

# Morphology of the Voice in the Hermeneutics of Martin Buber

An Inquiry into the Form of the Unformed

Fumio Ono

---

## Abstract

This paper focuses on *Kingship of God* (*Königtum Gottes*) and other Biblical works authored by Martin Buber in order to consider the intention and reasoning behind his criticism of Julius Wellhausen, thereby shedding light on the essence of the hermeneutics of Buber in the context of Biblical study. This paper also aims to discuss how the principle of his hermeneutics is connected with his philosophy and thought, and also with the trend of thought during his time, in a wider perspective of the history of thought. Buber finds “voice” in the origin of the Bible and addresses the “form” (*Gestalt*) of occurrence and tradition of the “voice.” He then positions the “form” that emerges from the reading of the text at the core of his hermeneutics, or treats it as the principle of his Bible translation. In this paper, I will demonstrate that Buber based his hermeneutics on a philosophical principle that inquires into “the form of the unformed,” while referring to modern German thoughts, such as Grimm’s achievements in mythology and folklore, which addresses the “form” of language, and Gestalt psychology, which analyzes the “form” of recognition.

**Keywords:** Martin Buber, criticism of Julius Wellhausen, Gestalt, morphology, the form of the unformed

## 1. Introduction

---

*Kingship of God* (*Königtum Gottes*, the first edition was published in 1932)<sup>1)</sup> by Martin Buber (1878–1965) is the first of three books written with the common title *That which is coming: Investigations concerning the history of the origin of the messianic faith* (*Das Kommende: Untersuchungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Messianischen Glaubens*). While Buber authored a number of books, this particular work appears to be the only exception, as it is written in a highly academic manner and style—it is characterized by a well-controlled academic style of writing, a long list of annotations that almost occupies one third of the work, an exhaustive mention of and reference to the achievements of major Biblical scholars, and dependence on the latest research results in the fields of history, archaeology, linguistics, Oriental study, and

ethnology, as well as Biblical study. Additionally, Buber meticulously and specifically responded to comments and criticisms directed at this work from various quarters as it went through several editions. Buber himself acknowledges that his theses regarding hermeneutics are “to be philologically justified” and “to attain an historical picture which can be scientifically justified” (WII: 491). Unlike other works of Buber known for his poetic style of writing, *Kingship of God* bases its discussion on the literary criticism of modern Biblical study and seems to represent a highly scholarly aspect of this thinker.

However, what are the reasons behind Buber’s adherence to such an academic style? (As I will discuss below, this question is not of secondary importance, but has a critical significance for both Buber and the purpose of this paper.) We may infer at least three possible reasons.

The first reason relates to the German translation of the Hebrew Bible that Buber and Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929) began at the end of 1925. This translation caused a great sensation and led to heated controversies over their interpretation of the Bible among Christians and Jews, as well as among believers and non-believers alike. At that time, Buber communicated his decision to Rosenzweig in his letter dated June 4, 1927, as follows.

After long, hard, and sometimes almost consuming inner work, my thoughts on the Bible have now finally assumed unified form. Your share in their development (through your proposal regarding Isaiah) is so great that I must communicate my decision to you at the very hour of its maturing. I want to write an “Interpretation of Scripture” [.....]. At the same time, of course, this will serve as a motivation of our work [of translating the Bible]. [.....] In any case, I realize that this is the only way in which I can express myself on these problems in written form, dealing with point after point in the text, and yet in accordance with some kind of system (*irgendwie systematisch*).<sup>2)</sup>

As it turned out, “Interpretation of Scripture” mentioned in this letter was not published after all. Instead, he carried out his decision by writing *Kingship of God* and a series of other Biblical works.<sup>3)</sup> This letter shows, at least, that Buber had an intention to express himself “in accordance with some kind of system.” In the controversies over their Bible translation, Buber and Rosenzweig were pressed to offer a convincing explanation of their interpretation by commenting on the Bible in specific terms. To convince the opponents of the validity of the “grounds” of their interpretation, their explanation had to be more or less “systematical.”

On the other hand, the second reason has a more personal and external background. In 1927, Buber was considering moving to Palestine, and Judah Leon Magnes (1877–1948), who served as the chancellor of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, together with Samuel Hugo Bergmann (1883–1975) and Gershom Scholem (1897–1982), was working to establish the Institute of Religious Studies within Hebrew University and to invite Buber to the post at the Department of General Religious Studies (*Allgemeine Religionswissenschaft*). However, there

was skepticism over the scientific nature (*Wissenschaftlichkeit*) of Buber's work among the faculty of the university, and for this reason, Buber had to show some good "reason" to dispel such skepticism.<sup>4)</sup>

The third reason is more internal and essential for the hermeneutics of Buber than the two reasons mentioned above—it relates to the all-out confrontation between him and modern Biblical study after the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which is best represented by Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918). It is a well-known fact that Wellhausen and many other Old Testament scholars in the modern age embraced the "documentary hypothesis" and generally denied the notion that ancient Israel was governed by theocracy (for reasons to be mentioned below). On the other hand, in *Kingship of God*, Buber aims to demonstrate that people in the earlier days of Israel saw a direct-theocratic tendency, or to be more specific, the belief of people in the early period of Israel that God governed them as their king was accepted as historical fact.<sup>5)</sup> The most important question posed to Buber in this argument was this: Whether the descriptions of the Bible in question "belong to a genuine historical tradition, accordingly, to a tradition sprung from the report of an event, or a fictional tradition of theological-literary origin" (WII: 648f.). To sum up in advance, while Wellhausen and his supporters insisted that the descriptions of the Bible in question are "fictional," Buber tried to prove that they reflect "actual historical events." For this reason, Buber had to present convincing grounds for his contention in an academic and scientific manner.

To demonstrate the validity of his reasoning, however, Buber had to adopt a "methodology different from" that of Wellhausen, because Wellhausen's academic approach seemed inappropriate to Buber. To sum up in advance again, Buber attempted to review the concept of history (*Geschichte*) in terms of events (*Ereignis*, *Begebenheit*, and *Geschehen*) and to find out how we can witness, via language, the process of the occurrence of past historical events. Simply put, this can be described as "prophetic faith" in Biblical terms, and Buber addressed this issue by trying to read the Bible as a written "tradition of faith" held by people leaning toward the direct reign of God over them, who believed in the Kingship of God. So to speak, Buber holds that the history originated in a single event that took place between God who spoke to people and people who heard the "voice," and that the "voice" was involved in both the occurrence and tradition of this single event. For this reason, Buber thinks it necessary in interpreting the Bible to draw out the "voice" from the text.

However, it entails significant difficulty to address the "tradition of faith" that is symbolized by the "voice" with a pre-text origin as an object of evidence-based analysis. Buber himself expressed his concern as follows. "Scholarship (*Wissenschaft*) frequently produces a well-motivated hesitation to include in the subject of research a tradition about whose origin and development no documentation has been obtained, which we consequently are directed to infer from nothing else than its literary final condition, a vague and philologically inaccessible-appearing element, accordingly" (WII: 570). Then, how did Buber face up to the persistent

“hesitation” prevailing among Old Testament scholars in the modern age?

Let me also add that, to address this issue, it is inevitable to explore more essential questions that concern the view of the world and the view of faith, such as what is tradition, what is history, and what is the Bible. How did Buber answer these questions?

With this in mind, this paper aims, first, to shed light on the characteristics of the hermeneutics of Buber discussed in the three-volume work, including *Kingship of God*, as well as in *The Prophetic Faith (Der Glaube der Propheten)*, which can be viewed as a summary of the three-volume work, focusing on their contents and methodology in the context of Biblical study. In addressing this first aim, I will avoid discussing the issue of literary interpretation from the perspective of Biblical study and the background to the interpretation in detail, along with the individual points regarding the controversies with Biblical scholars. Instead, I will try to find out the essences of the “inquiry into tradition,” the “inquiry into history,” and the “inquiry into faith” that define the hermeneutics of Buber in the deeper layer of his mind.

The second, but more important aim of this paper is to inquire into the philosophical principle behind these essences. In other words, in this paper, I will discuss how the principle behind the hermeneutics of Buber is connected with his philosophy and thought, as well as with the trend of thought prevailing in his days in the wider perspective of the history of thought. For example, Buber, in discussing the translation of the Bible, positions the “form” (*Gestalt*) that emerges from the reading of the text as the principle of translation. Such a focus on the “form” can be considered to constitute the central theme of *Kingship of God*, though not expressly indicated so, and means much to the thought of Buber in general as well. I will also follow the process through which Buber, in his exploration of the meaning of the “form,” deepened his interest in the contemporary thought prevailing in Germany from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including mythology and oral literature that inquire into the “form” of language, along with the Gestalt psychology that analyzes the “form” of recognition.<sup>6)</sup>

In the process of pursuing this aim, we will deepen our understanding of Buber as a philosopher who continued his exploration of the possibility of the emergence of “voice” with some kind of tangible form, though voice itself has no physical or material form. Additionally, this paper will show that Buber’s philosophical interest was centered on the exploration of the “form of the unformed,” by examining the discussions over his hermeneutics and his other philosophical texts. In this paper, I will temporarily call such an attempt by Buber, as a whole, the “morphology of the voice” in a broad sense. I do so not to give a strict definition to the diverse and complex philosophy of Buber, but to capture a snapshot of his thought that may become visible when called by this name.

Here, let me give a hint about the direction of the discussion in this paper in advance. This paper will depict the contemporary thought about the “form” prevailing in the days of Buber as the “magnetic field” from which Buber’s Biblical works emanated. By doing so, the paper aims

to demonstrate the following: that the points raised by Buber in his thought of the Bible are not limited to the field of Biblical study, but that they relate to certain anthropological issues that are more universal and that can be re-interpreted in the context of the history of thought regarding “the form”; and also that, for this very reason, on the contrary, we cannot understand the uniqueness of the hermeneutics of Buber if we overlook his inquiry into such “form.” In other words, the following discussion aims not only to find out how the results of the Biblical study by Buber contributed to the development of Old Testament study, but also to explore the possibility of extending such research results to a wider horizon of “thought” not limited to Biblical and religious studies in a narrow sense.

## **2. Basic points of contention raised by Buber and his criticism of Wellhausen: history, will, and memory**

---

First, let me outline the hypothesis of Wellhausen, which provides the basis of the discussion to follow, along with the points of Buber’s criticism of Wellhausen shown in *Kingship of God* and his other Biblical works.

It is a well-known fact that in *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (*Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*) (1883) and other works, Wellhausen depicts the history of Israel based on Hegelian progressive view of history, which holds that primitive nature worship (polytheistic religions) gave way to more ethical and universal religions (monotheistic religions), which were later institutionalized as rituals and eventually became corrupt, losing their substance. This view itself is not much different from the conventional view of history of Christian theology, but the theme of Wellhausen’s research was “to discuss the place in history of the Law of Moses. More precisely, the question to be considered is whether that law is the starting point for the history of ancient Israel or not, or rather for that of Judaism, i.e., of the religious communion that survived the destruction of the nation by Assyrians and Chaldeans”.<sup>7)</sup> To answer this question, Wellhausen argues that the ritual part of the Pentateuch, called the “Law of Moses,” does not date back to the early period of Israel, but originates in the ritual religion of the Second Temple Period at the end of the period of ancient Israel, or, in other words, in Judaism after the Ezra and Nehemiah period.

Seen from a Jewish viewpoint, the interpretation of the Bible by Wellhausen is too biased toward the Christian theological view. However, since Wellhausen adopted an apparently positivist methodology in his interpretation, his historical approach became the mainstream of Old Testament study. On the other hand, the research of Wellhausen, which seemingly maintains “academic neutrality,” can lead to total denial of the interpretation of the Bible from a Jewish viewpoint, which places importance on the historical experience of ancient Israel and has preserved the written law and oral law revealed to Moses on Mt. Sinai. In other words, Wellhausen expressed doubt about the absolute precedence and centrality of the Torah, on

which Jewish faith is based, and thus shook the religious foundations of Judaism. The disagreement between these views can be typically seen in the dispute over whether or not theocracy was in place in the early period of ancient Israel. Wellhausen writes:

Writers of the present day play with the expressions “theocracy” (*Theokratie*) and “theocratic” (*theokratisch*) without making it clear to themselves what these words mean and how far they are entitled to use them. But we know that the word “theokratia” was only coined by Josephus; and when the writer speaks of the Mosaic constitution, he has before his eyes, it is well known, the sacred community of his own day as it existed down to the year 70 A.D. In ancient Israel, the theocracy never existed in fact as a form of constitution.<sup>8)</sup>

Then, how did Buber face up to such a new trend in Old Testament study?

While Wellhausen maintains that theocracy, as an “idea,” could be known in ancient Israel, but never existed as “a form of government,” Buber argues that “the will toward constitution is not a constitution itself” (WII: 547), and emphasizes the existence and significance of “will” (*Wille*)—“a third possibility,” which is distinguishable from “idea” and the “institution.” The point raised by Buber is this: the will toward theocracy as a constitution is inseparable from the historical Israel, and the will to actualize theocracy was inherent in the dynamic of this folk life, which functions in the historiography because it has functioned in history (WII: 548).

To rebut the argument of Wellhausen, Buber should be able to offer a convincing explanation of the particular *raison d'être* of the “will” that is working in the midst of history and, accordingly, also working dynamically in the historiography (the text of the Bible). While Wellhausen mentions the “divergences of the religious version from the natural,” Buber insists such a divergence is impossible because “a natural version is lacking” (WII: 545). In doing so, perhaps, Buber resolutely selected the “history of tradition of faith” instead of the “natural history of the text.”

Accordingly, Buber gives special importance to “memory” (*Erinnerung, Gedächtnis*). In the opinion of Buber, the messianic faith of Israel is “the being-oriented-toward the fulfillment of the relation between God and world in a consummated kingly rule of God,” and “that Israel perceives this believing expectation and its living expression as belonging to, and entrusted most peculiarly to, it among all the nations is based upon the believing memory that it once proclaimed JHWH as its direct and exclusive folk-king” (WII: 490f.). Furthermore, he argues that it is of critical importance to determine whether such a “memory” stems from the “historical reality of the people” or if it is merely “a late illusion or a theological art product.” This is because, “only if the memory is historical can the expectation, even in its oldest utterances, be traced back to it” (WII: 491).

Of course, it goes without saying that memory is at the core of the historiography or oral

tradition. When the text of the Bible is viewed as a mere object of positivist literary criticism, however, both the abovementioned “will” and “memory” are “traces” at best, and any argument that depends on will or memory as proof of historical reality can be dismissed as an “illusion.” Then, what does Buber mean by memory and will? To answer this question, perhaps, we have to shed light on the nature of the text of the Bible, or the view of the Bible held by Buber.

### **3. ‘Tendentious historical analysis’ as alternative Biblical study**

---

The argument of Wellhausen is grounded on the documentary hypothesis that holds that the Pentateuch was composed of independent sources written at different times. These consist of Yahwist (J), Elohist (E), Deuteronomist (D), and Priestly Writer (P) sources. He insists that the periods when these sources were written and their chronological orders do not match both the periods when the events described with them occurred and their chronological orders.<sup>9)</sup> The achievements of Wellhausen were passed onto Hermann Gunkel (1862–1932), Gerhard von Rad (1901–1971), and Martin Noth (1902–1968). Unlike Wellhausen, who adhered to “the division of the text into sources” while addressing the final form of the text as a starting point, these researchers followed the “process of the formation of tradition” to explore how the individual minimum units that were originally independent from each other had been developed into the final form of the text, and established the methodology known as “form criticism” (*Formgeschichte*) or “traditional-historical approach” (*Überlieferungsgeschichte*).<sup>10)</sup>

The documentary hypothesis of Wellhausen and the form criticism or the traditional-historical approach established by Gunkel, von Rad, and Noth are opposed to each other in terms of the starting point of the research and the direction of the problem setting, but they are credited with formulating the standard of modern Old Testament study, in which the Bible is treated not as an object of worship, but as an object of research of positivist history as part of natural history, and is therefore subjected to literary criticism. For this reason, since the arrival of these researchers, the attitude to turn the back on scientific research of the Bible and worship the Bible as a sacred book has been permitted only in religious circles, and is regarded as an obstacle to academic progress. In a sense, the development of “science” in and after the modern age has forced “religion” to justify itself in accordance with the “grammar of science.” Naturally, this means that Buber had to undertake an additional, daunting task to self-justify and redefine Judaism vis-à-vis the “grammar of Christianity.”

This may sound unexpected, but Buber did not completely deny the academic significance of the documentary hypothesis itself. Rather, he recognized its importance and even favorably evaluated it to some extent.

I nevertheless regard as a secure discovery the discrimination of two great fundamental

types of tradition-compilation coming to expression in the differentiation of J and E (WII: 493f.).

Yet, Buber's evaluation of the validity of the hypothesis is restrictive, and his true interest was not in the analysis of the sources. What held critical importance for Buber was not "research on source criticism" (*quellenkritische Arbeit*), but "research on tradition criticism" (*traditionskritische Arbeit*) (WII: 242), or, in other words, "tendentious historical analysis of the text and its structure" (*tendenzgeschichtliche Analyse*) (WII: 494). According to Buber, the concept of "tendentious historical analysis" refers to a methodology used to interpret the text of the Bible from the viewpoint of the process of the formation of tendency (*Tendenz*) inherent in documents that determines the redaction of various traditions. This methodology is compatible with, to a certain extent, the form criticism that focuses on the genres of narratives and oral traditions used in "*Sitz im Leben*" (Gunkel), or *setting in life*, and the form of their redaction, and with the traditional-historical approach that focuses on the process of the tradition.<sup>11)</sup>

For example, let us look at Chapter 8 of the Book of Judges. Gideon won the fight against Midian and rescued the Israelites, who asked Gideon and his descendants to be their king, only to have Gideon retort, "I will not rule over you." Buber's interpretation of these words from Gideon shows a good example of his tendentious historical analysis.

According to Buber, the Book of Judges is a combination of writings that were redacted with two different tendencies behind them: the "anti-monarchical tendency" and the "monarchical tendency" (Chapter 2, *Kingship of God*). The "anti-monarchical tendency" refers to a "naïve-theocratic tendency"; its declaration was an actual speaking or even chanting that had been active in the formative work of remembrance since the very inception of the formation of tradition. On the other hand, the "monarchical tendency," out of polemical impulsion in opposition to something already found to be formed, undertakes its gathering, combining, interpreting activity with a material. Its declaration was already a writing that had stemmed out of the time in which the declaration circulated for the first time as document and thus issued a challenge for a counter-document. The latter represents a general understanding of the Old Testament scholars who rely on the documentary hypothesis. Of course, it is the former that Buber would appreciate as being primal. Buber places importance not on a book in a general sense, but on the substance of a group of historical narratives that were combined with one another via a certain tendency, or that took on a certain tendency in the process of their establishment. Buber writes:

The important thing for us here is not when, approximately, this was, but when the stories of the judges of Israel were narrated, not, to be sure, in the elaboration which lies before us, but already cyclically with the very same tendency inhabiting and linking them with



which we are acquainted from the elaboration. The imprint of this tendency, as old as the original shaping of the stories themselves, is that which I should like to call the “original redaction” (*Urredaktion*) of the theocratic Book of Judges: redaction accordingly before its becoming a book in the sense of written literature (*Schrifttumsinn*), redaction of a cyclical tradition (*Redaktion einer zyklischen Überlieferung*) at an early stage of formation (WII: 570).

In doing this, Buber aims to capture the “tendency” behind the process of the completion of a document—not the form of the elaboration itself. This “tendency,” which is associated with certain historical events, or, in other words, the trace of “original redaction,” is inherent in narrated history. Put otherwise, this is, so to speak, a more fundamental “will” to tradition, which later took the form of a written book. In the text of the Book of Judges, Buber attempted to find a chain of will to tradition that worked behind the process of the completion of the form of a text, or “something” behind the form—not the completed form itself. In this light, the group of documents that constitute the Bible can and should be viewed as a “unified whole” even if they were written in different periods. This interpretation of the Bible is more clearly shown in the following paragraph in which Buber looks back on the time when he began the translation of the Bible with Rosenzweig.

Not only did we agree immediately that, in accord with our rightly conceived philological task, [.....] we had to stick as much as possible to the Masoretic text, as being the only objectively graspable text. We also agreed that where it was a question, say, of the connections of various portions to one another, we were not to consider the matter with reference only to this or that apparently isolable source, but *had rather to reproduce the literary totality lying before us (die uns vorliegende literarische Ganzheit)*—or, to use the terms of modern Bible scholarship, we were to think not of J (*the “Jahwist”*) or E (*the “Elohist”*) but of R (*the “Redactor”*), i.e., *the unitary consciousness of the book (das einheitsbewußtsein des Buches)*<sup>12)</sup> [italics by Ono].

The attitude of Buber to view the Bible as a unified whole while accepting the documentary hypothesis in part constitutes a substantial challenge to the theory of Wellhausen. At the same time, such an attitude opens up new possibilities of hermeneutics as it represents his departure from academic interest pursued in the study of form criticism and traditional-historical approach, with which he shares a certain part of the methodology.

Here, we can see two factors that differentiate modern Old Testament study from the view of Buber. First, the modern Old Testament study aims at the classification, analysis, and fragmentation of the Bible, while in his hermeneutics, Buber addresses the unified or integrated nature of the Bible that emerges from various fragmented parts. Second, more importantly,

Buber seems to have the motivation to set himself a goal far above the interests pursued in the study of the form criticism and traditional-historical approach that examines documents in terms of the genres of oral traditions, as well as in the redacting style seen in the process of tradition. He aims to go back to the “inspiration that formed oral tradition” (*die sagebildende Begeisterung*) (WII: 19), which is supposed to have been at the background of the genres of oral tradition, originally, and to redefine the Bible by projecting the tradition of the “inspiration” onto the images of prophets. I will discuss this issue in greater detail in the next section.

#### **4. The power of “objective inspiration”: the tie that connects Jacob Grimm to Buber**

Buber says that the mission in his hermeneutics is to restore the “true nature” of the Jewish Bible,<sup>13)</sup> and *Kingship of God* was authored as part of his pursuit of this mission. In this sense, we may say that the nature of the Jewish Bible for him is revealed in this work. In *Kingship of God*, Buber seems to aim not only to differentiate his view from the view biased toward Christianity held by Wellhausen and other Old Testament scholars, who rely on the documentary hypothesis, but also to show a more appropriate historical approach of Judaism by referring in part, but countering to the achievements of the rationalist and historical positivist hermeneutic study conducted as part of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (*Judaism studies*), developed by German Jewish researchers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>14)</sup>

It is interesting to note that, although *Kingship of God* was written with the intention to return to the *Jewish Bible*, the name of Jacob Grimm (1785–1863), known as the father of *Germanistik* (*German studies*), appears in this book, and his theory is referred to in the critical part of its discussion. Of course, this fact can never justify the criticism often voiced by Orthodox Jews that “Buber is a man of German culture and has little knowledge about Judaism.” Rather, it seems more important for us to focus our attention on the form of the “inquiry into tradition” and “inquiry into history” with which Buber struggles, sandwiched between “Jewishness” (*Judentum*) and “Germanness” (*Deutschtum*), persistently retaining both properties within himself.

The documentary hypothesis holds that there is a significant time lag between “the time when a certain event took place” and “the time when the description about the event was completed.” For example, the hypothesis concludes that the source of the “words of Gideon” was inserted later in the history or changed later to better suit the atmosphere prevailing at the time. Buber rebuts this contention by arguing that even if this is the case, the emotions of the people who experienced the event and became inspired by it are reflected in the oral tradition or the description, and for this reason, the event and the oral tradition or the description is connected internally with each other (WII:17f.). Simply put, Buber believes that no matter what facts come to light by the positivist approach in modern Old Testament study, and even if the structure of the Bible is consequently declared “non-factual,” the truth of the Bible will still

remain, never shaken by such a declaration.

While the Bible is comprised of oral traditions, narratives, and legends, it still serves as a record of actual events, as far as the depiction of events contained in the Bible reflects the sentiments of the people who experienced the events firsthand. This historical approach apparently seems to be incompatible with scientific reasoning; however, in fact, it is not a subjective or arbitrary approach, but has its own validity. To give firm ground to this idea, Buber refers to Jacob Grimm.

Known well, the Brothers Grimm were representative philologists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and jurists who studied at the University of Marburg. They were inspired by their professor and legal scholar, Friedrich Carl von Savigny (1779–1861), who awakened their interest in folk tales. The basic principle of the “historical jurisprudence” advocated by Savigny holds that we can interpret law only by historically looking back to the “Volksgeist” (*nation’s ethnic spirit*) behind the legal system, and this view strongly appealed to the Brothers Grimm, as well as romantic writers, such as Ludwig Achim von Arnim (1781–1831) and Clemens Brentano (1778–1842), who were attracted to the ideas of Savigny.<sup>15</sup> As far as law has its origin in the ethnic spirit, then it is inevitably tied closely with the language that stems from the ethnic spirit and serves as a medium to describe the spirit itself. The academic exploration of the Brothers Grimm evolved into their famous collection of folk and fairy tales (*Kinder- und Hausmärchen*) and Grimm’s German Dictionary (*Deutsches Wörterbuch*), both of which were produced from the process of collecting myths of various peoples, narratives of medieval times, and folk traditions in their pursuit of the ethnic spirit, which is the common origin of law and poesy, in terms of linguistic tradition.

In his work titled, *A Thought on Myths, Epics and History (Gedanken über Mythos, Epos und Geschichte)* (1813), Jacob Grimm mentions that if we straightforwardly examine the fables and oral traditions of ancient times, we can see behind them not groundless made-up stories, but “true poesy” (*wahrhafte dichtung*), which can be described as “objective inspiration” (*objective begeisterung*).<sup>16</sup>

Buber, who was a keen reader of Grimm’s works, states that the words that relate a miraculous event are engraved with the original miracle itself, or “a poetizing memory,” and this is what Grimm calls “objective inspiration” (*objektive Begeisterung*) (WII: 547). “It is a primeval state of amazement which sets all the creative forces of the soul to work” (WII: 17).

“Inspiration” (*Begeisterung*), or “spirit” (*Geist*) descends on men and induces “emotional reactions,” and thus deeply moves their hearts. Since the age of Plato up to Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775–1854), a philosopher active in the age of Grimm, this concept of “inspiration” has historically been given special importance as a factor indispensable for poets and philosophers when “receiving” creative wisdom beyond human capability. It is held that the emotional reactions of the people who received such inspiration have been passed down *objectively* in oral traditions and historical narratives as memories and recollections of the

events. In a sense, Buber was tasked with recording the following: the “inspiration that has taken the form of an objective,” the “creative forces of the soul” that has created history, and “a primeval state of amazement” that activates the creative forces of the soul, in order to revive the power of “narration” and to hand down such power anew.

“Legends were narrated from the moment of the experience on.” These words are taken from ‘Mythology and History’ (*Mythos und Geschichte*), authored by Ernst Herzfeld (1879–1948), which Buber quotes in one of the notes contained in *Kingship of God* (WII: 546). This understanding directly corresponds to the following passage of Buber’s introduction to *The Legend of the Baal Shem*, a translation of the stories of the genesis of Hasidism, which reads, “I tell once again the old stories, and if they sound new, it is because the new already lay dormant in them when they were told for the first time.”<sup>17)</sup>

For Buber, the approach to a text by going back to the primal moment when the inspiration descended and re-experiencing the event that happened at that moment is valid equally for both Biblical study and the study of Hasidism. In Biblical study, this approach means going back to the moment of the revelation when the “voice” of God was heard; while in the study of Hasidism, it means going back to an event that can be termed *teshuvah*, or a “whole return to God.” Perhaps, Buber was deeply sympathetic with the historical recognition and methodology of the “orthodox” German philology, which may explain why he placed so much importance on oral traditions, legends, and anecdotes.

Here, it may be worth mentioning that there were important interactions between the study of the Old Testament based on the form criticism, on the one hand, and folklore and mythology, such as narratology and the study of oral traditions, on the other. In fact, Gunkel, the founder of the form criticism, paid much attention to the “art of narrative” of the oral traditions seen in the Old Testament, and relied on the achievements of Axel Olrik (1864–1917), a leading authority of Scandinavian folklore and mythology, as the basis of his research methodology.<sup>18)</sup>

The “discovery” of Scandinavian myth in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, such as *The Poems of Ossian* by James Macpherson (1736–1796), had a huge influence on Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803), Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), and many others. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Scandinavian myth drew much more attention, which led to the start of a Celtic boom, which was fueled by the publication of the *Kalevala*, edited by Elias Lönnrot (1802–1884), and the English translation of *Mabinogion* by Lady Charlotte Guest (1812–1895). Against this backdrop, mythology and the study of ethnic poems were inevitably connected with Biblical study.

Buber in his youth also played a role in increasing the popularity of the study of myths and folklore that have the neo-Romantic feel of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Besides his famous translations of Hasidic Tales, he translated *Mabinogion*, a collection of Celtic myths collated from the medieval Welsh manuscripts for the first time in the German-speaking world and published it under the

title of *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi* from the Insel Verlag in 1914. He also published an annotated adaptation of the German translation of the *Kalevala: the Finnish National Epic* in 1914. Further, he edited and translated *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, a collection of Chinese folk tales written by Pu Songling (1640–1715) in the early Qing Dynasty, and he published it under the title, *Chinese Ghost and Love Stories*, in 1911.<sup>19)</sup> These works of Buber may seem to lack consistency, but they cannot be dismissed simply as an unnecessary “detour,” as the well-known achievements of Buber in the area of the translation and study of Hasidism can be interpreted not only in the context of the Jewish Renaissance that heralds the rebirth of the Jewish nation, but also in the wider perspective of the “longing for the mythical world” that prevailed all over Europe from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. If it is an interest in the tradition of “voice” that is still clearly heard in the oral traditions, legends, and myths that drove him to the study of Hasidism, Bible translation, and Biblical study, then we may renew our understanding of, in part, the necessity and reason behind Buber’s enthusiasm for translation and the study of myths and traditions of various peoples in his younger days.

### **5. *Botschaft* of the Bible and its form (*Gestalt*): a consideration of the Bible as the “voice”**

---

Translation requires a self-understanding of the interpretation of the original text and language as media. For this reason, perhaps, the essential factors of Buber’s Bible interpretation are often visible in Buber’s theory of Bible translation. One of the examples is the following passage in which Buber states that the purpose in translating the Bible is to demonstrate that the Bible is a book of “voice.”

We have, as I said, had in mind the Bible as the “voice” (die “*laute*” *Bibel*). We proceed from the notion that the Bible is a product of living recitation (*Vortrag*), and is intended for living recitation; that speech (*Rede*) is its true existence, and the written text only a form for preserving it.<sup>20)</sup>

On the surface, this remark can be understood to indicate that Judaism has been honoring the oral tradition historically and therefore they call the Bible by the name “Miqrā,” meaning “recitation.” However, this seems to mean “more than that,” due to the following passage.

The Hebrew Bible is essentially stamped and ordered by the language of *Botschaft* (*divine message*). “Prophecy” is only the clearest, the most naked manifestation of *Botschaft*; prophecy proclaims publicly whatever is to be proclaimed (WII: 1095).

For this reason, Buber continues, even when we read legal and ritual prescriptions of the driest, the most concrete casuistic precision, they suddenly breathe out a hidden pathos. Still, this does not mean that only certain part or the certain writing style of the Bible communicates *Botschaft*. Instead, “the Bible as we have it is *Botschaft* in every limb of its body” (WII: 1095). This recognition of Buber also indicates that when he talks about the Bible as the “voice,” he means the “voice of *Botschaft*. This not only refers to “recitation” in the Jewish tradition, but also relates to the attitude used to read the Bible in a manner in which one can hear the “voice” in the text, with the recognition that the message of God is contained even in the most trivial textual description.

Here, it will be helpful for our understanding to refer to an ironic but appropriate indication made by Gershom Scholem, who was both an empathetic supporter and a sharp critic of Buber. He indicates that Buber makes no “distinction between inspiration and revelation,” which is popular among modern Catholic theologians, who generally hold that “inspiration” is the phenomena in which certain human authors, without clear consciousness, are urged by God to communicate His words, while “revelation” refers to the truths that God Himself reveals to people with language.<sup>21)</sup>

What we generally call the “voice” in this paper and what we see at the essence of the hermeneutics of Buber also refer to both inspiration and revelation. It is the “voice” of God addressed to men and the “voice” of prophets who are urged by the *ruach* (*spirit, breath*) of God. The “voice” of God and the “voice” of prophets, who heard the “voice” of God and told it to others, were handed down orally over a long period of time through the medium of the “voice” of the people. This is the origin of the Bible, and the Bible is a written record of such multilayered “voices”. This is how Buber interprets both the Bible and history.

Then, in what manner can such *Botschaft*, or “voice,” be heard by the people? Buber answers this question in terms of his unique concept, known as the “principle of *Gestaltung*.”

*Botschaft*, then, even where it is expressed indirectly, must not be reduced to annotation or commentary. Rather it enters into the form (*Gestaltung*), helps determine the form, transforms it, transforms itself for it—but without affecting us in the least as distorting, as blurring, as didactic. Narrative retains undisturbed its epic completeness, statute its strict particularity; but within these forms the action of *Botschaft* is accomplished, and does not leave things unchanged. The principle by which this is accomplished must be, precisely, a formal principle (*Gestaltungsprinzip*) (WII: 1096).

Buber argues that there are good reasons behind the repetitions of certain words and sounds, the relations and similarities of the roots of words, and the rhythms of words used in the Bible. If certain words are repeatedly used, this is because repetition is necessary, and here, we can see the form of *Botschaft* of the Bible. Therefore, if such choices of words are dismissed

simply as a play on words or as audible effects during Bible translation, *Botschaft* of the Bible will be totally spoiled. The translator is held responsible to translate this form of the Bible, and the reader is required to see the form in the text. The “voice” takes on form as *Botschaft* through the rhythmical or repetitive combinations of the words in the text. In this way, the Bible communicates to readers the form of the “voice” that can be infinite in combination but that has been handed down as a necessity.

## 6. Buber in the constellation of the thoughts of form (*Gestalt*)

---

Buber developed this idea during the period from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when new thoughts on the “form” and the “unformed” in the broadest sense, including form, shape, morphology, figure and style (*Form, Gestalt, Morphologie, Figur, Stil*), were emerging in various academic fields.

To show some well-known examples, Aby Warburg (1866–1929), an art historian who was fascinated by ancient paganism through Renaissance art, developed an iconographical methodology employing a morphological analysis of symbols. Around Warburg, a number of outstanding achievements were being made in the thought of “form” concerning morphology, figure, and shape, including: the iconological study of Erwin Panofsky (1892–1968) and Fritz Saxl (1890–1948); *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* by Ernst Cassirer (1874–1945); and later, *Origin of German Tragic Drama* and *The Arcades Project* by Walter Benjamin (1892–1940).<sup>22)</sup> We may also add Ludwig Klages (1872–1956) and Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961) to this list of thinkers.<sup>23)</sup> Of course, we should not forget the contribution by Buber’s mentor, Georg Simmel (1858–1918), regarding “formal” sociology.

In relation, let me point out that these thinkers were gathering around an “epicenter”—it was Goethe’s morphology that was receiving greater attention in rivalry with the empirical exact science that was garnering popularity in those days. For example, Ernst Haeckel (1834–1919), who advocated the recapitulation theory, authored *General Morphology of Organisms*, in which he combines Goethe’s morphology with Darwin’s evolution theory and maps a beautiful genealogical tree relating to all life forms.<sup>24)</sup> On the other hand, Rudolf Otto (1869–1937), the founder of the idea of the *numinous* experience, criticized Haeckel, on grounds that Goethe’s morphology belongs to the genealogy of the “idea of development” (*Entwicklung*) held by Aristotle, Giordano Bruno, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, and Johann Gottfried von Herder, and that it is definitely incompatible with Darwin’s evolution theory. This criticism corresponds with that of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), who proclaimed himself an anti-Darwinist in his *The Will to Power* and sharply distinguished between Goethe’s morphology and Darwin’s evolution theory.<sup>25)</sup>

In any case, we may say that various thoughts on the “form” that emerged across the scientific and religious communities originated from intense interest in the fundamental

generative principle behind the process of a “form” being “formed,” which Goethe called *Urphänomen* (*primal phenomenon*). Of course, Buber, who was attracted to both Goethe’s morphology and Nietzsche’s idea of power, immersed himself completely in the mood of the times and struggled to identify the “eternal *Urphänomen* which present here and now” (WI: 152).<sup>26)</sup>

In those days, Ernst Mach (1838-1916), a physicist, was among the leaders of the Monist League, together with Ernst Haeckel. Mach, in *The Analysis of Sensations*, presents the theory known as “sensory element monism” and argues that the world that consists of various elements appears differently depending on the context, but that each appearance has its own facticity. Then, how did Mach’s interest in the individual facticity of the “appearance” resonate with thought on “form”?

In the summer semester during the second year at the University of Vienna (1897), Buber attended Mach’s class, “General Inquiry into Natural Science” (Incidentally, Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1874–1929), whom Buber had befriended by that time, is considered to have attended the same class as an auditing student).<sup>27)</sup> It is almost impossible to answer the question about the direct influence of Mach on Buber. To be honest, Mach seems to have no influence on Buber at all. Aside from a superficial influence, however, it is plausible that they shared some ideological sympathy in the deep underground layer of the thought that characterized their age. In fact, the following passage in which Mach discusses the perception of an “appearance as a whole” seems to have a close connection with the discussion in *I and Thou* Buber would author later.

The tree with its hard, rough, grey trunk, its many branches swayed by the wind, its smooth, soft, shining leaves, appears to us at first a single, indivisible whole. In like manner, we regard the sweet, round, yellow fruit, the warm, bright fire, with its manifold moving tongues, as a single thing. One name designates the whole, one word draws forth from the depths of oblivion all the associated memories at once, as if they were strung upon a single thread.<sup>28)</sup>

A passage similar to this is also seen in Buber’s *I and Thou*, though there is some difference in nuance (WI: 81ff.). When we see a tree, we can perceive it as a picture, or in terms of color, form, growth movement, species, chemical composition, law or number. On the other hand, we can also perceive the tree as a single whole, its presence itself. Buber presents such perception as a concrete example of the “I-Thou” relationship.

In the section that follows, Buber refers to the “melody not made up of notes,” the “verse not made up of words,” and the “statue not made up of lines” as examples of objects that are perceived as a single whole. In this light, we may justifiably conclude that Buber was thinking about the Gestalt perception when writing this passage. Rather, it should be expressly indicated



that little attention has been directed to the fact that the well-known “I-Thou” recognition itself has certain connection with thoughts on Gestalt and that Buber’s interest in the wholeness of a “verse not made up of words” is of critical significance for his mission regarding the hermeneutics discussed above.

Mach mentions the ideas of “sound Gestalt” and “space Gestalt” in *The Analysis of Sensations*. These ideas inspired Christian von Ehrenfels (1859–1932) to write *On the Qualities of Form* (1890), which is considered to mark the beginning of Gestalt psychology.<sup>29)</sup> The emergence of Gestalt psychology, for which the University of Berlin played a leading role, largely shook the frameworks of conventional psychology and cognitive science. Against this backdrop, Buber, as a student of the University of Berlin, also came to know Gestalt psychology as a new movement directly opposed to the reductionistic experimental psychology founded by Wilhelm Max Wundt, by joining the seminar of psychology by Carl Stumpf (1848-1936)—one of the founders of the Berlin School of Gestalt psychology.

In *Man and His Image Work (Der Mensch und sein Gebild)* (1955), which Buber authored later in his life, he focuses on the issue of shaping (*Gestaltung/Figuration*), or Gestalt formation, and considers the general ability of man to form something into a particular shape, not limited to artistic creation. In this work, he refers to *The Circle of Gestalt* by Viktor von Weizsäcker (1886–1957), together with *The Sense of the Senses* by Erwin Straus (1891–1975), as recent psychological works dealing with human perception that deserve special attention, and refers directly to the idea of Gestalt. However, it is not my intention to emphasize such a superficial connection between Buber and Gestalt psychology. Rather, I would like to note the fact that he deals with Gestalt as an epistemological issue, considering how we perceive the reality of an object as a united whole, again through his encounter with a lime tree. In this work, we can see his persistent interest in Gestalt since he wrote *I and Thou*.

[.....] within my perception, the process of combination, restriction, segmentation, and rhythmization starts, and the shaping of a united whole (*das Werden gestalteter Einheit*) takes place. As this process takes on greater reality and existential nature, then the act of observing (*Betrachtung*) turns into the act of seeing (*Schau*) in all the sensory areas. The act of seeing represents loyalty offered by the process of figuration to the unknown, and, by working jointly with the unknown, plays its role. It is loyalty to existence, not to a phenomenon, or in other words, loyalty to the existence that concerns us, but that we can never reach (WI: 434).

What Buber is after is to explore how we can still offer “loyalty” to possibilities that may await us, while remaining loyal to the impossibilities we cannot reach. Here, the act of “seeing” refers to the function of perception to capture “the shaping of a united whole” (*das Werden gestalteter Einheit*) without dealing with it as an object of analysis. Buber endeavored to capture

the “entire wholeness” that cannot be perceived by the act of “observing,” and remained deeply interested in the shaping of melodies and rhythms as his principle of Bible translation. In this light, perhaps Buber felt deeply sympathetic with Gestalt psychology, which deals with melodies and rhythms but attempts to see them as a united whole that cannot be reduced to individual elements.

## **7. Conclusion: inquiry into the form of the unformed**

---

So far we have examined the essence of Buber’s criticism of modern Old Testament study in the context of Biblical study, and, at the same time, focused on his inquiry into what can be termed as the “form of the unformed,” which consistently underlies his hermeneutics, in order to highlight its potentiality.

Here, in concluding this paper, let me look back to Buber’s criticism of Wellhausen’s understanding of theocracy. Buber holds that “the will toward constitution is not a constitution itself” and that “the will to actualize theocracy [.....] functions in the historiography because it has functioned in history” (WII: 547f.). Now we know that the process of finding the “form of the unformed” that is expressed here as “the will that functions” means, for Buber, the act of reading the Bible and hearing the “voice” of the Bible. The unity of the Bible is guaranteed by this “voice.”

As we have verified, Buber remained consistently interested in: the existence of “will” throughout history; memories of events; tendencies that have shaped the form of the Bible known to us today; the wholeness of the Bible in which different documents are combined into one; the inspiration that has been preserved as traces in documents; the creative forces of the soul; the tradition of “voice;”; the formal principle; Gestalt and rhythm; and the act of “seeing” to capture an entire wholeness that cannot be dealt with as an object of “observation.” We may add to this list the concept of *nebi* (*prophet*), a theme addressed in *The Anointed One (Der Gesalbte)*, published as a sequel to *Kingship of God*, and especially the ideas of *ruach* (*spirit of God, breath*) and *dabhar* (*word*). In this work, Buber defines prophets as people who are driven by the movement of inspiration of *ruach* and explains that “those who speak Biblically by procreation will first experience *ruach* and then receive *dabhar*” (WII: 828). This statement may be considered to be directly associated with Grimm’s “objective inspiration” discussed above. In short, those who perceive the “will that functions” are those who experience “inspiration,” *ruach*, and “spiritual movement,” and who strive to give forms to their “will” and “memory” as *dabhar* or “words” (WII: 710f.).

I think it has now become evident that the connection between Buber’s hermeneutics and the Gestalt perception discussed in this paper is not of secondary importance but has a critical significance for Buber’s criticism of Wellhausen. Buber had to rebut Wellhausen, who viewed the Bible as a collection of different sources, while accepting, in part, Wellhausen’s documentary

hypothesis, and he had to verify the unity of the Bible. The unity of the Bible is never lost by the documentary hypothesis that treats the Bible as a combination of documents from independent sources, because, just as a melody is *something more than* a combination of notes, the text of the Bible is *something more than* just the sum of edited historical documents and commentaries. In the view of Wellhausen and his followers, a collection of independent documents makes up the wholeness of the Bible, but in the view of Buber, the wholeness of the Bible can be compared to a melody, which is never reducible to a collection of independent notes, and its unity is guaranteed by *ruach* that is given the form of *dabhar*.

In his historical approach to the Bible, Buber recognizes the Gestalt nature of linguistic phenomena, and strives to capture the “power” of *ruach*, or the “form of the unformed” contained in the tradition, by means of *dabhar*, the form of the “voice.” Put otherwise, this is a process of finding a “figure” (the form of the “voice”) against the “ground” (the letters that constitute the text of the Bible), and then reversing the figure-ground relation to focus on the text of the Bible anew in light of the “voice” that has been heard. This is a principle of never-ending dialogue, and represents the truth of “the genuine historical life of faith” depicted in the Bible.

Then, let me discuss why the abovementioned achievements of Buber in interpreting the Bible in light of the tradition of faith are worth attention still today.

For example, Benjamin Uffenheimer, a Jewish Biblical scholar in Israel, indicates that “Buber approached the Bible as a thinker of the Jewish national revival movement, seeking in the Bible his own truth and the truth of his generation.” In this remark, he emphasizes that the attempt of Buber departed from the interest of “professional Biblical scholars” who pursue only historical, objective truth.<sup>30)</sup> This view sees the value of the achievements of Buber not in Biblical study but rather in political theology after all.

On the other hand, some scholars attempt to show Buber’s unique contribution to the tradition of Jewish hermeneutics since Spinoza’s historical criticism. One of them is Michael Zank, an American scholar of Bible and Jewish study born in Germany, who presents the view that, “The as yet unresolved problem of the integration of biblical faith in the contexts of religious studies and the history of religion is at the core of Buber’s works.”<sup>31)</sup> However, as Zank himself analyzes with a sigh, Buber’s approach to Biblical faith as a basic theme that concerns both Biblical study and the history of religion “is now more unwieldy and unconventional than in the 1930s, when the historical and philosophical formulation of the question found a response in the study of the Holy Writ itself;”<sup>32)</sup> against the backdrop of the widening gap between Biblical study and the history of religion.

Yet, we may understand that the “unwieldiness” and “unconventionality” itself urges Old Testament scholars to reconsider their research framework that has been taken for granted. In fact, some of them have voiced skepticism about or questioned their conventional approach to the Old Testament that is based on the documentary hypothesis advocated by Wellhausen. For example, a Japanese Biblical scholar, Ken’ichi Kida, notes that modernistic and Christian

premises are behind Wellhausen's documentary hypothesis, and states that even analysis of literary genres in the form criticism that places importance on folklore and oral traditions "segmented each unit of documents into excessively small pieces and remained least interested in the attempt to reconstruct history based on the memories of ancient communities."<sup>33</sup>) He then concludes that such an attitude has become increasingly apparent even in the new study of traditional-historical approach that has taken over the method of form criticism. Considering that Kida translated *Kingship of God* into Japanese, we may justifiably say that Kida had Buber in his mind when writing this criticism.

Isaiah Teshima, a Japanese scholar of Bible and Jewish study, calls our attention to a very interesting "inconsistency" or "twisted situation." That is, Old Testament scholars, since Wellhausen, "have repeatedly and fundamentally denied the unity and credibility of the text of the Bible but have never lost the desire to read the Bible."<sup>34</sup>) We may be blamed for being too hasty if we conclude that such "inconsistency" alone evidences the inability of the modern spirit to completely ignore the tradition of faith concerning the Bible (as indicated by Buber). However, if Buber's inquiry entailed an "as yet unresolved problem" (Zank), perhaps, addressing this problem, at least, can provide a clue that helps scholars of Biblical study and religious history reconsider their conventional approaches.

Additionally, when we think of the gradual loss of ties between *knowledge and faith* and between *science and religion* since the modern Enlightenment period, the question posed to Biblical study by Buber, as a German-Jewish thinker, seems to hold significance not only as a part of the history of hermeneutics, but also as an important standpoint from which to reconsider the complex association between *knowledge and faith*—which have been separated at one time and then connected at other—in the context of a long historical process. Certainly, Buber's contribution will provide insight, even if indirectly, to those who are seriously committed to finding out whether it is possible to re-establish ties between *knowledge and faith*, and between *science and religion*, and if not possible, what alternatives are available.

Seen in the context of the traditional Jewish hermeneutics, the framework in which Buber criticizes Wellhausen regarding hermeneutics may be interpreted to indicate the superiority of *drash* (a Hebrew word meaning "to seek" and here, it indicates "interpretive meaning") over *peshat* (a Hebrew word meaning "to rid" and, here, "literal meaning"), in the sense that it focuses on the tradition of "voice," instead of positivist source criticism. Yet, on the other hand, Buber wanted to be faithful to the "literal meaning" of the text of the Bible and attempted to get rid of the "arbitrariness of interpretation," which many Old Testament scholars try to conceal using such terms as "academic neutrality" and "objectivity." In this sense, Buber's framework can be understood to indicate the superiority of *peshat* over *drash*, as well.<sup>35</sup>)

The morphology of the "voice" found in the hermeneutics of Buber involves fundamental considerations on anthropological questions of whether or not we can arrive at the literary meaning of a written text, and what requires us to interpret such text. In this light, the reference

to the “tendentious historical analysis” in the following letter may serve as one of the guideposts for those who are seeking to explore the insights of Buber, still today. This letter, dated June 14, 1932, was sent to Buber by Leo Baeck (1873–1956), who served as a chief rabbi in Berlin and thus had thorough knowledge of Judaism, and who studied Spinoza under Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) at the University of Berlin as a senior to Buber, thanking Buber for presenting him *Kingship of God*.

In addition to the wealth of details that gave me new and valuable information, and pending a more detailed comment when I have completed the book, I should like to emphasize only one point today: the book seems important to me from a methodological aspect as well. The “tendentious historical analysis” of the text is indispensable for an understanding of the Bible, and one could almost say that here *peshat* and *drash* are one and the same thing. I would wish that your book might point the way in this direction as well. Without an understanding of the historical paradox [discussed in your book], no access to the Bible can be provided.<sup>36)</sup>

Various important thematic issues are crystallized into the short description of “*peshat* and *drash* are one and the same thing,” such as: the modern Old Testament study led by Wellhausen and others from a Christian perspective; the long tradition of *peshat* and *drash* in Rabbinic Judaism; historical criticism of the Bible since Spinoza; the relations between faith and modern academic spirit: and, last but not the least, the question of whether the “form of the unformed” can manifest itself before men or not.

When unformed matter, whether it be a word or meaning, is shaped into a known form, the power that is inherent within it and constitutes its being is lost. How we can save this power is a question that deeply concerns the essence of language, and is a critical question rooted in the fundamentals of life for men who are given both spoken and written words. Still today, the traces of the struggle of Buber over this theme seem to pose us the most primitive, but all the more for its primitiveness, most universal question regarding human life.

---

**Note:**

- 1) Quotations taken from *Martin Buber Werke 3 Bd.*, Kösel-Verlag & Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1962–1964 are indicated as “W” in the text, followed by the volume number and then the page number. Other sources of quotations are shown as footnotes. For the quotations from the texts of Martin Buber, I used the German original text on my own, while referring to the English translations by Richard Scheimann, *Kingship of God*, third, newly enlarged Edition, New York, Evanston, San Francisco, London: Harper & Row, 1973; *Moses: The Revelation and the Covenant*, with an Introduction by Michael Fishbane, Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press

International, 1988; by Ronald Gregor Smith, *I and Thou*, Second Edition, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958; and also referring to the Japanese translations by Shozo Arai, Reiko Saotome and Kuniko Yamamoto, *Martin Buber Seisho chosakushu Vol.1 Mose (Biblical Works of Martin Buber Vol.1, Moses)*, the Board of Publications, the United Church of Christ in Japan, 2002; by Ken'ichi Kida and Hiroshi Kita, *Martin Buber Seisho chosakushu Vol.2 Kami no Okoku (Biblical Works of Martin Buber Vol.2, Kingship of God)*, the Board of Publications, the United Church of Christ in Japan, 2003; by Ken'ichi Kida and Yoshihiko Kanai, *Martin Buber Seisho chosakushu Vol.3 Abura sosogareta mono (Biblical Works of Martin Buber Vol.3, The Anointed One)*, the Board of Publications, the United Church of Christ in Japan, 2010. I would like to thank them for their generosity and understanding.

- 2) Martin Buber, *Briefwechsel aus sieben Jahrzehnten Bd.2: 1918–1938*, Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1973, S.284f.; and also Nahum N. Glatzer & Paul Mendes-Flohr (eds.) *The Letters of Martin Buber. A Life of Dialogue*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996, pp.350-351.
- 3) As mentioned in the foreword in the first edition of *Kingship of God*, Buber originally intended to write commentaries on the entire Bible following the order of *Tanakh*. As it turned out, however, he instead authored a series of works about the establishment of the faith in the Messiah in ancient Israel (WII: 489).
- 4) See Gershom Scholem, Martin Bubers Berufung nach Jerusalem, in: *Frankfurter Hefte. Zeitschrift für Kultur und Politik*. 22. Jahrgang, Heft 4, April 1967, S.229–231.; and also the correspondence exchanged between Buber and Magnes/Bergmann contained in Martin Buber, *Briefwechsel aus sieben Jahrzehnten Bd.2: 1918–1938*, S.289–293. Mendes-Flohr speculates that Buber wrote these Biblical works in order to be qualified as a professor. „In fact, it seems to have been intended as a *Habilitaionsschrift*, which would have entitled him to what we would now call a tenure-track university appointment” (Paul Mendes-Flohr, *Buber's Rhetoric*, in: P. Mendes-Flohr (ed.) *Martin Buber. A Contemporary Perspective*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press & Jerusalem: the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2002, p.2).
- 5) One of the remaining two books, *The Anointed One* (Vol. 2) “will show how the sacral character of the Israelitish king as one ‘anointed’ of JHWH is related to this religious idea of a folk-kingship of God”. The other book, *Moses* (Vol. 3), “portrays how both conceptions—already in the period of the kings—change from history into eschatology”. It is said that through these three works, Buber eventually aimed to support the insight that the “genuine eschatological life of faith is—in the great labourpains of historical experiences—born from the genuine historical life of faith” (WI: 490). In fact, Buber was devoted to the study of the messianism of the Bible in those days, and addressed this theme in his lecture at the University of Frankfurt. In December 1923, Buber was appointed to be a lecturer at the University of Frankfurt for the first Jewish study course ever introduced at a German university (“Course in the Studies of Jewish Religion and Ethics”), and became a visiting professor—*Honorarprofessor*—of the “Course in Religious Studies” in 1931. For reference, I will list the titles of his lectures and seminars at the University of Frankfurt below.

Summer semester of 1924: “How are Religious Studies possible?” (lecture), “On *Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah* by Maimonides” (seminar)

## JISMOR 6

Winter semester of 1924/1925: “On Messianism” (lecture), “Review of Literature about Messianism” (seminar)

Summer semester of 1925: Unknown

Winter semester of 1925/1926: “Creation Myths and Creation Faith” (lecture), “Aggadic Literature about Stories of History of Creation” (seminar)

Summer semester of 1926: “Religion and Ethics” (lecture), “Religious and Ethical Issues: From a Viewpoint of Hasidic Literature” (seminar)

Winter semester of 1926/1927: “Issue of the Name of God and Presence of God: Exodus Chapter 3 and Chapters 25–40” (lecture), “Exodus Chapter 3 and Chapters 25–40” (seminar)

Summer semester of 1927: Unknown

Winter semester of 1927/1928: “Biblical Religion and Academic Study of Present Time” (lecture), “Criticism of Issues regarding Biblical Study” (seminar)

Summer semester of 1928: Unknown

Winter semester of 1928/1929: “Bible Translation: Its Methodology and History” (lecture), “Review of Literature on Bible Translation” (seminar)

Summer semester of 1929: Unknown

Winter semester of 1929/1930: “On Prophecy” (lecture), “Review of Sections from *Isaiah*” (seminar)

Summer semester of 1930: Unknown

Winter semester of 1930/1931: “Faith and Traditional Practice” (lecture), “Review of Magical and Ritual Literature” (seminar)

Summer semester of 1931: “Idea of Rebirth” (lecture), “Religious Historical Seminar. Gnostic Literature” (seminar)

Winter semester of 1931/1932: “Fundamental Problem of Religious Studies” (lecture), “Theory of Today’s Religious Studies” (seminar)

Summer semester of 1932: “On the Radical Evil” (seminar), “On Manichaeism” (seminar)

Winter semester of 1932/1933: “Myths as Historical Phenomena” (lecture), “Mythological Legends” (seminar)

Though Buber announced the titles of the lectures and seminars for the summer semester of 1933 (“Religious Sociology” and “Religious Community,” respectively), he was made to cancel all his classes because of the advent of the Nazi regime. After having been deprived of his German citizenship, Buber applied for resignation voluntarily and formally left the university on October 4, 1933. In November, Buber reopened the *Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus* in Frankfurt that had been closed, and was named head of the *Lehrhaus*, beginning his activities there. (I collected the above information on Buber’s lectures and seminars through my survey at the Martin-Buber-Archives in the Jewish National and University Library of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, as well as from: Willy Schottroff, Martin Buber an der Universität Frankfurt am Main (1923–1933). In: Werner Licharz & Heinz Schmidt (hrsg.) *Martin Buber (1878–1965). Internationales Symposium zum 20. Todestag, Bd.1: Dialogik und Dialektik*, Frankfurt a. M.: Haag + Herchen Verlag, 1989, S.19–95.

- 6) Among many books that have been written on Buber, the only book that focuses on the

meaning of “form” in Buber’s thought is that of Zachary Braiterman (Zachary Braiterman, *The Shape of Revelation: Aesthetics and Modern Jewish Thought*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2007). In this book, Braiterman discusses how modern Jewish thinkers and artists in Germany dealt with the theme of “revelation” of God, in connection with the trends in art and aesthetics prevailing in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as Neo-romanticism and German Expressionism. He examines the very struggles of thinkers and artists, such as Buber, Rosenzweig, Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee, in capturing the “shape of revelation” and the form of spiritual beings as their thematic subjects. In writing this paper, I felt empathy with Braiterman’s view but, here, I focus my attention on the inquiry into “form,” not in the realm of art but at the core of Buber’s Biblical study, and consider how the inquiry could be associated with Buber’s philosophical interest. See note 23 for Buber’s inquiry into the “form” in the realm of art. It should be noted that even Braiterman makes no mention of the connection between Buber and the Vienna School of Art History.

- 7) See Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*, Zweite Ausgabe der Geschichte Israels, Band 1, Berlin: G. Reimer, 1883, S.1; and the Project Gutenberg ebook of *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* by J. Wellhausen: <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/4732> (cited Feb.-07-2011).
- 8) *Ibid.*, S.435f.
- 9) Julius Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments*, Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1876–1877.
- 10) See Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1901; Gerhard von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments, Bd.1, Die Theologie der geschichtlichen Überlieferung Israels*, München: Chr. Kaiser, 1957; Martin Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studie. Teil 1, die sammelnden und bearbeitenden Geschichtswerke im Alten Testament*, Halle: Niemeyer, 1943. For more information, see Rolf Rendtorff, *Das Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Problem des Pentateuch*, Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1977; Ritsu Ishikawa, “Shihen no yoshiki to henshu (Style and Redaction of Psalms)”, in: Fujiko Kohata and Tashio Aono (eds.), *Gendai seisho koza Vol.2: Seishogaku no houhou to shomondai (Modern Biblical Study Vol.2: Methodology of Biblical Study and Its Problems)*, Tokyo: the Board of Publications, the United Church of Christ in Japan, 1996, pp.140–163.
- 11) However, a discrepancy in opinion naturally existed between Biblical scholars, who took the form criticism or traditional-historical approach, and Buber, to be discussed later. Aside from a number of disagreements on individual points of dispute regarding the Bible, Buber favorably accepted the view of Gunkel in general, but he sharply criticized Sigmund Mowinckel (1884–1965), saying “Mowinckel fails to recognize the vitality and the carefulness of which early oral tradition is capable” (WII: 666), which is probably because Mowinckel interpreted many of the Psalms in connection with rituals. This criticism is a natural response for Buber, considering that Buber was familiar with the tradition of Judaism that places importance on oral tradition, and more importantly, that he saw the Jewish spirit in the direct dialogue with God that took place before the establishment of rituals.
- 12) Martin Buber & Franz Rosenzweig, *Die Schrift und ihre Verdeutschung*, Berlin: Schocken Verlag, 1936, S.321f.; and the English translation by Lawrence Rosenwald with Everett Fox,



*Scripture and Translation*, Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994, p.179.

- 13) See *Kingship of God* and other works regarding Bible translation contained in WII.
- 14) Scholars of Judaism studies who based their reasoning on rationalism and Hegelian progressive view of history did not admit Jewish mysticism, such as the Kabbalah, while Buber regarded myths and mysticism as a legitimate part of Judaism and was heavily interested in Hasidism. This attitude is reflected in Buber's view of the Bible discussed in this paper, which is characterized by his focus on the tradition of "inspiration," response to the address by God, and participation in the history "here and now," through such tradition and response. For Buber's view of messianism and concept of history that originated from his interest in Hasidism, and which were therefore different from the concept of history held in Jewish studies, see Fumio Ono, "Buber-shiso no bensho teki kozo, aruiha yudaya higeki no kongen – 'Gog to Magog' ni okeru higeki no rekishi no allegory ni tsuite (Dialectic and Tragedy– The Allegory of History in Martin Buber's Hasidic Chronicle Novel *Gog und Magog*)", Kyoto Association of Jewish Thought (ed.), *Kyoto Jewish Thought, 1<sup>st</sup> issue*, 2011. For an outline of Judaism studies or Jewish Studies, see Skolnik, Fred & Berenbaum, Michael (eds.) *Encyclopaedia Judaica 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. vol.21*, Detroit / New York / San Francisco / New Heaven, Conn. / Waterville, Maine / London: Macmillan Reference USA, in association with Keter Publishing House Ltd., Jerusalem, 2007. Also, the following work provides insight into the interactions between Jewish studies, including Judaism study and the Old Testament study by Wellhausen and others. Isaiah Teshima, *Yudaya no seisho kaishaku – Spinoza to rekishi-hihan no tenkai (Jewish Bible Hermeneutics: Spinoza and Inversion of Criticism of History)*, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2009.
- 15) For the relationship between Savigny's historical jurisprudence and Grimm, see Takeshi Katada, *Hou no kotoba, shi no kotoba: Jacob Grimm no shisoshi (Language of Law and Language of Poesy: The History of Thought of Jacob Grimm)*, Tokyo: Ochanomizu Shobo, 2007.
- 16) Jacob Grimm, *Kleine Schriften 4 (1869). Rezensionen und vermischte Aufsätze 1. Teil*. Nach der Ausgabe von Karl Müllenhoff und Eduard Ippel neu herausgegeben von Otfried Ehrismann (Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm Werke Abteilung 1), Hildesheim/Zürich/New York: Olms-Weidmann, 1991, S.74.
- 17) Martin Buber, *Die Legende des Baalschem. Mit einer Vorrede des Verfassers*, Zürich: Manesse Verlag, 1955, S.8.; and the English translation by M. Friedman, *The Legend of the Baal-Shem*, London & New York: Routledge, 2002, p.10.
- 18) See Hiroya Katsumura, "Kyuyaku seisho ni okeru katari no giho (The Art of Narrative in the Old Testament)" (1), *Kirisutokyo Ronso (Bulletin of the Institute for Research of Christian Culture) 17*, Shoin Women's University, 1984, pp.13–32; "Kyuyaku seisho ni okeru katari no giho (The Art of Narrative in the Old Testament)" (2), *Kirisutokyo Ronso (Bulletin of the Institute for Research of Christian Culture) 18*, Shoin Women's University, 1985, pp.15–39; and "Kyuyaku seisho ni okeru katari no giho (The Art of Narrative in the Old Testament)" (3), *Kirisutokyo Ronso (Bulletin of the Institute for Research of Christian Culture) 19*, Shoin Women's University, 1986, pp.9–26.
- 19) *Die vier Zweige des Mabinogi. Ein keltisches Sagenbuch*. Übersetzt von Martin Buber, Leipzig:

- Insel Verlag, 1914; *Kalewala. Das National-Epos der Finnen*. Nach der zweiten Ausgabe ins Deutsche übertragen von Anton Schiefner, nach dem zu Helmingfors im Jahr 1852 erschienenen Druck bearbeitet und durch Anmerkungen und ein Nachwort ergänzt von Martin Buber, München: Georg Müller Verlag, 1914; *Chinesische Geister- und Liebesgeschichten. In deutscher Auswahl von Martin Buber*, Zürich: Manesse Verlag, 1948 [1911].
- 20) Martin Buber & Franz Rosenzweig, *Die Schrift und ihre Verdeutschung*, S.307; and also *Scripture and Translation*, p.170.
- 21) Gershom Scholem, *Judaica 2*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970, S.172.
- 22) For the work of Warburg and related studies, see Jun Tanaka, *Aby Warburg: Kioku no meikyu (Aby Warburg: Labyrinth of Memories)*, Tokyo: Seidosha, 2001, and *Toshi no shigaku: basho no kioku to choko (Poetics of Cities: Memories and Signs of Place)*, Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 2007.
- 23) As part of our exploration of the relationship between Buber's thought and the trend of thought regarding "form" prevailing in Buber's days, I would also like to make mention of the Vienna School of Art History. The Vienna School of Art History was newly founded by Franz Wickhoff (1853–1909) and Alois Riegl (1858–1905), professors who taught art history at the University of Vienna. This school had an extensive influence on various academic areas, not limited to art, in Vienna at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By writing an introduction to the facsimile edition of *The Vienna Genesis (Die Wiener Genesis)* (1895), Wickhoff brought into light the unique value of late Roman art that could not be found in Renaissance art, while Riegl rewrote the history of art as the "history of the development of styles" in his *Problems of Style (Stilfragen)* (1893) and *Late Roman Art Industry (Die spätrömische Kunstindustrie nach den Funden in Österreich-Ungarn)* (1901). (See Julius von Schlosser, *Die Wiener Schule der Kunstgeschichte: Rückblick auf ein Säkulum deutscher Gelehrtenarbeit in Österreich*, Japanese translation by Yusuke Hosoi, Tokyo: Chuokoron Bijutsu Shuppan, 2000). In those days, as the 18<sup>th</sup> century turned into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the focus of aesthetics was being shifted from the issue of the ability to perceive beauty to the theory of works of art and the study of art history—the latter had been pursued since Hegel's aesthetics. Consequently, the ability to perceive beauty defined by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714–1762) was gradually becoming an object of psychology and physiology. It was the period when philosophy, aesthetics, and psychology were departing from the others and establishing themselves as independent, more specialized areas of study. Despite such a trend, there were scholars who made outstanding achievements across the areas of philosophy, psychology, physiology, and art, such as Gottfried Semper (1803–1879), Robert Zimmermann (1824-1898), Wilhelm Max Wundt (1832-1920), Konrad Fiedler (1841–1895), Johannes Volkelt (1848-1930), Theodor Lipps (1851–1914), and Wilhelm Worringer (1881–1965). Scholars of the Vienna School of Art History were among such outstanding scholars. Especially, much attention was drawn to Riegl, who coined the concept of "art-will" (*Kunstwollen*) stressing the autonomy of form and criticized the aesthetic materialism of Semper, who contended that style is determined by materials, technique, and purpose of use (See William M. Johnston, *The Austrian Mind: An Intellectual and Social History 1848–1938*, Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972, pp.152–153). For example, Kitaro Nishida (1870–1945), Japan's premier modern philosopher, read the will of artistic creation as a

historical formative action in Riegl's works on art history (See Kitaro Nishida, *Nishida Kitaro tetsugaku ronshu III (Collection of Philosophical Works of Kitaro Nishida III)*, Shizuteru Ueda (ed.), Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1989), while Walter Benjamin saw in it the recognition of the mutual transformation of forms of art, perception, and society (See Walter Benjamin, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*, in: *Walter Benjamin Gesammelte Schriften Band 1-2*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1991).

To show the relationship between the scholars of the Vienna School of Art History and Buber, let me indicate that Buber minored in art history at the University of Vienna, and Wickhoff and Riegl examined Buber's doctoral thesis as his vice advisors. Soon after graduating from the university, Buber intended to write a professorial thesis, and the theme he initially chose for the thesis was, also, Renaissance art history, though Buber abandoned writing the thesis in the end (Martin Buber, *Briefwechsel aus sieben Jahrzehnten Bd.2: 1918–1938*, S.187, S.589). While at the university, Buber attended courses in aesthetics and art continuously. Then, what made Buber so interested in aesthetics and art? Considering that Buber was at the forefront of the "Jewish Renaissance" that aimed at the revival of Jewish consciousness through artistic and cultural activities under the huge influence of Ahad Ha'am (1856-1927), it is no wonder that he was deeply attracted to the research of Wickhoff and Riegl on Italian Renaissance art and the art history of Oriental peoples. However, Buber made no explicit mention of his association with Wickhoff and Riegl or the significance of their thoughts except for their involvement in conferring a degree to him. Additionally, none of the many papers on Buber gives us more detailed information in this regard than the first monograph on Buber of Hans Kohn, which he wrote based on his interview with Buber in person (Hans Kohn, *Martin Buber. Sein Werk und seine Zeit*, Köln: Joseph Melzer Verlag, 1961, S.22f.). Let me also indicate that, according to Kohn, Buber attended the course in art history by Wickhoff and Riegl in his first semester (winter semester of 1896/1897) at the University of Vienna, but this is not confirmed. The fact known to us is that Buber attended the course during the study of Albrecht Dürer in the winter semester of 1901/1902. Additionally, while Wickhoff and Riegl officially served as Buber's vice advisors at the university, there is no record that evidences Buber's enrollment in the course offered by Riegl (Sources are *Martin Buber Werkausgabe Bd.1 Frühe kulturkritische und philosophische Schriften 1891–1924*, Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2001, S.301ff., along with my survey at the Martin-Buber-Archives in Jerusalem).

Yet, I think Buber's contact with Wickhoff and Riegl should not be treated merely as one of the anecdotes in his biography but should be given greater significance. I am even tempted to say that Buber was destined to meet the Vienna School of Art History on the horizon of thought where a new inquiry into "form," such as style, figure, and shape, was emerging. Of course, this is just my speculation that it is based on an arbitrary understanding of the history of thought, not on "objective evidence." However, considering that the philosophical inquiry into "form" in Buber's days was directed toward a new constellation (*Konstellation*) emerging from correspondence among matters that appear to be unrelated to each other, I believe our attempt to discover hidden correspondence between Buber and Wickhoff/Riegl has its own meaningfulness. Here, let me look to the criticism of Semper's aesthetic materialism voiced by Riegl who advocated the concept of the autonomy of form, amid the flowering of exact science

since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. If we put Riegl's criticism in the context of the discourse of Biblical study, the aesthetic materialism that holds that styles are determined by materials corresponds to the documentary hypothesis that holds that the existential style of the Bible is determined by verifying that its text can be divided into independent sources objectively, while the formative aesthetics that places emphasis on the concept of the autonomy of form corresponds to the approach of the form criticism and traditional-historical approach that focuses on the autonomous diffusion of narrative traditions, a process "preceding" the completion of the final form of the text. This understanding sheds light on the function of invisible power that underlies thought, which researchers leaning toward an empirical approach fail to capture.

Regardless, it is no wonder that Buber's contact with Wickhoff and Riegl led him to discover interactions among style, form, art-will, and history. Probably, Wickhoff's and Riegl's inquiry into the "power of art," which takes part in history and renews our lives, and into the style and the form behind the power, not only encouraged Buber in his attempt for a Jewish Renaissance for the rebirth of "Jewishness," but also resonated with the fundamental questions Buber asked in his hermeneutics.

- 24) See Yasutoshi Ueyama, *Freud to Jung: Seishinbunseki undo to Europe chishiki shakai (Freud and Jung: Psychoanalytic Movement and Intellectual Society in Europe)*, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2008, p.288 onward.
- 25) See Ueyama, *op. cit.* and Yoshito Takahashi, *Keitai to shocho: Goethe to "midori no shizenkagaku" (Forms and Symbols: Goethe and "Green Natural Science")*, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1988, p.300 onward.
- 26) Here, Buber mentions that he understands "revelation" as an "eternal *Urphänomen* which present here and now" and that it is an encounter with "a Presence as power" (WI: 153). For more details about this, see Ono, *op. cit.* It is both important and alluring to re-examine the thought of Buber as one of the ways of thought emerging from the contact between Goethe and Nietzsche, but I will wait for another opportunity to consider this issue.
- 27) The list of the classes Buber attended at the universities can be seen in *Martin Buber Werkausgabe Bd.1 Frühe kulturkritische und philosophische Schriften 1891–1924*, Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2001, S.301–304.
- 28) Ernst Mach, *The Analysis of Sensations and the Relation of the Physical to the Psychical*: English translation by C. M. Williams and revised and supplemented from the fifth German Edition by Sydney Waterlow, Chicago & London: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1914, p.102.
- 29) See Johnston, *op. cit.*, pp.302-304 and Gen Kida, *Mach to Nietzsche: seiki-tenkanki shisoshi (Mach and Nietzsche: history of thought at the turn of the century)*, Tokyo: Shinshokan, 2002. According to G. Kida, Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), as well, was inspired by Mach's concept of Gestalt and conceived an important idea of phenomenology. Later, Husserl's phenomenology and Gestalt psychology were discussed again by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961) in his lecture at the Sorbonne, "Phenomenology and the Sciences of Man."
- 30) Benyamin Uffenheimer, Buber and Modern Biblical Scholarship, in: H. Gordon & J. Bloch (eds.) *Martin Buber. A Centenary Volume*, New York: Ktav Publishing House, for the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 1984, p.163. Uffenheimer

outlines how the Biblical study of Buber was accepted in those days by Western Christian theologians and Protestant Old Testament scholars, as well as by Jewish Biblical scholars and modern Jewish thinkers, especially scholars of the Jerusalem School, such as Yehezkel Kaufmann (1889–1963), Umberto (Moshe David) Cassuto (1883–1951), and Moshe Zvi Segal (1876–1968).

- 31) Michael Zank, Buber and *Religionswissenschaft*: The Case of His Studies on Biblical Faith, in: M. Zank (ed.) *New Perspectives on Martin Buber*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006, p.68.
- 32) *Ibid.*, p.81.
- 33) Ken'ichi Kida, *Kami no na to ningen no shutai (Name of God and Subject of Man)*, Tokyo: Kyobun kwan, 2002, p.15.
- 34) Teshima, *op. cit.*, p.224.
- 35) For detailed information on the tradition of *peshat* and *drash* in Jewish hermeneutics, see Teshima, *op. cit.*
- 36) Martin Buber, *Briefwechsel aus sieben Jahrzehnten Bd.2: 1918–1938*, S.437; and *The Letters of Martin Buber*, p.385. Incidentally, it may be of interest to review the response of academic circles to *Kingship of God*. Since the first edition of *Kingship of God* was published just before the establishment of the Nazi regime, a number of comments and criticisms were sent to Buber, some of which Buber addressed in the foreword and footnotes in the updated editions. The sheer number of such comments and criticisms, as well as the meticulousity with which Buber responded to them, proves that this work was accepted at least by the academic discourse community. In the forewords of the second edition (1936) and the third edition (1955) of *Kingship of God*, Buber selects the most important criticisms and responds to them in great depth. These critics are world famous scholars, including Wilhelm Caspari (1876–1947), Ludwig Köhler (1880–1956), Walter Baumgartner (1887–1970), William Foxwell Albright (1891–1971), and the abovementioned Gerhard von Rad, who represented the Christian side, as well as leading Jerusalem School scholars, such as Yehezkel Kaufmann and Elias Auerbach (1882–1971), representing the Jewish side. All of their criticisms and Buber's responses concern the very essence of hermeneutics, which are too substantial to be discussed in detail here.