid and Ward, 1928), p. 85.—hereinafter referred to as *Three Reformers*.

to the students of three German-Swiss Universities in 1933, the self-serving Unique One applauded by Max Stirner in the nineteenth century becomes the group-serving We of today.² Likewise, Maritain forcefully asserted the premise that modern individualism and rationalism, arising from the Renaissance and Enlightenment, lead to modern totalitarianism.³ Such an interpretation of totalitarianism exposes as its cause a basic stand, a fundamental attitude or way of being which may offer us some understanding of the totalitarian mystique which encompasses every actual expression of totalitarianism in the world today.

This paper will also show that the establishment of truly human institutions in its turn is dependent on a way of being. Unlike the way of being which gives rise to totalitarianism, authentic human existence is characterized by spiritual transcendence and history. Being Hebraic and Christian, the humanism of Maritain and Buber is decidedly theocentric.⁴ What might still with meaning be referred to as modern secular humanism, precisely because it lacks the clear allegiance to God and transcendence found in these religious traditions, readily succumbs to the appetite and rationalization. For Maritain and Buber, being true to transcendence through tradition means being firmly established in history. And, for Maritain and Buber, history belongs to the human person.

In conclusion, this paper will look at the direction indicated by Maritain and Buber. For Maritain, the authentic ideal of every epoch is determined by concrete circumstances. Each “concrete historical ideal” serves as a beacon directing our steps toward the horizon of our possibilities. During the medieval period, based on the circumstance of Charlemagne, the unifying ideal of Christendom was the Holy Empire; and today, based on the present circumstance of humanity’s quest for democratic polity, the ideal is “. . . the *holy freedom* of the creature whom grace unites to God.”⁵ According to Buber, our current epoch is characterized by the insecurity which abandons us to the twin disasters of individualism and

² See Martin Buber, “The Question to the Single One,” in Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man*, trans. by Gregor Smith (London and Glasgow: Collins, the Fontana Library of Theology and Philosophy, 1973), pp. 61-62—hereinafter referred to as *Between*.

³ Maritain states or implies this thesis in a number of works; however, it is through an examination of his early analysis of Jean-Jacques Rousseau that we see it most clearly. See especially Maritain, *Three Reformers*, pp. 93-164.

⁴ Maritain explicitly develops the notion of theocentric humanism in opposition to anthropocentric humanism. See especially Jacques Maritain, *Integral Humanism: Temporal and Spiritual Problems of a New Christendom*, trans. by Joseph W. Evans (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973)—hereinafter referred to as *Integral*.

⁵ Maritain, *Integral*, p. 163.

collectivism. Buber was precise and succinct, referring to this pervasive insecurity which defines us as “homelessness.”⁶ This means that

... in this hour of history the crucial thing is not to possess a fixed doctrine, but rather to recognize eternal reality and out of its depth to be able to face the reality of the present. No way can be pointed to in this desert night. One’s purpose must be to help men of today to stand fast, with their soul in readiness, until the dawn breaks and a path becomes visible where none suspected it.⁷

But what enables us to “recognize eternal reality,” and “to stand fast” with our “soul in readiness?” What enables us to acknowledge our concrete ideal amid the fluctuations and uncertainties of historical existence? If history belongs to the human person, it is only because the future belongs to God.

I

According to Maritain and Buber, the crisis of modernity, which became so apparent during World War II, involves a shift away from God and the human person toward the individual alone. Such a shift away from transcendence and presence limits human perception and activity to one aspect of human reality. The material or physical, which encompasses the observable, objectifiable, and manipulable, although an inescapable component of human reality, becomes the whole of human reality.

It is in this context of exaggeration and exclusion that Maritain often speaks of the individual in opposition to the person, defining individuality as the restriction of human reality to material necessity or, perhaps more accurately, to egocentricity, for the operations of intellect and will, however curtailed, remain essential components of human reality. Maritain’s egocentric individual designates the modern way of being human through Thomistic terminology. Buber’s “I,” when confined to the “I-It,” appears to designate the same reality. As Maritain’s perception of human interaction maintains a dual focus, encompassing individual and person as essential, noting perversion only in the exaggeration of the former to the exclusion of the latter, so does Buber allow for the “I-It,” warning us only of the exclusion of the “I-Thou,” its eclipse through the ascendancy of self and object in modern society.⁸ And for Buber and Maritain, it is the actual truncated human being, the modern human being who

⁶ See Maurice Friedman, *Encounter on the Narrow Ridge: A Life of Martin Buber* (New York: Paragon House, 1991), p.245, 388.—hereinafter referred to as *Encounter*.

⁷ Buber, *For the Sake of Heaven*, trans. by Ludwig Lewisohn (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, Meridian Books, and Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1961), p. xiii.

⁸ For a complete understanding of the relationship between Buber’s distinctions, see Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1970).

attempts existence in the absence of transcendence and presence, who becomes the modern ideologue.

According to Maritain, Jean-Jacques Rousseau epitomizes the human being's decline toward mere individuality. And since the 1920's Maritain remained consistent in his use of Rousseau as the paradigm for the modern dilemma of the individual, who in seeking autonomy only succeeds in succumbing to tyranny.⁹ To be yourself, for Rousseau à la Maritain, meant that “. . . you must *be* your feeling, as God is His being.”¹⁰ Maritain asserted that

The way in which Jean-Jacques is himself is the final resignation of personality. By dint of following the endless inclinations of *material* individuality, he has completely broken the unity of the spiritual self.¹¹

And this sundering of “the spiritual self” becomes the prerequisite for totalitarianism.

What is most significant is the light Rousseau's doctrine sheds on the practical consequences of individualism. He wants freedom for the particular human being, and paves the way for totalitarian dictatorship. It is precisely because Rousseau neglects the person, and seeks to liberate the individual alone, that the paradox of the General Will and the single dictator arises.

In a lecture delivered in the United States, in 1938, Maritain referred to Rousseau's formula of the Social Contract, the myth of the General Will and its consequences:

. . . since every individual is born free, his dignity demands that he should *obey only himself*. Naturally, as everything immediately gets out of order, and as one must live all the same, and as, moreover, the bourgeois class needs order so that it may prosper in business, the dialectic of this democracy leads to the formula of the *Social Contract*: ‘to find a form of association . . . through which every man, united with all others, should nevertheless obey only himself and remain as free as before.’ . . . This formula inevitably leads to the myth of the General Will, in which the will of each is mystically annihilated in order to arise transfigured; to the myth of Law as the expression of Number, and not of reason and justice; to the myth of authority considered, not only as coming from the multitude, but as the proper and inalienable attribute of the multitude; and, finally, this formula leads to totalitarian dictatorship.¹²

But according to Maritain, it is within the camp of the great rationalists, from Descartes to Hegel, that the claim of scientific certitude becomes the bulwark of future ideology. Maritain accuses Cartesian and Hegelian rationalism of placing

⁹ See Maritain, “Jean Jacques Rousseau et la pensée moderne,” *Annales de l'Institut Supérieur de Philosophie de Louvain*, V (1921), and “Deux idées modernes,” *La Revue Universelle*, XIII (May 1, 1923).

¹⁰ Maritain, *Three Reformers*, p. 99.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

¹² Maritain, *Scholasticism and Politics*, trans. by Mortimer J. Adler (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1954), pp. 74-75.

a mantle of necessity and even respectability atop the egocentric cravings of individualism.¹³ He credits Hegel with “. . . the original formula of political totalitarianism,”¹⁴ and respects the rebellion of Kierkegaard and Marx. Maritain clearly acknowledges the capitalist milieu as the first issue of the modern way of being, and applauds the Marxist attack on bourgeois individualism. However, Marx, the atheist, was unable to reach authentic transcendence and presence.¹⁵ Finally, with the totalitarianism of the right, and primarily with Mussolini and Hitler, we witness the unmasking of the modern human being.¹⁶

Addressing the Latin-American Seminar on Social Studies in August, 1942, Maritain congratulated Nietzsche, Freud, and Marx for unmasking the modern human being, i.e. for disclosing the sin which lies within the modern way of attempting to be human. These three men played a prophetic role in contemporary society. However, Maritain appeals to another prophet, Fyodor Michailovich Dostoevsky. Referring to Dostoevsky’s novel, *The Possessed*, and in this way pointing a finger at the violence in the heart of the revolutionary crowd, whether it be of the left or right, Maritain notes that “. . . a deeper abyss than animality appears in the unmasking of man. Demonic forces are revealed.”¹⁷

And it is precisely here, at the point where Maritain acknowledges the annihilating aspect of modernity, that the prophetic views of Jacques Maritain and Martin Buber begin to coalesce. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, sin is

¹³ Maritain deals with Descartes and Hegel in a number of books and articles. See especially *Three Reformers*, pp. 53-89; *The Dream of Descartes*, trans. by Mabelle L. Andison, Philosophical Library (New York: F. Hubner & Co., Inc., 1944); and *Moral Philosophy: An Historical and Critical Survey of the Great Systems* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1964), pp. 164-166, and pp. 212-214—hereinafter referred to as *Moral Philosophy*.

¹⁴ Maritain, *Moral Philosophy*, p. 164.

¹⁵ Maritain deals with Marx, Marxism, and related topics in a number of books and articles. See especially *Integral*, pp. 80-82; *Moral Philosophy*, p. 214; *The Person and the Common Good*, trans. by John J. Fitzgerald (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), pp. 90-105—hereinafter referred to as *Person*; and “The Crisis of Civilization,” in *Pour la justice, articles et discours (1940-1945)* (New York: Editions de la Maison Française, 1945)—hereinafter referred to as “Crisis.”

¹⁶ Maritain renounces all forms of totalitarianism, for example see *Person*, pp. 90-105. However, Maritain asserts that even under the dictatorship of Salazar, Portugal never became a totalitarian state. Furthermore, on a number of occasions Maritain praised the relationship between Church and State brought about by the Concordat between Salazar’s Portugal and Vatican City, although he strictly maintained that even Salazar’s government ought not to be imitated. See *Scholasticism and Politics*, pp. 47-48; pp. 47-48; *Integral*, p. 277, note 11; *Man and the State*, Charles R. Walgreen Foundation Lectures, Phoenix Books (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 163, note 21; and *The Rights of Man and Natural Law*, trans. by Doris C. Anson (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1944), p. 19, note 1—hereinafter referred to as *Rights*.

¹⁷ Maritain, “Crisis,” p. 144.

alienation. Alienation from God, ourselves, our neighbors, and indeed from the whole of nature, so forthrightly presented in the Book of Genesis as sin, becomes the very cornerstone of modernity. Lurking behind the aesthetic gropings of the mere individual, and the rationalization for materialistic interests which is ideology, lies the solitude and desperation which are the hallmarks of sin. According to Buber, with the scattering of the illusions of individualism and collectivism, this solitude and desperation will give rise to increasing cruelty and violence.¹⁸

For Buber, the unmasking of the modern human being reveals mere mechanism, the golem or being without a soul, a sheer mechanism which presents a façade of actuality or presence in the world.¹⁹ Referring specifically to the mask which was Napoleon in the world, which could be Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, or any lesser slave of ideology, Buber noted in his *I and Thou* that such a one is “. . . the demonic You for whom nobody can become a You.”²⁰ And for such a one the crowd “. . . goes into ecstasies over the commanding brow and has no inkling of the signs inscribed upon the forehead like digits upon the face of a clock.”²¹ Rather than succumb to the spell, Buber urges us to apprehend the clockwork mechanism devoid of authentic presence and transcendence. He calls us to forthrightly acknowledge that through the eye holes of the mask no one remains to be encountered. Such acknowledgment can lead to an increase in nihilistic cruelty and violence as already mentioned, or it can lead us back to God and each other.

Attacking the “Unique One” of Max Stirner, Buber parallels much of what Maritain states concerning that individualism which begets totalitarianism, which is especially evident in Maritain’s treatment of Rousseau. Buber notes that

. . . many a rigid collective We, which rejects a superior authority, is easily understood as a translation from the speech of the Unique One into that of the Group-I which acknowledges nothing but itself—carried out against Stirner’s intention, who hotly opposes any plural version.²²

Buber’s attack on rationalization and ideology appears to be even more pervasive than Maritain’s. In much the same way as Maritain, Buber credits Hegel with the formula of totalitarianism and with legitimizing the status quo. And Marx is chastised for continuing the rationalist quest for self-liberation through maximizing the centralizing power of government.²³ The very way of

¹⁸ See Friedman, *Encounter*, pp. 246-247.

¹⁹ See Buber, *I and Thou*, pp. 92-95, and 117-119.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

²² Buber, “The Question to the Single One,” in *Between*, pp. 61-62.

²³ See Buber, “The Validity and Limitation of the Political Principle,” in *Pointing the Way*, ed. and trans. by Maurice S. Friedman (New York: Schocken Books, 1974),

thinking which is characteristic of Cartesianism and Hegelianism is perceived in terms of the abyss. According to Buber, we must learn to tread the narrow ridge, where concrete encounter avoids the abstractions and dogmatic dichotomies of our time. As Maurice Friedman augments:

The abysses on either side of the narrow ridge tended to become symbolic for Buber: the evasion of the concrete situation through one or another type of abstraction—psychologism, historicism, technicism, philosophizing, magic, gnosis, or the false either/ors of individualism versus collectivism, freedom versus discipline, action versus grace.²⁴

Although one may with Maritain acknowledge the prophetic roles of Freud and Marx, one commentator correctly summarizes Buber's critique of modernity, as an epoch of homelessness, in terms of Buber's criticism of Freud and Marx:

In this century we live in just such an epoch of homelessness, and have pursued two radically different routes for personal and social renovation: the appeal to the collective, the system, the institution; and the appeal to the realm of private ecstasy, the domain of feeling, the cultivation of the interior life. These two types of salvation, the economic and the psychological, the collective and the private, could perhaps, in an extravagant way, be personified by saying that for Buber the whole of the twentieth century can be divided between Marx and Freud. Neither route leads to our becoming at home in the world.²⁵

And as we have seen, for Maritain and Buber, there are not "two radically different routes for personal and social renovation," but rather, two sides of the same solipsistic coin.

However, Maritain and Buber clearly acknowledged the Janus faced nature of modernity. Maritain deeply appreciated the truly democratic aspirations of the peoples and the prevalent concern for human rights and dignity. And for Buber as well, the acknowledgment of sin or alienation in modernity can lead to the recognition of who we really are, and to the establishment of authentic community.²⁶

II

According to Maritain and Buber, a proper response to totalitarianism must involve a way of being in opposition to the atomistic individualism of our age. Being with the other must be established as the foundation for a new society. In

pp. 212-215—hereinafter referred to as *Pointing*.

²⁴ Friedman, *Encounter*, p. 44.

²⁵ Donald L. Berry, *Mutuality: The Vision of Martin Buber*, SUNY Series in Philosophy, Robert C. Neville, Editor (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), p. ix.

²⁶ See Friedman, *Encounter*, p. 247.

this way, respect for the dignity and rights of each will define the very existence of each.

According to Maritain, the person cannot neglect society, because it is *only* through society that personality develops. Domestic and civil society pave the way toward the society which is the mystical body of Christ. Maritain upholds the modern concern with human rights and personal dignity, expressly establishing “. . . the right to personal liberty or the right to conduct one’s own life as master of oneself and of one’s acts, responsible for them before God and the law of the community.”²⁷ However, according to Maritain, it is not in the multiplication of choice, as in modern liberal society, but rather in the acknowledgment of the transcendent aspirations of personality and the achievement of spontaneous communication within community that our authentic autonomy resides. Such spontaneity and the presence of God coalesce in our terminal freedom.²⁸

Martin Buber’s position is akin to Maritain’s insistence that authentic democratic community must acknowledge and even serve the transcendent aspirations of personality, which in turn foster viable relations in community and a healthy democracy. Throughout the 1920s and 30s, the decades which witnessed the ascendancy of the totalitarian mystique, Buber spoke forthrightly of human reality as fundamentally transcendence channeled through authentic dialogue:

Dialogue between mere individuals is only a sketch, only in dialogue between persons is the sketch filled in. But by what could a man from being an individual so really become a person as by the strict and sweet experiences of dialogue which teach him the boundless contents of the boundary.²⁹

And the society of a nation is the elasticity, cohesive yet flexible, wherein dialogue which is spontaneous, which is free and authentic dialogue can emerge. Such society ought to be protected from the political exigencies of the State. Ideally, and here one is reminded of Maritain’s *Education at the Crossroads* which appeared after World War II, not political propaganda, but social education is necessary to further personality, such education

. . . seeks to arouse and to develop in the minds of its pupils the spontaneity of fellowship which is innate in all unravaged human souls and which harmonizes very well with the development of personal existence and personal thought.³⁰

In turn, authentic community is built on the responsibility of dialogue or personal development in society. In his “The Question to the Single One,”

²⁷ Maritain, *Rights*, p. 60.

²⁸ See Maritain, *Person*; and *Freedom in the Modern World*, trans. by Richard O’Sullivan, K.C. (New York: Gordian Press, Inc., 1971), especially pp.51-52.

²⁹ Buber, “Dialogue,” in *Between*, p. 39.

³⁰ Buber, “Society and the State,” in *Pointing*, p. 176. See also, Jacques Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads*, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1960).

which, although consciously directed against the very foundation of modern individualism and totalitarianism, was to the amazement of Buber himself published in Nazi Germany in 1936, Buber sought to extend the responsibility of Kierkegaard's "Single One" into the social sphere of the others. Buber noted that "True community and true commonwealth will be realized only to the extent to which the Single Ones become real out of whose responsible life the body politic is renewed."³¹

For Buber, there is an instinct

. . . greater than the believers in the 'libido' realize: it is the longing for the world to become present to us as a person, which goes out to us as we to it, which chooses and recognizes us as we do it, which is confirmed in us as we in it.³²

Buber is in agreement with Maritain that nurturing this fundamental instinct towards experiencing communion is the goal of formal education and especially the family. It is the only way to establish just and loving relationships, and to achieve authentic dialogue which makes such relationship possible. And, as only a Jew could, Buber, in his "The Question to the Single One," focuses on the most primordial human relationship as the key to authentic existence within the body politic:

Marriage, essentially understood, brings one into an essential relation to the 'world;' more precisely, to the body politic, to its malformation and its genuine form, to its sickness and its health. Marriage, as the decisive union of one with another, confronts one with the body politic and its destiny— man can no longer shirk that confrontation in marriage, he can only prove himself in it or fail.³³

In agreement with Maritain, Buber argued that authentic freedom is to be equated with the spontaneity of giving and receiving. It is through marriage, the family, and our entrance thereby into civil society that we attain the truly effective and responsible freedom which alone counts in the world. The transformation of society begins from the ground up, wherever authentic community exists. Maritain respected the efforts of Saul Alinsky in the United States; and even within the Church, Maritain had hope for the "little flocks," small intimate groups which will renew the larger extended family which is the Church.³⁴ And Buber came to hope for a larger federation arising from the organic unity of small integral communities.³⁵ The living transcendence and presence of each, encountered through meeting by way of loving, working, and praying together, enables history to be fulfilled. Herein lies our salvation, as Buber noted in a rather remarkable statement:

³¹ Buber, "The Question to the Single One," in *Between*, p. 108.

³² Buber, "Education," in *Between*, p. 114.

³³ Buber, "The Question to the Single One," in *Between*, p. 83.

³⁴ See Jacques Maritain, *Reflections on America* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), pp. 164-166; and *Integral*, p. viii, note.

³⁵ See Friedman, *Encounter*, pp. 299-300.

Marriage is the exemplary bond, it carries us as does none other into the greater bondage, and only as those who are bound can we reach the freedom of the children of God. Expressed with a view to the man, the woman certainly stands ‘in a dangerous rapport to finitude,’ and finitude is certainly the danger, for nothing threatens us so sharply as that we remain clinging to it. But our hope of salvation is forged on this very danger, for our human way to the infinite leads only through fulfilled finitude.³⁶

It is well known that for Buber God is found between each of us whenever and wherever authentic meeting and dialogue occur. However, this meeting on the narrow ridge, between the abysses of modernity, can only occur where the other is acknowledged and accepted precisely as the other. We need what Buber calls “inclusion,” perceiving a situation as the other perceives it, as a prerequisite for authentic dialogue.³⁷ We require in some fashion, however obscured and occasional, the reassurance and conviction which can come only from the loving presence of God, whether found in our lived moments together or in the desert night, which always brings us back to each other and for each other. And, for Maritain and Buber, the authentic way of being human given us today most certainly involves the otherness of the other in a way which no previous epoch has.

III

For Maritain and Buber, acknowledgment of the right to existence and freedom of conscience of the other in no way implies relativism. It is precisely because of their commitment to tradition that each is able to appreciate the transcendence of the person within each concrete situation, within each moment lived together. Jacques Maritain was a convert to Roman Catholicism who remained loyal to that tradition out of the deepest personal conviction. Martin Buber discovered his Judaism as his own, accepting only what was tried and immediately accessible through personal experience.³⁸ It is significant that Raïssa, the wife of Jacques Maritain, was a sincere convert to Roman Catholicism from Judaism out of a profoundly mystical appreciation of the great saints in the Roman Catholic tradition.³⁹ And Paula, the wife of Martin Buber, was a convert to Judaism from Roman Catholicism who sincerely dedicated her life to the Judaism and cultural Zionism of her husband.⁴⁰ And it was precisely the nature of their religious commitment which enabled each couple to acknowledge that upholding the dignity and

³⁶Buber, “The Question to the Single One,” in *Between*, p. 84.

³⁷See Friedman, *Encounter*, pp. 67, 70-71.

³⁸See *Ibid.*, pp. 347-348.

³⁹See Raïssa Maritain, *We Have Been Friends Together and Adventures in Grace: The Memoirs of Raïssa Maritain*, trans. by Julie Kernan, Image Books (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1961).

⁴⁰See Friedman, *Encounter*, especially pp. 28-30.

rights of every person was their historical task. It is the strength of the Judeo-Christian tradition which enables one to stand for every person in the world today.

Certainly the revival of religious fervor which marks our time was already evident during the conflict in Spain which preceded World War II. And it is no wonder that the events of the Spanish Civil War became the dress rehearsal for subsequent European and eventually global conflict. The ills of modern liberalism cannot be overcome in this way! In our present historical climate, as Maritain warned, people would corrupt the Holy Empire of a bygone age into the mere Empire of the totalitarian state.⁴¹ This tendency was evident in Franco's Spain, but not only then and there. An article published in 1996, authored by two scholars from the University of Toronto working in collaboration, attributes the current growth of religious fundamentalism in America to what might be called the unholy alliance of modern rationalism stemming from the Enlightenment and religion seeking certitude.⁴²

Buber's appreciation of Hasidism enabled him to see that preparation for the arrival of the Messiah involves *teshuvah*, the complete turning or conversion to God away from sin or alienation.⁴³ We must repent! And our age has disclosed in a fuller way the extent of our sin. Faith in God must never degenerate into the rationalization of self-interest or materialistic concerns. Buber criticized Christianity for establishing faith in doctrine as opposed to *emunah*, the Hebraic concept of trust in meeting and disclosure, in mystery and revelation.⁴⁴

According to Buber, today our *teshuvah* or turning to God clearly involves striving to lay the foundation for a truly loving and inclusive society while awaiting the future transformation of the world which can come from God alone:

Only in the building of the foundation of the former I myself may take a hand, but the latter may already be there in all stillness when I awake some morning, or its

⁴¹See Maritain's introduction to Alfred Mendizabal, *The Martyrdom of Spain: Origins of a Civil War*, trans. by Charles Hope Lumley (London: Geoffrey Bles; The Centenary Press, 1938), pp. 1-48; and *Integral*, p. 277.

⁴²See James K. A. Smith and Shane R. Cudney, "Postmodern Freedom and the Growth of Fundamentalism: Was the Grand Inquisitor Right?" *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses*, Vol. 25, Number 1, 1996.

⁴³See Friedman, *Encounter*, p. 61; and Helmut Kuhn, "Dialogue in Expectation," in *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*, ed. by Paul Arthur Schilpp and Maurice Friedman, The Library of Living Philosophers, Vol. XII (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1967), especially pp. 654-655— hereinafter referred to as *Philosophy*.

⁴⁴See Martin Buber, *Two Types of Faith*, trans. by Norman P. Goldhawk (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961); Friedman, *Encounter*, pp. 79, 196, 315-316, 318, 386-387, 434; and Emil Brunner, "Judaism and Christianity in Buber," in *Philosophy*, pp. 309-318.

storm may tear me from sleep. And both belong together, the 'turning' and the 'redemption,' both belong together, God knows how, I do not need to Know it. That I call hope.⁴⁵

The direction indicated by Maritain and Buber points away from self-interest and its rationalization toward openness to an encounter with the mystery of otherness. On the narrow ridge, Buber struggled for decades in Israel, seeking to establish a rapprochement between Arab and Jew.⁴⁶ And Maritain struggled for the dignity and legitimacy of each in the bowels of a Europe torn between the opposition of conservative and liberal, too often degenerating into the hatred and revenge which belongs to the reactionary and the radical. Either our epoch will become the dead end where sin or alienation will triumph in an orgy of destruction, or our epoch will become a bridge into tomorrow where the promise of the Judeo-Christian tradition will be fulfilled. This is our historical moment, and it can be beautiful! For Maritain and Buber, commitment means an allegiance to meeting and disclosure, to mystery and revelation. For each, the self-interest of individuals and the totalitarian mystique will be overcome through faith in God who is the personal Lord of each.

Maritain and Buber point the way toward authentic human existence through acknowledging what is valuable throughout the human story. If modernity is plagued by inadequate notions of autonomy and rationalism emerging from the Renaissance and Enlightenment, modernity is also blessed with an explosion of truly human concerns and creativity. Maritain and Buber welcomed the authentically human in modern humanism. However, liberalism today will not engender liberation tomorrow, for the ambience of modernity favors totalitarianism. According to Maritain and Buber, what is required in a postmodern age is an integral or true humanism. This humanism will no longer seek to establish itself on the shoulders of Enlightenment thinkers alone, but rather, it will seek authentic human liberation by building a bridge into the future from our historical foundations through the Enlightenment and modernity. Such an approach will omit nothing of value in our human story. However, it will most certainly seek to disclose and dispel the vampire of exclusivity and domination. Reaching down into the rich soil surrounding their religious roots, Maritain and Buber, the Roman Catholic and the Jew, believed that they detected the nutrients from which would eventually arise an integral or true humanism, a theocentric humanism unlike the anthropocentric humanism of modernity. Each proclaimed liberation for all. For Maritain and Buber, transcendent spirituality meant the denial of brutish appetite and mere rationalization today. It also meant the recognition of pride and bigotry from within each tradition, the Roman

⁴⁵ Friedman, *Encounter*, p. 320.

⁴⁶ See *Ibid.*, pp. 268-303, 409-435.

Catholic and the Jewish, both today and yesterday. Having acknowledged the human everywhere and in every time, Maritain and Buber proclaimed the human person, historical and transcendent.