

## *What Is behind God's Name? Martin Buber's and Franz Rosenzweig's Reflections on the Name of God*

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What meaning does God's name convey? This was a question Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig had to answer when working on their translation of the Bible. They noticed that, as certain crucial biblical verses suggest, there is indeed a meaning behind God's name in the Bible. Thus, an important moment in their joint translation was their account of the self-revelation of God in Exod. III, together with the question of how best to translate the tetragrammaton YHWH—the name of God. This article will explore their decisions, based both on their dialogue concerning the translation of the Bible, and on their papers, especially Rosenzweig's well-known article 'Der Ewige' ('The Eternal') and Buber's response to it. Less well known is the fact that there exist two unpublished typescripts by Martin Buber reflecting on the name of God, which will also be taken into consideration. Contrary to the received view that the choice of the personal pronoun to transliterate the name of God in the Bible translation was mainly Rosenzweig's, I will show that it was actually a joint decision in which both thinkers' philosophies,<sup>1</sup> and a question that had haunted Buber since his youth, played an important part. The choice of the personal pronoun is an answer to this question, addressing the omnipresent God, the eternal THOU, in a kind of cultic acclamation.

As will become evident, it would be helpful to begin by taking a look at the background to this choice. It was in his last essay, 'The Eternal' (1929),<sup>2</sup> that Franz

<sup>1</sup>Of course, Buber's and Rosenzweig's philosophies, best expressed in *I and Thou* and the *Star of Redemption*, respectively, did not appear in a vacuum. Although the Jewish tradition to which they belonged was pertinent to their study, both thinkers give credit to philosophical influences on their works: Buber in 'Zur Geschichte des dialogischen Prinzips' (in Martin Buber (ed.), *Martin Buber Werke*, vol. I: *Schriften zur Philosophie*, Munich–Heidelberg 1962, pp. 293–305), and Rosenzweig in his article 'Das neue Denken' (idem, *Der Mensch und sein Werk: Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. III, *Zweistromland. Kleinere Schriften zu Glauben und Denken*, ed. by Reinhold and Annemarie Mayer, Dordrecht 1984, pp. 129–161). It would certainly be worth elaborating on these influences in another article.

<sup>2</sup>Franz Rosenzweig, 'Der Ewige', in Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, *Die Schrift und ihre Verdeutschung*, Berlin 1936, pp. 184–210. I will quote from the English translation by Lawrence

Rosenzweig changed his mind about the issue of translating the name of God. While in his *Star of Redemption* he had almost always used ‘the Eternal’ for the transliteration of the name of God,<sup>3</sup> he now favoured another option: the use of the personal pronoun. To be sure, Rosenzweig is silent about this change. In his article, his critique of the use of ‘the Eternal’ is not aimed at his own works, but at Moses Mendelssohn’s translation. Given the fact that Mendelssohn’s position had once been Rosenzweig’s own, it is perhaps not surprising that Rosenzweig acknowledges that Mendelssohn also recognized something crucial. He recognized, says Rosenzweig, that the translator’s account of the translation of the name of God is not to be found at the first appearance of this name in Scripture (Gen. II:4), but only at the moment of God’s self-revelation in Exod. III:14.<sup>4</sup> Hence, the choice of a suitable rendering of God’s name is decided at this particular verse.

It is now clear that, when focusing on the present task, it is most important to analyse Buber’s and Rosenzweig’s exchanges on Exod. III during their translation of the Bible before attempting to elucidate their thoughts by interpreting their remarks in the essays mentioned above.

## 1. ROSENZWEIG’S THOUGHTS IN DIALOGUE WITH BUBER

Given the task in hand, one cannot limit the analysis to Exod. III. When reading the archived exchanges between Buber and Rosenzweig, one soon realizes that it is necessary to start at the ‘beginning’. Anna Elisabeth Bauer gives a very succinct account of these beginnings and of the development of Rosenzweig’s thoughts on how to translate the name of God in the Bible,<sup>5</sup> drawing on his letter to Martin Goldner of 23 June 1927.<sup>6</sup> According to this source—once again diverging from the information given in Rosenzweig’s later systematic account in ‘The Eternal’—Buber’s and Rosenzweig’s reflections regarding the translation of God’s name had

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Rosenwald with Everett Fox (Franz Rosenzweig, ‘The Eternal’, in Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, *Scripture and Translation*, Bloomington 1994, p. 99ff).

<sup>3</sup> Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 5th edn., Frankfurt a. M. 1996, pp. 196, 198, 281, 303, 356, 442, 471; cf. Nadine Schmahl, *Das Tetragramm als Sprachfigur*, Tübingen 2009, p. 75. Unfortunately, only the recent English translation of the *Star* by Barbara Galli (Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, transl. by Barbara E. Galli, Madison, WI 2005) has preserved this essential feature, unlike the earlier one by William W. Hallo (Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, transl. from the 2nd edn. (1930) by William W. Hallo, Notre Dame, IN 1985).

<sup>4</sup> Rosenzweig, ‘The Eternal’, p. 102.

<sup>5</sup> Anna Elisabeth Bauer, *Rosenzweigs Sprachdenken im “Stern der Erlösung” und in seiner Korrespondenz mit Martin Buber zur Verdeutschung der Schrift*, Frankfurt a. M. 1992, p. 423ff. Another, more fleshed out (and hence more readable) account is presented by Hanna Liss, in ‘Entkontextualisierung als Programm. Die Bedeutung des göttlichen Namens bei Franz Rosenzweig und die pronominale “Ersetzung” des Tetragramms’, in Klaus Herrmann, Margarete Schlüter, and Giuseppe Veltri (eds), *Jewish Studies Between the Disciplines*, Leiden 2003, pp. 373–404. The English reader is directed to the presentation given by Barbara E. Galli, in ‘Rosenzweig and the Name for God’, in *Modern Judaism*, 14, no. 1 (February 1994), pp. 63–86.

<sup>6</sup> English translation: Franz Rosenzweig, ‘A Letter to Martin Goldner’, in Buber and Rosenzweig, *Scripture and Translation*, pp. 189–192.

already started with their notes on the book of beginnings, namely Genesis, because it was here of course that they first faced the problem of how to translate the tetragrammaton and the word *Elohim*.

### The need for a new translation

It was Rosenzweig<sup>7</sup> who insisted on starting with a revision of Luther's Bible.<sup>8</sup> When beginning the Bible translation with Buber, he was of course aware that the tetragrammaton (יהוה) is a name, and *Elohim* (אלהים) simply a term. However, in Luther's translation, it is also a term, namely 'the Lord', that represents the tetragrammaton, and another term, 'God', that stands for *Elohim*. Rosenzweig initially adopted Luther's translation, but soon realized it was wrong: "We said to ourselves that actually we should do the reverse—should say 'God' for the name, 'Lord' for *Elohim*. 'God' has for us something of the character of a name, while 'Lord' has the generalized, conceptual quality of *Elohim*."<sup>9</sup> Still, he felt some support was necessary from Luther's side to consider these changes, and thus continued: "Indeed, Luther evidently also instinctively translates chapters 2 and 3 [of Genesis] *Hashem Elohim* [יהוה אלהים] with 'God the Lord'."<sup>10</sup>

It was already clear to Rosenzweig, however, that a simple exchange of terms would not suffice: "Yet as we saw it, with such a transposition the problem would only be made more apparent, not solved."<sup>11</sup> The need for a new translation of the name of God, different from Luther's account, became obvious.

Important to realizing this fact was another verse of Genesis, chapter 9, verse 26, which reads in Hebrew: ברוך יהוה אלהי שם. Several of Buber's attempts to translate this verse are documented, among others "Blessed be the Lord, God to Schem",<sup>12</sup> a version used by Mendelssohn in his translation,<sup>13</sup> and one which Buber favours. Rosenzweig replies: "Why 'to Schem'? It is surely not meant to be that. The play on names alone makes that clear."<sup>14</sup> To understand this remark, one should note that *Schem* in Hebrew also means 'name', and a 'man of name' in Hebrew

<sup>7</sup> Hitherto, it has been suggested that it was mainly Rosenzweig's idea to use the personal pronouns (Schmahl, *Das Tetragramm als Sprachfigur*, p. 172, annot. 128, and p. 184; Liss, 'Entkontextualisierung als Programm', p. 374, especially annot. 4). I will question whether this assumption is correct, but to begin with I will follow the trail of research laid down by my predecessors.

<sup>8</sup> Franz Rosenzweig, Letter to Martin Buber (25 January 1925), idem, *Der Mensch und sein Werk. Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. I: *Briefe und Tagebücher*, pt. 2: 1918–1929, ed. by Rachel Rosenzweig and Edith Rosenzweig-Scheinmann, The Hague 1979, p. 1021.

<sup>9</sup> Rosenzweig, 'A Letter to Martin Goldner', p. 189.

<sup>10</sup> My translation. Rosenzweig, Letter to Martin Goldner (23 June 1927), in *Briefe und Tagebücher*, pt. 2, pp. 1158–1162, here p. 1159: "So übersetzt ja auch Luther Kapitel 2 und 3 [der Genesis] יהוה אלהים offenbar aus diesem Gefühl heraus, mit Gott der Herr."

<sup>11</sup> My translation. Rosenzweig, Letter to Martin Goldner (23 June 1927), p. 1159: "Aber mit einer solchen Umkehrung wäre natürlich, so sahen wir, das Problem nur deutlich gemacht, nicht gelöst."

<sup>12</sup> My translation. Original: "Gesegnet sei der Herr, Gott dem Schem". Bauer, *Rosenzweigs Sprachdenken*, p. 426.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> My translation. Original: "Warum denn: dem Sem? Es ist doch sicher nicht so gemeint. Schon wegen dem Namensspiel nicht." Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Mensch und sein Werk. Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. IV: *Sprachdenken im Übersetzen*, pt. 2: *Arbeitspapiere zur Verdeutschung der Schrift*, ed. by Rachel Bat-Adam, Dordrecht 1984, p. 40.

means a famous man.<sup>15</sup> This would result in a translation such as “The famous God”—that cannot be replicated,”<sup>16</sup> as Rosenzweig continues. He points out that he is largely put off by the term ‘Lord’, which he regards as “impossible in such a word of prayer.”<sup>17</sup> He continues: “How will this work in the psalms, then! Yet it cannot be avoided. GOD [in capital letters] reeks of the minister’s religion. One would actually have to use ‘God’ and ‘Lord’ in quite the opposite way to the way one usually does.”<sup>18</sup>

### Experimenting with pronouns

Rosenzweig then started considering the use of the personal pronoun for the translation of God’s name, without being able to say why.<sup>19</sup> He saw a similarity with the term ‘the Lord’, which likewise is not a proper name befitting a particular person. Only the use of the definite article implies which lord is being referred to.<sup>20</sup> The same is true of personal pronouns: only through capitalization and majuscules does it become clear which ‘He’ is meant, namely God. Rosenzweig writes:

‘The Lord’ is tolerable everywhere that ‘Yahweh’ is not entirely intolerable. [. . .] If there were no genitives, I would propose: HE, YOU, I etc. Yet HIS people, HIS law etc. is no replacement for the genitive. Theologically, the majuscules do not reek here; it is simply something that has never been undertaken before. Moreover, it sounds too mysterious; but that can be attributed to the fact that God is called by a name. And that the mystery is explicated on thousands of sheets of paper and yet remains a mystery, that is of course the essence of this book and that is the reason why it is—the Book of Revelation.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 41, annot. 1.

<sup>16</sup> My translation. Original: “Der berühmte Gott—was ja nicht nachzubilden ist”. Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>17</sup> My translation. Original: “In so einem Gebetswort wird es ganz unmöglich.” Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> My translation. Original: “Wie soll das erst in den Psalmen werden! Aber es ist nicht zu vermeiden. GOTT stinkt nach der Pfarrerreligion. Eigentlich müßte man Gott und Herr grade umgekehrt anwenden wie man es tut.” Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> It may well be that the background of his philosophy, laid down in the *Star of Redemption*, played an important role. When Rosenzweig and Buber became acquainted, Buber read the *Star*, and Rosenzweig was rather frustrated, at least initially, that Buber took more interest in its third than in its second part (see Rosenzweig’s letter to Edith Rosenzweig of 4 January 1922, in *Briefe und Tagebücher*, pt. 2, pp. 736–737, here p. 736). This shows (as do the Gritli letters, available at <http://argobooks.org/gritli/index.html>, accessed 19 September 2014) that for Rosenzweig the central section of the *Star*, where he developed his new dialogical thinking, was the essential part.

<sup>20</sup> Bauer, p. 427.

<sup>21</sup> My translation. Original: “Der Herr ist überall da erträglich, wo auch das Jahwe nicht ganz unerträglich ist. [. . .] Wenn es nun keine Genitive gäbe, so würde ich vorschlagen: ER, DU, ICH usw. Aber SEIN Volk, SEIN Gesetz usw. ist kein Ersatz für den Genitiv. Theologisch stinken die Versalien hier nicht; es ist ja als etwas Durchgeführtes noch nie gemacht. Eher wirkt es zu geheimnisvoll; aber das soll ja die Tatsache daß Gott mit einem Namen genannt wird ja schließlich auch. Und daß das Geheimnis auf tausend Blättern ausgesprochen wird und doch Geheimnis bleibt, das ist ja das Wesen dieses Buchs und der Grund aus dem es—das Buch der Offenbarung ist.” Rosenzweig, Letter to Martin Buber (2 August 1925), in *Briefe und Tagebücher*, pt. 2, pp. 1057–1058, here p. 1058.

One week later, Rosenzweig continues his thoughts and connects 'GOD' and the personal pronouns, focusing on Exod. XV:3: יהוה איש מלחמה יהוה שמו ("YHWH is a warrior, YHWH his name"). He says:

I began with Hashem Tsevaos [יהוה צבאות] and the sentence about the man of war in the Song at the Sea. I realized that there one has to say GOD. As it [the capitalization] happens in the case of personal pronouns, and not always, it is without an aftertaste . . . And HE is איש מלחמה [a warrior], GOD his name. Hence, taking the relevant circumstances into consideration, one may, with discretion, write GOD's instead of HIS. For both are possible. LORD, on the other hand, is best avoided.<sup>22</sup>

Here, Rosenzweig emphasizes the character of the tetragrammaton as a name. The wealth of meaning traditionally invested in the word 'God' needs no further explanation. Rosenzweig tries to convey this meaning by establishing a connection between 'God' and the personal pronouns. Through their utilization—for the first time—the word 'God' is perceived anew, now not only as a term but also as a name.<sup>23</sup>

### The transparency of God's name as a title

In his letter to Martin Goldner, however, Rosenzweig expresses his realization that in the name YHWH a meaning also resonates that is at one with the name, for otherwise the phrase יהוה שמו (*Adonai shemo*) would be meaningless:

Rather even at the time when the name was still spoken, whether as Yahweh or—for even this is not certain—Yeheweh, it could not be spoken without evoking the name's meaning – even at that time, that is, the name was wholly transparent. We have a very clear proof of this: the phrase *Adonai shemo* [יהוה שמו], no doubt familiar to you from at least the Song at the Sea [Ex 15,3]. This phrase becomes nonsense if it is translated: 'his name is Yahweh'. A battle cry in this form—'his name is Mars!' 'his name is Zeus!', even 'his name is Wilhelm' (though the case is different with 'his name is Napoleon', since here, because of the first Napoleon, the name has to some extent become a concept)—would be met by the hostile army with a simple 'so?' or 'so what?' But meaning enters in when a noun is introduced, as in Luther: 'Lord is his name!' Or in the Vulgate: *Omnipotens nomen ejus*. And Friedrich Leopold von Stolberg translates the phrase rightly as: 'His name is: I-am!'<sup>24</sup>

In an undated letter also printed in the edition of his working papers, Rosenzweig further comments on the translation of the phrase יהוה שמו: "The moment one translates it with the name of the god, it becomes pure nonsense. 'He is called Yahweh'—so what! What can I buy for it? Mine's Marduk, a nice name as well.

<sup>22</sup> My translation. Original: "Ich ging aus von Haschem Zewoaus und dem Kriegsmannsatz im Lied am Meer. Da merkte ich, daß man da GOTT sagen muß. Da es dann auf der Basis der Pronomina geschieht, und nicht immer, ist es ohne den Beigeschmack. . . . Und ER ist איש מלחמה GOTT sein Name. Also wird man auch für SEIN à discrétion GOTTES schreiben können unter Erwägung der jeweiligen Umstände. Dann geht beides. HERR dagegen ist möglichst zu vermeiden." Arc. Ms. Var. 350 (Martin Buber Archive at the National Library of Israel), Gimel 19, 52 = Bauer, *Rosenzweigs Sprachdenken*, p. 427.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 427–428.

<sup>24</sup> Rosenzweig, 'A Letter to Martin Goldner', p. 190.

The mere name of the god renders the sentence meaningless, just as a human name would.<sup>25</sup> He asks how it would look if ‘David’ were used instead of the name of the god in the phrase: “David is a man of war, David is his name”,<sup>26</sup> and concludes: “Yet here the name necessarily connotes the title—the one name coincides with the name.”<sup>27</sup> For Rosenzweig, a better example, therefore, would be: “Wilhelm is a war hero—emperor is his name!”<sup>28</sup>

To what kind of translation do these considerations lead? Buber’s and Rosenzweig’s translation (translated into English) reads: “HE is a man of war, HE is his name.”<sup>29</sup> Why the capitalized pronouns? In his letter to Martin Goldner, Rosenzweig finally explains this with the meaning of God’s name in Exod. III.

## 2. THE EXCHANGE ON EXODUS III

Rosenzweig stated retroactively in ‘The Eternal’ that it is the translation of Exod. III:14 which determines how the name of God is translated.<sup>30</sup> Thus, it is necessary to examine Buber’s and Rosenzweig’s exchanges on these verses.

The Martin Buber Archive in Jerusalem holds a draft of Buber’s translation of Exod. III:3 which shows the later corrections Buber made. In another extant manuscript there, these corrections are already worked into the original writing. According to these manuscripts, Buber first proposed Luther’s “I will be the one that I will be”<sup>31</sup> for אהיה אשר אהיה in Exod. III:14a, and “I-will-be”<sup>32</sup> for אהיה in Exod. III:14b. This was then corrected to “I will be-there, as the one being there”,<sup>33</sup> and “I-am-there”,<sup>34</sup> or in the clean copy, “I AM THERE”.<sup>35</sup> The corrected term “being there” (*dasein*) was also applied to אהיה עמך in Exod. III:12,

<sup>25</sup> My translation. Original: “Sowie man es mit dem Götternamen übersetzt, wird es ja einfacher Unsinn. Er heißt Jahweh—nun wenn schon! Wat ik mir schon dafor kofe, meiner heißt Marduk, auch ein schöner Name. Der bloße Göttername macht den Satz genauso sinnlos wie ein Menschenname ihn machen würde.” Rosenzweig, *Arbeitspapiere zur Verdeutschung der Schrift*, p. 94.

<sup>26</sup> My translation. Original: “Dawid ist ein Kriegsmann, Dawid heißt er.” Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> My translation. Original: “Sondern grade hier ist im Namen notwendig der Titel gemeint, der hier in diesem einen Namen mit dem Namen zu[s]ammenfällt.” Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> My translation. Original: “Wilhelm ist ein Kriegsheld,—Kaiser heißt er!” Ibid. Wilhelm was the name of Germany’s first emperor, ruling from 1871–1888. During the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71, he led the army into France and commanded two battles; thus he was declared German emperor.

<sup>29</sup> My translation. Original: “ER ist ein Kriegsmann / Hie ER! sein Name.” Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, *Das Buch Namen*, Berlin 1926, p. 61 (Exod. XV:3). In his translation, Everett Fox opts for “YHWH”: “YHWH is a man of war, YHWH is his name!” He gives his reasons in *The Five Books of Moses: A New English Translation with Commentary and Notes*, New York 1995, pp. xxix–xxx and pp. 268–272.

<sup>30</sup> Buber and Rosenzweig, *Scripture and Translation*, here p. 102.

<sup>31</sup> My translation. Original: “Ich werde sein, der ich sein werde.” Arc. Ms. Var. 350, Gimel 5, Original Manuscript, p. 8.

<sup>32</sup> My translation. Original: “Ich-werde-sein”. Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> My translation. Original: “Ich werde dasein, als der ich dasein werde.” Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> My translation. Original: “Ich-bin-da”. Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> My translation. Original: “ICH BIN DA”. Arc. Ms. Var. 350, Gimel 5, Clean Copy, p. 5.

which first read “I will be with you”,<sup>36</sup> but was then corrected to “I will be there with you”.<sup>37</sup>

Rosenzweig comments (as preserved in his working papers) as follows:

It does not work with “being”. That is hopelessly Platonized in German, as in any post-Platonic language, medieval Hebrew not excluded. [...] The words are not ‘a philosophy of the Bible’, but evolve totally out of the moment and thus of course encompass eternity too. The present is also the being, but the being does not need to become present. *’ehyeh ’asher ’ehyeh* is, like all explanations of names, no name in itself, but a real spoken sentence, the *wataumer* [how to say], which is followed by the concentration within the name, the *watigra* [how to write]. Therefore, just as for the being present, the being there can only be expressed thus: *I will be there howsoever I will be-there*.<sup>38</sup>

He also comments on Exod. III:12: “In order to grasp this in the sense of ‘being there, present’, [one should translate]: ‘Certainly, I shall be there at your side’.”<sup>39</sup> Rosenzweig picks up on the meaning of this verse in his article ‘The Eternal’ too. Likewise, for Exod. III:14b he proposes the translation “I AM THERE sends me to you”,<sup>40</sup> and comments: “Now as a real name and ‘the’ name, forging both parts of the sentence together”.<sup>41</sup>

Buber and Rosenzweig are clear about how to translate the name of God: they use capitalized personal pronouns, understood as an expression of the presence of God who is there and hence can be addressed:

This quality of relatedness, of reciprocity, inherent in the divine name, first simply because it is a name and then in particular because of its special meaning, must rather be rendered on the basis of the other side of the relation—the side of the one who speaks and names. The ‘present-to-you’ of the original must be rendered by a ‘present-to-me’ of the translation. . . . the personal pronoun . . . in its three persons means precisely the three dimensions of ‘present-to-me’: the capacity to be spoken to, the capacity to be spoken by, the capacity to be spoken of.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>36</sup> My translation. Original: “Ich werde mit dir sein.” Arc. Ms. Var. 350, Gimel 5, Original Manuscript, p. 7.

<sup>37</sup> My translation. Original: “Ich werde dasein bei dir.” Ibid. The same as in Arc. Ms. Var. 350, Gimel 5, Clean Copy, p. 5.

<sup>38</sup> My translation. Original: “Mit *sein* geht es nicht. Das ist im Deutschen hoffnungslos platonisiert, wie in allen nachplatonischen Sprachen, das mittelalterliche Hebräisch nicht ausgenommen. [...] Die Worte sind nicht “Philosophie der Bibel”, sondern ganz aus dem Augenblick herauswachsend und dadurch freilich auch die Ewigkeit fassend. Der Gegenwärtige ist auch der Seiende, aber das Sein braucht nicht gegenwärtig zu werden. *’ehyeh ’asher ’ehyeh* ist nun wie alle Namensklärungen kein Name, sondern ein wirklicher gesprochener Satz, das *wataumer*, dem dann erst die Zusammenballung in den Namen, das *watigra* folgt. Also: da das Gegenwärtigsein, das Zurstellesein nur so ausgedrückt werden kann: *Ich werde dasein, als der ich dasein werde*.” Rosenzweig, *Arbeitspapiere zur Verdeutschung der Schrift*, p. 93.

<sup>39</sup> My translation. Original: “Und 3:12, damit man dies da im Sinne von zurstelle, gegenwärtig—faßt, auch schon: ‘Wohl, doch ich werde dasein bei dir.’” Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> My translation. Original: “ICH BIN DA schickt mich zu euch”. Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> My translation. Original: “Und Kolon 5, *’ehyeh* schickt mich zu euch, nun als wirklicher Name und ‘der’ Name, beide Teile des Satzes; *’ehyeh ’asher ’ehyeh* zusammenschmiedend. . . .” Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Rosenzweig, ‘A Letter to Martin Goldner’, pp. 191–192.

A reconsideration of Rosenzweig's remarks in 'The Eternal' and Buber's reaction to them will help to confirm this statement.

### 3. ROSENZWEIG'S REMARKS IN 'THE ETERNAL'

Rosenzweig's retroactive thoughts in 'The Eternal' mirror decisions that matured in exchanges with Buber on the Bible translation, although he gives no indication that he himself had previously used 'the Eternal' extensively. Rosenzweig also demonstrates his dislike of the usual translation of God's name as 'the Lord' because of its Christian connotations, and assumes this was also one of the reasons why Mendelssohn chose another term for the translation of God's name: "When the devout Christian says, 'The Lord is my shepherd,' he thinks not of God but of 'the Good Shepherd'", namely Christ.<sup>43</sup>

As stated initially, Mendelssohn's crucial insight ("his decisive advance over Calvin and the Protestant Bible"<sup>44</sup>) was for Rosenzweig the realization that Mendelssohn's account of the translation of the name of God was to be found only in the account of God's revelation of his name in Exodus.<sup>45</sup> "Now we do not have to look for Mendelssohn's account of the matter at the first appearance of the name, i.e. at Gen. 2:4, as we do for Hirsch's. At that point we find only a reference sending us off to the commentary on Exod. 3:14."<sup>46</sup> Looking at Mendelssohn's commentary, "the surprising fact" emerges that even for Mendelssohn his "decision in favor of the abstract, 'philosophical' divine name"—'the Eternal'—"was extremely shaky."<sup>47</sup> Rosenzweig ascribes Mendelssohn's decision to his pre-Kantian background, against which the phrase "the Eternal being" also appears to imply the "God of prayerful petition", while today one would—if at all—come to the opposite conclusion "from the providential God to the necessarily existing God."<sup>48</sup>

Rosenzweig then follows Benno Jacob<sup>49</sup> in considering the issue textually, which leads to 'the Eternal' being denied as a suitable translation: "Moses recoils from the role of leader that God commissions him with. So God assures him, 'Indeed, I will be-there with you' (3:12)."<sup>50</sup> Moses then goes on to ask, anticipating the Israelites' questions: "What is behind his name? What am I to say to them?"<sup>51</sup> It is in response to the question concerning the meaning of the name, and not concerning the name itself, that Moses answers with the name of God as "I will be-there". Rosenzweig asks: "What meaning would be offered for the despairing and wretched Israelites

<sup>43</sup> Rosenzweig, 'The Eternal', p. 101.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>49</sup> Benno Jacob, 'Mose am Dornbusch: die beiden Hauptbeweisstellen der Quellenscheidung im Pentateuch, Ex 3 und 6, aufs Neue exegetisch geprüft', *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, 66 (1922/1922), no. 1 (1922, pp. 11–33), no. 2 (1922, pp. 116–138), no. 3 (1922, pp. 180–200).

<sup>50</sup> Rosenzweig, 'The Eternal', p. 104.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*



by a lecture on God's existential necessity?"<sup>52</sup> No lesson about God's eternal being is requested, but "rather an assurance of God's being-with-them."<sup>53</sup>

The only justifiable translation for Rosenzweig (and Buber) is therefore the one "that makes prominent not God's being eternal but his being present, his being present for and with you now and in times to come".<sup>54</sup> the personal pronoun, the expression of the One being present in three sorts of presence, condensed into a single word. Rosenzweig here refers to the explanation in his letter to Martin Goldner,<sup>55</sup> already quoted above.

Rosenzweig's further considerations deal with the alternative use of *Adonai*—my Lord—which overcomes the shortcomings of Luther's simple 'the Lord' which, while enjoying the advantage of suggesting a relation, nevertheless appears to be a false relation: "a ruling and not a helping, an overseeing and not an assisting".<sup>56</sup> With *Adonai* it is another matter: "It glances for a moment up from the middle of the sentence toward heaven."<sup>57</sup> One can perhaps hear in the rather friendly consideration of the translation 'Lord' an echo of Rosenzweig's early appreciation of Luther's Bible translation.

#### 4. BUBER'S THOUGHTS IN RESPONSE TO ROSENZWEIG

But what meaning for the despairing and wretched Israelites would be offered by a lecture on God's existential necessity? They, like this timid leader himself, need rather an assurance of God's being-among-them; and unlike their leader, who hears it directly from God's mouth, they need this in the form of a clarification of the old, obscure name, sufficient to establish that the assurance is of divine origin.<sup>58</sup>

This is the extract from Rosenzweig's article that Buber cites in response to Rosenzweig's thinking. From the very outset, Buber always refers to Rosenzweig's words. This comes as no surprise as, according to Buber, it was Rosenzweig who developed the translation of the tetragrammaton: "I myself only contributed some academic support",<sup>59</sup> to which he refers in his accounts in *Moses* (1948)<sup>60</sup> and *The Kingship of God* (1932).<sup>61</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 104. Cited by Martin Buber in 'Zu einer neuen Verdeutschung der Schrift', now in Martin Buber, *Werkausgabe* (hereafter *MBW*), vol. XIV: *Schriften zur Bibelübersetzung*, ed. by Ran HaCohen, Gütersloh 2012, pp. 186–220, quotation pp. 207–208.

<sup>59</sup> My translation. Original: "Ich selbst habe hier nur allerhand wissenschaftliches Stützwerk beigebracht." Martin Buber, 'Schlussbemerkungen', now in *MBW*, vol. XIV, pp. 221–227, quotation p. 224.

<sup>60</sup> Martin Buber, 'Moses', idem, *Werke*, vol. II: *Schriften zur Bibel*, Munich–Heidelberg 1964, pp. 9–197, here p. 47ff. English translation: Martin Buber, *Moses*, Atlantic Highlands, NJ 1998.

<sup>61</sup> Martin Buber, 'Königtum Gottes', in idem, *Werke*, vol. II: *Schriften zur Bibel*, pp. 485–723. The relevant part is also published in Buber and Rosenzweig, *Die Schrift und ihre Verdeutschung*, pp. 338–341.

After Rosenzweig's death, it is Buber who gives an account of the choice of translation. In 'On Word Choice in Translating the Bible' (1930),<sup>62</sup> which is dedicated to Rosenzweig's memory, Buber paraphrases the essential thoughts contained in Rosenzweig's 'The Eternal'. The name YHWH

alone among the divine epithets in the Bible is entirely a name and not a concept; but it is a name in which biblical consciousness perceives a meaning, or rather *the* meaning, the meaning that is disclosed in revelation, in the Burning Bush. [...] The Septuagint, the Vulgate, and Luther all render it 'the Lord'; and thus replace the reality with a fiction. Calvin and Mendelssohn render it 'the Eternal', and thus misread the disclosure. The scholarly translations, offering only a transcription (and a highly questionable one), ignore it, and thereby transform the name of God into a name of idols. The name might be rendered 'the one-who-is-there,' or 'the-one-who-is-present', and such a rendering would indeed be founded on a right understanding of the disclosure; but it would also betray that disclosure, in that the certainty that those who trust in revelation feel welling up from every naming of the name would be impaired by a rigid conceptual knowledge capable of grasping in the disclosure only the idea of constancy—the *ehyeh: I shall be there*—but not the idea of continual and unpredictable renewal—the *asher ehyeh: as whoever I shall be*. We had, therefore, to find in our western language an equivalent that would for the hearing reader create a feeling similar to the certainty issuing from the name, would, that is, not express God's being-with-me, being-with-you, being-with-us conceptually but would embody it in full presence. That is what is done in our translation by the pronouns: the I and MY when God is speaking, the YOU and YOUR when God is spoken to; the HE and HIS when God is spoken of.<sup>63</sup>

This reads more or less as a paraphrase of Rosenzweig's thoughts, which would support the received view that the choice of the personal pronouns was Rosenzweig's responsibility alone. A short note in 'The How and Why of Our Bible Translation' (1938) reveals, however, that Buber's "academic support" may have been more than that. Buber confesses:

It is clear to me now that in our rendering of the Divine name we were right to let ourselves be guided not by the conventional substitution *Adonai* but by the mysterious acclamation *ani va-ho*, which had moved me deeply ever since my early youth; I am convinced now that at the origin of the tetragrammaton stood some exclamatory pronoun, some 'taboo word' (as Hans Bauer puts it) for referring in inspired enthusiasm to an ineffable divinity.<sup>64</sup>

The link to Hans Bauer refers to his article 'Gottheiten von Ras Schamra'. Bauer assumes that the Divine name *el* had been a demonstrative pronoun in the original Semitic language, and continues, as in Buber's sense: "As for example in Islam,

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English translation: Martin Buber, *Kingship of God*, New York 1973, pp. 104–106. The relevant part is also published in Buber and Rosenzweig, *Scripture and Translation*, pp. 192–195.

<sup>62</sup> Martin Buber, 'On Word Choice in Translating the Bible', in Buber and Rosenzweig, *Scripture and Translation*, pp. 73–89 = Martin Buber, 'Über die Wortwahl in einer Verdeutschung der Schrift', in Buber and Rosenzweig, *Die Schrift und ihre Verdeutschung*, pp. 136–167, now in *MBW* vol. XIV, pp. 68–85.

<sup>63</sup> Buber, 'On Word Choice', pp. 87–88. Emphasis in original.

<sup>64</sup> Martin Buber, 'The How and Why of our Bible Translation', in Buber and Rosenzweig, *Scripture and Translation*, pp. 205–220, quotation p. 219.

especially in mysticism, *huwa* 'he' replaces the position of *Allah*, or as in some Christian circles 'He' or 'The one above' is used to denote God, so also an original Semitic *oil* 'this one' as a kind of 'taboo word' for a particular deity . . . could have been in use."<sup>65</sup>

Buber further assumes that the expression *ani va-ho* (אני והו) conceals an old 'taboo word' for the name of the deity. The expression itself appears in mSuk IV:5, in a response of R. Jehuda to Psalm CXVIII:25. In the Talmudic account, to which Buber probably refers, the context is the following: "אנא ה' הושיעה נא אנא ה' הושיעה נא" (bSuk XLVa). In English, this means roughly: "O Lord, please help, O Lord, help us to succeed!" R. Jehuda says: 'I and He, please help!'<sup>66</sup> Unfortunately, there is no commentary in the Gemara *ad loci*, but it is clear that some substitute for the Divine name is intended.

In his Ascona commentary<sup>67</sup> on chapter 14 of Lao-Tse's *Tao te King*,<sup>68</sup> which mentions three Chinese terms (*Yi, Hi, Wei*) that have been connected with the letters of the Hebrew name of God, Buber refers to the *aniva-ho* again and explains how he understands its meaning:

As long as one strives for the Divine (Imitatio dei), as long as one fulfils one's task, then the essence of the Divine is revealed; yet if we occupy ourselves with the essence and turn back, then we do not recognize him, we are thrown back as if from a bolt of lightning into the world of the conditioned, of the manifest/ Imitatio—an imitation. 'Be perfect as he is perfect.'—Ani vehu hoschiana—be holy as I am holy (Pentateuch). Ani vehu—I and he—that has to be understood in a dynamic way, as a call.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>65</sup> My translation. Original: "Wie nun z.B. im Islam, besonders in der Mystik, *huwa* 'er' die Stelle von Allāh vertritt oder wie in gewissen christlichen Kreisen 'Er' oder 'Der da oben' für Gott beliebt ist, so könnte auch ein ursemitisches *oil* 'der da' als eine Art Tabuwort für eine bestimmte Gottheit . . . gebraucht worden sein." Hans Bauer, 'Die Gottheiten von Ras Schamra', in *Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 10 (1933), pp. 81–101, here p. 84.

<sup>66</sup> My translation.

<sup>67</sup> 'Besprechungen mit Martin Buber in Ascona, August 1924 über Lao-tse's Tao-te-king', in *MBW*, vol. II:3, p. 237ff.

<sup>68</sup> *Lao-Tse's Tao te King*, Aus dem Chinesischen ins Deutsche übersetzt, eingeleitet und commentiert von Victor von Strauss, Leipzig 1870.

<sup>69</sup> My translation. *MBW*, vol. II:3, p. 238: "Wenn man dem Göttlichen nachstrebt (Imitatio dei), wenn man seine Aufgabe erfüllt, dann tut sich das Wesen des Göttlichen kund; wenn wir uns aber mit seinem Wesen befassen, uns zurückbiegen, dann erkennen wir ihn nicht, wie von einem Blitz werden wir zurückgeworfen in die Welt des Bedingten, der Manifestation. / Imitatio—ein Nachahmen. 'Seid vollkommen, gleichwie er vollkommen ist.'—Ani vehu hoschiana—seid heilig, wie ich heilig bin (Pentateuch). Ani vehu—ich und er—das ist dynamisch zu verstehen, ein Anruf." Also the manuscript of Buber's speech 'Jüdische Religiosität' (1914) already shows his early interest in the phrase. It reads: "Am schlichtesten und überzeugendsten wird diese Anschauung in einem Wort Abba Schauls überliefert; er erklärte die Worte des Mosesliedes וזה אלי ואנוהו durch: Dies ist mein Gott und ich will ihm gleich werden; nach Raschi bildete er aus dem Wort ואנוהו nach dem Notariken-System die Worte אנו והוא and sprach: Dies ist mein Gott—ich und er; das ist: ich will wie er werden." *MBW*, vol. II:1, pp. 207–432. My translation: "This view is passed down in the most simple and convincing way in the words of Abba Schaul; he explained the words of Moses' song וזה אלי ואנוהו with: this is my God and I want to become like him; according to Raschi he formed the words אנו והוא out of the word ואנוהו, using the Notariken system, and said: this is my God—I and he; that is: I want to become like him."

That Buber was impressed by this *ani va-ho* can also be seen in his *Ecstatic Confessions* (1909), where he quotes a passage from the *Divan* of Dschalâl-ed-dîn Rumi, which states in the original: “One I seek, One I know, One I see, One I call. / *He is the first, He is the last, He is the outward, He is the inward;* / I know none other except ‘Yā Hū’ and ‘Yā man Hū.’”<sup>70</sup> Buber, in his translation, writes “Oh He” (“O Er”) and “Oh He who is” (“O Er der ist”) for ‘Yā Hū’ and ‘Yā man Hū.’<sup>71</sup> He later gave a commentary on this in ‘Moses’ (and the ‘Kingship of God’):

Of all the various suppositions regarding the prehistoric use of the name YHWH there is only one the development of which makes all this understandable without contradiction. To the best of my knowledge it was first expressed nearly half a century ago by Duhm in an (unpublished) lecture in Goettingen:<sup>72</sup> ‘Possibly the name is in some degree only an extension of the word *hu*, meaning he, as God is also called by other Arab tribes at times of religious revival—the One, the Unnamable.’ The Dervish cry *Ya-hu* is interpreted to mean ‘O He!’, and in one of the most important poems of the Persian mystic, Jelaluddin Rumi, the following occurs: ‘One I seek, one I know, One I see, One I call. He is the first, He is the last, He is the outward, He is the inward. I know no other except *Yahu* (O He) and *Yā-man-hu* (O-He-who-is).’ The original form of the cry may have been *Yā-huwa*, if we regard the Arabic pronoun *huwa*, he, as the original Semitic form of the pronoun “He” which in Hebrew as well as in another Arabic form, has become *hu*. ‘The name *Yā-huwa* would then mean O-He! With which the manifestations of the god would be greeted in the cult when the god became perceptible in some fashion. Such a *Yā-huwa* could afterwards produce both *Yāhu* and *Yāveh* (possibly originally *Yāhvah*).’<sup>73</sup>

## 5. IN DIALOGUE WITH ROSENZWEIG

In contrast to what is commonly assumed, therefore, Buber’s words quoted above make clear that he and Rosenzweig allowed themselves to be led by this cry together. Likewise, he quotes Rosenzweig’s denotation of God as *Yāh* or *Yāhu* as “Gott-schrei”,<sup>74</sup> that is as an exclamation, out of which the tetragrammaton developed, in which “the name and the attribute are coextensive”.<sup>75</sup>

‘The Eternal’ also consists of a second part whose importance is often overlooked. Although at first it may not appear relevant to the topic under consideration, Buber’s later notes make it clear that it tackles a subject essential to Rosenzweig and Buber in their joint translation of the name of God as capitalized personal pronouns, namely the three different forms in which the Divine name appears in the

<sup>70</sup> Reynold A. Nicholson (ed.), *Selected Poems from the Dīwāni Shamsi Tabrīz*, Cambridge 1898, p. 127. Emphasis in original.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. the English translation of the *Ecstatic Confessions*: Martin Buber, *Ecstatic Confessions*, ed. by Paul Mendes-Flohr, transl. by Esther Cameron, Syracuse 1996, p. 28.

<sup>72</sup> In ‘Kingship of God’, Buber locates the quotation more exactly “in the transcript of an apparently early lecture by B. Duhm on Old Testament theology” (*Scripture and Translation*, p. 190 annot. 27).

<sup>73</sup> Buber, *Moses*, pp. 49–50; cf. Buber, ‘Kingship of God’, in *Scripture and Translation*, p. 190 annot. 27.

<sup>74</sup> ‘Der Ewige’, p. 207, quoted in Buber, ‘Königtum Gottes’, p. 621.

<sup>75</sup> Rosenzweig, ‘The Eternal’, p. 110.

Bible:<sup>76</sup> the digrammaton *Yâh*, the trigrammaton *Yâhu*, and of course the tetragrammaton. Once Buber was convinced that “at the origin of the tetragrammaton stood some exclamatory pronoun,”<sup>77</sup> it seemed natural for him to use personal pronouns in its translation. In the excerpt from *The Kingship of God*, also provided in *Die Schrift und ihre Verdeutschung*, Buber mentions the development of the tetragrammaton from the ‘Gott-schrei’ *Yâh* or *Yâhu* as described in Rosenzweig’s article.<sup>78</sup>

One theme tackled only by Buber, however, is the scholarly opinion that, in Moses’ time, it was “a common conviction that through the knowledge of a god’s name one could have the god himself in one’s power” or even more “become a god.”<sup>79</sup> God’s response in revealing his name as carrying the meaning of ‘being there’ “renders all magical feats both void and superfluous.”<sup>80</sup> His answer means “in summary: you do not *need* to invoke me; but neither are you *able* to invoke me.”<sup>81</sup> Buber interprets this historically as the “demagicalizing of belief”. This theme is also echoed in one of Buber’s unpublished typescripts on the topic (see next section).

Later, in ‘Zu einer neuen Verdeutschung der Schrift’ (1954), Buber writes a short summary of his thoughts on the topic. There he makes clear that

the insight into the pronominal character or content of the original name form paved the way. That is why in our translation it is written I and MY where God speaks, THOU and YOUR, where he is spoken to, and HE and HIS where he is spoken of. Where the name is placed in a speech of the Godhead and the verse should also work for itself, according to its obvious intention, without relation to the speaker, that is, as an objective instruction, the third person was kept. In single verses of Scripture—outside of the Pentateuch—where the name manifests itself in its full disclosure, precisely because the presence of God should be declared, ‘HE IS THERE’ had to be considered.<sup>82</sup>

## 6. BUBER’S THOUGHTS IN HIS UNPUBLISHED TYPESCRIPTS

The typescripts show how intensively Buber engaged with the question of how to deal philosophically with the name of God. He pursued the train of thought he had already begun to express in *I and Thou*.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 108ff.

<sup>77</sup> See footnote 64.

<sup>78</sup> Buber, ‘Kingship of God’, in *Scripture and Translation*, p. 193; ‘The Eternal’, pp. 108–110.

<sup>79</sup> Buber, ‘Kingship of God’, in *Scripture and Translation*, pp. 192–193. Emphasis in original.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 195.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. Emphasis in original.

<sup>82</sup> My translation. Original: “Die Einsicht in den pronominalen Charakter oder Gehalt der ursprünglichen Namensform gab die Richtung an. Darum steht in unserer Verdeutschung ICH und MEIN, wo Gott redet, DU und DEIN, wo er angeredet wird, ER und SEIN, wo von ihm geredet wird. Wo der Name in einer Gottesrede steht und die Stelle der offenkundigen Absicht nach auch für sich, ohne Bezug auf den Sprecher als solchen, etwa als objektiv bestehende Vorschrift, wirken sollte, ist die dritte Person beibehalten worden. An einzelnen Stellen der Schrift—außerhalb des Pentateuch—, wo der Name in seiner vollen Erschlossenheit sich manifestiert, weil eben die Gegenwärtigkeit Gottes verkündigt werden soll, mußte ‘ER IST DA’ gewagt werden.” *MBW*, vol. XIV, pp. 206–208.

In his first and untitled typescript,<sup>83</sup> Buber relates his thoughts to the question of whether and how God can have a name. According to Hermann Usener,<sup>84</sup> God's possessing a name is an expression of polytheism. Buber asks, however, "Is it not the case that the possession of a name shows its whole meaning only in the belief in the One God?" He goes on to surmise that the possession of names of paganism is but a primitive, incomplete level of the relationship that only attains completeness with the possession of the name of the One and real God.

Buber imposes his 'singularistic' theory of names, according to which the function of a name is not—as in Minucius Felix's<sup>85</sup> pluralistic theory—to discern objects or human beings, but to be able to address the being facing oneself. Buber therefore assumes the relation to a 'Thou' and not to a 'Them' as fundamental for the development of names and calls his theory a 'theory of invocation.'<sup>86</sup> The name is not there to discern objects, but to realize their presence, so that the being facing one responds. Giving a name means the invocation of the distinct being. And that is why the god has to be called by a name.

This leads Buber to the boundary between magic and religion. In magic, a non-reciprocal relationship is developed towards the subject being utilized. Man's relationship to the godhead is only a pseudo-relationship, his incantations only pseudo-prayers, as they are not reciprocal. Buber goes on to say that one should not imagine magic and religion as strictly separate, since magic penetrates deep into religion. On the other hand, even a heathen can appeal to the godly when he says 'Thou' in truth—at which point religion distinguishes itself from magic.

In *I and Thou* Buber also expresses a similar thought: "What distinguishes sacrifice and prayer from all magic? – Magic desires to obtain its effects without entering into relation, and practises its tricks in the void. But sacrifice and prayer are set 'before the Face' in the consummation of the holy primary word that means mutual action: they speak the Thou, and then they hear."<sup>87</sup>

Buber then gives many examples in the history of religion regarding the meaning of knowing the original name of someone or something. Calling "the name means the coercion to be present."<sup>88</sup> He emphasizes that the beginning of real religion lies there where man no longer believes that God has to become present (when being called by his name).<sup>89</sup> Readers may recognize here a reference to the Frankfurt Lehrhaus lectures on 'Religion as Presence' that led to *I and Thou*.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Arc. Ms. Var. 350, Beth 161.

<sup>84</sup> Hermann Usener, *Götternamen. Versuch einer Lehre von der Religiösen Begriffsbildung*, 3rd edn., Frankfurt a. M. 1948.

<sup>85</sup> Minucius Felix argues that the one God does not need a name. Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, ed., transl. and intr. by Bernhard Kytzler, Munich 1965, chapter 18:10, pp. 108–109.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. the beginning of Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, Edinburgh 1942.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. *I and Thou*, p. 83.

<sup>88</sup> Arc. Ms. Var. 350, Beth 161, p. 9.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Rivka Horwitz, *Buber's Way to "I and Thou": An Historical Analysis and the First Publication of Martin Buber's Lectures "Religion als Gegenwart"*, Heidelberg 1978.

Buber's second typescript is entitled: 'What can be found within the Jewish tradition, what in the history of religion regarding God's name in Ex 3:13?'.<sup>91</sup> It may partially be regarded as a kind of Buberian counterpart to Rosenzweig's considerations regarding Exod. III in 'The Eternal'.<sup>92</sup> Initially, Buber sketches out his main thesis that the Jewish assumptions concerning Exod. III:13—the pagan assumptions to be referred to—denote a sequence of levels in the development of human thought.<sup>93</sup> The concrete connection "full of blood" with the reality "rooted in the soil" of the events of revelation fades with time into abstractions which, after reaching their peak, provide once again "the weapon and the key" to overcoming this one-sided intellectual development and—in grasping the original sentiment—to restore the real, meaningful connection.

According to this original meaning, *ehyeh asher ehyeh* means that *God will be with humankind*. Making this dependent on the fulfilment of laws and duties is, for Buber, already a derivation and sign of the fading of the original revelation.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Behind God's name is the assurance of God's always *being there*, especially in times of need. To express this, Buber and Rosenzweig chose personal pronouns for its translation. This choice probably lay with Rosenzweig, who was also in charge of word choice in the translation project,<sup>94</sup> but was also prepared by Buber's enduring struggle with the term *ani va-ho* in the Mishnah, which he interpreted as a primitive form of naming God. As Buber phrases it: "The insight into the pronominal character or content of the original name form paved the way. That is why in our translation it is written I and MY, where God speaks, THOU and YOUR, where he is spoken to, and HE and HIS where he is spoken of."<sup>95</sup>

Another important aspect is the oft-neglected<sup>96</sup> relevance of (Rosenzweig's and) Buber's dialogical philosophy as background to these decisions, as shown by the ties between the first unpublished typescript and *I and Thou*. The translation of Exod. III:13f (I will be there howsoever I will be-there) in the joint project therefore demonstrates Buber's core ideas as well. The God that is omnipresent, can always be addressed as eternal THOU.

The second typescript appears to be a retroactive justification of the translation of Exod. III:13f at which he and Rosenzweig finally arrived. Retroactivity is assumed in this case because Buber had earlier still favoured other translations, as

<sup>91</sup> Arc. Ms. Var. 350, Gimel 58. German title: "Was ist in der jüdischen Tradition, was in der Religionsgeschichte über den Gottesnamen in Ex 3,13 vorhanden?"

<sup>92</sup> Rosenzweig, 'The Eternal', pp. 102–103.

<sup>93</sup> Arc. Ms. Var. 350, Gimel 58, p. 1.

<sup>94</sup> Buber, 'Schlussbemerkungen', p. 223.

<sup>95</sup> My translation. *MBW*, vol. XIV, p. 208.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. footnote 7.

evidenced by the first publication of *I and Thou*<sup>97</sup> and the drafts of the Bible translation preserved in the archive.<sup>98</sup>

According to Buber, the beginning of real religion is be found when one no longer believes that God has to become present when called by His name.<sup>99</sup> One may subscribe to that theory, assuming He is already there, as the meaning of His name conveys.

<sup>97</sup> Martin Buber, *Ich und Du*, Leipzig 1923, p. 129. Also, the first English translation still has “*I am that I am*” (*I and Thou*, p. 112). I am grateful to Ephraim Meir for pointing this out.

<sup>98</sup> Arc. Ms. Var. 350, Gimel 5, draft for translation, p. 8.

<sup>99</sup> Arc. Ms. Var. 350, Beth 161, p. 13.