



**TOLERANCE AND PLURALISM IN THE
PHILOSOPHICAL WRITINGS OF RABBI
JOSEPH B. SOLOVEITCHIK**

David Hyatt

Doctoral student at the Bar-Ilan University. *E-mail:* davidraanan@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Although much has been written about the dynamics of inter- and intra-religious dialogue in the philosophical writings of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, this discussion has not been put before the lens of the philosophy of tolerance and pluralism¹. After a brief review of some conceptual problems underlying these terms, I apply them to R. Soloveitchik's writings. First, I explore his attitude towards the group he considers as the most difficult to tolerate – secular Jews and non-Jews. Then, I introduce the notion of *incommensurability* by examining his relation to people from other faiths, an arena where doors are open both to tolerance and pluralism. Next, I explore his conception of *cognitive pluralism* as it is presented in *The Halakhic Mind*, highlighting both the limitations and the possibilities of pluralism in the light of phenomenological theories of intuition and intention. Subsequently, I address Gadamer's notion of *prejudice*, showing how it tackles some tensions inherent to adopting a tolerant or pluralistic stance. Finally, I examine the consequences of R. Soloveitchik's dialectical methodology, claiming that his use of an “unsolvable” dialectics requires a pluralistic approach to ethics and ideas. I also inquire whether R. Soloveitchik can support his desired dialectical schism. Herein, I show how one side of dialectics – that represented by terms such as Adam II, “humility”, “gvura [strength]” or revelational consciousness – has a supplementary effect, i.e. destabilizing the dialectical schism by means of a process variously described as a *recoil*, *withdrawal*, *retreat*, *catharsis*, *self-contraction*, or *tzimtzum*. This process is parallel to the willingness needed to engage in toleration.

KEYWORDS

Pluralism. Tolerance. Phenomenology. Neo-Kantianism. Inter-religious dialogues.

¹ See Finkelman (2001), Hartman (2001), Meir (2003), Rynhold (2003), and Sagi (2008).

Joseph Ber (Yosef Dov) Soloveitchik (February 27, 1903 – April 9, 1993) was the key figure in the re-habilitation of modern Jewish orthodoxy in the United States and his writings keep having a far-reaching influence on Jewish communities throughout the world. Born in Pruzhany, Russia (current Belarus), as a scion of the Brisker rabbinic dynasty, R. Soloveitchik was educated in accordance with the rational Talmudic system of his family, but he was also influenced by the Hasidic teachings of his childhood tutor. He left home at 21 years to study, first political science, in Warsaw, and, then, philosophy, in Berlin, at the Friedrich Wilhelm University. There, he was exposed to a wide variety of Western thought and science, eventually writing his doctoral thesis on Hermann Cohen's neo-Kantianism. He immigrated to the United States in 1932, settling in Boston. There, he established the co-educational Maimonides School and served as the head of the rabbinical school at the Yeshiva University. Renowned for his Talmudic scholarship, he also kept writing on philosophical and psychological themes, as well as tirelessly working on a wide range of social issues.

So far, the French writer and minister of culture André Malraux has been correct in his prediction that “the 21st century will be religious or it will not be at all” – audacious words in the mid-20th century, when it seemed that secularism would turn religion into a vestigial appendage of the past. Although Western secularism still remains a dynamic force, nowadays religion is not only alive, it is often robust and zealous. Thus, if we hope to avoid repeating bygone abuses of religion, such as the crusades, *jihad*, and the fantasies of Gog and Magog, i.e. if we intend to escape the risk of what Malraux ominously names *not being at all*, the crucial question is how believers from a religion interact with members from other faiths or secular orientations. This question requires increasing knowledge on the differences between two significant, and sometimes contradictory, concepts: tolerance and pluralism. Throughout his philosophical writings, Rabbi Soloveitchik promoted positions of tolerance, intolerance, and pluralism. In this article, I show how these positions have interacted during various phases of R. Soloveitchik's thought.

Tolerance is an illusory and paradoxical concept – a person can tolerate only what is considered as intolerable, thus,

worthy of either denunciation or forceful repression. “It implies,” writes Avi Sagi (2009, p. 5), “that we are willing to bear what we actually reject”, perpetuating something that we wish to avoid. A tolerant person believes in a certain truth and he may be willing to advocate for it, but not to impose it. Sagi distinguishes between “weak” forms of toleration that encourage public or private criticism of other positions, and “strong” forms that attempt not only to refrain from banning the other position, but “avoid deriding it, condemning it or developing negative attitudes toward it.” Strong toleration requires that a person develops a willingness, an intellectual-ethical attitude that, according to Joseph Raz, moves between self-understanding and some understanding on the other, coming from an idea that you are an autonomous being towards an idea that the other is also an autonomous being. Thus, although the immediate impulse of an individual might be acting against an opposite lifestyle, he gives up when realizing that the other’s life is ruled by “virtues” that, although “incompatible” with those of his own, are “each capable of being pursued for its own sake” (RAZ, 1988, p. 159).

Pluralism is essentially different from toleration because, from the beginning, the pluralist renounces his capacity to occupy the place of truth – but not necessarily the existence of truth itself. Sagi distinguishes between weak and strong pluralism. The weak form assumes the existence of absolute, universal truths, but it admits that, due to the limitations of human consciousness or historical development, the ultimate truth is currently inaccessible, but it may become more apparent over time². Contrary to weak pluralism, strong pluralism denies not only the capacity to getting close to truth, but its very existence; therefore, it is a form of relativism. This does not mean that a strong pluralist will not advocate for his point of view or lifestyle. However, unlike the tolerant individual, his renunciation to an Archimedean point of truth eliminates his ability to judge the other. Every person is encouraged to experience his own version of truth, provided he

² John Stuart Mill (1984, p. 106) took up this position in chapter two of *On Liberty*: “As mankind improve, the number of doctrines which are no longer disputed or doubted will be constantly on the increase” and there will be a “gradual narrowing of the bounds of diversity of opinion.”

does not prevent others from experiencing theirs. A celebration of diversity, individuality, and cultural difference rides high on the banner of a strong pluralist.

Regarding R. Soloveitchik, I would like to examine specific expressions of tolerance, intolerance, and pluralism in his writings and, then, investigate how he justifies philosophically these positions. The least sympathetic or *intolerant* aspect of this thought was aimed at ideologies he considered as hostile to religious life. This must include not only atheism, secular Zionism, but also the Reformation and Conservative Judaism. In this regard, perhaps he resembles the first great theoretician of tolerance, John Locke, who found room in his system to tolerate people from all creeds, except those he felt to be able to destabilize the social order. At the time of his work *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, Locke singled out the atheists and Catholics as representing such a threat. Similarly, in *Kol Dodi Dofek* [The Voice of my Beloved Knocks], R. Soloveitchik (1992, p. 13) writes that “the secular Jew denies or distorts his own nature. He buys his entrance into the general society at the price of his intellectual integrity”.

If R. Soloveitchik’s interactions with secular Jews were based on pragmatic or utilitarian considerations, then he was practicing a form of *weak toleration* – i.e. he was critical, but not coercive. In this sense, his approach still resembles that by Locke, who condemned the use of religious coercion, but he did not shy from the use of persuasion. He was opposed to use laws from the Jewish State in order to coerce non-religious Jews to follow the Jewish law, as emphasized in his critique to the Israeli rabbinate. In a letter inviting the reader to compare the orientation of Moses Mendelsohn’s *Jerusalem*, R. Soloveitchik (apud SCHWARTZ, 2008, p. 361) explained his main reason to refuse the nomination to be Israeli’s chief Rabbi:

[It] is impossible to enforce religiosity upon free individuals by means of governmental channels, for only spiritual activity is likely to bring back those who are far from Torah and to return the remote ones to their Father in heaven – this should be the purpose of the rabbinate. But how many are there who grasp this point?

Nevertheless, the autonomy that R. Soloveitchik grants the secular Jew is ambivalent. On the one hand, he regards them as “free individuals” and, thus, as self-determining adults.

However, on the other hand, he is paternalistic and, thus, unable to grant them an authentic moral and spiritual autonomy.

Interestingly, R. Soloveitchik comes closer to strong toleration concerning people from other faiths. In the wake of the Vatican II, the Roman Catholic council where Pope John XXIII offered to open a dialogue with the Jewish people (and members of other faiths), R. Soloveitchik carved out a sphere in which a dialogue could or could not take place between members of different religions. He wrote that the “Jewish religious tradition expresses itself in a fusion of universalism and singularism”³. The universal themes constitute areas where dialogue is “desirable and even essential” (SOLOVEITCHIK, 1967, p. 79), whereas the singular themes are areas where dialogue must be avoided. The singular includes such themes such as

Judaic monotheism and the Christian idea of the Trinity; The Messianic idea in Judaism and Christianity; The Jewish attitude on Jesus; [...] the Eucharist mass and Jewish prayer service; The Holy Ghost and prophetic inspiration; Isaiah and Christianity; The Priest and the Rabbi; Sacrifice and the Eucharist; The Church and the Synagogue – their sanctity and metaphysical nature, etc.

Whereas the universal includes such topics as War and Peace, Poverty, Freedom, Man’s Moral Values, The Threat of Secularism, Technology and Human Values, Civil Rights, etc., which revolve around the religious spiritual aspects of our civilization. Discussion within these areas will, of course, be within the framework of our religious outlooks and terminology (SOLOVEITCHIK, 1967, p. 79).

That is, as the discussion takes place within a *framework of a religious terminology*, a common set of humanistic values may be reached and authentic worth may be attributed to the other.

R. Soloveitchik extends this to religious beliefs from other religions. So, he brings his universalism into the sphere of the particular, claiming that, although the contents of their creeds differ, there is a universal form of religiosity that can

³ The addendum was published in a version of “Confrontation” and included in Soloveitchik (1967, p. 78).

provide communication with a basis. Every religion or, as he says, “faith community”, exists and operates within an inviolable space, which is endowed with “uniqueness”, “intrinsic dignity and metaphysical worth” (SOLOVEITCHIK, 1964, p. 28). In “Confrontation” (SOLOVEITCHIK, 1964, p. 18-19), he divides this space into three dimensions.

First, [...] Each faith community is engaged in a singular normative gesture reflecting the numinous nature of the act of faith itself, and it is futile to try to find common denominators [...] Second, the axiological awareness of each faith community is an exclusive one, for it believes – and this belief is indispens[a]ble to the survival of the community – that its system of dogmas, doctrines and values is best fitted for the attainment of the ultimate good. Third, each faith community is unyielding in its eschatological expectations.

This *strong* expression of toleration requires the recognition of the other’s incommensurable “uniqueness” and the unbridgeable gap between two faith communities. Recognizing the “intrinsic dignity and metaphysical worth” of the other means making him *tolerable*, since, as Joseph Raz wrote, being tolerant means realizing that the other’s life is ruled by “virtues” that, although “incompatible” with one’s own, are “each capable of being pursued for its own sake” (RAZ, 1988, p. 159).

Yet, as we explore the issue of the incommensurability between faith communities, the issue of pluralism has to be addressed, i.e. whether each belief system occupies an inviolable space that cannot be judged through the other’s criteria; is there any basis to some claim that religion is true or false, better or worse? R. Soloveitchik (1964, p. 28-29) writes that

[...] any suggestion that the historical and metaphysical worth of a faith community be viewed against the backdrop of another faith [is] incongruous with the fundamentals of religious liberty.

R. Soloveitchik directly tackled the philosophical dilemmas of pluralism in a short book entitled *The Halakhic Mind*. There, he introduced his notion of *cognitive pluralism*⁴,

⁴ R. Soloveitchik was largely inspired by William James’ *A pluralistic universe*. See Soloveitchik (1986, p. 20-21, 34) and Johnston (1999, p. 45-56).

which conceived a dialectics that oscillates between what is essentially a strong and weak form of pluralism. Regarding weak pluralism, he states that his conception of

[...] pluralism is founded on reality itself [...] it is ontologically conscious of, and reserves a central position in its perspective for, absolute reality. Pluralism asserts only that the object reveals itself in manifold ways to the subject, and that a certain *telos* corresponds to each of these ontical manifestations. Subsequently, the philosopher or scientist may choose one of the many aspects of reality in compliance with his goal (SOLOVEITCHIK, 1986, p. 16).

This pluralism is weak, as it claims that all belief systems – which, here, he extends to scientific and philosophical systems – are expressions of an absolute reality. However, his “pluralism” also contains the seeds of strong pluralism, since a latent relativism is contained in the statement that a person may “choose” from “one of the many aspects of reality”. This relativistic current in R. Soloveitchik’s thought becomes apparent when he states later on:

Modern pluralism...does not recognize any superiority of degree in the cognitive field. There is neither cognitive ascent or descent. Our multi-methodological approach is warranted by a proliferation of aspects inherent in reality itself; or by a multitude of interests latent in the cognitive act, be it of a purely contingent pragmatic or absolute order (SOLOVEITCHIK, 1986, p. 108).

When R. Jonathan Sacks, England’s former chief rabbi and one of the R. Soloveitchik’s students, reviewed *The Halakhic Mind*, he struggled with the implicit relativism of the work. Sacks remarked that, on the one hand, R. Soloveitchik’s conception of God “corresponds to something real in the world [...] It does not deny the absolute character of Being...” Nevertheless, at the same time,

[...] the very force of the argument suggests that reality can be sliced up and interpreted in infinitely many ways. And if reality corresponds to each of them, is it significant to say that it corresponds to any? (SACKS, 1997, p. 219).

R. Soloveitchik's answer to R. Sacks' rhetorical challenge might be "yes", since the latter seems not to have fully appreciated R. Soloveitchik's unique blend of a phenomenological theory of intentionality and the neo-Kantian method of reconstruction. By examining this dynamics, which is the *modus operandi* of *The Halakhic Mind*, we can get a better grasp on how R. Soloveitchik moves between positions of tolerance and pluralism, i.e. how he can believe in and advocate an absolute idea and, at the same time, acknowledge that this is only one aspect of reality.

R. Soloveitchik used phenomenological theories to dissect or reframe the primary conundrum of philosophical idealism – the transcendental gap between subject and object. The phenomenologist wishes to put this dilemma aside by, at once, pointing out the object's reality, but at the same time insisting that the only aspect of its reality that has any validity is the way how it is perceived through an intentional act⁵. Describing the phenomenological theory of intentionality, he writes:

[E]very psychical act is intentional, coordinated with an object, which exists or subsists for the subject. This coordination is synonymous with the act of predication which lends "reality" to the object. I love something real (to me); I hate something real (to me); I fear something real (to me). This "something" is not an illusion or a *fata morgana*, but a "real" object associated with the mental act (SOLOVEITCHIK, 1986, p. 43).

Nevertheless, by underlining the words "real", "reality", and "to me", R. Soloveitchik indicates that the phenomenological approach is a form of subjectivism. His notion of reality is minimalist and circumscribed. He warns readers that he is not claiming, like "phenomenological zealots" (SOLOVEITCHIK, 1986, p. 51) such as Scheler and Hartman,

[...] to apprehend the religious experience through a hypersensible act of intuition which is tantamount to a frank admission of defeat for reason [...] The autonomous philosophical apprehension of reality is anti-intellectualist and hostile to critical

⁵ Husserl's *epoché* is an intentional act raised to a level of self-consciousness high enough for scientific analysis.

thinking. It is pretentious and arrogant. It claims to transcend the boundaries of relational scientific knowledge and to reach the sphere of super-noesis (SOLOVEITCHIK, 1986, p. 51)⁶.

In opposition to these religious phenomenologists, R. Soloveitchik advocates for the reality of intentional consciousness by means of his theory of reconstruction, adapted, to a large extent, from the neo-Kantian philosopher Paul Natorp (see SCHWARTZ, 2007, p. 47-48, 76-77). In this approach, the *objective* component of intentionality consists in *a priori* claims from a given religious (or scientific) system. However, as far as these *a priori* structures are “objective”, the fact that they are recognized as constructs taken for granted indicates they are also “arbitrary creations of thought designed to order or classify the unknown” (SOLOVEITCHIK, 1986, p. 21). The “reality” they reveal is filtered through these structures, which are at once “objective” (taken for granted/*a priori*) and “arbitrary” (they do not claim to occupy an Archimedean point of truth). Thus, R. Soloveitchik (1986, p. 61-62) writes:

The structural designs of religion cannot be intuited through any sympathetic fusion with an eternal essence, but must be reconstructed out of objective religious data and central realities. The uniqueness of the religious experience resides in its objective normative components.

These “realities” and “data” are what in “Confrontation” he named “axiological awareness of each faith community [...] its system of dogmas, doctrines and values” (SOLOVEITCHIK, 1964, p. 18-19). The truth or “reality” of religious experience is conceived and experienced through its “objec-

⁶ R. Soloveitchik then expands upon the political consequences of these accusations, pointing a thinly veiled finger at Heidegger. He recalls that he wrote this essay in 1944, “it is no mere coincidence that the most celebrated philosophers of the third Reich were outstanding disciples of Husserl. Husserl’s intuitionism (*Wesensbau*) which Husserl, a trained mathematician, strived to keep on the level of mathematical intuition, was transposed into emotional approaches to reality. When reason surrenders its supremacy to dark, equivocal emotions, no dam is able to stem the rising tide of the affective stream” (SOLOVEITCHIK, 1986, p. 53). In *Halakhic Man*, R. Soloveitchik (1983, p. 139-143) explicitly implicates Heidegger.

tive, normative” structures and not *vice versa*, i.e. structures that are constituted through “reality”. R. Soloveitchik argues that Judaism is an ideal example for this reconstructive conception of religious experience, since its *a priori* structures are based on law and ritual.

It is by means of this reconstructive approach, which he also dubbed “descriptive hermeneutics” (SOLOVEITCHIK, 1986, p. 98), that R. Soloveitchik claims to save “critical thinking” and “reason” (SOLOVEITCHIK, 1986, p. 51). In other words, a large *a priori* system provides an objective basis through which conflicting claims of truth may be compared and contrasted within a medium of rational discourse. Talmudic discourse is, for Judaism, the primary example. However, if we return to the claims of “Confrontation” and its stress on incommensurability – the “numinous”, “exclusivity” of each faith community –, we can see that, according to R. Soloveitchik, rational discourse about faith-oriented experiences is limited to the practitioners of each faith. Nevertheless, and this is what is so striking about “Confrontation”, R. Soloveitchik does not wish to close himself off from individuals following other faiths. On the contrary, he insists upon endowing his co-religionists with dignity both as members of universal humanity and as believers in a transcendent God.

However, the question still remains: is R. Soloveitchik’s attitude towards people from different faiths pluralistic or tolerant? We have seen that he is not practicing a Lockean form of (weak) toleration, because he is opposed to convincing others about the absolute truth of his faith. On the other hand, within the framework of Judaism (and most religions), a wide range of superiority claims is presented. Therefore, he is, at most, a weak pluralist. One way to deal with this uncomfortable tension between a relation to the other that is, at once, fraternal and paternal is by means of Hans Georg Gadamer’s notion of the positive and needed roles of *prejudice*. Gadamer writes that:

It is not so much our judgments as it is our prejudices that constitute our being. This is a provocative formulation, for I am using it to restore to its rightful place a positive concept of prejudice that was driven out of our linguistic usage by the French and English Enlightenment. It can be shown that

the concept of prejudice did not originally have the meaning we have attached to it. Prejudices are not necessarily unjustified and erroneous, so that they inevitably distort the truth. In fact, the historicity of our existence entails that prejudices, in the literal sense of the word, *constitute the initial directedness of our whole ability to experience. Prejudices are biases of our openness to the world.* They are simply conditions whereby we experience something – whereby what we encounter says something to us. This formulation certainly does not mean that we are enclosed within a wall of prejudices and only let through the narrow portals those things that can produce a pass saying, “nothing new will be said here.” Instead, we welcome just that guest who promises something new to our curiosity (GADAMER, 1977, p. 9, our emphasis).

Gadamer shows how this positive notion of prejudice is, at once, an enclosure and an aperture, the limitation of our horizon and the indication of how to expand it. In this regard, it resembles what R. Soloveitchik describes as the *double confrontation* with the other. In a *single* confrontation, a person conceives the other as someone who is alien, as “an object beneath him” (SOLOVEITCHIK, 1964, p. 14). This is the stage of negative prejudice that wavers between intolerance and weak toleration. However, in the *second* or *double confrontation*, a strong toleration is enacted. A human being develops the ability to provide companionship and enter into a community. This “confrontation is reciprocal, not unilateral” (SOLOVEITCHIK, 1964, p. 14), each party regarding the other as “two equal subjects, both lonely in their otherness and uniqueness, both opposed and rejected by an objective order, both craving for companionship” (SOLOVEITCHIK, 1964, p. 14). It is worth noting that, in the second confrontation, the awareness of incommensurability does not dissolve⁷ – a decisive otherness remains. Yet, either by recognizing common values or a common experience of solitude, channels of communication are opened⁸. Whether R. Soloveit-

⁷ This is the point where R. Soloveitchik’s dialectics differs from Martin Buber’s I-thou relationship.

⁸ In *The Lonely Man of Faith*, Soloveitchik (2006) describes a similar process. It is precisely from Adam II’s awareness that his experience of being in the world is incommensurate

chik's stance consists in toleration or pluralism is determined by the role or consciousness mode he assumes at a certain moment of discourse or consciousness. When addressing issues of inter-religious dialogue, his position involves strong toleration and, as the philosopher of *The Halakhic Mind*, towards strong pluralism.

Nevertheless, these terms fall short of the kind of language needed to describe the relation of a person to the incommensurable other, especially when following another religion. Explaining why he strongly objected to use an interfaith chapel, R. Soloveitchik (2005, p. 8-9) said that his rejection

[...] stems neither from intolerance or narrow-mindedness, nor from a feeling of superiority [...] but from a deep philosophical insight into the essence of worship [...] We identify ourselves with our Gentile neighbors in all manner of collective endeavor – social, political and cultural [But] the worship of God is not a social or collective gesture but is a genuinely individual, most personal, intimate and tender relationship which cannot be shared with anyone else [...] The holiness of the synagogue, like the sanctity of the home, finds expression in our respect for its privacy and exclusiveness. To be dedicated to a plurality of cultic modes is a pure paradox.

R. Soloveitchik's refusal to join is not a rejection of tolerance or pluralism, but rather an attempt to move beyond these terms, showing the way how, in a *double confrontation*, a person, at once, affirms and rejects these antimonies. A person may acknowledge the universality of religious experience without attempting or wishing to "share" that experience with somebody from another religion. When experiencing one's faith in an act of worship or practice, it is vain to find any

with the experience of any other person, that he finds a point of commonality and solidarity with the other, that first "other" of course being Eve. "To be means to be the only one, singular and different, and consequently lonely. For what causes man to be lonely and feel insecure if not the awareness of his uniqueness and exclusiveness" (SOLOVEITCHIK, 2006, p. 39-40) and "If Adam is [to relieve his loneliness and] bring his quest for redemption to full realization, he must initiate action leading to the discovery of a companion who, even though as unique and singular as he, will master the art of communicating and, with him, form a community" (SOLOVEITCHIK, 2006, p. 37).

common thread with the other's experience. Here, incommensurability is absolute. The question is what happens in the discursive mode – when is a person facing the other (or writing to him, as in the passage above)? At that point, the individual is groping for commonality, for a universal experience, but at the same time he affirms the existence of one's difference, opposition, even intolerance. It is at that point that the antimony between toleration and pluralism breaks down either into a synthesis or sublimation of these dialectic terms or, as I would like to show, something entirely different.

Soloveitchik's studies are somewhat ineffective to claim that he seeks a dialectical synthesis. According to him,

Judaism accepted a dialectics consisting only of thesis and antithesis. The third Hegelian stage, that of reconciliation is missing. The conflict is final, almost absolute. Only God knows how to reconcile; we do not (SOLOVEITCHIK, 1978a, p. 25).

Most of R. Soloveitchik's philosophic writings revolve around various dialectic poles, and all of them share a structure that could be generalized as the duality between immanence and transcendence: natural and revelational consciousness, Adam I and II, majesty and humility, *koach* [strength] and *gvura* [self-control], to name the most well-known. R. Soloveitchik stresses that these poles are “unresolvable” and “insoluble” (SOLOVEITCHIK, 1978a, p. 25), as well as “not commensurate” (SOLOVEITCHIK, 2003, p. 116). Nevertheless, the existence of such an irresolvable schism within a single human consciousness produces a pluralistic consciousness where, as he said in *The Halakhic Mind*, “the object reveals itself in manifold ways to the subject, and that a certain *telos* corresponds to each of these ontical manifestations” (SOLOVEITCHIK, 1986, p. 16). Indeed, as he writes *Majesty and Humility*, “It is obvious that dialectical man cannot be committed to a uniform, homogeneous morality. If man is dialectical, so is his moral gesture” (SOLOVEITCHIK, 1978a, p. 26). Yet, in the pluralism described herein, each mode of consciousness is an island, where there is no dialogue with the other. Dialogue requires a deep acceptance of the other and recognition of the limitations of one's own consciousness. In other words, dialogue requires tolerance, not pluralism.

This ability to tolerate and dialogue is generated not by the relation between the two dialectical terms, but by the one that exerts a destabilizing force: Adam II, *gvora*, humility, revelation. These terms do more than simply balance their positive counterpart at the opposite end of dialectics. By encouraging the control and recognition of limitations in knowledge, they destabilize the absolute dualism of R. Soloveitchik's two-termed dialectical stringency. The stable poles, represented by Adam I or the notions of *cosmic* and *majestic* consciousness, draw strength from their confidence in mind's capacity to perceive and create order. The other pole is profoundly aware of the limitations of all these gestures to master the logos and, therefore, seeks to circumscribe man's ambitions. This limiting gesture does not detach one from the other or claim to set one above the other while brandishing the banner of Truth. As in Gadamer's notion of *prejudice*, the ability to recognize the limits of one's belief system is the very capacity that engenders openness to the other, instead of totalizing the other within one's own framework or *telos*. R. Soloveitchik describes, in various ways, this act of limitation as a gesture of *recoil*, *withdrawal*, *retreat*, *catharsis*, *self-contraction*, or *tzimtzum*. For instance, in "Catharsis" he writes:

[...] the cathartic act consists in retreating or disengaging from oneself, from one's inner world, in renouncing something that is a part of oneself, such as a sentiment, a mood, or a state of mind (SOLOVEITCHIK, 1978b, p. 46).

Cognitive catharsis consists in discovering the unknowability of being... If the scholar, simultaneously with the ecstasy of knowing, also experiences the agony of confusion and, along with the sweetness of triumph over Being, feels the pain and despair of defeat by Being, then his cognitive gesture is purged and redeemed (SOLOVEITCHIK, 1978b, p. 51-52).

In other words, the abdication of mastery also entails renunciation of mastery over that very *telos* a person has chosen to accept. The implications of this insight are far-reaching. R. Soloveitchik extends the notion of the other from another person to another religion and even the Archimedean truth of one's own religion. To tolerate the other means abdicating

mastery, recognize that there are possibilities of *being* different from one's own. These are autonomous possibilities that, though "incompatible" with one's own, are "capable of being pursued for [their] own sake" (RAZ, 1988, p. 159). By applying this insight to R. Soloveitchik's notion of *catharsis*, we may come to the surprising conclusion that before tolerating other ideas, other people, or other religions, a person must first learn to tolerate God, the inscrutable otherness continually asking for engagement and respect.

TOLERÂNCIA E PLURALISMO NOS ESCRITOS FILOSÓFICOS DE RABBI JOSEPH B. SOLOVEITCHIK

RESUMO

Embora muito tenha sido escrito sobre a dinâmica do diálogo inter e intrarreligioso nos escritos filosóficos do rabino Joseph B. Soloveitchik, esta discussão não foi colocado diante das lentes da filosofia da tolerância e do pluralismo. Depois de uma breve revisão de alguns problemas conceituais subjacentes a esses termos, eu aplico esses conceitos aos escritos de R. Soloveitchik. Em primeiro lugar, exploro sua atitude em relação ao grupo que ele considera como o mais difícil de tolerar – judeus seculares e não judeus. Em seguida, apresento a noção de incomensurabilidade, examinando sua relação com pessoas de outras religiões, uma arena onde as portas estão abertas tanto para a tolerância quanto para o pluralismo. Na sequência, exploro a ideia de pluralismo cognitivo, como é apresentado em *The Halakhic Mind*, destacando tanto as limitações quanto as possibilidades do pluralismo à luz das teorias fenomenológicas de intuição e intenção. Posteriormente, discuto a noção de preconceito de Gadamer, mostrando como ele aborda algumas tensões inerentes ao adotar uma atitude tolerante ou pluralista. Por fim, analiso as consequências da metodologia dialética de R. Soloveitchik, alegando que o seu uso de uma dialética "insolúvel" exige uma abordagem pluralista à ética e às ideias. Também questiono se R. Soloveitchik pode sustentar seu desejado rompimento dialético. Aqui, eu mostro como um lado da dialética – que representado por termos como Adam II, "humildade", "gvura [força]" ou consciência revelacional – tem um efeito complementar, ou seja, desestabiliza o cisma dialético por meio de um processo diverso descrito como um recuo, retirada, catarse, a auto-contracção ou *tzimtzum*. Esse processo é paralelo à disposição necessária para exercer a tolerância.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Pluralismo. Tolerância. Fenomenologia. Neo-Kantianismo. Diálogos inter-religiosos.

REFERENCES

FINKELMAN, Y. Religion and public life in the thought of Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik. *Jewish Political Studies Review*, v. 13, n. 3-4, p. 41-70, 2001.

GADAMER, H.-G. The universality of the hermeneutical problem. In: GADAMER, H.-G. *Philosophical hermeneutics*. Translated by David E. Linge. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1977.

HARTMAN, D. *Love and terror in the God encounter: the theological legacy of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*. Vermont: Jewish Lights, 2001. v. 1.

JOHNSTON, M. *Engagement and dialogue: pluralism in the thought of Joseph B. Soloveitchik*. Thesis (MA in Jewish Studies)—McGill University, Montreal, 1999.

MEIR, E. David Hartman on the attitudes of Soloveitchik and Heschel towards Chistianity. *Modern Judaism*, v. 23, n. 1, p. 12-31, 2003.

RAZ, J. Autonomy, toleration and the harm principle. In: MENDUS, S. (Ed.). *Justifying toleration: conceptual and historical perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

RYNHOLD, D. The philosophical foundations of Soloveitchik's critique of interfaith dialogue. *Harvard Theological Review*, v. 96, n. 1, p. 101-120, 2003.

SACKS, J. Rabbi Joseph B. R. R. Soloveitchik's early epistemology. In: ANGEL, M. D. (Ed.). *Exploring the thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveithchik*. Hoboken, NJ: KTAV, 1997.

SAGI, A. *Tradition vs. traditionalism*. Translated by Batya Stein. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008.

SAGI, A. *Jewish religion after theology*. Translated by Batya Stein. Brighton: Academic Studies Press, 2009.

SCHWARTZ, D. *Religion or Halakah*. The philosophy of Rabbi B. R. Soloveitchik. Translated by Batya Stein. Boston, MA: Brill, 2007. v. 2.

SCHWARTZ, D. *From the study of consciousness to the foundation of existence*. Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2008. v. 2.

SOLOVEITCHIK, J. B. Confrontation. *Tradition*, v. 6, n. 2, p. 5-29, 1964.

SOLOVEITCHIK, J. B. *A treasury of tradition*. New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1967.

SOLOVEITCHIK, J. B. Majesty and humility. *Tradition*, v. 17, n. 2, p. 25-37, 1978a.

SOLOVEITCHIK, J. B. Catharsis. *Tradition*, v. 17, n. 2, p. 38-54, 1978b.

SOLOVEITCHIK, J. B. *Halakhic man*. Translated by Lawrence Kaplan. Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1983.

SOLOVEITCHIK, J. B. *The Halakhic mind*. London: Seth Press, 1986.

SOLOVEITCHIK, J. B. Kol Dodi Dofek: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh. Translated by Lawrence Kaplan. In: ROSENBERG, B. (Ed.). *Theological and Halakhic reflections on the Holocaust*. Hoboken, NJ: KTAV, 1992. p. 51-117.

SOLOVEITCHIK, J. B. Out of the whirlwind. In: SHATZ, D.; ZIEGLER, R.; WOLOWSKY, J. B. (Ed.). *Out of the whirlwind: essays on mourning, suffering and the human condition*. Hoboken, NJ: KTAV, 2003.

SOLOVEITCHIK, J. B. Communal and public policy issues: on depiction of human images on stained glass windows in interfaith chapel. In: SOLOVEITCHIK, J. B. *Community, covenant, and commitment: selected letters and communications of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*. Hoboken, NJ: KTAV, 2005.

SOLOVEITCHIK, J. B. *The lonely man of faith*. New York/London: Three Leaves Press, 2006.

STUART MILL, J. *On liberty*. London: Penguin Books, 1984.