

## Soloveitchick Engagement with Western Philosophy 2

In my first lecture, I presented the two philosophical pillars upon which Halakhic Man is based, neo-Kantianism and the irreducibility of the individual. Both ideas appear in Hermann Cohen's writings and appear in what is referred to as his "early" period and "later" period. The Rav presents them in the two parts of Halakhic Man and in the footnotes locates them in two philosophical traditions. The first appears in the central footnote of part one and is called the "objective, cognitive" school. The second appears in the central footnote of the second part where he speaks of the development of man from "inauthentic existence" to "authentic existence". In the first footnote he attacks the "the rebellion against the authority of objective scientific cognition which has found its expression in the...phenomenological, existential, and antiscientific school of Heidegger" whereas in the second he lauds the philosophy of Heidegger which symbolizes the norm "which aspires to the complete realization of man in the ongoing course of his ontic (should read ontological) transformation."

In contrast to Halakhic Man where the Rav leaves these two perspectives independent of each other, in Halakhic Mind he not only explicitly embraces pluralism but creates an integrated system wherein the objective and subjective complement each other.

In my first essay on Halakhic Mind I outlined the turn in Continental philosophy in the beginning of the Twentieth century from Kantian metaphysics to the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl which spearheaded the emergence of Existentialism. This turn was the background of German philosophy during the Rav's studies in Berlin and is the philosophical grounding of Halakhic Mind. The turn I discussed in Hermann Cohen's thought was also very much connected as is evident in the writings of Franz Rosenzweig. (See Peter Eli Gordon's Rosenzweig and Heidegger for a detailed study).

The Rav himself writes about this in Part One

Philosophical pride has prompted metaphysicians to venture forth on a new non-scientific road and proclaim the renaissance of a philosophical world-interpretation. These philosophers suddenly became aware that apart from a quantitative universe there exists a qualitative one that has never been explored by classical philosophy. The variegated, colorful world, which for so long had remained in primordial loneliness, became within a relatively short time, the favorite hunt of the philosopher. The world intriguing the contemporary philosopher is not that which is "public" and constructed, but the "private", intuited one. 12 HM 13

In footnote 12 he lists the "phenomenologists like Husserl". (HM 107).om there

From there the Rav proceeds to propose a philosophy of "pluralism".

Hence, the alleged homogeneity of the logical category was but a naïve illusion on the part of the classical philosopher. Sober epistemological facts demonstrate the heterogeneity and pluralistic character of the most basic cognitive methods. (HM 14).

In Part Two the Rav develops his theme of pluralism in greater detail. There he refers to the limitations of Neo-Kantianism (HM 21) with its "unlimited faith in the monastic character of the cognitive process" and the need for an additional "spiritual" dimension of "becoming", citing

Heraclitus and Husserl (HM 29) to allow for the existence and belief of a mysterious, pluralistic Absolute (HM 28).

In Part Three the Rav turns to the other side of the coin of Part Two expressing the dangers of an overemphasis on the subjective, writing that “the cognition of this world is of the innermost essence of the religious experience” (HM 46) 62

In Part Four, the final part, the Rav makes use of the ideas discussed in the proceeding parts in order to construct an original philosophy of the halacha which he calls retrospective analysis. This analysis is a type of phenomenological reduction, which seeks to arrive at the subjective religious idea which underlies the objective halakhic act. (HM 85,86).