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Normal Mysticism:
An Interdisciplinary Study of Max Kadushin's Rabbinic Hermeneutic

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)
in
Interdisciplinary Studies
at Edith Cowan University, Perth,
Western Australia.

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2013

Abstract

Max Kadushin (1895-1980) was a rabbi, professor, and preeminent figure in the history of American Conservative Jewish rabbinic thought. His hermeneutic system, which centers on the idea of organic religious value-concepts, has had a significant influence on the emerging Textual Reasoning movement.

In chapter one, I describe the intellectual climate in which Kadushin's system took shape—providing a short history of the 19th-century reform and haskalah movements, discussing the general outline of Alfred North Whitehead's process philosophy tradition, and placing new focus on the tension between Conservative Judaism and Mordecai Kaplan's emerging philosophy of Reconstructionism as a critical factor in the origin of Kadushin's system.

In chapter two, I summarize and explain Kadushin's philosophy itself—the anatomy and physiology of the organismic complex, the content of his six volumes of published work, the rabbinic texts that attracted his most focused attention—and place it within the context of what Peter Ochs describes as the aftermodernist movement.

In chapter three, I address the relationship between Kadushin and secular Western philosophy. Of particular interest, I argue, is the relevance of his work to philosophical hermeneutics. After outlining how Continental hermeneutics emerged from the largely religious hermeneutics of 19th-century thinkers such as Dilthey and Schleiermacher, I contrast Kadushin's approach with that of Hans-Georg Gadamer and detail the ways in which each of them attempted to describe what Augustine described as the verbum interius—an endeavor that, Gadamer argued, ultimately defines the hermeneutic enterprise.

In chapter four, I reassess Kadushin's work from the disciplinary perspective of religious studies. After interpreting the degree to which Kadushin felt his own work relevant to other faith traditions, I examine previous attempts by Christian theologians to adapt the rough outline of his hermeneutic within their system, and contrast his rabbinic hermeneutic with those religious hermeneutic traditions with which his work is most often compared. I also examine the degree to which Kadushin's populist approach to mysticism and value-concepts reflects that of other contemporaneous Western religious thinkers.

In chapter five, I examine the moral and social implications of Kadushin's priorities. Taking into account how Kadushin evaluated contemporaneous ethical controversies, I argue that while his endeavor is itself descriptivist, the system he asserts bears a strong resemblance to contemporary virtue ethics. In doing this, I show that Kadushin's system of religious morality cannot be accurately classified as a traditional form of consequentialism, rule-based ethics, prescriptivism, or divine command theory. I also examine the implications of Kadushin's system as they pertain to authority, power, and tradition. In conclusion, I argue that his moral system is, in keeping with its rabbinic roots, highly flexible—a trait that can be both an asset and a liability.

This interdisciplinary thesis presents Kadushin's organic hermeneutic in a systematic way, assessing its relevance to the disciplines of philosophy and religious studies. In this thesis, I show that his system of thought rewards serious interdisciplinary study and raises far more general questions than those he specifically intended to address.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

i. incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for degree or diploma in any institution of higher education ;

ii. contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of this thesis ; or

iii. contain any defamatory material.

signed 8 March 2013

Thomas L. Head

Acknowledgments

Conventional wisdom suggests that a doctoral thesis presents an opportunity for a candidate to demonstrate his or her individual merit—but if there is one lesson that this thesis has reinforced for me, it is that individual merit, if there is such a thing, has never produced anything of substance on its own. Academic writing is, much like the rabbinic corpus to which Rabbi Kadushin dedicated his life of scholarship, a product of apprenticeship and community. This doctoral thesis is the work of a grateful and fortunate man.

I dedicate this work to the memory of my grandparents, Maybelle Bozeman Carwile (1917-2011) and Robert Serrell Carwile (1907-1998).

To my parents, Carol Head and Cappy Page, I am grateful for a lifetime of love and support. They have made this thesis, and everything else I have ever produced, possible.

To my supervisor, Alan Tapper, I owe a world of thanks. He has been patient when I have needed patience, and appropriately stern when I haven't. I could not have produced this thesis, under any circumstances, without his steady wisdom, guidance, and support.

To the staff at Edith Cowan University with whom I have interacted during my time as a student, most notably Sarah Kearn and Mark Hackling, I extend my gratitude and appreciation. I would also like to thank Charles Kadushin and Jacob Neusner, who directed me to some very helpful resources, and David Kweller and Rebecca Laskin, who so patiently taught me Hebrew many years ago.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to Rabbi Max Kadushin himself, whose work still has many new things to tell us. In a very real way, this thesis belongs to him.

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Chapter 1: Kadushin in Context

1.1 Purpose of Study

Described by Jacob Neusner as "the only scholar who has forthrightly and articulately asked the theological question of Judaism in the correct, academic mode,"[1] Max Kadushin (1895-1980) was a preeminent rabbinic hermeneuticist in the Conservative Jewish tradition whose work laid the groundwork for the contemporary Textual Reasoning movement. This is the first volume-length secular study of Max Kadushin's life and work.[2]

Shortly before Kadushin's death in July 1980, the first wave of public scholarly interest in his work had begun to emerge. Theodore Steinberg had finished the first English volume-length study of Max Kadushin's system of thought,[3] in the form of his unpublished doctoral dissertation at New York University, less than a year earlier; during the same year, Avraham Holtz's Hebrew summary of Kadushin's system of thought, the first secondary volume on Kadushin ever published, went to press in Jerusalem.[4] Holtz had also contributed an entry on Kadushin to the *Encyclopedia Judaica* in 1972,[5] and Pamela Susan Nadell profiled him in her *Conservative Judaism in America: A Biographical Dictionary* (1988);[6] he also profoundly influenced Simon Greenberg, who would go on to become an influential scholar and theorist in his own right. But for the first decade after Kadushin's death, there were no further books published that dealt specifically with his work. Elliot Prager produced a second dissertation on Kadushin in 1988 as his Ed.D. project at

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[1] "Foreword" to *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind* (1990), p. xv.

[2] The only widely-available volume-length study of Kadushin's work is Peter Ochs (ed.), *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind: Essays on the Hermeneutic of Max Kadushin* (1990). The volume provides a good survey of the research conducted to date, primarily by Jewish and Christian religious scholars. Relatively little of substance has been done with respect to Kadushin studies over the past 20 years, a situation that I hope this thesis will help remedy.

[3] As Steinberg correctly notes on p. 16 of his dissertation, "no full-length study of Kadushin's thought [had] ever been done."

[4] *Ba'olam Ha-mahshabah shel Hazal Be'ikbot M. Kadushin* (1978). Avraham Holtz still teaches at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, where he worked alongside Kadushin.

[5] volume 2, pp. 701-702.

[6] pp. 145-147.

Columbia University,[7] focusing specifically on Kadushin's approach to Jewish education, but it was never published.

Kadushin scholarship was both defined and transformed in 1990 by Peter Ochs' anthology *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind: Essays on the Hermeneutic of Max Kadushin*, made up of nine articles (one of them Steinberg's comprehensive intellectual biography of Kadushin, adapted from his dissertation,[8] which remains the most extensive biography of Kadushin written to date), an introduction by Jacob Neusner, and a bibliography (also adapted from Steinberg's dissertation[9]). In February 1991, Ochs was one of the ten scholars who co-founded the Postmodern Jewish Philosophy Network, an online Collaborative Project of the American Academy of Religion (AAR). In his biographical statement as part of the Network's introduction, Ochs described what he had hoped to achieve with *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind*—and explaining why he felt Kadushin worthy of scholarly attention:

> Seven scholars of rabbinic Judaism (Jack Neusner, Theodore Steinberg, Simon Greenberg, Richard Sarason, Alan Avery-Peck, Martin Jaffee, Peter Ochs) and two Christian theologians (Gary Comstock, George Lindbeck) offer the first extensive evaluation of one of the least known but most important American Jewish thinkers: Max Kadushin (1895-1980) of the Jewish Theological Seminary. They show that, influenced by American process thinkers and pragmatists, Kadushin viewed rabbinic Judaism as an organic system of virtues, or "value concepts," embodied in the rabbis' vast corpus of homiletic writings (*midrash aggadah*). Through his study of these writings, Kadushin offered a descriptive theology appropriate to his contemporary rabbinic community. While at times overlooking details of concern to the historical-critical scholar, Kadushin generated a method of text interpretation of great import to post-critical and post-modern theologies in both the Jewish and Christian biblical traditions...
>
> This collection teaches Kadushin's work to a general academic audience. It shows how, from out of the methods of traditional rabbinic discourse as well as of 20th century philosophy and social science, he generated a hermeneutic which

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[7] *The Work of Max Kadushin and Its Implications for Jewish Education*. Since completing his dissertation, Prager has served as lead administrator at prominent Jewish elementary schools in Maryland, New York, and New Jersey.

[8] See Steinberg, *Max Kadushin, Scholar of Rabbinic Judaism: A Study of His Life, Work, and Theory of Valuational Thought* (1980), pp. 28-70, and Steinberg in *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind*, pp. 1-18.

[9] See Steinberg (1980), pp. 425-451, and Steinberg (1990), pp. 233-238.

> may well serve as a prototype for contemporary Jewish and Christian text interpretation. The collection redefines his hermeneutic within the terms of several contemporary disciplines: the literary, rhetorical and historical study of rabbinic literature; pragmatism and semiotics; phenomenology; Christian narrative theology and "postcritical" theology; and descriptive theologies of rabbinic Judaism and Christianity.[10]

In 1996, the Postmodern Jewish Philosophy Network changed its name to the Society for Textual Reasoning. As Nancy Levene explained in her introduction to *Textual Reasonings: Jewish Philosophy and Text Study at the End of the Twentieth Century* (2002):

> This change [from the Postmodern Jewish Philosophy Network to Textual Reasoning] reflects a further refinement of the focus away from trends in philosophy per se ... The conversation became less about how postmodernism may or may not affect the study of Jewish texts and more about how philosophical practices can be transformed in dialogue with apparently unphilosophical texts and how such texts may newly speak to readers who abandon conventional ways of seeing (and being seen by) them.[11]

This is in keeping with Peter Ochs' characterization of Kadushin as an aftermodernist,[12] rather than postmodernist, thinker—and with Kadushin's own reluctance to identify himself as a philosopher. As the Society for Textual Reasoning and other new hermeneutic movements continue their work, it seems sensible to study and recontextualize Max Kadushin's work for a new generation of scholars.

Kadushin relied on non-rabbinic sources to construct a philosophy of rabbinics that functions as a comprehensive approach to religion, with rabbinics as a case study illustrating a more general, and more scalable, methodology. I will argue that this is not inconsistent with Kadushin's own objectives, that he felt his ideas to be relevant from a multifaith and interdisciplinary perspective, and that he was correct in his assessment of their relevance.

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[10] "Forward" (1991).

[11] p. 19.

[12] Aftermodernism, a term coined by Peter Ochs, is a movement made up of 20th-century Jewish thinkers who initially embraced, but ultimately rejected, a liberal critical approach to tradition. I explore this strain of contemporary Jewish philosophy in section 2.3.

While I will argue that Kadushin's work suffers from two problems that tend to plague self-educated thinkers—namely, his tendency to introduce ideas without realizing that they have already been introduced by theorists in other disciplines, and his tendency to find touchstones in the work of fairly obscure thinkers without making general assessments of the disciplines with which he is concerned—he was nevertheless a remarkably original thinker whose work has profound implications that reach far beyond the scope of rabbinic hermeneutics, and should be taken seriously by non-rabbinic scholars. It is my hope that my work will facilitate further interdisciplinary study of Kadushin's system of thought from mainstream ethicists, philosophers, psychologists, scholars of religion, and theologians operating outside of the Conservative Jewish rabbinic framework.

My study consists of five chapters.

The purpose of the first chapter, titled "Kadushin in Context," is to explain where Max Kadushin came from—and thereby to provide appropriate context for the study of Kadushin's ideas. To this end, I have begun with a short history of Conservative Judaism (section 1.2: "Enlightenment, Reform, and the Conservative Response"), a description of the Reconstructionist movement under which Kadushin developed his system of thought (section 1.3: "Mordecai Kaplan and the Survival of Jewish Culture"), and a short account of Kadushin's family history and early intellectual development (section 1.4: "The Early Life of Max Kadushin"). While much has been written about Conservative Judaism, Reconstructionism, process philosophy, and pragmatism, relatively little has been written about how these four traditions converged in Kadushin's early intellectual life.

The purpose of the second chapter, titled "The Conceptual World of the Sages," is to explain Kadushin's ideas themselves—to present them in an organized way, and to explain their significance. I have accomplished this goal by describing the outline of his body of work and the development of his general ideas over time (section 2.1: "From Reconstructionism to Aftermodernism"), presenting his hermeneutic and taxonomical framework in a linear, systematic way (section 2.2: "Value-Concepts and the Physiology of the Organic Complex"), and describing in greater detail the movement he helped create (section 2.3: "Kadushin's Defense of Rabbinic Methodology"). What makes this chapter distinct from earlier presentations of Kadushin's ideas is that it is relatively brief,

comprehensive, and recent, incorporating the work of Kadushin scholars and including discussion of his full body of work, including the posthumously-published *A Conceptual Commentary on Midrash Leviticus Rabbah: Value Concepts in Jewish Thought* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), article publications that have received relatively little scholarly attention, and the contributions of 35 years of Kadushin scholarship.

The third chapter, titled "Kadushin as Philosophical Hermeneuticist," assesses Kadushin's hermeneutic from a secular perspective—something that has not previously been done. It begins by assessing the degree to which Kadushin can or should be classified as a philosopher (section 3.1: "The Reluctant Philosopher"), proceeds to an extensive discussion of process hermeneutics and the degree to which this tradition may have influenced Kadushin (section 3.2: "The Philosophy of Organism"), briefly outlines the history of hermeneutics as a discipline of philosophy (section 3.3: "Philosophical Hermeneutics in the Western Canon"), and specifically compares Kadushin's hermeneutic with that of Hans-Georg Gadamer (section 3.4: "Kadushin, Gadamer, and Effective Historical Consciousness"). The question this chapter asks was inspired, in part, by Martin Jaffee's excellent essay "Halakhic Personhood: The Existential Hermeneutic of *Worship and Ethics*,"[13] which suggests means by which Kadushin's work can be discussed in terms relevant to Continental hermeneutics.

The purpose of the fourth chapter, titled "The Normal Valuational Life," is to assess Kadushin's work from a broader religious studies perspective. I have done this by examining the Textual Reasoning movement that Kadushin helped create as the multifaith academic-theological movement that it is (section 4.1: "Textual Reasoning and Religious Documentary Traditions"), tracing Kadushin's own assessment of his work in relation to biology, psychology, and the anthropology of religion (section 4.2: "Kadushin and the Sciences"), assessing Kadushin's work as representative of a more broadly applicable religious hermeneutic (section 4.3: "The Scalability of Kadushin's Religious Hermeneutic"), assessing specific attempts that have been made to apply Kadushin's work to Christian biblical interpretation (section 4.4: "Process Hermeneutics and the Christian Imagination"), and examining Kadushin's concept of normal mysticism from the

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[13] *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind*, pp. 95-112.

perspectives of the philosophy of mysticism and the psychology of religion (section 4.5: "Normal Mysticism and Religious Experience").

The purpose of the fifth chapter, titled "Metaethics and the Moral Implications of Organic Thinking," is to assess the relationship between Kadushin and ethics—both by examining the implications of his moral theology, and by assessing it from more general ethical and justice-oriented perspectives. The chapter explores the function of Kadushin's ethical value-concepts within the organismic complex (section 5.1: "The Drive to Concretization"), assesses Kadushin's relationship with contemporary ethical philosophers (section 5.2: "Kadushin and Virtue Ethics"), and examines the moral implications of his postcritical hermeneutic (section 5.3: "Authority, Obedience, and Tradition").

The latter three chapters represent attempts to apply Kadushin's work in new, more universal ways—a fruitful effort, and one that I think opens up new potential avenues for scholarship. This would certainly be in keeping with what Kadushin's own work would seem to demand. As Peter Ochs puts it:

> Kadushin claims that the rabbinic value-concepts display a 'drive to concretization.' This means that they are not abstract concepts, but marks of actual rules of practice ,so that to be persuaded by these concepts means to be committed to these rules of practice. Kadushin's claim helps account for the text-philosophers' efforts to push the practical as well as academic agenda of [Textual Reasoning] forward: their work displays a 'drive to concretization.' To serve this drive, they need not only offer theories, but also to see that they are testable in actual practice: first, the practice of [Textual Reasoning] as a community of enquiry, then the reparative practice that lends [Textual Reasoning] its ultimate purpose.[14]

Theodore Steinberg's 1979 dissertation, which remains the most significant and comprehensive volume ever written about Kadushin's work, concludes by pointing in much the same direction:

> That "gift of meaning" [bestowed by the Aggadah, in the words of Richard Rubenstein] made life worthwhile, endowed it with a spirit of transcendence, associated the individual Jew, engaged in all the mundane concerns of daily existence, with a sense of history and with the larger purposes and concerns of his society, and supplied him with the psychic strength which every person requires in

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[14] *Textual Reasonings* (2002), pp. 297-298.

> order to maintain his inner integrity against the disintegrative and disruptive forces from within and without ...
>
> If nothing else, Kadushin's method and technique can help clarify what those values of the past were ... But his contribution may be even larger: if his insights can be applied by modern men and women searching for humane values, his years of research ... will provide a valuable model for all who are concerned with the valuational integrity of the individual and the larger society.[15]

To respond to this drive for concretization, to examine this gift of meaning, this thesis will concern itself primarily with three simple questions:

1. What does Kadushin's system mean, from a contemporary, non-sectarian, interdisciplinary perspective?
2. How broadly applicable *can* it be?
3. How broadly applicable *should* it be?

Max Kadushin's system of thought represents a complex and systematic response to the religious traditions and philosophical movements that formed and surrounded him. If we are to understand it, it is important to study these movements.

1.2 Enlightenment, Reform, and the Conservative Response

The origins of Max Kadushin's approach to Judaism, much like the origins of Max Kadushin himself, point to the latter decades of the 19th century. It was during these years that Reform Judaism, secularism, emancipation, and the spirit of *haskalah* took hold in Europe and the United States, colliding with a strong and vibrant anti-assimilation movement that attempted to preserve some historical elements of Judaism that might have otherwise been lost—a precursor to the struggle with Mordecai Kaplan that would shape Kadushin's approach to rabbinic thought. It was an exciting time to be an observant, culturally engaged Jew.

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[15] Steinberg (1980), pp. 421-424.

It was also an extremely challenging time to be an observant, culturally engaged Jew, because the history of Jewish denominationalism over the past two centuries has represented not a spectrum of communities in mutual dialogue, but rather (very much in the rabbinic tradition) a series of movements and counter-movements.[16] Orthodoxy begat Reform Judaism, Reform Judaism begat Conservative Judaism, Conservative Judaism begat Reconstructionism, and Reconstructionism begat Max Kadushin. Historically speaking, Max Kadushin's philosophy of religion did not represent a response to tradition so much as it represented a response to a response (Reconstructionism) to a response (Conservatism Judaism) to a response (Reform Judaism) to tradition. In order to understand his place as an interpreter of rabbinic thought, it is necessary to examine not only the history of his system, but also its genealogy.

The conversation into which Max Kadushin entered would not have been possible without the reform movement of the 19th century, because it was Reform Judaism that made the most fundamental questions of rabbinic interpretation negotiable—and began the modern conversation surrounding the role of tradition to which Kadushin contributed. Although the 18th-century Jewish German philosopher Moses Mendelssohn would have been a logical antecedent to the Reform movement,[17] it would be more specific to describe him as an orthodox representative of the social and philosophical struggles that would later inspire reform than as an early figure in the Reform movement itself. Mendelssohn was, in the words of Reform historian Michael A. Meyer, "a reformer of Jewish life, but—with slight exception—not a reformer of Judaism."[18] Meyer goes on to write:

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[16] This is due, in part, to the fact that the major Jewish movements have evolved partly in response to the behavior of the majority culture, which is usually Christian and quite often openly antisemitic. As Zvi Sobel argues in *Tradition, Innovation, Conflict* (1991), p. 138: "The success of both [Conservative and Reform] movements can be attributed to the degree to which they developed plausibility structures that allowed Jews to have greater contact and intercourse with non-Jews who were willing to interact with them in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries."

[17] And is often credited as such. See, for example, David Biale's *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History* (1986), p. 125: "In claiming that 'true Judaism' was fundamentally different from the way it was actually practiced in medieval times, Mendelssohn paved the way for the claims of Reform Judaism in the next century."

[18] *Response to Modernity* (1995), p. 13.

> [Mendelssohn] did not believe that Judaism required fundamental reforms in order to remain viable outside the spiritual ghetto ... As an observant Jew, who was culturally, and to some extent socially, integrated into his environment, Mendelssohn came to serve as a model for the modern orthodox Judaism which developed in Germany two generations after his death. He was not, however, even a forerunner of the Reform movement ... Mendelssohn believed that Jews could not in good conscience free themselves from the obligation to keep the entirety of the law. Speculation on its significance was permitted but observance was required. Only God, through a new revelation, could alter what He had commanded at Sinai.[19]

With the exception of Mordecai Kaplan's Reconstructionism, which would not begin to emerge until the 1920s, no major Jewish denomination has ever been founded by any one person.[20] Instead, the study of the history of Judaism rewards an evidentiary approach—where key figures in Jewish history illustrate and reflect, but do not themselves create, popular movements that have broader, more anonymous origins and broader, more anonymous repercussions.

This is certainly true when we turn our attention to the reforms advocated by Israel Jacobson, the Westphalian congregational leader who in 1810 expressed the views of many early 19th-century German Jews when he dedicated a new synagogue with these controversial words:

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[19] ibid., pp. 13-14.

[20] This is not an uncontroversial position. In *The Blackwell Companion to Judaism* (2003), Dana Evan Kaplan notes that Jacobson is "regarded by many as the founder of Reform Judaism." Abraham Geiger is often credited as the founder of Reform Judaism (see, for example, Steven Engler and Gregory Price Grieve, *Historicizing 'Tradition' in the Study of Religion* (2005), p. 59, which cites him as "the intellectual founder of Reform Judaism," and Dow Marmur's *Beyond Survival* (1982), p. 19, which describes him as "the true founder of Reform Judaism"). Another figure commonly cited as the founder of Reform Judaism was the American rabbi Isaac Meyer Wise (described by Eizabeth Hafkin Pleck as "[t]he founder of Reform Judaism" in *Celebrating the Family* (2000), p. 268 and as "the nationally recognized founder of Reform Judaism" in Renée M. Sentilles' *Performing Menken* (2012), p. 35). With respect to Conservative Judaism, strong cases can be made that it was founded by Frankel (as suggested by Leo Trepp in *A History of the Jewish Experience* (1962), p. 186, to name one example among many) or by Solomon Schechter (as suggested by Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff in *The Silver Era in American Jewish Orthodoxy* (1982), p. 52). The definition of "founder" is so flexible, and contingent on so many different factors, that most widespread congregational movements can be legitimately credited to multiple founders. As Paul Kahn argues in *Legitimacy and History* (1993), p. 59, "the concept of a founder [suggests a person] who mediates between an abstract idea and historical experience." It follows that if a historical experience is widespread and applicable to a diverse community, there are likely to be many such mediators. What makes Reconstructionism unique, relative to Reform and Conservative Judaism, is that its nucleus can be clearly traced to an ideology defined by a single mediator.

> Who would dare to deny that our service is sickly because of many useless things, that in part it has degenerated into a thoughtless recitation of prayers and formulae, that it kills devotion more than encourages it, and that it limits our religious principles to that fund of knowledge which for centuries has remained in our treasure houses without increase and without ennoblement. On all sides, enlightenment opens up new areas for development. Why should we alone remain behind?[21]

Jacobson's words, supported by a cursory examination of the intellectual climate surrounding 18th and 19th century European Judaism, would suggest that the Enlightenment movement, which visibly influenced European Christianity, had a similarly transformative effect on European Jewish theology and directly led to the creation of the Reform movement. But the connection between Enlightenment rationalism and the development of Reform Judaism is, in fact, very indirect and very difficult to prove; while it is easy to trace the relationship between early Reform Judaism and Enlightenment-influenced non-Jewish culture, it is much harder to show that Enlightenment philosophers had a direct effect on Jewish theology as such.

While there was certainly a *haskalah* movement that represented a more direct influence of Enlightenment values on Judaism,[22] among much of the European reform movement it was apparent that Enlightenment thinkers had a secondhand influence on European Judaism—that reformers had noticed the effect that the Enlightenment had on Christian culture, and saw opportunities to similarly update their own tradition. Jacobson's synagogue dedication, for example, makes reference to "religious customs which must be

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[21] Israel Jacobson, dedication address of 1810, published in Michael A. Meyer and W. Gunther Plaut, *The Reform Judaism Reader* (2001), pp. 3-4.

[22] To which Kadushin's father belonged. As noted in Lois C. Dubin's article "Enlightenment and Emancipation" in Nicholas de Lange and Miri Freud-Kandel (eds.), *Modern Judaism: An Oxford Guide* (2005), p. 33: "Enlightenment among Jews is usually identified with the Haskalah, the ideological movement calling for modernization of Jewish culture that flourished first in Germany from the 1770s to the 1790s and then in Galicia and Russia from the 1820s to the 1880s. This movement decried the insularity, Talmudic focus, and kabbalistic orientation of early modern Ashkenazic Judaism, and it urged a twofold reform: (1) broadening and reorienting the curriculum for purposes of internal Jewish cultural renewal; and (2) training Jews with new skills for purposes of rapprochement and participation in the Gentile world. Haskalah was a variant of Enlightenment critical rationalism and the first modern ideology of Judaism ... So large has this movement and its Ashkenazic world loomed in modern Jewish history that it has been easy to overlook other ways by which Jews became familiar with and exemplified Enlightenment principles." As Dubin notes (see pp. 34-35), even the *haskalah* movement had to contend with a cultural environment that was predominantly Christian, and with a body of Enlightenment literature that was by and large written in response to Christian institutions.

rightfully offensive to reason as well as to our Christian friends,"[23] and the leading German rabbi-reformer Abraham Geiger vowed to "[work] closely with every true endeavor and movement of our day..."[24] The influence of Christian Europe upon the Reform movement was so profound that in 1847, the radical German rabbi-reformer Samuel Holdheim found it necessary, in proposing and evaluating reforms to the Sabbath liturgy, to "protest against any concession which seems thereby to have been made to Christian principles."[25]

The challenge the 18th- and 19th-century European reform movement faced was to offer up an authentically Jewish response to the Enlightenment that did not represent a concession to, or assimilation within, Christian culture. In a majority-Christian, commerce-oriented culture, this would have been a very difficult balance to maintain—and the challenge was exacerbated by the fact that most prominent Enlightenment thinkers originated in Christian families, and subsequently wrote in direct response to Christian authorities and Christian doctrine. And a centerpiece of this challenge, in responding to a movement that was essentially part of the larger, non-Jewish culture, without risking assimilation, was Hebrew liturgy. By the time the Reform movement's Philadelphia Principles were adopted in 1869, the movement had already clearly transitioned towards praying in the vernacular. Article 7 reads:

> The cultivation of the Hebrew language, in which the divine treasures of revelation have been couched and in which the immortal monuments of our literature have been preserved (the commanding influence of which extends to all educated nations), must in our midst be considered as the fulfillment of a sacred obligation. However, the language has in fact become incomprehensible for the overwhelming majority of our present-day co-religionists, and therefore in the act of prayer (which is a body without a soul unless it is understood) Hebrew must take second place behind a language which the worshippers can understand insofar as this appears advisable under prevailing circumstances.[26]

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[23] Jacobson in *The Reform Judaism Reader*, p. 3.

[24] Abraham Geiger, "The Youthful Rebel" (1836), published in *The Reform Judaism Reader*, p. 7.

[25] Samuel Holdheim, "The Essence of the Sabbath" (1847), published in *The Reform Judaism Reader*, p. 14.

[26] "The Philadelphia Principles" (1869), published in *The Reform Judaism Reader*, p. 197.

This battle was hard-won among German Jewish reform conferences, and it was not without its detractors. The most prominent was the moderate Dresden rabbi Zecharias Frankel (1801-1875), whose dissent from an 1845 Reform conference in Frankfurt essentially created Conservative Judaism (or, as Frankel would call it, positive-historical Judaism) as a movement. At issue: the question of whether Hebrew was an "objectively necessary" component in Jewish liturgy. In a 15-13 vote, with three abstentions, the Reform rabbis in attendance voted that it was not.[27] Frankel was so stunned by the outcome that he walked out of the conference. He later explained his decision:

> The majority of the Rabbinical Conference decided that Hebrew prayer was only *advisable* and that it would be the task of the rabbis to eliminate it gradually altogether.
>
> I disagree with such a decision, not only because I have a different point of view, but also because I disagree with the tendency of the decision. For this spirit leaves unheeded so many important elements and eliminates the historical element which has weight and power in every religion. In my opinion this is not the spirit of preserving positive historical Judaism, which I declared distinctly before the Assembly was my point of view. This spirit of the Assembly deprives all its further decisions of any validity in the eyes of those who adhere to the positive historical position. As I explained to the Assembly, not only voting is important, but also motivation. Only those who have already made up their mind and merely want a formal approval for their position can find a superficial satisfaction in general voting procedures.
>
> For these reasons I find myself moved to protest, not only against the above-mentioned decision, but at the same time to declare that my point of view is entirely different from that of the Assembly and that, therefore, I can neither sit nor vote in its midst.[28]

While relatively little of Frankel's work has been translated into English, Jewish historians familiar with his work have pointed out that the Conservative or positive-historical approach is, methodologically, different in character from both Orthodox and Reform Judaism—but very similar in character, as we shall see, to both the radically progressive Reconstructionism of Mordecai Kaplan and the comparatively moderate

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[27] Neil Gillman, *Conservative Judaism: The New Century* (Behrman, 1993), p. 20.

[28] Zecharias Frankel, open letter of July 18, 1845. Reprinted in Arthur Hertzberg, *Judaism* (1961), p. 290.

rabbinic philosophy of organism posited by Max Kadushin. As Michael A. Meyer describes it:

> The living religion consciousness of the community, Frankel audaciously claimed, contained a revelation that deserved no less recognition than that transmitted directly by God. As such, its validity was immune to attack by would-be reformers. Only the people's representatives, gathered collectively in a synod—not the theologians alone—could decide on reforms. Frankel entertained the possibility that one day the people might demand radical change; in that case even the traditional Hebrew worship service would have to give way to something quite different, despite the very early legal traditions establishing the present order. But he perceived the mass of Jews in his day to be essentially conservative. They had internalized new modes of thought and desired certain reforms for the sake of their children, but they were still emotionally tied to the ceremonial life of Judaism.[29]

Frankel was not the only founder of Conservative Judaism; many rabbis of his generation expressed similar concerns, and joined him in a broader movement to create a tradition that was neither Orthodox nor Reform. But by the time Max Kadushin delivered his address to the Rabbinical Assembly in 1927, Frankel's positive-historical perspective had become so characteristic of the Conservative Jewish tradition that much of his speech could have functioned as a summary of Frankel's philosophy:

> As a result of common influences we are united on the following platform: 1) We look upon Judaism as a developing religion and culture and assume that this development whether in institutions or thought can be traced and accounted for. 2) We encourage various schools of interpretation which seek to harmonize modern thought with Jewish beliefs. 3) We support the rebuilding of Palestine as a Jewish homeland. 4) We support and actively participate in the propagation of Hebrew, the tongue as well as the literature, in the school as well as in the synagogue. 5) We desire the perpetuation and development of our ceremonial. 6) We shall attempt to organize the various Jewish groups for the purpose of improving Jewish domestic law.[30]

The Conservative Jewish movement in the United States, and to a lesser degree internationally, took shape around the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New

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[29] *Response to Modernity*, p. 87.

[30] "Rabbi Max Kadushin," *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly of America*, 1927, volume 1, pp. 65-66.

York. Founded in 1886, the institution did not identify itself in strictly denominational terms, but someone familiar with Conservative Judaism might have recognized its fingerprint in its first constitution, which established it as an institution for the study of "the knowledge and practice of historical Judaism" that also celebrates "the love of the Hebrew language, and a spirit of fidelity and devotion to the Jewish law."[31] This tension, between fidelity to tradition and continuity with its culturally dynamic character, would echo the later conflict between Conservative Judaism and Mordecai Kaplan's new Reconstructionist movement, which would affirm that dynamism in a more aggressive way—and with less emphasis on adherence to traditional Jewish doctrine.

1.3 Mordecai Kaplan and the Survival of Jewish Culture

One of the central theses of the positive-historical Judaism affirmed by the Conservative Jewish tradition has been its formidability. When the great Conservative Jewish theologian Solomon Schechter wrote of Judaism's mission and legacy, he expressed no fear that its existence was in any sense endangered:

> Judaism means to convert the world, not to convert itself. It will not die in order *not* to live. It disdains a victory by defeating itself in giving up its essential doctrines and its most vital teaching. It has confidence in the world; it hopes, it prays, and waits patiently for the great day when the world will be ripe for its acceptance.[32]

The central thesis of Kaplan's Reconstructionism—and its most fundamental point of difference with Conservative Judaism[33]—is that Judaism, far from conquering the world,

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[31] "The Preamble and Constitution of the Jewish Theological Seminary, May 9, 1886," quoted in Jacob Rader Marcus (ed.), *The Jew in the American World: A Source Book* (1996), pp. 243-244.

[32] *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology* (1909), p. 77.

[33] *The Greater Judaism in the Making* (1960), pp. 369-370: "The fact is that the underlying principle of Conservative Judaism, which wold have the salvation of the individual Jew depend upon his fostering an intensive Jewish consciousness by identifying himself with the People of Israel, promises more than it fulfills. That principle sounds as though it really affords both inspiration and guidance to the modern Jew, as though it provides his way to self-fulfillment, in that it enables him to achieve the synthesis of what is best in his tradition with what is best in the modern world. Upon careful scrutiny, however, that principle turns out to be a method of salvation by evasion. It evades outward difficulties and inner conflicts, instead of coming to close grips with them."

must struggle not to be conquered by it. Arguing that Jewish culture no longer had the institutional strength to adequately reward Jews in this world for their faithfulness, that modern science had cast too much doubt on the existence of a World to Come, and that antisemitism made Judaism a more challenging identity than it would otherwise be under these already difficult circumstances, Mordecai Kaplan (1881-1983) felt that a radical program of reconstruction would be needed to keep Judaism alive in the modern world:

> [N]ow that the aura of divine election has departed from his people, and his Jewish origin brings with it nothing but economic handicaps and social inferiority, the Jew rebels against his fate. This is the fundamental reason for the change in his attitude toward Judaism. It is not merely that Judaism as a world-outlook or system of life is in danger of extinction, but that the Jew is maladjusted morally and spiritually as a result of losing the traditional conception of salvation. He has to evolve some new purpose in life as a Jew, a purpose that will direct his energies into such lines of creativity as will bring him spiritual redemption. That purpose will have to constitute his salvation. It is only then that he will gladly identify himself with Jewish life.[34]

Kaplan believed that he was acutely perceptive regarding the dangers Judaism faced, but inadequately gifted to address these dangers himself.[35] As a result of this anxiety, he worked within the Conservative Judaism framework by teaching at Jewish Theological Seminary of America while trying to build a supplemental, and ultimately competing, model of Jewish life through his Society for the Advancement of Judaism (SAJ). Founded in 1922, the SAJ was a small, experimental Reconstructionist congregation in New York City that served as home base for the national Reconstructionist movement, particularly in the

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[34] *Judaism as a Civilization* (1937), p. 15.

[35] Kaplan was, by most accounts, a remarkable professor and would gradually become known as a remarkably gifted writer as well—but he was overcome with fear of both realistic and unrealistic dangers, and felt himself both responsible for addressing them and ill-equipped to do so. This would be a recurring theme throughout his life, though it did not usually manifest itself in his published writings. One June 1931 journal entry (*Communings of the Spirit*, pp. 446-447) is particularly telling: "Now on the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of my birthday I think I have a fairly correct idea of myself. I am not blind to the fact that my abilities are mediocre, and that I failed to utilize them to full capacity ... But why go on recounting my failures and shortcomings? Despite my mediocrity I have enjoyed a greater measure of success than many of my colleagues who possess decidedly greater ability ... I am none too sanguine about the things I am doing ... The injustice and the suffering to which millions in this country are subjected and the inevitability of a world war that will exceed in its horror and devastation the last war have robbed me even of the desire to achieve anything lasting in the world of spiritual values."

years prior to the incorporation of the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation (JRF) in 1955. Kaplan knew he couldn't protect the future of Judaism as he saw it without help—and the departure of gifted students, such as Kadushin, from his movement only increased his anxiety.

While Kaplan would focus his career on preserving Jewish civilization by means of promoting Reconstructionism, Kadushin drifted back towards Conservatism and, in the process, pursued scholarly questions that seemed, to Kaplan, irrelevant. We can see that in Kaplan's July 1931 journal entry as quoted in the last chapter, wherein he complains that Kadushin "fights shy of the formula 'Judaism as a civilization' and tries to be original by advocating Organic Judaism," that "he himself gains nothing by [this line of reasoning]," and that he is "act[ing] unnaturally" by promoting it.[36] These are not merely the words of one scholar disputing the work of another; they call into question not the accuracy of Kadushin's conclusions, but the relevance of his inquiry. Kadushin cited Kaplan seven times in *Organic Thinking* (1938), but not at all in *The Rabbinic Mind* (1952) or *Worship and Ethics* (1964). Kaplan, and the Reconstructionist agenda in general, had fallen off his radar screen. (For his part, Kaplan tended to ignore Kadushin entirely in his published work; his name appears nowhere in *Judaism as a Civilization*.)

Part of this may be the function of Kadushin's scholarly career, specifically his interest in bridging the gap between the rabbinic tradition and the contemporary world. Each of his three major works had a clear descriptive, scholarly agenda: *Organic Thinking* "devoted to the problem of the nature of the rabbinic concepts,"[37] *The Rabbinic Mind* "concerned chiefly with the wider aspects of the rabbinic mind,"[38] and *Worship and Ethics* "[describing] how Halakah, working with the value concepts of the folk as a whole, enables the individual to achieve religious experience."[39] In practice, all three works describe all three topics to some degree, but all are primarily hermeneutic works and none of them reflect any particular anxieties on the part of their author.

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[36] *Communings*, pp. 451-452.

[37] *The Rabbinic Mind* (1952), p. xv.

[38] Ibid.

[39] *Worship and Ethics* (1964), p. xxiii.

But Kaplan had a more urgent agenda. "I have found that only those who have an interest in Judaism," he wrote in a 1928 journal entry, "are anxious to see it live ... I have yet to meet an enlightened Jewish layman who would go out of his way to insure the existence of Judaism in this country by means of a deliberate effort at constructive re-adjustment."[40] About his own *Judaism as a Civilization*, he wrote in 1931 (emphasis mine):

> As I went over the book this time I felt satisfied that it offered the only plausible program for American Judaism. Much in it sounds like counsel of desperation, and I doubt whether very many Jews will be found who will be ready to pay the price in effort and sacrifice which such counsel calls for. *It may be that the book is fifteen or twenty years too late*.[41]

Kaplan's dedication to the survival of Judaism, and his sense that this survival was by no means guaranteed, was evident even after his retirement. As biographer Mel Scult writes:

> He was unfailingly devoted to solving his primary problem: how to save the Jewish people. Why he thought it was *his* problem is not certain, but his devotion to solving this problem is evident from early in his life through his declining years. His sense of mission had nothing egotistical about it. At his ninetieth birthday dinner, Abraham Heschel offered a tribute in which he captured Kaplan's essence: "Kaplan takes Judaism personally. It is a magnificent obsession with him. I have a suspicion that just as the mystics of old used to stay up at midnight worrying about the *Shekhina*, he stays up at midnight doing *Tikkun Hatzos* [a midnight vigil] and worrying about the Jewish people."[42]

It is not enough to say that this anxiety motivated Kaplan's philosophy; it would be more accurate to say that this anxiety *was* Kaplan's philosophy. Reconstructionism represents, in basic terms, an attempt to intentionally work towards the long-term survival of Judaism as an all-inclusive civilization, and to do so as a primary religious goal. When

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[40] *Communings*, p. 259.

[41] p. 451.

[42] *Judaism Faces the Twentieth Century*, p. 15.

in 1976 Reconstructionist rabbi Arnold Rachlis described Reconstructionism as "more of a methodology than a doctrine",[43] he accurately described the degree to which Kaplan's anxieties about the future of Judaism had become, over time, a possible method of securing that future.

And the differences between Kaplan and Kadushin, too, were more differences of methodology than doctrine. While Kaplan urgently worked towards the survival of Judaism, Kadushin had abandoned the Reconstructionist movement and became fascinated by rabbinic hermeneutics and textual exegesis. It is easy to see why Kaplan might have felt that Kadushin's work lacked relevance, and there is nothing in any of Kadushin's work to suggest that he felt that Judaism was in any kind of immediate danger, or that his work (or Kaplan's, for that matter) would be essential to its long-term survival. Indeed, Kadushin suggests that Kaplan's struggle to consciously and intentionally preserve Judaism could be contrary to its character. "Breathing is effortless," Kadushin writes, "though it involves a complicated structure. So with organic thinking."[44] It is not clear exactly when the Kaplan–Kadushin friendship ended—most likely it was a gradual process, punctuated by small disagreements and changes in circumstances—but bearing in mind what Kaplan felt the urgency of his mission to be, this paragraph from *Organic Thinking* (the only paragraph in the book that deals directly with the Reconstructionist agenda) couldn't have helped matters:

> If the rabbinic reinterpretation[45] of the Bible is a criterion, reinterpretation is apparently essential to the process whereby the old organic complex is transposed in its entirety to a new level. Reinterpretation today begins with an attempt to find "equivalents"—as Kaplan calls them—equivalents in modern life of the old organic concepts. Supposing conditions to be favorable to the emergence of a new organic level, its emergence will mean, however, that reinterpretation will lose its piece-meal character and become a method for transposing the old organic complex as a

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[43] Quoted in Eric Caplan, *From Ideology to Liturgy* (2002), p. 143.

[44] *Organic Thinking*, p. vii.

[45] In Reconstructionism, reinterpretation refers to the process by which the meaning of traditional symbols are consciously altered by the community to accommodate changes in the communal worldview. I discuss this idea, and Kadushin's interaction with it, in section 3.1.

> whole. Reinterpretation must thus undergo a development, and that development can be accelerated with a deepened knowledge of organic thinking. Are new organic complexes necessarily new organic levels? Is it possible for a new organic complex to incorporate only fragments of the old? Can we discern the formation of new organic patterns or complexes in the present? The answer to these and similar questions are germane to the problem of reinterpretation today.[46]

It is true that both Kaplan and Kadushin sought to address the challenge of reassessing the Jewish tradition in the modern world, but they did so in profoundly different ways and with profoundly different timelines and priorities. They became, in a very real sense, irrelevant to each other. Kaplan felt that he was in a unique position to save global Judaism; Kadushin gave no indication that he felt the future of Judaism to be in doubt, and expressed the view that Kaplan's methodology would be, in any case, inadequate. Kadushin also suggested that he was on the verge of discovering something that would have far-reaching implications not only within the Jewish tradition, but also beyond it.[47]

1.4 The Early Life of Max Kadushin

The story of Kadushin's early life and family history gives us some idea of the drives and priorities that shaped his education. These drives and priorities help to explain why he struggled with the meaning of Judaism, why he found the Reconstructionist agenda relevant, and why he ultimately rejected it.

Max Kadushin[48] was born on December 6, 1895 in Minsk, Russia to Solomon and Rebecca Kadushin. Solomon was the son of Joseph of Viasin, a well-respected Jewish

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[46] p. 261.

[47] From *Organic Thinking*, pp. viii-ix: "The new orientation makes for a complete reversal in our attitude toward philosophy. Instead of examining the sphere of religion in the light of philosophy, we must do exactly the opposite ... Rabbinic thought is organic thinking *par excellence* ... These matters, of special interest to the student of rabbinics, have wider bearings ... Brought forth by the examination of rabbinic thought, the general principles of organic thinking are illumined and exemplified by the data of rabbinic thought."

[48] Except where otherwise noted, biographical details come from Steinberg's biography of Kadushin, published in his dissertation and reprinted with minor revisions in *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind*, pp. 1-18. For over 30 years, this has been the only comprehensive biography of Kadushin in print.

scholar with a personal library of more than 5,000 books.[49] For his part, Solomon had received an excellent Orthodox Jewish education but was in many respects a child of the *haskalah* (Jewish enlightenment) movement. Much like Moses Mendelssohn, he found a way to participate fully in an educated secular life without sacrificing his traditional beliefs or associating himself with the Reform movement. The entire family emigrated to Seattle, Washington in 1898, where Solomon soon found work selling equipment to lumberjacks and prospectors. He died in 1907.

Like his father, Max Kadushin had a very strong interest in secular literature and philosophy; like his grandfather, he also had an interest in advanced rabbinic scholarship. As soon as he graduated from high school at the age of 16, he traveled to New York University. There he majored in English literature and philosophy, while at the same time studying as an undergraduate at Jewish Theological Seminary, the international center of the Conservative Judaism movement.

At the outbreak of World War I, Kadushin found ways to continue his studies: working at Camp Yaphank Army Base in Long Island, New York during the summers, while tutoring young students in Hebrew and Judaica during the academic year. Dividing his time between New York University's program in philosophy and English literature and the pre-rabbinics program of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, Kadushin's academic calendar represented in many ways the tension that Conservative Judaism had emerged to resolve. The tension between assimilation into mainstream culture and specialization within Jewish culture was often challenging then, just as it is often challenging today. His grandfather had chosen the latter path, but Kadushin—more like his father, in this respect—tried to strike a balance between the two. When Kadushin graduated from New York University, the possibility of graduate school gave him a clear choice with little room for compromise: earn a doctorate and teach English literature, or enter rabbinical school. He chose rabbinical school.

There he encountered a controversial figure whose ideas he would study, and respond to, for the rest of his life: the dynamic young professor named Mordecai Kaplan.

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[49] *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind*, p. 1.

Kadushin entered rabbinical school under his tutelage, among others.[50] He was ordained in 1920 and accepted a position as rabbi of New York's Temple B'nai Israel in 1922, where he became a staunch public advocate for Kaplan's Reconstructionist approach. As Mel Scult writes in *Judaism Faces the Twentieth Century*:

> While at the Seminary, [Kadushin] became devoted to Kaplan, teaching classes at the Jewish Center while Kaplan was a rabbi there. Kadushin's biographer maintains that Kaplan was a father figure to the very bright rabbinical student. His classmates at the Seminary sarcastically referred to him as "his master's voice" because of Kadushin's devotion to Kaplan. In the early 1920s, Kadushin wrote a number of essays[51] that exactly mirrored Kaplan's concept of Judaism and his proposals for a center that would reflect the enlarged Judaism his teacher was advocating.[52]

The biographer to whom Scult refers is Steinberg, who writes of the Kaplan–Kadushin relationship:

> They were much alike: both were physically small and compact in build; both possessed strong, assertive personalities; both were highly intellectual in their approach to Judaism and to life generally; and both tended to be firm and uncompromising in their attachments to carefully reasoned intellectual and religious positions. Kaplan may have served as a surrogate parent to Kadushin, who was just sixteen when he left his family to attend school in New York and whose own father died when he was only twelve. Their relationship was exemplified in the way they collaborated in preparing their weekly sermons, which they often developed during the course of long evening walks the two enjoyed taking together. Kadushin, a good preacher who spoke without notes in, as he put it, "the William Jennings Bryan style," would deliver his version of the sermon at his major worship service on Friday night; Kaplan, also a powerful and compelling speaker, would give his on Saturday morning.[53]

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[50] While he was in rabbinical school, Kadushin presided over the 1918 bar mitzvah of future literary critic Lionel Trilling. Alan Wald described the service (in his *The New York Intellectuals* (1987), p. 33), which was hosted on campus at JTSA, as "an elaborate affair."

[51] Kadushin wrote two articles for *Jewish Center* that explicated on ideas for Jewish educational reform in alignment with Kaplan's broader goals. Specifically, they were "The Function of Synagogue and Center" (volume 1, issue 4, September 1923, pp. 6-11) and "The Place of the Center in American Jewish Life" (volume 4, issue 2, June 1926, pp. 11-17). Other than the address in response to Rabbi Finkelstein, discussed below, these were the only articles Kadushin published during the 1920s.

[52] Wayne State University Press (1995), p. 232.

[53] Steinberg in *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind*, pp. 4-5.

Kaplan's comment on the process in a September 1925 journal entry is decidedly less touching: "I wonder," he wrote, "whether I am doing the right thing in permitting [Kadushin] to use the sermons I work out with him at present. His contribution is almost nil."[54] This comment can be dismissed as the result of a frustrating day (Kaplan had been criticized by another rabbi, then grew angry at Kadushin for relaying the criticism to him), but the fact remains that their sermon collaboration is not discussed anywhere else in Kaplan's published journals. Kadushin left New York, Temple B'nai Israel, and his weekly sermon collaboration with Kaplan to serve as rabbi at the Humbolt Boulevard Temple in Chicago. "One of Kadushin's reasons for leaving New York," Steinberg writes, "was, in all likelihood, his desire to pursue his rabbinic career independently and away from Kaplan's pervasive influence."[55]

For his part, Kaplan continued to respect Kadushin for years afterwards. Scult writes:

> In the late 1920s, Kadushin was among the most politically radical of Kaplan's circle. In one of Kaplan's fits of depression, he considered leaving the SAJ and suggested that Kadushin be asked to replace him. Nothing ever came of the idea, but Kaplan's confidence in his former student was obvious.[56]

But by 1930, the relationship between Kaplan and Kadushin had become more tense. Kadushin continued to assert the Reconstructionist agenda within the denominational framework of Conservative Judaism, and remained Kaplan's ally in that sense. But for Kaplan, this was not enough; he felt that it was necessary to leave the Rabbinical Assembly and build a new Reconstructionist tradition with the SAJ. As Kaplan wrote in a December 1928 journal entry:

> ... Kadushin maintains that the Rabbinical Assembly can be gotten to accept the program of reconstruction by those of us who subscribe to that program working

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[54] *Communings of the Spirit*, p. 214.

[55] *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind*, p. 5.

[56] *Judaism Faces the Twentieth Century*, p. 232.

> from within. If that is true I ought to give up the prospect of ever seeing the SAJ develop into a national movement. Judging, however, by the reactionary spirit which dominates the counsels of the Rabbinical Assembly there seems to be little likelihood of the progressives in the Assembly carrying their policies ... There is certainly a need of some concerted action on the part of some self-conscious group to compel both organizations to give heed to the demands of their progressive members.[57]

Kaplan's assessment of their differing opinions appears to have been wholly accurate: they were on the same page theologically, but in very different places institutionally. Nowhere is this clearer than in Kadushin's response to Rabbi Louis Finkelstein's presidential address at the 1927 Rabbinical Assembly, titled "The Things That Unite Us," in which Finkelstein affirms both core Jewish theological values and the necessity of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America as an essential institution through which differences can be worked out. Kadushin defended Kaplan and Reconstructionism on the issue of theological unity:

> It seems to me that if we are to come to some agreement, the points at issue should be stated as objectively as possible, uncolored by our personal philosophic bias. Dr. Finkelstein's failure to do so reduces his formulas to opinions of a particular metaphysical school, to which many of us may not belong ... Metaphysical support for belief in God, though of paramount importance to the individual, can never become a matter of common agreement. Each thinking individual must find this support by taking thought with himself; and his temperament, his knowledge of the physical universe, and his academic contacts will influence his philosophic loyalties.[58]

But on the issue of institutional affiliation, he agreed more with Finkelstein than he did with Kaplan:

> The Seminary does symbolize and unify the things that unite us. We are proud that the finest representatives of the historical schools today have been our teachers. We are more than grateful for the stimulating interpretations of Jewish thought we were privileged to hear there. We only hope that the Seminary will encourage and enlarge this important aspect of its teaching. The best commentary on its

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[57] Mel Scult (editor), *Communings of the Spirit: The Journals of Mordecai M. Kaplan, Volume 1, 1913-1934.*

[58] "Rabbi Max Kadushin," *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly of America*, 1927, volume 1, p. 61.

> effectiveness is Dr. Finkelstein's closing sentence, "After we have said everything about our similarities and likenesses there remains but one thing to be said, and that is: we are all of us Seminary men."[59]

Kadushin's willingness to work through problems using traditional institutions, and Kaplan's eagerness to create new institutions, drove an ideological wedge between the two men long before their theological differences did—but clear theological differences were soon to follow. In an August 1930 journal entry, Kaplan discusses a criticism Kadushin had leveled against him in response to a recent chapter he had written. "[Kadushin] maintained that I failed to take advantage of present day organization of Jewish life," Kaplan wrote, "and tried to construct something entirely new and artificial." Although he conceded that "[Kadushin] is entirely right in his contention" and vowed to rewrite the entire chapter, he felt that Kadushin's criticism displayed "a certain note of captiousness ... [which] appears in his failure to get the full force of the point he criticizes."[60]

By the time Kaplan wrote this journal entry in July 1931, it is clear that he felt Kadushin's theology no longer fit within a Reconstructionist framework:

> Kadushin is stopping in Long Branch this year. I am very sorry for the poor showing he makes every time I hear him. He certainly means well but he labors under both natural and artificial handicaps. Like all of us he has mediocre abilities, but in addition, he suffers from a sense of inferiority which prevents him from making as good a use of his abilities as he might otherwise. In his attitude toward me he seems to be obsessed with the idea that I am trying to crush his individuality. He therefore makes it a point to disagree with me, although he is completely in sympathy with my entire approach to the problem of Judaism ...
>
> He fights shy of the formula 'Judaism as a civilization' and tries to be original by advocating Organic Judaism. Our common cause suffers through his taking that attitude, and he himself gains nothing by it. His paper on the attitude of Conservatism Judaism toward Jewish nationalism which he gave in outline form Monday was a flop. He said very little that was concrete, and introduced a lot of irrelevant matters from his thesis on Seder Eliyahu he has been working on the last few years. I think his wife, Evelyn Garfiel, is largely to blame for his acting that way. She is in some respects more able than he is and has her doctorate. She naturally

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[59] ibid., p. 66.

[60] *Communings of the Spirit*, p. 420.

> wants to feel that she has married a great man and so she forces him to act unnaturally.[61]

Garfiel, who indeed held a Ph.D. in experimental psychology from Columbia University, may have played a role in Kadushin's growing intellectual independence from Kaplan[62]—and, perhaps, a role in his decision to leave New York for Chicago. According to Scult, Garfiel ("herself an ardent follower of Kaplan") had once confronted Kaplan and "told him of her unhappiness with the fact that [he] was dominating her husband."[63] Although Kadushin would go on to co-found the Mid-West Council of the Society for the Advancement of Judaism (a Reconstructionist organization) in 1928, his status as a member of Kaplan's inner circle had begun to slip. His study of rabbinic texts, particularly the Seder Eliahu (which formed the basis of his dissertation and first book), had begun to convince him that they had more intrinsic value as coherent religious documents than Kaplan's philosophy had suggested. Although his preface to his first book, *The Theology of Seder Eliahu* (1932), described the work as "in line with [Kaplan's] general philosophy,"[64] this May 1934 journal entry suggests that Kaplan may have disagreed:

> Last Wednesday night Rabbi Max Kadushin called. He had come from Madison, [Wisconsin] to work on texts of the Seder Eliyahu. I like him very much as a person. This makes me all the more sorry for his self-entanglement in a methodology of

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[61] ibid., pp. 451-452.

[62] And was a formidable thinker in her own right. While it is impossible to determine how much influence she had on Kadushin's system, her book on the Jewish prayerbook, *The Service of the Heart* (1958), she describes value-concepts in far clearer terms than those her husband would use (pp. 66-67): "Ordinarily, when a religion employs logic to derive or 'prove' its basic ideas of God, the soul, salvation, and so on, it produces a philosophy of religion, a theology ... Judaism is quite different. Except for a few famous Jewish philosophers of the Middle Ages, Judaism is, for so intellectual a people, startlingly poor in theology and theologians. Its 'basic ideas,' its religious or value-ideas, are not derived by logic from any agreed upon, fundamental assumptions; nor are its value-concepts anywhere exactly defined. Their ideas of God's mercy, His justice, Torah, holiness, charity, loving-kindness, *Mitzvah*, and the other value-ideas that constitute the pattern of Jewish religious thought are completely taken for granted by Rabbi and layman alike; they are simply part of the natural furniture of every Jew's mind."

[63] *Judaism Faces the Twentieth Century*, pp. 232-233.

[64] *Theology of Seder Eliahu*, pp. xxv-xxvi: "Those who are familiar with the philosophy of Professor Kaplan may find a point of contact between his conception of 'Judaism as a Civilization' and my description of rabbinic Theology of Seder Eliahu as 'organic thinking.' Without committing him to the point of view taken here, I would like to think of it as in line with his general philosophy."

> interpretation of rabbinic thought, a methodology the implications of which he does not fully comprehend. He calls it organismic. He is so obsessed with it that no one can engage in conversation with him for five minutes without becoming aware about something being organismic. But the worst of it is that he has become so 'hipped' on 'organismic' thinking that organized logical thinking is to him an inferior and artificial sort of thinking. Before you know it he will pronounce 'Eliyahu' a superior thinker to Aristotle.
>
> Consequently during the greater part of his stay Wednesday night we wrangled and irritated each other.[65]

It would not be inaccurate to say that, despite Kadushin's conciliatory statement to the contrary, the publication of *The Theology of Seder Eliahu* marked his formal departure from the Reconstructionist movement and created a permanent rift between his work and that of Kaplan. They never worked together again. This is not to say that the two men were, in any sense, personal enemies. "Kaplan," Kadushin would later remark, "is bigger than Reconstructionism, and nobody was more concerned about Judaism than Kaplan. This is an emotional contribution of no mean order."[66]

Kadushin's second book, *Organic Thinking* (1938), presents a philosophy of religion that has more in common with that of Alfred North Whitehead than with Mordecai Kaplan, and which was certainly more a defense of Judaism than an attempt to reconstruct it. Although he was an ardent defender of Conservative Judaism, Kadushin refused to label himself as belonging to the small-c conservative wing of the movement, preferring to describe himself as "an unreconstructed partisan of tradition."[67] But note the word "unreconstructed": his choice of terminology, like much of his philosophy itself, represented a response to Reconstructionism. By the 1930s, he had clearly departed from Mordecai Kaplan's nascent movement and returned to the institutional and ideological traditions of Conservative Judaism. It was within those traditions that he would conduct his life's work, as a scholar and theorist.

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[65] *Communings of the Spirit*, pp. 520-521.

[66] *Judaism Faces the Twentieth Century*, p. 233.

[67] Quoted in *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind*, p. 7.

Chapter 2: The Conceptual World of the Sages

2.1 From Reconstructionism to Aftermodernism

At face value, Max Kadushin's rabbinic hermeneutic seems like a complex but fairly uncontroversial expression of the traditional positive-historical[68] attitude towards textual study advanced by Conservative Judaism, the prevailing school of thought at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. Longtime JTSA president Louis Finkelstein's organic description of the rabbinic corpus was not particularly unusual, in his tradition:

> [Rabbinic] society had no need for a systematic theology based on verbalized assumptions and theories of contemporary science, and built up with logical precision and coherence. The verbalized doctrines to which one appealed in moments of particular temptation or distress were valid independently of their logical relationship to one another. The concepts were real, and the propositions true, because without them life, as it was lived, made no sense.
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> Inconsistent maxims could equally be accepted as true, relating doubtless to different situations. Inconsistent theological propositions did not have to be reconciled; their validity as propositions was not really important. What was significant was their pedagogical value and their poetical meaning, expressing the underlying premises on which all of life's decisions were based.
>
> Theological maxims and assertions were either footnotes, documenting ideas expressed in righteous living, or parenthetical statements, making symbolic actions clearer than they could otherwise be to the untutored mind.[69]

What makes Kadushin's system unique in the Conservative Jewish tradition is not that he defined the rabbinic approach as organic, but rather that he did so with an unusual degree of specificity—creating a bridge between the largely unarticulated methodology of

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[68] Zechariah Frankel's original term for Conservative Judaism was "Positive-Historical Judaism," and it asserts similar priorities to those advanced by Kadushin. As Jon Bloomberg explains in *The Jewish World in the Modern Age* (p. 96): "'Positive' meant 'scientific,' while 'historical' meant corresponding to the historical experiences of the Jews. Jewish tradition and history have established certain beliefs, values, and institutions as fundamental, says Frankel ... How is the identity of these beliefs, values, and institutions to be discovered? Through scientific historical study." Kadushin's emphasis on science, discussed in chapter 4, reflects this methodology.

[69] Louis Finkelstein, from his introduction to Solomon Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology: Major Concepts of the Talmud* (Schocken, 1961), p. ix.

the positive-historical school, and the secular world with which the positive-historical school was surrounded. In the process, he directly confronted the philosophical questions posed by the rabbinic corpus, and created one of the earliest comprehensive postcritical hermeneutics.

He did so in six works: three rabbinic commentaries (*The Theology of Seder Eliahu*, *A Conceptual Approach to the Mekilta*, and *A Conceptual Commentary on Midrash Leviticus Rabbah*), and three broader works of philosophy *(Organic Thinking*, *The Rabbinic Mind*, and *Worship and Ethics*). None are superfluous; each volume contributes, in a different (and often redundant or slightly contradictory) way, to a full understanding of his system of thought.

The Theology of Seder Eliahu (1932)

As a doctoral student at JTSA, Kadushin chose to study *Tanna debé Eliyahu* ("the School of Elijah"), a classical rabbinic midrash[70] consisting of 46 chapters divided into two parts, the 31-chapter *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* ("Greater Section of Elijah") and the 15-chapter *Seder Eliahu Zutta* ("Lesser Section of Elijah"). The great rabbinic scholar Louis Ginzberg had suggested it to him as a possible subject of future study,[71] and Kadushin's rapport with the text may have had something to do with the *Seder Eliahu*'s[72] unusually universalistic approach to Torah[73]—which would have made it an appealing text for someone who, like Kadushin, was trying to gain a better understanding of his relationship with the secular world. One passage, for example, reads as follows:

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[70] According to *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion* (2011), p. 656: "The book consists of homilies concerned with the reasons for the commandments, love and study of Torah, and other religious and ethical teachings. The work was written between the third century and the tenth century CE, probably by one author, who claims to have lived in Jerusalem and Babylon."

[71] *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind*, p. 3: "Ginzberg introduced him to the critical study of Talmudic texts and, a few years later, after Kadushin had completed rabbinical school, suggested that he analyze *Seder Eliahu* for his doctoral dissertation."

[72] Much like the *Midrash Leviticus Rabbah*, as noted below.

[73] C.G. Montefiore and H. Loewe (eds.), *A Rabbinic Anthology* (Jewish Publication Society of America, 1960), p. 557: "The *Tanna debé Eliyahu* contains several anti-Gentile sayings; yet mixed with them are some of an entirely opposite character."

> What was Deborah's character that she should have judged Israel, and prophesied to them at a time when Phinehas son of Elazar was alive? I call heaven and earth to witness that whether it be Gentile or Israelite, man or woman, slave or handmaid, according to the deeds, which he does, so will the Holy Spirit rest on him.[74]

Another reads:

> Even the Gentiles recognise the wisdom, understanding and discernment [which God's words impart], and they attain to the root principle of the Law: they love God with a perfect love, whether He do good to them or evil.[75]

But the text also characterizes the Gentile world as having specifically heard, and rejected, God's prophecy—suggesting that the difference between Jewish and non-Jewish communities is not between Chosenness and the lack thereof, but rather a fundamental difference in character that has led Gentiles to be unreceptive to God's repeated attempts at prophecy. One passage, for example, describes the Gentile prophets as a series of failures, despite their dedication and natural gifts:

> After Noah came into the world, the Holy One said to Shem. Shem, you had my Torah—if it had been kept at all among the first ten generations, do you suppose that I would consider destroying My world on account of them and their transgressions? Now prophesy to them in the hope that they will take my Torah upon themselves. So for four hundred years Shem prophesied to all the nations of the world, but they were not willing to heed him. After him came Eliphaz son of Barachel, Zophar the Naamathite ... and the last of all of them, Balaam son of Beor. There was not a thing in the world that the Holy One did not reveal to Balaam. Why? Because otherwise all the nations of the earth would have spoken up to Him and said: Master of the Universe, had you given us [as well as Israel] a prophet like Moses, we would have accepted [Your] Torah. Therefore the Holy One gave them Balaam son of Beor who in his native intelligence surpassed Moses.[76]

Kadushin would be drawn to *Seder Eliahu*'s emphasis on *derech eretz* ("the way of the world"), a concept that he would explore in much greater detail in his later work, most notably *Worship and Ethics*.

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[74] ibid., p. 557.

[75] ibid., p. 380.

[76] Quoted in Shaul Magid, *From Metaphysics to Midrash* (Indiana University Press, 2008), p. 155.

Whatever led Kadushin to focus so intently on *Seder Eliahu*, his love for the text was clear[77]—and endured far beyond the completion of his doctoral dissertation and the publication of *The Theology of Seder Eliahu*. "Before you know it," a clearly-irritated Mordecai Kaplan complained in 1934, "[Kadushin] will pronounce 'Eliyahu' a superior thinker to Aristotle."[78] As Theodore Steinberg explains, Kadushin took it upon himself to champion the text and defend its importance to the rabbinic corpus:

> Like other haggadic books, *Seder Eliahu* appeared to be the usual unsystematic compilation of biblical exegesis, folk lore, ethical ideas and theology. The untidy nature of the haggadic literary style had, heretofore, defied all attempts at discerning its overall coherence and pattern of thought. This led scholars such as Solomon Schechter and George Foot Moore to conclude that Judaism of the rabbinic period, "...had no body of articulated and systematic doctrine such as we understand by the name theology."[79]

Kadushin's own description of this process acknowledges that he faced a difficult task:

> With the warnings of Schechter and Moore to deter me, I nevertheless attempted for a time to cast the rabbinic concepts in the Seder into some sort of logical order. All this work was, of course, fruitless. At the last, however, a careful analysis yielded the conviction that this Midrash does possess coherence, but of an entirely different kind from that produced by logic, systematic thought. I have called the type of thinking which, it seems to me, characterizes rabbinic theology "organic thinking" or "harmonious thinking." In the light of the organic coherence of rabbinic theology, the individual concepts reveal a structure otherwise not to be discerned.[80]

The system he describes in this book bears most of the hallmarks of his philosophy as he would later develop it: value-concepts, the four fundamental concepts, the fundamental organic character of rabbinic philosophy. But his terminology shows less influence from Alfred North Whitehead and William James, and his vocabulary is less refined and specific, at this stage of his scholarly career, than it would later become.

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[77] Kadushin would go on to cite *Seder Eliahu* in all five of his subsequent books; its influence on his writing is both clear and profound.

[78] *Communings of the Spirit*, p. 521.

[79] *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind*, p. 3.

[80] *Theology of Seder Eliahu*, p. v.

He is also clear that he does not intend for his study to represent any general statements about the rabbinic corpus. He considers himself to be an expert with respect to *Seder Eliahu*, but not with respect to other texts:

> The claim that there is an inherent relationship among rabbinic concepts can be made with justice, on the basis of the present work, only with regard to Seder Eliahu. Whenever subsequently I use the term "rabbinic theology" or like generalizations it should be understood that I have reference only to rabbinic theology as exemplified in this Midrash. Whether the same principle of coherence extends to rabbinic thelogic literature at large could be verified only upon painstaking examination of other Midrashim, on which task I hope sometime later to venture.[81]

As we shall see, Kadushin's career focused less on proving the universality of this approach than it did on elaborating the ways in which this approach may illuminate the texts to which it did apply. His next three books—*Organic Thinking* (1938), *The Rabbinic Mind* (1952), and *Worship and Ethics* (1964)—would focus on these more general questions, while his later two, *A Conceptual Approach to the Mekilta* (1969) and the posthumously-published *A Conceptual Commentary on Midrash Leviticus Rabbah* (1987), would examine, in a more rigorous and specific way, the applicability of his system in other rabbinic texts, beyond the immediate context of *Seder Eliahu*.

Organic Thinking: A Study in Rabbinic Thought (1938)

After the publication of *Seder Eliahu*, Kadushin had established the basics of his rabbinic hermeneutic—but not in a very systematic or detailed way, and not in a way that was intended to apply to texts other than *Seder Eliahu*. With the publication of *Organic Thinking* six years later, this changed. *Organic Thinking* is, by far, the most universal and non-sectarian of Kadushin's works. Stepping far beyond Kadushin's original milieu, it attempts to answer what Kadushin describes as a universal human problem:

> Social values or ideals cannot be coordinated into a logical system. Whenever this has been attempted, religion has been constricted into dogmas and ethics hardened into the rules of the doctrinaire. Logic has its rightful place, to be sure, in these

[81] ibid., p. 22.

> enterprises of the human mind and spirit, but when it seeks to lay the foundation of conduct is efforts are futile when they are not harmful. A well-ordered, logical, hence uniform, system negates that very complexity which is the chief characteristic of human motives and conduct. It takes no account of the differences between individuals, nor of the uniqueness of every ethical situation. In short, it runs counter to all the forces and factors that make the human scene human.[82]

Where he was careful in *Theology of Seder Eliahu* to limit his conclusions to the individual text under discussion, in *Organic Thinking* he makes no reservations about offering up a more general hermeneutic (though he does not, at any point, use the word "hermeneutic" to describe his work):

> A careful analysis of the pattern of rabbinic thought proves not only that it gave room for the variations of individuals but that such variation was inevitable. A comparison with primitive mentality serves to indicate that this type of thinking is an abiding feature of man's mental life. This type of thinking, therefore, is universal, whilst local in content and individualistic in configuration. It is not logical but organismic: Each organismic pattern of thought or organic complex has its own distinctive individuality,—each social pattern and each individual variation of it.[83]

Organic Thinking is the most universal of Kadushin's works and, in this respect, the boldest and most directly applicable to this thesis. While later chapters will explore the applicability of Kadushin's ideas beyond the rabbinic context, *Organic Thinking* is the only Kadushin volume in which the author persistently confronts the question himself—though most of the volume does focus on rabbinic thought, his discussion of the universal implications of his system tend to be fairly vague and aspirational. In his discussion of the purpose of the organic complex, for example, Kadushin writes:

> For a thing to escape attention it needs only to be most commonplace. How else can we account for the fact that so little attention has been paid to the plain, every-day ideas of a man, the concepts which he must use in all his relationships, the grounds or motives for that spontaneous activity that constitutes so large a portion of his life? The "necessary" ideas or concepts which establish man in the world of nature have been the subject of much careful study. But are there not other concepts, notably those that affect the social relationships, which are also habitual, canalizing the moment-to-moment experience and in that sense "necessary" concepts? Being habitual or unpremeditated these concepts are the aiding elements

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[82] p. v.

[83] pp. v-vi.

> of a man's character, the threads that make up the pattern of his personality—or, to use a word upon which we shall soon elaborate, his values.[84]

The book consists of four chapters:

1. *Introductory*. This short chapter essentially defines the scope of his study, and his general thoughts regarding the nature of organic thinking and the function of value-concepts.
2. *Torah*. Kadushin applies his universal principles to Torah, and reiterates a more detailed version of the organismic complex he outlined in *The Theology of Seder Eliahu*. Here he outlines the basics of his rabbinic hermeneutics, and explains the Torah's "practical efficacy"[85] as a means by which an observant Jew absorbs the organismic complex and "not only learns to do what is right but becomes so tempered as to find it natural to do good and to avoid evil."[86]
3. *Torah as Law and Ethics*. This section applies the concepts of *mitzvot*, *derekh eretz*, and sin as value-concepts, though not in an especially compelling or linear way. Kadushin would later revisit these ideas, to greater effect, in *Worship and Ethics*.
4. *On the Organic Complex*. The largest chapter of the book covers principles both universal ("The Organic Concept," "General Characteristics of the Organic Complex," "The Role of Logical Thinking") and rabbinic ("Relation to Bible," "The Experience of God," "The Relation to the Ethical")—and often marbles the two tiers of the discussion in such a way that it is not always clear when Kadushin is discussing organic thinking in general, and when he is discussing the rabbinic implications of organic thinking in particular.

In his conclusion, Kadushin revisits the question of universality vis-a-vis organic thinking:

> Did peoples in the past other than Israel possess an organic complex of concepts? The overwhelming importance of society, again and again indicated in the

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[84] p. 179.

[85] p. 68.

[86] p. 75.

> researches of all the social sciences,[87] makes it likely that organic thinking is an abiding feature of man's mental life, a supposition likely enough, at any rate, to merit further investigation. Substantiation of this supposition will amount to a demonstration that all religion and ethics which are social products are not an arbitrary, chaotic hodge-podge of historical accidents but possess an order inherent in the very nature of society. Techniques and conclusions developed in the course of such investigation may even aid us to grapple with the complicated processes of present-day society.[88]

At first glance, this seems to indicate a false dichotomy—that Kadushin is suggesting that either his system possesses some universality, or that progress in the social sciences may hit a wall should cultures be revealed to be an "arbitrary, chaotic hodge-podge of social accidents." The history of the social sciences suggests that there are many other options. But Kadushin did not argue here that other societies need possess *his* organic system—just that the character of their thought, if it is not clearly rational and linear in character, would logically be organic. And he felt that this could have broad applicability to religious studies, as a discipline:

> The theory of organic thinking can prove helpful in social studies and particularly in the study of religion ... The study of religion has been wrongly oriented in respect to both psychology and philosophy. The unusual personalities, the saints, the ascetics, the mystics who see visions and hear locutions, have been of primary interest to the psychology of religion; and when it has analyzed religious phenomena exhibited not in individuals but in groups, the phenomena were out of the ordinary, bizarre, abnormal. When associated with religion, the term "psychological" has acquired a connotation similar to that of "pathological." By means of the theory of organic thinking, however, we have been able ... to describe the religious experience shared by all members of the folk, by the common man and the spiritual leader at once, religious experience as a factor in the ordinary, normal course of every-day life.[89]

Organic Thinking represents Kadushin's boldest attempt to apply his hermeneutic approach to fields with which it would not appear to have a natural affinity. In his

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[87] On its own, this is a somewhat strange and tautological statement; obviously the social sciences would treat society as important, just as the natural sciences would treat nature as important. But perhaps this is a more general acknowledgment, by Kadushin, that the traditions of philosophy and theology are themselves products of social conditioning, a belief consistent with his postcritical approach, which he takes great pains to distinguish from the philosophical traditions that we would identify as modernist.

[88] p. 254.

[89] pp. vii-viii.

remaining two works, he largely abandoned the goal of adapting his approach to other systems and focused on its applicability to rabbinic thought and Jewish life, two fields with which he was far more familiar.

The Rabbinic Mind (1952)

The Rabbinic Mind is the third, and most mature, general presentation of Kadushin's rabbinic hermeneutic. His work on *Seder Eliahu,* limited as it was to the interpretation of a single text, is too reserved to be of much general use; *Organic Thinking,* by positing universal theories more in keeping with the fields of sociology and anthropology than with rabbinics, is audacious but not particularly convincing. Without abandoning the universal goals of *Organic Thinking,*[90] *The Rabbinic Mind* succeeds by focusing specifically on midrashic traditions—not necessarily just *Seder Eliahu*, but not the entire human experience, either. Writing that "[t]here is no sharp line of demarcation ... between the method here and that of my earlier works," Kadushin's own assessment of *The Rabbinic Mind* emphasizes "the wider aspects of the rabbinic mind"; *Theology of Seder Eliahu* and *Organic Thinking*, Kadushin argues, "are devoted primarily to the problem of the nature of the rabbinic concepts."[91] By limiting the scope of his work to the rabbinic corpus, but not strictly to *Seder Eliahu*, Kadushin dramatically increases the effectiveness of his presentation.

Life experience, which must have included countless attempts to explain his system to others, may have played a significant role in improving his presentation. By the time *The Rabbinic Mind* was published, it had been 20 years since publication of Kadushin's promising *Theology of the Seder Eliahu* and 14 years since publication of its bold sequel, *Organic Thinking.* His focus, during these years, was on the education of Jewish high school and college-aged youth. After spending 1930 on sabbatical in Palestine, Kadushin

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[90] *The Rabbinic Mind*, p. 3: "That the value-concepts played these roles in the lives of the Rabbis and their followers will, we believe, become apparent in this work. But it is hardly possible, bearing in mind the basic function of the value-concepts, that the entire phenomenon can be characteristic of that society alone. Value-concepts are most likely decisive factors in every civilized society, each society owing its stability and character to such value-concepts, or at least to such aspects of value-concepts, as are peculiarly its own."

[91] p. xv.

transferred to Madison, Wisconsin to become director (and de facto chaplain) of the University of Wisconsin's branch of the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation, an organization serving Jewish college students. Kadushin spent over a decade in Wisconsin, where he enjoyed university life but occasionally clashed with Hillel leaders over his tendency to emphasize scholarly pursuits over pastoral responsibilities, a difficulty that eventually led to his resignation. In 1942, he returned to New York City to become principal of Marshaliah Hebrew High School, where he spent ten years and met with a great deal of success, having better learned how to balance scholarly life with leadership responsibilities. He was forced out in 1952, however, owing to a change in management in the Jewish Education Committee, the organization that supervised Marshaliah.

The Rabbinic Mind consists of seven chapters. The first three ("Introductory," "The Organism of Rabbinic Value-Concepts," and "The Conceptual Term and Its Implications") essentially cover the same ground as *Organic Thinking*, but represent a tighter, clearer presentation with fewer points of comparison with contemporaneous systems—a trend that continues for the rest of the book, as Kadushin deemphasizes points of comparison with other systems and opts, instead, to give more attention to specific rabbinic value concepts and, for lack of a better term, the physiology of Judaism—the way in which rabbinic texts are conveyed to contemporary communities and result in the concretization of values through *halakah* and *mitzvot*.

It would not be going too far afield to suggest that *The Rabbinic Mind* could function very well as an apologetics for Jews who are struggling with their belief in the literal, creedal affirmations associated with their faith, but who still find purpose in Jewish life, and it is to these contemporary Jews that the book's conclusion appears addressed:

> The absence of a statement of basic principles on the part of the Rabbis was among the most serous difficulties with which medieval formulators of creeds had to cope ... The rabbinic dogmas are vastly different from the dogmas of medieval Jewish theology. The rabbinic dogmas do not constitute a creed, and they even permit, in some degree, the play of personality.[92]

There is another sign of maturity in *The Rabbinic Mind*: Kadushin demonstrates no attempt to come out from under his mentor's shadow. Mordecai Kaplan is never

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[92] p. 367.

mentioned in the volume, and Kadushin's mind seems to be completely focused on the needs of the young women and men who learned from Kadushin, at Marshaliah and the University of Wisconsin, his approach to Judaism—one that engages the Jewish tradition culturally and textually, but asserts no need to reconstruct it.

Worship and Ethics: A Study in Rabbinic Judaism (1964)

In his preface to *The Rabbinic Mind*, Kadushin notes that "*Organic Thinking*, an earlier book, deals with the category of the ethical and with kindred topics," and that subsequently "the subject of rabbinic ethics is not given separate treatment in the present volume."[93] But *The Rabbinic Mind*'s emphasis on the "physiology" of Jewish life—the absorption of values, their sustenance through worship, their concretization through ethics—strongly hints of a more practical volume focusing on the religious life of Jews, who, inasmuch as they are Jews, always function as part of a larger community. Kadushin's primary targets in *Worship and Ethics* seem to be rugged Western individualism and the myth of the self-made man. As he writes in his preface:

> In rabbinic Judaism worship and ethics are cultural phenomena. Each individual has his own personal experiences in both spheres, but what make the experiences possible are the values of society. Theories depicting the individual as the creative rebel who overcomes the bonds of routine and inertia with which the tribe would enslave him certainly do not apply to rabbinic Judaism, and in essence probably to no religion. Such theories willy-nilly must use terms like worship, repentance, or love, terms and ideas provided by the tribe, by society.[94]

By the time he wrote this volume, Kadushin was 69 years old and had served for four years as visiting professor of ethics and religious thought at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, a position he held until his death in 1980—but he had spent nearly three decades away from JTSA, and the 1950s were particularly hard on him. As Steinberg writes:

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[93] p. xvi.

[94] p. xxiii.

> The next eight years [after publication of *The Rabbinic Mind*], from 1952 to 1960, were difficult for Kadushin. Already a man in his middle fifties, Kadushin was unable to establish himself in a financially secure position as a full-time teacher and scholar. He returned to the pulpit, spending one year at the Bayshore Jewish Center on Long Island, and four years at the Conservative Synagogue Adath Israel of Riverdale in the north Bronx. The pulpit rabbinate no longer satisfied him, however, probably because he was unable or unwilling to bend to the manifold demands placed upon the congregational rabbi. This was the post-World War II era of vast congregational expansion. Kadushin was willing to preside over worship services, arrange for adult education and administer the synagogue's religious school, but he was prepared neither to engage in the time-devouring organizational life of the typical congregation, nor to participate in the fund-raising activities which dominated many synagogues in the post-war era, as they set about refurbishing old and constructing new facilities. During those years, most congregations wanted, and no doubt needed, rabbis who were strong, popular organizers and leaders willing to become involved in undertakings which Kadushin considered trivial or beneath his dignity. It was not a time for bookish, scholarly rabbis starting anew in the pulpit.[95]

While it would be speculative to suggest that this experience had taught Kadushin humility, humility is the implicit undercurrent that connects *Worship and Ethics*. In his discussion of mysticism, for example, Kadushin dismisses the idea of the mystic as an exceptional individual, focusing on the ordinary function of mysticism as an element of Jewish community:

> Normal mysticism is not limited to the few who have special gifts of temperament. It is the experience of the ordinary man as well as of the gifted man; rather, it is the experience of the gifted man which has also become the experience of the ordinary man. The effectiveness of normal mysticism ... can be gauged by "the things done," but these practical results of normal mysticism can only be in the field of morality and ethics, a field cultivated by normal mysticism.[96]

Not surprisingly, given its subject matter, *Worship and Ethics* is the most practical of Kadushin's works. Emphasizing communal worship, prayer, *halakah*, mysticism, *mitzvot*, *derekh eretz*, and the idea of holiness, it describes value-concepts and the organismic complex in relation to Jewish morality and ethics, and the personal religious experience that defines the life of a devout Jew. This is in keeping with Conservative Judaism's

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[95] *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind*, p. 15.

[96] p. 182.

emphasis on the value of Judaism as a community, as well as with Kadushin's enduring emphasis on the organic, communal character of Jewish thought.

The value-concept of *derekh eretz* ("the way of the world"), which was prevalent in *Seder Eliahu* and central to Kadushin's thinking, also plays a central role in his discussion of ethics. But the volume also argues against linear, rational, provable ethical universals. The idea of a metaethic, like the idea of a metaphysic, is largely irrelevant to his system. In his descriptive account of rabbinic thought as he understood it, he saw a system of moral values connected to and justified by empathy, God, and social progress—just as, on questions of metaphysics, he clearly believed in a personal God—but he did not suggest that ratiocination could synthesize these ethics, or any theology, from fundamental meta-elements. His commitment to a communal approach was unmitigated. This does not mean that Kadushin did not posit the existence of any kind of universal ethic; that would have been contrary to the rabbinic tradition. But he is always careful to attribute the origins of his universal ethics, as when discussing the Noachite commandments:

> "The Sons of Noah," or mankind in general, were given, the rabbis, say, seven *mitzvot* ... We have here a formulation of what we have recognized above to be the rabbinic category of universal ethics ... In another formulation of universal ethics, the rabbis say, "Because of eight things the world is destroyed..." ... But all the matters here are also designated, by implication, as violations of *mitzvot*, the concept of *mitzvot* being embodied in the statement.[97]

Kadushin characterizes universal ethics such as the seven Noachite commandments as belonging to the category of *derekh eretz*, but he is very careful to say that this should not imply, as it does in the work of Maimonides and other medieval and post-medieval Jewish thinkers, a reducible natural law that is grounded in social utility. He argues that this approach is inconsistent with the premedieval rabbinic tradition, and robs values themselves of meaning, of their privileged position at the core of ethical decisionmaking:

> When we assign to ethics a utilitarian role, we tend to reduce ethics to something neutral, to a means to an end, to mechanics, as it were. In our rabbinic statements, on the contrary, the object is, patently, to extol justice, truth, peace, and charity.

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[97] p. 206.

> These are virtues not because they have social utility; they are virtues in their own right. Moreover, they are virtues of such importance that without them mankind would not be civilized, nor fit to endure.[98]

Kadushin also argues that a philosophical, universal approach to ethics denies the distinct, individual character of each ethical act. The final paragraph of *Worship and Ethics,* Kadushin's last major work, reads:

> When ethical acts are described by a general formula, and that general formula is the same for all ethical acts, no recognition whatsoever is given to the particular character possessed by each and every ethical act. On the other hand, a value concept, being merely connotative and not a formula, has meaning only so long as it is concretized in a particular act. Conversely, when stress is laid upon the ethical value concept embodied in an act, there is also full awareness of the circumstantial, particular character of that act.[99]

This is a perfect illustration of Kadushin's approach to ethics, rabbinic hermeneutics, worship, and nearly everything else in his system: emphasis on the uniqueness of people, situations, and literary traditions, and a deemphasis on any system or standard that would reduce them to a linear hierarchy. It is this strain of Kadushin's thought that has led to his being labeled, correctly or incorrectly, as a postmodernist.

A Conceptual Approach to the Mekilta (1969)

The last volume Kadushin published during his lifetime was *A Conceptual Approach to the Mekilta*. Subtitled "How the spiritual values of the Talmud and Midrash arise from the Bible," the volume is essentially a commentary on the *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, a series of midrashim focusing on Exodus 12-23. It represents an application of Kadushin's system to the text, but it can also be read as a very effective general commentary on the meaning of individual words as expressed in the text.

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[98] p. 45.

[99] p. 237.

While his commentary on the Mekilta does not break new theoretical ground for purposes of this thesis, it does give the clearest and most concise definition of value-concepts to be found anywhere in Kadushin's works. It is also, at times, the most poetic:

> A value concept endows situations, events, or acts with significance, gives to each of them a distinct value which it would not otherwise have. The act of giving away money, food and clothing can be described in purely "operational" terms; for one who does not possess the concept the concept of charity, however, the act as a whole will have no significance. But in imparting significance to an act, a value concept performs more than an ideational function. An act embodying a value concept conveys emotion as well as meaning, and hence a valuational situation is an experiential rather than exclusively a knowledge-situation ...
>
> A primary condition for a healthy value complex is the interaction of the intellectual leaders and the folk. Since value concepts do not refer to objects or relations in common sensory experience, they need to be cultivated, nurtured. Even more vital is the need to establish norms of behavior ensuring the steady concretization of the value concepts, norms whereby the opportunities for actualizing the concepts discovered by the gifted man, may become similar opportunities for the ordinary man. These needs were met by the Rabbis, the trained intellectual leaders of the people who nevertheless did not constitute a professional class, and whose interests were therefore largely the same as those of the folk. In Haggadah they made the value concepts vivid, and in Halakah they developed the norms which fostered and directed the steady actualization of those concepts in daily life.[100]

In these two paragraphs, Kadushin sums up his rabbinic hermeneutic in flawless, easily communicable terms. His first decade since returning to JTSA had clearly led him to refine the presentation of his system—and helped to shape his legacy as one of the most quietly influential Conservative Jewish figures of the twentieth century.

A Conceptual Commentary on Midrash Leviticus Rabbah (1987)

Essentially "a companion volume to *A Conceptual Commentary to the Mekilta*,"[101] Kadushin's commentary on *Vayikrah Rabbah*, a 5th-century rabbinic midrash, is a pure

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[100] pp. 29-30.

[101] Avraham Holtz, "Foreword," in Max Kadushin, *A Conceptual Commentary on Midrash Leviticus Rabbah* (Scholars Press, 1987), p. xxiii.

application of his system to a text. While it includes little discussion of Kadushin's system, rabbinics scholar Alan Avery-Peck argues in his essay "Max Kadushin as Exegete: The Conceptual Commentary to Leviticus Rabbah" that this posthumously-published commentary clearly established Kadushin's postcritical hermeneutic as being ahead of its time:

> While Kadushin began his work, most individuals studying midrashic documents were interested in historical and literary questions. Indeed, until the past two decades, the primary focus of midrashic scholarship was to date the various midrashic texts and to determine the literary relationship among them. During the period of Kadushin's work, only a few scholars shared in his attempt to define *midrash* functionally and to examine it as a genre of literature. Even fewer of these paid attention to specific documents in the corpus. Jacob Neusner remains among the few who attempt to describe the specific redactional and substantive theories—the worldviews—of complete midrashic documents. Kadushin was one of the first scholars to move in this direction, focusing upon and interpreting individual midrashic documents, at least in theory, as rabbinic wholes.[102]

Peck goes on to write that Kadushin "failed to recognize the importance of examining *Leviticus Rabbah*'s own stylistic conventions and substantive traits as evidences of its individual framers' ideology and worldview,"[103] which echoes what has been written about Kadushin's system itself: that he attempted something bold and new and, though he failed to construct a functional system, nevertheless contributed in a very real way to the intellectual tradition of Conservative Judaism. And, as Steinberg points out, he enriched its vocabulary:

> Pirke Avot (6:6) states that "One who quotes a thing in the name of he who said it brings redemption to the world." On the other hand, there are ideas and phrases which reach such a degree of general acceptance and universality that they achieve anonymity. Some of Kadushin's ideas have achieved this status. Terms such as "normal mysticism," "value-concept," and "organic thinking," all coined by Kadushin, have become part of the universe of discourse among scholars of rabbinic studies.[104]

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[102] *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind*, pp. 79-80.

[103] ibid., p. 91.

[104] *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind,* p. 17.

For Kadushin, who prized so highly the role of the rabbis as a community and disparaged so consistently the drive to leave an individual mark on the world, this sort of anonymous celebrity, as an invisible force in the history of 20th-century rabbinic thought, is a powerful —and remarkably appropriate—achievement.

2.2 Value-Concepts and the Physiology of the Organic Complex

William Emerson Ritter and Edna Bailey, whose study titled *The Organismal Conception: Its Place in Science and Its Bearing on Philosophy* (1927) largely delineated Kadushin's definition of the philosophy of organism,[105] characterized organism as being determined by the relationship between the whole and its constituent parts:

> The [organismic] idea of wholeness involves the recognition that a unit exists and is possible only through the existence of parts, or elements. The conception of a unit as something uncomposed, ultimately simple, is at odds with all our best known facts. The whole is not merely something that is intact, something not torn, or cut to pieces, or smashed to fragments. Rather a whole is something the original and necessary parts of which are so located and so functioning in relation to each other as to contribute their proper share to the structure and functioning of the whole. A natural whole stands in such relation to its parts as to make it and its parts mutually constitutive of each other. Structurally, functionally, and generatively, they are reciprocals of one another.[106]

The reciprocals, for Kadushin, were the organismic complex (the whole) and the value-concepts (the parts) from which it takes its shape. In Kadushin's system, a value-concept is represented by a word or phrase that is used in the rabbinic literature—*chesed* (lovingkindness), for example—but it isn't created merely by that word or phase's dictionary definition. It is, instead, created by the way it is used. Kadushin writes:

> The absence of a definition, instead of being a defect, is what enables the rabbinic value-concepts to function easily and effectively. We shall find that the value-concepts are not only undefined but nondefinable, and that this accords with the

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[105] *Organic Thinking*, pp. 184-185, among many other references.

[106] Ritter and Bailey, *The Organismal Conception: Its Place in Science and Its Bearing on Philosophy* (University of California Press, 1927), pp. 307-308.

> dual nature of the task which is accomplished by them. Being nondefinable, the value-concepts are extremely flexible, and they can, therefore, respond to and express the *differentia* of human personalities. At the same time the value-term does convey an abstract, generalized idea of the concept it represents, and this generalized idea is common to all the members of the group. The complex of value-concepts as a whole is hence meaningful enough and colorful enough to make of the individuals who employ it a unified group, a society with a clearly recognizable character.[107]

A value-concept isn't *just* a word or phrase or *just* an idea, but rather a word or phrase that expresses a complex idea that cannot be quickly or adequately defined. Value-concepts are neither wholly communicable nor wholly incommunicable, but defining them in explicit terms is inadequate; they are experienced more than they are defined, and part of the experience of each value-concept is growing accustomed to the way that it interacts with other value-concepts, as well as growing accustomed to the way that it is commonly experienced or expressed, not only within the rabbinic literature but also within the life of observant Jews who are conversant in or otherwise influenced by the rabbinic tradition.

Kadushin consistently identifies four fundamental concepts—*middat ha-din* (God's lovingkindness), *middat rachamim* (God's justice), Torah, and Israel[108]—that he sees as especially elemental to the organismic complex, inasmuch as they're elements that form other value-concepts and link them together. But he is careful to say that these four fundamental concepts are not necessarily the most important, or essential, value-concepts:

> We wish to emphasize that these four are fundamental not because they are the most important. Other concepts—the sanctification of the Name and the World to Come, for example—are certainly as important as those we have called fundamental, if importance here implies being essential to the rabbinic world-outlook. The fact is that rabbinic concepts are not like articles of a creed, some of which have a position of primary importance while others are relegated to secondary rank. All rabbinic concepts are of equal importance, for the pattern would not have the same character were a single concept missing. We have, however, called God's loving-kindness, His justice, Torah, and Israel fundamental

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[107] *The Rabbinic Mind*, pp. 2-3.

[108] *Theology of Seder Eliahu*, p. 33, among many other references.

> concepts because all the rabbinic concepts are built, woven rather, out of these four.[109]

Outside of the four named fundamental concepts, Kadushin technically classifies all named value-concepts as subconcepts (though he does not use this term often, generally choosing to simply refer to them as value-concepts).[110] Kadushin also acknowledges that there are many nameless value-concepts, which he calls conceptual phases, that "have not crystallized out into genuine subconcepts, perhaps because of some amorphous qualities which further study may yet reveal."[111] (For obvious reasons, it's impossible to name examples of conceptual phases.)

Kadushin acknowledges three types of concepts other than value-concepts that are important to the religious life of individuals, and that are present in rabbinic literature. These three types of concepts are not central to his hermeneutic, but are worth mentioning here for contextual purposes:

1. *Cognitive concepts*, definite words or phrases that have been absorbed into an individual's fluent understanding of the world but do not technically constitute value-concepts, though the same word or phrase can technically be used to refer to both a value-concept and a cognitive concept.[112]

2. *Defined concepts*, definite words or phrases that have not been absorbed into an individual's fluent understanding of the world, but can still be communicated using definitions or explanations. The same word or phrase can technically be used to refer to both a value-concept and a defined concept.[113]

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[109] *Organic Thinking*, pp. 6-7.

[110] *The Rabbinic Mind*, pp. 15-16.

[111] *The Rabbinic Mind*, p. 17.

[112] *The Rabbinic Mind*, p. 51.

[113] *The Rabbinic Mind*, p. 108.

3. *Auxiliary ideas*, implicit concepts that are not named but which, unlike conceptual phases, do not constitute value-concepts.[114]

All value-concepts connect the emotional and spiritual lives of individuals with communicable terms. Using *tzedakah* (charity) as an example of a value-concept, Kadushin writes:

> Every particular valuational event or experience owes its unitary character to the value-concepts imbedded in it, for these imbedded concepts are the unifying agents in the situation. But they do more. In integrating what may be analyzed out as objective, impersonal elements, the value-concepts endow the situation as a whole with significance. The act of giving away money and food and clothing ... can be described purely in "operational" terms; for one who is not acquainted with the concept of charity, however, the act as a whole will have no [valuational] significance.[115]

Likewise, value-concepts can be expressed in many different ways—different contexts, and through different individuals:

> It is only when the value-concepts are employed in speech or action, when they are active or dynamic, that the coherence of the concepts, their interrelationship, can be demonstrated. One of them is the atomistic effect of the value-concepts, each statement and each deed embodying value-concepts being a complete and independent entity in itself ... Statements of that kind, whether in Haggadah or in ordinary speech, are vehicles for the expression of the individual's personality. Not articulated in a hard-and-fast system, they can convey an individual's moods, his reactions under varying circumstances, his own peculiarities of temperament, as well as his deep seated convictions. All this would be impossible were the value-concepts congealed in a static, hierarchical system of thought. Were that the case, instead of leaving room for the differentia of personalities, the value-concepts would impose a uniform set of ideas upon everybody, a rigid structure of dogmas. This does not mean that rabbinic thought admits no dogmas at all. But the dogmatic elements are few, and these few are of a sort that does not impede the operation of the value-complex as a whole.[116]

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[114] *The Rabbinic Mind*, p. 52.

[115] *The Rabbinic Mind*, pp. 189-190.

[116] *The Rabbinic Mind*, p. 5.

In summary, every value-concept has two essential characteristics:

1. It is organic and interdependent in character. A value-concept is what it is in relation to other value-concepts within the organismic complex. "All the organic concepts," Kadushin writes, "are integrated with one another, inextricably intertwine with each other."[117] It cannot be removed from its organismic complex—the relationship it shares with other value-concepts—without losing its meaning. Value-concepts are always part of a functioning system; they are not abstract ideas that can be dealt with objectively in a vacuum, but rather they are "the abiding elements of a man's character, the threads that make up the pattern of his personality."[118] Value-concepts cannot exist without an organismic complex, and an organismic complex cannot exist without value-concepts, and no value-concept can be entirely divided from another without changing its nature. "[T]he wholeness of the organic complex and the particularity of the individual organic concept are mutually interdependent."[119]
2. Its nature is realized in concretization, not definition. A value-concept "is a potent concept for it seldom remains abstract. The value concept is embodied most often in an act and we are then conscious of a concretization of the concept; we get an impression of definiteness, of concreteness, fully as strong as that of any sense experience."[120] Value-concepts function as a means by which a person can more fully experience an idea or event within the framework of his or her own experience. "When we see one man helping another," Kadushin writes, "that situation spells out to us *gemilut hasidim* [lovingkindness]; we interpret the situation and thus concretize the concept merely by having witnessed the event. Now, despite the idea element in it, this interpretation is not an intellectual act. The valuation here is warm and emotional, and this implies a degree of involvement, of participation on the part of the witness to the act."[121]

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[117] *Organic Thinking*, p. 184.

[118] *Organic Thinking*, p. 179.

[119] *Organic Thinking*, p. 184.

[120] *Worship and Ethics*, p. 23.

[121] *Worship and Ethics*, p. 24.

A value-concept is a term that creates a connection between a partly communicable understanding of the world and a specific event or idea. It charges events with meaning, and charges worldviews with relevance. It is a unifying force, a non-descriptive, connotative concept that connects the inner world of faith and reflection with the outer world of experience.

2.3 Kadushin's Defense of Rabbinic Methodology

Peter Ochs coined the term "aftermodern"[122] to refer to Kadushin's approach, which he also believes shares some characteristics in common with the approaches of a host of other thinkers, most notably[123] Martin Buber, Hermann Cohen, Emil Fackenheim, Mordecai Kaplan, and Franz Rosenzweig. Ochs identifies a five-point "pattern of inquiry"[124] which he believes to be held in common by Jewish aftermodern thinkers:

1. *"A personal conflict between traditionalism and modernity."* In Kadushin's case, this is reflected by the tensions within his grandfather's status as an Orthodox haskalah and, perhaps most tellingly, by his own decision to earn a secular degree in philosophy and literature at New York University at the same time he attended the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. Furthermore, both of Kadushin's mentors—Louis Ginzberg and Mordecai Kaplan—struggled with the tension between traditionalism and modernity.

2. *"A search for behavioral norms."* As a thinker on the Reconstructionist fringe of the Conservative Jewish movement, Kadushin was at the center of the debate over Jewish observance and the centrality of *halakha*.

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[122] *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind*, p. 166.

[123] ibid., pp. 167-169. Ochs also notes that Richard Sarason identifies Leo Baeck as an aftermodern, and that "None of the aftermoderns claims to be an aftermodern."

[124] ibid.

3. *"A sense that the rabbinic tradition does not provide reliable critical norms, and that the input of modern philosophy may be needed—tempered by suspicion regarding the relevance of modern philosophy to rabbinic thought."* Kadushin's interest in Whitehead, Dewey, and the philosophy of science reflects a growing focus on modern philosophy.

4. *"Disillusionment with modern philosophy."* This is reflected in Kadushin's early work, which cites philosophical works but questions the value of philosophy vis-à-vis rabbinic hermeneutics.

5. *"An awareness that Judaism provides its own critical norms and that external criticism is unnecessary."* Kadushin's system of value-concepts essentially establishes critical norms for rabbinic thought that are designed to be impervious to modernist critique.

Ochs' assessment of Kadushin as an aftermodern thinker has not been challenged in any substantial way, and seems to reflect a consensus view of sorts—and understandably so, as it corresponds with the broad outline of Kadushin's life and the priorities of his work. The Society for Textual Reasoning, which Ochs co-founded in 1991 as a Collaborative Project of the American Academy of Religion, functions as both a clearinghouse of Jewish historical-critical scholarship and as the current scholarly home base of those interested in studying the work of Kadushin and similar aftermodern scholars. As explained in the organization's Statement of Purpose:

> "Textual Reasoning" is the name a community of contemporary Jewish thinkers has given to its overlapping practices of Jewish philosophy and textual interpretation. The initial inspiration for the movement came from the confluence of postmodern philosophy, pragmatism, and cultural theory coupled with the dialogical and hermeneutical Jewish philosophies of Hermann Cohen, Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig and Emmanuel Levinas. This exploration led to a renewed appreciation for classical Jewish texts and rabbinic traditions of interpretation. In these materials textual reasoners have found dialogical and exegetical methods of thinking and rich textual resources for responding to some of the great challenges of contemporary life.
>
> Among these challenges are the intellectual and religious issues posed by the demise of the hegemonic principles of secular thought that came to guide the

> lives of so many European and American Jews up to the Shoah and the problem of how to create flourishing Jewish cultures in the Diaspora and Israel …
>
> In response to such questions and issues, "Textual Reasoners" seek to think through the traditional Jewish practices of reading and commentary. However, in response to profound concerns about the biases in exclusively traditional practices of reading, we have sought to extend the practice of reading by including contemporary critical methods that will help to re-evaluate and expand Judaism's past practices of reading. The result is that textual reasoning is at once a critical and constructive enterprise that endeavors to create new forms of Jewish thought and life that will respond to contemporary needs while being faithful to the fabric of Jewish traditions of text interpretation and philosophy.[125]

Beyond the hermeneutic dimension of Kadushin's philosophy, there is another element that further insulates his model of Judaism from the modernist challenge: his rejection of what he refers to as "the all-inclusive God-concept," and with it the burden of proving the existence of a freestanding metaphysical entity. As Kadushin writes:

> [T]he Rabbis' experience of God was unconfined by the restrictions of an all-inclusive concept yet at the same time coherent. It was not inchoate or "raw experience." Dependent on an organic complex of concepts, it rose into expression in particular concepts though an undercurrent in all. The values that attached to things and events in ordinary, every-day life, the concepts that gave these phenomena their coloring, were organic concepts or values. Accompanying each experience of value, a decisive shade in the coloring, as it were, was the experience of God.[126]

The scientific modernist critique of theism could be summed up by the well-known exchange between Napoleon and the astronomer Pierre-Simon Laplace, who remarked that "I have no need of that hypothesis."[127] Centuries later, Carl Sagan would echo this sentiment in his introduction to Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time* (Bantam, 1988):

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[125] From the *Journal of Textual Reasoning*, online edition. URL: http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/journals/tr/tr-purpose.html

[126] *Organic Thinking*, p. 230.

[127] Quoted ubiquitously, as in (for example) Francis Crick, *The Astonishing Hypothesis* (Simon and Schuster, 1994), p. 6.

> This is also a book about God ... or perhaps the absence of God. The word God fills these pages. Hawking embarks on a quest to answer Einstein's famous question about whether God had any choice in creating the universe. Hawking is attempting, as he explicitly states, to understand the mind of God. And this makes all the more unexpected the conclusion of the effort, at least so far: a universe with no edge in space, no beginning or end in time, and nothing for a Creator to do.[128]

Kadushin makes much the same assessment of the all-inclusive God-concept that Laplace and Sagan do—regarding it as irrelevant and superfluous—and does so without contradicting his personal belief in God. Kadushin has no need of the God-concept as a hypothesis; there is nothing for the subject of an all-inclusive God-concept to do. By drawing the attributes of God into an organic conceptual framework and denying the rabbinic validity of metaphysics, Kadushin dismisses the theism debate without sacrificing religious orthodoxy, and relegates theological attributes to a domain beyond the reach of philosophy. From a philosophical point of view, this rejection—which dismisses the assertion of philosophical theism, and subsequently dismisses its rebuttal—is the primary metaphysical attribute of his system: it includes God, but declines to assert theism and asserts, instead, the primary relevance of text, tradition, and lived experience.

The question of how well Kadushin accomplished his primary goal of explaining the coherence of rabbinic Judaism is, for the most part, beyond the scope of this thesis; the questions of where he fits within the non-sectarian disciplines of philosophy and religious studies, and how well his general system can be adapted in a manner that he had never fully explored, are of greater relevance. But the question of whether Kadushin succeeded at his intended goal provides, at the very least, some historical context to a more general discussion of his work.

Jacob Neusner, whose own work has focused on rabbinic textual interpretation, praises Kadushin's innovation and interdisciplinary relevance, but suggests, in his foreword to *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind*, that Kadushin failed in his intended objective:

> Among philosophically engaged colleagues, Kadushin quite justifiably retains more than antiquarian interest. For the study of religion, however, his ouevre marks only an experiment that failed. He asked the right question; his criticism of his

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[128] p. x.

> predecessors hit the mark. But in asking questions of coherence and logic, he denied that these questions could be answered; that is, I think, because he did not know how to answer them. He tried to cover everything all at once, even while correctly working through specific documents in concrete ways; it was, then, a failure of nerve. He wanted too much too soon, and he did not do the detailed work that would have yielded results commensurate to the inquiry: what holds the whole together is a question he never in the end answered at all, and the answers that he did give underlined his own failure.[129]

Earlier, in *Judaism in the Secular Age*, Neusner makes a more penetrating criticism of Kadushin's work:

> To face it squarely: in the period about which Kadushin writes, one cannot accurately say that the rabbi played the role Kadushin assigns to him, or that he did so for the reasons and in the ways Kadushin thinks. It is quite correct that in rabbinic Judaism, worship and ethics were very much a part of a culture, but that culture did not so much emerge from the masses as it was the creation and unique possession of the rabbinical academies ...
>
> Its norms were not ever popular to begin with. The masses of the Jews in Palestine and Babylonia, where the two Talmuds were produced which supposedly embody the folk-culture of the Jews as *refined* by their religious leaders, did not conform to the rabbinic value-system at all, if only because, for the most part, they were hardly exposed to it. They did not have so intimate a relationship with the rabbis. The rabbis were mainly teachers and judges of the law. They were also believed by many, including themselves, to possess extraordinary theurgical powers. They were thought to be men who could do miracles, cast an evil eye, or whose merit, through their knowledge of Torah or through their "pure" genealogy, was sufficient to bring rain, or to protect a city better than walls. Their influence over the people was, however, peripheral in many areas of life and important in only a few. Their direct influence, as one would expect, derived from their administration of the law. Yet in 3rd-century Babylonia, their courts were able to deal effectively only with those parts of the law which involved civil litigation, exchanges of property of all kinds, and matters of personal status in which property-exchange took place ...
>
> So when one speaks, as does Kadushin, of how the rabbis gave form to the value-concepts of a folk, he refers perhaps to later periods, but not to the period in which rabbinic Judaism itself took shape and with which Kadushin is specifically concerned ... The academy, like the monastery, was not merely a place where the ideals of the common faith were realised in an intensified form, but where some quite different ideals were cultivated and exemplified from those in the towns and villages ...

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[129] *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind*, p. xv.

> What became the theological norm was not the folk norm when it was in formation. It did not embody popular but rather academic values. It did not express the aspirations of the people, who had to be cajoled, intimidated, and, when possible, forced to conform to what the rabbis desired. This is true of law *and* of ethics in Jewish society in Talmudic times.[130]

This is completely contrary to Kadushin's own assessment of the rabbinic role during the Talmudic period:

> Rabbinic haggadic literature represents an inter-action between the life of the people and the creators of literature to a degree unknown today. The concepts which gave meaning to and determined the moment-to-moment experience of the people were the subject of discourses by the Rabbis delivered before the masses. Exemplified by illustrations from history and from their own times, refined by distinctions carefully drawn, applied to the situations of daily life and prefiguring a vision of the future, these concepts as taught by the Rabbis were but a literary—or oral—extension of the values held by the masses, and of untold effect upon the direction taken by the latter.[131]

Kadushin was well aware of the fact that the academies existed, of course, but he describes them as existing in relationship with the community—not separate from it:

> The great academies not only handed down the learning of the past, they promoted interchange of views and opinions among the mature scholars; and these creative discussions served to train the younger disciples, who were allowed to put questions and even to venture opinions. And yet, despite the fact that the Rabbis "spent more time in the *Bet ha-Midrash* (the academy) than beyond its walls," they were not a cloistered group and not a professional class ... [T]he Rabbis were bound up with the life of the people as a whole, and members of every economic

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[130] p. 101-103. In *The Political Consequences of Thinking* (1997), political scientist and gender theorist Jennifer Ring has made similar criticisms of Kadushin's definition of "rabbinic"—suggesting (p. 209) that his assessment of power dynamics in the Talmudic era may be naive: "There is an assumption that the Torah is open to interpretation not only by experts, the rabbis, but by any Jew who gives it serious thought, even the simplest person. The indeterminateness or the inconclusiveness of the boundaries of the Torah implies a dialectical relationship between the divine authority of the Torah and its interpreters. Theoretically, the authority of interpretation is available to all Jews. However, I suspect more problems than Kadushin acknowledges in legitimating Talmudic interpretation. It would seem to involve a question of the politics of the authority of Judaism: who belongs to the priesthood?" I have discussed Ring's critique in greater detail in chapter 5.

[131] *Organic Thinking*, p. 188.

> group were to be found among them. Ginzberg has noticed that "more than one hundred scholars mentioned in the Talmud were artisans, a considerable number were tradesmen, and others were physicians or followed various professions." Some of the greatest Rabbis made their living with their hands—Hillel was a carpenter, Joshua b. Hananiah a smith, Johanan a shoemaker. Such men were representative of the folk, albeit of the folk at its best. By the same token, the value-concepts embodied in their teachings were the value-concepts of the folk. That is why Haggadah was an extension of the use of the value-concepts in ordinary social intercourse.[132]

In comparing Kadushin's body of work with Neusner's, it is very clear that Kadushin's is based on a much smaller sample of rabbinic material. Kadushin had already formed the fundamental outlines of his philosophy, including identification of the four "fundamental concepts," in his *Theology of the Seder Eliahu*, a commentary he began to write during his twenties—and a commentary that focuses on a single text at that. The argument could be made that a holistic, organismic philosophy would reward this sort of approach—that by studying one text, he was in fact studying Judaism in microcosm—but the claim that the entire rabbinic corpus would produce the conclusions Kadushin reached after his own limited study is extraordinary, and Kadushin produces very little evidence to support its rabbinic universality.

But it is also very likely that Kadushin felt that he had no choice but to commit to a philosophy early in his career, before conducting the sort of exhaustive study that Neusner suggests. Kadushin had been working to come out from under the shadow of Kaplan, who quite literally felt that the survival of Judaism was in his hands. While Kadushin's philosophy does not suggest the same sense of urgency, the emotional resonance of participating in a radical program to reconstruct Judaism and ensure its survival would have forced him to either submit to, or overcome, the sense that the rabbinic tradition was drawing to a close. This would have been no time for Kadushin to begin a slow, painstaking, multi-decade process of textual analysis, even if that was the methodology that would have best served his goals.

It's also reasonable to ask if historical accuracy is germane to Kadushin's main thesis. The question of whether the system of value-concepts originated within the larger

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[132] *The Rabbinic Mind*, pp. 85-86.

Jewish lay community or within the smaller Jewish academic community is important for many reasons,[133] but in either case, the texts with which we are left are the same—and, separated from these communities by two thousand years, we are unable to call upon them to assist us in interpreting them. As Peter Ochs notes in *Textual Reasonings*, "Kadushin was misinterpreted by rabbinic historians because they mistook his pragmatic historiography[134] for an unwarranted variety of plain-sense reasoning."[135] It is quite possible that, by prioritizing the historical accuracy of Kadushin's model of rabbinic life as if it were a primary hermeneutic concern today, we would be making a similar mistake.

In addition to the problem of scope, identified by Neusner, Max Kadushin's son, psychologist Charles Kadushin, identifies a problem of methodology that may have limited the practical adaptability of his father's work:

> The Kadushin enterprise was ... not the creation of a new theology or even the explication of an old one. Rather, the aim was to create "thick text" anthropological and psychological accounts of phenomena some of which were two thousand years old ... He analyzed and described but not, as theology would have it, prescribed ... This was both his strength and his limitation. Culture, but especially religion—to the extent that the Rabbinic cultural system fits the rubric of religion—is prescriptive in its very essence. But no social science account can be prescriptive or it loses much of its validity. On the other hand, theology and "religion" seek prescription, and Kadushin offered none. This is the real source of the difficulty of

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[133] In part because it highlights issues of power that Kadushin does not directly address, as noted in chapter 5.

[134] The term "pragmatic historiography," coined by Peter Ochs to describe the hermeneutic approach of David Halivni, represents (*Textual Reasonings*, p. 121) "a historiography that begins where the plain-sense evidence leaves off. Its first dictum is 'never to contradict the plain-sense,' alluding to the rabbinic dictum *eyn hamikre yotse m'dei peshuto*, 'the text must not be led outside the bounds of its plain-sense.' The midrashist composes texts that ask the Bible's plain sense to answer questions that are not necessarily before the text, but which are consistent with its use. Analogously, the pragmatic historiographer asks the documentary evidence to answer questions about the past that we cannot answer incontrovertibly, *but which are consistent with the evidence and which a given community of enquirers demands that we must answer if we are to put our text scholarship to the ends for which we have produced it*. Pragmatic historiography's second dictum is therefore *al tifrosh min ha-tsibbur*, in the sense of 'never to ignore the needs of the community,' which is also 'never to forget that the texts make demands on us at the same time that we ask questions of them.'"

[135] p. 139.

> his oeuvre and a reason it perhaps did not attain the recognition Kadushin hoped it would.[136]

This, too, is a flaw that makes biographical sense. Kadushin was, to an exceptional degree, a product of both hyper-secularism and hyper-orthodoxy; there was never a point in his early life during which this tension was resolved, as his two mentors in rabbinical school were the ultra-secular Mordecai Kaplan and the ultra-traditional Louis Ginzberg. Furthermore, while training to become a rabbi, he married an established secular psychologist, Evelyn Garfiel. That Kadushin would attempt to apply unwieldy secular methods to answer a religious question, or vice versa, makes perfect sense within the context of his life story.

It's reasonable to ask why Kadushin, if his work is of such great potential importance, has received so little relative interest from scholars. Steinberg identified Kadushin's unusual organizational style as a culprit, writing that:

> One of the problems encountered in studying Kadushin is that, although his books are carefully written and closely argued, the contents are very technical, often repetitive, not clearly organized and, therefore, difficult to read. Certain of his major ideas are not presented in a fullblown, systematic fashion in any single place, but important aspects are interspersed here and there in connection with other topics.[137]

Ochs, too, acknowledges Kadushin's limitations as a writer:

> Kadushin's books are difficult to read; their conclusions have therefore failed to receive the public attention they merit.[138]

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[136] Charles Kadushin, "Max Kadushin's 'System,'" published in most of the Bloch reprints of Kadushin's work, including *Theology of Seder Eliahu*, pp. xxii-xxiii.

[137] *Max Kadushin*, p. 23.

[138] "FORWARD" in the Postmodern Jewish Philosophy Bitnetwork, volume 1, number 1, February 1991. Available online. URL: http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/journals/tr/archive/pmjp/pmjp1_1.html

But religious studies, like art, is a discipline in which a radically innovative effort that fails, if made with determination and in good faith, can be a more fruitful topic of scholarly inquiry than a less innovative effort that succeeds. As Neusner writes:

> [F]or the sheer wit and intelligence, the effort, and the courage and the nobility of the enterprise as he undertook to realize it, Kadushin stands pretty much all by himself. He is the only scholar who has forthrightly and articulately asked the theological question of Judaism in the correct, academic mode. He is the only scholar who has undertaken to set forth a well-crafted method. And he is the only scholar who has provided sustained and well-articulated results ... Kadushin stood quite alone in his time ... When we consider that Max Kadushin never held a full-time professorship but earned his living in other ways, we realize the opportunities denied him but lavished on us. All the more reason to appreciate his legacy and to honor and respect his intellectual heritage—but also to try to be worthy of the opportunities that our generation, uniquely in the history of Jewish learning, now enjoys.[139]

Nor does the relative accuracy of Kadushin's work, in dealing with specific questions of interpretation relative to the specific context of the rabbinic tradition, speak to its accuracy or applicability when used to answer different questions of a less contextual and sectarian nature. It is to those questions, largely unexplored until now, that the remainder of this thesis is addressed.

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[139] *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind*, pp. xv-xvi.

Chapter 3: Kadushin as Philosophical Hermeneuticist

3.1 The Reluctant Philosopher

Assessing Max Kadushin as a philosopher presents several practical difficulties. Kadushin did not personally identify as a philosopher, but his definition of philosophy was too metaphysical, and his ideas too clearly hermeneutic in character, to make his identity as a non-philosopher stick. It would be more precise to say that he was not a metaphysician, and that he felt that his identity as a non-metaphysician disqualified him from identifying himself as a philosopher. "[W]hat Kadushin, derisively, called a philosopher," George Lindbeck writes,[140] is "someone who thinks that second-order redescriptions can communicate the essence of a religion better than its ordinary scriptures, teachings, liturgies, and practices." For Kadushin, who emphasized lived experience and the organic character of the Jewish faith, such abstraction would have held very little appeal. By the standards of his time, he may have correctly described the most common definition of the word "philosophy"—but a reassessment of his work from a historical philosophical perspective shows that his work has some relevance to the discipline, his protests to the contrary notwithstanding.

Before proceeding further, it is important to distinguish rabbinic Judaism as Kadushin defined it, which refers primarily to the pre-medieval corpus of rabbinic literature and later material that he assesses to be in the same spirit, and the medieval scholastic tradition, which Kadushin felt to be excessively philosophical and, subsequently, regressive:

> How far medieval Jewish philosophers diverged from rabbinic theology can be gaged from the fact that they strove to formulate an all-inclusive God-concept.

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[140] "Martin Luther and the Rabbinic Mind" in *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind*, p. 156. Lindbeck goes on to say (on p. 161) that "By [philosophy] [Kadushin] referred to a tendency, beginning with the Greeks and climaxing in the Enlightenment, to regard systematically organized defined ideas as the best way of conveying the constitutive or essential features of any phenomenon whatsoever: rabbinic Judaism, Luther's understanding of Christianity, galaxies or quarks. In the case of the rabbis, interpreters have to force rabbinic thought into categories imported from the outside, usually from philosophers such as Aristotle or Kant."

> Believing that this philosophical God-concept was to be found in Jewish tradition, they attempted to bring the Jewish traditional concepts into harmony with philosophical concepts. That they did not succeed is evidenced by the artificiality and arbitrariness of their allegorical method ... To inject an organic concept into a nicely formulated philosophical system without changing the character of the former is an impossible feat. In attempting this very thing, medieval Jewish philosophers were bound either to do violence to do the rabbinic concepts or else to be inconsistent.[141]

Kadushin's son, Charles Kadushin, hints at the clean distinction his father drew between philosophy and the social sciences when he writes that "Kadushin's models were always social science, not philosophy."[142] And Mordecai Kaplan also noticed that Kadushin had begun to see organic thinking as a decidedly non-philosophical line of inquiry:

> ...[T]he worst of it is that [Kadushin] has become so "hipped" on "organismic" thinking that organized logical thinking is to him an inferior and artificial sort of thinking.[143]

In his review of *Worship and Ethics*, Brandeis professor Marvin Fox took issue with Kadushin's definition of philosophical inquiry, and his characterization of it as non-rabbinic:

> [P]hilosophic ideas and the techniques of logical argument and analysis are by no means the exclusive property of technical philosophers. Such ideas and techniques are to be found in every literature which concerns itself—as the rabbinic tradition does—with the ultimate questions. Dr. Kadushin, however, is determined to deny even these rudiments of philosophic method to the rabbis.
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> Thus Kadushin asserts categorically that "a rabbinic text is always misconstrued when given a philosophical interpretation"—a statement which surely deserves a prize for sheer dogmatism and one which would seem to indict the work of scholars ranging from Philo to Maimonides to Hermann Cohen.
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> [A] man in the act of prayer may find himself directed toward a metaphysical

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[141] *The Rabbinic Mind*, p. 235.

[142] *Theology of Seder Eliahu*, p. xxii, quoted from Charles Kadushin's essay "Max Kadushin's 'System,'" reprinted therein and elsewhere.

[143] *Communings of the Spirit*, p. 521.

> insight into some aspect of divinity. To deny religious legitimacy to what could be styled a "philosophic" response of this kind is to read out of the tradition some of our greatest spirits and to impoverish rabbinic theology beyond recognition.[144]

Why did Kadushin feel the need to imply a dichotomy between organic thinking and philosophical thinking, especially given the degree to which his own system depended on the organismically-centered but professedly philosophical work of Alfred North Whitehead, William James, Charles Peirce, and John Dewey? Some of this distinction could, no doubt, be traced to the many conversations between Kadushin and his mentor Kaplan that inspired the critical journal entry—conversations after which Kadushin would have presumably felt it necessary to clarify that he was conducting a very different sort of work.

But Kadushin was also the victim of unfortunate timing; his first major philosophical work was published in 1938, at a time in the history of philosophy when rigid analytical traditions such as logical positivism were on the rise, culminating in the publication of A.J. Ayer's *Language, Truth, and Logic* in 1936. Judging by his characterization of philosophy in *The Rabbinic Mind*, he often felt that philosophy implicitly leveled strong criticisms against his own hermeneutic efforts, and the rabbinic tradition to which he applied them, that would have been at least as formidable as his criticism of philosophy:

> Particularly since the Middle Ages, thinkers have worked to achieve an integrated philosophy, a system of ideas compelling assent by the force of its logic. Many thinkers today have a similar ideal, and they would doubtless stigmatize value-concepts answering to our description as nothing but naïve, unsophisticated ideas.[145]

Kadushin attributed this tendency to the fact that philosophy tends to reward individualistic ratiocination, an approach that he seems to argue rejects common sense, and the collective wisdom of tradition, to an impractically rigid extent:

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[144] "Moral Reason," *Commentary* (December 1964), pp. 78-82.

[145] pp. 5-6.

> In any philosophical or ethical system, indeed, in any system of thought devised by an individual, the ideas must be marshaled in a logical, hierarchical order, with the validity of the system regarded as dependent, in large part, on the tightness of its logic. Such systems, requiring tremendous mental effort and concentration, never were, and could not be, guides in daily conduct for most men, not even for philosophers in their off-moments.[146]

Philosophy, in Kadushin's vocabulary, refers to a way of thinking that would reject both the fruits and the methodology of the rabbinic tradition—and would fail to create the necessary impact on the lives of individual Jews. For Kadushin, this makes it an unacceptable methodology for dealing with socially complex religious questions:

> Instead of examining the sphere of religion in the light of philosophy, we must do exactly the opposite. There can be no real amalgam of philosophy and religion, no sound philosophy *of* religion, for the reason that in any philosophical system all the ideas are related to each other in tight logical sequence whereas religious concepts are organismic, non-logical. A religious complex of concepts therefore cannot be made part and parcel of a philosophical system. Apparent similarities between religion and philosophy are only verbal similarities. The organic experience of God, we shall learn, has nothing in common with philosophical concepts of God.[147]

Kadushin's definition of a philosophical system as "a system of ideas compelling assent by the force of its logic" is defensible, but was not universally held even at the time—and, most curiously, it was not entirely shared by the secular philosophers whose work most directly influenced Kadushin's system. "The chief danger to philosophy," Alfred North Whitehead writes in the final chapter of his *Process and Reality* (1929), "is narrowness in the selection of evidence." He proceeds to a defense of a philosophy that takes seriously the organic traditions of "religious systems," writing that "sheer contempt betokens blindness": "Philosophy may not neglect the multifariousness of the world—the fairies dance, and Christ is nailed to the cross."[148] And William James, whom Kadushin quotes in the very first sentence of *Organic Thinking*,[149] argues in his *Pragmatism* (1907) that "the

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[146] *The Rabbinic Mind*, pp. 31-32.

[147] *Organic Thinking*, p. xxvi.

[148] pp. 512-513.

[149] p. 1.

philosophy which is so important in each of us is not a technical matter; it is our more or less dumb sense of what life honestly and deeply means."[150] Charles Peirce defines philosophy as "an experimental science, resting on that experience which is common to us all ... where elaborate deduction is of no more avail than it is in chemistry or biology."[151] And John Dewey had an especially broad definition of philosophy, writing that "[a]ny person who is open-minded and sensitive to new perceptions, and who has concentration and responsibility in connecting them has, in so far, a philosophic disposition."[152] Kadushin clearly did not inherit his narrow definition of secular philosophy from the contemporaneous secular philosophers who had most directly influenced him.

But Kadushin's strict definition of philosophy was not especially eccentric by the standards of his time, and the relationship he suggests between philosophical and religious methods finds a precedent in the work of classicist and anthropologist Francis Macdonald Cornford. The list of Kadushin's principal sources assembled by Theodore Steinberg, and cited in *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind*,[153] includes Whitehead, James, Peirce, and Dewey—but it also includes Cornford's *From Religion to Philosophy: A Study in the Origins of Western Speculation* (1912), which suggests that philosophy represents a point of clear methodological transition from the religious traditions that precede it. Cornford

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[150] p. 11.

[151] *Philosophy of Mathematics: Selected Writings*, p. 201. While Peirce's famous statement that "Logic is rooted in the social principle" (*Philosophy of Peirce: Selected Writings* (1940), p. 162) was intended to be a statement about ethical goals, not scientific methodology, his discussion of beliefs, habits, judgments, and leading principles (see "What is a Leading Principle?" in *Philosophy of Peirce*, especially pp. 129-130) acknowledges the role that biology and social conditioning play in individual logic.

[152] *Democracy and Education*, p. 380. Dewey was especially keen on the idea of integrating the social sciences, and other perspectives not ordinarily associated with Western philosophy, into philosophy as a discipline. "It is my conviction," Dewey writes (Adams and Montague, *Contemporary American Philosophy: Personal Statements* (1930), pp. 25-26), "that a great deal of our philosophizing needs to be done over again from [a social sciences-oriented] point of view, and that there will ultimately result an integrated synthesis in philosophy congruous with modern science and related to actual needs in education, morals, and religion ... Intellectual prophecy is dangerous; but if I read the cultural signs of the times aright, the next synthetic movement in philosophy will emerge when the significance of the social sciences and arts has become an object of reflective attention in the same way that mathematical and physical sciences have been made the objects of thought in the past, and when their full import is grasped ... In any case, I think it shows a deplorable deadness of imagination to suppose that philosophy will indefinitely revolve within the scope of the problems and systems that two thousand years of European history have bequeathed to us."

[153] pp. 237-238.

even goes so far as to suggest that philosophy inherits its value-concepts from religion, and then clarifies and demythologizes them:

> The words, Religion and Philosophy, perhaps suggest to most people two different provinces of thought ... It is, however, also possible to think of them as two successive phases, or modes, of the expression of man's feelings and beliefs about the world ... There is a real continuity between the earliest rational speculation and the religious representations that lay behind it ... Philosophy inherited from religion certain great conceptions—for instance, the ideas of "God, "Soul," "Destiny," "Law"—which continued to circumscribe the movements of rational thought and to determine their main directions. Religion expresses itself in poetical symbols and in terms of mythical personalities; Philosophy prefers the language of dry abstraction, and speaks of *substance*, *cause*, *matter*, and so forth. But the outward difference only disguises an inward and substantial affinity between these two successive products of the same consciousness. The modes of thought that attain to clear definition and explicit statement in philosophy were already implicit in the unreasoned intuitions of mythology.[154]

Kadushin never indicates the degree to which Cornford's distinction between philosophy and religion may have influenced his own,[155] but the parallels between their two systems are clear. Cornford, for example, makes the argument that Anaximander "is more purely rational than many of his successors" because in the work of these successors, "mythical associations and implications [contained within key Greek values], which [Anaximander] has expurgated, emerge again."[156] Kadushin concludes *Organic Thinking* by making his only direct reference to Mordecai Kaplan,[157] his mentor and rival, directly citing Kaplan's concept of reinterpretation as discussed in the relevant chapter of *Judaism as a Civilization* (1934), in which Kaplan explicitly applies the process of demythologization to Jewish value-concepts (emphasis his):

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[154] p. vii.

[155] Kadushin cites Cornford's work in his own discussion of Greco-Roman mystery cults on p. 181 of *Worship and Ethics*, but otherwise has nothing to say in his published work about *From Religion to Philosophy*—but the book's presence in the Steinberg bibliography suggests that Kadushin was very familiar with its content and, as the lone Mordecai Kaplan citation illustrates, the fact that Kadushin has infrequently cited a given thinker does not mean that he was not profoundly influenced by that thinker's work.

[156] p. 65.

[157] p. 261.

> The ideas expressed in the ancient Jewish literature, and the institutions that have become identified with Jewish life, should be regarded as attempts to express in terms of beliefs and practices the needs and desiderata of a fuller life than man had been able to attain ... Functional reinterpretation is concerned with man's yearning to find himself in a universe that is friendly to his highest purpose, to fulfill his most valued potentialities of his nature and to achieve a social order that is founded on justice and peace ... *This type of interpretation consists chiefly in disengaging from the mass of traditional lore and custom the psychological aspect which testifies to the presence of ethical and spiritual strivings.*[158]

This is consistent with the goals of contemporaneous analytical philosophers such as Ayer, who held that propositions lacking literal significance also lack meaning.[159] But for Kadushin's part, the organismic complex begins where literal significance ends:

> The rabbinic interpretation of the Bible is in a completely different universe of discourse. When the Rabbis depart from the literal meaning and offer their own interpretations, what do these interpretations contain? They contain rabbinic value-concepts, concepts shared by the learned and ignorant alike, concepts common to all the people. It is because these rabbinic concepts differ so radically from philosophic concepts that rabbinic interpretation is so radically different from figurative interpretation.[160]

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[158] pp. 388-390.

[159] See *Language, Truth, and Logic*, pp. 35, 36, 43, et. al. In *The Problem of Knowledge* (p. 235), Ayer uses an organic metaphor in which he more explicitly rejects, at least in part, the idea of value-concepts: "[T]he language which different people seem to share consists, as it were," he writes, "of flesh and bones. The bones represent its public aspect; they serve alike for all. But each of us puts flesh upon them in accordance with the character of his experiences. Whether one person's way of clothing the skeleton is or is not the same as another's is an unanswerable question. The only thing that we can satisfied about is the identity of the bones."

[160] *The Rabbinic Mind*, p. 107.

Kadushin did have a place in his system for concepts—cognitive concepts[161] and defined concepts[162]—that convey meaning in a more literal way, but they function as framing devices to illustrate what value-concepts are not. In order for a concept to constitute a value-concept, it must embrace the sort of vagueness that, in Ayer's universe ideas, would have characterized a concept as nonsense.[163] For Kadushin, a value-concept must—in its purely abstract form—lack clarity:

> The value concept does not stand for any concrete object or relationship that is conveyed to us through our senses [and] ... The abstract value concept ... is in rabbinic literature is never given a definition ... A term that is not made explicit, either through sensory experience or through a definition, can only be connotative, suggestive. The abstract value concept is therefore merely connotative or suggestive. Nevertheless, it is a potent concept for it seldom remains abstract. The value concept is embodied most often in an act and we are then conscious of a concretization of the concept ... Indeed, the value concept has unified the details of

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[161] In Kadushin's system, a cognitive concept conveys concrete human experience (specifically, perception), but is not a value-concept because it is denotative and lacks intrinsic valuational significance. "The cognitive concepts refer to objective matters, such as 'table,' 'chair,' 'tall,' 'round,' and are therefore denotative whereas the value-concepts ... [are] only connotative" (*The Rabbinic* Mind*,* p. 51). The practical function of cognitive concepts in Kadushin's philosophy is that they give him the opportunity to clarify that his theory of value-concepts is not a linguistic theory. Introduced in *The Rabbinic Mind* (1952), the idea of a cognitive concept is identified (pp. 50-51) as a nod to linguist Grace de Laguna's theory of language as expressed in *Speech: Its Function and Development* (1927), discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. Kadushin essentially concedes that, in de Laguna's words, "the world we see through [words] is *patternized* to our earliest view," that "[h]uman speech is *conceptualized* to an indefinite degree," and that "[t]he world of each of us is not completely objectified, but retains a privacy which is inexpressible to ourselves and incommunicable to others" (*Speech,* p. 290)—characteristics that value-concepts hold in common with some models of ordinary speech. But for Kadushin, the distinction rests in the fact that cognitive concepts "refer to ... factors which, because they are definite, objective, are also discrete ... do not yield significance" (*The Rabbinic Mind*, p. 110).

[162] According to Kadushin, all fully-developed conceptual terms fall into three categories: value-concepts, cognitive concepts, and defined concepts. While value-concepts and cognitive concepts represent a fluent connection between the individual mind and direct experience, defined concepts are the result of abstraction. "When a concept is defined," Kadushin writes in *The Rabbinic Mind* (p. 46), "it is really the definition that performs the functions of abstraction and classification, and hence the conceptual term is of only secondary importance. It may be discarded for another symbol considered more adequate, it may be redefined and so change its meaning as happens not infrequently in the science of psychology, and it may even be an ephemeral term for which there are many alternatives as often happens in philosophy."

[163] *Language, Truth, and Logic*, pp. 118-119: "If a mystic admits that the object of his vision is something which cannot be described, then he must also admit that he is bound to talk nonsense when he describes it ... [I]f [his intuitions] are not logical, they must either be dismissed as metaphysical, or made the subject of an empirical enquiry."

sense experience into an act or situation.[164]

This would have been a hard sell in an era when analytical philosophy and logical positivism demonstrated considerable influence, both within and outside of their respective traditions. One can imagine George Santayana's famous criticism of William James' pragmatism, for example, being equally applicable to Kadushin's postcritical approach to religious concepts: "Believe, certainly; we cannot help believing," Santayana writes, "but believe rationally, holding what seems certain for certain, what seems probable for probable, what seems desirable for desirable, and what seems false for false."[165]

Both Cornford and Kadushin describe a situation in which religion has created a world of fundamental implicit and explicit values represented by key words and phrases, and in which the goal of philosophers is to reinterpret these key words and phrases, strip them of their non-rational elements, and organize them into a clear, hierarchical, internally consistent system.[166] They differ only with respect to the question of whether this is an achievable and worthwhile goal. In Cornford's *From Religion to Philosophy*, the religion is Greek mythology and the philosophical tradition is Greek philosophy; in Kadushin's work, the religion is rabbinic Judaism and the philosophical tradition is contemporaneously represented by his mentor Mordecai Kaplan. Cornford and Kadushin represent different sides of this methodological divide, but both share the same view that religion constructs values that are then reconstructed by a secular, rational, and hierarchical process of philosophical reinterpretation. And in order for Kadushin to truly

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[164] *Worship and Ethics*, p. 23.

[165] *The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy* (1911), p. 60.

[166] But where Cornford presents this as progressive, with philosophy representing a more advanced form of thought, Kadushin does not. His view seems closer to that of contemporary religious philosopher Ben-Ami Scharfstein, who writes (in *A Comparative History of World Philosophy*, p. 2): "In keeping with the original meaning of the term *philosophy*, *love of wisdom*, philosophers, one supposes, have wanted to be wise, yet experience has taught that there is no good reason to think that they are necessarily so except, circularly, by their own definitions, and no good reason to think that nonphilosophers cannot be equally wise, that is, perceptive, farsighted, and sagacious, in the ways that their particular lives have taught them. Nor is there any good reason to suppose that traditions that are not philosophical by the definition I have adopted have not had their own depth of sophistication and practical intelligence (which is implicitly also theoretical)."

be, in his own words, "an unreconstructed partisan of tradition,"[167] he would need to reject that effort to demythologize by reinterpretation—rejecting not only the prevailing conclusions of secular philosophy, but also what he understood to be its fundamental goals. By accepting an uncommonly narrow definition of philosophy, Kadushin distanced his work from that of secular philosophers who did not share his objectives or his sympathies—and further clarified the differences between his goals and those of his mentor.

Judging by the secondary literature written about Max Kadushin, he is clearly regarded as a philosopher by most scholars today. In fact, despite his claims to the contrary, it is his work's tendencies towards philosophy that have generated the most criticism. Jacob Neusner remarked that Max Kadushin's biggest flaw was that he was, if anything, *too much* of a philosopher—that he "took a philosophical route to the solution of what is, to begin with, a literary problem..."[168] And Marvin Fox's scathing assessment[169] of *Worship and Ethics* (1964) essentially states that if Kadushin had steered clear of philosophy, he would have produced a more useful body of work:

> Dr. Kadushin is not content to remain within the field of rabbinic scholarship, where his erudition and command are considerable; he also strays into the realm of speculation to develop a theory concerning the peculiar character of rabbinic value-concepts. And in expanding this theory, he frequently relies on unsound and ill-founded arguments ...
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> [T]he most telling rebuttal of Dr. Kadushin's view is to be found finally in the fact that he himself is constrained to use philosophic terminology in explaining rabbinic teaching.[170] Is not that very "doctrine of the immanence of God" (which he finds was unacceptable to the rabbis) a philosophic construct? Or does Dr.

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[167] Quoted in *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind*, p. 7.

[168] *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind*, p. xiv.

[169] "Moral Reason," *Commentary* (December 1964), pp. 78-82.

[170] One subtle difference between Neusner's critique and that of Fox: Neusner argues that Kadushin asks the correct questions (stating on p. xv that he was, in fact, "the only scholar who has forthrightly and articulately asked the theological question of Judaism in the correct, academic mode") but answers them in an excessively philosophical way, while Fox takes issue with the fact that Kadushin "strays into the ream of speculation to develop a theory"—that he, in other words, asks the wrong questions. Neusner clearly admires Kadushin's goals, but takes issue with his methodology; Fox takes issues with both Kadushin's goals and his methodology.

> Kadushin perhaps believe that philosophic elements are to be found only in what the rabbis rejected and not what they affirmed?[171] ... Where we do find philosophic ideas in rabbinic theology, Dr. Kadushin seems to be suggesting here, they are of no importance because they are not effective in religious experience.[172]

For my part, I tend to share Wittgenstein's view that disagreements over the meaning of the word "philosophy," as such, do not themselves constitute a philosophical or substantively metaphilosophical dispute.[173] A definition of philosophy that excludes the social element

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[171] In Kadushin's defense, this is *exactly* what he meant: that the rabbinic tradition did not absorb the doctrine because it was too philosophical to fit within the organismic complex. Kadushin never suggested that the rabbis lacked the intellectual capacity to construct didactic theological doctrines; only that these doctrines were not meaningfully represented in rabbinic literature, and do not fall within the framework of the normal valuational life. Fox appears to have taken offense at Kadushin's glib, single-paragraph discussion of the doctrine on page 181 of *Worship and Ethics*: "It is almost unnecessary, by now," Kadushin writes, "to point out that all such ideas are contradicted by the experience of normal mysticism, and indeed, by that of *gilluy Shekinah* as well." Fox clearly did not feel this controversial statement to be "almost unnecessary ... to point out," but Kadushin had already written a lengthier rebuttal of what he would characterize as non-rabbinic philosophical doctrines in chapter 6 ("Rabbinic Dogma") of *The Rabbinic Mind*. Fox does not appear to be familiar with this chapter, as he suggests as an ostensible *reductio ad absurdum* that Kadushin's work "would seem to indict the work of scholars ranging from Philo to Maimonides to Hermann Cohen" (p. 80); Kadushin *does* in fact argue in chapter 7 of *The Rabbinic Mind* that Maimonides' thought is philosophical rather than rabbinic, and uses this as the centerpiece of his distinction between theological doctrines, such as the doctrine of the immanence of God cited by Fox, and the less explicit belief traditions of the rabbis. "Once more," he writes on page 341, "we must distinguish between the philosophic approach and the rabbinic approach. Maimonides devotes the first four of his Thirteen Articles of Faith to the dogmas of the existence and incorporeality of God ... But even the phrase, 'the existence of God,' a phrase so characteristic of the approach of Maimonides and other philosophers, is not to be found in rabbinic literature. Normal mysticism does not call for a systematic demonstration of God's existence." Fox was not exactly wrong to criticize Kadushin on grounds of vagueness—he was reviewing *Worship and Ethics*, not Kadushin's entire body of work—but this lack of context weakens Fox's argument, and appears at times to lead him astray in his general assessment of Kadushin's philosophy.

[172] Fox proceeds to ask "But what precisely does he mean by religious experience?...," then critiques a single-sentence definition taken out of context from *Worship and Ethics* by asking a series of rhetorical questions that are answered clearly in the 79-page chapter 6 ("Normal Mysticism") of *The Rabbinic Mind*. Both Kadushin and Fox are at fault: Kadushin for assuming that readers would have been familiar with his prior work (thereby glossing over challenging ideas that warranted detailed discussion, or at least a footnote citing a more detailed discussion), Fox for making general criticisms of a philosophical system that he had not adequately researched. In their defense, *Worship and Ethics* was the last of Kadushin's three major philosophical volumes, and the one least amenable to a freestanding assessment.

[173] *Philosophical Investigations*, p. cxxxi: "One might think: if philosophy speaks of the use of the word 'philosophy,' there must be a second-order philosophy. But that's not the way it is; it is, rather, like the case of orthography, which deals with the word 'orthography' among others without them being second order."

and context-specific theories, as Kadushin's does,[174] is so narrow as to exclude an unfeasibly large part of the Western canon and would therefore be of little practical use for purposes of a chapter that attempts, as this one does, to examine his relevance to that canon. But this does not mean that it did not serve a purpose; Kadushin's skepticism towards the discipline of philosophy establishes Jewish tradition and the normal valuational life as his touchstones, and clearly distinguishes his goals from those of natural theology and religious apologetics.

3.2 The Philosophy of Organism

Kadushin was very clear in his self-assessment as a non-philosopher, but—boldly, perhaps paradoxically—had no qualms about incorporating secular philosophical influences into his system of thought. The four secular philosophers who appear to have most directly influenced Kadushin's work[175] were Alfred North Whitehead, William James, Charles S. Peirce, and John Dewey. All were American philosophers, and all have been tied, in some

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[174] And as many others do. Stephen Hicks makes the same claim of postmodernism (and much of the Western canon leading up to postmodernism) in *Explaining Postmodernism*, arguing (p. 73) that "[t]he meaninglessness of philosophy's traditional questions means that we must recast philosophy's function" because "[p]hilosophy is not a content discipline but a method discipline." Narrow definitions of philosophy sometimes also exclude ideas that are grounded in religious tradition, as a matter of principle; see for example "Why Descartes is Not a Philosopher" (published in Brendan Sweetman's *The Failure of Modernism*), in which Peter Redpath makes the interesting claim that René Descartes practiced "secularized theology" (p. 10) rather than philosophy. And ideas that are written in reaction to other ideas, rather than formulated independently, are also sometimes characterized as unphilosophical; in his *Critique of Religion and Philosophy* (p. 26), Walter Kaufmann describes what has subsequently become a mainstream view that existentialism is more of a mood than a system—"not a philosophy, but a label for several different revolts against traditional philosophy."

[175] Kadushin also cites Henri Bergson, as noted by Ochs (*Understanding the Rabbinic Mind*, p. 173), but his discussion of same is brief, highly critical, and mildly sarcastic; it may be a bit of a stretch to describe him as an influence per se. "Vague though the positive side of Bergson's philosophy may seem to us," Kadushin writes (*Organic Thinking*, p. 252), "he is emphatic enough in his criticism of conceptual thought. Indeed ... he is over-emphatic, for he dismisses all concepts as only analytic tools. Since, in his view, concepts but hamper our true integration with the movement of life, he advocates his own particular kind of intuition. The exercise of this kind of intuition, he affirms, necessitates tremendous concentration and great exertion of will in order to overcome our ordinary conceptual or intellectual way of thinking, and even at the end, true integration with the movement of life, or experience of God, cannot be complete. There is no gainsaying any individual's personal experience, of course, and such Bergson's 'intuition' seems to be. But we can assert, at least, that his thesis does not represent a valid organismic approach to religious experience."

respect, to the pragmatism movement.[176]

Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947)

Alfred North Whitehead is cited six times in *Organic Thinking* (1938), and is generally acknowledged as the primary secular philosophical influence on Kadushin's system of thought. Theodore Steinberg, for example, argues that "Kadushin concluded that an organizing principle of rabbinic thought did exist" specifically because he was "[s]timulated by his reading of Alfred North Whitehead's philosophy of organism and especially the theories of organism proposed by the biological scientists, William E. Ritter and Edna Bailey."[177]

The degree to which Kadushin could be called a process philosopher depends on how one defines process philosophy—a phrase that Whitehead never uses in *Process and Reality*, preferring to refer to his system as a "philosophy of organism"[178] and, rather than characterizing it as a new tradition, suggesting that it is a reemergence of Platonic metaphysics from the miasma of the post-Enlightenment European metaphysical categories (or, in other words, "a recurrence to pre-Kantian modes of thought"[179]). Much like Kadushin, Whitehead resisted characterizing his own ideas as novel, preferring to see them as a representation of much older patterns. The fact that he may have been correct does not resolve the problem of contextualizing Whitehead. To acknowledge Whitehead's system of thought as a distinctive 20th-century tradition called process philosophy that

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[176] Alfred North Whitehead is not usually identified as a pragmatist, but he is, in the words of Kelly A. Parker (*Environmental Pragmatism*, p. 22), often counted among the "'honorary' pragmatists who rejected the label, but some of whose views bear close affinity to pragmatism." In *The Highroad Around Modernism* (pp. 18-19), Robert C. Neville notes that "[i]n America, Whitehead called himself a pragmatist and directed the dissertations of the first editors of Peirce's philosophy papers, Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss." Ochs notes (*Understanding the Rabbinic Mind,* p. 176) that although "[Kadushin] wrote explicitly about his interest in organicism ... there are more subtle indications of his having worked with the pragmatists as well."

[177] *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind*, p. 3.

[178] See pp. 55, 141, 145, 151, et. al.

[179] p. vi.

originates with his own work is, to a great extent, to reject its central historical thesis.

To accept his historical thesis, on the other hand, characterizes process philosophy as the primary voice of the Western tradition.[180] Nicholas Rescher, in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* argues that what distinguishes process philosophy from other traditions is that it "pivots on the thesis that the processual nature of existence is a fundamental fact with which any adequate metaphysic must come to terms."[181] This definition of process philosophy would include the vast majority of metaphysical systems, post-Newtonian and otherwise, as the hypothesis of a frozen, sessile universe has never enjoyed widespread acceptance—but it is entirely consistent with the manner in which Whitehead sometimes defined his own system:

> ...[I]f we had to render Plato's general point of view with the least changes made necessary by the intervening two thousand years of human experience in social organization, in aesthetic attainments, in science, and in religion, we should have to set about the construction of a philosophy of organism.[182]

Later, he more explicitly defines what a philosophy of organism is:

> The doctrine of the philosophy of organism is that, however far the sphere of efficient causation be pushed in the determination of components of a concrescence—its data, its emotions, its appreciations, its purposes, its phases of subjective aim—beyond the determination of these components there always remains the final reaction of the self-creative unity of the universe.[183]

But just as it is not necessary to return to Kadushin's rabbinic sources for information on his hermeneutic, it is not necessary to return to Plato to determine what Whitehead asserts that has, at least in the scholarly imagination, defined the tradition of

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[180] In his *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (p. 654), Robert Audi cleverly sidesteps this entire controversy with the entry "process philosophy**.** See WHITEHEAD."

[181] Available online. URL: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/process-philosophy/

[182] *Process and Reality*, p. 39.

[183] ibid., p. 75.

process philosophy. It is enough to say that Whitehead's definition of process philosophy is intrinsically metaphysical, and that Kadushin rejects metaphysical questions as unrepresentative of the rabbinic tradition and, therefore, beyond the scope of his system:

> If our study of true organic concepts teaches anything, it teaches that if a religion is organic or organismic its concepts will not be metaphysical. Organic concepts are effortless whereas metaphysical concepts involve great strain not only in their acquisition but in their retention as well. Organic concepts give room for differences in the views of individuals whereas metaphysical concepts, "eternal ideas," dogmas, demand rigid uniformity. In short, organic concepts, as we tried to explain above, are distinct in type from philosophic or metaphysical concepts. No wonder, then, that Whitehead is inconsistent in his views on religion: his description of religion as an organismic process must necessarily conflict with his description of it as a rational system of metaphysical concepts.[184]

Kadushin considered his work to fall well outside of the ordinary scope of systematic philosophy, but this was consistent with the implicit goal of his hermeneutic; if he considered the rabbinic tradition to be one that would have appeared unwieldy by the standards of hierarchical, systematic philosophy, it would presumably have been no insult to suggest that Kadushin's hermeneutic had the same general flavor.

There is also an obvious similarity between Whitehead's universe of concretized potentialities and Kadushin's universe of concretized value-concepts; what Whitehead attempted metaphysically, Kadushin attempted textually. Both approached their respective domains by exploring the concretization of potentialities. In an essay published in Sandra Lubarsky and David Ray Griffin's *Jewish Theology and Process Thought*, Peter Ochs argues that Kadushin's system of thought could itself be accurately characterized as a rabbinic text process theology:

> Partly supportive, partly critical of Whitehead, Kadushin's rabbinic theology is best described as a process theology unlike other process theologies: a text process theology in dialogue with, but not identical to, Whitehead's natural process

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[184] *Organic Thinking*, p. 251.

theology.[185]

For his part, Kadushin resisted the term "theology" in describing the subject of his work, if not the work itself:

> "Rabbinic theology" as a designation for the rabbinic complex, though to some extent justified, is not the happiest of terms ... By "theology" we ordinarily mean the theory behind creeds or dogmas, a logical system of ideas or concepts having a hierarchical relationship to one another, whereas organic thinking involves no such hierarchy but is rather a net-work of concepts. Rabbinic theology is not theology in the accepted sense but organic thinking.[186]

Kadushin might have been happier to see his work described as a textual process hermeneutic,[187] but this distinction is merely semantic and contingent on Kadushin's highly specific understanding of what constitutes theology; what is important to acknowledge, for our purposes, is that Kadushin's system demonstrates Whitehead's methodological influence. It does not cover the metaphysical terrain that process philosophy has historically covered, but it covers its own terrain by using an adapted process-philosophy methodology. In the more than eight decades since publication of Whitehead's *Process and Reality* (1928), the work that most influenced Kadushin's understanding of process philosophy, process philosophy itself has undergone a series of changes and become more theologically-centered. It is possible that, writing today, Kadushin would have a more explicit connection with the broader process philosophy movement.

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[185] p. 210.

[186] *Organic Thinking*, p. 185.

[187] It is worth noting that Ochs himself refers to Kadushin's work as a hermeneutic, most notably in the work he edited whose full title is *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind: Essays on the Hermeneutic of Max Kadushin*. My disagreement with Ochs' terminology, to whatever extent I have one, is with his use of the term "theology" to refer to a system that was not, on the whole, focused specifically on the nature or attributes of God. I would argue that Kadushin's work can be more specifically, and therefore more accurately, understood as a theologically-informed hermeneutic rather than as a hermeneutically-informed theology.

William James (1842-1910)

William James inspired the opening paragraph of *Organic Thinking*, giving Kadushin language to articulate the question he had hoped this volume—and, ultimately, his entire life's work as a scholar—would help to answer:

> "There is (thus) a zone of insecurity in human affairs," remarks William James in his essay on The Importance of Individuals, "in which all the dramatic interest lies; the rest belongs to the dead machinery of things. This is the formative zone, the part not yet ingrained in the race's average, not yet a typical, hereditary and constant factor of the social community in which it occurs" ... In the realm of values, the problem is to discover the principle of coherence which renders them a typical and constant factor of the social community and at the same time makes possible for them a degree of inconstancy or indeterminacy in the lives of individuals.[188]

In addition to sharing the view that indeterminacy is the creative milieu, Kadushin and James were also similar in the respect that both were essentially descriptive philosophers who emphasized the psychological component of their work rather than its merit as a systematic, philosophical approach. And both believed that the methodologies they described existed to serve a very similar purpose: the construction of individual character.

Although the introductory paragraph of *Organic Thinking* represents the only instance in which Kadushin directly quotes James, Steinberg identifies him as one of Kadushin's favorite sources.[189]

Charles S. Peirce (1839-1914)

Kadushin quotes Peirce twice in his work, both times in the footnotes of *The Rabbinic*

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[188] p. 1.

[189] *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind*, p. 238.

Mind, both times at length, and both times approvingly, without any criticism.[190] Peter Ochs has suggested that Peirce's influence on Kadushin's work may have been more significant than these two lonely quotations would suggest:

> The Biblical scholar and philosopher, Yohanan Muffs, recounts that, on their frequent walks together down Riverside Drive in the 1970's, Kadushin often brought with him a volume of Charles Peirce's *Collected Papers*, which he cited "with great admiration." (Despite Kaplan's evident influence on his normative theories, Kadushin cited him with relative infrequency. The two meager footnotes he offers Peirce may be similarly misleading.)[191]

The first such citation annotates Kadushin's remark about the physiology of overlapping concepts within the organismic complex, which reads as follows:

> Concepts which overlap are characterized by the fact that they are used, when circumstances warrant, interchangeably for each other; and all together they constitute quite a large group. Elsewhere we described the overlapping of the concepts of charity and deeds of loving-kindness, and we shall have occasion to discuss more such concepts in our present study.[192]

He annotates this with an almost deferential citation to Peirce's work on signs that belong to multiple, overlapping classes:

> The following statement by Pierce[sic] indicates that "overlapping" is a general type of relationship: "It may be quite impossible to draw a sharp line of demarcation between two classes, although they are real and natural classes in strictest truth.

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[190] Peirce's collected works are also listed in the bibliography used by Kadushin (cited by Steinberg in *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind*, p. 238).

[191] *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind*, p. 176.

[192] *The Rabbinic Mind*, p. 29.

> Namely, this will happen when the form about which individuals of one class cluster is not so unlike the form about which individuals of another class cluster but that variations from each middling form may precisely agree. In such a case, we may know in regard to any intermediate form what proportion of the objects of that form had one purpose and what proportion the other; but unless we have some supplementary information we cannot tell which ones had one purpose and which the other"—C.S.S. Peirce, Collected Papers, ed. by Hartshorne and Weiss (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1931-1935), Vol. I, pp. 87-88.[193]

In a later discussion of God's attributes, Kadushin inserts a quote from Peirce, on anthropomorphism and the comprehensibility of the cosmos, as an aside:

> Although not bearing on our own thesis, which has a different orientation, it is a fact that the classic philosophic stand on anthropomorphism is being challenged today on the grounds of science itself: "Every scientific explanation of a natural phenomenon is a hypothesis that there is something in nature to which the human reason is analogous; and that it really is so all the successes of science in its application to human convenience are witnesses. They proclaim that truth over the length and breadth of the modern world. In the light of the successes of science to my mind there is a degree of baseness in denying our birthright as children of God and in shamefacedly slinking away from anthropomorphic conceptions of the universe"—C.S.S. Peirce, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 158-159.[194]

In his essay "Max Kadushin as Rabbinic Pragmatist," published in *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind*,[195] Peter Ochs suggests a reimagining of Kadushin's hermeneutic based on "what [it] would look like if it were inspired wholly, rather than only partly, by Peirce's work,"[196] using Peirce's taxonomy of signs rather than Kadushin's less flexible taxonomy of concepts.

John Dewey (1859-1952)

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[193] *The Rabbinic Mind*, pp. 29-30.

[194] *The Rabbinic Mind*, p. 286.

[195] pp. 165-196.

[196] p. 167.

Kadushin's discussion of Dewey in *Organic Thinking* is arguably the strangest passage in the book. It consists, essentially, of three parts: initial praise ("[he] has done much toward elucidating the implications of the organismic approach"[197]), criticism of Dewey on grounds that his work has a metaethical foundation,[198] and criticism of Dewey on the grounds that he accepts a God-concept independent of personal experience.[199] It is clear that Kadushin was extremely familiar with Dewey's work, respected it, and kept it close at hand,[200] but ascertaining its direct influence on his system of thought, given its similarity to other systems in which the influence is clearer and more direct, is difficult.

3.3 Philosophical Hermeneutics in the Western Canon

In Jean Grondin's seminal *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Yale, 1994), he recalls a conversation he once had with Hans-Georg Gadamer, the most prominent philosophical hermeneuticist of the twentieth century, about the philosophical tradition Gadamer had done so much to create:

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[197] p. 253.

[198] Kadushin writes (p. 253): "He recognizes that 'the distinction between physical, psycho-physical and mental is ... one of increasing complexity and intimacy of interaction among natural events.' But, for all that, when he comes to treat of 'ends' or values he succumbs to the old, stultifying 'basic fallacy.' Aware that these values are 'ends so inclusive that they unify the self,' he apparently fails to grasp the import of his own statement. If the ends are so inclusive as to unify the self it must be because they are constituents of an organismic form on the mental level. The thing to do, therefore, is to try to discover the special character peculiar to this organismic form, an analysis such as that undertaken in our study of rabbinic 'ends' or values."

[199] pp. 253-254: "Dewey's failure to utilize the organismic approach towards ends or values results also in the failure to perceive that, in an organic complex, there is no definitive concept of God but rather the experience of God ... Rabbinic values, as we learned, do not '*take on* unity.' They are not synthetically unified by the concept of God, whether through imagination or other means, but are integrated because they are the constituents of an organic complex. We should say, therefore, that Dewey's approach to the matters pertaining to our study leans to the rationalistic rather than to the organismic."

[200] Dewey's *Experience and Nature* (1925) and *A Common Faith* (1934) also appear among the principal Kadushin sources in Steinberg's bibliography (*Understanding the Rabbinic Mind*, p. 238).

> ...I met with him in a Heidelberg pub to discuss [the universal claim of hermeneutics] and other matters ... After everything that I had read, I was prepared for a long and rather vague answer. He thought the matter over and answered, concisely and conclusively, thus: "In the verbum interius."
>
> I was astonished. This is nowhere emphasized in *Truth and Method*, let alone in the secondary literature.[201] The universal claim of hermeneutics is to be found in the "inner-word," which Augustine discussed and to which Gadamer had devoted a little-noticed chapter of his magnum opus? Somewhat nonplussed, I asked him to elaborate on what he meant. "This universality," he continued, "consists of inner speech, in that one cannot say everything. One cannot express everything that one has in mind, the logos endiathetos. That is something I learned from Augustine's *De trinitate*. This experience is universal: the actus signatus is never completely covered by the actus exercitus."[202]

Gadamer's reference to Augustine is helpful for several reasons. First, it provides us with a clear working definition of hermeneutics—no small feat for a field that is, as Grondin points out, "afflicted by a vast amorphousness which, as in the case of most other philosophemes, may well explain why it has prospered."[203] Second, it establishes the strong link that exists between Continental hermeneutics, which is largely a product of the twentieth century, and religious hermeneutics, which tends, in its contemporary manifestations, to be very sectarian and technical. Third, it correctly grounds hermeneutics, expressed in its many manifestations, as one of the oldest and most frequently-discussed ideas in the Western philosophical tradition.[204]

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[201] More recent scholars of hermeneutics, inspired in part by this reference in Grondin's introduction, are attempting to close the gap. See, most notably, John Arthos' *The Inner Word in Gadamer's Hermeneutics* (Notre Dame, 2009) and Mirela Oliva's *Das innere Verbum in Gadamers Hermeneutik* (Mohr Siebeck, 2009).

[202] pp. xiii-xiv.

[203] p. 18.

[204] Nor is this limited to the West; a strong argument can be made that any philosophical tradition with a significant extant philosophy of language is also likely to have an extant hermeneutic tradition, though not always so-named. Rita Sherma makes a compelling argument that "thousands of years of exegesis, interpretation and reinterpretation, of adaptation and reconstitution of ancient norms, concepts, and practices have endowed the Hindu tradition with a wealth of hermeneutical systems and strategies" (*Hermeneutics and Hindu Thought: Toward a Fusion of Horizons*, p. 2). And Sebastian Alackapally has written—in his *Being and Meaning: Reality and Language in Bhartrhari and Heidegger*—on similarities between the tradition of Continental hermeneutics and the work of the Sanskrit grammarian Bhartrhari (ca. 400-450 CE), who discusses numerous stages of pre-expressive verbal conceptualization—the *pratibhá*, the *pashyantí*, and so on—that are comparable in function to different expressions of the verbum interius.

The origin of hermeneutics as a Western philosophical tradition, like the origin of the Western philosophical tradition itself, can be found in Greek philosophy.[205] Although the most famous classical work on hermeneutics, of a sort—*Peri herméneias* ("On Interpretation")—centers more on grammar than it does on interpretation, it begins by describing what Augustine would later term the verbum interius:

> Spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words. Just as all men have not the same writing, so all men have not the same speech sounds, but the mental experiences, which these directly symbolize, are the same for all, as also are those things of which are experiences are the images.[206]

But, inasmuch as it makes the bold claim that the interior life described by words and speech is the same for each person, it is not hermeneutic in the sense that most people would use that term today. "The development of explicit hermeneutical reflection," Grondin argues,[207] "bears the signature of modernity." He goes on to explain:

> [W]hat distinguishes the modern world-picture is its consciousness of being perspectival. As soon as it becomes evident that worldviews do not merely duplicate reality as it is in itself, but are instead pragmatic interpretations embraced by our language-world, then hermeneutics comes into its own. Only with the advent of modernity has this occurred ... Yet modern insights can be traced back to antiquity ... Along with the rationalist Eleatics and Platonists there was also a host of relativistic Sophists who were thoroughly familiar with the conditioned and perspectival nature of human standards. So it remains a question how far back the history of hermeneutics reaches. The answer, of course, depends on how one defines hermeneutics.

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[205] Multiple sources confirm that the word can be traced to the Greek verb *herméneuein*, meaning "to interpret." "*Herméneuein* and *herméneia* in their various forms occur in a considerable number of the texts which have survived from ancient times," Richard Palmer writes in his *Hermeneutics* (Northwestern University Press, 1969, p. 12). "The word occurs in the noun form in *Oedipus at Colonus*, and several times in Plato. Indeed, various forms are found in most of the more familiar ancient writers, such as Xenophon, Plutarch, Euripedes, Epicurus, Lucretius, and Longinus." Conventional wisdom (Palmer p. 12, to name one source among many) suggests that the word *herméneuein* is derived from the Greek messenger-god Hermes, a claim that Grondin disputes in his *Sources of Hermeneutics* (SUNY, 1995, p. 159): "Despite popular tradition, there seems to be no etymological link whatsoever between the Greek god Hermes and the art of [*herméneuein*]."

[206] p. 1.

[207] *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, pp. 17-18.

It was Augustine who, in Book XV of his work *On the Trinity*, described the verbum interius to which Gadamer attributes the entire hermeneutic enterprise:

> But there are more hidden depths in our memory, where we found this thing even when we thought about it for the first time, and where the innermost word [verbum interius] is born that does not belong to any language—born as knowledge from knowledge and sight from sight, and as understanding which is manifested in thought from understanding which was already lurking, but hidden, in memory.[208]

For Augustine, and for most of his successors until the twentieth century, the primary focus of the Western hermeneutic tradition was biblical and oriented primarily around rules of interpretation that would create consistent approaches to Scripture. This became particularly important for Protestants during the Reformation, as they attempted to reconstruct Christianity based solely on their understanding of the Bible.[209] The first of the ten Berne Theses of 1528, for example, establishes the biblical text as the sole legitimate basis of religious authority:

> I. The holy, Christian Church, whose only Head is Christ, is born of the Word of God, abides in the same, and does not listen to the voice of a stranger.
>
> II. The Church of Christ makes no laws or commandments without God's Word. Hence all human traditions, which are called ecclesiastical commandments, are

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[208] Section 15.40, as translated by John Arthos in *The Inner Word in Gadamer's Hermeneutic*, pp. 130-131. Arthos' translation is more elegant than most; Arthur West Haddan's 1878 translation of this section defines the verbum interius as "understanding which had indeed existed before in the memory, but was latent there, although, unless the thought itself had also some sort of memory of its own, it would not return to those things which it had left in the memory while it turned to think of other things."

[209] This doctrine, known as *Sola Scriptura*, was essential to the Protestant Reformation. As New Testament scholar N.T. Wright puts it in *The Last Word: Scripture and the Authority of God* (HarperCollins, 2011), p. 4: "The sixteenth-century Reformers appealed to scripture over and against the traditions which had grown up in the church during the Middle Ages; the churches which stem from the Reformation all emphasize (as the early fathers had done) the central importance of the Bible ... This has marked out the post-Reformation churches from the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches, which give a more complex and interwoven account of how scripture operates within the life of the church."

> binding upon us only in so far as they are based on and commanded by God's Word.[210]

So it follows from these articles that article IV condemns transubstantiation because "[i]t cannot be proved from the Biblical writings," that article V condemns contemporaneous Roman Catholic liturgy because it "is contrary to Scripture," that article VI condemns prayers for the intercession of the saints because they are "contrary to Scripture," that article VII condemns the doctrine of purgatory because "Scripture knows nothing of a purgatory," and so forth.[211] It stands to reason that a tradition attributing so much power to texts would quickly need to establish rules of interpretation, but the early Reformers favored an approach that was more devotional than hermeneutic, at least in the sense by which hermeneusis had been defined until that point. John Calvin's *Institutes* (1536/1539/1543), for example, holds that correct interpretation requires God's direct intervention, obviating the need for hermeneutic rules:

> There are [reasons] by which the dignity and majesty of the Scriptures may be not only proved to the pious, but also completely vindicated against the cavils of slanderers. These, however, cannot of themselves produce a firm faith in Scripture until our heavenly Father manifest his presence in it, and thereby secure implicit reverence for it. Then only, therefore, does Scripture suffice to give a saving knowledge of God when its certainty is founded on the inward persuasion of the Holy Spirit ... [I]t is foolish to attempt to prove to infidels that the Scripture is the Word of God. This it cannot be known to be, except by faith. Justly, therefore, does Augustine remind us, that every man who would have any understanding in such high matters must previously possess piety and mental peace.[212]

In his sermon "The Twofold Use of the Law and Gospel," Martin Luther goes so far as to suggest that hermeneutic rules, as had been applied previously in Roman Catholic biblical interpretation, are harmful to the relationship between the reader and the text. Writing about the methods of Roman Catholic allegorical interpretation proposed by

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[210] "The Ten Theses of Berne, 1528" in Arthur C. Cochrane, *Reformed Confessions of the Sixteenth Century* (Westminster John Knox, 2003), pp. 49-50.

[211] ibid.

[212] John Calvin (translated by Henry Beveridge), *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, volume 1, p. 109.

Origen,[213] Luther writes that any attempt to reason out a biblical hermeneutic process is doomed to failure[214]:

> [Paul's] passage[215] relative to spirit and letter has in the past been wholly strange language to us. Indeed, to such extent has man's nonsensical interpretation perverted and weakened it that I, though a learned doctor of the holy Scriptures, failed to understand it altogether, and I could find no one to teach me. And to this day it is unintelligible to all popedom ... And no wonder, truly! For it is essentially a doctrine far beyond the power of man's intelligence to comprehend. When human reason meddles with it, it becomes perplexed ... Reason knows nothing about the wretchedness of depraved nature.[216]

The primacy of Scripture, and the emphasis placed on the Holy Spirit as the only proper intermediary to interpretation, presented a model of biblical interpretation that competed with the tradition-centered *prima scriptura* emphasis of contemporaneous Roman Catholicism. The dispute between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, and

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[213] Most directly expressed in his *Homilies on Leviticus* (translated by Gary Wayne Barkley; Catholic University of America Press, 1990), in which he writes (pp. 88-89): "Unless we take all these words in a sense other than the literal text shows, as we already said often, when they are read in the Church, they will present more an obstacle and ruin of the Christian religion than an exhortation and edification ... [J]ust as 'the visible and invisible,' earth and heaven, soul and flesh, body and spirit have mutually this kinship and this world is a result of their union, so also we must believe that Holy Spirit results from the visible and invisible just as from a body the letter, which is certainly something seen, and the soul, the understanding of which is understood within, and of the Spirit..."

[214] This may illustrate a similarity between Luther's approach and that of Max Kadushin himself, as both emphasized the limits of the philosophical approach but had no qualms about using it themselves as a means of refuting philosophical propositions. George Lindbeck makes a compelling case ("Martin Luther and the Rabbinic Mind" in *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind*, pp. 141-164) that "[if] the catechetical Luther were the authoritative one, then ... both [Luther and Kadushin] viewed their second-order redescriptions of practice as corrective rather than constitutive." In his essay "Toward a Postliberal Theology" (*The Return to Scripture in Judaism and Christianity*, pp. 83-103), which does not mention Kadushin at all, Lindbeck goes on to describe the hermeneutic of the Protestant Reformers in a manner that brings to mind Kadushin's description of the concretization of value-concepts: "Among the reformers ... [s]cripture, one might say, was interpreted by its use, by the *viva vox evangelii*. In the intratextual context, emphasizing the living word in this way involves applying the language, concepts, and categories of scripture to contemporary realities." As noted in the next chapter, Lindbeck himself is a postcritical hermeneuticist who occupies a place within the Lutheran theological tradition that could be described as roughly parallel to that of Kadushin within the tradition of Conservative Judaism.

[215] A direct reference to 2 Corinthians 3:5-6, which reads: "Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." (NIV)

[216] From volume 3 of *Luther's Epistle Sermons*, translated by John Nicholas Lenker (Luther Press, 1909). Available online via Project Gutenberg: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/30619/30619-h/30619-h.htm

among different varieties of Protestantism, overshadowed the issue of biblical hermeneutics. At the same time, the idea of what 17th-century philosopher Johann Conrad Dannhauer described as a *hermeneutica generalis*[217]—a universal hermeneutic—began to take shape. Gadamer biographer and hermeneutics scholar Jean Grondin notes that this is most likely due to the influence of the printing press on European scholars. "By expanding the realm of books worth reading beyond the limits of the single holy book," he writes, "the Renaissance necessarily brought about the appearance of a universal hermeneutics."[218]

The philosopher most often associated with the idea of an Enlightenment-era universal hermeneutic is Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), but he produced very little material dealing directly with universal hermeneutics, and most of it was not intended for publication. As Andrew Bowie explains in his introduction to *Schleiermacher: Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings*:

> Understanding Schleiermacher's hermeneutics is ... made difficult by the fact that there are hardly any texts by Schleiermacher that exist in a version of which he would finally have approved: the work on hermeneutics in the present volume, for example, dates from as early as 1805 and as late as 1833 ... *Hermeneutics and Criticism* (*HC*) (published posthumously in 1838 and mainly containing work dating from 1819 onwards) appeared in the *theological*, not the philosophical division of the first edition of Schleiermacher's complete works, and is particularly concerned with the interpretation of the New Testament.[219]

It is for this reason, Bowie suspects, that Schleiermacher is so often misrepresented —most superficially "as the 'Romantic' theorist who thinks of interpretation as an 'intuitive,' 'empathetic' identification with the thoughts and feelings of the author of a text"

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[217] Grondin notes (*Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, p. 48) that although Dannhauer "has been long overlooked in the history of hermeneutics because he does not seem to fit in very well," his *The Idea of the Good Interpreter* (1630) reestablishes hermeneutics as a field independent of biblical interpretation and subsequently "is of considerable interest for our nonteleological inquiry into the universal claim of hermeneutics."

[218] *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, p. 48.

[219] pp. vii-viii.

when, in reality, Schleiermacher "[never] saw interpretation in empathetic terms."[220] It would be more accurate to say that Schleiermacher was a metahermeneuticist inasmuch as he defined the hermeneutic enterprise in ways that future scholars would take for granted—most crucially in rejecting the optimistic assumption that had defined hermeneutics in the past, which is that we generally understand what we're reading and need to employ hermeneusis only when confronted with a difficult passage. In Schleiermacher's theory, influenced by Kant's epistemology, this assumption is challenged—and hermeneutics subsequently becomes a crucial, rather than trivial, subdiscipline of philosophy. As T.M. Seebohm puts it:

> [Under Schleiermacher's theory] we have to abandon the naive assumption that we usually understand an author correctly and that misunderstanding or not-understanding occurs only occasionally. According to Schleiermacher, a methodologically guided hermeneutics has to assume that we always misunderstand the text.[221]

Kadushin might have found Schleiermacher's metahermeneutic relevant to his work, as it could have explained why readers who are culturally, chronologically, and linguistically remote to the rabbinic corpus would have not been able to find its coherence, but there is no evidence that Kadushin was familiar with his work. For most of Kadushin's scholarly career, the concept of philosophical hermeneutics did not enjoy especially wide currency; prior to the publication of Gadamer's *Truth and Method* (1960), the term "hermeneutics" was still associated primarily, though not exclusively, with religious systems of thought. Kadushin's own use of the phrase was in reference to the

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[220] p. vii.

[221] *Hermeneutics: Method and Methodology*, p. 53. In his *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics* (p. 70), Jean Grondin makes a similar point: "[Schleiermacher] universalizes misunderstanding as the situation and occasion of interpretation. This universalization is penetrated through and through by a notion of radical subjectivity ... Post-Kantian reason, with its cognitive claims now problematized, has become fundamentally unstable because it has become aware of the limited, perspectival, hypothetical character of its endeavors to understand. Henceforward it must take the universal primacy of misunderstanding as its starting point."

sixteen[222] *middot* (interpretation doctrines) of Rabbi Ishmael, which were based in turn on the seven *middot* associated with Rabbi Hillel. In *Organic Thinking*, for example, he cites these rabbinic "hermeneutical principles"[223] as representing a point of interaction between the Bible and the Mishnah, justifying claims of divine authority for the latter and, implicitly, providing a hermeneutic etiology for the Oral Torah. But he does not leave us with the impression that hermeneutics is something that he does—rather, that it's something that he studies. This is because Kadushin's understanding of hermeneutics, at least to the extent that he uses the word in his own work, was limited to specific practices governing the interpretation of religious texts. But his work deals with more fundamental hermeneutic issues than those presented in what Kadushin characterizes as the "hermeneutic rules" of the *middot*, and these were, for the most part, the same issues that had begun to define the emerging tradition of continental hermeneutics.

3.4 Kadushin, Gadamer, and Effective Historical Consciousness

Max Kadushin struggled to reconcile the continuity of tradition with the coherent transmission of meaning during a unique time in the history of Western philosophy: a time when prominent secular thinkers began to ask themselves the same kinds of questions. These questions had, until that point, largely been asked by theologians.

When Kadushin's *Organic Thinking* was published in 1938, the tradition of continental hermeneutics was in its infancy and held little sway outside of Germany. There is no evidence that Kadushin was in any sense familiar with it at any point in his career; Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927) was not published in English until 1962, and

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[222] These are appended to the *Sifra*, a halakhic midrash on Leviticus (Vayikra), and described therein (and by Kadushin) as "the thirteen *middot*"—and generally described as such in rabbinic literature, despite the fact that there are in fact sixteen distinct *middot* in the text. "That the 'thirteen' *middot* seem to number sixteen," Azzan Yadin writes in *Scripture as Logos: Rabbi Ishmael and the Origins of Midrash* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004, p. 101), "...does not undermine the centrality of this tradition. Quite the contrary; the discrepancy suggests that the number thirteen is not an empirical characterization arrived at by counting the *middot*, but rather an ideological statement imposed upon the list." Yadin argues that a Talmudic mandate to "Go and learn [a verse from Torah] by one of the thirteen *middot* according to which the Torah is interpreted—a matter is learned by its context" (Sanhedrin 86a, quoted by Yadin on p. 102) led to a tradition in which the sixteen *middot* were referred to as the thirteen *middot*, perhaps in much the same way as a baker's dozen, despite being clearly described as a dozen, actually numbers 13.

[223] p. 35.

Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method* was not published in English until 1975. But the priorities of continental hermeneutics, particularly those described by Gadamer, were similar to those of Kadushin and would have probably been of considerable interest to him given the suspicion he felt regarding second-order philosophical reinterpretations of the rabbinic tradition. This passage from Gadamer's *Truth and Method*, for example, indirectly defends Kadushin's position on the communal and organismic character of rabbinic texts:

> *A person who reflects himself out of a living relationship to tradition destroys the true meaning of this tradition* ... I must allow tradition's claim to validity, not in the sense of simply acknowledging the past in its otherness, but in such a way that it has something to say to me ... Someone who is open to tradition in this way sees that historical consciousness is not really open at all but rather, when it reads its texts "historically," it has always thoroughly smothered them out beforehand, so that the criteria of the historian's own knowledge can never be called into question by tradition.[224]

Where Gadamer's predecessors tended to assess textual traditions from a rationalistic point of view, focusing on assessing a text as an outsider with as much conceptual accuracy as possible, Gadamer—in keeping with his roots as a German phenomenologist—saw the hermeneutic enterprise as an experiential one in which a partial ontological fusion of horizons, a human resonance with the text and the community that produced it, would become necessary. The more complete the understanding of the text, the more immersive the process, the riskier it becomes. "In understanding," Gadamer writes, "we are drawn into an event of truth and arrive, as it were, too late, if we want to know what we are supposed to believe."[225] In Gadamer's system, objectivity comes with a price—the more we use our own worldviews to assess a text, the less we are likely to recognize a text's internal merits and coherence:

> [T]he historian usually chooses concepts to describe the historical particularity of his objects without expressly reflecting on their origin and justification. He simply follows his interest in the material and takes no account of the fact that the descriptive concepts he chooses can be highly detrimental to his proper purpose if

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[224] *Truth and Method*, pp. 354-355.

[225] *Truth and Method*, p. 484.

> they assimilate what is historically different to what is familiar and thus, despite all impartiality, subordinate the alien being of the object to his own preconceptions. Thus, despite his scientific method, he behaves just like everyone else—a child of his time who is unquestioningly dominated by the concepts and prejudices of his own age.[226]

Kadushin's argument that value-concepts are intrinsic to rabbinic Jewish thought, and not merely to the physical texts themselves, would also carry weight with Gadamer. "It is not by accident," Gadamer writes, "that one could talk about the 'book of nature,' which contained just as much truth as the 'book of books.' That which can be understood is language."[227]

But if Gadamer's work reinforces Kadushin's assessment of the problem, it also criticizes Kadushin's proposed solution. Where Kadushin would likely run afoul of the Gadamerian hermeneutic standard is in his attempt to classify value-concepts into exactly the sorts of explicit taxonomies that held no interest for the rabbinical authors themselves, and Gadamer saw this as an intrinsically flawed approach. This passage could have been written specifically about Kadushin's taxonomy of value-concepts:

> We have seen that conceptual interpretation is the realization of the hermeneutical experience itself. That is why our problem is so difficult. The interpreter does not know that he is bringing himself and his own concepts into the interpretation. The verbal formulation is so much part of the interpreter's mind that he never becomes aware of it as an object ... It is obvious that an instrumentalist theory of signs which sees words and concepts as handy tools has missed the point of the hermeneutical phenomenon. If we stick to what takes place in speech and, above all, in every dialogue with tradition carried on by the human sciences, we cannot fail to see that here concepts are constantly in the process of being formed. This does not mean that the interpreter is using new or unusual words. But the capacity to use familiar words is not based on an act of logical subsumption, through which a particular is placed under a universal concept. Let us remember, rather, that understanding always includes an element of application and thus produces an ongoing process of concept formation.[228]

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[226] *Truth and Method*, p. 397.

[227] *Truth and Method*, p. 484.

[228] *Truth and Method*, p. 404.

Still, this criticism becomes less potent if we remember that Gadamer and Kadushin had fundamentally different goals. It is reasonable to assume that it is primarily their differing goals, and not their differing methodologies, that render their systems so incompatible. Kadushin is not explicitly attempting to achieve the sort of ontological fusion of horizons proposed by Gadamer, or any approximation of it; he is merely expressing the normal valuational life of a 20th-century Jew who has inherited the language of his ancestors, and is trying to describe it in such a way that it appears coherent to those who do not immediately find it to be so. That Max Kadushin failed to explain rabbinic philosophy by the standards of continental hermeneutics, a branch of a discipline that he had already denounced as irrelevant to his inquiry, would have most likely seemed to him both obvious and unimpressive.

Chapter 4: The Normal Valuational Life

4.1 Textual Reasoning and the Religious Documentary Tradition

The defining characteristic of Max Kadushin's approach to rabbinic hermeneutics is that he began by closely examining a corpus of literature that resists organization, and produced a system of organizing principles by which it could be understood. The question of whether his system accurately represents the rabbinic tradition is best left to rabbinic scholars whose understanding of the root texts is more comprehensive than mine,[229] but in some respects my thesis offers the opportunity to do (or attempt to do) for Kadushin's work what he did (or attempted to do) for the rabbinic tradition: describe it in such a way that it can be properly understood as a compelling and well-organized system of thought, even if interpreted outside of its original context.

In the previous chapter, I describe where Kadushin's system of thought might fall within the tradition of philosophical hermeneutics, a tradition with which he appeared to be unfamiliar, and a tradition that he very well might have found to be inappropriate for his objective. Having assessed rabbinics as being mostly beyond my scope, and philosophical hermeneutics as being mostly beyond his, I am left with three disciplines of study that both of us would consider central to our work: religious studies, psychology, and ethics. My objective, in this chapter, is to describe how Kadushin's work might be contextualized within the first two of these three disciplines. And because we have already established that Kadushin was a religious hermeneuticist, it would seem logical to begin any serious assessment of Kadushin's relevance to religious studies by examining how his religious hermeneutic compares to that of other contemporaneous thinkers.

The specific movement with which Max Kadushin is now identified is textual reasoning,[230] a movement that is reactive and, therefore, not subject to a clear lineage—a movement that, to borrow a quotation from Lewis Mumford, "revolts against its fathers and

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[229] Some of whom have objections to Kadushin's characterization of the rabbinic corpus, as noted in chapter two.

[230] As noted in the first chapter.

makes friends with its grandfathers."[231] It is ironic, but not terribly unusual, that a movement reemphasizing the significance of tradition, lineage, and group decision-making is represented primarily by freethinkers and autodidacts, few of whom (for obvious reasons) had like-minded mentors.[232] Max Kadushin's rebellion against the philosophical priorities of Mordecai Kaplan is more the rule than the exception. This renders moot the question of the movement's "founder"; Kadushin was certainly one of the earliest figures in the movement, and his influence within Conservative Judaism has been considerable, but his influence did not produce most of the first-generation textual reasoners—nor, as best I can tell, did any other single figure of the early movement. Of the ten figures identified by Jacob Meskin as "important sources out of which textual reasoning grew,"[233] only one—Charles Peirce[234]—was ever cited by Kadushin. Indeed, Kadushin's *Organic Thinking* (1938) appeared in print before most of them had published relevant work.[235] While Kadushin is not the most widely-known or well-understood among the first wave of the textual reasoning movement, he was one of the first—so much so that the most relevant points of comparison can be found with later thinkers rather than with his contemporaries.

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[231] From the opening sentence of *The Brown Decades* (p. 1): "The commonest axiom of history is that every generation revolts against its fathers and makes friends with its grandfathers."

[232] Though as Ochs notes in the epilogue of *Textual Reasonings* (pp. 290-291), this is changing. Textual reasoning is now a multigenerational movement: "A second generation of textual reasoners appears to have found the academy a more welcoming environment than it once was for their older colleagues ... The next generation, however, tends to be more tolerant of persistently liberal trends in postmodern thinking: as wary of religious authoritarianism as of unmitigated secularism in the academy."

[233] *Textual Reasonings*, p. 165. The other figures named by Meskin are the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, the French structuralist Roland Barthes, the French post-structuralist Jacques Derrida, Hans-Georg Gadamer, the Belgian philosopher Luce Irigaray, the Bulgarian linguist Julia Kristeva, the Lithuanian Jewish postmodernist Emmanuel Levinas, the French Christian phenomenologist Paul Ricoeur, and the American neopragmatist Richard Rorty. Although lineages present themselves between several of the figures (Irigaray was influenced by Bakhtin, Rorty by Peirce, and so forth), the diversity of these figures—with respect to their backgrounds, areas of focus, and core philosophical values—is astonishing, and speaks to the interdisciplinary character of the textual reasoning movement.

[234] As discussed in the previous chapter.

[235] Bakhtin and Levinas had both published relevant work as early as 1929, but there is no evidence that Kadushin was familiar with it. The rest of the thinkers on Meskin's list—Barthes in 1957, Derrida in 1967, Gadamer in 1960, Irigaray in 1974, Kristeva in 1969, Ricoeur in 1965, and Rorty in 1979—published their first relevant volumes far too late to have had a direct influence on the development of Kadushin's system.

While there are many thinkers with whom Kadushin can be fruitfully compared, I believe that the Lutheran theologian George Lindbeck (b. 1923) makes a particularly useful point of reference. His *The Nature of Doctrine* (1984) attempts to resolve, in many respects, the same modernist dilemma with which Kadushin had been struggling for a half-century. Both thinkers felt that their respective faith-traditions had been misconstrued by the skeptical and highly philosophical academic culture with which it was surrounded, but both also felt that the criticisms leveled by that culture were worthy of a serious response. Both took issue with applying the rationalistic, individualistic priorities of the European Enlightenment to communal traditions. And both addressed this challenge of coherence in a similar way: by emphasizing a cultural-linguistic[236] approach to religion. As Lindbeck writes:

> The crusader's battle cry "*Christus est Dominus*," for example, is false when used to authorize cleaving the skull of the infidel (even though the same words in other contexts may be a true utterance). When thus employed, it contradicts the Christian understanding of Lordship as embodying, for example, suffering servanthood ... [A] demonstration in Euclidean geometry which implies that parallel lines eventually meet must be false for formally the same reason that the crusader's cry is false: the statements in both cases are intrasystematically inconsistent. The difference is that in the Christian case the system is constituted, not in purely intellectual terms by axioms, definitions, and corollaries, but by a set of stories used in specifiable ways to interpret and live in the world. The mistake of a primarily cognitive-propositional theory of religion, from a cultural-linguistic perspective, is to overlook this difference.[237]

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[236] Lindbeck describes the cultural-linguistic approach in terms that are very reminiscent of Kadushin's system (*The Nature of* Doctrine*,* p. 19): "[A] religion can be viewed as a kind of cultural and/or linguistic framework or medium that shapes the entirety of life and thought ... Like a culture or language, it is a communal phenomenon that shapes the subjectivities of individuals rather than being primarily a manifestation of those subjectivities. It comprises a vocabulary of discursive and nondiscursive symbols together with a distinctive logic or grammar in terms of which this vocabulary can be meaningfully employed. Lastly, just as a language (or 'language game,' to use Wittgenstein's phrase) is correlated with a form of life, and just as a culture has both cognitive and behavioral dimensions, so it is also in the case of a religious tradition. Its doctrines, cosmic stories or myths, and ethical directives are integrally related to the rituals it practices, the sentiments or experiences it evokes, the actions it recommends, and the institutional forms it develops."

[237] *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 50.

Central to Lindbeck's system is the belief that "doctrines qua doctrines are not first-order propositions,"[238] a view that Kadushin also held.[239] Both Lindbeck and Kadushin, in keeping with the standard progression of a textual reasoner,[240] essentially saw their work as representing a third way that rejected both propositional fundamentalism (represented, in Kadushin's case, by medieval Jewish philosophy[241]) and propositional secularism (represented, relatively speaking, by the non-secular but very secularly-influenced Mordecai Kaplan). Both expressed that they were concerned with questions of coherence. Both felt that the language of faith can effectively mold behavior if properly received, even if (and, in Kadushin's case, especially if) it is not accompanied by metaphysical propositions. Lindbeck's taxonomy of doctrine aligns itself neatly with the priorities of Kadushin. As Peter Ochs writes:

> In Lindbeck's terms, then, Kadushin was a postcritical scholar. The "propositionalists" against whom he argued were the philosophers who imposed extraneous conceptual schemes on the rabbinic texts, claiming that the texts referred ostensively to the objective meanings of scripture. The "experiential-expressivists" were the philosophers (and irrationalists) who denied rabbinic Judaism displayed any conceptual order; for them, the rabbinic texts expressed either the rabbis' subjective beliefs or else the root experiences that are common to all humanity. Against these two approaches, Kadushin offered his "cultural-linguistic" alternative: for the rabbis, scripture was a system of symbols, or value-

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[238] p. 66.

[239] *The Rabbinic Mind*, pp. 30-31: "The rabbinic value-concept is not a meaning added or applied to objective facts or situations but *inherent* in the situations and as easily apprehended ... Rabbinic value-concepts are inseparable from everyday, moment-to-moment experience. They are mental habits that are become second nature, more correctly, in view of their organismic character, part of nature. It is precisely the naturalness, the everyday quality of the rabbinic midrashim that led the modern authorities in this field, accustomed to philosophic and ethical systems in which deliberate, careful, effortful demonstration is the rule, to despair of finding any principle of organization in rabbinic thought ... We have to do here not with a system of thought *projected* by a mind but with the rabbinic mind itself, with the elements of that mind as they grasp the facts of normal, everyday experience."

[240] As outlined by Ochs, and described in the second chapter.

[241] *Organic Thinking*, pp. 68-69: "[I]n marked contrast to rabbinic theology, medieval Jewish philosophy negated the concepts of God's love and justice. Medieval Jewish philosophy ... also tends *in a measure* to negate the pragmatic efficacy of Torah. The primary function of the Torah, says Maimonides, is to inculcate right ideas ... the Torah's function of promoting right conduct is secondary. The Rabbis, of course, know of no such distinction. Maimonides' whole discussion and the concepts involved in it are utterly foreign to their way of thinking. Without recourse to philosophic niceties, they simply teach that Torah has practical efficacy in the affairs of life."

> concepts, whose meanings were displayed, within the rabbinic community, in its everyday and its scholarly conduct.[242]

Lindbeck himself contributed an article to *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind* titled "Martin Luther and the Rabbinic Mind,". In it he suggests that he would not go quite as far as Kadushin did in his rejection of propositional statements. "[I]t is crucial, at least in biblical religions," Lindbeck writes, "that believers have what a Whiteheadean might call a 'propositional feeling' or attitude toward the 'mighty acts of God' dogmatically identified as crucial, and it is not clear that Kadushin recognizes this. Without such an attitude, true worship or what Kadushin speaks of as 'normal mysticism' would be impossible."[243] That said, the fact that Lindbeck feels it necessary to draw this distinction with respect to dogma suggests that, in other respects, their attitude towards propositions is similar.

4.2 Kadushin and the Sciences

The idea of assessing Kadushin from the perspective of psychology of religion is not original to this thesis. In suggesting future Kadushin studies, Theodore Steinberg brought up the possibility in his 1979 dissertation that assessing Kadushin's work from the perspective of the psychology of religion could be fruitful:

> Kadushin states that his "...work may well be characterized as a psychological study of Rabbinic Judaism," and maintains that the psychological data revealed in his findings is quite different from other studies in the field of religious psychology. Normal mysticism and indeterminacy of belief are psychological as well as religious phenomena. It would be desirable to compare these and other phenomena which Kadushin describes with those of established psychological theories.[244]

"Rabbinic thought, according to Kadushin," writes David Stern, "is not a philosophy or a myth or even a theology so much as it is a way of thinking, a virtual psychology;

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[242] Ochs, *The Return to Scripture in Judaism and Christianity*, p. 11.

[243] *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind*, p. 149f.

[244] Steinberg, pp. 417-418.

indeed, the model for Kadushin's organicism was early Gestalt psychology."[245] While Kadushin never says this outright, and direct references to Gestalt psychology are sparse in his published work,[246] he certainly indicates that Gestalt psychology was, at the very minimum, *a* model for his organicism:

> When full cognizance is taken of the fact that each organismic form has its own individuality which must be made the subject of careful analysis, the organismic approach is sound and fruitful. We are familiar with the results of this approach in psychology—in Gestalt and psycho-analysis. But it has produced results equally as rich, if less well-known, in other fields—in biology, chemistry, physics, astronomy, and mathematics.[247]

Kadushin's son, the eminent sociologist Charles Kadushin, agrees with Stern's assessment that Max Kadushin's approach was inspired by the social sciences:

> The Kadushin enterprise then was, as he insisted, not the creation of a new theology or even an explication of an old one. Rather, the aim was to create "thick text" anthropological and psychological accounts of phenomena some of which were two thousand years old. Kadushin's models were always social science, not philosophy. He analyzed and described but not, as theology would have it, prescribed.[248]

Kadushin wrote *Organic Thinking* at a time when there was a metascientific debate

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[245] "Aggadah" in Cohen and Mendes-Flohr (eds.), *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, p. 11.

[246] It is probable that those who knew him face-to-face were aware of a greater Gestalt influence than is immediately visible in his published work; this was certainly the case with respect to the subtle influence of Kaplan and Peirce, as noted in the previous two chapters, respectively. According to Charles Kadushin (*The Rabbinic Mind*, p. xx), Kadushin "espoused gestalt psychology when Watson behaviorism was king, because the ideas of gestalt were helpful in organic thinking."

[247] *Organic Thinking*, p. 254.

[248] *Theology of Seder Eliahu*, p. xxii.

between organicism and elementalism,[249] a metareligious debate between fundamentalism and liberalism, a metapsychological debate between behaviorism and non-behaviorist systems[250] such as Gestalt psychology, and a metaphilosophical debate between positivism and pragmatism. For Kadushin, all four tensions represented the same struggle between "warm human conviction"[251] and what he identified, in the William James quote with which he began *Organic Thinking*, as "the dead machinery of things"[252] —a worldview in which literalism and reductionalism had completely conquered the human element, and fact triumphed over values. He saw hope in the work of William Ritter and Edna Bailey, whose *The Organismal Conception* (1928)—a standalone article that was essentially an "updated abstract"[253] of Ritter's Gifford Lectures, originally published in two volumes as *The Unity of Organism* (1919)—gave him the sense that organicism, and with it the human element, would ultimately triumph. He writes in *Organic Thinking*:

> The definition at which we have arrived is corroborated by definitions of the organic drawn in other fields. Thus Ritter and Bailey, who demonstrate that the organismal conception has been a fruitful hypothesis in various branches of

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[249] The debate between organicism and reductionism has largely subsided except in the area of cognitive science, where reductive and non-reductive models of consciousness compete. A century ago, as Ritter puts it (in *The Unity of Organism*, p. 183): "One of the best characterization-marks of elementalist biology is the expression 'nothing but.' What is the human brain? It is 'nothing but' a vast multitude of ganglionic cells (9,200,000,000 in the cortex alone), if the answer comes from a cellular elementalist; or it is 'nothing but' a still greater of chromosomes, if the elementalist be of the consistently orthodox chromosomal persuasion. And what of the so-called emotions of the human breast? In last analysis they are 'nothing but' chemical substances in an unstable equilibrium, or in some other state. Ernst Mach, that prince of modern elementalists, quotes Lichtenberg approvingly as follows: 'We should say *It thinks*, just as we say *It lightens*. It is going too far to say *cogito* if we translate *cogito* by *I think*. The assumption, or postulation, of the ego is a mere practical necessity.' What sort of necessity, if not practical necessity, do these people believe in?" Kadushin associated the elementalist approach to biology with the philosophical approach to religion, and found them to be similarly flawed. For him, the answer—in both cases—was organicism.

[250] In his preface to *Organic Thinking* (p. vii), Kadushin mentions that "[a] man's emotional life, Freud has shown, is an integrated whole, and Gestalt-psychology has demonstrated that his sense-perceptions are 'organic and dynamic.'" This is the only reference to Freud in his published work.

[251] *Organic Thinking*, p. 130.

[252] p. 1.

[253] As described by Robert Reid (*Evolutionary Theory*, p. 114).

> scientific research, define that conception as "the conclusion that ... wholes are so related to their parts that not only does the existence of the whole depend on the orderly cooperation and interdependence of its parts, but the whole exercises a measure of determinative control over its parts."[254]

In time, the sciences would largely reject the extremes of organicism and elementalism in much the same way that Kadushin and similar postcritical hermeneuticists rejected the extremes between fundamentalism and liberalism: by finding a third way. Subsequently, as Charles Kadushin argues, Max Kadushin's approach to both the natural and social sciences may appear to be somewhat dated today:

> The quest for universal coherence, not necessarily the quest for meaning, is held by some post-modern theorists to be an unattainable goal. For social scientists, it suffices to account for the meaning of specific experiences or more generally, to aggregate such accounts into what [Robert K.] Merton called "theories of the middle range."[255] All encompassing theories of cultural integration, or total functional explanations of society, or mono-stranded psychological interpretation have not been acceptable in social science for a number of years, though when Kadushin began his quest these kinds of theories were very much the fashion.[256]

Nowhere is this clearer than in his discussion of anthropologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl's concept of the law of participation. In prefacing this discussion, Kadushin asks the question that we asked at the beginning of this chapter:

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[254] pp. 184-185.

[255] Kadushin's original commentary on *Seder Eliahu* was, in fact, a middle-range theory of sorts according to Merton's definition—as it was "intermediate to general theories of social systems which are too remote from particular classes of social behavior" and "close enough to observed data to be incorporated in propositions that permit empirical testing," "deal[ing] with deliminated aspects of social phenomena" (*On Social Structure and Science*, p. 41). Kadushin was very careful *not* to present it as a general theory of rabbinics, arguing that "[t]he claim that there is an inherent relationship among rabbinic concepts can be made with justice, on the basis of the present work, only with regard to Seder Eliahu" and that "[w]henever subsequently I use the term 'rabbinic theology' or like generalizations it should be understood that I have reference only to rabbinic theology as exemplified in this Midrash" (*Theology of Seder Eliahu,* p. 22). It became a more general theory with the publication of *Organic Thinking*, which makes a broader, more abstract argument that was not specific to the text under discussion and which, indeed, posits that organic thinking is a universal human characteristic.

[256] *Theology of Seder Eliahu*, p. xxii.

> Did peoples in the past other than Israel possess an organic complex of concepts? The overwhelming importance of society, again and again indicated in the researches of all the social sciences,[257] makes it likely that organic thinking is an abiding feature of man's mental life, a supposition likely enough, at any rate, to merit further investigation. Substantiation of this supposition will amount to a demonstration that all religion and ethics which are social products are not an arbitrary, chaotic hodge-podge of historical accidents but possess an order inherent in the very nature of society. Techniques and conclusions developed in the course of such investigation may even aid us to grapple with the complicated processes of present-day society.[258]

At first glance, this appears to imply a false dichotomy—inasmuch as Kadushin is suggesting that either his system possesses some universality, or that progress in the social sciences may hit a wall should cultures be revealed to be an "arbitrary, chaotic hodge-podge of historical accidents." The history of the social sciences themselves suggests that there are many other options. But what he really has in mind is something much more general and tentative—the anthropological concept of the law of participation—which is certainly organic in character, but not in the more specific sense of Kadushin's work.

That said, J.M. Long's succinct definition of the law of participation, written in the late 19th century, could be easily mistaken for a description of Kadushin's organismic complex:

> Social institutions are the result of the condensed and accumulated wisdom and experience of past ages. It is by education, by assimilating into their own mental life this wisdom and experience of the past as embodied in language, art and institutions, that the social units are prepared to enter into this organized combination of society and to enjoy its blessings ... Thus, by the principle of participation, each individual member of society enters into the combined thought

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[257] On its own, this is a somewhat strange and tautological statement; obviously the social sciences would treat society as important, just as the natural sciences would treat nature as important. But perhaps this was a more general acknowledgment, by Kadushin, that the traditions of philosophy and theology are products of social conditioning, a belief that distinguishes the postmodern approach to philosophy from what has been characterized as the modernist approach. We will examine the issue of social conditioning in a more general sense, as it pertains to Kadushin's philosophy, in the next chapter.

[258] *Organic Thinking,* p. 254.

> and activity of his age ... By this wonderful gift of participation, which each one obtains through education and the development of personality, the individual becomes a living unit in the social organism, and thus has his own life expanded into the universal life of Humanity.[259]

More contemporary definitions of the law of participation are clearer, and emphasize its practical role in blurring boundaries of identity and causality. Intellectual historian Geoffrey Galt Harpham's definition, for example, is accurate and fairly straightforward:

> Perpetual metamorphosis is the central premise of mythic thought, which operates on the principle of the cosmic continuum. According to this principle, no realm of being, visible or invisible, past or present, is absolutely discontinuous with any other, but all equally accessible and mutually interdependent.
>
> Lucien Lévy-Bruhl called this sense of unity the "law of participation," or identity between objects neither physically contiguous nor causally related; mythic thought in general, he said, was based on a "participation mystique" ... Lévy-Bruhl characterized the mind that could sustain such thoughts "pre-logical," which was unfortunate and ill-informed...[260]

Kadushin took issue with the French anthropologist Lévy-Bruhl, who associated the law of participation with contemporaneous research on what he described as primitive thought. Kadushin felt that the principle was entirely too vague, and did not take into account the valuational complexity of social structures in the industrialized world:

> Primitive mentality as described by Lévy-Bruhl and rabbinic theology as we have described it here are ... similar in two respects and vastly different in a third. Like rabbinic theology, primitive thought is non-hierarchical and, again like rabbinic theology, this non-hierarchical thought acts like a framework for logical thinking. Unlike rabbinic theology, however, primitive thought does not possess a pattern of clearly discernible concepts, a complex of concepts each member of which, though related to all the rest, has a marked individuality of its own expressed through its

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[259] *Studies in the Philosophy of History and the New Science of Sociology* (Toof, 1884), p. 23.

[260] *On the Grotesque*, p. 77.

> own power to abstract and generalize ... Primitive mentality, to be sure, is a form of organic thinking, but it is an undeveloped form, lacking aspects observable in mature forms. Anthropologists sometimes fail to appreciate the distance between primitive and civilized man.[261]

What Kadushin does not acknowledge is that there is ample evidence of organismic thought among the oral societies to which Kadushin and Lévy-Bruhl might refer as primitive. In *Upheavals of Thought*, for example, Martha Nussbaum describes a partly-communicable cultural emphasis that is, in general terms, analogous to Kadushin's idea of the fundamental concepts:

> ...[Christine] Lutz shows that the Ifaluk word for love, *fago*, is also the word for compassionate care of the weak, sadness at the lot of the unfortunate, and so forth. It thus covers part of the territory of "compassion," and yet it is the central term for personal love. Lutz plausibly argues that Americans focus on romantic love as the paradigm case of "love," while the Ifaluk focus on maternal nurturance and, more generally, on meeting the basic needs of another, as the paradigm experience of *fago* ... [I]t is plausible to think that the culture's vocabulary does also shape, to some extent, its members' sense of what is salient in experience.[262]

Kadushin also fails to acknowledge the degree to which early rabbinic culture could have qualified as primitive under a Eurocentric post-Enlightenment anthropological model[263]—existing, as it is largely did, as an oral tribal culture independent of the empires that defined the written and artistic traditions of the period. (Even the Torah was, according

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[261] *Organic Thinking*, pp. 255-256. Kadushin also discusses Lévy-Bruhl's ideas in *The Rabbinic Mind*, pp. 143-147, but primarily with respect to Lévy-Bruhl's concept of what he referred to as primitive "preconnections," which are not particularly relevant to this thesis.

[262] p. 156.

[263] And, given the antisemitic climate of the European Enlightenment, frequently did. Voltaire's description of the Jewish people as "an ignorant and barbarous people" who live by "the law of savages beginning to assemble themselves into a nation" (*Philosophical Dictionary*, vol. 4, p. 214) was representative of the spirit of the era at least in France, and served the dual effect of criticizing the foundation of Christianity, the religion of most contemporaneous European earthly authorities. When Emile Durkheim remarked centuries later that "Judaism, in spite of its great historic role, still clings to the most primitive religious forms in many respects" (*Suicide*, p. 376), he was restating conventional wisdom. In fighting to classify Judaism as something other than primitive, Kadushin contradicted centuries of antisemitic folk anthropology.

to most scholars, compiled by residents of the Babylonian empire.[264]) Kadushin's attempt to define the Jewish tradition as non-primitive based on the scientific achievements of later rabbinic writers is, by virtue of its anachronism (and the vagueness of "primitivism" as a term), unpersuasive:

> Modern writers have described and assayed the rabbinic achievements in mathematics, astronomy, medicine, surgery, and the natural sciences. The work in these several fields of science was, naturally, done by the learned class. Is it possible, however, for such work to be done unless a general idea of order in nature is held by the people at large? In the rabbinic period, in any case, the people at large did possess a general idea of regularity and order in the physical world.[265]

If he were writing today, it is unlikely that Kadushin would need to defend rabbinic Judaism from what he took to be Lévy-Bruhl's implicit argument that "preconnections" in primitive societies were analogous to the non-hierarchical character of rabbinic texts—at least not on Lévy-Bruhl's terms.[266] The concept of "primitive" societies is intrinsically both scientifically questionable and morally dubious, as Jim Ife argues in *Human Rights from Below*:

> Along with the Enlightenment came a strengthening of ideas of Western superiority and a consequent devaluing of other cultural traditions as being more "primitive" and as being somewhat behind in the inevitable march of human progress. Not only did this reinforce racism, but it also gave a moral justification to colonialism. If others are less "enlightened" and more "primitive" than we are, then we readily

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[264] As noted, inter alia, in the *New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Prentice-Hall, 1990), p. 5: "It is generally agreed that Gen-Deut never functioned as a complete Torah until the exilic period."

[265] *The Rabbinic Mind*, p. 147.

[266] As Marianna Torgovnick argues in her epilogue to *Gone Primitive* (p. 246): "[T]his distinction between 'us' and 'them' is becoming ever more tenuous in the postmodern world. More ... something in 'us' habitually resists seeing 'them' as alien—whether because we project our own concerns onto them, or have oceanic aspirations, or faith in a universal human nature, or some combination of these factors. Western desires for the primitive have not waned as primitive societies have modified or been forced to modify traditional ways of life. But those desires have become more and more unambiguously tinged with nostalgia as primitive societies ceased to present obstacles to the spread of Western values. The West seems to need the primitive as a precondition and a supplement to its sense of self: it always creates heightened versions of the primitive as nightmare or pleasant dream."

> assume an obligation to "enlighten" them by helping them to replace their inferior cultural traditions with our more developed ones. Hence the Western colonialist project of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries had a moral justification that earlier colonial escapades had not. No longer was colonialism simply about resources, power and greed. It could now be justified by more "noble" aims of enlightenment in the form of education (in Western knowledge), religious evangelism, imposition of Western traditions of law and governance and so on.[267]

Kadushin never fully explains his assertion that "primitive" societies operating under the law of participation represent an "undeveloped" form of organic thinking that illustrates "the distance between primitive and civilized man." Since he never conducted firsthand anthropological research, it is safe to assume that he would have been left to rely on contemporaneous anthropological sources which would have described "primitive" societies in much the same terms he used. But his failure to cite examples from studies of specific cultures as evidence that non-"civilized" cultures do not use organic thinking renders his argument on this point poorly-substantiated. It seems reasonable to dismiss it as an assumption, and as an unfortunate product of its time[268]—though by no means unique in that respect. And if we do dismiss it, then Kadushin's more general argument for the universality of organismic complices, free of its obligation to prove that the rabbinic tradition is not "primitive," becomes more persuasive:

> The theory that an aspect of man's mental life is organismic dovetails with our knowledge of other aspects of man's nature ... A man's emotional life, Freud has shown, is an integrated whole, and Gestalt-psychology has demonstrated that his sense perceptions are "organic and dynamic" ... Unless man's mental life is absolutely divorced from the rest of his nature, his mental life, too, his concepts, must possess an organismic aspect. To argue, therefore, that organic thinking represents a pre-logical stage of thought which civilized man has outgrown, that is not something native to man as man, is to argue against all that we know of man's

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[267] p. 109.

[268] The regressivism of Kadushin's hard-and-fast distinction between "primitive" and "civilized" cultures is not at all representative of his general approach to social hierarchies and human rights. I would speculate that it represents a fear on Kadushin's part that the lack of hierarchical organization in rabbinic thought could characterize it as pre-civilized, a fear that contemporaneous thinkers shared.

constitution.[269]

Kadushin suggests, in particular, that application of his system of thought to the field of the psychology of religion could be fruitful:

> The theory of organic thinking can prove helpful in social studies generally and particularly in the study of religion ... The study of religion has been wrongly oriented in respect to both psychology and philosophy. The unusual personalities, the saints, the ascetics, the mystics who see visions and hear locutions, have been of primary interest to the psychology of religion; and when it has analyzed religious phenomena exhibited not in individuals but in groups, the phenomena were out of the ordinary, bizarre, abnormal. When associated with religion, the term "psychological" has acquired a connotation similar to that of "pathological." By means of the theory of organic thinking, however, we have been able ... to describe the religious experience shared by all members of the folk, by the common man and the spiritual leader at once, religious experience as a factor in the ordinary, normal course of every-day life.[270]

It is that question, the question of the efficacy of organic thinking in addressing questions germane to religious studies, upon which the remainder of this chapter focuses.

4.3 The Scalability of Kadushin's Religious Hermeneutic

Steinberg, in his 1979 dissertation, suggests an avenue for future Kadushin studies that has to a great extent inspired my topic:

> Can Kadushin's categories be applied to the study of the valuational structures of other cultures and societies?[271]

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[269] *Organic Thinking*, p. vii.

[270] *Organic Thinking*, pp. vii-viii.

[271] Steinberg, p. 418.

My answer to this question is a definitive "yes." Kadushin's system of thought can be applied to other valuational structures, both secular and religious, though this fact in itself tells me very little. If I were to assert that a specific cultural or religious system consists of an organismic complex formed by the interaction of value-concepts, I would be making a statement about that system that is neither provable nor falsifiable. This suggests that the question is not so much whether we *can* apply Kadushin's system to other traditions, but instead whether it is effective and worthwhile to do so—whether Kadushin's system is, in the terminology of computer science, scalable[272]—and that is a much more difficult question to answer.

Simon Greenberg, who applied Kadushin's ideas (to considerable effect) in his life as a Conservative Jewish leader, took a broad view with respect to the scalability of the term "value-concepts":

> Every distinguishable universe of discourse possesses value concepts, for the human mind is universally characterized not only by its ability to formulate concepts, but also by its irrepressible insistence on seeking to bestow significance upon what it encounters. That it does primarily by means of value concepts. Anyone who undertakes to study the role of value concepts within a specific society would find that Kadushin's description of the nature of rabbinic value concepts is thus relevant, for, while the role of value concepts may differ from society to society, their essential nature is the same no matter in what society they function. They cannot be rigorously defined. They cannot be logically deduced. Within any given complex of concepts they are constitutive of one another. Hence organic or organismic thinking is an integral, ineradicable function of the human mind.[273]

The appeal of the term "value-concepts" is in evidence if one looks at how often the term is referenced, even in contexts where Kadushin's work is not otherwise part of the discussion. As noted in the next chapter, political scientist Daniel Elazar, ethical

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[272] "*Scalable*," the Linux Information Project (http://www.linfo.org/scalable.html) tells us, "refers to the situation in which the *throughput* changes roughly in proportion to the change in the number of units or the size of the inputs. It can also be looked at as the cost per unit of output remaining relatively constant with proportional changes in the number of units or the size of the inputs. *Scalability* refers to the extent to which some system, component or process is scalable." In a less technology-specific context, scalability would refer to the relative usefulness of an idea when reapplied in a broader or narrower context than the author had intended.

[273] Greenberg in *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind*, p. 35.

philosopher Georg Henrik von Wright, and post-Holocaust theologian David R. Blumenthal have made considerable use of the term "value-concepts" in their respective analyses of the contemporary world without specifically implying a rabbinic context, and without bringing into the discussion other terms that were part and parcel of value-concepts as Kadushin had originally defined them. Marilyn Anne Schick's master's thesis, *Teaching Value Concepts in South Korea* (2005),[274] uses value-concepts without making any reference to Kadushin at all—which is not uncommon.[275] The scalability of "value-concepts," as a term, is impressive. A search for the exact phrase "value concepts" on Google returns 115,000 results; a search for "Max Kadushin," only 5,840. The term has clearly achieved some measure of usefulness beyond the scope of rabbinic hermeneutics.

But this vernacular usage is not connected, in any meaningful way, with Kadushin's idea of the organismic complex, the four fundamental concepts, auxiliary ideas, and so forth. And the scalability of these ideas, grounded as they are in the structure of rabbinic language, could be significantly lower. If I were to unpack the segregationist implications of the phrase "the Southern way of life"[276] using Kadushin's methodology, to name one example, Kadushin's narrow definition of value-concepts would actually classify the phrase as an auxiliary idea rather than a value-concept.[277] It is also more useful to discuss the phrase as it exists relative to a few other representative value-concepts, rather than attempting to relate it to a specific number of fundamental concepts or to an organismic

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[274] Available online. URL: http://digitalcollections.sit.edu/ipp_collection/139/

[275] It is likely, for example, that the founders of the Georgia real estate company (Value Concepts, Inc.) and Pennsylvania corporate finance consulting firm (Value Concepts, LL.C.) that made use of the phrase "value-concepts" did not have Kadushin's rabbinic hermeneutics in mind.

[276] As noted in the next chapter, Kadushin's system can be especially useful in the analysis of problematic ideas. While "the Southern way of life" is an auxiliary concept, for example, "white" would certainly qualify as a value-concept—most likely a fundamental concept, within a segregationist organismic complex—and while the word itself is not offensive, a discussion of the concretization of whiteness could be very useful in illustrating the subtle power of institutional racism.

[277] Although Kadushin is consistent in applying his definition of value-concepts, this definition is both very narrow and very complex—reducing the scalability of the term considerably if we limit it to its original application. The election (*bahar*) of Israel, for example, would not be classified as a value-concept in Kadushin's system (*The Rabbinic Mind*, p. 55) because it is a verb rather than a noun: "[T]he idea of the chosen people or the election of Israel, too, appears to be an auxiliary idea. In all of rabbinic literature, so far as we have been able to discover, there is no conceptual term, no valuational noun form equivalent to the terms 'the chosen people' or 'election of Israel.' However the idea functioned, therefore, it does not seem to have crystallized into a value-concept."

complex. Greenberg's description of the universality of value-concepts applies only if we put aside, for our purposes, the particularity of the term as Kadushin describes it relative to the rabbinic corpus and use a broader definition. The core of the idea of value-concepts is highly scalable, but Kadushin's full hermeneutic taxonomy—which incorporates fundamental concepts, subconcepts, cognitive and defined terms, auxiliary ideas, the organismic complex, and so forth—is too particular to be adopted in its entirety in most contexts. And Kadushin is very clear, in his response to Kaplan in the final paragraph of *Organic Thinking*, that he does not believe that rabbinic value-concepts can be assessed independently of their association with the broader organismic complex.[278] "Since only the rabbinic complex as an integrated whole exhibits an order," he writes, "the single concepts are not complete in themselves."[279] It is probably necessary to deemphasize that aspect of Kadushin's philosophy in order to adopt a scalable approach to value-concepts, but this is not necessarily contrary to the spirit of Kadushin's system. As he writes in *Organic Thinking* (emphasis mine):

> The "necessary" ideas or concepts which establish man in the world of nature have been the subject of much careful study. But are there not other concepts, notably those that affect his social relationships, which are also habitual, canalizing his moment-to-moment experience and in that sense "necessary" concepts? Being habitual or unpremeditated these concepts are the abiding elements of a man's character, the threads that make up the pattern of his personality—or, to use a word upon which we shall soon elaborate, his values. Because rabbinic theology presents precisely such concepts, our analysis may therefore have bearings beyond the limits of its subject-matter. *It is not unlikely that in describing the kind of coherence characteristic of rabbinic theology and the consequences of that coherence we are delineating the features of the valuational life in general.*[280]

Kadushin describes his enquiry, in other words, as a case study. It is not immediately clear that he would object to piecemeal appropriation of his methods; it was

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[278] *Organic Thinking*, p. 261: "Reinterpretation today begins with an attempt to find 'equivalents'—as Kaplan calls them—equivalents in modern life of the old organic concepts. Supposing conditions to be favorable to the emergence of a new organic level, its emergence will mean, however, that reinterpretation will lose its piece-meal character and become a method for transposing the old organic complex as a whole."

[279] *Organic Thinking*, p. 235.

[280] p. 179.

piecemeal appropriation of rabbinic terminology that bothered him.[281] Very few literary traditions are as self-contained as the rabbinic corpus,[282] and assessing individual value-concepts within an organismic complex that consists primarily of words and phrases that have visibly been borrowed from other organismic complices may not technically be possible. It is certainly easier to use the idea of value-concepts on its own, though this usage is not consistent with the organismic, process-centered priorities of Kadushin's original rabbinic system.

Nor would Kadushin be likely to object to application of his methods in a non-religious context. As he writes in the introduction to *Organic Thinking*:

> Since rabbinic theology and social values in general present the identical problem as regards coherence, the former would seem to be but a special case of the latter ... If rabbinic theology is but a special case of social values in general, the more we shall learn concerning the coherence of rabbinic theology and cognate matters the greater will also be our knowledge of the valuational life in general.[283]

Kadushin does not argue for the validity of an all-inclusive God-concept[284]—and there is very little about his system that, by all appearances, *was* intended to be all-inclusive. None of his major works are primarily directed outside of the Jewish milieu, and his organismic complex is Jewish, indeed rabbinic, in character. That being the case,

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[281] Kadushin's emphasis on retaining as much of a given system as possible is not unusual among postliberal and postcritical theologians who, no longer faced with the fundamentalist obligation to comprehensively defend the propositional validity of a given system or text, can afford the luxury of retaining it more-or-less in its entirety. In *The Nature of Doctrine* (pp. 61-62), Lindbeck quotes John Henry Newman: "The Rubicon was a narrow stream. A slight advantage gained is often at once an omen and a measure of victory ... An accidental badge, or an inconsistency, may embody the principle and be the seat of life of a party. A system must be looked at as a whole; and may as little admit of mending or altering as an individual. We cannot change one joint of our body for a better; nor can we with impunity open one vein."

[282] In *The Sage in Jewish Society of Late Antiquity* (p. 22), Richard Kalmin notes that "[t]he chronological and geographical data supplied by the Talmuds, while largely unverifiable from external sources, is strikingly consistent throughout rabbinic documents and from one rabbinic document to another."

[283] p. 3.

[284] Indeed, he makes a rather forceful argument that it is inconsistent with the nature of the organismic complex (*Organic Thinking*, p. 230): "While the Rabbis had profound experience of God, they had, strange though it may appear at first, no all-inclusive God-concept ... Free of the confines of an all-inclusive God-concept, the Rabbis' experience of God was nonetheless unified ... Accompanying every concretization of an organic concept was the adumbration of the integrated complex fraught with experience of God. In other words, the experience of God was a characteristic of the organic complex as a whole."

reading Kadushin's system of thought as if it were intended to function as a general religious hermeneutic in any sense would be a mistake. He does, however, posit universal characteristics that could be relevant to other religious traditions.

4.4 Process Hermeneutics and the Christian Imagination

Max Kadushin developed his system of thought in conversation with both Judaism and Western philosophy. No religious tradition has developed in closer alignment with the Western philosophical canon than Christianity, which has largely functioned as the *de facto* state religion of the West due to its association with European colonial entities. Consequently, there has been no major philosophical movement in the past two thousand years that has not been marbled (with varying degrees of success) with Christian theology; Augustine marbled Christianity with Platonism, Thomas Aquinas with Aristotelianism, C.S. Lewis with modernism, Paul Ricouer and Paul Tillich with phenomenology and hermeneutics, and so forth. An entire branch of Christian theology, apologetics, is dedicated to addressing new philosophical and scientific challenges to the faith.

But the case of process philosophy represents a rare case in which Christian apologetics has more-or-less swallowed up the tradition to which it has responded. Christian process theology has eclipsed process philosophy in influence, incorporating an element of panentheism into Christian theology and a little Christian theology into the process tradition. Process theology generally implies natural theology, Unitarianism, a God who is either completely non-interventionist or functions only through persuasion, universalism or rejection of afterlife beliefs, and deemphasis on scriptural and traditional authority—all ideas that were popularized in the process tradition by Alfred North Whitehead's theologically-focused successor, Charles Hartshorne, during his long and prolific career. In her introduction to *Jewish Theology and Process Thought*, Debra Lubarsky characterizes an intricate and metaphysically-focused natural theology as being central to process philosophy itself:

Process philosophy is a form of postmodern thought in that it supersedes many of

> the philosophical assumptions of modernity, including, especially, late modernity's rejection of theism. Like deconstructive postmodernism, it rejects supernaturalism, the idea of a totally independent, absolutely powerful God who transcends the world. But unlike the deconstructionists who proclaim the death of God and hence of all authority and truth, process thought affirms that God, the soul of the universe, is alive ... In brief, a process metaphysics embraces both the finite world and divinity; defends freedom, purpose, and reason as inherent in the structure of reality; insists that reality is "out there"; argues against both pure objectivity and pure subjectivity; and upholds the goals of truth, beauty, and goodness. In taking these positions, process philosophy rejects philosophical materialism, dualism, and sense-empiricism.[285]

This approach doesn't do Kadushin much good; he had no interest in engaging the philosophical assumptions of modernity on a purely metaphysical level. And it does very little good for Christian scholars whose primary concern is not for the abstract and intangible hierarchies of the theological cosmos, but rather for tradition, scripture, liturgy, morality, and the social gospel.[286] Process theologian Ronald Farmer, an ordained Disciples of Christ minister and religious studies professor at Chapman University, noted potential benefits in bridging the gap between process theology and biblical hermeneutics:

> After years of exploration and experimentation, my quest for a satisfying hermeneutic brought me to an impasse—an impasse encountered by others in the field of biblical studies as well ... A few years after graduate school, I began to study process thought. Although my first explorations were confined to theological and philosophical matters (for example, God and the problem of evil), I soon discovered that process thought had exciting implications for the development of a hermeneutic.[287]

But Farmer's approach is so completely faithful to Whitehead's metaphysics that

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[285] pp. 7-8.

[286] This is not to suggest that pure metaphysics are irrelevant to religious life, but I would argue that novel metaphysical doctrines, because of their flighty and speculative nature, are ill-suited to reliably and sustainably resolve a serious personal or cultural crisis of faith on their own, however useful they may otherwise prove to be. I am reminded of U.S. Supreme Court justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's famous remark that "doctrinal limbs too swiftly shaped, experience teaches, may prove unstable" (as quoted in "On Privacy and Equality...," *New York Times*, June 16, 1993).

[287] Ronald L. Farmer, *Beyond the Impasse: The Promise of a Process Hermeneutic* (Mercer, 1997), pp. 45-46.

what he posits, in the end, is not so much a hermeneutic as it is an assertion of the primacy of metaphysics over hermeneutics and, with it, a roundabout dismissal of the verbum interius as a serious object of study. His adaptation of Whitehead's conceptual prehensions to a hermeneutic system, for example, defines them exclusively in terms of functioning as conduits for "eternal objects which are to be the predicate for the emerging proposition."[288] His emphasis on metaphysics leads to a system that is, in practice, abstract to the point where the text itself is no longer the focus of his inquiry, but merely a conduit for a reassertion of tangentially-related metaphysical doctrines. His applied hermeneutic on texts referring to judgment in the Revelation of St. John, for example, is simply a restatement of mainstream Christian process eschatology:

> Because God prehends all actual occasions, each momentary occasion experiences itself in terms of all other actual occasions of the created order. Each actual occasion experiences itself as all others experienced it. Joys that it gave to others will be experienced, and so will the evils that inflicted. The relational nature of reality will be fully felt ...
>
> This movement toward a unification of feelings is a result of divine concrescence (or growing together), and this concrescence is governed exclusively by the divine aim or will. Thus, actual occasions resurrected in God have no choice but to experience judgment. To the degree that the occasion has conformed itself to the initial aim, it will experience the process of divine concrescence as wonderfully liberating, as heaven; to the degree that it has departed from the initial aim, it will experience the process as painful, as hell.[289]

However effectively this may address the problem of evil, or posit an emotionally resonant afterlife belief, it highlights the reason why Kadushin's attempt to apply a process-philosophy approach to hermeneutics stands out: process philosophy as it exists today is typically so brazenly metaphysical that it leaves little room for the tentative and personal-communal process of hermeneutics. Simple assertion of metaphysical principles, and the insistence that a text must be harmonized with them, is not what would generally be described as a hermeneutic act, and is certainly not consistent, in terms of methodology,

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[288] p. 94.

[289] pp. 190-191.

with Kadushin's more subtle and communal approach to texts. The impasse to which Farmer refers will remain in place for any process theologian (or any other kind of theologian) who dictates to texts rather than engaging in dialogue with them.[290]

A humbler, if far more metaphysically orthodox, approach to the Bible can be found in Locke Bowman's *Teaching for Christian Hearts, Souls, and Minds: A Constructive Holistic Approach to Christian Education*, which is explicitly based on Kadushin's work.[291] His difference with Kadushin is subtle but present, as illustrated by this passage:

> The concepts of religious faith are treasured, and invested with the deepest of spiritual commitment called forth by the Spirit of God. They cannot be defined, for they accrue to themselves the rich recorded experience of a people who belong to a living God. They are old but ever new. They are parts of a magnificent whole, and this wholeness we are never able to fully apprehend, for it is of the very character of God.
>
> As the value-concepts are seen to be ever so closely interrelated with one another, and as we explore the Scriptures and the traditions of God's faithful people for evidence of this total picture, we discover what Rabbi Kadushin called "organismic thinking."[292]

Bowman holds that Christian value-concepts are not only religious in origin, but divine. I do not believe that his statement is a dishonest adaptation of Kadushin's work—his belief is completely consistent with an incarnational ecclesiology that recognizes the

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[290] Though I do recognize that Christian process theology's implications, to a great extent, force the hand of its proponents with respect to the question of hermeneutics. Asserting that ancient cultures consistently advocated a specific and intricately-detailed 20th-century cosmology over a period of centuries is not easy, but it is the approach to the Bible that a biblically conservative process theology requires. Whitehead and Hartshorne, who did not believe in the authority of the Bible, would have been freer to use a more evenhanded hermeneutic approach to the Bible, had they wished—but the fact that they did not should not be surprising, as they had little theological reason to do so.

[291] Bowman's book also contains, on page 70, the single most elegant four-sentence summary of Kadushin's system that I have ever read: "We are schooled in the Western tradition to organize our thinking into premises that follow upon another into logically constructed credal systems. Abundant evidence exists that premedieval rabbinic thought avoided this way of working. As the Rabbis read Scripture ... they were under no heavy compunction to arrange their thoughts into theological outlines. They were not troubled by contradictions or inconsistencies in what they read; the important thing to note was how each form of writing in its own way spoke of God's love, God's justice, Torah, and Israel."

[292] p. 28.

corporeal Church as the Body of Christ, and any expansion of Kadushin's system into a belief system that has such an ecclesiology would need to attribute divine authorship of some kind to the value-concepts—but it is not consistent with Kadushin's emphasis on their non-supernatural character as elements in the normal valuational life. As he writes in *The Rabbinic Mind:*

> Rabbinic value-concepts are inseparable from normal, everyday, moment-to-moment experience. They are mental habits that are become second nature, more correctly, in view of their organismic character, part of nature.[293]

Ecclesiology, and not metaphysics, is the primary obstacle between Kadushin's system and its application in a Christian theological context. Judaism has always primarily had an action-oriented, this-worldly character, and Christianity, which developed under the influence of dualistic Greco-Roman philosophy, has traditionally not. Christianity has historically emphasized creeds, metaphysical justifiability,[294] beatified martyrs, divine intervention, good and evil as spiritual forces, a literal Satan, and a supernatural world of souls existing as a substratum behind our material, corporeal existence. Judaism, in most of its manifestations, takes place on Earth. It is full of flawed characters, personal experience, laws, liturgy, and a sense of corporeality.[295] It is, fundamentally, more fertile terrain for Kadushin's earthly, action-centered spirituality than most forms of Christianity would be.

But this is not to say that Kadushin's system cannot be adapted at all, though sometimes there will be unpredictable effects. In his essay "Christian Values Concepts,"

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[293] *The Rabbinic Mind,* p. 31.

[294] In his article ("Christian Value Concepts") Comstock illustrates this difference by asking, with respect to the viability of Kadushin's system on Christian soil: "Could Christians consider the Bible a tool for ordering and regulating Christian life rather than primarily a source of beliefs and stories to be justified theologically?" (p. 116)

[295] In response to Christianity's historical emphasis on metaphysics and creeds, for example, Abraham Joshua Heschel's words from *Who is Man?* (Stanford University Press, 1965) come to mind: "It would be a contradiction in terms to assume that the attainment of transcendent meaning consists in comprehending a notion." (p. 79)

published in *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind*, theologian Gary Comstock assesses the possibility of "redemption" as a Christian value-concept, acknowledges the denominational diversity of his faith, and concludes with an understanding of the Bible that emphasizes community over metaphysics:

> Learning to approach the Bible with rabbinic eyes has had some unpredictable consequences ... For me, this means looking to the text less for a single universalizable principle valid for governing the lives of all rational people everywhere, and more for hundreds of particular, traditional *mitsvot* valid for governing the lives of my sisters, my brothers, and me, in the Ames Mennonite Church.[296]

This more practical, pastoral and prescriptive, but less universalist and implicitly less colonialist, attitude towards Christianity would seem to be more in keeping with a pluralistic and postcolonial world than the cosmic philosophical model that has largely prevailed since the patristic era—and suggests that postmodern Christian theologians may find, within postcritical hermeneutic interpretations of the Oral Torah, edifying parallels to their own efforts.

4.5 Normal Mysticism and Religious Experience

Central to Kadushin's approach to religious experience is his concept of normal mysticism, which celebrates ordinary faith and downgrades the relative importance of mystics, prophets, and any others who claim to have a particularly compelling supernatural experience of God.[297] In so doing, it places greater emphasis on the non-supernatural or at

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[296] p. 140.

[297] As he explains in *The Rabbinic Mind* (pp. 252-253): "[T]hat which the Rabbis in general experienced, and the folk as well ... was the experience of God *unaccompanied* by psychic phenomena such as visions or locutions. Here, then, is another feature of normal mysticism. In order to achieve that kind of mysticism, a person must develop habits of action that are at the same time habits of sensitivity, but this is largely a matter of cultivation, of training. The psychological equipment required is only the sort called for also in ordinary, day-to-day living, not that of any unusual temperament ... Persons whose psychological constitution allows them to see visions and hear locutions are certainly not excluded; in fact, in the concept of *Gilluy Shekinah* the value-complex gives room for such extraordinary phenomena. But that very concept, we found, is not completely in keeping with the nature of the value-complex as a whole."

least ambiguously non-supernatural religious experience of the average observant Jew, a form of religious experience accessible to everyone and granting epistemological privilege to no one. It is, like most of Kadushin's philosophy, communal and anti-hierarchical in its relative orientation. "The capacity for normal mystical experience on the part of the common man," Kadushin writes, "was a basic characteristic of rabbinic Judaism."[298]

In practical terms, this means, inter alia, a rejection of the more exclusive, privileged, and supernaturally-oriented traditions of Kabbalah, to which Kadushin refers at one point as "the fantasies of later abnormal mysticism."[299] To the extent that he believes that normal mysticism can be intentionally invoked,[300] he cites the value-concept of *kawwanah*. Tractate *Berakot* folio 17a recurs throughout rabbinic literature: "It matters not whether you do much or little, so long as your heart is directed to heaven."[301] The verb form of "directed" becomes a noun, *kawwanah*, as rabbinic scholars C.G. Montefiore and H. Loewe explain:

> The word "directed" is of much importance. The verb suggested a noun, *kawwanah*, which is one of the fine religious creations of the Rabbis. It depends upon Biblical verses such as I Chron. XXIX, 18,[302] but is a new conception all the same. *Kawwanah* (intention, concentration, collectedness) is especially required in prayer, though the legalism of the Rabbis could not prevent them from delightedly discussing when it was necessary, and when it was not necessary, in the recitation of the statutory daily prayers, whether in the synagogue, or at home, or elsewhere ... [Though] [t]he predominant view of the Rabbis ... is that intention is certainly necessary.[303]

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[298] *Worship and Ethics*, p. 16.

[299] *Organic Thinking*, p. 321.

[300] And to a certain extent he does not believe that it can, as per *Worship and Ethics*, p. 17: "Men differed, of course, in their capacity for normal mysticism. Some of the rabbis themselves, on their own admission, could not achieve *kawwanah* at certain times. This was doubtless true of many common men as well."

[301] "The following brief sentence occurs again and again...," from Montefiore and Loewe, *A Rabbinic Anthology* (Jewish Publication Society of America, 1960), p. 272.

[302] "O LORD, God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel, keep this desire in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you." (NIV)

[303] *A Rabbinic Anthology,* pp. 272-273.

Kadushin shares this predominant view, at least with respect to normal mysticism:

> *Kawwanah* in this phase amounts to nothing less than the deliberate cultivation of an inward experience. True, the other concepts involved in an experience of worship determine its idea-content, but it is *kawwanah* which makes any experience of worship possible at all. In other words, without conveying the idea-content of an experience of worship, *kawwanah* is as large a factor in such an experience as concepts which do express the idea-content.[304]

The purpose of normal mysticism, in Kadushin's view, is personal and communal transformation—a sense of what one might refer to as a connection to something larger than the self, an awareness of history, and deeper ties with the Jewish community:

> Normal mysticism is not infrequently accompanied by changes, for the time being, in the psychological constitution of the individual. We have observed how in some acts of worship the individual achieves a larger self. More striking is the change that occurs, during the recitation of several berakot, in the individual's consciousness of time, the past and the future coalescing with the present.[305]

Note, however, his use of the word "psychological": he is referring here to natural processes, to changes in subjective identity, and not to supernatural unitive experiences. His assessment of these, most notably in his response to Evelyn Underhill's philosophy of mysticism, is more critical:

> At some points [abnormal] mysticism and normal mysticism seem to converge, yet at these points, too, more is dissimilar than similar. [Abnormal] [m]ysticism seems to have something in common with normal mysticism when we are told that for "the primitive consciousness of selfhood" mystic life substitutes "a wider consciousness." This statement reminds us of those occasions at worship when the individual associates himself with Israel or with mankind, occasions when he posses[s]es a larger self, "a wider consciousness" ... [But] we see that "a wider

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[304] *Worship and Ethics*, pp. 186-187.

[305] *Worship and Ethics*, p. 16.

> consciousness" means one thing when it refers to the association of the individual with mankind and an entirely different thing when it refers to "a conscious relation with the Absolute" ... Since they make for self-expression, not for "self-naughting," rabbinic acts of worship are emphatically not a means of communion or fusion with the divine.[306]

In fact, he tends to dismiss supernaturalism altogether in his definition of normal mysticism. So if normal mysticism doesn't promote fusion with the divine, and provides no psychic epistemological benefits, what is it *for*? In Kadushin's terms, it better integrates the individual with the Jewish faith as a whole by concretizing and communicating value-concepts. Normal mysticism becomes, in Kadushin's system, what it *feels* like to integrate the fundamental concepts of rabbinic Judaism into individual and communal life:

> There is no concept in the entire value-complex that may not be integrated, at some time or other, with a concept symbolizing mystical experience. Far from being a rare or peculiar experience, the mystical awareness of God was, therefore, a steady aspect of the valuational life as a whole, an aspect of the normal valuational life of the individual.[307]

Although this *sounds* esoteric, intricate, and extremely novel, it is none of these. In *The Encyclopedia of Judaism*, Jacob Neusner summarizes the traditional rabbinic theology of Jewish liturgy in terms that are in perfect alignment with Kadushin's concept of normal mysticism:

> The sages reframed Scripture's history into laws governing the social order, turning events from singular, sequential, one-time and unique happenings into exemplary patterns. These encompass the past within the present and join future, present, and past into a single plane of eternity. This mode of thought brings about the formation of liturgies in which all ages meet in one place, the great themes of existence coming together to reshape a very particular moment. That same mode of thought, moreover, insists on the union of the public and the private, the communal and the

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[306] Ibid., pp. 179-180.

[307] *The Rabbinic Mind,* pp. 214-215.

individual, all things subject to the same principle, explained in the same way.[308]

And in the action-focused assessment of Judaism presented by Kadushin, this process finds its purpose—and its apex—in the moral actions that concretize the value-concepts. Kadushin drew no clear distinction between his hermeneutic system and religious experience, or religious experience and ethics, or ethics and his hermeneutic system. All three, in a manner characteristic of the organic model he described, form an integrated whole. The value-concepts are reinforced in religious experience and concretized in ethical acts; religious experience both reinforces, and is reinforced by, value-concepts and ethical observance; and ethical behavior is reinforced by religious experience and is shaped by, and concretizes, value-concepts. The three defining elements of Kadushin's system are inseparable, and cannot function independently of one another. What's more, none of these elements are justified on primarily metaphysical or philosophical grounds. All seem to be based, with at least some degree of accuracy, on the rabbinic corpus itself. But there is also some disengagement with the reader, on all three points, that derail the natural lines of inquiry to which I would expect critical readers would naturally be drawn.

On the matter of value-concepts, for example, Kadushin focuses primarily on establishing the coherence of rabbinic thought—defending the rabbinic tradition against charges that it is incoherent, self-contradictory, or otherwise limited in value. But those who see no value in it would be unlikely to find the value-concept argument persuasive, as it assumes a certain amount of reverence for the terminology of the rabbinic texts. It would be more reasonable to ask, for example, if the rabbinic tradition accurately describes the nature of things relative to the ostensibly contrary traditions of medieval and Enlightenment-era Judaism, or if (as Kaplan suggested) an entirely new model is needed. But this is a question that Kadushin never asks; he focuses on readers who revere the rabbinic corpus and consider it superior to later traditions that emerged, but who nevertheless still feel that it might be incoherent—observant Jews very much like himself,

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[308] "Liturgy of Judaism: Content and Theology," from *The Encyclopedia of Judaism* (New York: Continuum, 1999), p. 811.

who are rational enough to be subject to propositional challenges to their faith but willing to entertain non-propositional responses to these challenges.

Kadushin's philosophy of normal mysticism would logically amount to a critique of Kabbalah and other esoteric mystical traditions—and a reaffirmation of the value of the religious life of the Jewish community as a whole, rather than the teachings of individuals who claim privileged access to the divine. His argument is, in this instance, emotionally resonant—but he clearly wrote the argument to reinforce the beliefs of readers who are already living the experience he describes. It is not as if his readers are likely to be unfamiliar with ordinary spirituality, or incapable of exercising incredulity when confronted with extraordinary empirical claims. Like the rest of Kadushin's work, his theory of normal mysticism consists of very powerful, novel ideas—but because he is pursuing what Charles Kadushin would later describe as a "thick-text" study, it is presented as a one-way conversation. There is little chance of a dialogue with the reader, or answering questions that readers are likely to ask. In this respect, Kadushin's work bears a very strong resemblance to Whitehead's *Process and Reality*: conceptually strong but so self-contained that it feels, at times, like it was written for a different world.

This is not, strictly speaking, Kadushin's fault; he wrote extremely bold work with very little financial or scholarly support over a period of decades. But it does require readers to ask, and answer, their own questions based on his work so that it can be reframed in a way that more directly answers the questions that readers are likely to ask. The anthology *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind* represents, in many respects, an exercise in this effort. Martin Jaffee, a professor of comparative religion and Jewish studies at the University of Washington—Seattle, identified and articulated what I believe to be the core teaching of Kadushin's system in his article "Halakhic Personhood: The Existential Hermeneutic of *Worship and Ethics*." By using a phenomenological approach, he states the subjective experience of Kadushin's organismic complex, normal mysticism, and halakhic prescriptivism, contextualizing Kadushin's description of halakha as "a manifestation of the value-concepts that the practice of the laws can be so whole-souled an expression of the self"[309] and his emphasis on the value-concepts of *tsedakah* (charity)

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[309] *The Rabbinic Mind*, p. 96.

and *gemilut chasadim* (lovingkindness). This is Jaffee's phenomenological description of halakhic personhood, according to Kadushin's system:

> Worshipful consciousness [normal mysticism] ... becomes inseparable from consciousness itself [by virtue of the integration of the value-concepts into the individual consciousness], so that to interpret oneself as being in the world and to interpret oneself as being in the divine presence become a single act of self-understanding. Since the *halakhah* enjoins the recitation of a variety of *berakhot* in all contexts of daily living, every aspect of the experience is capable of occasioning worshipful consciousness ... Among these experiences, and hardly the least of them, is the experience of other-directed responsibility. As we have seen, this responsibility is brought to consciousness in the individual's worshipful discovery of the self as including and standing-for humanity as a whole. In the intensification of one's consciousness of human solidarity, one is empowered to act toward the other as God acts towards oneself.[310]

By answering the questions that philosophy asks, Jaffee has successfully recontextualized Kadushin's system in a way that makes it more easily and obviously scalable. It is also, to return to Lindbeck, consistent with the postcritical emphasis on lived experience that characterizes both Kadushin's system and his own:

> [T]he linguistic-cultural model is part of an outlook that stresses the degree to which human experience is shaped, molded, and in a sense constituted by cultural and linguistic forms. There are numberless thoughts we cannot think, sentiments we cannot have, and realities we cannot perceive unless we learn to use the appropriate symbol systems. It seems ... that unless we acquire language of some kind, we cannot actualize our specifically human capacities for thought, action, and feeling. Similarly, so the argument goes, to become religious involves becoming skilled in the language, the symbol system of a given religion.[311]

For Kadushin, the linguistic-cultural absorption of value-concepts, mediated by normal mysticism, leads in turn to the concretization of value-concepts in the form of ethical action. There is little room left over in this ecosystem for abstract metaphysical ends

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[310] *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind*, pp. 111-112.

[311] *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 20.

or unitive mystical means. The milieu of Kadushin's philosophy of religion is Earth.

Chapter 5: Metaethics and the Moral Implications of Organic Thinking

5.1 The Drive to Concretization

Although Max Kadushin dedicated most of his professional life as a scholar to exploring the structure and function of rabbinic thought, a good argument could be made that he became better known, during the latter decades of his life, as an ethicist. His title at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, where he taught from 1960 onward, was "visiting professor of ethics and mysticism"—and the last of his three non-commentary studies, *Worship and Ethics* (1964), focuses primarily on exploring the relationship between religious experience and religious ethics. Bearing this in mind, one might justifiably expect Kadushin's system of ethical thought to constitute a complex taxonomy on the same general order as his system of rabbinic hermeneutics. This is not the case; Kadushin's approach to religious ethics is quite simple, and leaves all complexity to the *halakha* itself.[312]

Nor is it especially difficult to trace the development of Kadushin's approach to ethics—though it follows an opposite trajectory from his approach to hermeneutics. In *Organic Thinking* (1938), Kadushin provides a secular context for his approach to interpretation, couching it in the language of contemporaneous philosophical movements,[313] but seems to target his later work to an audience that has already accepted the integrity of the rabbinic corpus and is ready to move on to the more practical questions it raises. With respect to his ethics, he moves in the opposite direction—addressing the topic in a very matter-of-fact way in *Organic Thinking* and only later, in his 1960 essay "An Introduction to Rabbinic Ethics" (which would later become chapter two of *Worship and Ethics*), explaining in detail where his approach to ethics stands in relation to more traditional philosophical approaches. Following this trajectory shows how neatly his

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[312] This is not to say that it is, in any sense, easy to categorize; it shares some notable characteristics with virtue ethics, universal prescriptivism, Divine Command theory, and emotivism, but (as I explain later in the chapter) cannot be placed neatly within any of these four traditions.

[313] As noted in chapter 3.

ethical system aligns itself with the implicit message contained in the rabbinic tradition—a considerable contrast from his hermeneutic, which lays an explanatory pattern across it.

Take, for instance, the first sentence of his discussion of ethics in *Organic Thinking*: "The study of the Torah leads, according to the Rabbis, to the practice of the *miẓwot* contained in the Torah."[314] At face value, this is an uncontroversial assertion that simply states the traditional Jewish position that the moral law is meant to be lived, and not merely contemplated—but for Kadushin, who saw within the rabbinic tradition an organismic complex of active ideas, value-concepts function as a kind of benevolent virus for which normal mysticism, and ethical conduct, are universal symptoms. "Every concept," he writes, "is possessed of a *drive* toward concretization."[315] He further explains:

> Even when organic concepts are but implicit or imbedded in events, situations, attitudes, facts, the latter are nonetheless seen to be concretizations of the concepts. We recognize a prayer just as we recognize an expression of mother-love without either being explicitly introduced as such ... The organic concepts, then, are continually applied to the constant stream of experience. They canalize that stream, or, to drop the figure, they continually interpret or determine the facts, give meaning to them.[316]

As I have discussed in the next section, this idea of inculturated moral values that are fully realized only when they are acted upon is not original to Kadushin's system—but when it operates within a hermeneutic framework in which the entire rabbinic cultural tradition consists of similar values operating within an organismic complex, it reframes the entire tradition in a way that directly engages the language of morality:

> The variety of the moral life is spelled out in rabbinic literature in terms of a moral vocabulary. It is a large vocabulary, containing not only terms for matters recognized as ethical or moral, but also for things recognized as immoral ...
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> An ethical or moral term refers to a complete act, a complete event, or a situation as a whole. A robbery, for instance, involves a number of things: a definite thing taken, definite circumstances when the event took place, definite individuals. The event may be described in minute detail, so far as all these matters are concerned, and yet, unless the idea of "robbery" is conveyed, the event as a whole

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[314] p. 95.

[315] *Organic Thinking*, p. 187.

[316] *Organic Thinking*, pp. 186-187.

> will not be communicated. We may say, then, that a moral term unifies a situation or an act. Because a moral term or idea has this unifying function, the moral idea is integral to the event, is an essential element of the situation.[317]

Kadushin makes it clear that he views halakha as a logical enterprise:

> [T]hough logic does not build up the value-concepts, it has nonetheless an extremely important function in the valuational life. Logical analysis enables us to find ways of applying the value-concepts, both by means of laws and in situations not covered by law. Acute logic marks that branch of rabbinic literature which has to do with law, the Halakah.[318]

But when Kadushin discusses the ethical value-concepts, he is discussing Judaism within the context of the organismic complex—not analyzing halakha. Because *all* value-concepts are fully actualized only through concretization and do not exist simply as abstract logical ideas, morality operates on the same explanatory level as metaphysics, and both operate on the same explanatory level as religious experience.[319] And just as Kadushin had no use for the universal God-concept grounded in metaphysics, he had very little use for universal ethical rules grounded in ontology. The idea of a metaethic, like the idea of a metaphysic, is largely irrelevant to his system. In his descriptive account of rabbinic thought as he understood it, he saw a system of moral values connected to and justified by empathy, God, and social progress—just as, on questions of metaphysics, he clearly believed in a personal God—but he did not suggest that ratiocination could synthesize these ethics, or any theology, from fundamental meta-elements. His commitment to a communal approach was unmitigated:

> The value concepts are terms in the common vocabulary of groups, and the individual acquires the value terms just as he acquires his general vocabulary, that is, from childhood on. Society supplies the indeterminate value concepts, and the

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[317] *Worship and Ethics*, pp. 20-21.

[318] *The Rabbinic Mind*, p. 6.

[319] *Worship and Ethics*, p. 173: "Because the value concepts are organismically interrelated, acts of worship are not only experiences in normal mysticism but acts which are fraught with ethical concomitants and motifs. It is no wonder, therefore, that some acts of worship ... have profound implications for personal morality."

> individual makes them determinate in acts or situations. Were society and the individual two separate and distinct entities, it would still be impossible to assign a specific concretization of a value concept either wholly to the one or wholly to the other; but the fact is that society and the individual cannot even be set up one against the other ... Since society and the individual both share in any concretization of a value concept, the division between autonomous and heteronomous acts is hardly a valid one. In fact, this division is an oversimplification, a logical dichotomy that ignores socio-psychological facts.[320]

For this reason, Kadushin tends to reject definitions of ethics that are grounded in universal moral rules, regardless of whether they are deontological or Utilitarian in character. The central argument in his "Introduction to Rabbinic Ethics" (1960) begins with a rejection of traditional philosophical ethical frameworks:

> Philosophers have oversimplified and, paradoxically, overtheorized the problem of morality and ethics. They oversimplify the problem when they attempt to find a single, universal criterion for morality, whether it be Aristotle's ultimate of well-being, or Kant's categorical imperative, or Bentham's hedonic calculus. Each of such criteria is a test to determine whether an action is truly ethical or moral, and a test only ...
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> Were a man to ponder over every situation, he would have neither time nor will to act at all. There would be only moral stagnation. Moral acts have an emotional, not only a mental aspect, are propelled by inner drives. In directing men to what is primarily an intellectual process, the ultimate criterion oversimplifies the problem of morality and is rendered quite futile as well.
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> At the same time the universal criterion has overtheorized the problem of morality and ethics. A universal criterion acts as a test ... [b]ut it also acts as a definition of morality or ethics. Deeds in accord with the criterion are ethical; deeds not in accord are not ethical. Was there no genuinely moral life before any of these definitions was formulated? But if moral life obtained—as obviously it did—men must have been able to distinguish a moral from an immoral act without these definitions. Apparently, then, the moral life is altogether possible without definitions

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[320] *Worship and Ethics*, p. 26.

> of morality ... The universal criterion not only oversimplifies morality; it overtheorizes it by attempting to give an abstract definition of morality.[321]

The modus operandi of Kadushin's rabbinic ethical system is fairly simple and straightforward, operating on a continuous cycle of actualization:

1. The individual, as part of a community, absorbs the vocabulary and symbology of the organismic complex, as well as emphatic trends[322] indicating the general priorities of the organismic complex.
2. Value-concepts, which are indeterminate if left to their own devices, are driven to concretization through worship and ethics.
3. The individual's concretization of value-concepts, to whatever extent it is remembered and/or recorded, itself becomes part of the organismic complex.

There are, of course, specific value-concepts that receive special attention in Kadushin's system—he is especially drawn to the value-concept of *derech eretz* ("way of

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[321] *Worship and Ethics*, p. 20. In his introduction (p. 8), Kadushin takes issue with attempts to force rabbinic ethics into a philosophical framework. "The great fault with modern representations of rabbinic ethics," he writes, "is the assumption that the true approach to ethics is the philosopher's approach. Rabbinic ethics has been forced into the framework of Kantian ethics, even by some who find fault with others on that score. In line with the philosophers' view that ethics must exhibit an ultimate criterion, it is customary to represent this or that rabbinic statement as consisting of an ultimate ethical criterion. It is no wonder, therefore, that the crucial role of the ethical concepts has been all but overlooked ... Eminent scholars even go so far as to claim that there is no such thing as rabbinic ethics. The rabbis, they say, do not discriminate between ethical acts and other miẓwot; and one writer declares—mark the philosophic approach!—that the rabbis 'had no notion of a rationalistic ethics, still less of an intuitive ethics.'" The quote, which Kadushin does not footnote, comes from George Foot Moore's *Judaism* (1927),p. 167: "In the sphere of morals, so far as I can see, the Tannaim had no notion of a rationalistic ethics, still less of a intuitive ethics—'Thus saith the Lord' was the beginning and end of their wisdom..."

[322] Emphatic trends receive considerable attention in all three of Kadushin's major works, as they function as useful interpretive tools, but they are peripheral to both his taxonomy of concepts and his philosophy of ethics. "Emphasis," Kadushin writes (*Worship and Ethics*, p. 11), "is not achieved in any one manner. It may consist of stressing one concept over against another, both in Haggadah and in Halakah. In one haggadic statement, for example, the plea is made that Israel survive lest Torah disappear; in another statement, as an answer to a direct question, Israel is given precedence over Torah. An emphatic trend, however, represents not this type of emphasis but one that is due to repetition, the emphasis now being the result of a repeated effect produced by a number of different value concepts." Examples of emphatic trends within the rabbinic corpus, as Kadushin interprets it, are love, universality, individuality, the experience of God, mercy, and the otherness of God. By relying on emphatic trends, individuals have been given a good sense of which value-concepts to prioritize in a given situation. The emphatic trend in favor of love, for example, tends to insulate the organismic complex from a callous application of halakha.

the world"), which he sees as a rabbinic acknowledgment of proto-rabbinic natural conduct[323]—but all of them function within the broader framework of the inculturated organismic complex as filtered by emphatic trends, all are indeterminate unless concretized, and all are enriched, within the organismic complex, by concretization. Kadushin's system of ethics is, in other words, more of a social ecosystem than a fundamental set of philosophical principles.

5.2 Kadushin and Virtue Ethics

Assessing Max Kadushin as a philosophical ethicist presents many of the same problems we encounter when we assess him as a philosophical hermeneuticist. His system, constructed for specific use within the context of rabbinic Judaism and clearly intended specifically for the Conservative Jewish milieu, does not readily lend itself to general application as a system of universal rules. Indeed, the basic idea of universal rules, as traditionally defined, is foreign to Kadushin's system. His definition of the ethical, like his definition of the rabbinic, is hitched up by its relationship with the psychological—and while all ethical systems arguably represent a point of interaction between philosophy and psychology, Kadushin's leaves little doubt that he is more concerned with the latter. As he writes in *Worship and Ethics*:

> If the value concepts represent drives, positive or negative, then they constitute a vital aspect of a man's personality. They are not merely motives, for these may be short ranged. They are dynamic elements of personality, focal points in a continuous process of valuation, primary factors in the experience of significance. A rich personality has many and varied experiences of significance, or more technically, a valuational life governed by a large number of value concepts. A moral act, therefore, involves other acts besides those embodied in it. Although a moral act is the direct concretization of a particular value concept, it constitutes, in fact, the projection of a personality informed by many value concepts. Thus it is not a single emotional drive that propels a man to a moral act, but his entire personality. Any particular valuational drive, any value concept, is but a constituent

[323] "The concept of *derek erez*," Kadushin writes in *Worship and Ethics* (p. 53), "does two things at the same time. It expresses awareness of morality and ethics, and through its phases, it also limits the sphere of morality and ethics."

> of an individual's personality, and hence the other value concepts also contribute to the concretization of a concept, even if indirectly.[324]

As we shall see, his approach to ethics flirts with systems that we now call virtue ethics and universal prescriptivism, but does not fall within the generally accepted margins of either of these philosophical traditions. Because its context is that of the rabbinic literary tradition rather than natural philosophy or anything of similar scope, and because his priorities better reflect the objectives of the social sciences tradition than those of secular Western philosophy, it is very difficult to classify his system of ethical thought within the framework of a secular philosophical tradition without doing violence to either his objectives or his methodology.

But the similarities between Kadushin's system and contemporaneous ethical systems are well worth exploring, if only because he had—presumably unwittingly—stumbled into one of the defining philosophical controversies of the 20th century. Western moral philosophy, traditionally represented by deontological systems with universal methodologies on one side and Utilitarian systems with universal priorities on the other, underwent the same kind of shift in perspective as Western hermeneutics, and for many of the same reasons. The publication of British philosopher Elizabeth Anscombe's essay "Modern Moral Philosophy" (1958) changed the ground rules of moral philosophy in a way that would have made them more amenable to Kadushin's objectives, much as the publication of Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method* would do the same for hermeneutics two years later, but if Kadushin ever heard about this, he never said so; Anscombe's name, like that of Gadamer, is absent from Kadushin's published work. Still, it's hard not to see a parallel to Kadushin's struggle in the way Anscombe outlines the central problem of post-Kantian Western moral philosophy:

> [I]t is not profitable for us at present to do moral philosophy; that should be laid aside at any rate until we have an adequate philosophy of psychology, in which we are conspicuously lacking ...
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> In present-day philosophy an explanation is required how an unjust man is a bad man, or an unjust action a bad one; to give such an explanation belongs to ethics; but it cannot even be begun until we are equipped with a sound philosophy

[324] pp. 25-26.

> of psychology. For the proof that an unjust man is a bad man would require a positive account of justice as a "virtue." This part of the subject-matter of ethics is, however, completely closed to us until we have an account of what *type of characteristic* a virtue is—a problem, not of ethics, but of conceptual analysis—and how it relates to the actions in which it is instanced ... For this we certainly need an account at least of what a human action is at all, and how its description as "doing such-and-such" is affected by its motive and by the intention or intentions in it; and for this an account of such concepts is required ...
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> Now I am not able to do the philosophy involved—and I think that no one in the present situation of English philosophy *can* do the philosophy involved—but it is clear that a good man is a just man; and a just man is a man who habitually refuses to commit or participate in any unjust actions for fear of any consequences, or to obtain any advantage, for himself or anyone else. Perhaps no one will disagree ... [N]ow if someone says, "I agree, but all this wants a lot of explaining," then he is right, and, what is more, the situation at present is that we can't do the explaining; we lack the philosophic equipment.[325]

There is clearly considerable overlap between and among what Anscombe describes as the philosophy of psychology, what Kadushin describes as the problem of coherence, and what Gadamer describes as hermeneutics. While philosophy is a venerable and well-analyzed field, the social sciences represent a relatively new, and relatively radical, innovation. It is difficult to speak sensibly of ethics until we have fully reconciled philosophy with the social sciences, but it is difficult to justify the relevance of philosophical inquiry absent an emphasis on ethics. This has created a scenario that, I would argue, is especially challenging for the ethicist—namely, a scenario where one must do the most important work of philosophy using the least reliable tools. Over the past several decades, contemporary philosophers have, following Anscombe's lead, reassessed pre-Enlightenment ethical philosophy and placed greater emphasis on virtues as intrinsically worthwhile ethical objectives. Most prominent among the contemporary virtue ethicists has been the Scottish philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre, whose *After Virtue* (1981) brought the field to public attention. There is considerable overlap between MacIntyre's sphere of interest and Kadushin's; in particular, they share nearly identical views with respect to the importance of inculturated social norms to personal ethical development. As MacIntyre writes:

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[325] *The Collected Philosophical Papers of G.E.M. Ascombe* (1981), vol. 3, pp. 26-40.

> I am never able to seek for the good or exercise the virtues only *qua* individual ... [I]t is not just that different individuals live in different social circumstances; it is also that we all approach our own circumstances as bearers of a particular social identity ... I inherit from the past of my family, my city, my tribe, my nation, a variety of debts, inheritances, rightful expectations and obligations. These constitute the given of my life, my moral starting point. This is in part what gives my life its own moral particularity ...
>
> Without those moral particularities to begin from there would never be anywhere to begin; but it is in moving forward from such particularity that the search for the good, for the universal, consists. Yet particularity can never be simply left behind or obliterated. The notion of escaping from it into a realm of entirely universal maxims which belong to man as such, whether in its eighteenth-century Kantian form or in the presentation of some modern analytical moral philosophies, is an illusion and an illusion with painful consequences. When men and women identify what are in fact their partial and particular causes too easily and too completely with the cause of some universal principle, they usually behave worse than they would otherwise do.
>
> What I am, therefore, is in key part what I inherit, a specific past that is present to some degree in my present. I find myself part of a history and that is generally to say, whether I like it or not, whether I recognize it or not, one of the bearers of a tradition. It was important when I characterized the concept of a practice to notice that practices always have histories and that at any given moment what a practice is depends on a mode of understanding it which has been transmitted often through many generations. And thus, insofar as the virtues sustain the relationships required for practices, they have to sustain relationships to the past —and to the future—as well as in the present.[326]

It is clear that Kadushin, MacIntyre, and Anscombe shared similar concerns about the state of contemporary ethical philosophy, and it is clear that Kadushin and MacIntyre address these concerns in strikingly similar ways inasmuch as they both see ethics in primarily social and traditional rather than deontological or Utilitarian terms, but it does not follow from this that Kadushin's idea of the ethical value-concept is in any sense identical to what MacIntyre would describe as a virtue, primarily because the two ideas were created to address different goals. For Kadushin, it is not important to prove, justify, explain, or even document the philosophical significance of a value-concept; value-concepts express significance rather than conform to it. As Kadushin writes:

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[326] *After Virtue*, pp. 220-221.

> By using the phrase, "it stands to reason," or by saying that the proper behavior might have been "learned" from the animals, the rabbis are not pointing to social utility as a basis for ethics. That idea is found in medieval Jewish philosophy and is applied there at least to a segment of the moral life, but the idea is not rabbinic ... All such theories of social utility more or less imply that justice, truth, and so on are fruits of reason, that they are products of "practical wisdom." "Practical wisdom" always posits a utilitarian end. The end may be social utility, or it may apply only to an individual in a specific situation ... The rabbis, however, posit no end whatever, specific or otherwise. Phrases like "it stands to reason" must not lead is to *supply* the "reason."[327]

If we compare Kadushin's discussion of social utility with MacIntyre's working definition of a virtue, a clear difference emerges between MacIntyre's virtues and Kadushin's ethical value-concepts:

> *A virtue is an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods.*[328]

MacIntyre's virtues serve a purpose; Kadushin's ethical value-concepts *are* purposes,[329] and this non-utility is necessary, by the standards of his system, in order for them to be fully expressive of both cultural and personal differentia. In citing the work of Alfred Kroeber, Kadushin writes that the value-concept of patience "has overtones for the Siamese it does not have for us" and cites this as evidence that "every culture imparts to a universal concept a special quality, overtones of significance that the concept does not have elsewhere."[330] Or, to put it another way, there is no such thing, in Kadushin's system, as a truly universal concept or universal virtue. If ethical value-concepts served a clear and demonstrable purpose, it would be possible for multiple organismic complices to share universal ethical value-concepts—but Kadushin is suspicious, here and elsewhere, of any

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[327] *Worship and Ethics*, p. 44.

[328] *After Virtue*, p. 191.

[329] *Worship and Ethics*, p. 45: "When we assign to ethics a utilitarian role, we tend to reduce ethics to something neutral, to a means to an end, to mechanics, as it were. In our rabbinic statements, on the contrary, the object is, patently, to extol justice, truth, peace, and charity. These are virtues not because they have social utility; they are virtues in their own right."

[330] *Worship and Ethics*, p. 59.

basis for ethics that can be derived on the basis of reason or utility. We can see this even in his almost whimsical discussion of the relatively abstract, political ethical concept of democracy:

> If the value-concepts make for the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the individual self, it is folly, perhaps worse than that, to attempt to define them. It is folly because a defined concept is the same for all, negating the flexibility which allows for the play of every individual's *differentia*. It is worse than folly when such definitions are taken seriously and the attempt is made to cast the minds of all individuals into the same mold ...
>
> Hankering after definitions, many of our American thinkers have failed in their true function. They have sought to define democracy, trying in this way, no doubt, to give it firmness. Fortunately, these academic definitions have no chance of success. Had the effort been successful, value-concepts would have become rules uniform for all men. We should be having totalitarianism, not democracy.[331]

MacIntyre also argues for a much more goal-oriented process of virtue-cultivation than does Kadushin. Taking his cue from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, MacIntyre suggests that the development of moral character, at least within the framework of virtue ethics, is intrinsically and intentionally transformative. "Within that teleological scheme," MacIntyre writes, "there is a fundamental contrast between man-as-he-happens-to-be and man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realized-his-essential-nature. Ethics is the science which enables men to understand how they make the transition from the former state to the latter."[332] For Kadushin, this abstract transformative goal (which he calls Aristotle's "ultimate of well-being") is merely one impractical ultimate criterion among many.[333] Intentional self-transformation—and especially critical self-transformation in search of an abstract moral state—is not the motivating force behind ethical development, according to Kadushin's system.

But if we examine the broader outlines of MacIntyre's enterprise, it is clear that his goals have otherwise been very similar to those of Kadushin. Both thinkers, for example, see themselves as ultimately reclaiming a pre-Enlightenment vision of ethics from what

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[331] *The Rabbinic Mind*, p. 83f.

[332] *After Virtue*, p. 52.

[333] *Worship and Ethics*, p. 19.

they see as bad philosophy. Both are skeptical of traditional Western philosophy's menu of ultimate ethical criteria—proposed, according to MacIntyre, by thinkers who "could not recognize the impossible and quixotic character of their self-appointed task"[334]—and yet, despite Kadushin's obvious love of psychology, both are reluctant to reclassify ethics as a social-sciences concern. Both could be called religious traditionalists after a fashion—MacIntyre a Roman Catholic convert, Kadushin a Conservative Jew—but neither could be accurately described as fundamentalists by any meaningful definition of the term, and both have been suspicious of reactionary conservative political movements within their respective traditions.[335] Perhaps most importantly of all, both saw ethics as a process of personal development that cannot be reduced to a purely scientific or philosophical endeavor.

In the years following the publication of Anscombe's "Modern moral philosophy", there have been numerous other ethical philosophers whose work bears some similarity to that of Kadushin. Very few of them, however, discuss ethics in a manner that seems contextually relevant to Kadushin's system of thought. It would be easy, for example, to characterize Kadushin's advocacy of ethical value-concepts as a localized version of R.M. Hare's universal prescriptivism—because, as concepts that can only be actualized through concretization, they arguably function as imperatives—but this would be a gross oversimplification of Kadushin's thesis, as it implicitly rejects the indeterminate character of the concepts themselves, as well as a gross oversimplification of Hare's, as a non-universal prescriptivism, deprived of its Kantian foundations, would essentially imply ethics by fiat. Likewise, while Hilary Putnam's work on the overlapping character of facts and values would seem to lay the groundwork for indeterminate ethical value-concepts, the fact that ethical value-concepts could be ambiguously factual and not merely interpretative would answer a question that indeterminate concepts never ask. What

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[334] *After Virtue*, p. 55.

[335] In *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (1988), p. 386, MacIntyre refers to what he calls "that unfortunate fictitious amalgam sometimes known as 'the Judeo-Christian tradition' and sometimes as 'Western values,'" and goes on to say that "writings of self-proclaimed contemporary conservatives, such as William J. Bennett, turn out in fact to be one more stage in modernity's cultural deformation of our relationship to the past." Kadushin, for his part, was notoriously apolitical in his writing—his description of democracy noted above, and the critique of fascism mentioned later in this chapter, were his only substantive published comments on political theory.

Kadushin has most in common with Putnam is, perhaps, that both advocate forms of pragmatism—which makes sense, as C.S. Peirce, John Dewey, and William James were formative influences on both men.

Nor would it make very much sense to associate Kadushin's system of ethical value-concepts with contemporary strains of the process philosophy in which his hermeneutic was incubated. David Ray Griffin, the most prominent contemporary process philosopher, defines ethics as the search for "[u]niversally recognized moral norms,"[336] a problem that did not interest Kadushin, and proposes to meet this objective by persuading the world to accept "nonparochial definitions of theism and atheism,"[337] a solution that (given Kadushin's opinion of universal God-concepts in general) would have interested him even less. Nor is it accurate to dismiss Kadushin's approach as representative of a divine command theory, given his tendency to attribute the power of value-concepts to their social, non-metaphysical attributes.

One ethicist whose work bears a particularly remarkable similarity to that of Kadushin is the Australian philosopher Julius Kovesi, whose description of moral notions could be accurately described as a secular parallel to Kadushin's concept of ethical value-concepts. In *Moral Notions* (1967),[338] Kovesi writes: "[M]oral notions have to be public twice over: they not only have to be formed from the point of view of anyone, but they also have to be about those features of our lives that can be the features of anyone's life ... [I]f other notions did not exist those events that are their subject matter would go on happening, but without moral notions there would be nothing left of their subject matter." Compare with Kadushin's definition of a robbery as presented in the previous section,[339] where "unless the idea of a 'robbery' is conveyed, the event as a whole will not be communicated." In both cases, a moral idea is essential to our understanding of an action —to our ability to process it as a meaningful event—and not merely an abstract critical reflection upon it. But Kovesi's moral notions, much like MacIntyre's virtues, imply a

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[336] "Ethics and the Fabric of the Universe" (2010), p. 107.

[337] ibid., p. 110.

[338] pp. 147-148.

[339] *Worship and Ethics*, pp. 20-21.

justification of social utility—defined, in Kovesi's system, as "functions and purposes"[340]—that Kadushin explicitly rejected.

The problem of social utility highlights the difficulty of placing Kadushin clearly on a specific node of the Western ethical philosophical tradition, because he does not see ethics as a problem to be solved; rather, he sees it as a phenomenon to be studied. For this reason, he makes no attempt to prove the legitimacy of ethical value-concepts, rejecting both abstract arguments in their favor as well as practical arguments based on social utility. For Kadushin, the ethical value-concepts are important—but there is no indication that proving their importance is important. This notion of voluntarily participating in a complex network of indeterminate ethical value-concepts, whose potential accuracy and usefulness are irrelevant to their nature, simply does not answer the questions that Western moral philosophy typically asks.

5.3 Authority, Obedience, and Tradition

To posit a postcritical hermeneutic is, at least in some sense, to posit a non-critical hermeneutic. By defining the rabbinic tradition in terms that are more amenable to the social sciences than to philosophy, and by treating the rabbinic belief system in an experiential and psychological manner rather than subjecting it to rigorous standards of internal and external consistency, Kadushin effectively adapts it to rebut the modernist challenge—but this carries with it the risk of creating an unaccountable system with an unassailable power structure. It is a risk that Kadushin appears to have recognized, at least in part, and for which he attempted to compensate in several ways.

During Kadushin's lifetime, political philosopher Hans Kohn defined the concept of organic nationalism: "a fictitious whole, called organic, of a part of mankind—a state, nation, or race—which acts as if it were the whole."[341] "This ideal," Kohn writes, is rooted in a German nationalism that "represented a flight from reality into mythology, from action

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[340] *Moral Notions*, p. 57: "What we should say is that only those wants, etc. that are *anybody*'s wants are incorporated into our social and moral notions, and the function and purpose of these notions in our lives must be such that anybody should be able to and should want to use them in the same way and for the same purpose."

[341] *Not by Arms Alone* (1971), p. 10.

into dream. It was not a return to any real past; it was an idyllic myth and a poetic dream which transfigured the past into a Golden Age."[342] By the time Kadushin published *Organic Thinking* in 1938, organic nationalism had taken hold in Europe in the form of fascism.[343] But as Kadushin would have recognized, considering the intellectual climate of the time, even an explicitly organic theory of the state does not necessarily suggest organic nationalism. Contemporary political historian James Meadowcroft stresses this point in his discussion of the British political theorist Herbert Spencer:

> In the light of the multiple ways in which organic imagery could be brought to bear on the state, and the widely differing political conclusions which theorists justified via the appeal to organicism, it makes little sense to talk of a coherent 'organic theory of the state.' Turn-of-the-century organicism is best understood not as a single or unified conception of society or the state, but as a set of recognizable images by means of which argument about the nature and role of the state could be conducted.[344]

There are several reasons why Kadushin's work could not have been reasonably interpreted as proposing a radical, organic theory of the state. The first, and most obvious, is that Kadushin did not posit a theory of the state at all—Kadushin's objective in writing

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[342] *Prelude to Nation-States* (1967), p. 172.

[343] All of the major European fascist regimes of the 1930s characterized themselves as organic, and as rejecting the Enlightenment emphasis on excessive individualism and ratiocination. As Robert N. Proctor explains in "Nazi Medical Ethics: Ordinary Doctors?" (2003), p. 409: "Nazi leaders commonly referred to National Socialism as 'applied biology'; indeed it was Fritz Lenz who originally coined this phrase in the 1931 edition of his widely read textbook on human genetics. The Nazi state was itself supposed to be organic (*biologisch*) in two separate senses: in its suppression of dissent (the organic body does not tolerate one part battling with another), and in its emphasis upon 'natural' modes of living (the healthy, organic body does not tolerate alien bodily intruders, such as tobacco or toxic pollutants)." Writing of Giovanni Gentile's political philosophy, which constituted the platform of fascist Italy, M.E. Moss writes in *Mussolini's Fascist Philosopher* (2004), p. 2: "The romantic conception of the organic unity among existents, in contrast to the enlightenment atomistic way of thinking, became essential ... to the fascist conception of the state. In the fascist state, moral dilemmas between values of institutions, whether political, economic, or sociological, and individuals were settled in favor of institutional values and justified in terms of the greater value of the organic unity expressed by the institution, the whole of which the individual formed merely a part." And as Lauren M. McLaren writes in *Democratization in Southern Europe* (2008), pp. 55-56, Franco taught that "Spain needed to be an 'organic democracy' rather than an 'inorganic' one as during the previous periods of liberalism ... The belief was that all Spaniards were just that—Spaniards—and were working together for national causes; political parties damaged this organic structure and approach by dividing Spaniards from one another into unnatural groups."

[344] *Conceptualizing the State* (1995), p. 66.

Organic Thinking was to resolve "the problem of the coherence of rabbinic theology"[345] and thereby explain a religious tradition that had already been in place for two millennia. This would not have functioned well as a revolutionary platform, and there is no reason to imagine that Kadushin intended his system to function as a political philosophy. Nevertheless, he was aware enough of the problematic implications surrounding the word "organic" that he criticized fascism twice in *Organic Thinking*. The first time, in his introductory chapter, he takes an initial step to distance his philosophy from the fascist implications of the word:

> In using the term "organic," be it recognized, we do not mean to surround it with that aura which it assumes in fascist vocabulary where the term is vague, unbuttressed by demonstration, as well as honorific. We propose to depict in some detail the order which the rabbinic concepts exhibit, to *demonstrate*, that is, the existence of this order, and then to indicate why it can only be characterized as organic.[346]

None of Kadushin's reviewers accused him of proposing a fascist rabbinic hermeneutic—given the widespread interdisciplinary use of the word "organic" at the time, it would have been strange if they had—but his use of the word in the actual title of the book was unusual. Thirteen books listed in the Library of Congress' 1938 *Catalog of Copyright Entries* contain the word "organic" in the title: Kadushin's *Organic Thinking*, and twelve organic chemistry texts.[347] His explanation of his use of the word adds three additional, fairly uncontroversial distinctions to the fascist appropriation of organicism—where Kadushin's use of the term "organic" is nonpolitical, specific, documented, and pragmatic, the fascist use of the term does not meet any of these four criteria. (The fact that Kadushin felt it necessary to include this disclaimer strongly suggests that he did not consider the word "organic" to be intrinsically honorific for his purposes.) But when he brings up the idea of fascism later in the text, he makes a bolder claim about the limitations of legitimate organic systems:

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[345] *Organic Thinking* (1938), p. 2.

[346] p. 6.

[347] *Catalog of Copyright Entries,* Library of Congress Copyright Office, 1938, pp. 100, 161, 176, 234, 391, 423, 434, 453, 537, 538, 592, 602, and 636.

> The most patent abuse of the organismic terminology is, of course, to be found in the fascist philosophies where the word "organic" is simply an honorific term to cast glamour over pseudo-scientific ideas and over rank prejudices. True organic concepts act as inner drives, we have learned; and were the fascist concepts such drives what need would there be for concentration camps,[348] absolute censorship, terror-tactics and other methods of constant intimidation and regimentation?[349]

Kadushin seems to be making an implicit claim that the fascist regimes were, due to their pattern of imposing authoritarian policies on their people, enforcing non-organic systems of thought. This certainly seems to have been the case—the three major European fascist regimes were driven by the specific objectives of the political leadership, not by spontaneous expressions of a national culture—but a strong argument could be made that Kadushin has dismissed the risk of authoritarian oppression too easily, and that he has not fully acknowledged the potential risks of deferring to a historical tradition while attributing its outcomes to universally-shared organic inner drives. As I have noted in chapter two, Kadushin's account of the relationship between rabbis and laypersons—wherein he suggests that "these concepts as taught by the Rabbis were but a literary—or oral—extension of the values held by the masses"[350]—is highly controversial.

On this point, Jennifer Ring's assessment of Kadushin bears discussion:

> I must admit that I, for one, am not comfortable with Kadushin's insistence that the term *value concept*s adequately captures the availability of Talmudic wisdom to members of "the" Jewish community ... Kadushin may be trying to have it both ways, with his argument that the sort of thinking that he describes is "rabbinic," that

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[348] This is the only direct reference to the Holocaust in any of Kadushin's published work, but *Organic Thinking* does include a more subtle reference to Nazism in its discussion (p. 269f) of Morris Raphael Cohen's *Reason and Nature* (1931): "Cohen's example of the assumption by the Allies that all Germans are to be held responsible for the Great War, even those who opposed it and even generations to come, proves to us, despite what Cohen says previously, that collective responsibility is grounded in the idea of collective or corporate personality. Indeed, nationalism as such argues that the notion of corporate personality cannot be dispensed with." What Kadushin seems to suggest in bringing up this point is that the Nazi Party can't plausibly claim a persistent, historical national identity while simultaneously shifting the burden of collective responsibility to targeted minority groups—it is improbable that, in 1938, he could have referred to German nationalism and collective responsibility without implicitly addressing this point—but the fact that he did not explicitly connect his argument to a critique of Nazism leaves this open to interpretation.

[349] p. 252.

[350] *Organic Thinking*, p. 188.

> is, the work of specialists, full time Jewish scholars, and yet available to all members of the Jewish community ...
>
> There is an assumption that the Torah is open to interpretation not only by experts, the rabbis, but by any Jew who gives it serious thought, even the simplest person. The indeterminateness or the inconclusiveness of the boundaries of the Torah implies a dialectical relationship between the divine authority of the Torah and its interpreters. Theoretically, the authority of interpretation is available to all Jews. However, I suspect more problems than Kadushin acknowledges in legitimating Talmudic interpretation. It would seem to involve a question of the politics of the authority of Judaism: who belongs to the priesthood?[351]

Kadushin's argument in favor of the organismic complex as a communal product isn't based on the idea that the Jewish community *is* egalitarian; it's based on the idea that it *was* egalitarian during the haggadic period, a point to which he refers in all of his major works. In *Organic Thinking*, for example, he writes:

> Rabbinic haggadic literature represents an inter-action between the life of the people and the creators of literature to a degree unknown today. The concept which gave meaning to and determined the moment-to-moment experience of the people were the subject of discourses by the Rabbis delivered before the masses. Exemplified by illustrations from history and from their own times, refined by distinctions carefully drawn, applied to the situations of daily life and prefiguring a vision of the future, these concepts as taught by the Rabbis were a literary—or oral—extension of the values held by the masses, and of untold effect upon the direction taken by the latter.[352]

In *The Rabbinic Mind*, he expands on his discussion of rabbis as representatives of the Jewish lay community:

> Seldom do we find the gap between the scholars and the folk, as here, all but closed, and still more seldom over so extended a period. In fact, the tendency in the western world has been the other way. The medieval scholars and thinkers spun out abstract doctrines, far beyond the ken of the common folk, and insisted that these are the truths of religion and morality. Nor are we closing the gap today. A philosopher like Bergson, much in vogue among the intellectuals, divides the world into "society," on the one hand, and mystics and saints, on the other ... Bergson merely substitutes in persuasive and glowing terms his mystic for the medievalist's philosopher, but society is stigmatized in either case ... The literary works of

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[351] *The Political Consequences of Thinking* (1997), pp. 204, 209.

[352] p. 188.

> western civilization are not, on the whole, produced under the conditions or by the type of men that produced the Haggadah. The Haggadah is a unique literature. Containing the value-concepts of the people as a whole, including the scholars and thinkers, it is a reflection of how these concepts functioned in daily life.[353]

After making essentially the same claims in *Worship and Ethics*, Kadushin argues that the distinction between laity and rabbinate became more pronounced over time:

> It is true that toward the end of the second century and later, the rabbinic class was more and more crystallized as a class apart. There was a tendency to free the rabbis from taxes, and there were perhaps even attempts to ensure succession to their sons.[354]

The historicity of these claims is beyond the scope of the thesis, but their human implications are not—and if we were to take Kadushin's statements regarding rabbinic culture at face value, they would still present several problems. The first, and most glaring, is the complete absence of women's voices from visible representation in haggadic literature; this omission, normal for two-thousand-year-old texts but highly abnormal today, already limits the degree to which rabbinic literature could accurately be described as representative of the folk. While it is hypothetically possible (even probable) that women were anonymous folk influences on the rabbinic authors, Kadushin's description of the role of women in rabbinic literature is not encouraging:

> It would not be fair to leave the impression ... that woman had but slight worth in the eyes of the Rabbis. On the contrary, the Rabbis believed that the woman's influence counts for very much, for good and for ill. True, their conception of what constitutes a good woman was in conformity with the ideal current in antiquity. "An upright woman," they concluded, "is only she who does the will of her husband." This conclusion they drew from the instance of Jael who, according to them, was an "upright woman" and did the will of her husband, and thus merited that she be singled out from all the women to be the instrument of salvation for Israel.[355]

Nor does Kadushin present any indication that rabbinic culture was sufficiently advanced as to fully include the voices of the disabled, the very poor, people born to

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[353] pp. 88-89.

[354] p. 250f.

[355] *Organic Thinking*, p. 161.

disreputable families, people of marginal ethnic identities, and others whose experiences might be excluded from the Haggadah, even if we were to otherwise accept his description of the rabbi-folk relationship as historically accurate. Kadushin's system is, of course, not unique among religious traditions in this respect—it would be very nearly unique if it *didn't* present these kinds of limitations—but it is difficult to grant tradition the strong endorsement Kadushin gives it without conceding to patterns of injustice and marginalization that are harmful to those same folk values, that same populist spirit, that Kadushin celebrates.[356] Whether one is applying Kadushin's system of thought in its original rabbinic context or adapting it to future use in a different tradition, Veronica Vasterling's critique of Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophy of tradition is relevant to Kadushin's system of thought:

> Gadamer's portrayal of tradition as "the great tapestry that supports us," his portrayal of tradition as an encompassing, ever-developing, continuous whole, and his emphasis on the authority of tradition betray a rather unrealistic view of tradition ... In view of the power struggles involved, it might be more correct to describe tradition as the story of the winners, a story that gains authority because the memory of the dissenters, the silenced, the losers is forgotten and erased.[357]

Vasterling, who sees Gadamer's system as otherwise useful,[358] proceeds to suggest that a greater emphasis on his concept of dialogue—rather than tradition—can compensate for this problem. Are there similar elements within Kadushin's system that can correct for the narrowness of tradition, where the need arises? I would argue that there are—and that Kadushin's system accommodates this possibility exceptionally well. In his majority opinion in *Griswold v. Connecticut* (1965), the case that effectively legalized the sale of hormonal birth control throughout the United States, U.S. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas found an implicit right to privacy in the U.S. Constitution on the basis of "penumbras, formed by emanations from those guarantees that help give them life and

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[356] Kadushin seems to hint at this possibility in the final paragraph of *Organic Thinking* (p. 261), where he makes a brief reference to "the problem as to the reinterpretation of rabbinic theology in accordance with our modern needs," but does not elaborate on what these modern needs might be.

[357] "Postmodern Hermeneutics?" (2003), p. 168.

[358] ibid., p. 170: "Though Gadamer's notion of tradition has lost its relevance, this is not true of the more general lesson of hermeneutics."

substance"[359]; the value-concepts themselves, which are intrinsically indeterminate and cannot be defined in explicit terms, are literally made of penumbras and emanations. Finding our values within them, without imposing a critical interpretation on them, necessitates a process of textual reasoning.

[359] 381 U.S. 479.

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Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

Max Kadushin's system of thought brings with it a complex vocabulary inspired by process philosophy, rabbinic hermeneutics, and other far-ranging sources. What he means by a word or phrase is not necessarily what most authors would mean by a word or phrase. For this reason, his vocabulary warrants special attention.[360]

abnormal mysticism. Dramatic, supernatural personal religious experience inspired by ***gilluy Shekinah*** (or delusions of same) that is not the sort of **normal mysticism** that one would encounter as part of a normal **valuational life**, and that subsequently may be of limited value to one's **halakhic personhood**. Kadushin is particularly skeptical of mystical experiences that suggest a personal union with God.

aesthetic significance. Superficial value attributed to an act, entity, or concept. Discussed as a counterpoint to **valuational significance**.

aftermodernism. A term coined by Peter Ochs to describe an informally-defined category of twentieth-century Jewish scholars notable for their decisions to initially embrace, but ultimately reject, a modernist liberal critical methodology. Essentially a type of postmodernism, but without the rejection of tradition that is generally implicit in that term. According to Ochs' system, Kadushin is classified as an aftermodernist.

analytic concept. A type of **defined concept** produced by logical analysis (unlike **cognitive concepts**, which are produced by experience, or **value concepts**, which are produced by one's cultural and/or religious environment). Interchangeable with **philosophic concept**.

auxiliary idea. An implicit rabbinic idea that operates within the **organismic complex** but that has nevertheless failed to coalesce around a single conceptual term, and subsequently

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[360] Because this is a reference glossary, I have omitted citations and direct quotations for readability purposes.

cannot constitute a **value-concept** (or one of its **conceptual phases**). Examples of auxiliary ideas include the Chosenness of the Jewish people and the omniscience of God.

category of significance. An idea, action, or experience falls within the category of significance if it provides the opportunity for a **value-concept** to interact with an individual's personality. An intentional good deed, for example, always falls within the category of significance because it allows for the **concretization** of *tzedakah*, *gemilut hasidim*, et. al.

cognitive concept. A concept that brings to mind a specific cognitive experience, but can't be fully encompassed by a definition (as **defined concepts** can) and does not intrinsically fall within the **category of significance**, and hence does not constitute a **value-concept**. Examples of cognitive concepts include the color blue, the smell of wet sand, and any concrete entity—a chair, the sky, a fire, pain—with which one has become so fluent that the definition is no longer generally necessary to characterize its margins.

coherence. Evidence of sanity, intellectual honesty, and value. Although Kadushin never *explicitly* defines coherence in these (or any other) terms, it seems clear that this is what he means.

conceptual phase. A specific expression of a **value-concept** that is different from its other expressions, not given a separate term. Many value-concepts have multiple conceptual phases that can only be differentiated by context.

concretization. The expression of a **value-concept**, by thought or action, to a specific context.

defined concept. A concept that can be defined, and that is characterized by its definition. Can be distinguished from **cognitive concepts**, which are characterized by immediate cognitive association, and **value-concepts**, which are impossible to fully characterize but can be **concretized**.

***derek eretz*.** A Hebrew phrase meaning "the way of the world." A **value-concept**, with at least five distinct **conceptual phases**, that characterizes moral norms.

emphatic trend. A series of recurring **conceptual phases** within multiple **value-concepts** indicative of a recurring theme. Love, to use Kadushin's example, occurs a conceptual phase within multiple value-concepts—God's love, love of Torah, love of one's neighbor, and so forth—even though love does not play so significant a role in the rabbinic corpus when examined as a single value-concept.

ethical concept. A **value-concept** with ethical implications that is the subject of halakhic study, and subsequently the subject of rational ethical analysis.

fundamental concept. One of the four **value-concepts** that Kadushin identifies as elemental to the **organismic complex**: *middat ha-din* (God's lovingkindness), *middat rachamim* (God's justice), Torah, and Israel. While these are not necessarily the most important value-concepts (Kadushin is careful to avoid ranking value-concepts hierarchically), he believes that they link all other rabbinic value-concepts together, thereby anchoring the organismic complex in place.

***gilluy Shekinah*.** "Revelation of the divine presence." A **cognitive concept** representing the direct sensory experience associated with **abnormal mysticism**. Although Kadushin makes it clear in *Worship and Ethics* that does not consider *gilluy Shekinah* to be a **value-concept** per se, he does argue that it plays a legitimate historical role within the **organismic complex**.

halakhic personhood. A term coined by Martin Jaffee and used to refer to the implicit structure of the **valuational life** in Kadushin's system whereby **value-concepts** both mediate and are mediated by **normal mysticism**, normal mysticism both mediates and is mediated by ethical conduct, and ethical conduct both mediates and is mediated by value-concepts.

indeterminacy. The organic character of a **value-concept** that causes it to resist definition, manifesting itself only through **concretization**.

***kawwanah*.** "Intention." The proper state of being, brought about by participation within the **organismic complex** as part of the normal **valuational life**, that allows one to experience **normal mysticism**.

normal mysticism. The ordinary experience of God, available to everyone who has ***kawwanah***. Distinguished from **abnormal mysticism**, which is not of interest to Kadushin as it is not a component of the normal **valuational life**.

organic thinking. As Kadushin defines it, the normal religious thought process of an observant Jew. The capacity to absorb, and participate in, the **organismic complex**—resisting the temptation to reduce it entirely to **defined concepts**, and instead embracing its **indeterminacy**. Organic thinking is a necessary component of the normal **valuational life**.

organismic complex. The network of **value-concepts** that is both absorbed and engaged by every observant Jew.

philosophic concept. A type of **defined concept** produced by philosophical logic. More-or-less interchangeable with the term **analytic concept**.

rabbinic. Pertaining to the thought of the rabbis, especially those who produced early midrashic literature prior to 700 CE. Kadushin holds that rabbinic thinking is reflected in the **valuational lives** of observant Jews to this day, but that the Jewish people have struggled, especially since the medieval era, with the tendency of some rabbis to impose **philosophic concepts** on the **organismic complex** and resist its tendency towards **indeterminacy**—a fault that can be attributed to both the Reform and Orthodox movements.

textual reasoning. A term coined by members of the Academy of Jewish Philosophy, and used to refer to the process of text-engagement used by a series of postmodern Jewish philosophers (including Kadushin).

valuational life. The life of an ordinary Jew.

value-concept. A **rabbinic** term that possesses **indeterminacy**, can be actualized only through **concretization** (and therefore cannot be defined), is linked to the **organismic complex** by one or more of the four **fundamental concepts**, and forms part of the normal **valuational life**.

Appendix B: A Chronology of Max Kadushin's Life, Work, and Contemporaneous Influences

1895

On 6 December, Max Kadushin is born in Minsk, Russia to Solomon and Rebecca (née Mazel) Kadushin.

1897

William James' *The Will to Believe* is published.

1898

The Kadushins emigrate to Seattle, Washington.

1902

Mordecai Kaplan completes rabbinical school at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, and is ordained a rabbi.

1907

Solomon Kadushin dies.

1909

Louis Ginzberg publishes the first volume of his seven-volume *Legends of the Jews*.

Solomon Schechter publishes *Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*.

1910

Kaplan joins the faculty of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

1912

Max Kadushin graduates from high school and moves to New York to pursue his education, majoring in philosophy and English literature at New York University while taking additional coursework at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

F.M. Cornford's *From Religion to Philosophy: A Study in the Origins of Western Speculation* is published.

1913

Kaplan begins hosting seminary students at his house, initially to discuss the works of William James.

1918

Kadushin prepares future literary critic Lionel Trilling for his bar mitzvah.

1920

Kadushin is ordained a rabbi at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

1921

Kadushin becomes rabbi of Congregation B'nai Israel in Washington Heights, New York City.

1922

Kaplan organizes the Society for the Advancement of Judaism, the world's first Reconstructionist congregation.

1923

Kadushin marries experimental psychologist Evelyn Garfiel.

Kadushin's article titled "The Function of Synagogue and Center" is published in *Jewish Center*.

1925

John Dewey's *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* is published.

Kaplan and Kadushin begin collaborating on weekly Reconstructionist sermons.

1926

Kadushin leaves Congregation B'nai Israel, and New York, to serve as rabbi of Humboldt Boulevard Temple in Chicago, Illinois.

Kadushin's article titled "The Place of the Center in American Jewish Life" is published in *Jewish Center*.

1927

Rabbi Louis Finkelstein, president of the Rabbinical Assembly, delivers an address, titled "The Things That Unite Us," in which he outlines certain fundamental theological principles and describes the Jewish Theological Seminary of America as a vehicle for ironing out theological controversies.

Kadushin gives a rebuttal in which he criticizes the former point, but agrees on the latter.

Grace de Laguna's *Speech: Its Function and Development* is published.

1928

Kadushin co-founds the Mid-West Council for the Society for the Advancement of Judaism, promoting Kaplan's Reconstructionist philosophy in Chicago.

William E. Ritter and Edna Bailey's *The Organismal Conception: Its Place in Science and Its Bearing on Philosophy* is published.

1929

Kadushin and his family spend a year in Palestine in order to learn Hebrew by immersion.

Alfred North Whitehead's *Process and Reality* is published.

1931

Kadushin moves from Chicago to Wisconsin, to serve as the University of Wisconsin's resident Hillel Foundation rabbi.

In a journal entry, Kaplan expresses frustration at Kadushin's growing interest in "organic thinking."

1932

Kadushin completes his Doctor of Hebrew Letters (D.H.L.) at Jewish Theological Seminary of America and publishes his first book, *The Theology of Seder Eliahu*, based on his doctoral research.

1934

John Dewey's *A Common Faith* is published.

1936

A.J. Ayer's *Language, Truth, and Logic* is published.

1937

Kaplan's first and most influential volume, *Judaism as a Civilization*, is published.

1938

Kadushin publishes *Organic Thinking: A Study in Rabbinic Thought*, the first (and most systematic) of his three major works.

Louis Ginzberg publishes the final volume of *Legends of the Jews*.

1942

Kadushin returns to New York to serve as director of the Hebrew High School of Greater New York.

1952

Kadushin publishes *The Rabbinic Mind*, the second of his three major works.

1953

Kadushin becomes rabbi of the Bay Shore Jewish Center of Long Island.

1954

Kadushin becomes rabbi of Synagogue Adath Israel in the Bronx.

1958

Kadushin becomes a professor at the Academy for Higher Jewish Learning in New York City (now known as the Academy for Jewish Religion).

Evelyn Garfiel Kadushin's *The Service of the Heart: A Guide to the Jewish Prayer Book* is published.

1960

Kadushin joins the faculty of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America as visiting professor of ethics and rabbinic thought.

Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method* is published.

1964

Kadushin publishes *Worship and Ethics: A Study in Rabbinic Judaism*, the last of his three major works.

1969

Kadushin publishes *A Conceptual Approach to the Mekilta*, the second of his three rabbinic commentaries and the last volume of his work published during his lifetime.

1978

Avraham Holtz's *Ba'olam Ha-mahshabah shel Hazal Be'ikbot M. Kadushin*, the only major Hebrew-language secondary volume on Kadushin's work, is published in Israel.

1979

Theodore Steinberg completes his doctoral dissertation on Max Kadushin at New York University. Although never published (beyond University Microfilms International), it remains the most comprehensive single-author work on Kadushin's life and work ever produced.

1980

Max Kadushin dies on 23 July.

1984

George Lindbeck's *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* is published.

1987

Kadushin's final rabbinic commentary, *A Conceptual Commentary on Midrash Leviticus Rabbah*, is published posthumously.

1988

Elliot Prager completes his dissertation on Kadushin's philosophy of Jewish education.

1990

Understanding the Rabbinic Mind: Essays on the Hermeneutic of Max Kadushin, the only major secondary volume on Kadushin's work published in English, goes to press. The

volume includes an intellectual biography and bibliography, adapted from Steinberg's dissertation.

In the same year, pastor Locke Bowman publishes *Teaching for Christian Hearts, Souls, and Minds: A Constructive, Holistic Approach to Christian Education*, which adapts Kadushin's work to an evangelical Christian worldview.

1991

The Postmodern Jewish Philosophy Network, which incorporates Kadushin's work into a broader discussion of postmodern and postcritical Jewish philosophy, is founded. It will later evolve to become the Society for Textual Reasoning.