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Special Issue Reprint

Theism in the Language of Humanism

Reincarnations of the Transcendent God in the Secular Subject

Edited by
Ronen Pinkas and Elad Lapidot

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This is a reprint of articles from the Special Issue published online in the open access journal *Religions* (ISSN 2077-1444) (available at: https://www.mdpi.com/journal/religions/special_issues/PXEM3ENQR7).

For citation purposes, cite each article independently as indicated on the article page online and as indicated below:

Lastname, Firstname, Firstname Lastname, and Firstname Lastname. Article Title. *Journal Name* **Year**, *Volume Number*, Page Range.

ISBN 978-3-7258-2007-8 (Hbk)
ISBN 978-3-7258-2008-5 (PDF)
doi.org/10.3390/books978-3-7258-2008-5

Cover image courtesy of Ronen Pinkas

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About the Editors

Ronen Pinkas

Ronen Pinkas is a Research Fellow at the School of Jewish Theology at the University of Potsdam in Germany (Ph.D. Jewish Philosophy, Bar-Ilan University). His research interests include contemporary and modern Jewish philosophy and theological thought, Jewish intellectual history, the religious thought of Hermann Cohen and Franz Rosenzweig, Judaism and psychoanalysis, inter-religious dialogue, and comparative theology: Judaism and Dharmic religions. He has published scholarly articles on various topics in Jewish thought and theology in *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy, Daat: A Journal of Jewish Philosophy and Kabbalah, Judaica: Neue Digitale Folge, Religions*, *Archivio di Filosofia*, and other renowned journals. He is currently working on a monograph on Erich Fromm and Jewish Thought.

Elad Lapidot

Elad Lapidot is a Professor for Jewish Thought at the University of Lille, France. His publications include *Jews Out of the Question. A Critique of Anti-Anti-Semitism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2020); a Hebrew translation, with introduction and commentary (with R. Bar), of Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: Resling Publishing, 2020); *Heidegger and Jewish Thought. Difficult Others*, edited with M. Brumlik (London/New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018); and *Etre sans mot dire: La logiqe de 'Sein und Zeit'* (Bucarest: Zeta Books, 2010).

Preface

Preface by Ronen Pinkas and Elad Lapidot

The process of secularization can be defined as a shift in the focus of European thought from the transcendent God, the otherworldly, and the suprahuman, towards immanence, that is, towards the world and the human condition in the world. Secularization represents a transition from theism to humanism. In light of this definition, one might conclude, as has often been done, that secularization resulted in the exclusion of God from thought and the removal of religion from the world. Nevertheless, post-secular thought offers a more nuanced and sophisticated perspective. The process of secularization, as postulated by numerous theorists, was not a departure from theism and religion in general, but rather a departure from a specific conception of God and a particular mode of religiosity that had been dominant for an extended period. The majority of contributions to this volume identify the moments of secularization and humanism, not as the elimination of God but on the contrary as an opportunity that was recognized by various thinkers to liberate the divine from the constraints of hegemonic European theology and religiosity. This perspective suggests that secularization did not erase God but rather created an opportunity for the humanization of religion through ethical, social, or political activation. In other words, the fundamental tensions concerning the relationship between the world and God—namely, immanence and transcendence—do not simply disappear but undergo a shift or process of displacement, and are then translated into the realm of human subjectivity and inter-subjectivity.

The papers in this volume employ a variety of methodologies and present a range of responses to the question of how the divine and transcendent reappear in the discourse of humanism. We propose that this process of transition, transformation, or translation can be viewed through the lenses of four domains: the intellectual, the psychological, the interpersonal, and the political.

In the first three articles, the reconfiguration of transcendence in the humanistic perspective is most apparent in the intellectual domain. In Randi Rashkover's article, this transition is discernible in the assessment of the relationship between Judaism and modernity as articulated by the canon of modern Jewish thought. In light of the argument that Judaism requires a novel analytical category, namely a "new secularity," which replaces the conventional dichotomy between secularism and religion, the transcendent may be regarded as the intellectual. If we consider modern Jewish thought to be a departure from tradition towards the transcendent, we can view it as a form of theism in the language of humanism. Similarly, Philipp von Wussow's article identifies the embodiment of the theistic in the humanistic discourse through the lens of modern Jewish thought. His conclusion that religious thought in the twentieth century had no alternative but to rebuild itself on post-secular foundations reinforces the assumption that the transformation of the theistic into the humanistic must occur in the philosophical domain. In the view of Franz Rosenzweig, the starting point is the philosophical concept of a universal God, and the process of theological reflection is directed towards a return to tradition. Rosenzweig's critique of scientism indicates that an answer to this question can be found in Judaism. Sabine Wolsink's contribution also permits an examination of the transformation from theistic to humanistic modes of thinking in religious philosophical discourse. By reading Allard Pierson's *True Humanity* through the lens of Caputo's *Religion without Religion*, it becomes evident that the answer to the question of transformation lies in common human nature. This implies that the true post-secular spirit is a universal one. Universalism itself represents the transition of the Christian tradition to humanism.

The following two articles examine the transformation of transcendence from theistic to humanistic perspectives in the psychological realm. In Rico Sneller's analysis of Carl du Prel's

philosophy of the unconscious, we observe the re-emergence of the transcendent God in the form of a personal unconscious. In contrast with the preceding three articles, Sneller posits that the transformation of the transcendent into the humanistic is not necessarily the result of a tension between philosophical and religious perspectives, or between tradition and modernity. Instead, he suggests that the philosophical and ethical debate about the unconscious plays a pivotal role in this transformation. The introduction of a binding moral and cosmological element into the realm of the personal unconscious signifies the incarnation of the theistic in humanistic discourse. Ronen Pinkas' article presents a comparable line of inquiry. The assertion that Erich Fromm's nontheistic mysticism serves as the foundation for his humanism and that this is based on the experience of unity beyond words indicates that the answer to the question of the transformation of the transcendent into the humanistic should be sought in the field of language and concept formation.

The articles by Admiel Kosman and Nadav Berman share a common assumption: that the transformation of the transcendent into the humanistic must be situated in the realm of interpersonal relationships. In Martin Buber's approach, the divine is revealed in the dialogical encounter. Kosman's work examines Buber's replacement of the common term "God" with a new term coined by Buber himself: "The Eternal Thou." Berman's examination of Franz Rosenzweig's opposition to Gnosticism and the critique of agape emphasizes the transition of divine love into the interpersonal humanistic realm.

The last three articles in this volume perceive the transition of the transcendent from the theistic to the humanistic in the political realm. Cedric Cohen-Skalli's historical–political analysis indicates that there is an unresolved contradiction between the transcendent and the humanistic frames of thinking. In his approach, the transcendent is the religious, which was overcome by the humanism of the Enlightenment, a process that encountered various obstacles in the Middle Eastern context. Sergey Dolgopolski's article also suggests that the translation of the transcendent into the humanistic discourse can be traced through an analysis of the theo-political. His research offers a study of the Jewish relationship to God and homeland, the Land of Israel, in light of Heidegger's philosophy of forgetting and forgetfulness. In his view, the transformation of God into theos and logos leads to a forgetting of the divine. In contrast, the rabbinic approach maintains a relationship that requires forgetting, which dialectically strengthens the power of memory. The same dynamic can be observed in the relationship between homeland and diaspora. Elad Lapidot's essay also suggests that the transformation of the transcendent into humanism can be seen in the political sphere. He contends that the theological concepts of exile and diaspora, understood through the lens of post-secular Judaism, have the potential to facilitate the realization of pluralism and social ethics.

It is our hope that this collection of articles, which offers a variety of perspectives on the relationship between theology and humanism, as well as between tradition and modernity, will contribute to the evolving research literature on post-secularism and encourage interdisciplinary and inter-religious dialogue.

About the Authors

Admiel Kosman, an Israeli poet, is a full professor of Jewish Studies at Potsdam University as well as the academic director of Geiger College. He is the author of five books and dozens of articles in the field of Jewish Studies.

Cedric Cohen-Skalli teaches early modern and modern Jewish Philosophy at the Dept. of Jewish History at the University of Haifa. His research focuses on the relationship of Jewish thinkers to two main philosophical shifts: the shift from Medieval philosophy to early modern thought (14th–17th century) and the shift from early modern to modern thought (18th–20th century). He has published three books and many articles on diverse aspects of Jewish thought and literature in the early modern

and modern period. He is also the translator of many works of Freud, Benjamin, Scholem, Idel and Abravanel.

Nadav Shifman Berman is a scholar of Jewish Thought and Philosophy. He is a Research Fellow at the Faculty of Law, University of Haifa, where he co-leads interdisciplinary ISF-funded research on Jewish Thought, Law & Technology. Previously, he was a postdoctoral associate at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, and at Yale University. His doctoral dissertation (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2018) investigated philosophical links between 20th century Jewish Thought and classical American pragmatism. His contribution to the present volume is part of a wider research project he pursues on Jewish Thought vis-a-vis Agape.

Philipp von Wussow is a lecturer of philosophy of religion, German–Jewish philosophy, and political philosophy at the Department of Evangelical Theology at the Goethe University in Frankfurt. He is the author of *Logik der Deutung. Adorno und die Philosophie* (Würzburg 2007) and *Leo Strauss and the Theopolitics of Culture* (Albany: SUNY Press 2020).

Randi Rashkover is the Nathan and Sofia Gumenick Professor of Judaic Studies and Professor of Religious Studies at William & Mary. She is the author of several books and edited volumes including *Nature and Norm: Judaism, Christianity and the Theopolitical Problem* (Academic Studies Press, 2020), *Judaism, Liberalism and Political Theology*, co-edited with Martin Kavka (Indiana University Press, 2014), *Freedom and Law: A Jewish-Christian Apologetics* (Fordham University Press, 2011) and *Revelation and Theopolitics: Barth, Rosenzweig and the Politics of Praise* (T&T Clark, 2005). She is working on a new book tentatively entitled *Jewish Continuity: A Philosophical Perspective*.

Rico Sneller is a lecturer of philosophy and depth psychology at the Academy of Depth Psychology (Nijmegen) and a visiting lecturer at Alfarabi University in Almaty (Kazakhstan). He has taught continental philosophy and ethics at Leiden University (NL). He is active on various boards, both nationally and internationally. His current research focuses on exceptional states of consciousness in relation to philosophy. Together with Mahmoud Masaeli (Ottawa University), he edited a series of books on global ethics, development, and spirituality. He recently published *Perspectives on Synchronicity, Inspiration, and the Soul* (Cambridge Scholars 2021).

Sabine Wolsink is a university assistant and PhD candidate in systematic theology at the Faculty of Protestant Theology and the Vienna Doctoral School of Theology and Research on Religion of the University of Vienna, Austria. Her PhD project deals with humanity and aesthetics in the thought of the Dutch intellectual Allard Pierson (1831–1896), considered from the perspective of John D. Caputo's radical theology.

Sergey Dolgopolski is the Gordon and Gretschen Gross Professor of Jewish Thought at the University at Buffalo SUNY departments of Jewish Thought and Comparative Literature. His general area of interest is the variety of ways in which philosophy and literature interact, creating new philosophical concepts and new literary forms. He specializes in the Talmud as a body of text and thought seen from poetic, rhetorical, and philosophical perspectives. He is the author of *Other Others: The Political After the Talmud* (Fordham University Press, 2018); *The Open Past: Subjectivity and Remembering in the Talmud* (Fordham U. Press, 2012); and *What is Talmud? The Art of Disagreement* (Fordham U. Press, 2009). He co-edited *When Jews Argue: Between the University and the Beit-Midrash* (Rutledge, 2023) and *Talmud/and/Philosophy: Conjunctions, Disjunctions, Continuities* (Indiana U. Press 2024), and is currently working on a monograph on the sense of past and the agency of cited law in the Palestinian Talmud.

Ronen Pinkas and Elad Lapidot
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Article

Beyond the Secular-Religion Divide: Judaism and the New Secularity

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Abstract: In his 2018 survey of twenty-first-century American Judaism entitled *The New American Judaism: How Jews Practice their Judaism Today*, Jack Wertheimer references a 2015 Pew Research study that presupposes the secular-religion binary as the analytical metric for its determination that both the American public and American Jews are becoming less religious. Nonetheless, Wertheimer's use of this analytical frame prohibits him from making sense of many details of the twenty-first-century American Jewish life that he seeks to describe. Indeed, any survey of the contemporary American Jewish scene is remiss if it does not discuss the rise of orthodox Jewish feminism, current trends towards substantial denominational change, and/or the emergence of a "post-ethnic" Judaism. Even so, recent historical-ethnographic accounts have outpaced analytical challenges to the secular-religion binary. Contemporary historians and ethnographers find themselves forced to choose between an analytically deficient model and a default rejection of analytical tools altogether. Arguably, the roots of the current impasse are derived from the influence of what scholars refer to as the secularization thesis. Therefore, to overcome this impasse, ethnographers and historians of American Judaism need access to a more refined categorical lens. In this essay, I argue that they may find the analytical support they need by turning away from the secularization thesis and turning toward far more complex accounts of the relationship between Judaism and modernity provided by the canon of modern Jewish thought. Such a turn yields an analytical category we may refer to as the "new secularity" which, when applied to studies in Jewish life in America (and potentially elsewhere) sheds light on communal realities that the secular-religious account misses.

Keywords: secularization; secularity; orthodox feminism; denominationalism; fact-value

Citation: Rashkover, Randi Lynn. 2024. Beyond the Secular-Religion Divide: Judaism and the New Secularity. *Religions* 15: 433. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15040433

Academic Editors: Ronen Pinkas and Elad Lapidot

Received: 14 March 2024
Revised: 22 March 2024
Accepted: 26 March 2024
Published: 30 March 2024

1. Introduction

On a summer evening in July of 1883, Hebrew Union College held a banquet to celebrate the ordination of its first class of Reform rabbis. As Jewish thinker Neil Gillman describes it, the banquet was "the climax of a glorious day in the history of the [Reform] movement . . ." (Gillman 1993, p. 26). Attendees were served from a menu of the finest foods, including an appetizer of "Little Neck Clams (half shell) . . . and a main entrée of either "Soft Shell Crabs or Salade of Shrimp" (Gillman 1993, p. 26). In a later discussion of nineteenth-century American Judaism, Gillman juxtaposes this description of the "Trefah banquet" with a profile of the late nineteenth-century wave of Eastern European Jewish immigrants who he says were, "inclined to be much more traditionalist in belief and practice than their German cousins . . . [and] unfamiliar with the culture of modernity . . ." (Gillman 1993, p. 38). As the well-regarded scholar Hasia Diner explains, Gillman's account is characteristic of a long line of American Jewish historians who think, "in terms of a 'German' and an 'eastern European' immigration . . . [and have] accepted [the] historical narrative [that] the first group quickly assimilated to American standards of behavior [whereas] the latter group . . . [remained] . . . more Jewish and more resistant to change" (Diner 2006, p. 79).

American Jewish history has long been narrated through the lens of the antagonism between secularity and religiosity. Students learn that the first Jews came for economic

opportunity and to a place lacking all provisions for religious life. They are told that German Jews were less religious than Eastern European Jews, that America Zionism was strictly secular, and that the suburban Jews of the 1950s were less religious than the Orthodox Jews who arrived on the shores of America in the wake of the Holocaust.

More recently, American Jewish historian Jack Wertheimer frames his 2018 survey of twenty-first-century American Judaism entitled *The New American Judaism: How Jews Practice their Judaism Today* by referencing a 2015 Pew Research study that presupposes the secular-religion binary as the analytical metric for its determination that both the American public and American Jews are becoming less religious. No doubt, Wertheimer's analytical appeal to the secular-religion divide echoes the approach used by respected historians like Diner. Nonetheless, Wertheimer's use of this analytical frame prohibits him from making sense of many details of the twenty-first-century American Jewish life he seeks to describe. For example, what can Wertheimer say about a twenty-first-century community of Reform Jews who take on new mitzvoth, but whose eighteenth and nineteenth-century ideological foundations celebrate "universal, human ethical principles"? Are they "religious" or "secular"? Similarly, what analytical tools can Wertheimer use to explain contemporary Orthodox Jews who, as he says, "live externally as fully engaged [religious Jews] . . . but privately have lost their faith?" (Wertheimer 2018, p. 97). Wertheimer knows he needs to add to his explanatory toolbox, but he does not know how and resigns himself to presenting a semi-journalistic, and often confusing, description of twenty-first-century American Judaism.

Wertheimer's description of contemporary American Jewish practices that belie the secular-religion characterization are just the tip of the iceberg. Any survey of the contemporary American Jewish scene is remiss if it does not discuss the rise of orthodox Jewish feminism, current trends towards substantial denominational change, and/or the emergence of a "post-ethnic" Judaism. Even so, recent historical-ethnographic accounts have outpaced analytical challenges to the secular-religion binary. Contemporary historians and ethnographers find themselves forced to choose between an analytically deficient model and a default rejection of analytical tools altogether. Contemporary Jewish studies pay a heavy price for this distorted situation. Not only does it obstruct research into the current state of American Jewish life, but it also forecloses the possibility of related analyses that emerge from a more thorough account of the landscape of contemporary American Judaism, such as the changing character of church-state relations in America, the relationship between Judaism in America and in Israel, and comparisons between Judaism and Islam in the west and elsewhere.

Arguably, the roots of the current impasse derive from the influence of what scholars refer to as the secularization thesis. By the secularization thesis, I mean the idea first coined by Max Weber and later described by Peter Berger in his 1967 work, *The Sacred Canopy*, that "religion" and "modernity" are antagonistically related since modernity introduces rationalization processes implicit in the work of natural science, industrialization, and the modern state that undermine the ontological foundations of religious world-views and their appeal to sacred, non-human forces. As Berger explains, secularization is the idea that as a result of modernity's account of "reality [as] amenable to the systematic, rational penetration, both in thought and activity, which we associate with modern science and technology . . . [most individuals] no longer live . . . in a world ongoingly penetrated by sacred beings and forces . . ." (Berger 1967, pp. 111–12). Thus, in Berger's view, the decline of religion in the modern west is a symptom of its essential irrationality and its inability to come to terms with the knowledge of the world made possible by rational science.

Therefore, to overcome this impasse, ethnographers and historians of American Judaism need access to a more refined categorical lens. Below, I argue that they may find the analytical support they need by turning away from the secularization thesis and turning toward *far more complex* accounts of the relationship between Judaism and modernity provided by the canon of modern Jewish thought. As I discuss, such a turn yields an analytical category we may refer to as the "new secularity" which, when applied to studies in Jewish

life in America (and potentially elsewhere), sheds light on communal realities that the secular-religious account misses.

Generally speaking, modern Jewish thought is identified with the canon of work produced by Jewish philosophers who analyze the relationship between Jewish law, norms, and practices and the intellectual and material conditions presented by western modernity. As I discuss in more detail below, when taken as a whole, the canon of modern Jewish thought (approximately 1650–present), which includes the work of thinkers like Moses Mendelssohn, Franz Rosenzweig, Hermann Cohen, Gillian Rose, Rachel Adler, and others, demonstrates common patterns of response to the encounter between Judaism and western modernity. The key to unlocking these common patterns is (contra Berger) to recognize them as a set of complex responses to what intellectual historians, such as Jonathan Israel, refer to as the crisis of the enlightenment (see Israel 2002) or the notion that the promise of the new science associated with the enlightenment went hand in hand with a crisis concerning the truth and validity of non-scientific areas of knowledge such as ethics, religion, and politics. Frequently, this account of the exclusive truth and validity of scientific claims is referred to as the fact-value divide.

Contrary to the secularization thesis that pits science and reason against religion, an investigation into the common patterns shared by modern Jewish thinkers in response to the crisis of the enlightenment illuminates how modern Jewish thinkers *both* deeply respected the newly discovered methods and knowledge of natural science and yet were, at the same time, anxious about and ultimately critical of the threat it posed to the logical validity of Judaism and its laws, norms, and practices. In sum, an examination of how modern Jewish thinkers responded to the enlightenment gives credence to the fact that the relationship between Judaism and modern reason was and is both more favorable *and* more critical than secularization theorists suggest.

As I discuss, modern Jewish thinkers display three primary patterns of response to the fact-value divide or the crisis of the enlightenment that I list in the order of their *increasing discomfort* with it: (1) acceptance and the willingness to reduce Jewish norms and claims to "scientific" terms, (2) acceptance together with an account of the essence of Judaism as an irreducible "more", and (3) an external critique that challenges the exclusive veracity of fact claims and asserts the unique validity of claims regarding revelation, but only flips the goal posts of exclusive logical validity away from "science" to theology but does not provide an account of the logical validity of these claims. For better or worse, the signature feature of a religious thinker's appropriation of the fact-value divide is what I refer to as arbitrary anchoring or the inability to articulate the standards of intelligibility or logical validity of one's claims. Thus, there are two key elements constitutive of the complexity of the modern Jewish thought responses to the crisis of the enlightenment or fact-value divide: (a) general acceptance of the fact-value divide in the form of an inability to arrive at an account of the logical validity or intelligibility of Jewish claims and (b) an increasing discomfort with the fact-value paradigm and its denigration of the intelligibility of Jewish claims that gives rise to a slow process of philosophical investigation into the fact-value paradigm's own validity.

Not surprisingly, and more importantly for our purposes here, over time, these philosophical reactions to the crisis of the enlightenment result in an overarching skepticism concerning any and all attempts to posit self-evident rational grounds of *either* facts or values. Jewish thinkers dismayed with the status of the intelligibility of Jewish discourse in the wake of varying forms of acceptance of the fact-value divide begin to chip away at its self-evidence and the self-evidence of subsequent and related attempts to replace it with other grounds of rational self-evidence. This skepticism leaves Jewish thinkers and community members with a forced option to either accept the skeptic's verdict that there is no single standard of the rational validity of claims or recognize that, within a post-enlightenment context, we cannot identify a *single ground or standard* for the validity of Jewish theopolitical claims, *and* the determination of the validity of these claims requires a (transcendental) investigation into them by those for whom they sustain or once sustained

intelligibility, as these individuals and communities deploy these claims within changing conditions of the world within which they live. No doubt, the rational promise of such a process presupposes that there are Jewish communities and thinkers for whom Jewish laws and claims are intelligible or hold logical meaning.

I refer to this philosophical position as a "new secularity" since it sustains: (1) an appreciation for scientific knowledge, (2) a skepticism concerning its philosophical hegemony, i.e., a realization that scientific knowledge is a knowledge generated by and for human persons and communities, and (3) an appreciation of the fact that the rational validity of Judaism and its laws and beliefs is a pragmatic product of the relationship between the communities that live by them and the worldly constraints within which they do or do not achieve meaning. Thus, the central argument of this essay is that this philosophical position or "new secularity" aptly describes the current philosophical situation of Jews in America and can be used as a valuable analytic for gaining a deeper appreciation of the particular ethnographic realities of lived Jewish experiences that remain neglected and misunderstood by the secular-religion divide approach which itself takes for granted an unreflected-upon appropriation of the fact-value divide.

2. Secularization and the Crisis of the Enlightenment in Modern Jewish Thought

Frequently, intellectual historians describe the history of modern Jewish thought as a two-part tale that mimics the narrative presented by secularization theorists. This account typically begins with seventeenth- and eighteenth-century liberal attempts to accommodate the standards of modern rationality and reject fundamental elements of the Jewish tradition, and then it moves to describe the post-WWI neo-orthodox reaction against this liberal assault that was eager to restore non-rational categories of the Jewish tradition, such as miracle and revelation (for an example of this narrative, see Lazier 2008). Not surprisingly, this narrative fails to adequately convey the more complex character of the relationship between Judaism and modernity expressed by the canon of modern Jewish thought, a character which I discuss elsewhere (see Rashkover 2020). I suggest this is a result of the impact of the crisis of the enlightenment upon modern Jewish thinkers.

I am not the first scholar to consider the impact of the crisis of the enlightenment upon modern Jewish thought. In his 1935 volume, *Philosophy and Law*, the twentieth-century theopolitical philosopher Leo Strauss challenged the assumptions of the secular-religion binary applied to the modern Jewish thought canon and offered a valuable starting point for the analysis presented here. There are four key points of difference between the analysis of modern Jewish thought presented by Strauss in *Philosophy and Law* and the liberal-post-liberal narrative that bears the marks of the secularization thesis: (1) According to Strauss, there is no categorical divide between so-called "liberal" Jewish thinkers like Mendelssohn and Cohen, who were apparently sympathetic to the secular enlightenment world-view, and so-called post-liberal or "traditional" Jewish thinkers like Rosenzweig, who apparently rejected modern reason in their efforts to preserve the discourse of Judaism. In his view, both liberal and post-liberal Jewish thinkers alike were impressed with modern reason and used it as the primary standard for judging the veracity of Jewish law, norms, and practices (for Strauss discussion, see Strauss 1995, pp. 26–28). (2) In Strauss' view, this appropriation of modern reason by liberal and post-liberal thinkers alike made it *impossible* for them to secure the rational legitimization of Judaism since Judaism is a legal discourse whose rationality is rooted in the highest good of a revelatory authority called into question by the epistemological standards of modern reason and natural science (Strauss 1995, pp. 26–28). (3) The very modern reason that modern Jewish thinkers appropriated is itself philosophically questionable since it presupposes the exclusive truth or self-evidence of natural scientific knowledge, which it does not itself defend (Strauss 1995, p. 32). (4) Contemporary Jewish thought should and does challenge the commitment to modernity and should and does focus attention on the intelligibility and/or logical validity of the law that operates within an account of revelatory authority and not outside of it. Clearly, Strauss' position challenges Berger's insistence upon the antagonism between Judaism and

reason and calls attention to a form of Jewish legal rationality invisible to secularization theorists in general and proponents of the liberal/post-liberal divide within modern Jewish thought in particular.

3. The "New Secularity"

Like Strauss, the analysis here recognizes the impact of the crisis of the enlightenment upon modern Jewish thought. If it is the case that Jewish thinkers have been favorably disposed to the gains in knowledge afforded by the rise of natural science, then it is also true that these same thinkers show concern with the enlightenment's strict identification of truth and rational validity with natural science and the corresponding delegitimization of Jewish laws and ideas that stand outside this body of knowledge. When viewed historically, it becomes clear that, despite continued respect for scientific knowledge, Jewish thinkers have become increasingly too concerned to salvage the rational intelligibility of Jewish discourse (for an extensive analysis of the slow process by which modern, western Jewish, and Christian thinkers evaluated the tension between their commitment to natural science and their commitment to normative claims, see Rashkover 2020).

In particular, and as mentioned briefly above, there are three distinct ways that Jewish thinkers mediated between their respect for science and their concern for the rational validity of Jewish laws and practices. They acted in one of the following ways: (1) like Spinoza, they accepted natural science as the philosophical standard of truth and validity and reduced Jewish claims to these terms, thereby dismissing all other Jewish laws and practices as irrational or outside of the perimeters of truth and logical validity (as Spinoza argues, "reason demands nothing contrary to Nature." (Spinoza 2006, p. 4)); (2) like Franz Rosenzweig or Martin Buber, they accepted natural scientific claims as logically valid but, concerned with the reduction of claims to a naturalist explanation, maintained that Jewish claims are irreducible to naturalistic explanation and refer to a sacred reality more than or beyond the natural world, even if the appeal to this sacred more does not restore the rational validity of Jewish discourse since it is beyond the bounds of human knowledge (Martin Buber's *I and Thou* offers a good example of this position; for a discussion of Franz Rosenzweig's account of the relationship between scientific knowledge and theology, see Rashkover 2020, pp. 6–17); or (3) like Strauss, they accepted the value of natural science but challenged its *philosophical* hegemony through an external critique from the vantage point of a revelatory rooted, communally self-sufficient, and internally coherent standard of Jewish legal rationality, which he nonetheless took as self-evident and which, therefore, remained vulnerable to the arbitrary anchoring that constitutes the telltale sign of the appropriation of the fact-value divide. No doubt, Strauss challenged the logical superiority and self-evidence of scientific discourse. However, he also challenged the self-evidence of revelatory discourse. Both, he claimed, are intelligible discourses, but both are inevitably rooted in decisionist determinations of what constitutes the higher form of life. In such a view, mutual skepticism constitutes the highest philosophical achievement, and each guarantees the logical siloization of the other. Jewish discourse achieves intelligibility but only within the context of a decisionist determination and not by virtue of a positive articulation of the transcendental conditions of the possibility of the logical validity of its claims (for a clear presentation of Strauss' account of the relationship between theology and philosophy, see Strauss 2006).

Ultimately, in our current philosophical climate, none of the three responses provides an account of how to recognize the intelligibility of Jewish discourse. Despite the increasing philosophical challenge to the fact-value paradigm, as most robustly illustrated by Strauss, all three responses lead Jewish thinkers into a forced option to either (a) accept the skeptic's challenge to the rational validity of Jewish discourse or (b) engage in what I call an immanent critique of the fact-value paradigm or what is an awareness of a thinker's own tendency to appropriate it together with an awareness of its inadequacy. Philosophically speaking, however, an awareness of the inadequacy of the fact-value paradigm need not result in skepticism, since it may also give rise to a transcendental investigation into what can

or could be the conditions of the possibility of the logical validity of Jewish claims. Stated otherwise, when accompanied by a living confidence in the value of Jewish discourse, an immanent critique of the fact-value paradigm invites those who engage in this discourse to replace the search for an absolute ground for the logical validity of their claims with a task or an activity or *ongoing* (transcendental) investigation into the conditions of the possibility of these claims or discourse.

Jewish thinkers and communities who embody this stage of response to modernity recognize the philosophical limits of both the enlightenment and the post-enlightenment accounts of reason and, by default, come face to face with the sobering and yet philosophically promising conclusion that, in the current moment, there is no single standard of rationality which can be used to legitimize any discourse, scientific, theological, or otherwise. Rather, under current circumstances, knowledge claims achieve rationality by virtue of their function for the communities who deploy them within the material and ideational conditions within which they live. Consequently, this chapter in the history of the Jewish response to modernity, apparent in the thought of Jewish thinkers like Menachem Fisch (see Fisch 2008) and in communal trends towards denominational innovation and post-ethnicity, appropriates the modern anxiety over the rational legitimacy of theopolitical discourse and/or recognizes the vulnerability of key elements of the Jewish tradition to the challenge of skepticism. Nonetheless, this response does not subject Jewish claims to the criteria of enlightenment reason but attempts to rehabituate those laws and norms whose meaning is called into question by current environmental conditions by discerning if and when there is a way to situate them into the web of other functional knowledge claims. Ideas or practices that can be rehabituated achieve rational validity or, in John Dewey's language, warranted assertability. Claims or laws that do not are temporarily dismissed or stored, even if they are not in current use since over time inferential, ideational, and material conditions may change such that they can be successfully rehabituated into the web of working knowledge claims of a given Jewish community at some unknown time in the future.

I refer to this stage as the "new secularity" because, like its modern enlightenment ancestor, it presupposes that rationality is a product of a community's knowledge of the *world*. Even so, it is a "new" kind of secularity since, unlike its modern predecessor, it takes for granted that rational validity is determined by the pragmatic interests of living Jewish communities and the interface between the claims, laws, and norms that have achieved warranted assertability and the worldly constraints that can pose a challenge to the meaning or ongoing intelligibility of any one of these claims at any time.

Moreover, and more importantly, for our purposes here, appreciation for the "new secularity" as a stage in the Jewish thought response to modernity enables ethnographers and historians to appreciate developments in American Jewish life that remain unintelligible to researchers limited by the secular-religion binary. There is no doubt that contemporary forms of American Judaism, like other forms of religious life, benefit from the work of ethnographers and historians. Still, this work is arguably enriched by the recognition of the philosophical orientations of living communities. Indeed, it was sociologist Peter Berger himself who recognized the significance of rational conditions for the assessment of sociological alterations in religious life. What Berger did not appreciate is the extent to which the rational conditions of those of us who have inherited enlightenment standards have undergone dramatic philosophical reflection and response by the living communities deeply affected them. In what follows, I offer the following three examples from contemporary American Jewish life that benefit from the analytical lens of the new secularity: (1) the rise of orthodox feminism; (2) the trend towards denominational changes; and (3) the emergence of a post-ethnic Jewish self-consciousness.

In 2014, a communal debate ensued among the members of the modern orthodox Riverdale Jewish community in New York when a group of young high school women decided to take up the traditionally male practice of wrapping tefillin at their orthodox yeshiva (Borschel-Dan 2014). According to traditional interpretations of Jewish law, only

men are commanded to daily bind their upper arm and head with a black leather strap connected to a box that contains a text from Deuteronomy.

At the time of the debate, the rabbi of the young women's school supported their initiative. However, a leading rabbi of the Riverdale Jewish community named Rabbi Rosenblatt did not and insisted the following: (a) the school the young women attended was an "orthodox" school and its reputation as such would be questioned if the young women donned tefillin in it and (b) while it was undoubtedly true, he argued that there are "some" conditions that justify halakhic (Jewish legal change) (these conditions were not present in this instance even if the women's position was supported by ample textual evidence).

In response, the Riverdale women argued that rabbinic refusal to allow women to don tefillin constituted an unintelligible position (Borschel-Dan 2014). As women who participated in a particular society at a particular historical moment, the value of equal and fair treatment of women and/or the inclusion of women in key devotional experiences constituted knowledge claims they recognized as logically valid. This, coupled with the fact that there was ample textual support from within the tradition to ground their view, emboldened the young women to challenge Rosenblatt's conclusion.

Below, I offer a brief analysis of what I take to be the rational status of Rabbi Rosenblatt's position. Suffice it to say here that there is good reason to argue that Rosenblatt's position waxes irrational in comparison to the young women's position insofar as Rosenblatt's position works hard to deny what I would maintain are his own modern orthodox community's shared standards of intelligibility or what, in this instance, is the importance and equal value of women's devotional experience. By categorically determining that communal concern for women's devotional experience simply did not rise to the level of a communal justification for halakhic change, Rosenblatt suppressed hermeneutical responses to worldly conditions and, in the process, secured the unintelligibility of his own position. In her own work on feminist halakhic reasoning, Ronit Irshai amplifies this point and argues that modern orthodox halakhic arguments that attempt to ignore the large pool of knowledge claims and commitments confided by most community members, as they live in a pluralist society, do so at the risk of advancing unintelligible legal interpretations that will either fade away against the test of time or be sustained through ideological techniques of hermeneutical coercion. In her assessment, it is critical for modern orthodox Jews to, "confront the basic premises that they are unwittingly buying into, premises at odds with their shared values [such as the premise that it is fine for women to operate as second class citizens in orthodox communities], which as a practical matter, they most likely reject in most areas of their lives [and to concede that] there is no divide in the values, and that the distinction between how they are applied in [their] religious and secular dimensions of life is an artificial one . . .." (Irshai 2010, p. 76).

Regardless of this assessment of the rationality of Rosenblatt's position, it is clear that a Bergerian account of the secular-religion divide fails to provide an adequate explanation of the young women's position. From a Bergerian perspective, the Riverdale women must be either orthodox and irrational or rational and secular. However, it is clear that the Riverdale women are halakhically observant and, if anything, seek to become more observant. As well, the women present what they take to be a rational position, albeit a position whose rationality, like the "new secularity", derives from the relationship between the claims they live with and the often-changing worldly constraints within which they sustain these claims. Falling into neither the strictly observant or secular category, the Riverdale women ground the rationality of their legal claims in their commensurability with other knowledge claims they hold and, therefore, whose intelligibility they take for granted, including but not limited to other halakhic claims, claims of natural science, and even meta-halakhic principles, such as the fair and equal treatment of women.

In addition to the rise of feminist orthodoxy, we can point to the following two other examples from twenty-first-century American Jewish life (although there are many) that achieve greater intelligibility when viewed through the lens of the new secularity:

(1) the trend towards denominational change and (2) the emergence of a post-ethnic Jewish self-consciousness.

In *The New American Judaism*, Jack Wertheimer discusses the contemporary state of Reform Judaism. To frame the analytical dimension of this discussion, Wertheimer invokes a recent PEW research study that takes for granted the secular-religion binary and apparently documents the current decline of the Reform movement. According to the study, "just over one-third of Reform Jews who affiliate with a synagogue claim to attend services once a month or more . . ." (Wertheimer 2018, p. 114). With this, and in keeping with the secularization thesis, Wertheimer prognosticates that, "the dramatic decline of liberal Protestant denominations may truly serve as a warning of what lies ahead for Reform Judaism" (Wertheimer 2018, p. 114).

Certainly, it is surprising that, when in contradiction to this account, Wertheimer describes how, liberated from its nineteenth-century ideological commitments, twenty-first century Reform Judaism displays a new denominational (indeed more "orthodox") vitality. In recent decades, he notes, Reform Jewish communities have experimented with appropriating traditional liturgical practices once dismissed as old-world by the patriarchs of classical Reform. In its twenty-first century incarnation, by contrast, "the shofar [has once again] replaced trumpet blasts . . . head coverings and prayer shawls [have] made a comeback . . ." (Wertheimer 2018, p. 107). Frequently Wertheimer continues, Reform Jews have retrieved non-liturgical elements of the halakhic system as well, most notably the laws of kashrut and marital practices, including rituals associated with the mikvah, an ancient rabbinic institution linked to formerly considered unintelligible purity laws deriving from the book of Leviticus. Taken together, these (denominational) innovations point to a time of unrivaled growth for the movement.

Clearly, Wertheimer's account of Reform Judaism's recent success conflicts with his earlier diagnosis of its decline. This I argue is because his analysis of its decline is predicated upon a definition of religion associated with the secular-religion binary. From this perspective, religion amounts to a subjective set of beliefs about a sacred (irrational) "more" unrelated to the knowledge we have about the everyday world in which we live. Accordingly, "religion" is something that takes place in houses of worship only, separate from voting booths, dinner tables, bedrooms, political marches, and scientific laboratories. Consequently, evidence for or against the presence of religion is delimited to synagogue membership and attendance statistics. This means that Wertheimer's project is inevitably stymied by the failure of the analytic he uses to capture and be informed by the data he finds.

By contrast, when viewed through the lens of the "new secularity" described above, Wertheimer's data acquire analytical meaning. Like its feminist orthodox and post-ethnic cousins, twenty-first century Reform Judaism constitutes a hybrid expression of the deep skepticism concerning the contemporary meaning of key elements of the Jewish tradition (e.g., traditional notions of divine command, miracles, along with a skepticism of classical ideas of nineteenth century Reform Judaism) together with a willingness to reinterpret some of these elements in relation to other knowledge claims held by the communities involved. So understood, Reform Judaism's exercises in innovation do not signal a nostalgic desire for a lost religious world, but rather they are the anxious expressions of communities who display a willingness and ability to preserve the best and most functional aspects of the world-views they love.

A third example of the contemporary American Jewish landscape illuminated by the new secularity is what American Jewish scholar Shaul Magid refers to as post-ethnic Judaism in his book, *American Post-Judaism: Identity and Renewal in a Post-Ethnic Society*. By post-ethnic Judaism, Magid refers to the emergence of Jewish communities that do not anchor their Judaism in ethnic identification or what, drawing from Max Weber's definition of ethnicity, he describes as, "a subjective belief in their common descent because of physical type or customs" (Magid 2013, p. 18) In the second half of the twentieth century, American Jewish communities entered a period of unwavering ethnic commitment, shaken as they

were by the Holocaust and motivated to support the preservation of the Jewish people through the newly established State of Israel. Nonetheless, as Magid maintains, recent data indicate the rise of American Jewish communities that are post-halakhic, global, and multi-ethnic and are "founded on voluntary and socially constructed affiliations" (Magid 2013, p. 23). Unlike their denominationally or ethnically oriented predecessors, post-ethnic Jewish communities demonstrate an unprecedented hermeneutical freedom and drive for symbolic and ritual rehabituation.

In his book, Magid discusses the example of the Jewish Renewal Movement established by Rabbi Zalman Schachter Shalomi in the early 1970s. Founded neither on Zionism nor the Holocaust, Schachter's Renewal, as Magid explains, seeks to "move beyond its parochial interests and demonstrate that Jews can contribute to global civilization as Jews" (Magid 2013, p. 23). Driven by a concern for the contemporary crisis of meaning overshadowing traditional Jewish concepts, Renewal communities actively experiment with hermeneutical reinterpretations that comport with the social, political, and ecological concerns that currently affect American Jewish life. For example, members maintain that the contemporary geopolitical environment casts suspicion over parochial implications of the traditional notion of biblical monotheism, and they often turn to kabbalistic ideas of divine emanation through multiple attributes or sephirot as a way to lend new meaning to Jewish theological claims. Similarly, Jewish renewal communities respond to the contemporary loss of meaning around the notion of halakhic obligation and recast Jewish practice as ritual or post-halakhic.

According to Magid, post-ethnic exercises in hermeneutical freedom exemplify "George Simmel's notion that when cultural forms become spiritually empty and no longer embody the life of the society, they cease to serve the members of the society in question . . ." (Magid 2013, p. 20) and, for our purposes, illustrate the key elements of the "new secularity". Like Strauss, post-ethnic Jewish communities view the late twentieth-century Jewish focus on the Holocaust and Zionism as an inadequate attempt to resolve the larger problem of Judaism's encounter with modernity and its accompanying standard of reason. However, parallel to the work of feminist orthodox halakhic reflection, post-ethnic communities accept the challenge posed to the intelligibility of Jewish communal concepts and engage in the pragmatic rehabituation of them.

As these examples suggest, recognition of the "new secularity" creates space for comparative analyses between what are often considered unrelated developments in American Jewish communal life, such as feminist orthodoxy, Reform Jewish traditionalism, post-ethnic Jewish Renewal, and rising rates of Orthodox Jewish agnosticism. However, before concluding, it is important to underscore the explanatory benefits of this categorical development. While the study of religion requires a dialectical interface between the "understanding" and "explanation", it is also the case as we have seen that, in the wake of the failure of the secular-religion binary, Jewish scholars have found it difficult to identify working categories that support the explanatory arm of their religious studies work. This was the primary argument advanced by J.Z. Smith, who defended the explanatory function of analytical categories in religious studies while recognizing the pragmatic limits of these categories in the face of changing data (see Smith 1998). Above, I attempted to show how the category of the new secularity offers one such pragmatically useful explanatory concept for research in American Judaism. Not only does it facilitate comparative analyses in American Jewish Studies, but it also opens up new areas of research, including but not limited to the following: (1) Judaism and race in America since it offers an analytical framework to understand how, as Eric Goldstein described (this analysis appears in Goldstein 2006), Jewish ideas about race have been and arguably still are expressions of Jewish communities' attempts to rehabituate their communal identity to make sense of their position in American society; (2) analytical comparisons between Judaism in America and in Israel insofar as it is unclear if and how the category of the new secularity applies to the data of Jewish life in Israel; and (3) legal religious pluralism and/or church-state relations in the U.S. insofar as, within the scope of the new secularity's account, religious law acquires justificatory

validity, while the intelligibility of halakha or alternatively Islamic law remains situated within the constitutional constraints of American society.

Additionally, the category of the "new secularity" has predictive value since, as discussed above, it arises under unique conditions that, if no longer present, signal the end of this stage of the Jewish encounter with modernity and the communal challenges and possibilities it affords. As we have seen, the following two conditions stand out: (1) the "new secularity" presupposes a crisis of intelligibility regarding key elements of Jewish life or philosophical skepticism and (2) the "new secularity" presupposes the willingness and ability of Jewish communities to salvage or preserve their own discourses in the face of this crisis. Admittedly, given the impact of modernity on religious beliefs, it is difficult to imagine any serious alteration to condition #1 in the foreseeable future. This is not the case with respect to the second condition or what is the ability and willingness of communities to engage in hermeneutical acts of self-preservation.

For example, as Joseph Winter's *Hope Draped in Black* makes clear, hermeneutical rehabituation is a luxury afforded to communities whose physical survival is not under threat. Of course, the willingness and ability of Jewish communities to engage in hermeneutical efforts of self-preservation can also be threatened if Jews lose interest in preserving their ideas, norms, and practices altogether. As cultural studies theorist Zygmunt Bauman suggests, we live in a time when the steering mechanisms of market and power are so dominant that they can drain the life-force out of cultural development altogether and/or the development of forms of Judaism in particular (see Bauman 2012).

Stated otherwise, to say that Jewish communal life constitutes an active site of rationality is not to say that Jewish communities are always and/or inevitably sites of rational activity. In fact, collective reasoning practices are more likely to operate under certain conditions and are easily threatened in the absence of those conditions. Thus, an account of the conditions of the possibility of the "new secularity" can provide a criterion by means of which we can determine if and when a Jewish community is functioning rationally or not and can offer an analytic lens to predict the likelihood of a community's future as rational (i.e., healthy and self-preservationist) or ideological (unhealthy and ultimately unable to meet the challenges of changing conditions over time) when, by ideological, I mean the position of being committed to a fixed web of ideas that apparently follow with the force of logic, but which represent the interests of a particular group who robustly deny all potential contradictions or challenges to the logical validity of these claims (in Karen Ng's terms, ideologies are "at once social practices and forms of rationality that destroy the relation between life and self-consciousness . . . [As such, ideologies are fixed constellations of ideas that are] locked within their own abstract space, as divorced from reality as a psychotic." (Ng 2015).

More specifically, a community operates as a site of rational activity when the following occur: (a) its ways of life or norms and practices are deemed intelligible by the community members that live by them; (b) the community permits challenges to or reviews of its norms and ideas by individuals or groups who perceive a conflict between "x" norm and their own account of worldly constraints; and (c) the community is willing to reinterpret its norms or practices and, under extreme conditions, even decide to reject or disregard them. As such, and unlike a secular-religion approach, a "new secularity" account of rationality does not privilege more typically "liberal" communities over more "traditional" ones. Rationality is not hereby linked to certain ideas and/or certain ways of living but only to how a community holds its ideas and norms and adjudicates internal challenges to their intelligibility in view of changing material and ideational constraints. Indeed, it may be the case that traditional or haredi orthodox communities are more likely to rationally preserve themselves than modern orthodox or other liberal Jewish communities since (a) they are more insular and less exposed to changing worldly constraints and (b) they work hard to develop mechanisms such as educational institutions and family and community practices that demonstrate and reinforce the value of the community's way of life. However, the key to any community's rational vitality is the extent to which it remains rationally self-

determinative and does not permit the determination of the intelligibility of its norms and ideas to be usurped by those who seek singular control over this process.

Consequently, the chances that a community will remain rational are greatly increased in times when there is widespread acceptance of the intelligibility of the large majority of the community's norms and ideas and greatly reduced when there is skepticism regarding the intelligibility of a critical number of communal norms or ideas. It is important to keep in mind that what it takes for one community to undergo an intelligibility crisis may not be the same as what it takes for another community to experience such a crisis. For example, occasional and somewhat limited expressions of skepticism in a haredi community may activate authority figures to *suppress* internal rational activity and assert their own exclusive right to normative interpretation, while a more modern orthodox community may be more open to regular bouts of re-evaluation or practical rehabituation and reach a crisis point only when there is a complete loss of social coordination.

Regardless of the threshold, a community's experience of an intelligibility crisis in its lifeworld will at one and the same time create the opportunity for the community to exercise its highest level of philosophical self-review *and* render the community vulnerable to ideological forces ready and waiting to relieve the community of this high-level, effortful, and often disorienting rational work. Clearly, the greater the philosophical challenge, the easier it is for a community to succumb to ideological escapes from it (Rashkover 2021). Consequently, in times of crisis, it is not surprising that communities find it difficult to sustain the level of rational activity they need to guarantee their long-term self-preservation. Communal rational self-determination takes time and effort. Under such circumstances, communities often find it easier to accept the interpretive determinations of their practices presented to them by individuals or groups who seek to assert their own accounts of the meaning of the community's tradition, but they do so by bypassing the communal practices of justification necessary to sustain the long-term health of the community. This, I believe, offers a plausible explanation of Rabbi Rosenblatt's non-rational or ideological position and the apparent willingness of at least some in the Riverdale community to accept his unilateral determination of what constitutes "orthodoxy" and/or his suppression of the community's hermeneutically reflective activity. Stated otherwise, the persistent threat of ideology constitutes the greatest ongoing challenge to the rational self-preservation of Jewish (and arguably non-Jewish) communities in a post-enlightenment environment. As such, any deployment of the category of the "new secularity" inevitably yields results regarding community health and well-being that derive from specific case-by-case analyses of the ongoing dynamic between hermeneutical rehabituation and ideological usurpation of this activity in any particular community.

A fully developed account of the dynamic between communal rational activity and ideology as the two poles of the new secularity is beyond the scope of this analysis. Suffice it to say that an analytical awareness of this dynamic between communal rational activity and ideology as constitutive of the "new secularity" provides a far more generative lens with which to understand developments in Jewish communal and theopolitical life than the secular-religion binary and can arguably be of great service to comparative work in religious studies. Of course, such an analytic is useful only if it serves the data. No doubt, it is high time for ethnographers and historians of Judaism to let go of the secular-religion binary. However, the failure of this explanatory model only reminds scholars of the ongoing challenge to develop categories that enhance explanatory work in Jewish studies and Religious studies more broadly.

Funding: This research received no eternal funding.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Article

Postsecular Jewish Thought: Franz Rosenzweig, Alexander Altmann, Leo Strauss

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Abstract: This article traces the emergence of what is nowadays called "postsecular" religion from German-Jewish philosophy of the 1920s and 1930s. The three different cases of Franz Rosenzweig, Alexander Altmann, and Leo Strauss impel us to pay particular attention to a few recurring argumentative and rhetorical strategies. The emergence of postsecularism marks a shift in the epistemic foundations of Jewish religious thought, which had long been under pressure from secular European thought. Beginning with Rosenzweig, Jewish philosophy used secular categories of European philosophy to facilitate a return to the foundations of Judaism, eventually turning against what it sees as the epistemic weaknesses of secularism itself. This article traces the new phenomenon to Rosenzweig's evolving view of secularism, especially to his ridicule of Siegfried Kracauer's secular messianism, before examining a few key arguments in his book *The Star of Redemption* (1921). A brief discussion of Alexander Altmann's writings of the early 1930s provides that even modern Orthodox Jewish thought, which had never been "secular", used postsecular categories and arguments to make the philosophical case for orthodoxy. Leo Strauss's introduction to his *Philosophy and Law* (1935) provides a far more elaborated form of Rosenzweig's argument. As this article seeks to show, postsecular Jewish thought comes with a slight twist of epistemic relativism, particularly when it comes to the juxtaposition of the Biblical and scientific "world-views". But here it merely draws the full consequences of modern science, beating scientism with its own weapons. Furthermore, religious thought in the 20th century had no other option than to rebuild itself on postsecular grounds.

Keywords: postsecularism; Jewish philosophy; postcritical Judaism; posttraditional Jewish thought; secular messianism; phenomenology; orthodoxy; enlightenment

Citation: von Wussow, Philipp. 2024. Postsecular Jewish Thought: Franz Rosenzweig, Alexander Altmann, Leo Strauss. *Religions* 15: 430. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15040430

Academic Editors: Ronen Pinkas and Elad Lapidot

Received: 11 March 2024
Revised: 22 March 2024
Accepted: 25 March 2024
Published: 29 March 2024

1. Introduction

The category of "postsecularism" is not entirely appropriate for 20th-century Jewish philosophy. To begin with, this is due to the unmistakable Christian connotations of the term. Also, the theory has been all about postsecular *societies* and little about the type of belief and the respective arguments in favor of this belief. What Habermas has described as a "shift from the traditional to a more reflexive form of religious consciousness" (Habermas 2008, p. 28) is one of the most fascinating phenomena in the field of contemporary religion; but the predominant sociological focus on the topic has not been overly helpful. This paper suggests a change of perspective by expanding the historical matrix *and* by examining more closely the actual arguments and rhetorical strategies.

The emergence of postsecularism is a by-product of the return to religion in 20th century Jewish thought—a return that was inaugurated, in different forms, by Martin Buber, Hermann Cohen, and in particular Franz Rosenzweig. However, returning to religion even in the sincerest manner comes with severe modifications of religion as it was traditionally understood. Postsecular religion first comes across as a curious mixture of premodern beliefs and postmodern sensitivities. But it also marks the future of religion in the 21st century, at least in secular Western societies.

This paper is not only about Franz Rosenzweig but, at least briefly, also about Alexander Altmann and Leo Strauss. One reason for this choice is that the case of Rosenzweig alone would be too obvious, with his personal story of growing up in an assimilated German-Jewish home, of his near-conversion to Christianity, and then his resolute return (or rather, turn) to Judaism. Rosenzweig quickly became a role model for secular Jews seeking to find a meaningful connection to Judaism. As he described the impact of his master work *The Star of Redemption*, it was *the* book for those young Jews who in various ways sought to find a path to the old Jewish law (Rosenzweig 1984, pp. 139–40). They could not understand Jewish law in the way it had traditionally been understood, so they understood it in a postsecular framework. Altmann and Strauss change this view, because they had never been "secular", and moreover, they had not been in two different ways. The variety in their intellectual biographies, then, bids us to see the similarities in the actual arguments and rhetorical strategies despite their different personal starting points. Altmann hailed from a long rabbinic family tradition and underwent the characteristic double education in rabbinic studies and philosophy, which he and others conceived as the two highest pursuits for a Jew. As he explained in a later talk at the University of Chicago, he lived "in two realms", without reducing one to the other: "I can afford to live in two realms. We have this sort of a split mind, in which people really believe that there might be a possibility of being a philosopher and a believer *without* trying to combine the two into a unity" (Altmann 2022, p. 841).

Leo Strauss, on the other hand, was not a typical "secularist", although he identified as an atheist. But the type of atheism he subscribed to was "Biblical atheism", which "rejects for reasons of conscience the belief in God" (Strauss 1995, pp. 37–38). According to Strauss, Friedrich Nietzsche was the forerunner of "an atheistic or . . . non-theistic religiosity" that only came to light after the death of God. The entire doctrine of *Beyond Good and Evil* was "in a manner a vindication of God" (Strauss 1983, pp. 179, 181).

Strauss later recalled growing up in an Orthodox Jewish home without much Jewish knowledge (Strauss 1997, pp. 459–60). He chose the life of philosophical inquiry against the life of obedience to God, but he always wondered whether the choice was justified. This nurtured his life-long quest to examine or "re-understand" the conflict between philosophy and Judaism, or reason and revelation. He concluded early on that the pillars of the tradition, namely, Plato and the prophets, have been torn down since Nietzsche, so that a new start is both necessary and possible. This new start, however, would necessarily entail a revision of the tradition: "The tradition has been shaken at its *roots* by Nietzsche. It has altogether forfeited its self-evidence. We stand in the world completely without authority, completely without orientation . . . We *can* begin entirely from the beginning: we lack any polemical passions against the tradition (we have, after all, nothing from where we could be polemical); and at the same time, the tradition has become completely estranged from us, completely questionable" (Strauss 2014, pp. 234–35). In 20th-century Jewish thought no tradition was simply given. Strauss concluded that the presuppositions of secularism were unfounded, and that a return to a transcendent God was possible on the same epistemic grounds.

2. Adjacent Terms

To add a few more terms and references that resemble the notion of postsecularism, this type of belief has been ridiculed by Theodor W. Adorno as religion *after* religion: "revelation is invoked . . . because supposedly it would be a good thing to have revelation . . . It seems to me that the religious renaissances of today are philosophy of religion, not religion" (Adorno 2005, pp. 136–37). The quotes are from the brief article "Reason and Revelation", written in the 1950s to educate a wider audience about the dangers of positive religion in modernity. What Adorno had in mind was the Patmos Circle, of which Rosenzweig was not a member but an ally. For Adorno, this type of religiosity was purely ideological, born out of despair over the crisis of rationalism in the wake of WWI. But he repeated the same arguments in the 1960s, most notably in the opening remarks of his book *Jargon of Authenticity* (1964)

(Adorno 1973, pp. 3–4). Adorno had first come across this phenomenon in the early 1920s through the influence of his private teacher, the critic Siegfried Kracauer. Kracauer professed a rigorous secular messianism at the time, the quintessence of which was to reject all positive faith and rather wait for some true religion in the future: "Perhaps the only remaining attitude is one of *waiting* . . . One waits, and one's waiting is a *hesitant openness*, albeit of a sort that is difficult to explain". Kracauer explained that those who wait are "as hard as possible on themselves, so as not to be taken in by religious need", while their openness "consists of tense activity and engaged self-preparation" for the eventual "life in the religious sphere". Further details about this future life "cannot be conveyed in the form of knowledge" (Kracauer 1995, pp. 138–39). At the highpoint of this phase, when Kracauer argued with Rosenzweig and Buber on their new translation of the Hebrew Bible (Kracauer 1995, pp. 189–201), the weakness of his position also marked the downfall of his secular messianism.

Whereas Kracauer's critique of positive religion was bound to a specific moment, Adorno generalized this view, albeit he changed a few coordinates. He proceeded by maintaining a principal difference between the religion "of old" and the religious "mood" of the present. As he suggested, the religion of old came with a "richly and concretely developed religious imagination", whereas the new religion is based on "a desperate abstraction". This notion of a rich religious imagination "of old" is based on Georg Lukács' *Theory of the Novel*, which also had heavily impacted the secular messianism of Kracauer. The positive counter-image to the fragmented world of modernity is being located in medieval thought, in which all secular life received its meaning from one transcendent signifier. Adorno imagined premodern religion as a closed world unhinged by rationality—a fiction that serves to motivate a particular stance on the *modern* problem of religion and politics. For Adorno this fiction serves to explain away revelation in terms of social psychology. As he maintained, "revelation is invoked [. . .] because supposedly it would be a good thing to have revelation". From here on, all precaution has been given up by Adorno. As he continued: "In the best case . . . it is the desire that produces such an attitude: it is not the truth and authenticity of the revelation that are decisive but rather the need for guidance, the recourse to what is firmly established"[1]. The principal strategy here is to explain the return of religion as a matter of psychological instability. In retrospect, this strategy has not been successful: religion simply did not go away. It survived the psychopathology of religion virtually unscathed, only to rise again after the latter's demise.

Religion after religion is not necessarily inauthentic, but it often comes with at least a hint of epistemic relativism. This feature must not be understood in any negative sense: it is precisely what makes Rosenzweig and others insusceptible to the critique of religion as it had been shaped by Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. Postsecularism outsmarts the critics of religion by beating them with their own weapons.

For another reference, Steven Wasserstrom described the paradoxical endeavor of religion after religion as "a nonreligious religiosity, a secular antimodernism, a metarationalism operating within academic discourse" (Wasserstrom 1999, p. ix). These notions must be qualified to be helpful. Wasserstrom appears to share with Adorno the notion that religion after religion is not strictly religious. Furthermore, the reference to metarationalism points to the difficulty that secular and non-religious attitudes and beliefs largely operate on the same epistemic grounds as postsecular and religious ones. The term "religion after religion" may be helpful to describe the new type of religiosity, but it cannot refute it: it does not provide a compelling argument why religion after religion cannot be thoroughly religious.

It is common to refer to this phenomenon as "posttraditional", but this term can be misleading. After all, the vanguards of postsecularism constructed a new tradition. Furthermore, tradition had always been constructed in an ongoing process of inclusion and exclusion. Tradition has never been simply given. Postsecular Jewish thought may have turned against a particular, authoritative tradition, but not against tradition as such. Today the term "posttraditional" has come to designate all sorts of spiritual and cultural

engagement with Judaism beyond the ancestral model of observance of the Torah and God's commandments (Mendes-Flohr 2021).

We are getting closer to the matter by employing the term "postcritical", just as Leo Strauss spoke of "postcritical Judaism" in a late remark. One of the outstanding features of the postcritical condition is that it is insusceptible to the critique of religion by Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud offered three—maybe *the* three—comprehensive posttraditional interpretations of religion in modernity. They represent the three options for a radical critique of religion to argue where religion stems from: class struggle, the will to power, or neurosis. Religion, then, is a sign either of injustice, mediocrity, or immaturity (von Wussow 2020, p. xxiii). Marx called it "the opium of the masses" (Marx and Engels 1975, p. 175), Nietzsche spoke of "alcohol and Christianity" as "the two great European narcotics" (Nietzsche 2005, p. 187), and Freud compared religion to "intoxicating substances" (Freud 1961, p. 75). They all expected that a future without religion would be blissful and bright.

But Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud did not account for the possibility that one could be thoroughly religious without falling back behind their critique. They presupposed that the religious interpretation of reality had been discredited and that the common man only held on to it for narcotic purposes. A new interpretation would successfully replace the religious interpretation. The one thing necessary for humanity was a new purpose—the classless society, the overman, or the man of unprejudiced science. These purposes were the core elements of a new, secular "belief", which was based on the idea of the perfectibility of man (von Wussow 2020, p. xxiii).

The term "postcritical" is also linked to post-Bible criticism. Postsecular Jewish thinkers were no longer bound by the limits of Bible criticism, which had been a major weapon for the critique of religion. But they needed not fall back behind the critical findings: they read the Bible *as if* it were a holy book (Rosenzweig 1984, pp. 747–48; Strauss 1997, p. 394). It is no wonder, then, that postsecular Jewish philosophy is immensely concerned with reason and revelation, or philosophy and Judaism, as if it were the most important and most obvious topic of philosophizing in the 20th century.

It is useful, then, to make a shift from sociological observations on religious beliefs to the study of the arguments and assertation made in favor of these beliefs. Habermas outlined how to see oneself as a member of a postsecular society and what to expect from others to safeguard that "social relations remain civil" *despite* the prevalence of religious world-views in the public sphere (Habermas 2008, p. 21). In other words, he urged religious people to act reasonably. Jewish postsecularism of the 1920s and 1930s urged secular reason to be more reasonable and not exclude the possibility of revelation, creation, and miracles. Postsecularism, then, is not only a return to religion. In the first place it is a critique of the critique of religion.

3. Rosenzweig, the Quintessential Thinker of Postsecularism

Rosenzweig is a major reference point for the return to Judaism in early-20th-century Jewish philosophy. To a certain degree the same can be said about Hermann Cohen (1842–1918) and Martin Buber (1878–1965), who both had a lasting impact on Rosenzweig. But they differ when it comes to their respective modes of returning. Buber devised the return to Judaism as a renaissance, a rebirth of the Jewish people's spiritual powers. Cohen sought to provide Judaism with a proper foundation in systematic philosophy. For Rosenzweig to return meant a full-fledged *teshuva*, a reversal and repentance. He thereby seems to anticipate much of the return to religion at the beginning of the 21st century.

But Rosenzweig could not simply return to the Jewish tradition as the Jewish tradition was traditionally understood. He fused theological and philosophical ideas to make sense of the tradition in a new and thoroughly modern way. In particular, he put great emphasis on experience, which had been of little concern for the Jewish tradition. Rosenzweig's master work, *The Star of Redemption* (1921), was devised as a system of experience, in which two conceptual triangles laid over one another—God, world, man and creation, revelation,

redemption—mimic the Star of David. None of the terms could be reduced to one another. It was this conceptual framework that allowed him to articulate the reality of Judaism that lived with him.

One of the most interesting aspects in the context of postsecularism is how, from the point of his near-conversion onward, Rosenzweig's view on secularism evolved. In particular, it is helpful to study a number of sneering remarks Rosenzweig made on his secular colleagues. Perhaps the best example is a remark in a letter to Buber on his upcoming seminar with Siegfried Kracauer at the Freie Jüdische Lehrhaus in Frankfurt. For some context, the remark is part of a larger story, which has been well documented (Baumann 2011; Handelman 2011). While the failed seminar stands at the beginning of this story, Kracauer's scathing review of Rosenzweig and Buber's Bible translation and the ensuing polemics mark its end point.

At the time, Kracauer was under the strong influence of Georg Lukács' *Theory of the Novel*, which had been a hallmark of secular messianism. Lukács described a future resurrection of the meaningful times, in which the mortified world of things—the "second nature"—would receive their meaning from above: "This second nature is not dumb, sensuous and yet senseless like the first: it is a complex of senses—meanings—which has become rigid and strange, and which no longer awakens interiority; it is a charnel-house of long-dead interiorities; this second nature could only be brought to life—if this were possible—by the metaphysical act of reawakening the souls which, in an early or ideal existence, created or preserved it; it can never be animated by another interiority" (Lukács 1971, p. 64).

Kracauer subscribed to this view, and he held that the only appropriate response to this state of the world was to wait for this metaphysical act to happen. The heroism of waiting stood in a sharp contrast to all those who would not just wait. They were the "short-circuit people" (*Kurzschlussmenschen*): "what they all have in common is a tendency to flee headlong from the dreariness and the world outside in order to slip quickly into a sheltering abode" (Kracauer 1995, p. 136). Kracauer also included Buber and Rosenzweig among the "short-circuit people"[2].

Rosenzweig knew about these views, but he still wanted to bring Kracauer to the Lehrhaus to attract the urban secular bourgeoisie. However, he had no illusions about the theological prospects. In a letter to Buber, written in October 1922, he envisioned the outcome as follows: "And then we learn for the umpteenth time that 'we' live in a burst broken fragmented and chaotic 'time', from which a 'religious quest' yearnfully licks its fingers for that great pretty round unity cake, which a gracious medieval pastry cook home-delivered ready-made as a Weltanschauung-dessert to a mankind that was 'close to God'"[3].

This description fits Kracauer's negativistic crypto-theology extremely well. But even more interesting is the form of the argument, and especially the ridicule, against Kracauer. Ridicule had been the hallmark of Enlightenment thinkers against religion: they laughed the religious people out of their positions, even if they could not refute their actual beliefs (Strauss 1995, pp. 29–30). Postsecular religious thought turned the matter around, using the Enlightenment weapon against the Enlightenment. In the last Lehrhaus lecture, when Kracauer could not read his prepared remarks due to his speech impediment, he passed his manuscript over to Rosenzweig. As the latter recalled, he proceeded to deliver Kracauer's remarks, which became much funnier than the previous sessions due to his parenthetical comments (Rosenzweig 1979, p. 861). Neither the manuscript nor the remarks were preserved. One must imagine the event as a watershed moment in the quarrel between religious and antireligious beliefs and attitudes, in which the laughter of postsecularism drove secularism out of its pretension of epistemic superiority. To be sure, turning the matter around merely repeats the problems: it can laugh the secular messianists out of their positions, but it cannot refute them. The decisive discovery was that it does not need to refute secularism. It only needed to refute the pretension that secularism had refuted religion and to point out the poorness of secular beliefs and attitudes.

The theoretical foundation in *The Star of Redemption* is the chapter on miracles, and in particular the passage on the new theological rationalism. Rosenzweig started from the notion of a multitude of enlightenments, which successively represent knowledge as opposed to faith. In the last stage, in the 19th century, the belief in miracles was replaced by historicism with the corresponding belief in the "progress" of mankind. Rosenzweig repeatedly refers to this "new belief"[4]. The demonstration that science and historical progress rest on a belief, too, is a major strategy of postseculars.

At this point there is a major turnaround in the chapter. Rosenzweig had spelled out his critique of the critique of religion, but he needed a more thorough conceptual framework to explicate his new understanding of religion. But as he switched from criticism to this rather constructive role, he ran into a number of difficulties. As Rosenzweig claimed, nothing less than "a completely new building" for theology was needed (Rosenzweig 1988, p. 113; 2005, p. 122). For this task, philosophy and theology would need to work together. A thorough and close reading of these pages would need to analyze a variety of claims, including his ideas of a new temporal experience, but it must suffice to explicate the interrelation of philosophy and theology here. Rosenzweig's principal claim is that philosophy and theology *need* each other, but he did little to provide a proper argument in the chapter. It is at this point that Rosenzweig employed his full arsenal of philosophical rhetoric instead.

One rhetorical highlight is certainly the claim that philosophy needs theology for the sake of its systematic integrity and ultimately of its own scientific character. It feeds upon a problem in Hermann Cohen's system of philosophy, in which the three major parts cannot come into a unity unless they are being complemented by religion. Outside the specific systematic problems in neo-Kantian philosophy, however, the claim does little as a philosophical argument. Rosenzweig rather used it as a springboard into theology. His description of Cohen's trajectory explains more about Rosenzweig himself than about Cohen: "Cohen meant to add an annex to the old philosophy, a mere [. . .] addition to his own system, in particular to his ethics, and for all intents and purposes, he rediscovered the lost paradise of mankind" (Rosenzweig 1984, p. 240).

Hence Rosenzweig's figures of mutual need should not so much be taken for arguments but rather for rhetorical appeals. One outstanding feature of these appeals is their self-referential character: they all point to the "new type of philosopher or theologian, situated between theology and philosophy" (Rosenzweig 1988, p. 118; 2005, p. 116), which is none other than Rosenzweig himself. No German-Jewish philosopher in the 20th century could find a proper balance of philosophy and theology upon which the entire liberal model of German-Jewish thought was based (von Wussow 2023). But Rosenzweig increasingly believed he had found a new solid basis—the only possible basis—that even surpassed the Cohenian model. As he wrote to Gertrud Oppenheim in July 1924: "The liberal German-Jewish standpoint, on which for almost a hundred years almost the entire German Jewry found a place, has apparently become so small today that only one man, namely, I, can live on it" (Rosenzweig 1979, p. 980).

It should be noted that the passage can indeed be read systematically and not merely rhetorically. Rosenzweig's systematic idea in the chapter is to establish the connection between creation, revelation, and redemption from the vantage point of creation "In certain respects . . . both Revelation and Redemption are Creation" (Rosenzweig 1988, p. 114; 2005, p. 113). This is also the systematic starting point for his revaluation of the relationship between philosophy and theology: "And so here lies the point from where philosophy and construct anew the whole edifice of theology" (Rosenzweig 1988, p. 114; 2005, p. 113).

But despite and against this unmistakable systematic pretension, the guiding principles of these passages are of a rhetorical nature. I would therefore suggest a more modest approach that analyzes these passages *as a play*—a play between philosophy and theology, to be sure, but also between author and reader. Rosenzweig's principal game plan is to overwhelm the reader with a plethora of claims and references. This has much of a rhetorical shell game: Rosenzweig plays with the terms philosophy and theology until he

could make them mean whatever he wants, because the reader can no longer follow the argument and action of the text.

For two examples of Rosenzweig's subsidiary arguments, we may first refer to the repeated claims that philosophy and theology "call" for each other. Rosenzweig does not state why they call for each other, or how he managed to intercept the call. Second, and to back up the first, he wrote: "And already the weathervanes of the times are without a doubt turning unquestionably in this direction. We already hear theology's call to philosophy everywhere. A new theological rationalism is on the move" (Rosenzweig 1988, p. 113; 2005, p. 112). This is an odd mixture of claims about current trends pointing into the future. The common denominator is the appeal to the reader to ride on the wave of the future, seamlessly crossing over into a prohibition against even questioning the claim. Even the English translator was confused here, as one can see in the conjunction of "without a doubt" and "unquestionably", which both stand for the German word "durchweg". Needless to say, perhaps, the claim about an unmistakable current trend is at odds with the suggestion that both philosophy and theology have hitherto missed this point.

4. Altmann and Strauss

Alexander Altmann hailed from a longer family tradition of Jewish scholarship and service. He was trained in phenomenology and neo-Kantian philosophy at Berlin University (where he became friends with Joseph Soloveitchik) while also pursuing his rabbinical studies. In 1931 he both received his Ph.D. and was ordained as a rabbi. Henceforth he taught at the Hildesheimer Rabbinical Seminary and served as a rabbi until 1938, when he fled to England and eventually to the U.S. Altmann worked towards a "Jewish theology", which was meant to point the way for German Jews to have a share in the finite world of German culture and in the infinite world of Judaism. Living in two worlds, he never came to ditch the Biblical view for a share in contemporary culture.

But as his first published writing, "Metaphysics and Religion" (1930), shows, he was not the typical *Rabbinerdoktor*. He started from a contemporary philosophical issue, namely, Max Scheler's return to metaphysics[5]. The argument roughly runs as follows: If it is possible to return to metaphysics, why should it be impossible to return to religion? Moreover, the return to metaphysics is doomed to fail due to its inner contradictions, but this failure does not affect religion. At last, the return to religion is possible only on orthodox premises (Altmann 1991, pp. 1–15). This foundation of orthodoxy out of the aporias of European metaphysics is brilliant, but it comes with a slight postsecular smack.

Altmann's theological works show how he employed the tools of Schelerian phenomenology to elaborate on the core tenets of Judaism, hence using secular thought to foster the renewal. His writings provide a sense of how postsecular modes of argument "migrate" into Jewish theology, which is decidedly non-postsecular in its intentions. At last, phenomenology was also useful for Altmann to overcome the dualistic conception of secular and postsecular modes. As he sought to show in his article "What is Jewish Theology?" (1934), the interplay between finite and infinite, between temporal and eternal, marked the very meaning of Jewish existence (Altmann 1991, pp. 40–56). This endeavor also points to the lasting impact of Franz Rosenzweig across various branches of Jewish thought.

A more elaborated version of the postsecular argument can be found in Strauss's introduction to *Philosophy and Law* (1935), in a passage on the quarrel between the Enlightenment and orthodoxy. The two notions are somewhat generic, referring neither to an epoch nor to a specific religious community, but rather to the perennial quarrel between belief and unbelief.

As Strauss maintained, the Enlightenment has never addressed the ultimate premise of orthodoxy: "the irrefutable premise that God is omnipotent and His will unfathomable. If God is omnipotent, then miracles and revelations in general, and in particular the Biblical miracles and revelations, are possible" (Strauss 1995, p. 29). The Enlightenment refutation of orthodoxy, then, has never even been carried out, and orthodoxy survived the Enlightenment attack in hiding. Orthodoxy has not been refuted, and could not have

been refuted, because the entire system of orthodox belief is irrefutable. Since the orthodox premise that God is omnipotent and unfathomable cannot be refuted, "all individual assertions resting on this premise are unshakable" (Strauss 1995, p. 29).

The argument has both its strengths and its weaknesses. It is built upon the demonstration that the thesis of God's omnipotence cannot be refuted; but the price of this demonstration is that the thesis of God's omnipotence cannot be proven to be true. Even if the Enlightenment was wrong in its pretension that it had refuted orthodoxy, that did not make orthodoxy right. In other words, the argument refutes a refutation, but it cannot establish a position. Any principled judgment of right and wrong is impossible under the premise of a double negation. The argument in favor of religion comes at the price of a principal limitation. It can nevertheless be effective in the sphere of intellectual politics, where fundamental conflicts are not being settled in the orderly manner of a principled decision about right or wrong, but rather in the infinite clash of interpretations and rhetorical persuasions (von Wussow 2020, p. 70).

Strauss's argument is situated in a peculiar historical moment, which loosely resembles the situation today. The critique of religion employed by Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud had lost its traction, but the arguments in favor of a new type of religious faith had not yet been thoroughly articulated. Rosenzweig, Altmann, and Strauss set out the epistemic foundations for this articulation. They use the highest principles of the Enlightenment to criticize the Enlightenment. The perennial question is whether this utilization of the Enlightenment against the Enlightenment is possible without leaping into relativism. Is it possible to reap the benefits of relativism for a non-relativistic purpose?

A proper answer to these questions must take into account that, for the most part, postsecularism merely draws the opposing positions to their ultimate conclusion. Strauss demonstrated this in *Philosophy and Law* in a hidden swipe against Ernst Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms: if modern science is but one historically contingent form of world-construction among others, the scientific interpretation of the world is not in principle superior to the Biblical interpretation. Cassirer evaded this consequence, but Strauss noted it sharply. He concluded that the idealistic understanding of modern science "makes possible the rehabilitation of the 'natural world-view' on which the Bible depends"[6]. Modern science comes to be seen as but one of several possible "world-views", and the scientific "world-view" is not in principle superior to the Biblical world-view. The victory of scientism, as envisioned by Cassirer, inadvertently rehabilitates the Biblical world-view. It therefore marks the end of scientism.

The epistemic equivalence between the biblical world-view and the scientific world-view comes with a peculiar twist: the introduction of the Biblical world-view uses the relativistic starting point for its own purpose, but this purpose is antirelativistic in its intention. Biblical religion, with its center in the act of God revealing Himself to man, is meant to be more than just another "world-view"; it disrupts the infinite play of possible "world-views". For better or worse, this paradox defines postsecularism to a great extent.

In a last twist, Strauss claimed that the Enlightenment was "forced" to create the world of modern culture to cover up its own failure: "Was not the 'unique' 'world-construction' of modern natural science, according to which miracles are indeed unknowable, devised expressly for the very purpose that miracles *be* unknowable, in order to protect man against the grip of the omnipotent God?" (Strauss 1995, p. 34). After failing to refute orthodoxy, the Enlightenment invented modern science to protect itself against the possibility of miracles. Its attack against orthodoxy is born out of despair over its own weakness. Modern science, then, is not a spontaneous and free creation of man: it rests on an act of violence committed by the Enlightenment against orthodoxy. The subsequent development of the Enlightenment serves to cover up, and ultimately to forget, this act of violence.

There would be more to say about Strauss's introduction to *Philosophy and Law*, which is a masterpiece in its own right (von Wussow 2020, pp. 65–90). But this passage alone is worth studying closely at least for the fact that it clearly continues and radicalizes what Rosenzweig had written in the chapter on miracles. Strauss argued that Rosenzweig had

not gone far enough. But his own argument had also decisively been prepared by Rosenzweig. A clear link is provided by a phrase at the beginning of Rosenzweig's chapter, which shows both the continuation and the evolution of the argument *after* Rosenzweig: "For all practical purposes, [. . .] it amounts to the same thing whether everything is guided and determined by forces residing in things or by the influence of higher powers" (Rosenzweig 1988, p. 104; 2005, p. 104). The relativistic consequence, according to which the world could be guided by God as well as by laws that can be described by science, is a major philosophical presupposition of the return to Judaism. The obvious limitation of Rosenzweig's statement, though, made it inevitable that the epistemological argument became more refined *after* Rosenzweig.

5. Conclusions

Postsecular Jewish thought, then, was not just a "shift from the traditional to a more reflexive form of religious consciousness" (Habermas). Judaism had long, if not always, been both traditional and reflexive; and the tradition was constituted in the very act of reflection. Hence the category of "secularization" is so difficult to adapt to Jewish thought. And yet the terms can properly be employed to describe a variety of phenomena specific to German-Jewish philosophy of the interwar period. One important feature is how Jewish thought turned the weapons of the philosophical critique of religion against itself. While this reversal inevitably runs into difficulties when it comes to a more constructive formulation of critical insights, it is highly useful to open up a space for the renewal of Judaism—a space that is not necessarily to be filled by constructive theology but also by different forms of Jewish communal and individual life.

Another outstanding feature of the new understanding of religion is that it is immune to the critique of religion by Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. It had become possible to be thoroughly religious *without* falling back behind the critique of religion. As indicated, Strauss referred to this possibility as "post-critical Judaism" (Strauss 1997, pp. 94, 344). To rephrase the critical insight somewhat differently: one can believe in miracles, in God's creation of the world, and His revealing Himself to man; and there is no decisive counter-argument as long as one believes in a thorough and sincere manner. It is of course possible to refute religion, but one can as well refute the refutation, and both are possible on the very same grounds. Religious or non-religious beliefs and attitudes are a matter of choice, an act of the will. Religious and anti-religious discourses are a matter of rhetoric persuasion.

Parallels to contemporary issues of religion and politics, such as the renewed argument between creationists and those who say they "believe in science", are all too obvious. But the quarrel between these two closed world-views—the Biblical view that runs into difficulties when facing modern science and the "belief" in science that mistakes science for a homogeneous, settled doctrine—is remarkably different from the postsecular condition of German-Jewish philosophy before World War II. Most notably, the latter pointed the way to the tension and possible reconciliation of reason and revelation, but it did not collapse one into the other. Postsecular Jewish thought defies a clear-cut alternative between religious and secular beliefs, showing how both can be inseparably intertwined. Postsecularism therefore bids us to rethink the basis of religious and secular attitudes alike. It is for this reason that we should look for German-Jewish philosophy of the interwar period to trace the origins of postsecularism.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Notes

1 (Adorno 2005, p. 137), translation altered.

2 Kracauer in a letter to Leo Löwenthal, 4 December 1921, in (Löwenthal and Kracauer 2002, p. 33).

3 "Und dann erfahren wir zum soundsovielten Male, daß 'wir' in einer zerborstenen zerbrochenen zersplitterten und chaotischen 'Zeit' leben, aus der ein 'religiöses Suchen' sehnsüchtig sich die Finger leckt nach jener großen schönen runden Einheitstorte, die im 'Mittelalter' ein gütiger Konditor einer 'gottnahen' Menschheit fertig ins Haus lieferte, zum Weltanschauungsnachtisch" (Rosenzweig 1979, p. 837).

4 Or "new faith" in Barbara Galli's translation: (Rosenzweig 2005, pp. 109–10).

5 Scheler's phenomenology was also the subject of Altmann's dissertation (*Die Grundlagen der Wertethik: Wesen, Wert, Person. Max Schelers Erkenntnis- und Seinslehre in kritischer Analyse*, 1931).

6 (Strauss 1995, p. 33). For particulars on the nexus of Strauss and Cassirer here, see (von Wussow 2020, pp. 19–29, 76–77).

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Article

'Let Us Just Be Humans': Reading Allard Pierson's True Humanity through the Lens of Caputo's Religion without Religion

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Abstract: The Dutch intellectual Allard Pierson (1831–1896) is often considered to be an example of secularism. In 1865, he resigned as a minister from the Dutch Reformed Church in order to promote true humanity in society at large. This article explores how Pierson's true humanity can be considered as an ultimate concern (Tillich) or a religion without religion (Caputo) by reading him through the lens of John D. Caputo's thinking. Both Caputo and Tillich developed a non-institutional and undogmatic understanding of religion, in which religion is related to a universal human love, passion, or ultimate concern that is not necessarily linked to a religious institution or doctrine. After an elaboration of Caputo's religion without religion, the article discusses Pierson's thinking in the context of nineteenth-century theological modernism and debates on the modernist's right to stay in the church. Then, Pierson's reasons for his resignation and his true humanity are examined. It becomes clear that Pierson did not choose secularism over religion, but rather surpassed the religious-secular divide by a focus on our common human nature. Being human was more important than being Christian, which exemplifies the late-nineteenth-century move from a theistic Christianity towards a humanistic religiosity or humanism.

Keywords: Allard Pierson; John D. Caputo; Paul Tillich; humanism; secularism; modernism; religion without religion; ultimate concern; liberal Protestantism

Citation: Wolsink, Sabine. 2024. 'Let Us Just Be Humans': Reading Allard Pierson's True Humanity through the Lens of Caputo's Religion without Religion. *Religions* 15: 340. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15030340

Academic Editors: Ronen Pinkas and Elad Lapidot

Received: 15 January 2024
Revised: 6 March 2024
Accepted: 11 March 2024
Published: 12 March 2024

1. Introduction

'He who loses his God will find his God', Allard Pierson wrote in 1888 (Pierson [1888] 1982, p. 118).[1] The prominent Dutch intellectual and former minister of the Dutch Reformed Church was at that time professor of art history, aesthetics, and modern languages in Amsterdam.[2] For Pierson, the God he lost was the God of his youth in the context of the Dutch awakening movement, the *Réveil*. His loss was caused by the influence of empirical philosophy and modern theology during his student years. By rejecting supernaturalism and absolute truths, questioning the historical authenticity and infallibility of the Bible, and challenging the authority of the church, Pierson could not help but lose the God of his youth. It was not the end, though. 'He who loses his God will find his God', and Pierson found his God in the one thing he had always strived for, in the ideal of true humanity.

Pierson is often considered to be an apostate or an example of secularization, leaving the church and moving from Christian theism to humanism, like many intellectuals in the second half of the nineteenth century. Pierson's breach with the church was considered to be a breach with religion as well (Balke 1996; Molendijk 2000; Trapman 1996, 2005, 2014).[3] But is it that simple? It all depends on how religion is defined (Wolsink 2023). This article explores how Pierson's striving for true humanity could be considered as an ultimate concern or a religion without religion, and therefore as religious in the sense John D. Caputo, following Paul Tillich, defined religion. Caputo and Tillich both developed a non-institutional and undogmatic understanding of religion, in which religion is related

to a universal human love, passion, or ultimate concern that is not necessarily linked to a religious institution or doctrine (Caputo 2015, 2018; Tillich [1957] 1988). It thereby criticizes or even surpasses the religious-secular divide.

This article addresses the following research question: in what sense does Pierson's true humanity, in the context of nineteenth-century theology, surpass the religious-secular divide when read through the lens of Caputo's religion without religion? The question will be answered by first elaborating on Caputo's concept of religion without religion. Second, Allard Pierson's thinking in the context of his own time will be discussed, focusing on his relation to Dutch theological modernism. In particular, the questions of how to consider the church, and whether or not modernists could stay in the church, which was a major discussion point between orthodoxy and modernism, will be addressed. Third, Pierson's resignation from the church and his reasons for doing so will be examined. Fourth, Pierson's promotion of true humanity beyond the borders of the church will be revalued on the basis of Caputo's religion without religion.

2. Caputo's Religion without Religion

In contemporary times, religion often only appears in the context of either religious fundamentalism or militant atheism; as a result, the American philosopher John D. Caputo tended to give up the word *religion* due to its problematic associations. However, he chose a different approach, and aimed at reclaiming the concept of religion from a postmodern perspective (Caputo 2015, p. 16).[4] Against a dogmatic and supernaturalistic theism that claims to possess the one and only Truth, Caputo offered a "deeper" understanding of religion as related to the depths of our human existence, and that breaks with claims of absoluteness and infallibility. It is not a modern destruction of religion, with its critiques from Karl Marx to Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud, but a postmodern deconstruction or repetition of religion (Caputo 2015, p. 19), which Caputo called (after Jacques Derrida) a religion without religion. This religion without religion tries to overcome the 'usual distinction between the religious and the secular' in the name of what Caputo called the 'post-secular' (Caputo 2018, p. 3). This thus implies a redefining of both religion and the secular in order to reconsider the relation between the two, or to even overcome the religious-secular divide.

In a brief historical sketch, Caputo characterized the premodern era as presecular, the modern era as secular, and the postmodern era as postsecular. Religion and the secular are both inventions of modernity, which created several binary oppositions, such as between subject and object, consciousness and the external world, faith and reason, science and religion, sacred and profane (Caputo 2018, p. 49). Religion was considered to be a separated sphere, differentiated from other spheres like politics, art, and science (Caputo 2018, p. 45). In creating these oppositions, modern thinkers 'made or invented the very categories they were discriminating, none of which had existed, and certainly not in these precise terms, before modernity' (Caputo 2018, p. 49). Due to the modern and Enlightenment focus on epistemology and rationality, religion was discredited as not meeting the "objective" proofs of rationality and as merely subjective (Caputo 2018, p. 61). As a subjective, individual experience, religion was not able to prove its objectivity and it was therefore no longer plausible in modernity. Hence, modern criticism declared religion to be an illusion that had no reasonable ground for modern humans.

Modernity should thus be secular, according to this view. Secular here does not just refer to secularization, which is a cultural category that describes the relation between politics and religious institutions as well as the number of people that identify themselves as religious. Secular refers here to secularism, which is, according to Caputo, 'a normative and ideological claim' (Caputo 2018, p. 50). Secularism claimed to be neutral, in opposition to religion, which it is not. To Caputo, secularism is based on the 'mythology of Pure Reason', which is 'a transcendental illusion, the chimera of neutralized consciousness, as if such a disinterested, decontextualized, disembodied, ahistorical and fantastic creature were ever anywhere to be found on earth (or maybe even in heaven)' (Caputo 2018, p. 50). Caputo criticized this claim of neutrality of secularism and modernity by dismantling the

ideology behind it. Like religion, it also claimed to possess an absolute truth. 'If religion is a private illusion, secularism is a public illusion' (Caputo 2018, p. 50). Thus, both religion and secularism are dangerous and too powerful and need to be '*weakened* into the *post*-secular and a religion *without* religion', recognizing that they are both 'finite and historically conditioned human practices' (Caputo 2018, p. 51). This weakening happens by depriving religion of its supernaturalism and secularist Pure Reason of its transcendentalism and universalism.

But how should religion then be defined? How did Caputo develop a concept of religion that moves beyond both supernatural religion and secular criticism of religion towards a religion without religion that has value in the contemporary postsecular context? In the concept *religion without religion*, Caputo understood religion in two different senses. The first religion—*religion* without religion—is a passion, a desire, an unconditional and ultimate concern, after an unorthodox reading of Augustine's *Confessions*. The opposite of this religion is not the secular, but irreligion, or a state of being without love, passion, or ultimate concern. Here the theology of Paul Tillich, Caputo's 'favorite "official" theologian', resonates (Caputo 2018, p. 81).[5] Tillich famously defined faith as 'the state of being ultimately concerned' (Tillich [1957] 1988, p. 1), which is a religion without religion. Religion was not restricted to the church, but could be found everywhere in culture. The second religion—religion without *religion*—from which the first religion can be liberated, is the religion of the religions, that is a religious tradition with a mostly institutionalized, dogmatic, and ritual form, 'religion in the strict, narrow or confessional sense' (Caputo 2018, p. 93). The opposite of this second religion is the secular. Due to these different understandings of religion, Caputo argued that 'there are earnestly religious people in all the great religions, but there are religiously earnest people outside religion' and 'some people can be deeply and abidingly "religious" with or without theology, with or without the religions' (Caputo 2018, p. 3).

In line with this, Caputo distinguished between two ways of being in the world that correspond to two different kinds of time. On the one hand, there is always the time of the *conditional* or economic time, in which we do things for the sake of other things. This time is determined by a means-to-an-end rationality, in which everything is a condition for achieving something else. On the other hand, there is the time of the *unconditional*, the time of the gift. This time is determined by doing things for the sake of the things themselves, without why and with unconditional commitment. What we do unconditionally is like a gift, namely without the expectation of a return. We do things for nothing, *pro Deo*. The two ways of being in the world belong together. We cannot merely live without the conditional and retreat from the world, but we have to live under the conditions of the world. Similarly, we cannot merely live without the unconditional and only live in a world in which everything is a means to an end, because then life itself will pass us by without ever having a love, passion, or desire. 'The mark of the human condition is to live *in the distance between the conditional and the unconditional*, to constantly negotiate between them' (Caputo 2015, p. 37). To Caputo, then, to be religious means to have a sense of the unconditional in a world determined by economic time: 'For me religion means living in constant exposure to the unconditional, open to something excessive, exceptional, unforeseeable, unprogrammable, something slightly mad relative to the rationality of means-and-end thinking' (Caputo 2015, p. 37).

Religion as an unconditional and ultimate concern is, according to Caputo, a proto-religion, 'one that takes place prior to the division into "religious" and "secular" in the more familiar sense, belonging to a religious *prius* that lies at the very core—or down in the depths—of our experiences' (Caputo 2016, p. 37). This religion Caputo saw expressed in Tillich's ultimate concern, because it is related to our deepest concerns, and in Derrida's religion without religion, because it is a religion that is essentially not related to dogma and institution. This proto-religion is, however, not 'an ahistorical cross-cultural universal' (Caputo 2016, p. 37), as if there is a universal religion that every human being in every time and place has. Caputo denied that 'if we dig deep enough into the different we will find

that everything is the same' (Caputo 2016, p. 37). Instead, he wanted to underline that the "deep" or "basic" element of this religion refers to 'hermeneutic and phenomenological structures' (Caputo 2016, p. 37), which means that it is bound to a particular historical context and that these structures are in need of continuous deconstruction. These structures, in which religion is the deep core of our experiences, apply only to those who recognize themselves in them. The *homo religiosus* goes only for human beings with histories like "ours", whereby we always have to ask who we mean by "we". 'If "we" (who?) had a different history, we might not talk like this at all—about God, religion or theology [. . .]. Lots of people do not' (Caputo 2016, p. 38).

Although this "deep" religion could be problematized because of its still universalistic claim about human life and experience, Caputo's conception of religion can be helpful to overcome a mere secular and modern interpretation of religion. It opens up the possibility to consider religion as a love, passion, or ultimate concern that is not intrinsically institutionalized but related to human existence—a love all human beings are able to have whether they are affiliated to a religious tradition or not.

3. Allard Pierson and His Context: Theological Modernism and the Church

Before he became one of the most significant Dutch intellectuals of the nineteenth century, Pierson went through a remarkable personal and professional development.[6] Born and raised in the midst of the Réveil, the Dutch awakening movement, he developed a deep sense of piety that colored his spirituality throughout his whole life. However, when he started his theological studies in Utrecht in 1849, he was influenced by the young professor of philosophy Cornelis Willem Opzoomer (1821–1892), who had just been appointed in 1846. Opzoomer was one of the founding fathers of modern theology in the Netherlands. His empirical philosophy changed Pierson's religious worldview in such a way that he started to doubt the epistemological and ontological premises of the orthodox Reformed Protestantism of his youth.

Dutch modern theology can be characterized by the attempt to reconcile the Christian faith with modern culture and science. In this view, the natural scientific method of empiricism, in which knowledge is only based on perception and experience and what can be deduced from this perception and experience, should be leading in the field of theology as well. The natural sciences had demonstrated the most progress in the last centuries, thus their method had to be the method with which one can reach certainty the best (Opzoomer [1863] 1990, pp. 47–49). Following this empiricism and new scientific insights, such as evolutionary theory and historical-critical study of the Bible, the modernists rejected supernaturalism and therefore the biblical miracles (Molendijk 2022, p. 2). God did not work from outside of nature, but from within the boundaries of the laws of nature. In this way, the modernists underlined the immanence of God and therefore human ability to gain knowledge of the divine, albeit by strongly emphasizing that their theology was not pantheistic.

Besides the empirical philosophy of Opzoomer, the systematic theologian Jan Hendrik Scholten (1811–1885) was particularly important. As a professor of theology in Leiden since 1843, Scholten became the unofficial leader of modern theology in the Netherlands. His inaugural speech as professor in Franeker in 1840 could even be regarded as the starting point of Dutch theological modernism (Benjamins 2008, p. 57; Buitenwerf-van der Molen 2007, p. 23).[7] His main dogmatic work *De leer der Hervormde Kerk in hare grondbeginselen uit de bronnen voorgesteld en beoordeeld* (*The Doctrine of the Reformed Church in its Fundamentals Presented and Assessed from the Sources*, 1848–1850) was an attempt to systematically develop his modern theology. Although some significant differences exist between the thinking of Opzoomer, Scholten, and other modernists, and although they both changed their view during their lives, not often as a result of the fierce theological debates going on, they shared the attempt to reconcile contemporary culture with the Christian faith, the rejection of supernaturalism and of the historical authenticity and possibility of the biblical miracles, and therefore the abandonment of any absolute or infallible truth as well as any form of

dogmatism (Pierson 1865, pp. 16–17). The latter was caused by a radical historical approach to the Bible, the Christian doctrines, and the church.

Pierson adopted this modern theological thinking and became one of the main representatives of the modernist movement. Although it goes beyond the scope of this article to discuss Pierson's theological development in detail, his changing view about modern theology will briefly be reviewed. In one of his main theological works *Rigting en leven* (*Direction and Life*; Pierson 1863), Pierson elaborated on both the theoretical foundations of modern theology and the practical and pastoral implications of this thinking. Whereas in this publication he presented himself as a representative of the modernists, he became more and more aware of the tension between the naturalistic and deterministic worldview of the modernists on the one hand and human religious needs on the other. How is the conception of God as an absolute principle of our scientific mind compatible with the religious image of God the Father of our religious feeling? How can our scientific mind be united with our religious feeling? (Pierson 1863, p. 47) In *Rigting en leven*, Pierson did not solve this problem. However, in this work, which he wrote two years before his resignation as a minister of the church, it already becomes clear how he struggled with the church and considered the promotion of true humanity in the whole of society to be an important element of his modern thinking (Pierson 1863, pp. 261–76; Trapman 1996, p. 23).

In later years, he started to criticize modern theology and empirical philosophy for its naturalism, which in his eyes could only lead to materialism and the loss of the objective value of religion and morality. In 1871, Pierson wrote:

> Both the belief in God and the belief in the ideal moral destination of an individual human being presuppose that the human person has significance that cannot be attributed to it, when the human being too is simply a part of a great whole in which everything is connected according to the indissoluble law of cause and effect. (Pierson 1871, p. 124)[8]

The human person is no exception from the great whole of which it is part. Consequently, the contradiction between good and evil, and sacred and profane, disappears, because everything depends on the natural law of cause and effect. At this point, modernists had to choose between being loyal to their own naturalistic and deterministic principle (the law of cause and effect) or to the maintenance of religion and morality. According to Pierson, many modernists were not consequent when they adhered to naturalism and determinism, but still preached. However, many modernists were probably not aware of their half-hearted position, and as long as they were not, their position as a minister in the church did not contradict their conscience (Pierson 1865, pp. 12–13, 46).

By contrast, Pierson did draw a radical conclusion from the modern theological view, eventually leading him to resign as a minister. Whereas in orthodoxy, it is often thought that doctrines give birth to experience, he argued that it is the other way around: experiences give birth to doctrines (Pierson 1875, p. 48). When one acknowledges that every religious doctrine is not a supernatural revelation, but a human, and thus fallible, expression of religious experience, as the modernists did, 'then the adoption or rejection of those doctrines [. . .] should not establish a dividing wall between us and our fellow men' (Pierson 1865, p. 35).[9] The walls of different confessions should no longer divide humans. As Pierson explained: 'I believe this concerning the supernatural, thou something else. Both of us are fallible human beings. Our difference ought not to be an issue when it comes to our highest, our innermost sense of community' (Pierson 1865, p. 35).[10] This sense of community is our sense of being part of the same humanity.

After a long time of consideration, Pierson decided to give up his position as minister in the Dutch Reformed Church. In April 1865, he officially resigned, provoking upheaval in the Netherlands. He did not plan to explain his departure any further than that he wanted to have more time for his literary and academic activities (Trapman 1996, p. 20). By doing so, he tried to avoid causing damage to the modernist movement, a difficulty he had discussed beforehand with, among others, his friend and fellow modernist, the famous professor and Old Testament scholar Abraham Kuenen (1828–1891) (Trapman 2005,

p. 195). Nevertheless, Pierson could not prevent the modernists from suffering a loss as his resignation caused a debate on the modernist's right to stay in the church.[11] Due to the fact that public speculations were raised that, in his opinion, did not do justice to the sincere grounds of his resignation (Pierson 1865, p. 6),[12] in October 1865, Pierson decided to write a letter to his last congregation in which he gave clarification for his decision. Before this letter is discussed, the question should be asked what was at stake regarding the modernists and the church.

On the one hand, orthodox theologians criticized the modernists for staying in the church, because they considered the modernist point of view not compatible with Christianity and the church doctrines (Trapman 2005). Pierson's example strengthened the orthodox theologians in their opinion. For example, the famous Neo-Calvinist theologian and politician Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920), who was a former student of Scholten, called theological modernism a fata morgana or delusion. With this characterization, he meant to state that modernism was attractive and that it followed a fixed law, but that it lacked all reality (Kuyper 1871; Molendijk 2022, p. 100). Modernism was especially appealing to the educated classes, it was a necessary reaction to developments in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century, and, due to its empiricism and abstractions, modernism lost the connection with the real, living God (Molendijk 2022, pp. 100–2). In Kuyper's eyes, modernism was a heresy. In opposition to the modernists, who turned the church into a religious association characterized by tolerance and without clear boundaries and a confession, Kuyper argued for an exclusive church based on a confession. A church is essentially exclusive (Molendijk 2022, pp. 103–4). Furthermore, the Dutch pillarization process, to which Kuyper's ideas gave an impetus, was focused least of all on general humanity. Instead, it divided humanity into different pillars, whereby every pillar had its own school, newspaper, associations, and political party (Molendijk 2022, pp. 139–52).

On the other hand, Pierson's fellow modernists defended their right to stay in the church, claiming that their theological modernism was a Christian and ecclesiastical endeavor.[13] The modernists considered themselves to be the true heirs of the Reformation, which not only gave them the right but also the duty to stay in the church (Trapman 2005, pp. 204–5, 208; Krijger 2019). Many of them believed in the ideal of one church for the entire nation, i.e., the Dutch Reformed Church as a Protestant people's church (*volkskerk*) (Trapman 2005, p. 207). The church should be the keeper of the one and only universal religion, which was, in their opinion, nineteenth-century modern or liberal Protestantism. Following their line of thinking, in which Christianity was the most developed form of religion among the religions, modern or liberal Protestantism was the fulfilment of human religious development. As Pierson wrote, the main principle of modern theology was humanism. Against Kuyper, the modernists did not separate humanity into several pillars, but promoted the unity of all human beings. This position of theological modernism was not tenable and the modernists lost their leading position in society when the process of pillarization started, accompanied by the emancipation of several other groups, such as the Roman Catholics, the Neo-Calvinists, and the socialists (Molendijk 2022, p. 91). As Arie L. Molendijk remarked, the modernists were reluctant regarding pillarization, because they thought 'that they represented the common good and tried to integrate differences of opinion and worldview in an overarching whole [. . ..]. Their self-understanding did not allow them to consider themselves as a pillar alongside other pillars' (Molendijk 2022, pp. 91–92).[14]

4. Pierson's Resignation from the Church

Pierson was not the first and only modernist to leave the church, but his resignation caused much upheaval. Although earlier he was reticent, in October 1865 he felt the need to explain his departure. In the following, his line of reasoning will be discussed, showing both the difficulty of a modernist view of the church and the possibility of the promotion of true humanity for society at large.

In his published letter *Aan zijne laatste gemeente* (*To His Last Congregation*; Pierson 1865), Pierson argued that he had always strived to promote true humanity, but that he no

longer believed in the possibility of doing so as a representative of the church. To his old congregation he wrote: 'Not in you, not in me lies the reason for my departure, but solely in the character of the Dutch Reformed Church in relation to the character of my principles' (Pierson 1865, pp. 10–11).[15] His main principle was the principle of modern theology, which is 'humanity in the finest sense, the best sense of the word' (Pierson 1865, p. 12).[16] Pierson pursued the same goal as the other modernists: 'to bring our society under the influence of the most noble humanism' (Pierson 1865, p. 12).[17] Nevertheless, whereas most modern theologians believed in reaching this goal by working as ministers in the church, Pierson could no longer adopt this position for himself. 'The conviction has taken hold of me that everything I would like to do to promote what *I* consider to be the one thing necessary [i.e., true humanity], I say absolutely not hindered or made impossible, but simply neutralized, as long as I tried to promote my goal in the role of minister in an established church. Who feels a call to neutralize their own zealous efforts?' (Pierson 1865, p. 11).[18]

What did Pierson mean by this neutralization of his own attempts? As discussed above, the modernists rejected supernaturalism. This rejection, according to Pierson, had to result in the disappearance of both the distinction between sacred and profane, and the distinction between the different denominations, because these distinctions maintain a certain artificiality and formalism, or 'the old leaven of clericalism' (Pierson 1865, p. 20).[19] 'The kind of humanity that is my [Pierson's] ideal does not have similar traditional boundary lines. The church, on the other hand, maintains them, lives by them' (Pierson 1865, p. 24).[20] The distinction between the different denominations divided humanity on the basis of beliefs, whereas we should not be concerned with what someone believes, but who someone is, namely a true human or not:

> I know what a human is, but what is a Protestant, a Roman Catholic, an Israelite human being? All those who are eager and committed to advancing all that is good and sound are my brothers, my fellow believers in the best sense of the word. I am not interested in what this or that person believes or does not believe about the supernatural world, but what he is, and above all whether he is a human being, at least approximately, in the true sense of the word. (Pierson 1865, pp. 24–25)[21]

From a contemporary perspective, one could state that this disappearance of the distinction between the different denominations also implies an overcoming of the religious-secular divide, because it no longer matters whether someone's belief is religious or secular, but whether someone is human in the true sense of the word.

The disappearance of the distinction between profane and sacred deals with being truly human too. First of all, this concerns the position of the church minister in the congregation. When supernaturality is rejected, the church minister can no longer be a priestlike man between God and humans, mediating the Word of God to humanity. Although Protestantism broke with the Catholic priesthood, orthodox Protestantism with its supernaturalism still maintained the special position of church ministers in the congregation. According to Pierson, and similar to the view of other modernists, the minister is, like the other members of the congregation, a normal person with no special access to God's revelation. In fact, he is as much searching for truth as any other human being. The minister is 'merely an ordinary man' (Pierson 1865, p. 20),[22] 'a human being who searches with his brethren and fights the battle of life, who knows nothing more about the supernatural than anyone else, who is at most further advanced than the majority in the knowledge of what religion is not and cannot be' (Pierson 1865, pp. 19–20).[23] Moreover, the disappearance of the distinction between profane and sacred also implies that not only the ordained clergy has a vocation. Every human being has a vocation in society. Pierson encouraged his last congregation by writing to them: 'you are all called to independence and I am not needed in any other sense than those of you who may consider themselves least needed. [. . .] My former congregation, thou art no longer an assembly of infants [*onmondigen*, cf. Kant's *Unmündigkeit*]. To freedom, to independence thou art called' (Pierson 1865, p. 30).[24]

Liberated from an authority that decided how they should act, they themselves have the freedom and independence to realize a society in which true humanity can flourish.

To Pierson, the church could no longer function as a support for the realization of this true humanity. The church held on to absolute truths and supernatural doctrines and thereby maintained the artificial distinctions between profane and sacred, and between the different denominations, exactly on the basis of the view that the church possesses the Truth. The church's unity is a divinely ordained unity and therefore the highest moral unity. The church is intrinsically exclusive, as persons who do not accept the confession or meet the requirements are excluded from this unity (Pierson 1865, pp. 31–32). This can be justified as long as one believes in the supernatural origin of this unity. When one, however, starts to question this supernaturality and absoluteness, as Pierson did from his modernist point of view, one has to reconsider the position of the church. Pierson asked himself the question: is the church the highest moral unity? In other words: 'By being in principle outside of the church, does one also stop being a human being in the true sense of the word?' (Pierson 1865, p. 32).[25] No, Pierson answered, there is a higher moral unity, which is humanity as a whole. 'Since it has become clear to me that one can stand, being firm in one's principles, outside of the church and yet, as much as it is given to the weak mortal, be a noble, a true human being, I have said to myself: There is a higher unity than that expressed by the church' (Pierson 1865, pp. 35–36).[26] Being truly human is more than being Christian. True humanity is defined by a sense of unity with fellow human beings (Pierson 1865, p. 27), with all human beings and not only with those Christians from the same denomination as yours. Therefore, by staying in the church, Pierson would obstruct his own goal of promoting true humanity, because he had to maintain artificial distinctions between human beings and had to exclude human beings, which is against the very nature of true humanity.

> The church has become too narrow for me, while I feel that wanting to stretch out its boundaries even further should be synonymous with asking the church to sign its own death warrant. The church must find one of its distinguishing features in its possession of certain theological opinions. Yet by doing so, it is also forced to exclude those who can belong to the noblest of our generation. (Pierson 1865, p. 35)[27]

Thus, true humanity should be promoted outside of the ecclesiastical domain, in society. In this way, Pierson also broke with the modernist view that liberal Protestantism was the highest position of human religious development. Christianity, including the church, contributed to the rise of true humanity (Pierson 1865, pp. 26, 29–31), but we have to move beyond that point as well, as becomes more and more clear in his later works (e.g., Pierson 1875).

5. True Humanity beyond the Church

From a secular and confessional perspective, Pierson's breach with the church is also clearly a breach with religion. When we, however, take Tillich's ultimate concern and Caputo's religion without religion into account, it is not that simple. This article tries to show that the usual view of Pierson's breach with the church and religion should not be that simply understood as a move from religion to secularism. It all depends on our concept of religion. In my understanding, a secular concept of religion, in which religion is opposed to the secular and in which religion is inherently institutionalized and dogmatic, does not do justice to a person like Pierson. Caputo offered a different understanding that fits better, because in his understanding of religion, religion is related to the ultimate concern, love, or passion of human beings. From such a perspective, it becomes clear that Pierson's true humanity was an ultimate concern to him, something that bothered him so much that he could no longer stay in an exclusive church without harming the thing that was most important to him. His religious sense was shaped by this striving for true humanity.

True humanity, which Pierson considered to be the word 'that in the end determines everything for us' (Pierson 1875, p. 60),[28] 'arises and is cultivated precisely by the realization that one shares the same human nature with all, and with it the same weaknesses, as well as the same conditions of progress and improvement' (Pierson 1875, p. 62).[29] This realization of having the same human nature in common with all can be promoted by the disappearance of absolute truths. When these truths turn out to be merely human opinions, they are not of such an ultimate concern that they can form unbridgeable gaps between human beings. For example, the gap between 'converts and non-converts, believers and non-believers, elected and wretched' (Pierson 1875, p. 62),[30] in other words, the gap between religious and secular, can be bridged by the realization of our common human nature and therefore by our common striving after the promotion of true humanity. Instead of dividing human beings into groups separated from each other, 'let us just simply be human beings', Pierson argued (Pierson 1875, p. 59).[31] This true humanity is thus 'general love for mankind, revealing itself in all kinds of ways in tactful and abundant acts of solidarity, naturality in the broadest sense of the word, nobility and elevation in motives, in thoughts and sensations, incorruptible love for truth and beauty in every field' (Pierson 1865, p. 14).[32] More practically, this implies 'consoling and comforting the suffering, supporting the weak, counselling the inexperienced' (Pierson 1865, p. 15).[33]

A requirement for true humanity is a sense of community with our fellow human beings. The realization of being connected with other human beings on the basis of our shared human nature is inherent to true humanity. Therefore, true humanity intrinsically exists in community. 'One of the indispensable conditions of true humanity is a strongly developed sense of community. It is clear that as long as I feel I am only an individual, I will remain a stranger to true humanity. Therefore, if I am to be a true human being, I must have a sense of community, that is, a sense of unity with my fellow human beings' (Pierson 1865, p. 27).[34] Therefore, although Pierson broke with the church as institution, this does not imply that he rejected all forms of community on a religious or spiritual basis. On the contrary, even in *Aan zijne laatste gemeente*, Pierson underlined that attending religious gatherings should not be confused with the maintenance of church institutions (Pierson 1865, p. 32). He did not reject the existence of 'completely free, religious gatherings for the promotion of mutual edification', but 'the existence of the church or of a denomination as an enclosed entity' (Pierson 1865, p. 34),[35] because such an entity is exclusive. Instead of such an exclusive unity, Pierson argued that since the eighteenth century, especially since the French Revolution, a more general idea of unity had been discovered and embraced by many, namely 'the purely human unity' (Pierson 1865, p. 29).[36] This unity is grounded in the conviction that 'the truly human nature can be found in all human beings to a greater or lesser degree, is supreme in all of them and independent from any church belief' (Pierson 1865, p. 29).[37] This implies that we all, no matter 'to whatever nation, class, or denomination we belong, are members of one and the same spiritual family' (Pierson 1865, p. 29).[38]

To Pierson, the modern theological principles that define true humanity have merged from the church in society, 'where they inspire our laws, regulate our judicial system, modify our mutual interactions, and create all kinds of useful institutions' (Pierson 1865, p. 40).[39] As examples he mentioned hospitals, an institution for deaf mute people, an institution for the homeless, and schools. These are the 'true temples of the new society' (Pierson 1865, p. 40).[40] The highest moral unity is not the church, but society at large. 'Our church, it is society' (Pierson 1865, p. 38).[41]

By pushing out the frontiers of the church towards society and the whole of humanity, Pierson moved beyond institutional religion. Furthermore, his focus on true humanity as his ultimate concern, even already as a representative of institutionalized Christianity, shows how he defined Christian religion by true humanity. This redefining of the Christian religion, which corresponds with the modernist view of Jesus as the human person par excellence, demonstrates the nineteenth-century shift from a theocentric and theistic Christianity towards a humanistic religiosity or humanism. To consider this shift as secularization implies a concept

of religion in which religion is inherently institutionalized, theistic, and supernaturalistic. The possibility of understanding religion, God, and the world differently is thereby neglected. By reconsidering religion as a religion without religion, following Caputo, and thus related to our ultimate concern, following Tillich, the shift towards humanism is a shift towards the postsecular, in which the religious-secular divide is overcome in a universal human passion and compassion towards other human beings and humanity at large.

6. Conclusions

In this article, we reassessed Pierson's thinking, in particular his concept of true humanity, through the lens of Caputo's religion without religion, which operates against the background of Tillich's ultimate concern and Derrida's postmodern deconstruction. By adopting a different definition of religion, Pierson's resignation from the church and the development of his thinking can be reconsidered: he did not break with religion, but his ultimate concern was and always has been true humanity. In his own context, this true humanity differed from the view of orthodoxy, which pleaded for a confessional and exclusive church that was not focused on a unity of all people. Although Pierson shared this striving for true humanity with the modernists, he also differed from their view. Whereas the modernists saw it as their right and duty to stay in the church, Pierson had to move beyond the boundaries of the church in order to do justice to true humanity. He no longer considered Christianity to be the highest stage of human development, but he thought being a human in the true sense of the word was more important than being a Christian. In this way, he moved from a theocentric and theistic Christianity towards humanism, in which the promotion of true humanity is an ultimate concern to humans.

Funding: Open Access Funding by the University of Vienna.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Notes

1 'dat wie zijn God verliest, zijn God zal vinden'. The translations of Dutch quotes are my own.

2 To be precise, Pierson was a former minister of the Walloon Reformed congregation in Louvain (Belgium) and Rotterdam. The Walloon congregations in the Netherlands were embedded within the Dutch Reformed Church.

3 Existing literature on Pierson underlines how Pierson sympathized with the religion of his youth, which enabled him to write about the Réveil in *Oudere tijdgenooten* (Pierson [1888] 1982). Trapman argued that Pierson intellectually broke with religion, but still felt emotionally connected to the religion of his youth (Trapman 1996, p. 23). However, it should be questioned what this emotional connection entails and what Trapman understands by faith or religion. In my opinion, Trapman still thinks within a modern and secular framework in which religion is opposed to reason. Pierson could no longer adhere to religion intellectually, but he still had sympathy for the religion of his youth and the religion of others. The perspective I adopt in this article implies a different framework: I do not distinguish between an intellectual and an emotional Pierson. Instead of seeing his religion as just a melancholic attachment to his youth, I argue that his striving for true humanity is in itself religious, when we consider it from the perspective of Caputo's religion without religion.

4 Another approach, with several similarities, to this binary opposition of theism and atheism is offered by Richard Kearney with his concept of anatheism (cf. Kearney 2010).

5 Caputo often refers to Tillich, although not without criticizing him, for example by weakening his metaphysics. See, for example, (Caputo 2016, pp. 67–71; Caputo 2019, pp. 223, 259).

6 For non-Dutch literature on Pierson, see (Wolsink 2023; Molendijk 2022, 2000, pp. 51–73). For Dutch literature on Pierson, see e.g., (Naber 1897; Boersema 1924; De Graaf 1962; Barnard 1987).

7 Buitenwerf-van der Molen argues that also 1848, the publication year of the first edition of Scholten's *De leer der Hervormde Kerk*, could be considered as the starting point of modern theology in the Netherlands, as for example K.H. Roessingh and Simon J. de Vries did (Roessingh 1914, pp. 106–7; De Vries 1968, p. 30). Either way, Scholten played a major role in this starting phase.

[8] 'Het geloof aan God zoowel als het geloof aan de ideale zedelijke bestemming van den enkelen mensch onderstelt, dat aan de menschelijke persoonlijkheid een beteekenis toekomt, die haar niet toekomen kan, wanneer ook de mensch eenvoudig deel uitmaakt van een groot geheel, waarin alles samenhangt naar de onverbrekelijke wet van oorzaak en gevolg.'

[9] 'dan mag het aannemen of verwerpen van die leerstukken [. . .] geen scheidsmuur oprichten tusschen ons en onze medemenschen.'

[10] 'Ik geloof dit omtrent het bovenzinnelijke, gij iets anders. Beide zijn wij feilbare menschen. Ons verschil mag dus niet in aanmerking komen, waar sprake is van ons hoogst, ons innigst gemeenschapsgevoel.'

[11] For a discussion of this debate, see (Trapman 1996, 2005; Molendijk 2000, 2022, pp. 51–73).

[12] Pierson's resignation was considered to be an act of despondency or even of being unfaithful to one's own principles (Pierson 1865, p. 7).

[13] The main protagonists in this debate were Albert Réville (1826–1906) (Pierson's direct colleague as minister of the Walloon congregation in Rotterdam), Conrad Busken Huet (1826–1886) (the former minister of the Walloon congregation in Haarlem, who resigned in 1862), Kuenen, and Scholten. See (Trapman 2005, p. 194).

[14] Ultimately, some of the modernists changed their view and started to accept the pillarization process. For an elaboration on this, see (Krijger 2019, pp. 398–456).

[15] 'niet in u, niet in mij ligt de reden van mijn heengaan, maar uitsluitend in het karakter der vaderlandsche hervormde kerk in verband beschouwd met den aart van mijne beginselen.'

[16] 'humaniteit in den schoonsten zin, den besten zin des woords'.

[17] 'onze samenleving te brengen onder den invloed van het edelst humanisme'.

[18] 'De overtuiging heeft zich van mij meester gemaakt, dat al hetgeen ik zou willen doen ter bevordering van hetgeen *ik* het éene noodige acht, ik zeg volstrekt niet belemmerd of onmogelijk gemaakt, maar eenvoudig geneutraliseerd werd, zoolang ik mijn doel trachtte te bevorderen in de hoedanigheid van predikant bij een gevestigde kerk. Wie gevoelt roeping tot het neutraliseeren van eigen ijverig pogen?'

[19] 'den ouden zuurdeesem van het klerikalisme'.

[20] 'De humaniteit die mijn ideaal is bezit soortgelijke traditioneele grenslijnen niet. De kerk daarentegen houdt ze in stand, leeft er van.'

[21] 'Wat een mensch is, weet ik; maar wat is een Protestantsch, een Roomsch, een Israëlitisch mensch? Allen die des zins en willens zijn om te bevorderen al wat goed is en wel luidt zijn mijne broeders, zijn mijne geloofsgenooten in den besten zin des woords. Niet wat deze of gene omtrent de bovenzinnelijke wereld al of niet gelooft, boezemt mij belangstelling in, maar wat hij is, en bovenal of hij een mensch is, althans bij benadering, in den waren zin des woords.'

[22] 'slechts een gewoon mensch'.

[23] 'een mensch die met zijne broederen zoekt en den strijd des levens strijdt, die aangaande het bovenzinnelijke niets meer weet dan wie ook, die hoogstens verder dan de groote menigte gevorderd is in de kennis van hetgeen de godsdienst niet is, niet kan zijn'.

[24] 'gij [zijt] allen tot zelfstandigheid geroepen en ben ik in geen anderen zin noodig dan diegeen onder u die zich wellicht het minst noodig acht. [. . .] Mijn oude gemeente, gij zijt niet langer een vergadering van onmondigen. Tot vrijheid, tot zelfstandigheid zijt gij geroepen.'

[25] 'houdt men, door principiëel buiten de kerk te staan, óok op een mensch te zijn in de ware beteekenis van het woord?'

[26] 'Sints het mij gebleken is dat men principiëel buiten de kerk kan staan en toch, zooveel het den zwakken sterveling gegeven is, een edel, een waarachtig mensch kan zijn, heb ik tot mij zelven gezegd: Er is een hoogere eenheid dan die de kerk uitdrukt.'

[27] 'De kerk is mij te eng geworden, terwijl ik gevoel dat hare grenspalen nog meer te willen uitzetten gelijk zou moeten staan met haar te vragen dat zij zelve haar doodvonnis onderteekene. De kerk moet in haar bezit van zekere theologische meeningen een harer kenmerkende eigenschappen vinden. Maar daardoor is zij tevens gedwongen buiten te sluiten, die behooren kunnen tot de edelsten van ons geslacht.'

[28] 'Het woord is uitgesproken, dat ten slotte alles voor ons beslist: humaniteit.'

[29] 'humaniteit [. . .] die juist ontstaat en gekweekt wordt door het besef, dat men met allen dezelfde menschelijke natuur gemeen heeft, en met haar dezelfde zwakheden, evenals dezelfde voorwaarden van vooruitgang en verbetering.'

[30] 'bekeerden en onbekeerden, geloovigen en ongeloovigen, uitverkorenen en verworpelingen'.

[31] 'laat ons dan maar eenvoudig menschen zijn'.

[32] 'algemeene en in kiesch en overvloedig hulpbetoon zich op allerlei wijze openbarende menschenliefde, natuurlijkheid in den uitgestreksten zin des woords, adel en verheffing in beweegredenen, in gedachten en gewaarwordingen, onkreukbare liefde tot waarheid en schoonheid op ieder gebied.'

[33] 'het troosten en opbeuren van lijdenden, het steunen van zwakken, het raden van ongeoefenden'.

[34] 'Een der onmisbare voorwaarden der ware humaniteit is een sterk ontwikkeld gemeenschapsgevoel. Het is duidelijk, dat zoo-lang ik mij uitsluitend individu gevoel, ik aan de ware humaniteit vreemd zal blijven. Er moet dus, zal ik waarlijk mensch zijn, in mij leven een gemeenschapsgevoel, dat is, een besef van eenheid met mijne medemenschen.'

[35] 'geheel vrije, godsdienstige bijeenkomsten ter bevordering van onderlinge stichting'; 'het bestaan van de kerk of van een kerkgenootschap als afgesloten geheel'.

[36] 'de zuiver menschelijke eenheid'.

[37] 'dat het waarachtig menschelijke in alle menschen in meerdere of mindere mate teruggevonden wordt, in allen het hoogste en van elks kerkgeloof onafhankelijk is'.

[38] 'dat wij allen, tot welk volk, tot welken stand, tot welk kerkgenootschap wij ook behooren, leden zijn van één en dezelfde geestelijke familie'.

[39] 'waar zij onze wetten bezielen, onze rechtspleging regelen, ons onderling verkeer wijzigen, en allerlei nuttige instellingen in het leven roepen.'

[40] 'de ware tempelen der nieuwere samenleving'.

[41] 'onze kerk, het is de samenleving'.

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Article

God or Self? The Re-Emergence of God in the Unconscious

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Abstract: Toward the end of the Age of Enlightenment, rationalism's demise gradually entailed the transcendent God's demise. In this article, I will draw on the resurfacing of God in the ensuing tradition of the unconscious. Whereas philosophers such as Schopenhauer or Eduard von Hartmann, undermining the alleged rational consciousness, assumed the existence of an impersonal, unconscious, yet collective will, others took one step back and maintained a higher yet individual "consciousness" *beyond* the threshold of sense perception. I am referring to the philosopher–spiritualist Carl du Prel (1833–1899), whose notion of a personal unconscious inaugurated both Freud's and Jung's "psychologies" of the unconscious. In many respects, Du Prel's "personal unconscious" ("transcendental consciousness") interestingly corresponds to the traditional conception of God; it is morally binding and has a cosmological impact. I will explore to what extent Carl du Prel, in his philosophy of the unconscious, allows for a re-emergence of God in the form of a personal unconscious. I will also try to specify the conditions of possibility for equating these unruly notions ("God" and "unconscious"). My question will be as follows: can we consider the personal unconscious (or transcendental consciousness), as developed in Carl du Prel's work, as a re-emergence of a more traditional conception of a transcendent God in terms of reason and intelligibility?

Keywords: transcendental consciousness; unconscious; Carl du Prel; subjectivity; transcendent God

Citation: Sneller, Rico. 2023. God or Self? The Re-Emergence of God in the Unconscious. *Religions* 14: 1026. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14081026

Academic Editors: Ronen Pinkas and Elad Lapidot

Received: 28 June 2023
Revised: 2 August 2023
Accepted: 8 August 2023
Published: 10 August 2023

1. Introduction

> "[T]here is only a difference in the mode of conceiving one and the same thought, whether we refer the hidden impulse of our actions to a transcendental Ego, or to Schopenhauer's Will, or to Hartmann's Unconscious, or to the Christian God. We may be of this opinion or that, yet since the impulse to action does not always lie in our sense and brain consciousness, we may agree with [Georg Christoph] Lichtenberg, that 'On this globe we serve an end, the attainment of which cannot be hindered, though all mankind conspired against it.'" (Du Prel 1889, p. 98; 1885, p. 362)

> "a transcendental philosophy is the more genuine, and better fulfills its vocation as philosophy, the more radical it is" (Husserl 1970, p. 18; 1962, p. 102)

A discussion of "theism" in light of "humanism" and "secularism" might quickly lose itself in using unwarranted concepts and implicit assumptions. Already, the notion of "God" itself might lead the academic author astray: *mentioning* this notion all too often passes into *using* it, thereby taking a complete mastery of conceptual language for granted. What if "God" were a notion that neither designates nor means anything? What if the *intended* referent (*God*) were ultimately intractable and a limit case of language? What if *God* could not be intended, properly speaking, at all? Unless (pace Husserl) pre- or even post-intentionality were considered, it would be a challenge for any academic author who pretends to shed some light on resurfacing theism in the secular subject to not succumb to illicit reifications that make hitherto achieved philosophical insights undone.[1] Such inferences would occur in naïve conclusions in the form of S = P (e.g., "the transcendent

God of pre-Modernity *equals* the modern subject's conscience, rationality, unconscious, etc.").

Not only the notion of "God" but also the concept of "secularity" is difficult to use unreflectively. How one defines these concepts somewhat already implies one's attitude towards them. For example, if one defines secularisation—as Hans Blumenberg does[2]—as the Modern movement of dissociating oneself from Judaeo-Christian affinities or as the emancipatory quest for moral self-legitimisation, one cannot avoid presupposing, in one way or another, that (a) this movement and the quest are a concrete possibility, (b) a self-contained morality exists, and (c) Judaeo-Christian conceptuality is particularistic and nonuniversal. On the contrary, if one takes secularisation—as Hegel does[3]—to be the necessary outcome of a historical process leading from a contingent, locally determined ("religious") conceptuality towards its obtaining universal validity and commonness, one presupposes that (a) this conceptuality is universally, though first secretly, valid, (b) the radical opposition between a transcendent and a purely mundane ("secular") sphere makes sense, and (c) actual global developments related to human rights and cosmopolitan ideals of worldwide justice have some final significance.

In this article, I will not only defend the claim that the notion of the unconscious can be a legitimate inheritor of a more traditional discourse on God's transcendence. I will also argue that Carl du Prel's discussion of the unconscious ("transcendental consciousness") is sufficiently self-reflective to embrace the methodological difficulties mentioned above. It can encompass the requirements of *ultimacy* and *normativity*—traditionally attributed to the transcendent God—without, for that matter, necessarily infringing transcendence. Also, it refrains enough from reifying so as to prevent including *God* in a simplistic referential scheme.

2. The Unconscious: From Schopenhauer to Carl du Prel

Carl du Prel (1833–1899) was a German philosopher and psychical researcher whose work links Freud's and Jung's oeuvre, on the one hand, and Schopenhauer's, on the other. Largely forgotten today, Carl du Prel was famous in his own time for integrating exceptional experiences, like telepathy, out-of-body experiences, clairvoyance, etc., into thinking.[4] Toward the end of the 19th century, he was a leading spiritualist in Germany who conducted experiments with mediums, the most famous being Eusapia Palladino (1854–1918). Whereas philosophers tend to be suspicious regarding the excessive claims of psychical researchers, let alone the "evidence" they offer, Du Prel did nothing more than underpin Schopenhauer's famous claim about the *practical metaphysical* nature of psychic phenomena. After finishing his major work, *The World as Will and Representation*, Schopenhauer repeatedly insisted on exceptional experiences, disregarding our standard spatiotemporal framework as an empirical confirmation of his philosophy of Will.[5] Space and time, Schopenhauer argued, belong to metaphysical Will and its representations, not to reality itself. Will is "located" beyond time and space. Will conditions time and space themselves; they have no independent being. Schopenhauer continued, stating that, being equivalent to the Kantian thing-in-itself, Will is not only supra-individual. It is also intrinsically blind: being insatiable, it only wills itself. Its blindness entails that it is unconscious. The conscious human person is the outward appearance of an unconscious inner reality. Therefore, Will represents and destroys the individuation principle, which makes us believe in separate entities.[6]

Carl du Prel was heir to the respectable 19th-century Schopenhauerian tradition of the unconscious.[7] With the benefit of hindsight, we can say that this tradition could only emerge in light of the discomforts of any identification of the human mind with mere reason. This identification had always counted as the fundamental asset of the Enlightenment. One can only surmise that, just as the Enlightenment's rational subject generated a rational God, a generalised unconscious would reveal a corresponding trans-rational God associated with a human unconscious in the ensuing Romantic rationality critique. It would, however, be premature to assume that such a transformation of the notion of God unambiguously

applies to the Romantic period. Schopenhauer's Will, for example, is impersonal and, rather than a moral incentive, forms the main predicament for human existence; it should be overcome. Eduard von Hartmann (1842–1906), Schopenhauer's "successor" and author of the *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, continued to argue for an impersonal will and to undermine any belief in ultimate individuality or individual consciousness—let alone an individual conscious God. Yet, in Carl du Prel, we meet an author who argued for the latter's individuality while drawing on Schopenhauer's generalised unconscious. We will see in a moment that this move brought him closer to a renewed conception of God, however abstrusely.[8]

3. Double Nature of the I and Psychophysical Threshold

The main ingredients of Schopenhauer's thinking return as the key elements of Du Prel's philosophy. In *Philosophy of Mysticism*, Du Prel critically elaborates on the implied *duality* of the subject: its conscious and its unconscious parts. He claims that research on stimulus transmission through the human nervous system confirms Schopenhauer's basic ideas. Such research was mainly conducted by the psychologist–philosopher Gustav Theodor Fechner (1801–1887) in his *Elements of Psychophysics*. Its outcome showed that a time-lapse is implied for a nerve stimulus to arrive at the brain centre and be adequately processed. "The functions of the nervous system", Du Prel states, "are [. . .] associated with a definite measure of time". (Du Prel 1889, p. 89; 1885, p. 74f). And he continues by saying that "the phenomenal world would undergo a powerful transformation, were our measure of time in perception altered". (Du Prel 1889, p. 90; 1885, p. 75) Such transformations may occur during exceptional human experiences, for example, after using narcotics, during the dying process, in our deepest dreams, in a somnambulist state, or under hypnosis. It may become manifest, then, that our I is stratified. Whereas our *empirical* I conforms to a physiological time frame, our ("unconscious") *transcendental* I obeys a wholly idiosyncratic time. Any confusion must result from an erroneous application of physiological temporal units to the time frame that governs exceptional experiences. "Thus we carry over into dream", Du Prel writes, "the waking habit of estimating duration according to the number of perceptions upon the physiological scale of time, while our consciousness is, in fact, then subject to the transcendental scale". (Du Prel 1889, p. 94; 1885, p. 79) And, "the physiological scale of time is not essential to the human mind"; "its connection with the organic body is *no necessary relation*" (Du Prel 1889, p. 112; 1885, p. 94).

Du Prel not only distinguishes multiple simultaneous time frames (physiological and transcendental). He further claims that our physiological time cannot originate in transcendental consciousness itself and must therefore be relative; our nervous system only *retards* the cognitive content of consciousness. As everyone can see who has ever woken up from a dream because of an outward stimulus that produced the complete dream content *retrospectively* (the sudden ringing of a bell), this dream content must be located in the (infinitely short) time-lapse needed for the stimulus to reach consciousness and be processed by it, as if consciousness were already aware of what remains to be transmitted to it through the nervous system, and as if "its connection with the organic body is *no necessary relation*". We can hardly avoid assuming the existence of a transcendental consciousness beyond the physiology of the nervous system. This transcendental consciousness might be unconscious for the waking mind; it will be conscious for itself. Let us see how this should be understood and how it can be connected—if at all—to the transcendent God's resurfacing in the human unconscious.

Beyond the coincidental retro-causality of dream production, Du Prel suggests, dreams—let alone somnambulist states—provide evidence for the simultaneity of two forms of consciousness (of two *I*'s) more directly. They *split* the dreaming (or hallucinating) I. What is eventually a monologue is *distributed* over a *scene* and an *audience*. This splitting takes place on the fault line of a *psychophysical threshold*. "In dream, somnambulism, and all ecstatic conditions, an interior waking takes the place of the external sense-consciousness, but, being itself limited, likewise borders on the Unconscious". (Du Prel 1889, p. 115; 1885,

p. 96) External and internal stimuli are *dramatised* in our dream lives. The latter consists of a "projection of interior states" or a "symbolical representation of the internal condition". (Du Prel 1889, p. 117; 1885, p. 98) "[H]e conceives as non-Ego all that oversteps the threshold from the unconscious. Consequently, the dualism of the Conscious and the unconscious, the psychophysical partition, is the common cause, as well of the dramatic sundering, as of deception which makes dreams seem real" (Du Prel 1889, p. 120f; 1885, p. 101).

Consciousness seems to be divided over two I's, which are separated by a psychophysical threshold. This threshold does not separate a waking from a dreaming state; it is instead displaced *when* dreaming. Insofar as displacement (or another altered state of consciousness) occurs within the dream itself, it testifies to an increased susceptibility to content thus far concealed. Dreams exteriorise such unconscious content by immediately converting each flash of insight into an image and putting each word into another person's mouth. They poignantly enhance the dramatic splitting.

Suppose that a psychophysical threshold is at work in our minds. In that case, Du Prel concludes, it is psychologically possible that the subject consists of two persons *ignorant* of their mutual unity and connection with the subject. This doubleness may be permanent, although it will only manifest in dreams and other exceptional states of mind. Our second I, then, can contact us without us realising its identity with ourselves.[9]

4. The Unconscious and God

The question becomes urgent as to whether such a more profound, "transcendental" I may be rightfully identified with a transcendent God and under which conditions. These two questions cannot be isolated.

It is already noteworthy that Du Prel appropriates Kant's term "transcendental consciousness" to designate an unconscious level in the human mind beyond waking consciousness. In Kant, this term refers to an unalterable structure of thinking and perceiving (i.e., the two forms of perception, space and time, and the twelve categories of thinking). While Hegel and the neo-Kantians in his wake historicise transcendental consciousness by letting it unfold over time, they nevertheless capitalise, as a point of no return, the transcendental gain that history procures. In contrast, one could remark that Husserl's phenomenology resists any form of reification while maintaining the concept of the transcendental consciousness itself.

In light of Du Prel, however, one might highlight three different shortcomings concerning transcendental consciousness. Kant sets strict limits to it, paralysing experience and forcing it into a spatiotemporal and categorical framework.[10] Hegel and neo-Kantianism historicise it, but that hardly improves anything: once developed, the transcendental creates an ontological *fait accompli*. Husserl—posterior to Du Prel—threw out the baby with the bathwater since he did not allow for the *inner* self-transcendence of transcendental consciousness. In Husserl, consciousness is intentional, and that excludes any form of stratification. In this respect, it is highly significant that Husserl could only interpret Descartes' ontological argument for the existence of God as vicious instead of taking it as a *rupture* of intentionality: "*Descartes* had [. . .] had not noticed the circle in which he was involved when he presupposed, in his proof of the existence of God, the possibility of inferences transcending the ego, when this possibility, after all, was supposed to be established only through this proof" (Husserl 1962, p. 11; 1970, p. 92). And yet, Husserl acknowledged the necessity for the philosopher to "penetrate[. . .] to a clear *understanding of himself as the subjectivity functioning as primal source* [urquellend]".[11] I claim in this article that Carl du Prel, even before Husserl's call and doubtlessly overstating its immediate concern, tried to take this necessity seriously and reinterpret the self as a generating source of transcendence, thereby contributing to the alleged "secularisation" of the transcendent God. Let us take a closer look.

In the final chapter of his *Philosophy of Mysticism*, Du Prel addresses the question of transcendental consciousness and its relation to God. This question cannot be avoided in light of transcendental consciousness' *ultimacy* and *normativity*—characteristics commonly

associated with God. Transcendental consciousness is first accessed at the "dusk" of waking consciousness. Du Prel does not hesitate to link the apostle Paul, the mythical seer Tiresias, Socrates/Plato, Philo, Christian mysticism, and Kant. To start with the latter: "[T]he greatest passivity of the sensible man", Du Prel states, "brings the highest ecstasy, that is, the clearest inward awakening of the transcendental—or in Kant's expression, the intelligible—man, while in the energetic abandonment of the personality to the phenomenal world, the inward man is reduced to silence" (Du Prel 1889, p. 170; 1885, p. 423f). Du Prel corroborates this Kantian insight by associating "intelligible man" (who experiences "respect" for the law) with essential notions from the authors just mentioned. In his *Second Letter to the Corinthians* (4, 16), Paul writes, "The more our outward man dies away, the more living is the inward". Philo, in his turn, claims that "[w]hen the divine light shows itself, the light of man is hidden, not appearing again till the divine is hidden, as the prophets said: 'Your spirit departs, as it were, when the spirit of God comes, and only returns when this withdraws'". Plato writes in the *Phaedo* that "if we would have pure knowledge of anything, we must be quit of the body—the soul in herself must behold all things in themselves: and then we shall attain the wisdom which we desire, and of which we say that we are lovers; not while we live, but after death". Du Prel concludes that Christian mysticism's fundamental notion can be found in the adage *sensuum occasus veritatis exortus est* ("the decline of the senses constitutes the birth of truth"). "[A]ll are but different expressions of one and the same knowledge, confirmed also by somnambulism, that the inward sense of man is only manifested when the outward senses are suppressed; that the higher powers of the soul rise in proportion as the life of sense is depressed" (Du Prel 1889, p. 171; 1885, p. 424).

True, Du Prel's literary "evidence" in support of his claim can be interpreted otherwise. One might, for example, be surprised about the implicit identification of Kant's intelligible man with "the highest ecstasy" or about the association of Paul's encouragements to the senescent with somnambulism. My intention here is neither to justify nor to refute this "evidence". I am interested in how the transcendental self can be identified with the transcendent God. Du Prel claims that such identification is possible, or at least that a clear distinction makes no sense. "Now if between man and the thing-in-itself", Du Prel contends, "call we that God, or Pan, or Nature, there must be interposed the transcendental Subject, then the problem of our existence appears in a completely new light" (Du Prel 1889, p. 202; 1885, p. 452).[12]

When, I would ask, would a distinction between the transcendental self and God make sense? It would make sense if both differed in their degree of ultimacy or normativity. Such is not the case in Du Prel's account. The latter does not imply celestial hierarchies in the sense of either pseudo-Dionysius or Swedenborgian theosophy. It restricts its scope to a threshold of consciousness that can be displaced under certain conditions.

Let us take a step further and see which role the transcendental subject fulfils in Du Prel's philosophy and how it assumes ultimacy and normativity. I take "ultimacy" and "normativity" as unalienable qualities of transcendence. The "act" of transcending already implies limits imposed on what is transcended. These limits make it relative as regards the transcending and are proportionate to the latter's *binding* or *normative* nature—in whatever form. At the same time, they confront it with its *beyond*, with what is inexorably and irreducibly out of reach. Transcendence introduces normativity (it binds) and ultimacy (it cannot be superseded in turn).[13]

The role of the transcendental subject in Du Prel is at least threefold. It inaugurates birth (1), generates moral injunctions (2), and directs our lives (3). Especially the latter two are closely related, although, in the end, the first is involved in both. These three roles have traditionally been attributed to the transcendent God. God has always counted as the creator, issuing moral injunctions and governing our lives, albeit invisibly.

In Du Prel, however, these roles are attributed to the transcendental subject. Its first role (1) is to inaugurate birth, in other words, to become incarnate. Du Prel draws here on a longstanding spiritual tradition, which spanned at least from Plato (*Gorgias*) and Plotinus to Schelling and Schopenhauer. This tradition entails that we choose our

incarnation. A secularised version of this belief can be found in Fichte and Sartre. The latter two only differ from the former in that they have minimised, if not eliminated, the interstices between choosing the transcendental subject and its elective environment: I am my own act. In the Platonic tradition, however, the choice of our incarnation antedates it. "My transcendental Subject may be cause of my earthly personality;" Du Prel writes, "it is thus not the individuality that begins at birth, but only the sensuous, the earthly-conditional Ego". (Du Prel 1889, p. 204; 1885, p. 453). The transcendental "causality" of my empirical existence is further enhanced by parental love. Rather than attribute birth to the (coincidental) intercourse of parents, Du Prel goes as far as interpreting the sexual desire in parents to the drive of the (pre-existent) child to become incarnate: "if between man and the world-substance there is the transcendental Subject, then obviously the metaphysical Will is to be placed in such a Subject, and the love of the parents coincides with the incarnation-impulse of a transcendental, pre-existing Subject". (Du Prel 1889, p. 216; 1885, p. 463). (Note that Du Prel draws on Schopenhauer's metaphysics of sexual love here, except for Schopenhauer's conception of the Will to incarnate as *impersonal*.)

The second role (2) of the transcendental subject reminiscent of the transcendent God concerns the moral injunctions it issues. Morality is ultimately rooted in the incentives that the transcendental subject generates and reveals—in whichever way—to the empirical person. The latter may have hitherto identified morality with law or tradition. But the empirical person may be wrong on this. "For the monistic doctrine of the soul", Du Prel argues, "the moral imperative comes ultimately from the transcendental subject. Thus the authority ceases to be foreign, but as authority remains; and even though proceeding from our own subject, it is still not to be presupposed as *petitio principii*".

Consequently, a confrontation with one's innermost being, e.g., in crisis experiences or other meaningful life events, may lead to reconsidering what is morally incumbent on us or even *super*erogatory. In light of ground-breaking, supererogating demands, common moral conceptions are likely to appear as mere tradition or convention without being *ultimately* decisive. "The whole content of Ethic may be comprehended therein", Du Prel summarises, "that the person should be serviceable to the Subject; every revolt of the person, in its own favour, against the Subject is immoral". (Du Prel 1889, p. 294; 1885, p. 530). What is more, such revolt cannot be made intelligible, for it runs contrary to our deepest *motivations*: "The motive force of a moral principle depends on how *near me* is the nature for whose redemption I am called to co-operate, and *from which* the moral authority proceeds—and *this proximity is the greatest possible*, if a transcendental Subject is supposed; it depends, further, on the *nearness* of the aim to be reached by moral action, and this *nearness* also is the greatest possible, when I already experience the transcendental results of my acts by discarding my earthly phenomenal form through death". (Du Prel 1889, p. 300; 1885, p. 535; my italics, RS). The transcendent God—one might retort here—*to the precise extent* that he is transcendent, lacks motivational force; at best, he might *deter* the trespassing of his commandments, but such deterrence would immediately annul ethics *as* ethics (for my moral agency would be based on fear of divine punishment). Du Prel invites us to reconsider transcendence by *conflating* command and the commander.[14]

Du Prel is undoubtedly not the only one to associate ethics with self-encounter. Existentialism, for example, likewise based proper ethics on critical human experiences calling one back to one's own-most self—without, for that matter, implying a particularly *transcendental* subject. Similarly, Henri Bergson argued that there are two sources of morality and religion: tradition and intuition. The latter, Bergson contended, tends to disrupt commonly held moral views and dynamise petrified ethical systems (Bergson 1934). In 20th-century psychological thinking, we find this radical morality of selfhood in C.G. Jung; in many respects, Jung was inspired by Du Prel, not in the least regarding his conceptions of morality.

The third role (3), which Du Prel attributes to the transcendental subject and which reminds us of the transcendent God, is closely linked to the former. It regards the steering of our empirical lives. Many things may happen in our lives that we would have preferred

not to happen: misfortune, suffering, or tragedy. Yet, rather than ascribe these to blind fate or sheer coincidence, Du Prel argues that they are connected to transcendental leadership: "the transcendental being considers the personality of sense in a purely objective relation, in an attitude of as much indifference to its fate as to that of a stranger—as it must be, since the two halves of the being lie this side and that side of a threshold of sensibility". (Du Prel 1889, p. 178; 1885, p. 430f). And he continues, stating that "[s]ince, moreover, we now know that the fruits of this life are not lost for the comprehensive consciousness of the transcendental being, it looks as if this being itself had chosen this lot, not being moved by the sufferings of our earthly life, but yet enjoying the fruits of it. Should we in this way conceive the earthly life, notwithstanding its preponderant suffering, as a transcendental prescription, then—and only then—disappear at once the contradictions encountered by theistic and pantheistic systems between the miseries of existence and providence; and the complaints of man against nature, which no philosophical system can seriously contend to be groundless, are silenced". (Du Prel 1889, p. 179; 1885, p. 431).

It would be easy to trace these ideas back to the ancient tradition of the Stoa. Prior to any philosophy of the transcendental subject, Seneca spoke of the indwelling God. We owe this God our gratefulness despite misfortunes.[15] In modern days, a thinker like Simone Weil perpetuates the Stoic tradition of divine immanence. In her *Waiting for God*, she writes, "All that man vainly desires here below is perfectly realised in God. We have all those impossible desires within us as *a mark of our destination*, and they are good for us when we no longer hope to accomplish them".[16] In this quotation, Weil shows that suffering is limited to the perspective of our empirical existence and represents our challenge. It might be a gateway to a higher form of consciousness that merges with the divine.

5. Conclusions

In this article, I have tried to argue that the notion of the unconscious ("transcendental consciousness") developed by Carl du Prel perpetuates the classical idea of a transcendent God. It does so by its ultimacy and its normativity. I have taken "ultimacy" and "normativity" as notions that irreducibly belong to "transcendence". Transcendence, by virtue of transcending, limits and binds the transcended and confronts it with its beyond. Transcendence introduces normativity (it binds) and ultimacy (it cannot be superseded in turn).

To this, we can add the intractability of the unconscious regarding linguistic referentiality: as the unconscious is not an object, it cannot be "designated"; any form of reification of the unconscious will likely draw on the limitations proper to "waking" consciousness. The predicament of philosophy and language is that concepts tend to be conceived as signifiers that refer to univocal "meanings" susceptible to "definition". The history of philosophy can partly be seen as a growing awareness of this predicament. Could it be that what is called "secularisation" or "Modernity"—at least to some extent—ties in with this growing awareness to the point of "reallocating" transcendence elsewhere, for example, in an unconscious issuing ultimately binding injunctions? Is it not highly telling and most significant, therefore, that Du Prel insists on the *proximity* of moral authority and transcendental subjectivity, a proximity that almost *conflates* the "distance" of a transcendent God and the "nearness" of my unconscious ("The motive force of a moral principle depends on how *near me* is the nature for whose redemption I am called to co-operate, and *from which* the moral authority proceeds—and *this proximity is the greatest possible*, if a transcendental Subject is supposed; it depends, further, on the *nearness* of the aim to be reached by moral action, and this *nearness* also is the greatest possible, when I already experience the transcendental results of my acts by discarding my earthly phenomenal form through death") (Du Prel 1889, p. 300; 1885, p. 535. My italics, RS)? This proximity need not be conceived as identity, for that might unjustifiably divinise the unconscious and reify both God and the unconscious. What is gained by the notion of an unconscious lies precisely in its blurring of the boundaries between clear-cut entities ("God", "consciousness", "unconscious").[17]

Carl du Prel's philosophy of the unconscious (or "transcendental subjectivity") and its 20th- and 21st-century concomitants can help rethink transcendence precisely by (1) its embracing of experience (true, not the manipulated, randomised version often substituted for experience, i.e., the *sense data* or *evidence* of science) and (2) its more comprehensive conception of consciousness as a form endowed with a *mobile* inner threshold.

> "If, therefore, the question of the prophet: 'Leavest thou men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler ?' (*Habakkuk* 1, 14) must, as regards human history, be answered in the negative, it only remains to ask to whom this question is to be addressed: to the personal God, to the single Universal Will, or to the plurality of transcendental subjects, whose consciousness of their solidarity, however, must, with the continual development of the purpose of history on a large scale and in the whole, have grown into antagonism to the Will of the earthly individual".

And Du Prel meaningfully continues, saying that,

> "[p]ractically, it is indifferent which address we suppose for this question of the prophet, and if only we do not, like the materialists, deny that it has any address, we should join hands over all other differences of opinion, with a common faith in human solidarity, instead of contending, as unhappily those do who have nevertheless still a belief in metaphysics generally—the religious and the philosophical. It is not really a question of the form of metaphysic, be it this or that religion or philosophy, at a time when a common danger has to be encountered in the total rejection of metaphysic, with the already alarming consequences of that rejection". (Du Prel 1889, p. 218f; 1885, p. 465f)

If, and only if, neither the unconscious nor the transcendent God is reified, it is indeed "practically indifferent which address we suppose for this question of the prophet". Transcendental consciousness (or just the unconscious) remains a limit case for "ordinary" consciousness. Ultimately, and at a more *profound* level of reflection, it would make no sense to ask if God "exists", or whether God's transcendence disappears in the (alleged) immanence of the unconscious. Such questions draw on tacit reifications that distort the basic intractability and fertility of the unconscious.

It cannot be my aim in this article to suggest that any *alleged* claim to unconscious contents is irrefutably valid. The unconscious is equally liable to be misunderstood, if not abused, as was the notion of God's transcendence throughout history. The secular age has not profoundly eliminated such possible abuse. I wonder, however, whether *no* forms of abuse (i.e., deceitful truth claims) ultimately draw on transcendence. Is it not finally the transcendent God who "permits"—in a highly ambiguous sense—truth abuse?[18]

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

1 I am referring here to insights from critical philosophy, philosophy of language, hermeneutics, etc.

2 Cf. "Was in dem als Säkularisierung gedeuteten Vorgang überwiegend, jedenfalls bisher mit nur wenigen erkennbaren und spezifischen Ausnahmen, geschehen ist, lässt sich nicht als *Umsetzung* authentisch theologischer Gehalte in ihre säkulare Selbstentfremdung, sondern als *Umbesetzung* vakant gewordener Positionen von Antworten beschreiben, deren zugehörigen Fragen nicht eliminiert werden konnten" (Blumenberg [1966] 1999).

3 "[W]ir behaupten eine wesentliche Beziehung der Vernunfterkenntnis und der Religion. Es ist ungegründet, dass der Glaube an den Inhalt der positiven Religion bestehen kann, wenn die Vernunft sich vom Gegenteil überzeugt hat. Die Vernunft ist ebenso

göttliche Offenbarung wie die Vorstellung in der Religion, und es ist falsch, dass Glaube und Vernunft, wenn sie entgegengesetzte Inhalt haben, gleichgültig nebeneinander zu bestehen vermöchten" (Hegel 1974, p. 54v).

4 Also see Sneller 2021 (Husserl 1970, p. 18; 1962, p. 102) and the introduction to the recent re-edition of *The Philosophy of Mysticism* I, 2022.

5 Even Husserl makes, mutatis mutandis, a case for connecting the transcendental with direct experience: "Wir selbst werden in eine innerliche Verwandlung hineingezogen; in der uns die längst erfühlte und doch stets verborgene Dimension des 'Transzendentalen' wirklich zu Gesicht, zu *direkter Erfahrung* kommt. Der in seiner Unendlichkeit eröffnete Erfahrungsboden wird alsbald zum Ackerfeld einer *methodischen Arbeitsphilosophie*" (Husserl 1962, p. 104). Also cf. (Adriaanse 1974).

6 While not being dependent on it, Schopenhauer's insights are largely reminiscent of the Hindu notion of *atman* (self). See, for example, the *Bhagavad Gita*, 7–8 and 14–15.

7 Cf. (Kiesewetter 1869), 1891–1895 (Von Hartmann 1869).

8 For more information on Carl du Prel, see (Kaiser 2006; Sommer 2013; Tenhaeff 1926; Treitel 2004; Weber 2007; Sneller 2021).

9 In a way, Du Prel's notion of a *threshold* at the heart of consciousness enables us to deal with the main paradox as regards the notion of the 'unconscious' as such, i.e., that it is unconsciously *aware* and, therefore, not unconscious all throughout. It could encompass insights from modern brain research (cf. Ramachandran, Damasio, Gazzaniga) indicating that the brain is never fully inactive.

10 Cf. (Duintjer 1966) and (Gerding 1993).

11 "wenn der Philosoph zu einem klaren *Verständnis seiner selbst als der urquellend fungierenden Subjektivität* sich durchgerungen hat" (Husserl 1962, p. 102; 1970, p. 18).

12 Also cf. Descartes' fourth meditation, "et que je suis comme un milieu entre Dieu et le néant, c'est-à-dire placé de telle sorte entre le souverain être et le non-être, qu'il ne se rencontre, de vrai, rien en moi qui me puisse conduire dans l'erreur, en tant qu'un souverain être m'a produit" (Descartes 1979, p. 133).

13 "Si la transcendance a un sens", Levinas writes at the beginning of *Autrement qu'être*, "elle ne peut signifier que le fait, pour l'*événement d'être*—pour l'*esse*—pour l'*essence* de passer à l'autre de l'être" (Levinas [1974] 1991, p. 3). And several pages further: "Gravité de l'*autrement* qu'être qui vient de montrer d'une façon encore confuse son affinité avec l'éthique". Ibid., p. 8.

14 In a Talmud lecture, Levinas interestingly suggests that God, rather than address my rational faculties, *seduces* me: "Voilà que Dieu ne t'enseigne pas en s'adressant à ta raison, il t'enseigne et te mène vers cette 'table couverte de mets succulents' en te séduisant. [. . .] L'incitation divine, c'est la Thora" (Levinas 1982, p. 48).

15 Cf. "Non sunt ad caelum elevandae manus nec exorandus aedituus, ut nos ad aurem simulacra, quasi magis exaudiri possimus, admittat; prope est a te deus, tecum est, intus est". *Epistulae ad Lucilium* XLI.

16 (Weil 1973, p. 126; 1966, p. 109). My italics, RS. Relying on the kabbalistic notion of the *divine* self-withdrawal (*zimzum*), Weil imagines a morality of pure attention which equally rests upon self-withdrawal—as if human attention repeats God's. Cf. "Vouloir l'existence de cette faculté de libre consentement chez un autre homme qui en a été privé par le malheur, c'est se transporter dans l'autre, c'est consentir soi-même au malheur, c'est-à-dire à la destruction de soi-même. C'est se nier soi-même. En se niant soi-même, on devient capable après Dieu d'affirmer un autre par une affirmation créatrice. On se donne en rançon pour l'autre. C'est un acte rédempteur". Ibid., p. 134.

17 Cf. "Le problème de la transcendence et de Dieu et le problème de la subjectivité irréductible à l'essence—irréductible à l'immanence essentielle—vont ensemble" (Levinas [1974] 1991, p. 20).

18 Cf. Jacques Derrida: "C'est ce qu'on appelle Dieu, non, ce qui s'appelle Dieu quand nécessairement il signe à ma place même quand je crois le nommer, lui. Dieu est le nom de cette métonymie absolue, ce qu'elle nomme en déplaçant les noms, la substitution et ce qui se substitute dans cette substitution" (Derrida 1994, p. 134).

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The Forgotten Language of Nontheistic Mysticism: Religious Factors in Erich Fromm's Humanism

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Abstract: In *You Shall Be as Gods*, Erich Fromm (1900–1980) defines his position as nontheistic mysticism. This research clarifies the term, considers its importance within Fromm's humanism, and explores its potential origins. The nontheistic mystical position plays a central role in Fromm's understanding of the relationship between mysticism and organized religion, religion and religiosity, and it clarifies the relationship between religion, philosophy, and social psychoanalysis, whose combination constitutes his humanistic ethics. Nontheistic mysticism relates, as well, to Fromm's understanding of human nature; it involves the question of the relationship between language, perception, and experience. The nontheistic mystical position is linked to Fromm's negative theology, the x experience, and idolatry. Hence, the nontheistic mystical position is relevant to Fromm's understanding of self-realization and his vision of a sane society. Unlike some scholarly opinion, the conclusions of this paper suggest that Fromm's humanism is not radical, as long as radical is defined as an absolute atheistic secular feature that eliminates the range of religious language and experience. Rather, it is a broad and cautious humanism that, on the one hand, internalizes the transcendent divinity into the human subject and transforms it into anthropological–ethical phenomena, but, on the other, implies that atheism carries the risk of an idolatrous identification of the human being with God. Consequently, this humanism requires a religious–mystical component to adequately portray the spiritual and ethical potentials of humanity and its challenges. Nontheistic mysticism is a consciousness mechanism aimed at the fine-tuning of the individual's moral compass, which is affected by the pathologies of normalcy that prevail in all societies.

Keywords: mysticism; x experience; idolatry; idology; negative theology; religious humanism; nontheistic Jewish humanism; Fritz Mauthner

Citation: Pinkas, Ronen. 2024. The Forgotten Language of Nontheistic Mysticism: Religious Factors in Erich Fromm's Humanism. *Religions* 15: 531. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15050531

Academic Editor: Malachi Hacohen

Received: 26 March 2024
Revised: 21 April 2024
Accepted: 22 April 2024
Published: 25 April 2024

1. Experiencing the Reality beyond God

In *You Shall be as Gods* (published in 1966), Fromm states, "'God' is one of many different poetic expressions of the highest value in humanism, not a reality in itself. It is unavoidable, however, that in talking about the thought of a monotheistic system I use the word 'God' often, and it would be awkward to add my own qualification each time. Hence, I wish to make my position clear at the outset. If I could define my position approximately, I would call it that of a nontheistic mysticism" (Fromm [1966] 1969, p. 18).

Fromm's writing is commonly described as clear, well-organized, and accessible to a broad audience, rather than solely for scholars. His bestsellers, *Escape from Freedom*, *To Have or to Be?* and, especially, *The Art of Loving*, continue to be sold in bookstores today owing to their ability to mediate complex issues in clear language that an ordinary educated reader can grasp. However, the term *nontheistic mysticism* is ambiguous and difficult to understand, and its application deviates from the clarity that characterizes Fromm's style.[1] First, mysticism is a vague concept that is hard to define. As Scholem writes, "There are almost as many definitions of the term as there are writers on the subject" (Scholem [1941] 1995, pp. 3–4). Second, the common definitions of mysticism frequently include a theistic component, most often as an unmediated encounter of the individual with God,

and the idea that the mystic is bound to a certain religion whose principles constitute his fundamental presumptions.[2] Hence, it is not surprising that Fromm rarely uses this challenging term in this particular form in his writings. Nonetheless, the nontheistic mystical position, as Fromm defines it, can be found in his writings, even if he did not employ the term explicitly.

If Fromm's thought had not been so abundantly saturated with theological terms such as negative theology, idolatry, Messianism and religion, and with so many references to the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, Jewish and Christian mystical writings, Hasidism, and Buddhism, and, most importantly, if Fromm had not insisted that religion (humanistic and nontheistic) was so important[3] for a successful human existence and self-realization,[4] then it might have been possible to dismiss Fromm's statement as incidental and solely dependent on a narrow context.[5]

We could then contend that Fromm's nontheistic mysticism should be understood solely in the context of the historical development in the concept of God: from the belief in or the experience of a concrete and local God that, according to Fromm, indicates a childish attachment pattern of worship (as in archaic forms of devotion such as polytheism, totemism, matriarchal religions of nature, etc.) to a more mature monotheistic structure, which directs to an abstract God and a universal view (by highlighting negative theology as the real knowledge of God) and the negation of idolatry (as the desired religious action). Finally, this ends in a complete liberation from any theistic or nontheistic religious system, and a transition to an anthropological system of spiritual orientation that endorses the powers of reason and love (Fromm [1950] 1955, pp. 29–31, 49; Fromm 1994, p. 160; Fromm [1975] 1999a, pp. 34–36; Fromm [1956] 2006, pp. 59–66; Fromm [1968] 2010, p. 74). He writes that for "the non-theistic humanist" a question arises: "What could take the place of religion in a world in which the concept of God may be dead but in which the experiential reality behind it must live?" (Fromm [1966] 1969, p. 180).

Accordingly, we can assume that *nontheistic* refers to a kind of humanistic frame of orientation: namely, the ethical–spiritual principles that are found in world religions and should be freed from their particularistic symbolic traditional–religious language, and especially from their irrational (metaphysical) authoritarian elements. In *You Shall be as Gods*, Fromm does indeed replace the theistic term *God* with the term *x element* (Fromm [1966] 1969, pp. 19, 44),[6] whereas *mysticism* refers to the personal experience that makes this frame of orientation necessary, concrete and therefore binding. Thus, Fromm believes that it is possible and necessary to break free from the common traditional religious framework and to embrace a kind of private–universal religiousness without losing the former's spiritual and moral depth.[7] This freedom is not about recognition and a rational acceptance of a new system of orientation, but about experiencing the "reality behind" the concept of God. The x experience (discussed later) implies the transition from addressing religion to focusing on religiosity.[8] In his lecture "The Relevance of Humanity for Today" given in 1962, Fromm speaks of "a new *experience* of humanism" and the "one world" that is related to it. He warns that "unless we develop a new humanism, there will be no *one* world" (Fromm 1994, p. 62). The *one world* means a universal view of equality between all human beings despite their differences (i.e., every human being has the potential to develop the powers of love and reason, transcending the narrowness of one's ego, and affirming life). He highlights the need for the experience of humanistic values and not merely their recognition and acknowledgment. This experience, he argues, belongs to the "psycho-spiritual field" that is common to the theistic and the non-theistic person (Fromm 1994, p. 56). In my opinion, the notion of experiencing the *one world* originates from Fromm's understanding of mysticism and his interpretation of the path towards the *unio mystica*.[9] Namely, the *oneness* of the theistic (i.e., "likeness to God") or nontheistic (i.e., Brahman in Hinduism and satori in Zen Buddhism; see Fromm [1960] 1986, p. 74) mystical experience, and not the philosophical theoretical understanding of universalism or monism, is the foundation of the individual's experience of the new humanism.[10]

In a lecture given in 1975, Fromm argues that "radical humanism is not simply a case of rational argumentation, on the contrary this rational argumentation is based on what the individual experiences" (Fromm [1975] 1999a, pp. 34–36). However, this is not a solipsistic Cartesian experience. According to Fromm's social approach, every experience has a cultural starting point. Just as the mystical experience grows out of the linguistic and conceptual soil of a specific religious tradition, so does the experience of the humanist. He argues that the new humanism is based on the crucial renewal of "the very roots of our tradition, which is the Greek–Roman, Judeo-Christian tradition of Humanism" (Fromm 1994, p. 79).[11] Arguably, Fromm's presentation of the Rabbinic–Hasidic conception of God differs from the common biblical understanding within the Judeo-Christian tradition (discussed later).

Fromm believed that forming and supporting a moral worldview (i.e., productive biophilic orientation) requires more than mere rational knowledge (e.g., knowledge of moral autonomy, human dignity and universalism). He clarifies that the experience of humanism implicates becoming aware "as an active inner process" and not "the passive processes of thinking, listening, agreeing, or contradiction" (Fromm 1994, p. 54). In "Medicine and the Ethical Problem of Modern Man", he asserts that the definition of ethics as "was meant by the term in the great philosophical or religious tradition [. . .] is a matter of conscience" (Fromm 1966, pp. 175–94).[12] He states that the ethical humanistic consciousness, as opposed to authoritarian consciousness, is "an inner voice that calls us to return to ourselves" (Fromm 1966, p. 177). For Fromm, listening to the "inner voice" does not refer to hearing the "internalized authority" (i.e., Freud's superego) or a call for the individualist ethic, which carries the risk of relativism and perhaps anarchism, but rather it involves the hard task of self-introspection of one's feelings and thoughts combined with the voice of the cultural ethical norms.[13] This can be seen as a challenging, meditative and perhaps even mystical task.[14]

2. Love and Knowledge

Fromm declares in an interview that any attempt to understand the human being must include "knowledge of his biological instinctive equipment as well as of the social influences of his society, and of the religious, moral, and ethical problems with which he must cope. If one omits any of these, one has a crippled and restricted picture of man" (Evans 1966, p. 100). Rainer Funk's studies highlight the centrality of religious critique in Fromm's humanism (Funk 1982, pp. 183–218). In *On the Limitations and Dangers of Psychology* (published in 1959), Fromm explicitly expresses his view on the connection between psychology and religious–mystical thought:

> "The problem of knowing man is parallel to the theological problem of knowing God. Negative theology postulates that I cannot make any positive statement about God. The only knowledge of God is what He is not. As Maimonides put it, the more I know about what God is not, the more I know about God. Or as Meister Eckhart put it: 'Meanwhile man cannot know what God is even though he be ever so well aware of what God is not.' One consequence of such negative theology is mysticism. If I can have no full knowledge of God in thought, if theology is at best negative, the positive knowledge of God can be achieved only in the act of union with God". (Fromm 1966, p. 203; a similar wording in Fromm [1956] 2006, pp. 29–30)

The comparison between the ability to know God and the ability to know a human being is striking.[15] Fromm's negative theology implies that the experience of God is the source of our concept of God. He acknowledges that the realm of experiencing God belongs to mysticism. In mysticism, the attempt to know God by thought is replaced by the experience of union with God, in which there is no more room, and no need, for knowledge about God (Fromm [1956] 2006, p. 30; Fromm [1966] 1969, pp. 32–34). In the context of Eckhart's mysticism, Fromm states, "negative theology does in no way deny the being of

God; it only denies our capacity to know *what* he is, but not our faith *that* he is" (Fromm 1994, p. 118; italics in the original). If knowing a person is equivalent to this experience, which is fundamentally conditioned by the negation of attributes and concepts, this might raise the question of whether it is possible to know a person at all. Indeed, there is a parallel between Fromm's description of the mystical experience and the process of discovering the unconscious.[16] Thus, Fromm differentiates between the Aristotelian Greek concept of knowledge as used in the natural sciences, which is impersonal and objective, and the Hebrew concept of knowledge when applied to knowing a person (*yada*, "to know", which in the Hebrew Bible refers to both sexual love and deep understanding, in Genesis 4: 1 and Exodus 2: 23–25).[17] This implies that, according to Fromm, knowing a person is possible only through the intimate experience of the encounter, and in an authentic encounter, a certain *union* needs to be established, namely, love. Fromm concludes: "as the logical consequence of theology is mysticism, so the ultimate consequence of psychology is love" (Fromm [1956] 2006, p. 30).

Given this, Fromm's definition of the human condition—that is, paradox as defining human nature[18] and mysticism as a way of representing what is beyond the rational—and his approach to interpersonal relationships—that is, unity and love as a way of knowing a person—are closely associated with his views on religion and mysticism, specifically his nontheistic mysticism.[19] This illustrates, to a certain extent and despite some elemental differences, that for Fromm, similarly to other Jewish thinkers (such as Franz Rosenzweig, Martin Buber, and Emmanuel Levinas),[20] the relationship between God and the human being performs as a model for relationships between humans.

3. Mysticism and the x Experience

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, certain philosophical, psychological, and sociological perspectives emerged that implied that it is possible to distinguish between the institutional and external elements of different religions and the internal mental experiences of the individuals who reported having religious experiences (e.g., William James, Rudolf Otto, Georg Simmel, Friedrich Heiler, Carl Jung, and Martin Buber). The underlying presumption was that all religious–mystical traditions shared an experiential component that involved the establishment of a relationship with the internal or transcendent *absolute* (the metaphysical reality, the unconditioned, the pure consciousness, the One, and the transcendent) that exists beyond the senses and rational thought. In addition, there was the fascination with Far Eastern traditions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Zen Buddhism, which in the West were perceived as religions that focus on the individual's inner experience. Different models were built to examine the mystical experience.[21]

Similar to that of Martin Buber, Fromm's examination of mysticism continues the scholarly trend that views the mystical experience as the expression of the absolute fulfillment of religiosity, but not of religion. Accordingly, the mystical experience can be characterized as a psychological, but not social, category, and can be described without religious terms (concerning Buber's mysticism, see Mendes-Flohr 1989, pp. 78–82). Fromm accepts the assumption that there is no contradiction between theistic (Jewish, Christian, or Muslim) mysticism and non-theistic (Zen Buddhism) mysticism, and mystics are essentially not theistic.[22] Namely, the mystics in the West and the East carried the same anti-authoritarian humanist spirit. Fromm intends to clarify the phenomena from his own humanistic perspective rather than from the viewpoint of religious studies or the traditional historic–philological study of mystical texts. Thus, his conception of mysticism is different from what is commonly accepted in research. [23]He holds that mystical writings first and foremost demonstrate an ethical, existential, and non-dogmatic position. Mysticism, Fromm claims, is the highest rational development in religious thinking.[24] It refers to the experience of unity, harmony within oneself, with the fellowman, and with the universe (Fromm [1950] 1955, p. 95; Fromm [1966] 1969, p. 178). The experience of unity transcends words and thought. It cannot be fully described in words.[25]

This kind of unity comprises both the awareness of one's self as a separate and unique entity and "the longing to break through the confines of this individual organization and to be one with the All" (Fromm [1950] 1955, p. 95). Fromm argues that the tension between these two opposing feelings—the fullest experience of individuality and of its opposite (the general *one* within which individuality is lost)—is the foundation of the mystical experience.[26]

The mystical experience, according to Fromm, is not ecstatic, numinous, ascetical or cosmological; rather, its meaning is limited to morality and ethics. Joan Braune convincingly demonstrates that, despite the logic of paradox that characterizes Fromm's dialectic approach, it is incorrect to categorize it as gnostic, ecstatic–cathartic or, even worse, apocalyptic (Braune 2014, pp. 182–84). Lundgren states, "In [Fromm's] mysticism there is a shift from dogmatics to ethics, from believing to experiencing, from having to being" (Lundgren 1988, p. 64). The mystics, according to Fromm, "have been deeply imbued with the experience of man's strength, his likeness to God, and with the idea that God needs man as much as man needs God; they have understood the sentence that man is created in the image of God to mean the fundamental identity of God and man. Not fear and submission but love and the assertion of one's own powers are the basis of mystical experience. *God is not a symbol of power over man but of man's own powers*" (Fromm [1950] 1955, p. 49). This is strongly expressed in Fromm's claim that "Marx's atheism is the most advanced form of rational mysticism, closer to Meister Eckhart or to Zen Buddhism than are most of those fighters for God and religion who accuse him of 'godlessness'" (Fromm [1961] 2004, p. 52).[27]

Fromm distinguishes between a mature and conscious aspiration for unity, which is a mystical harmonious experience that accomplishes the need for relatedness, and a "narcissistic type of mystical experience", which is a regression to a pregenital or prenatal stage of unity (before any sense of individuality or self has developed), and was misunderstood by Freud as the "Oceanic feeling" (Fromm 1992, p. 79). The distinction between the two types of mystical experiences, the narcissistic and the harmonious, can be seen as Fromm's version of the philosophical ethical criticism of solipsistic mysticism, and echoes, for example, Franz Rosenzweig's "dangers of the mystic" in *The Star of Redemption*.[28] Fromm expands the narcissistic danger to the social realm. He maintains that individual narcissism can be transformed into group narcissism (Fromm [1964] 1971a, p. 87; also see his discussion about the ambiguity between narcissistic and anti-narcissistic functions in religion, ibid., pp. 81, 98–100). He states that "the essential teachings of all the great humanist religions can be summarized in one sentence: It is the goal of man to overcome one's narcissism" (ibid, pp. 108–9). In this context, Fromm interprets the verse "Love thy neighbor as thyself" as a religious teaching to overcome one's narcissism, similar to Hermann Cohen's idea that one discovers his own human being in the stranger (ibid., p. 109).

In *You Shall be as Gods*, Fromm explicitly connects the ethical–mystical religious experience with the *x experience.* He states that the analysis of the x experience moves from the theological to the psychological level. The x experience is characterized by the decline of narcissism and necrophilic tendencies, openness to the world, transcending the ego, and the ability to love the world and to distinguish between rational and irrational authority, and between an idea and an ideology (Fromm [1966] 1969, p. 49).[29] Fromm binds the mystical–religious experience to the x experience for a few reasons. The first is to illustrate the common essence underlying the different traditions: "This type of experience is most clearly expressed in Christian, Moslem, and Jewish Mysticism, as well as in Zen Buddhism. [. . .] One can speak of *a theistic as well as nontheistic religious experience*" (Fromm [1966] 1969, p. 47).[30] Second, this connection determines the concept and function of religion in the humanistic sense (Funk 1982, p. 115). That is, religious concepts acquire their humanistic importance when they are interpreted and lived from the perspective of the x experience. And lastly, it illustrates that the common person may achieve a mystical experience if it is characterized as an x experience. Namely, the x experience is the religious experience of a nontheistic religion. The x experience forms a general orientation that leads to ethical action. Thus, the mysticism offered by Fromm is "positive" and "normal mysticism".

By positive, it means that the experience does not involve a denial of the world through asceticism—namely, that the world is an illusion that the human being must deny in order to reach the truth—but rather involves a connection of the human being with the world as part of a "mystical union".[31] This mysticism can be called "normal" because it not limited to those with a special spiritual gift but can be experienced by the ordinary person as well.[32]

Fromm believed that the x experience is not only a path to a more humanistic society (overcoming incestuous ties, narcissism and necrophilia, in order to experience freedom, love and biophilia), but also a means for the secular person to engage in the religious discourse (by the exposure of his idols and the discovery of his own religiosity) and for the common religious person to psychologically analyze his irrational and dogmatic faith.[33] He writes that "Eckhart is usually unconscious of his nontheism; Marx, of his religiosity" (Fromm [1976] 2008, p. 133). The x experience is how a believer or a non-believer can experience the reality of absolute values, which are beyond God, and live according to them. This forms the phenomenological basis of Fromm's belief that humanity can practically unite in the negation of idols and idolatry (Fromm [1955] 1991, p. 343; Fromm [1966] 1969, p. 49).

4. Idolatry and Religion

Fromm sees idolatry as a problem of orientation and the fundamental cause of human suffering. His widespread use of the terms idols and idolatry demonstrates the complexity of the religious terminology in his thought, in general, and the influence of Jewish thought, in particular. Idolatry, which Fromm identifies as a modern problem equivalent to narcissism, alienation, and necrophilia, links the teachings of the biblical prophets to Marx's social criticism and Freud's psychoanalysis (the Oedipal complex and incestuous relationships, which Fromm extends to the collective sphere). For Fromm, the fight against idolatry is a fight for human freedom and a sane society. He writes, "Although there is no place for theology, I suggest that there is a place and a need for 'idology'. The 'science of idols'" (Fromm [1966] 1969, p. 40; Fromm 1992, p. 43). Namely, idolatry for Fromm is not a theological concept, yet it is impossible to disregard its theological foundation. Overcoming idolatry in its various forms is a crucial element in the formation of a productive orientation. In my opinion, idolatry (or, rather, the fight against idolatry) should be seen as an intermediate concept that bridges the theistic and nontheistic traditions and, in general, the various fields of religion, philosophy, history, psychology and social criticism. In other words, in Fromm's use, idolatry is an a priori concept external to each of these disciplines and, hence, a key concept in his thought in general.[34]

Within theistic religion, any fixed formulation and any form of God (as well as the word God itself) are already idols that carry the risk of "religious" idolatry.[35] Thus, Fromm holds that in Maimonides' negative theology as well as in mysticism (i.e., Eckhart), "we find the same revolutionary spirit of freedom" (Fromm [1966] 1969, p. 50)—a freedom in which the human being is the only one responsible for his fate.[36]

What interests us is the way humanistic religiosity (God as the x element) associates with human freedom. Fromm writes, "He [man] *needs to be obedient to God* so that he can break his fixation to the primary ties and not submit to man. But is the concept of man's freedom carried to the ultimate consequence of his freedom from God? In general, this is undoubtedly not the case" (Fromm [1966] 1969, p. 62, my emphasis).[37]

Todd Dubose contends that human freedom occurs in relation to God as the x experience (Dubose 2000, p. 222). In Fromm's dialectic, God is a condition for human freedom, which includes independence from a specific form, but not from the broad meaning, of the condition itself. He states, "I am disobedient to the idol because I am obedient to God" (Fromm 1966, p. 167). The concept of God functions as an insightful reminder of the risks associated with "submissions".[38] In the social realm, this refers to submission to a heteronomous authority (fixation to primary ties: family, clan, party, nation); in the inner realm, this refers to submission to greed and selfishness (the *having* orientation; see Fromm [1976] 2008, pp. 16–17). Both of these realms represent determinations that must be overcome, and *obedience* to God (the x element that represents the human being's highest

potential) is essential for this accomplishment.[39] Although the concept of God is required for the negation of idolatry, it also increases the danger of "religious" idolatry. Therefore, the capacity to rule out idols and idolatry involves a kind of religious reasoning.

Fromm's x experience involves not only differentiating between the experience that the concept of God represents and an idolatrous representation of the concept of God, but also becoming a more loving, reasonable and sensitive human being (Fromm 1966, p. 48). From a religious perspective, which Fromm was aware of, pure atheism results in an idolatrous identification of the human being with God. I claim that the x experience embodies both the "divine" experience of negative theology and the call to meet some of the ethical demands of that "non-God", or, to employ Emmanuel Levinas' statement, which somewhat clarifies this complexity, "We all in fact maintain that human autonomy rests on a supreme heteronomy and that the force which produces such marvelous effects, the force which institutes force, the civilizing force, is called God" (Levinas 1997, p. 11).

This is somewhat in line with the criticism of Jewish philosophers of Kant's concept of the pure will (Der reine Wille). Hermann Cohen tried to solve the problem of moral duty by arguing that "even according to Kant's teaching, man is not a volunteer of the moral law but has to subjugate himself to duty" (Cohen [1919] 1995, p. 345). Following Cohen, Franz Rosenzweig claimed that the worship of the categorical imperative (in Kant's formulation) is no less than idolatrous because the human will does not function according to a physical law and cannot be reduced to a mere pure will.[40] Fromm, in my opinion, was well aware of the difficulty of discussing moral responsibility in the absence of an element that somewhat restricts personal freedom. First, he places the universal experience within the unconscious (see note 16). Moreover, he considers the commanding God as the voice of conscience heard in the x experience (and not just any voice of conscience), as there is a problem of the pathology of normalcy, which questions the individual's "inner" moral intuition.

The x experience indicates a situation in which a person reaches his utmost humanistic potential and in which the idols that the individual worships have been uncovered and idolatrous attitudes have been overcome. In my opinion, the x experience should be seen as the momentary fulfillment of the (Cohenian) continuous messianic task. Given that the humanistic task of rejecting idolatry is never-ending (we constantly face alienation and are tempted to worship idols and turn ideas into ideology, etc.), there is an eternal need for this commanding "non-God". This is reflected in Fromm's general social criticism on the various forms of "secular" idolatry. Thus, regarding narcissism, the idea of God "is the negation of narcissism because only God-not man-is omniscient and omnipotent" (Fromm 1964, p. 109). In addition, God demands loving the stranger (Fromm [1956] 2006, p. 45; compare with Fromm [1947] 1971b, p. 14). Creation in "the image of God" requires universality, the negation of "group narcissism" and the "capacity for an evolution of which the limits are not set" (Fromm [1966] 1969, p. 57). Regarding alienation, God forbids the worship of man-made objects and the admiration of power: political, economic, and technological. Regarding necrophilia, the correlation between biophilia and ethical orientation appears in the Bible: God demands humans choose "life" and "good" (Deuteronomy 30: 9, 15; Fromm [1968] 2010, p. 30).[41] Fromm's approach holds that these crucial imperatives must be freed from the heteronomous framework of "commandments given by God in revelation" and integrated into the freedom of the human will. Indeed, his characterization of idolatry and idol worship as both mental and ethical problems turn these commandments into a natural law. That is, for Fromm, the Seven Noachide Laws and the Ten Commandments are ethically binding, regardless of whether one believes them to be the formulation of a secular ethical system arrived at through human reasoning and projected onto a Godhead, or the literal will of a divine being (Schimmel 2009, p. 41).

Fromm's nontheistic mysticism turns revelation into the x experience, and the divine command into the humanistic–religious voice of conscience. He states that "only those who experience it [ethical-mysticism] will understand the formulation, and they do need any formulation" (Fromm [1950] 1955, p. 94). In a certain sense, the mystic understands that God demands that he be rejected, and this includes the rejection of the demander himself.

In Fromm's words, "having being defeated by man is precisely what pleases God" (Fromm [1966] 1969, p. 64) and "It seems that [Adam and Eve's] disobedience was even within God's plan" (Fromm [1964] 1971a, p. 11).

Fromm states that in the Rabbinic literature, God is conceived as being a supreme ruler and lawgiver: "He is the King above all Kings". He adds that "while this is generally true, there are statements in the Talmudic law and later Jewish literature which are indicative of a trend that is to make men completely autonomous, even to the point where he will be free from God" (Fromm [1966] 1969, p. 62). In this context, Fromm presents the well-known Talmudic story, *The Oven of Akhnai* (discussed later), and various examples drawn from Hasidic legends to illustrate a different conception of God than what is typically found in the Hebrew Bible. He concludes that Jewish thinkers were the most radical representatives of internationalism and of the idea of humanism (Fromm [1966] 1969, p. 69).

Indeed, there are significant similarities between his nontheism and his understanding of the concept of God in Judaism. Fromm states that in the Jewish tradition, "one must not talk *about* God lest God be transformed into an idol" (Fromm [1966] 1969, p. 28), and that in Jewish theology [unlike in Christian theology], "*the acknowledgment of God is, fundamentally, the negation of idols*" (Fromm [1966] 1969, p. 35; italics in the original). Consequently, if Judaism, according to Fromm, does not demand belief, and if its essential and highest demand and messianic goal is the negation of idolatry—based on the commandment, "Whoever denies idolatry is as if he fulfilled the whole Torah (BT, Hullin 5a)" (Fromm [1966] 1969, p. 40; Fromm 2022, p. 14; see Pinkas 2021)—then, from Fromm's perspective, not only does his nontheism not contradict or challenge Judaism (which for Fromm is a combination of prophetic, Rabbinic, and Hasidic Judaism), but it broadly expresses it. My purpose here is not to present an apologetic defense of Judaism, nor do I suggest that Fromm's ideas are exclusively Jewish. Rather, I emphasize that, from a Jewish perspective, his nontheistic position is not considered atheism.

5. Nontheism Is Not Atheism

In my opinion, and unlike some scholars—for example, Don Hausdorff, who claims that Fromm "has remained an atheist ever since 1927" (Hausdorff 1972, p. 65), and Daniel Burston, who states unequivocally that "Fromm was nonetheless a committed atheist" (Burston 1991, p. 29)—there is no moment when Fromm's nontheism becomes pure atheism. With the exception of the picture obtained from his doctoral thesis and some early opinion articles, at a time when he was still living a religious lifestyle, it can be said with certainty that Fromm was not a theist. However, he was also not an atheist in today's terms.[42] Braune concludes that "One should be careful not to give too much weight to identifying Fromm as atheist. [. . .] Fromm's approach to the existence of God walks a fine line between atheism and negative theology" (Braune 2014, pp. 188–89, fn. 24).[43]

Funk states that for Fromm, "all statements about God are fundamentally statements about man. Divine love and justice are symbols of man's own powers of love and justice, even though they are ascribed to God" (Funk 1982, p. 110). Nevertheless, unlike Simone Weil, Jan Assmann, Regina Schwartz, and Hagai Dagan, for instance, Fromm does not attribute undesirable traits, such as narcissism, necrophilia, and destructiveness, to God. That is, for Fromm, God as the x element is primarily a positive symbol of "man's own [positive] powers".[44] The x element advocates for agnosticism on the basis of negative theology, which is meant to permit the freedom of the human being. Indeed, its fulfillment does not depend on any divine transcendent factor. However, this freedom, on the one hand, requires a perspective on spiritual potentials (reason, love, productivity, biophilia)[45] and, on the other, recognition of the limitations of the human being, as well as a sense of duty and responsibility that, in Fromm's approach, are essentially religious.

In *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, Fromm declares that "The real conflict is not between belief in God and 'atheism' but between a humanistic, religious attitude and an attitude which is equivalent to idolatry regardless of how this attitude is expressed—or disguised—in conscious thought" (Fromm [1950] 1955, p. 114).[46] Fromm's humanism goes beyond the

religious–secular division. Being an atheist, according to Fromm, does not exempt a person from his or her (conscious or unconscious) religiousness or from the influence of the factor of faith on their character.[47] Moreover, being an atheist does not deprive him or her of the possibility of the x experience.[48] In other words, the challenges that an atheist and a religious believer face to realize the x experience are not essentially different but rather result from the differing social orientations that shape the individual's social character (productive or nonproductive orientations, see Funk 1982, pp. 27–49). Fromm advocates for a spiritual renewal that involves rejecting dogmatism, conservatism, and stagnation, regardless of whether a person is religious or secular. Dubose states, "The nameless God, described in Fromm's final, evolutionary stage of the God concept, resists conceptualization, and thus, reification. Reification is idolatry". He concludes that "To reject theism, though, is not to reject *homo religiosus*" (Dubose 2000, p. 221; see Durkin 2014, p. 31).

Fromm's broad definition of the concept of religion encompasses social, political, and cultural phenomena that are not typically classified as religious phenomena (Fromm [1976] 2008, pp. 85, 110: "Indeed, in this broad sense of the word no culture of the past or present, and it seems no culture in the future, can be considered as not having religion."). In addition, his nontheistic mysticism acknowledges no supreme being, entity, person, or spirit that exists independently of the natural order. However, unlike Dubose, I contend that Fromm has distanced himself from a specific type of theism—namely, the conceptions of God that are prevalent in the hegemonic Western Judeo-Christian tradition.

The x element is not God as the creator, or as a punishing and rewarding external lawgiver. Nonetheless, the x element is related to the human being's own powers: autonomy, love, and reason. On the one hand, Fromm claims that "Man creates himself in the historical process which began with his first act of freedom—the freedom to disobey—to say 'no'" (Fromm [1966] 1969, pp. 70–71), and that "The act of disobedience as an act of freedom is the beginning of reason" (Fromm 1942, p. 28; Fromm [1966] 1969, p. 72). On the other hand, Fromm claims that "Paradoxically, I truly follow God's will if I forget about God" (Fromm [1960] 1986, p. 41). Thus, the x element illustrates an unresolved hermeneutical circle of reason and freedom. The freedom to disobey (God's irrational demands) is the origin of reason, but at the same time, reason (i.e., the human being as created in the image of God with the capacity of reason and love) has to precede a genuine rebellion (Fromm 1966, p. 162).[49] In other words, as Maurice Friedman has formulated, "If man is a being made in the likeness of God and God is a symbol of the powers of man, we have a perfect circle!"(M. Friedman 1967, p. 234. Quoted in Lundgren 1988, p. 22, fn. 31). This tension, in my opinion, underlies Fromm's nontheistic mysticism. That is, human beings can be autonomously commanded by their capacity for reason, but this capacity is based on the notion that the human being is not an object among the other objects of nature. Rather, the human being is a part of nature yet also transcends it (Fromm [1947] 1971b, p. 40; Fromm [1950] 1955, p. 22; Fromm [1962] 1980, p. 165). The human being is "partly divine, partly animal; partly infinite, partly finite" (Fromm [1955] 1991, p. 24). Fromm's position confronts both approaches: that humans are shaped exclusively by either biology or culture. The mystical position can manage and incorporate paradoxes, but it also includes the *infinite* that is beyond culture. The x element is an infinite God that includes atheism within it.

Nontheistic mysticism, therefore, is a two-sided coin. One side promotes the religious–mystical factor within a secular–humanistic system. The other side promotes the secular–humanistic factor within a common religious system. Concerning the latter, the meaning is that religion without a humanistic–secular element (e.g., reason and love as objects of devotion instead of religious dogmas) constitutes a partial and inappropriate frame of orientation. Concerning the former, the meaning is that an ethical system would not be complete without a mystical–religious element (e.g., the x element, the rejection of idolatry, and the need for relatedness, which nourishes the ethical orientation). As such, nontheism can be viewed as a safeguard against theistic religious ideas, which may carry the risks of religious dogmatism, fanaticism, authoritarianism, collective narcissism, tribalism, and

political messianism. In contrast, mysticism, which involves a religious experience of unity that is beyond the enclosed ego and that cannot be expressed in words, can be seen as a safeguard against the various social and personal risks associated with secular–humanistic traditions, which might include moral relativism, dogmatic ideologies, anthropocentrism, non-pluralistic uniformity, conformity, narcissistic individualism, and, in general, the necrophilic enslavement of humans by technology and economic interests. More importantly, the mystical experience promotes the internal religious sense of moral responsibility.

Consequently, according to Fromm, theism should include within it a certain quality of atheism, and vice versa, in order to minimize the risk of idolatry. Following this, we can argue that the experience of nontheistic mysticism, according to Fromm, fosters the need for a new humanistic religion, or a new religious humanism. However, this need, says Fromm, "is not an attack on the existing religions",[50] but a need for a new, nontheistic, noninstitutionalized "religiosity".

6. Religious Humanism

According to Fromm, we cannot distinguish between humanistic and religious values but only between authoritarian and humanistic forms of religion.[51] This claim is based on two assumptions: a. Humanism is founded on a religious–mystical unitary view of humanity (as per above). b. All social phenomena carry religious (and idolatrous) characteristics (Fromm [1950] 1955, pp. 51–52; Fromm [1955] 1991, pp. 170–71). Hence, the human being is "homo religiosus" not only because faith is a basic character trait "which pervades all his experiences" and "Man cannot live without faith" (Fromm [1947] 1971b, pp. 199–210), but also by the very fact of belonging to a social group that shares a frame of orientation and an object of devotion (e.g., family, a club of interest, union, tribe, clan, party, nation, etc.). Regarding the "religious" person, there can indeed be a contradiction between the person's official religious beliefs and his private "secret" religion (Fromm [1976] 2008, p. 111). The uncovering of a person's secret religion (i.e., of his idol and hence his idolatry and alienation) from a psychoanalytic–humanistic point of view is a necessity for human freedom (Fromm [1950] 1955, pp. 31–33; Fromm [1966] 1969, p. 40; Funk 2009, pp. 16, 29).[52] Following this, it is permissible to assume that Fromm's religiosity is his nontheistic mystical position, which ultimately constitutes the psychological and intellectual basis of his humanism.

Fromm was a distinct humanist thinker, and it is accepted in research that his humanist position is the core that connects his various writings in different fields. He was aware of the disagreements over the definition of humanism,[53] and the psychological, ethical and political risks involved in misunderstanding humanism.[54] Generally, the risk is that a preoccupation with a concept or a term could develop into an ideology (Evans 1966, p. 90), which would mean a departure from life itself. This issue is present in both Marx's criticism of Hegel and the Zen Buddhist texts that Fromm investigated. Moreover, Jewish philosophers since Hermann Cohen, Franz Rosenzweig, Martin Buber, and others have been explicitly sensitive to the shortcomings and problems of (Kantian, Hegelian, and secular) humanism. On this subject, for instance, there is a similarity between Fromm and Emmanuel Levinas' approaches. Levinas argues that the passion leading to building a decent and moral society includes an internal forgetfulness of moral responsibility. That is, humanism might worship its principles and consequently forget itself within rhetoric and ideology. Hence, Levinas acknowledges the presence of anti-humanism inherent in the core of humanism (Levinas 1997, p. 277; Ben-Pazi 2023, p. 129). Therefore, dialogic education is of great importance.

For Fromm, humanism is not a rigid ideology or a dogmatic doctrine, yet there are concepts in his approach that form the basis of a humanistic orientation. Along with defining humanism, he explains its opposites—specifically, what humanism is not. The positive mode emphasizes human dignity, the unity of humanity and affirmations of life.[55]

> "Humanism, both in its Christian religious and in its secular, nontheistic manifestations, is characterized by faith in man, in his possibility to develop to ever higher stages, in the unity of the human race, in tolerance and peace, and in reason and love as the forces which enable man to realize himself, to become what he can be. [. . .] The most important and the most fundamental thought of humanism is the idea that mankind—humanity (humanitas)—is not an abstraction but a reality [. . .] that each individual represents all of humanity[56] and, hence, that all men are equal, not in their gifts and talents, but in their basic human qualities. This concept of equality is rooted in the Judaeo-Christian tradition". (Fromm 1964, pp. 69–70; see Fromm's Credo in Fromm [1962] 1980, p. 136)

The positive definition of humanism as "faith in man" is not so obvious if we consider that humanism emerged following the rejection of the previous religious belief system, which is, indeed, not the case with Fromm. Martin Buber, for example, sees "faith in man" as the foundation of "believing humanism", which cannot be considered atheistic or secular.[57] The humanist, writes Fromm, "experiences in himself all of humanity [. . .] He is a skeptic and a man of faith. [. . .] He is a man of faith because he believes in that which potentially exists, although it has not yet been born" (Fromm 1966, p. 170; Fromm 1964, p. 73). Fromm provides several lists of great humanists, revolutionary characters, and non-idolaters in human history, including mystics, philosophers, and founders of religions (see Lundgren 1988, p. 68). Thus, Fromm's "positive" definition of humanism clearly and prominently features a religious component.

The negative mode of the definition sees humanism as a reaction to alienation, to irrational forms of authoritarianism and, in general, to threats of dehumanization: religious fanaticism, extreme nationalism and enslavement of the human being by economic means (Fromm 1964, pp. 70–71). Under Fromm's humanism, all heteronomous determinations are rejected, including the external divine authority, the authority of a leader or a party, or the authority of intelligence in the realm of technology. His humanism opposes any form of irrational authority, but also rational authority that is unbiophilic, such as the authority of sophisticated machines, computers, and AI (Fromm [1964] 1971a, pp. 42, 57; and see there in p. 65 his definition of the *Homo mechanicus*). Thus, Fromm's negative definition of humanism also involves a religious component—namely, humanism as a reaction to idolatry.

7. Nontheistic Jewish Humanism

Fromm does not belong to those thinkers who thought that religion was opposed to humanism (for example, Yeshayahu Leibowitz, who clearly distinguished between religion and humanism)[58] or that humanism would replace religion (such as Freud's position in *The Future of an Illusion*, or Marx's "religion is the opium of the people"). In addition, Fromm cannot be counted among those thinkers who identified humanism with a specific historical religion.[59] Fromm thought that national identity should be overcome in favor of humanism. Humanists look beyond the dimensions of their own society and the frontiers of their social existence (Fromm [1968] 2010, pp. 65–66). Similar to Cohen, but unlike Buber, Fromm most likely feared that if national identity [e.g., modern Zionism] were not renounced, then a Jewish humanist project—or any specific religious–humanist project, for that matter—would be in danger of idolatry (the worship of power, nationalism, and patriotism, phenomena that exemplify incestuous relationships). Hence, for him there is a parallel between overcoming formal theism and overcoming nationalism as both carry the risk of idol worshiping and idolatry.

Kieran Durkin states that "Fromm's radical humanism is most deeply and profoundly influenced by his understanding of the Judaic tradition" (Durkin 2014, pp. 43, 53–54; see L. Friedman 2013, p. 260). Indeed, in *You Shall Be as Gods*, Fromm distinctly identifies the theoretical concept of humanistic religion with his understanding of Judaism. Lundgren writes with humor "Not only did Erich Fromm have a genuinely Jewish nose, he also had a genuinely Jewish soul" (Lundgren 1988, p. 120). Though Fromm is certainly different

from Hermann Cohen, Martin Buber, Hugo Bergmann, Ernst Simon, Emmanuel Levinas, Eugen Kohn, Abraham Heschel, Mordechai Kaplan, Jacob Agus, and, in our times, Paul Mendes-Flohr, Ephraim Meir, Hanoch Ben-Pazi, and other Jewish thinkers who used and still use terms that Fromm avoided—such as "moral monotheism", "biblical humanism", "Hebrew humanism", and "Jewish humanism"—his humanism is nonetheless largely based on Jewish thought. He sees the Old Testament as a revolutionary book because its theme is the humanistic liberation of the human being. Additionally, for him, this anthropological (and not theological) task is the Rabbinic (Halachic) teaching itself. To a certain extent, the authentic Judaism, as Fromm saw it, is a nontheological religion, and there are indeed justifications for holding that opinion.[60] For example, Fromm claims that "The logical consequence of Jewish monotheism is the absurdity of theology" (Fromm [1966] 1969, p. 39). He stresses that knowing God in the prophetic sense is the same as loving God: "it is not speculation about God or his existence"; "it is not theo-logy"; and, quoting the Talmudic commentary on Jeremiah 16: 11, "They have forsaken Me and have not kept My Torah [. . .] If only they had forsaken Me and kept My Torah" (Fromm [1966] 1969, p. 34).

In *You Shall Be as Gods*, Fromm brings at length the known Talmudic tale *The Oven of Akhnai* (BT, Bava Metzia 59a–b; Fromm [1966] 1969, pp. 62–64). In the story, miracles and divine voices are democratically rejected. For Fromm, the story teaches that God's own will is "man's autonomy". God laughs as he proclaims, "My sons have defeated me". Despite the anthropomorphism, Fromm sees this God as a symbol of man's own powers—namely, freedom—rather than as a worshiped idol and the recipient object of projection. In this case, God is free from his role as an authority. Nevertheless, His wish is human and social freedom. He is neither strong nor perfect, but a humorous God who rebels against himself, thereby softening religious fanaticism from within. It should be noted that in the story, God does not grant absolute human freedom but rather freedom of interpretation of the law, which is His creation anyway. Fromm radicalizes the humanistic element and interprets this legal-hermeneutical freedom as a religious one—namely, as an utter negation of God's law for the sake of human autonomy. However, Fromm deviates from the common interpretations according to which God explicitly grants 'legal' but not religious freedom. In my opinion, Fromm found in this story a theistic atmosphere that vitally encompasses atheism, because only as such can it be free from idolatry. Or, in Levinas' words, "It is certainly a great glory for the creator to have set up a being capable of atheism, a being which, without having been *cause sui* [self-caused], has an independent view and word and is at home with itself" (Levinas 1979, pp. 58–59).

To sum up this section, nontheistic mysticism is a religious–humanistic position that seeks to direct thoughts and actions rather than a vague idea or abstract notion. On the one hand, it teaches that, according to Fromm, a productive and biophilic frame of orientation does not involves a belief in the existence of God, because this might lead to obedience and submission to irrational authority, world-denying mysticism or an eschatological faith that removes the human being from his responsibility to himself and to humanity.[61] On the other hand, a belief in the human being alone (i.e., as defined only by scientific-evolutionary concepts, see Browning 1975, p. 117) cannot guarantee the accomplishment of humanism—a nontheistic mystical element of a divine–human potential of a "new spiritual form" is required.[62]

Fromm's nontheistic mystical position reinforces the notion that any project of liberation—whether self-transformation from the mode of *having* to *being*, awakening a self-consciousness, making the unconscious conscious, overcoming different forms of alienation and destructive ideologies (fanaticism, narcissistic attitudes and forms of neurotic "secrete religion", pseudo-freedom, and other forms of pathology of normalcy) and, finally, accomplishing productive–biophilic–humanistic conscience—is conditioned to a frame of orientation that primarily aims to establish *unity*, harmony, and fulfilling the need for relatedness. Namely, the self attains through giving itself in relation to what is not itself, to others or other beings (M. Friedman 1967, p. 240). Jarno Hietalahti identifies the need for relatedness as a crucial component of Fromm's humanism, which could well serve as a

genuine response to post-humanist, trans-humanist, and anti-humanist approaches. Hence, for Fromm, the very core of humanity is based on relatedness: we cannot be individuals without being related to others (Hietalahti 2023).[63] From a philosophical perspective, this originated in the principle of the One. The ideas of the One, oneness and unity are the building blocks of Fromm's humanism, and he considers them the achievements of the mystic in the theistic and nontheistic traditions. Messianism, according to Fromm, illustrates how the idea of unity constitutes the frame of orientation that dictates the individual's moral responsibility (Fromm 1966, p. 209).

8. Fromm's Mysticism: Background

Fromm was introduced to Jewish mysticism during the first two decades of his life while participating in Frankfurt's intellectual Jewish life.[64] However, he learned about Judaism from thinkers who had a rational, critical and often negative view of mysticism. Fromm studied with the Orthodox Rabbi Nehemiah Nobel (1871–1922). "Nobel", writes Fromm, "was a mystic, deeply steeped in Jewish mysticism as well as in the thought of Western humanism" (Fromm [1966] 1969, p. 14). Franz Rosenzweig also called Nobel a "mystic" and was impressed by the way Nobel delivered his lessons and sermons, which were sometimes described in magical terms.[65] Nobel indeed, at the very least, taught Kabbalah at the opening lecture of the Jewish Lehrhaus. However, his essays do not explicitly refer to Kabbalistic literature.

Nobel believed that knowledge of the Talmud and Halacha and observance of Jewish laws, rather than knowledge of Kabbalah, was at the core of Jewish life. Generally, Nobel combined German culture (Schopenhauer, Kant and, especially, Goethe) with non-dogmatic Judaism based on the Hebrew Bible, the prophets' writings and Halachic literature, and believed in the importance of Zionism for the renewal of Judaism. His emphasis on the social–moral aspects of Judaism was influenced by Hermann Cohen, who was well-known for rejecting mysticism and Kabbalah, recognizing them as irrational and mythological pantheistic threats to a moral monotheism.[66] According to Cohen, mysticism is a danger to our moral orientation: it is an "imaginary theory" and "delusion" that is in contradiction with logical reasoning (Cohen [1919] 1995, pp. 108, 414). Moral monotheism necessarily excludes mysticism because it obscures the relationship between the human being and the transcendent God by giving the illusion that it is possible to reach unity with God, instead of the enduring moral aspiration of accomplishing *nearness* to God (Cohen [1919] 1995, pp. 212, 306, 314; see also the discussion about mysticism and the isolation of the individual on p. 386). He declares that *religion* enters into "the methodological connection with ethics, religion—not myth, and not mysticism" (Cohen [1919] 1995, p. 168). The difference in the positions of Cohen and Fromm regarding the term mysticism, but not regarding a fundamental issue in the relationship of human beings to God, becomes clear in the light of Cohen's words: "The return to God is not union with God. The return means nothing other than what the origin means: holiness is the command and the power of God, which are transferred to man, but which do not make man and God identical. Even with this transference, God remains the Unique One" (Cohen [1919] 1995, p. 306). Fromm can agree with Cohen that unity with God actually means that the divine powers exist in the human being itself. But unlike Cohen, Fromm purges any possibility of divine transcendence and a concept of holiness, which for Cohen's method is philosophically necessary.

Another of Fromm's early mentors in Judaism was Rabbi Shlomo Baruch Rabinkow (1882–1941), who, in his teachings, blended elements of Hasidic mysticism (especially the *Tanya*, which is the main work of Chabad philosophy and mysticism) with Hermann Cohen's religious socialism. Fromm claimed that Rabinkow influenced him more than any other person, and that Rabinkow was a radical humanist "rooted in the Hasidic tradition" that "sought for and found the radical humanist attitude in the Jewish tradition, whether it was in the Prophets, the Talmud, Maimonides, or a Hasidic story. [. . .] his whole concept of Judaism was heavily weighted on the side of Halakhah and not theology" (in Jung 1987, p. 103).[67] In his dissertation, *The Jewish Law*,[68] accepted in 1922, Fromm describes

Hasidism as the authentic expression of Judaism in modern times.[69] Under the influence of Rabinkow,[70] Fromm presents a critical approach to western mysticism and Kabbalah, which he saw (to a certain extent similarly to Cohen) as a world-denying theological doctrine focused on the individual's ecstatic–mystical experience. Early Hasidic mysticism, however, he recognized as "mysticism of the community" and a means to strengthen the community's ties to its traditional ways in the face of the challenges of modernity. Fromm believed that Hasidism's mystical approach preserved the Jewish laws while allowing for participation in a broader social reality by charging all daily activities with spiritual meaning. His discussion of the socio-mystical element of Hasidism refers to Martin Buber's writings and Simon Dubnow's *World History of the Jewish People*.[71] Fromm claimed that "Hasidism is a mysticism—if one may still use that term—of the community. It is in community, and not in the fleeting glimpses experienced in solitude, that God is realized" (Fromm 2022, p. 111).[72] Funk notes that Fromm's fondness for Hasidism, specially Chabad Hasidism as he came to know it from Rabinkow, persisted even after he broke away from the institutionalized religious lifestyle and began to value religion in the form of "nontheistic mysticism" (Funk 1982, pp. 195–204). Funk argues that much of what Rabinkow says about the Jewish individual can later be found in Fromm's humanistic views; for example, the human being's capacities for biophilia, autonomy, productivity and loving another person as based on the love of oneself. Considering this, I contend that Fromm's nontheistic mystical position applies not only to religion but to his humanism in general (Funk 2014, pp. 46–50). The theistic component of Hasidism, as Fromm saw it, was applied to empower life and denounce human arrogance and pride. It is a frame of orientation that enables the criticism of the "human", but without impairing the dignity, productivity, and freedom of the human being. That is, the theological element broadens the frame of orientation more than the political, historical, economic, scientific, or technological viewpoints could.

Fromm's understanding of Hasidism as a mystical position that does not renounce the world and does not create a polarization between the sacred and the secular (Fromm [1968] 2010, p. 138; Lundgren 1988, pp. 67, 89) anticipates his later approach to mysticism in general, which he will recognize not as a singular phenomenon among other phenomena but rather as a unity that exists at the root of all phenomena. This will culminate in the idea that oneness and the experience of unity of the mystical *experience* is the essence of religiousness and humanistic ethics in general.[73] For Fromm, while the principle of universalism, as it developed from the beginning of the Enlightenment, expresses the non-theological philosophical understanding of humanity's unity, the religious mystical tradition was the most authentic way to express and actualize the individual's experience of this unity.[74] In *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, Fromm cites from a Hasidic story as an example of the "characteristic of mystical thinking" (Fromm [1950] 1955, pp. 89–90).

Fromm's nontheistic mystical position was formed even before the explicit use of the term in 1966 in *You Shall Be as Gods*. Its buds are already found in Fromm's dissertation (still in a theistic form as a rejection of religious dogmas) and later in *Man for Himself* (1947),[75] *Psychoanalysis and Religion* (1950), *The Forgotten Language* (1951), *The Sane Society* (1955), *the Art of Loving* (1956), *Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism* (1960), *Beyond the Chains of Illusion* (1962), and *The Heart of Man* (1964). In all these writings, we can find the foundations of this position: (a) that a genuine mystical–ethical experience precedes the formation of religious concepts; (b) that the same experience of unity received different formulations in the philosophical and non-theistic traditions; and (c) that the experience of unity is essential to human development.

9. Fritz Mauthner's "Gottlose Mystik"

According to Lundgren, Fromm probably obtained the nontheistic mysticism designation from Thomas Merton (1915–1968). Merton, a Trappist monk and "modern Christian mystic", named Fromm an "atheistic mystic" in their correspondence starting in 1954, a definition that Fromm partly accepted. Nevertheless, there were also differences in opinion between them. Both agreed that true mysticism does not know God as "an object outside

ourselves, as 'another being' capable of being enclosed in some human concept". Nevertheless, Fromm did not respond to Merton's claim that "...the majority of true mystics stand and fall with the existence or non-existence of God" (Lundgren 1988, pp. 71–72).[76]

Among the mystical writings that interested Fromm, at least starting from the sixth decade of his life, were the writings of Meister Eckhart, which Fromm often quotes. Eckhart's mysticism represents an important development in that it is a "temple of reason", where negative theology and the concept of "the one" can coexist (Fromm [1975] 1999b, pp. 37–38).[77] Fromm presents Eckhart as a nontheistic medieval mystic and revolutionary of his time (similar to Buddha, Marx, and Schweitzer). Fromm calls him "one of the boldest and most radical thinkers" and "the greatest master of life". Eckhart appears in Fromm's list of great humanists of the revolutionary character alongside Buddha, Jesus, and others (Lundgren 1988, pp. 68–67). Fromm's discussions about negative theology, paradoxical logic, the x experience and the mode of *being* over *having* all include references to Eckhart. According to Fromm, Eckhart did not explicitly deny the existence of God because a nontheistic approach was not acceptable at the time he lived, and his theistic statements should be understood as allegorical only (similar to Maimonides' approach, which admittedly influenced Eckhart). Lundgren mentioned Arthur Schopenhauer and Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki as two thinkers who saw a closeness between Eckhart and Buddhism based on the nontheistic factor (Lundgren 1988, p. 71).

In addition to this, an equally noteworthy influence that should be taken into account is that of the philosopher Fritz Mauthner (1849–1923).[78] Mauthner's influence on Fromm has not yet been discussed in the research, but there is a solid basis for its importance, not only for the way that Fromm understood Eckhart, but also, mainly, for his own nontheistic mystical position. Fromm starts his article *Meister Eckhart* with a reference to Mauthner's *Der Atheismus und seine Geschichte im Abendlande*. He writes, "Eckhart [was] an adherent of realism, and thus, as F. Mauthner (1920) has pointed out, was able to base his pantheism on the concept of God as the one and all-embracing reality" (Fromm 1994, pp. 116–17).

In my opinion, this minor comment has significant weight. Fritz Mauthner is perhaps a forgotten philosopher. However, already in the early twenties of the last century, he coined the term "Gottlose Mystik" (Godless mysticism). In *Der Atheismus*, Mauthner attributes this term to Buddhism as well as to Eckhart while extensively discussing the history of mysticism in the context of his discussions on *der Friede in gottloser Mystik* (peace in godless mysticism) and *das Streit um den* Gottesbegriff (the dispute over the concept of God). At the beginning of the 20th century, Mauthner refers to the similarity between Schopenhauer, Buddhism, and Eckhart in the context of *unity* and nontheism (Mauthner [1920] 1989, pp. 408, 415–17, 423–27), and to Spinoza in the context of mysticism (Weiler 1970, p. 293). In fact, Mauthner created a precedent to refer to Eckhart, the medieval Christian mystic, within a context of nontheistic mysticism. Inspired by Eckhart, Mauthner saw mysticism as the apex of his own philosophy (Weiler 1958, p. 86).

I believe that Fromm, at the very least, knew the basic ideas in Mauthner's philosophy of language and his position on nontheistic mysticism. Mauthner describes his own mysticism as *godless*. For him, this term does not imply any assertion about the existence of any entity; rather, godless mysticism is best described as "an inarticulate feeling of unity" (Weiler 1970, p. 292). Mauthner believed that godless mysticism was the essence, and the spiritual core, of religion. This anticipates Fromm's position that the mystical movements carried a humanistic and anti-authoritarian spirit (e.g., Fromm [1976] 2008, p. 114). In addition, Mauthner presented Spinoza as a Jewish atheist and representative of the godless mystical approach with "his so-called pantheism, the overwhelming feeling of the All-One" (Mauthner 1924, p. 9). A similar position can be found in Fromm's thought.

Mauthner is mainly known for his philosophy of language and linguistic skepticism. He considered language a deceiving tool for human knowledge.[79] He attempted to show that insofar as knowledge is mediated by words, language is both unnecessary and impossible as a tool for perceiving reality (Pisano 2023, p. 215). He stated that his two important works, *Critique of Language* and the *History of Atheism*, have more in common than mere

authorship; they are intertwined. For Mauthner, the critique of language cannot transcend the limits of language but only points to them. By doing so, it also points to a transcendent reality that has no limits. The critique of language, via this route, not only leads to mysticism but is mysticism itself (see Weiler 1970, p. 291). A critique of language must teach freedom from language as well, as the highest form of self-freedom. Hence, it is silence that enables unity with the self and non-self,[80] and nature. The *godless mystic* is torn between silence and the desire to communicate his silence. Silence is an attempt to say what cannot be said. On the one hand, nothing is possible, while on the other, everything is possible (Weiler 1970, pp. 295–96).[81]

I believe that some elements of Mauthner's thought can be found in Fromm's writings. For example, the discussion of the concept of God in *You Shall be as Gods* begins with a critique of language that exemplifies a linguistic skepticism. He defines the separation between the concept and the experience (Fromm [1966] 1969, p. 19), utilizing Marx's concept of alienation. Following this, Fromm states his nontheistic mystical position, which ultimately teaches that the *experience* of unity is at the core of all religions and fundamentally beyond words (although the conceptualization between religions is different, the basic experience is the same). Hence, for Fromm as well, linguistic skepticism and mysticism are intertwined.

In Fromm's approach, language and its development are related to moral consciousness—that is, a change in verbal categories expresses a change in attitude. In *To Have or to Be?*, Fromm claims that the language we use today reflects the spread of the *having* mode, which is characterized by a society built on property and greed (Fromm [1976] 2008, p. 17; Fromm 2000, pp. 46–37; Fromm [1968] 2010, p. 91). Similar to Mauthner (see note 79), Fromm argues that in recent centuries, nouns had been replacing verbs. Verbs designated a state of inner activity—a being mode—while nouns stood for things and possessions. We possess a house, an idea, and even love itself. "But to express an activity by *to have* in connection with a noun is an erroneous use of language, because processes and activities cannot be possessed; they can only be experienced" (Fromm [1976] 2008, pp. 17–19; and see L. Friedman 2013, p. 322). When we talk about things that are not related to the experience, we use words in a way that is inappropriate and misleading. Generally, Fromm holds that language has an immense influence on our moral perception and on our relationships with the human and nonhuman environment. Language can initiate emotional retreat, moral distress, and the freezing of empathy. For example, Fromm argues that this is radically expressed in the way we use different words to describe living animals and animals intended for eating (Fromm 1973, pp. 120–21). In light of Mauthner's approach, Fromm's nontheistic mysticism can be understood as a part of a linguistic humanistic project. If humanism is a struggle against the idolatrous processes of alienation, according to which a term loses its meaning—namely, I can free myself from something, but I do not "have" freedom as a noun, because freedom is just a word, an alienated term (Evans 1966, pp. 95–96)—then nontheistic mysticism is an invitation to dynamically intervene in the processes of meaning formation. The fulfillment of Frommian religious humanism must involve the critique of language, and thus liberation from illusions, superstitions, absolutisms, ideologies, and the politicization of language that serve as a tool for authoritarianism. Nontheistic mysticism is a consciousness mechanism aimed at the fine-tuning of the individual's moral compass, which is affected by the pathologies of normalcy that prevail in all cultures.

10. Concluding Remarks

This paper suggests that the humanistic ethic offered by Fromm is closely related to his nontheistic mystical position. Fromm recognized the failure of humanism as a completely atheistic–secular project since the Renaissance and Enlightenment, in that "solidarity" cannot fully replace *the experience* of the "one world" offered by humanistic religion (see Wilde 2004, p. 3) and that the humanistic consciousness involves an experience that belongs to the "psycho-spiritual field". His broad definition of religion, as well as the use of the concept of idolatry as immanent in human existence, reinforces this claim. According to

Fromm, one cannot speak of a humanistic transformation without mentioning these two terms: religion and idolatry. Idolatry, in its various and changing forms, will always pose a challenge to the individual and to society.

I argue that Frommian humanism should not be understood, as is often portrayed in the research literature, as merely radical or normative humanism that advocates humanistic principles based on the rejection of former religious traditions. Rather, if we accept the notion that nontheistic mysticism defines humanism, then it is a sort of *broad humanism*. This kind of broad humanism, unlike common humanism, incorporates in its frame of orientation the religious experience of unity and negative theology.

For Fromm, nontheistic mysticism is a category that is relevant to both the theistic and nontheistic religions. At the same time, it challenges the dichotomy between religion and secularism. While the historical religions led to a separation in the history of humanity, for Fromm, mysticism preserved the original core of the principle of unity. Therefore, unlike religions, mysticism connected the various phenomena and did not stand beside or beyond them. That is, the term teaches that there is a fundamental unity at the root of human existence, which can still be experienced by the individual, through the x experience. Franz Rosenzweig once acknowledged, "God plainly did not create religion, but rather the world", expressing his discontent with the separation brought by religions. Indeed, as Rosenzweig is careful with the use of the term religion (which is crucial for liberating God from religion, which, for him, is necessary for human freedom), Fromm is careful with the use of the term God. The concept of God, as the x element in the nontheistic mystical approach, is not only a negation of determinism and heteronomy, but also implies that the human being is not a god and that human accomplishments, however great they might be, cannot be considered divine if they do not incorporate "the need for relatedness" and moral responsibility. The nontheistic mystical position includes atheism but goes beyond it. The x element expresses the infinite possibility of transcending the ego and reducing narcissism. Consequently, the x experience involves a certain biophilic component (see Fromm 1994, p. 160; and see his definition of biophilic ethics in Fromm [1964] 1971a, pp. 49–50) based on the premise that human moral autonomy rests on a kind of supreme heteronomy that transcends both language and solipsistic intuition.

The x experience, being a unique experience of the individual, poses a challenge for a social thinker such as Fromm, who sought a (messianic) way to a sane and humanistic society. Thus, the x experience is an experience of oneness that also involves criticizing the politicization of language, the formation of ideologies, and is closely connected to the fight against idolatry.

The nontheistic mystical position is not only problematic, controversial, and paradoxical—which helps explain Fromm's marginalization in the social science research community and the failure of psychoanalytical training institutes to integrate it into their teaching (Silver 2017, pp. 392–393)—but it also puzzles, raises questions, and aims to reexamine our language, philosophical stances, and beliefs. In *The Forgotten Language*, Fromm claims that modern man has forgotten the universal language of symbols through which inner experiences, feeling and thoughts are expressed as if they were sensory experiences, events in the outer world (Fromm 1951, p. 6). The nontheistic mysticism is Fromm's symbolic universal language for the experience of the One and of unity. John Schaar commented that Fromm's *The Forgotten Language* "rests on the premise that all human beings share a common 'forgotten language', and that this language expresses the universal concerns that arise from the human situation" (Schaar 1961, p. 46, fn.*). Schaar intended to point out a weakness of essentialism in Fromm's approach[82] but, in my opinion, unintentionally pointed to a strength. Fromm's social psychoanalysis perceived the human being as a social being, and sees the aim of psychology as solving problems of relatedness between the individual and the world: the split between reason and nature, and the dichotomy between the birth of individuality and the pain of aloneness and fear of separation. Consequently, love, as a spontaneous affirmation of others while preserving the individual self, is an overcoming of that split. For Fromm, love for one person is only a condition for loving

humanity and the world: "All men are part of Adam, and all women part of Eve" (Fromm [1956] 2006, p. 52). That is, relatedness, overcoming alienation, relationships, and achieving union are crucial for self-realization, and eventually for a sane society. These matters are at the core of this forgotten language.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

1 Fromm's writing contains some complex philosophical ideas, such as his concept of human nature, which contains a contradiction rooted in the predicament of human existence: the human being is both a product of natural evolution and a subject of natural laws, but, at the same time, is also separate from nature and transcends it with reason and self-awareness (Fromm [1966] 1969, p. 71; Fromm 1994, p. 100; Fromm [1964] 1971a, pp. 20–24; Fromm [1976] 2008, p. 137).

2 (Scholem [1941] 1995, p. 6). "History rather shows that the great mystics were faithful adherents of the great religions" (Hallamish 1999, pp. 3–4). Schweid claimed that even among rational thinkers (who did not necessarily focus on mystical writings but whose thought deals with religious experience), mysticism includes an element of prophetic messianism within it (Schweid 1992, pp. 83–106). That is, in contrast to Scholem, who differentiated between the biblical prophecy and the Kabbalah, Jewish thinkers of the twentieth century, according to Schweid, saw the prophetic experience (in the Hebrew Bible) as a mystical experience—that is, prophecy as a form of mysticism. The prophet's message is not to teach the experience itself but morality, love of God, keeping the commandments, etc. Hence, there is a connection between prophetic mysticism and morality.

3 John Schaar, an ardent critic of Fromm, even accuses him of using "the language of mystical religion and not of empirical science" (Schaar 1961, p. 38; and see Funk 1982). In this important book and other works, Funk underscores the significant role of religion and religious critique in understanding Fromm's humanism.

4 Wilde claims that Fromm's "radical humanism is often couched in a rhetoric of redemption or salvation. [. . .] If Fromm's messianism unwittingly leads him away from a politics of self-realization toward one of mystical deliverance, then clearly he is undermining his own project" (Wilde 2004, p. 54).

5 Fromm scholars agree that it is crucial to consider the Jewish roots of his thought (see, e.g., Pinkas 2020, p. 149, fn. 2, 3). Glen claims that Fromm's reliance on the Old Testament and the Talmud to support his thought in general indicates that he has not been emancipated from "his earlier religious faith" (Glen 1966, p. 23). In my opinion, Fromm did not seek to liberate himself from the Jewish "faith". All his life, he claimed that Judaism does not demand faith—that is, Judaism was never based on religious dogmas and even rejected them. However, Jewish thought always accompanied him.

6 In *The Forgotten Language*, Fromm distinguishes between three categories of symbols: universal, accidental, and conventional. By applying the x element to the various terms for God in different languages and religions, Fromm transforms the symbol of God from conventional (limited to a group of people sharing the same convention) to universal, in which "the relationship between the symbol and that which is symbolized is not coincidental but intrinsic. It is rooted in the experience of the affinity between an emotion or thought, on the one hand, and a sensory experience, on the other. It can be called universal because it is shared by all men. [. . .] Indeed, the language of the universal symbol is the one common tongue developed by the human race, a language which it forgot before it succeeded in developing a universal conventional language" (Fromm 1951, pp. 17–18). It should be noted that Fromm was not the only one who used the symbol X for God. Already in 1953, Kohn writes, "The term God is a verbal symbol; it must be given some content before we can use it in a way to strengthen our faith for living. So far, God has figured in our thinking as a sort of mathematical X, the assumed 'unknown quantity'" (Kohn [1953] 1963, p. 13). The concept of God in Kohn's work, as a symbol of man's powers, is strikingly similar to Fromm's approach. However, I could not find evidence that they read each other's works.

7 The term includes within it an insoluble tension between the heteronomous moral obligation as it is in the religious tradition (i.e., I am obliged to behave morally because it is God's command), and the autonomous morality in philosophy (i.e., without having the freedom to choose, my behavior cannot be considered moral). Nontheistic mysticism is an attempt to reconcile the two positions. In Fromm's approach (as well as in Hermann Cohen's approach), there is no immanent contradiction between religion and morality, but rather between a humanistic religion (according to Cohen, a religion of reason) and an irrational authoritarian religion. There is an affinity between Cohen's *religion of reason* and Fromm's humanistic religion. A universal religion that is significant for moral orientation is described in both cases. The distinction is as follows: (a) Cohen asserted that Judaism is the source of the religion of reason (an argument that Fromm largely agreed with), and (b) a pure religion of reason is abstract and devoid of concrete content; hence, it is crucial to maintain its particular components (such as the Shabbat and the Day of Atonement). Fromm does not entirely agree with this assertion. Generally, in Fromm's approach, the ethical–mystical experience could serve in place of the religious tradition.

[8] One could point to a logical fallacy in Fromm's basic assumptions. As is known, Fromm opposed Freud's approach, which sees institutionalized religion in its social form as a collective neurosis. In fact, Fromm attributes "neurosis" to forms of private religion and not to institutionalized religion (which, in Fromm's approach, moves on the axis between authoritarian and humanistic). If we see the term nontheistic mysticism as Fromm's private religion, then he runs the risk of promoting a "neurotic private" religion.

[9] See (Funk 1982, pp. 275–78). It should be noted that the attitude of the rational Jewish philosophers in the twentieth century toward mysticism was not positive. For example, Hermann Cohen opposed mysticism because it blurs the boundaries between the human being and God and between the individual and his fellow man. Franz Rosenzweig described the mystic as someone who, in his love for God, is forced to deny the world and his responsibility to it. Martin Buber rejected the sort of mysticism that denies the senses and the world in order to reach divinity.

[10] Hermann Cohen, following Kant, believed that universality can be achieved through abstract ideas and without the need for experience. However, Cohen criticizes Kant by arguing that universalism is not sufficient to establish a moral orientation because, for this, "discovery" of the individual is required, and this does not occur in ethics but in the field of religion (with the concept of correlation—namely, covenant or "Brit"). Fromm, with his emphasis on the experience of mystical unity, expresses a continuation of this line of thought but with a different conceptual usage. I disagree with Glen's conclusion that when Fromm "speaks of monotheism, he really means monism" (Glen 1966, p. 127). In my opinion, this reduction is risky, especially because monism is a philosophical view that is the result of intellectual considerations, whereas the "One" that Fromm refers to is accessible only through experience.

[11] In Fromm's approach, humanism did not develop out of a negation of the religious traditions (as is usually seen in historical or philosophical-analytical systems) but is rooted in them. In his interpretive approach, humanistic truth should be emphasized without obscuring its origins. His book, *You Shall Be as Gods*, draws a direct line between Judaism and humanistic religion. The two complement each other so well that one perceives that Fromm's humanistic religion has its roots in Judaism, even if it is not explicitly stated.

[12] In this lecture, given in 1957, Fromm claims that the ethical consciousness is one and comprehensive. It is not relative to a particular field or culture but is rooted in the human being. He distinguishes between "ethics" and "morality". The former carries the risk of relativism: "Ethics would be the system of norms that fit the function of a particular society. In a society of headhunters, it is ethical to kill your enemies and shrink their heads". Ethical behavior is the behavior "which is most appropriate to unify, harmonize, and strengthen the individual, given his human constitution [. . .] the ethical commands of [the humanistic religions] Buddhism, Taoism, prophetic religion, and the New Testament by formulating it thus: the aim of life is to overcome one's narcissism [. . .] that which prevents one's being open to the world. As the mystics say, we must be empty in order to be full with the world" (Evans 1966, pp. 101–2).

[13] Fromm's definition of awareness is different from the Greek term *Gnothi seauton* (know thyself), which gained notoriety in modern German idealistic philosophy. In Fromm's view, awareness always involves relationships. "The knowledge of man is possible only *in the process of relating ourselves to him*" (Fromm 1966, pp. 189–90). For him, an attitude of *relatedness* is essential to exhaust the definition of a human being: "The only way to full knowledge lies in the *act* of love; this act transcends thought, it transcends words" (Fromm 1966, p. 201). This position is close to the existentialist (relational) approach of Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber.

[14] In the context of listening to "the inner voice", Fromm gives the example of a Zen meditation practice. "If you sit for fifteen or twenty minutes in the morning and try not to think of anything, but empty your mind, you see how difficult it is for you to be alone with yourself and to have a feeling "this is me" (Fromm 1966, p. 189). And see (Evans 1966, p. 81): "I analyze myself for forty or fifty minutes every morning. I am trying to be aware; I am trying to be very critical".

[15] Fromm refers to the mystical experience of unity, and especially the negative theology in Eckhart's version. However, the idea that knowledge about God is equivalent to knowledge about the human being appears explicitly in Franz Rosenzweig's method in *The Star of Redemption*: "About God we know nothing. But this not-knowing is a not-knowing about God. As such, it is the beginning of our knowledge about him. The beginning, not the end. The not-knowing as end and outcome of our knowledge is the fundamental idea of 'negative theology'. . ." (Rosenzweig [1921] 2005, p. 31). "About man also we know nothing. And this nothing, too, is only a beginning, and even the beginning of a beginning. In him, too, the original-words awaken, the Yes that creates, the No that generates, and the And [und] that articulates" (ibid., p. 72).

[16] (Fromm [1960] 1986, p. 58): "The unconscious is the whole man—minus that part of man which corresponds to his society. [. . .] Unconsciousness represents universal man, the whole man, rooted in the Cosmos; it represents the plant in him, the animal in him, the spirit in him. . ." (Fromm [1962] 1980, p. 89): "Discovering one's unconscious is, precisely, not only an intellectual act, but also an affective experience, which can hardly be put into words, if at all. [. . .] The process of discovering the unconscious can be described as a series of ever-widening experiences, which are felt deeply and which transcend theoretical, intellectual knowledge". See (Fromm 1992, p. 57). Fromm believed that "our consciousness represents mainly our own society and culture, while our unconscious represents the universal man in each of us" (Fromm [1964] 1971a, p. 144).

[17] The distinction between knowledge according to Aristotle and Maimonides was made by Hermann Cohen. See (Pinkas 2020, p. 160; Fromm 2020, p. 188; Fromm [1966] 1969, pp. 74–75).

[18] Fromm states, "I do believe that with regard to the basic facts of life, we have to live in the paradox, and we have to think in the paradox, if we want to understand life" (Funk 2009, p. 11).

[19] The mystical union is also expressed in Fromm's theory of needs, especially the *need for relatedness* according to which "man is torn away from the primary union with nature, which characterizes animal existence. Having at the same time reason and imagination, he is aware of his aloneness and separateness, of his powerlessness and ignorance" (quoted in Funk 1982, p. 62). The *need for a frame of orientation* and an object of devotion, as well as the *need for effectiveness*, are also expressions of the dichotomy between nature and the human being. The capacity to respond to these needs productively involves, to a certain extent, an experience of unity with oneself and others. See (ibid., pp. 64–66).

[20] A significant difference should be noted in that Rosenzweig and Levinas do not use the mystical term of unity to describe these relationships. See, e.g., (Levinas 1979, pp. 77–78, 194–96).

[21] Regarding the models of mystical unity (introverted mysticism that turns inward and extroverted mysticism that turns outward through the senses to the world), the ecstatic model, and the transformative model, see (Koren 2010, pp. 44–53; Margolin 2021, pp. 8–12, 17). In general, Fromm does not consent to the distinction between introvert and extrovert (which Jung and James proposed in the study of the mystical experience) and instead employs the terms sadistic and masochistic.

[22] According to Gershom Scholem, the need to give up institutionalized, dogmatic religion in favor of a universal religion drove pantheistic trends, which enabled the separation between the mystical experience and theism. See (Scholem [1941] 1995, the first lecture; and Mendes-Flohr 1984, pp. 96–139).

[23] Most definitions refer to mysticism as a direct personal experience that is beyond normal human understanding and involves a form of spiritual search, usually spontaneous (sometimes including visions, dreaming, or a state of ecstasy). It is an experience of oneness of the self with God, the universe or an ultimate reality, or one that allows you to achieve direct knowledge of God through experience. A mystic is a person who has, to a greater or lesser degree, such direct experience—one whose religion and life are centered not merely on an accepted belief or practice, but on what he regards as first-hand personal knowledge. The online Merriam-Webster dictionary defines mysticism as: 1. the experience of mystical union or direct communion with ultimate reality reported by mystics. 2. the belief that direct knowledge of God, spiritual truth, or ultimate reality can be attained through subjective experience (such as intuition or insight). 3. (a) vague speculation: a belief without sound basis, (b) a theory postulating the possibility of direct and intuitive acquisition of ineffable knowledge or power, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mysticism (accessed on 23 April 2024). Generally, there are two tendencies in the scholarly research of mysticism: one is phenomenological, which underlines the experience itself, and the other is historical and philological. The position that mysticism does not necessarily depend on a specific religion developed from the first approach.

[24] The idea that negative theology leads to mysticism is not self-evident. The negative theology of Maimonides is usually seen in Jewish studies as a rational philosophical-religious approach that contrasts with a mystical–Kabbalistic one. However, scholars do address the impact of negative theology on Kabbalah. See (Wolfson 1994, pp. v–xxii; and see Idel 2004, pp. 197–226).

[25] Unlike Kabbalah scholars and Jewish philosophers, Fromm does not delve deeply into the distinctions between prophetic and mystical experience. Fromm's perspective articulates, in a way, what Schweid refers to as "prophetic mysticism". It is a mystical experience that allows one to see life from a different perspective without a mystical detachment from the material world (see Schweid 1992). Fromm refers to the nameless God in the Hebrew Bible and in Kabbalistic literature according to his needs. He writes, "We see here the connection with the namelessness of the Tao, the nameless name of the God who reveals himself to Moses, of the 'absolute Nothing' of Meister Eckhart. Man can only know the negation, never the position of ultimate reality. [. . .] God becomes for Meister Eckhart 'the absolute Nothing', just as the ultimate reality is the 'En Sof', the Endless One, for the Kabbalah" (Fromm [1956] 2006, pp. 71–72).

[26] Kieran Durkin demonstrates how this factor also characterizes the x experience, namely, that living in accordance with the x experience provides us with the seemingly paradoxical task "of realizing [a true] individuality and at the same time transcending it and arriving at the experience of universality" (Durkin 2014, p. 187).

[27] Fromm disapproved of Marx's "religion is the opium", just as he dismissed Freud's "religion as an illusion". In fact, Fromm modifies the equation, suggesting that Marx and Freud's conclusions refer to secret religions but not to collective religions.

[28] Rosenzweig gives a theological basis for the "immoral relationship" that characterizes the mystical experience. Just as the "Creator is always in danger of sinking back again into his hidden existence", in the same way, the mystic, according to Rosenzweig, is "in danger of returning to its enclosure" (i.e., the denial of creation, the relationship between the Creator and the world, and the natural course between creation and revelation). The mystic, with his "arrogant sense of security", is in danger of being indifferent to the world: his "soul is open to God, but because it is open only to God, it is invisible to the rest of the world and cut off from it" (Rosenzweig [1921] 2005, pp. 222–23).

[29] Fromm offers a psychological analysis of the x experience according to five main aspects: (a) to experience life as a problem, and to be aware of the existential dichotomies of life; (b) to accept a defined hierarchy of values headed by the powers of reason, love, compassion, and courage of the human being; (c) seeing the human being as an end and never a means—measuring each action according to the question of whether or not it helps the person transform to be more human, strong, and sensitive; (d) letting go of one's "ego" (which is linked to greed and fear), openness, and emptying the self to allow response, love, and unity with

the world; and (e) experiencing the transcendence, in the sense of transcending the ego: "The experience is essentially the same whether it refers to God or not".

30 Not all researchers accept the assumption that there is a feature common to the various phenomena known as mysticism. For example, according to Boaz Huss, the term mysticism is a distinctly Christian theological concept that religious scholars applied indiscriminately to different cultures. Huss claims that Christian mysticism is not a universal phenomenon, and he doubts the existence of a common factor or an essential connection between the phenomenon known as Christian mysticism and its Muslim, Chinese, Indian, and Jewish counterparts (Huss 2007, pp. 9–30).

31 Fromm's interpretation of positive mysticism is reminiscent of that of Martin Buber in his earlier works. Buber emphasized the experience, stating that instead of seeking unity as the knowledge hidden within diversity, the human being is expected to embody this unity. That is, according to Buber, "unity" means "presence", which is beyond intellectual recognition. Buber was also fascinated by the Eastern mystical teachings. Furthermore, Buber believed that the true embodiment of Jewish mysticism was Hasidism, and not, for example, medieval Kabbalah. The mysticism of the Baal Shem Tov, who is regarded as the founder of Hasidic Judaism, was described by Buber as realistic and activist mysticism (see Bergmann 1958, pp. 3–12). A similar approach to Jewish mysticism is presented in Fromm's dissertation from 1922. There, Fromm also criticizes Buber for not distinguishing well between Hasidic mysticism, which is communal mysticism, and the mysticism that developed in the West, which focuses on the individual (Fromm 2022, p. 111). The relationship between Fromm and Buber deserves special study that goes beyond the scope of this article.

32 Regarding "normal mysticism", see, for example, (Kadushin 1964, pp. 178–82; Kadushin [1952] 2001, p. 253). However, I do not know whether Fromm was aware of Max Kadushin's (1895–1980) writings.

33 It is questionable whether the x experience expresses a discovery about the nature of reality, or whether it is Fromm's basic outline of the art of living (see Braune 2014, pp. 188–89, fn. 24; compare with Durkin 2014, pp. 185–87). According to Fromm, "being in the world", abandoning the isolated self and emptying the egoistical self are the ultimate goals (see Fromm 2000, p. 65).

34 In a certain sense, Fromm's concept of idolatry parallels the concept of miracle in Franz Rosenzweig's method. For Rosenzweig, the concept of miracle is outside the realms of both theology and philosophy. I am grateful to Ido Ben Harush for this insightful observation.

35 (Fromm 1992, p. 43): "The prophetic and later Christian religions were originally anti-idolatric; in fact, God was conceived as the anti-idol. But in practice, the Jewish and Christian God was experienced by most believers as an idol, as the great power whose help and support could be attained through prayer, ritual, and so forth". That is, for Fromm, God as the x element can be seen as a return to the authentic monotheistic tradition. (Fromm [1955] 1991, pp. 118–19): "The principle of monotheism, in contrast [to heathen, idolatrous religions], is that man is infinite, that there is no partial quality in him which can be hypostatized into the whole. God, in the monotheistic concept, is unrecognizable and indefinable; God is not a "thing". If man is created in the likeness of God, he is created as the bearer of infinite qualities. [. . .] Monotheistic religions themselves have, to a large extent, regressed into idolatry. Man projects his power of love and of reason unto God; he does not feel them any more as his own powers, and then he prays to God to give him back some of what he, man, has projected unto God".

36 In the context of Freud's criticism of religion, which saw dependence on God as an illusion stemming from the substitution of infantile dependence on the father, Fromm writes, "What would he have said to a religion in which there is no God, no *irrational authority* of any kind, whose main goal is exactly that of liberating man from all dependence, activating him, showing him that he, and nobody else, bears the responsibility for his fate?" (Fromm [1960] 1986, pp. 84–85, italics are mine).

37 In this context, Fromm interprets the biblical term "covenant" (Genesis 9: 11). In the covenant (Brit) "man has gained the freedom of being able to challenge God in the name of God's own promises" (Fromm [1966] 1969, pp. 22–23; and see Burston 1991, p. 135, concerning Fromm's universal interpretation of the "chosen people"). The covenant is regarded as a progressive step toward a more mature view of the relationship between God and humanity (Wilde 2004, p. 48).

38 According to Fromm, not only is the acknowledgment of an authority that exists beyond the human being in opposition to humanism, but it is also detrimental to mental health. For him, the connection between moral autonomy and mental health is essential (see Pinkas 2020, p. 155).

39 (Fromm [1964] 1971a, p. 109): "The idea of God [. . .] is the negation of narcissism because only God-not man-is omniscient and omnipotent. But while the concept of an indefinable and indescribable God was the negation of idolatry and narcissism, God soon became again an idol; man identified himself with God in a narcissistic manner, and thus, in full contradiction to the original function of the concept of God, religion became a manifestation of group narcissism".

40 (Rosenzweig 1979, p. 791): "Not just the categorical imperative, also the categorical indicative is pagan" (my translation).

41 The idea that life (i.e., biology) is "the good" (i.e., the moral good) is not self-evident philosophically nor psychologically. For example, Socrates' decision to die is justified in Plato's philosophy. In psychology, for example, the pleasure obtained from the death drive (the Thanatic pleasure from the symptom) in Freud's approach challenges the positive correlation between biology and ethics. Humanism holds that humans are fundamentally rational, whereas the prevailing viewpoint in Judaism is that human beings are inherently good (see Ben-Pazi 2023, pp. 26–28). Combining these methods, nontheistic mysticism (and humanistic religion in general) acknowledges that rationality and a priori reason are insufficient on their own because they distance the

human being from concrete reality. Friedman claims that "Fromm acted as his own clinician as well as a prophet for humankind" (L. Friedman 2013, p. 263; see Funk 2009, p. 51).

42 My definition of atheism here follows (Baggini 2003): "Atheism [. . .] is the belief that there is no God or Gods. [. . .] Atheism contrasts not only with theism and other forms of belief in God, but also with agnosticism—the suspension of belief or disbelief in God" (pp. 3–4). "Atheists can be indifferent rather than hostile to religious belief" (p. 10). For Fromm, the problem with this definition lies in the terms belief and faith. Even in the years when he lived a religious lifestyle, he emphasized that, in Judaism, there is no [divine] commandment to believe (Fromm 2022, p. 13). The tendency to present Fromm as an atheist (e.g., Pöhlmann 1991, pp. 133–34), is, in my opinion, a mistake. It should be noted that Pöhlmann focuses on *Das Christusdogma*, which is Fromm's psychoanalytic–social analysis of the development of the religious dogma in Christianity. The important point is that Fromm believed it was essential to describe human history and the mental and social reality with religious concepts. This does not confirm that he believed in the existence of a transcendent deity or a God (as a creator, revealer, and source of morality, etc.), but it also does not make Fromm an atheist, rather a humanist religionist.

43 Stanley Glen argues that Fromm's religion is "mystical atheism", and claims that even though Fromm "is in revolt against the patriarchal aspect of the faith of his fathers, against its conception of the 'otherness' of God (transcendence) and of the sacred law that arises out of it, he still seeks its authentication" (Glen 1966, p. 23).

44 The idea that God is a symbol of the "highest value" and, as such, constitutes a point of orientation for the moral development of humanity is very central to modern Jewish philosophies that react to Kantian ethics. (Fromm [1956] 2006, p. 59): "In all theistic religions, whether they are polytheistic or monotheistic, God stands for the highest value, the most desirable good. [. . .] I myself do not think in terms of a theistic concept, and that to me the concept of God is only a historically conditioned one, in which man has expressed his experience of his higher powers, his longing for truth and for unity at a given historical period. But I also believe that the consequences of strict monotheism and a non-theistic ultimate concern with the spiritual reality are two views which, though different, need not fight each other" (Fromm [1956] 2006, p. 67).

45 Fromm writes that Hermann Cohen pointed out that "the ethical qualities of God (midot), enumerated in Exodus 34: 6–7, have been transformed into norms for human action" (Fromm [1966] 1969, p. 54).

46 (Fromm 2000, pp. 98–99): "The dialogue between religious theists and religious non-theists is in the somewhat difficult position of not having a suitable language because, for 2000 years, all concepts have been oriented toward western religions, especially toward Christianity. That is why, for example, the study of Buddhism is of such great interest: it is a religion that is non-theistic, that knows no god, and that nevertheless essentially accords very closely with Christian and Jewish mysticism. The comparison of a mystic like Meister Eckhart with certain Buddhist texts evinces a nearly complete agreement. Indeed, I believe that there is no disagreement between theistic-religious people and non-theistic-religious people, that there should be no disagreement, and that both should act according to the principle of understanding the other person's points, one should, on the contrary, first see one's own weak points. [. . .] Yet both groups have essentially the same basic position that is nevertheless incompatible with the position of idolatry, which is the position of the great majority within as well as outside religion".

47 (Fromm [1947] 1971b, pp. 199–210). He considers faith to be a character trait without which we would be doomed to relativism and uncertainty (Wilde 2004, p. 46). Fromm connects mysticism with the being mode of faith, where a person is said to be in faith rather than to have faith (Fromm [1976] 2008, pp. 35–36).

48 In this context, it is possible to take into account the "social unconscious" according to Fromm, which connects religion (as a cultural–social condition) and psychoanalysis. If we accept the assumption that contradictions are repressed to the unconscious—namely that, according to Fromm, the human being is "partly divine, partly animal; partly infinite, partly finite" (Fromm [1955] 1991, p. 24; see there, pp. 118–19), then we can argue that the condition of the "religious" person includes suppressed secular elements, and alternatively, the condition of the "secular" person includes suppressed religious elements. We should remember that for Fromm, "there is no one without a religious need" (Fromm [1950] 1955, p. 25). Hence, a nontheistic mystical perspective is an intermediate view that allows an orientation beyond cultural influences (religious and secular), but at the same time is not morally relativistic, as it is based on the idea and experience of unity.

49 On Fromm's and Cohen's origin of reason, see (Pinkas 2020, p. 155).

50 (Fromm [1976] 2008, p. 163; Funk 1982, p. 115). And see (Fromm [1968] 2010, p. 142): "In fact this new humanism is a return to the message of the Prophets who did not preach the *belief* in God, but that people should do God's will—and what is God's will? [. . .] What new spiritual forms, symbols and rituals will arise cannot be predicted. They will probably not be theistic in the traditional sense, but will share the experience for which God, Nirvana, are poetic symbols". And see (Fromm [1955] 1991, p. 172). It should be noted that from the second half of the twentieth century onward, the term "spirituality", and not mysticism, challenged the binary distinction between the religious and secular realms of life. See (Huss 2014, pp. 47–60). Huss argues that contemporary spirituality challenges the division created in the modern era between the religious and secular realms of life and enables the formation of new lifestyles, social practices, and cultural artifacts that cannot be defined as either religious or secular.

51 It is important to remember that, for Fromm, the distinction between authoritarian and humanistic religion "cuts across the distinction between theistic and nontheistic [. . .] The essential element in authoritarian religion and in the authoritarian religious experience is the surrender to a power transcending man. The main virtue of this type of religion is obedience, its cardinal sin is disobedience. [. . .] Humanistic religion, on the contrary, is centered around man and his strength. Man must develop his power of

reason in order to understand himself, his relationship to his fellow men and his position in the universe. [. . .] The prevailing mood is that of joy, while the prevailing mood in authoritarian religion is that of sorrow and of guilt" (Fromm [1950] 1955, pp. 34–37; Fromm [1976] 2008, p. 110).

52 Fromm states that "only by being in touch with the idol" can the individual try to be in touch with himself (Fromm 1992, p. 42). That is, his nontheism can be seen as a way "to be in touch" with his own idol and himself.

53 There is no single accepted definition of the term humanism. For example, according to the Collins dictionary, humanism is the belief that people can achieve happiness and live well without religion https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/humanism#google_vignette (accessed on 24 April 2024). According to the Oxford dictionary, humanism is "A philosophy or ethical system that centers on the concept of the dignity, freedom, and value of human beings. The belief that there is an essential human condition that emerges regardless of historical circumstance and that this can be used as the basis for developing an understanding of the past". https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20111017141751899 (accessed on 24 April 2024).

54 See, e.g., (Durkin 2014, p. 7). And see there in the introduction, concerning Fromm's differentiation between "radical humanism"—which is revolutionary, prophetic, and seeks to go to the root—and "normative humanism", which is essential to a sane society. Later, Durkin added the "interpersonal humanism" type to Frommian humanism in "In Defense of Fromm's Humanism in the 21st Century", a lecture given at the Erich Fromm's Study Center, Berlin, October 2023.

55 For Fromm, humanism is close to medical science because it is based on a seemingly arbitrary principle: that life is better than death (this can be philosophically debated, specifically in bioethics under the topic of "end-of-life decisions"). The arbitrariness is demonstrated, for example, by a researcher in the medical sciences who sets out to confirm this hypothesis by finding a cure that prolongs life. It can be argued, though not without a hint of absurdity, that when a scientist discovers what he set out to discover in the first place, he jeopardizes the validity of his research (see Evans 1966, p. 81). Accordingly, the humanistic orientation has guiding principles, a desired reality, and ways to achieve it.

56 (Fromm 1994, p. 68). In 1962 Fromm states that the most important of all humanist thinkers of the 18th and 19th centuries is Goethe, who expressed the idea that the human being "carry in himself not only his individuality but all humanity with all its potentialities". It is interesting to note that Rabbi Nehemiah Noble taught Goethe and humanism at the Jewish Lehrhaus in Frankfurt (see Meir 2002, pp. 97–107). Fromm's friend, Ernst Simon, also published an article in 1951 on Goethe's humanism, which he identifies as religious humanism in contrast to, for example, Sartre's anti-religious humanism (Simon 1951, pp. 86–103).

57 According to Buber, the main difference between humanism and a "believing humanism" concerns the importance of dialogue. In believing humanism, the encounter between the human being and God outlines the model for the crucial importance of the encounter between humans (see Ben-Pazi 2023, p. 64).

58 Leibowitz (1903–1994) sharply distinguishes between the religious system of values and the humanistic-non-theistic system. For example, he writes, "Morality as guidance of man's will in accordance with his knowledge of nature and of himself (the Stoics; Spinoza), or in accordance with what the individual considers his duty toward man as an end-in-himself (Kant), differs radically from religious consciousness or religious feeling" (Leibowitz 1992, p. 6). Kasher argues that although Leibowitz declared that he was not a humanist, his method and decisions that correspond to humanism (mainly in matters of medical ethics) characterize him as such, even if against his will (see Kasher 1998, pp. 19–29). Fromm probably did not know Leibowitz, who was known mainly in Israel, but he was aware of the relationship between religion and morality (a discourse widely conducted by Hermann Cohen). The demand to distinguish between religion and morality does not claim that a religious position is necessarily anti-humanist; on the contrary, the claim that humanist values are anchored in the commands of God—from a religious perspective—only strengthens their validity. In Cohen's thought, when the love of one's fellow man, or alternatively, the prohibition of murder—are God's demands, then they become a "practical reason". However, this position requires sensitivity to the use of language. The term radical humanism, in the case of Fromm, may falsely exclude religion from morality.

59 Fromm purges every element of national identity in his discussions of religion and Judaism. This is mostly evident in his discussions of the biblical Moses (see Pinkas 2022, p. 243). On the one hand, Fromm completely internalized the universal element of Cohen's religion of reason; hence, for him, there is no contradiction between humanism and Judaism. Similarly to Cohen, who emphasized the contribution of Jewish monotheism to European humanism, Fromm also deals with the contribution of Judaism, but points towards the horizon of a new nontheistic humanistic religion. Fromm's position differs from that of Ernst Simon and Martin Buber, who considered Jewish humanism as a concrete form of humanism that would be realized in Zionism (see Fromm [1966] 1969, pp. 66–69). Fromm characterizes Jewish nationalism as a natural means of compensation for being persecuted throughout the generations and emphasizes the universal elements in the Hebrew Bible and Rabbinic literature. It is important to note that for Buber, Zionism is "something other than Jewish nationalism. We rightly call ourselves Zionist and not Jewish nationalists. [. . .] Zion is something which once was to be and still is to become [. . .] the beginning of the kingdom of God over humankind" (Mendes-Flohr 1988, p. 22).

60 For example, Levinas in "For a Jewish Humanism" (published 1956) declares that "Monotheism is a humanism. Only simpletons made it into a theological arithmetic" (in Levinas 1997, p. 275). Paul Mendes-Flohr dealt with the Jewish origins of postmodern humanism and its principles among 20th century Jewish thinkers (e.g., Mendes-Flohr 2006, pp. 369–77; and see Fisher 2019).

61 He writes, "Does God intervene in the historical process? No. Man is left to himself and makes his own history; God helps but never by changing man's nature, by doing what only man can do for himself. To put it in my own nontheistic language: man is left to himself, and nobody can do for him what he is unable to do for and by himself" (Fromm [1966] 1969, p. 74).

62 About the "Psychospiritual renewal", see (Fromm [1968] 2010, pp. 137–42).

63 As a response to trans-humanism, which promotes the process of perfecting humanity (for example, with the claim that AI will complete humanity and raise it to the level of a superior race and half-god, as is Noah Harari's position), Hietalahti emphasizes that, according to Fromm, humanity's perfection is not technological but ethical. Against post-humanism (which argues against anthropocentrism and the lack of regard for nature, etc.), Hietalahti shows that according to Fromm, the essence of the human being is paradoxical: it is part of nature but also transcends it. He concludes that, according to Frommian humanism, human beings engage in an enduring ethical process as individuals and as societies. Human beings are not rational and isolated; rather, they are interwoven in relationships, which also extend to the non-human environment. The conclusions of Hietalahti's research indicate, in my opinion, the importance of researching the Jewish sources of Fromm's "need for relatedness".

64 See (Pinkas 2023). At the Free School of Jewish Learning in Frankfurt, Fromm also met Gershom Scholem and Martin Buber. Scholem was still in the early stages of his research on Kabbalah, while Buber, at this stage of his life, had already delved into the "I and thou" dialogical approach and less into mysticism.

65 (Heuberger 2007, p. 10, and especially on p. 28). Notwithstanding their opposing viewpoints on Zionism, Nobel and Hermann Cohen kept a close friendship. Nobel's viewpoint on Judaism was significantly affected by Cohen's *Religion of Reason*.

66 Fromm's understanding of mysticism echoes the way in which Cohen understands the striving for "God's nearness", as a longing to get closer to the good. Cohen's method stresses the reciprocity between God and humans; however, this *correlation* only has ethical significance. For Cohen, mysticism illustrated a departure from the religion of reason (Cohen [1919] 1995, pp. 163–64). For Fromm, as we have seen, "Rational thinking, which is free from assumption, ends in mysticism", and mysticism is "the logical consequence of theology". Namely, for Fromm, mysticism does not stand in contradiction with reason, as it does for Cohen.

67 Gershom Scholem describes Rabinkow as "The Jew of Heidelberg in those years [. . .] a perfect embodiment of a representative of the oral teaching. [. . .] A master of the Talmud from a Hasidic family, who internally brought together the system of the Baal Shem-Tov with the system of Hermann Cohen, his philosophical hero. [. . .] He was strict in observance of the commandments, possessed of a free spirit and an open heart—the appearance of a great teacher" (in Pinkas 2023, pp. 9–10).

68 The handwritten dissertation, *Das Jüdische Gesetz: Zur Soziologie des Diaspora-Judentums* (1922), was first published in 1989. The first English translation is from 2022.

69 (Fromm 2022, p. 111). From the position of an observant Jew, Fromm, in his socio-historical research, was critical of Kabbalistic and mystical–messianic approaches—for example, those of Sabbatai Zevi and Jacob Frank, which abolish the Halachic law (Fromm 2022, p. 124). Fromm distinguishes between ecstatic mysticism and the social mysticism of Hasidism. Regarding the former, he is very critical (as is Hermann Cohen), but is positive regarding the latter. "Hasidism was not an ascetic movement, but rather a movement guided by the principle of serving God in joy. [. . .] This existential knowledge [Erkenntnis] is not acquired through learning [Wissen], but rather through immersing oneself in one's own inner world, through contemplation. Learning that only sharpens the intellect must therefore yield to prayer and joyful gatherings" (Fromm 2022, p. 113).

70 In his published essay "The Individual and Society in Judaism" (in Jung 1987, pp. 131–55), Rabinkow emphasizes the democratic and humanistic aspects of Jewish education while criticizing mysticism. "[The] firm adherence to the law keeps the Jew, in spite of all his self-consciousness, from the deviation of an empty individualism and above all from the most dangerous of all selfishness: religious egotism. The method of juridical treatment of all problems of cult and ritual, familiar to one who has enjoyed Jewish education from early youth, immunizes him against mysticism. For him even the most sacred ritual acts are governed and controlled by logical standards and by history-oriented rationality. Therefore, enthusiastic followers of mysticism and superstition are [rarely] found [among the Jews]" (ibid., p. 150). This article was first published in German in 1929 and is Rabinkow's only publication.

71 Fromm quotes from Buber's writings on Hasidism: *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman*, published in 1906; Die *Legende des BaalShem*, published in 1907; *Geist und Leib der chassidischen Bewegung*, published in 1922 as introduction to *Der große Maggid und seine Nachfolge* and from Simon Dubnow, *Die neueste Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes*, published in 1920.

72 Fromm added that "This profound difference between Hasidic and Occidental mysticism is given far too little attention and emphasis by Buber" (Fromm 2022, p. 111).

73 (Fromm [1975] 1999a, pp. 34–36). He writes, "In the great philosophical or religious traditions [. . .] ethics is not a code of behavior. . . [rather] ethics refers to a particular orientation which is rooted in man and which, therefore, is not valid in reference to this or that person or to this or that situation but to all human beings" (Fromm 2020, pp. 165–66).

74 (Fromm [1956] 2006, p. 30): "In mysticism, which is the consequent outcome of monotheism, the attempt is given up to know God by thought, and it is replaced by the experience of union with God in which there is no more room—and no need—for knowledge *about* God. The experience of union, with man, or religiously speaking, with God, is by no means irrational. On the contrary, it is as Albert Schweitzer has pointed out, the consequence of rationalism, its most daring and radical consequence. It is based on our knowledge of the fundamental, and not accidental, limitations of our knowledge. It is the knowledge that we shall never 'grasp' the secret of man and of the universe, but that we can know, nevertheless, in the act of love".

[75] In *Man for Himself*, which is Fromm's most philosophical work (and less "religious"), he tried to combine the biblical–religious and the philosophical to support the claim that social psychoanalysis is indispensable to the development of ethical theory. There, the reference to mysticism is minor but important for understanding the development of his position. He claims that "there is much less difference between a mystic faith in God and an atheist's rational faith in mankind", and that the mystics in the Judeo-Christian religions understood that the creation of the human being in "God's image" transcends the authoritarian structure of religion (Fromm [1947] 1971b, p. 210).

[76] In his correspondence with Merton, Fromm stated that Karl Marx was propounding "a nontheistic mysticism like Zen Buddhism" that would overcome "the subject-object split", and thereby facilitate a deep "union between man and man, and man and nature" (L. Friedman 2013, p. 226; Fromm [1962] 1980, pp. 54–56). Thus, the similarity that Fromm saw between Marx's secular messianism and the nontheistic Zen Buddhism cannot be attributed to Merton.

[77] For Fromm, Eckhart expresses an existential development from Maimonides' thought. In *The Guide for the Perplexed*, Maimonides rejects pathos and personality in the experience of the individual and God. God is impersonal; he stopped interfering with his creation. Maimonides' approach, unlike Eckhart's, may lead to the impossibility of the mystical experience of unity with such a God.

[78] I am grateful to Paul Mendes-Flohr for encouraging me to look into the relationship between Fritz Mauthner and Fromm. This topic deserves more in-depth research than the brief introduction I offer here.

[79] Mauthner holds that it is superstitious to assume that there is a correspondence between the name and the thing it refers to. For example, "justice", "spirit", "God", and "causality" are all nouns, yet there is no existent thing or entity that corresponds to them. As for religion, the impersonal monotheism free of religious dogmas was, according to Mauthner, a solid basis for criticism of the "most holy concepts: God, freedom, and immortality" (Mauthner 1924, p. 13). That is, according to Mauthner, the main contribution of Jewish monotheism should be seen within the philosophy of language and the history of atheism rather than, for example, as Hermann Cohen believed, in the realm of moral socialism. According to Mauthner's method, the latter is merely the outcome of the former.

[80] Mauthner writes, "In one point monism and mysticism coincide: in a feeling of desire for unification and of becoming one. Of what? Of one's own Ego. With what? With the non-Ego. Such a monism, such a feeling-of-unity would have nothing to do with the inferior (explanations) of a materialism and it would cover reasonably well that which I have called, so as to have a word symbol [for it], *godless mysticism*" (Weiler 1970, pp. 225–26). For Mauthner, the main goal of language criticism is to alter the way we see and use language. On the one hand, language criticism is a skepticism that undermines the certainty of thought, and, on the other, language criticism enables the expression of a desire for unity between language and thought, and he calls this unity mysticism.

[81] Fromm dealt with silence in his discussions on meditation and Zen Buddhism. For him, silence is not a departure from relationships and connecting; rather, it is essential to them. Silence is a condition and state of consciousness that allows for the real connection—the weight of the dialogic responsibility of listening.

[82] A similar criticism appears in Helen Lynd's *On Shame and the Search for Identity* (1958): "Fromm, and even Sullivan at times, seem to assume that there is an already existent real or true or spontaneous self which can be evoked into active existence almost at will. [. . .] But, like understanding of "reality", such a real self is something to be discovered and created, not a given, but a lifelong endeavor" (M. Friedman 1964, p. 401). Durkin demonstrates that the essentialism underlying Fromm's radical humanism is justified, reasonable, and crucial to its success, enabling him to avoid the excesses of extreme relativism or absolute essentialism (Durkin 2014, p. 9).

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Article

What Kind of God Does Buber's "I-Thou" Offer to the World: An Introduction to Buber's Religious Thought †

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† This essay was previously printed in its primary form—as an appendix to the Hebrew new addition of Buber's "I and Thou" (translated by Dr. Aharon Flashman; see Kosman 2013). It appears here in English as an extended version. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Prof. Paul Mendes-Flor; without his encouragement, this article probably would not have been written.

Abstract: This article has three main goals: (1) To explain in a clear and comprehensible way the difficult basic-word "I-Thou", which is the basis of Buber's concept of dialogue, and in fact is the core of his entire teaching (even though it eventually spread over many fields). My main argument in this article is that "I-Thou" is not the "dialogue" that is often spoken of in the name of Buber (not only on the popular level but also in academic circles, and even commonly among those who deal directly with Buber's teaching) but, rather, that "I-Thou" is a pointing-toward-word—pointing the way for the one whose heart is willing to direct his life to the path of devotion to God—a life whose practical meaning according to Buber is the effort to make room for the presence of the divine ("Shekhinah") within the stream of earthly normal life, the flow of physical, instinctive life, the flow of life as they are, within "This-World" as it is. (2) This article attempts to follow the sources in Buber's writings to clearly explain Buber's faith (which Buber saw as the core of the movement of Hasidism that preceded him). Who is the God that Buber clings to? Why did Buber try to replace the common appellation "God" with a new term of his own: "The Eternal Thou"? (3) It aims to show how the researchers who tried to present Buber as a social or political thinker and removed from his teaching the centrality of his faith entirely distorted his teaching and displaced from it the core of the foundation on which all of Buber's teaching rests.

Keywords: Martin Buber; I-Thou basic word; faith and God in Buber's teaching; Hassidism; religious humanism; love in Buber's teaching

Citation: Kosman, Admiel. 2024. What Kind of God Does Buber's "I-Thou" Offer to the World: An Introduction to Buber's Religious Thought. *Religions* 15: 794. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15070794

Academic Editors: Ronen Pinkas, Elad Lapidot and Brendan Hyde

Received: 25 April 2024
Revised: 30 May 2024
Accepted: 7 June 2024
Published: 29 June 2024

1. On the Difficulty in Explaining the Primary Words at the Center of Buber's Thought

Martin Buber begins *I and Thou* with the following:

The world is two-fold for man in accordance with his two-fold attitude.
The attitude of man is two-fold in accordance with the two basic words he can speak.
The basic words are not single words but word pairs.
One basic word is the word pair I-You (=I-Thou).
The other basic word is the word pair I-It, but this basic word is not changed when He or She takes the place of It.
Thus, the I of man is also two-fold.
For the I of the basic word I-You (=I-Thou) is different from that in the basic word I-It.

Only a few have attempted to plumb the depths of meaning of the basic words "I-Thou" and "I-It" and have dared to clearly formulate this meaning. Buber himself did not make this easy for the reader,[1] and his interpreters generally feared to examine the religious nucleus of his teachings, preferring instead to engage in the external trappings of his life.

Jochanan Bloch is one of the few scholars to devote intensive efforts to explaining these concepts. He writes:

> [. . .] in the final analysis one cannot make a clear distinction between Thou and It. The branching-off of Thou from It is not to be grasped in clear concepts. (Bloch 1984b, p. 60)[2]

The attempts by Samuel Hugo Bergman, Buber's close friend and pupil, to contend with this issue are similarly unsatisfactory. Bergman writes in his entry on Buber in the *Hebrew Encyclopedia*:

> Buber distinguishes between two "primary words": the primary word of I-Thou, and that of I-It. A person's "I" also has two countenances [i.e., how he relates to the other]. The "I" of the I-Thou primary word is not the same as that of the I-It primary word. The I-Thou relation requires effort and energy from both sides of the dialogue, and this energy wanes. The "objective" "It" does not demand of us the special efforts which are required by the "Thou", with which we have a direct relation. The bounds of our capability to contain, of our preparedness vis-a-vis the other, are limited. The busy physician cannot mobilize the necessary mental powers for the realization of I-Thou, and for him the patient is transformed from "Thou" to nameless "case", to "It". This is also true for the social worker, and for all of us as regards our attitude to the other. (Bergman 1968, cols. 682–83)[3]

Bergman's statement forces us to conclude that the relation to "Thou" requires "effort and strength", which in most instances is beyond us in everyday life. That is, even with generally good intentions, in real life we usually address the other as if he were "It"—we relate to the other as if he were a nameless object, who has no independent existence as a subject.

Clearly, then, the meaning of the primary (or basic) word "I-It" is much more understandable than that of "I-Thou". Bergman gracefully skirts providing an explanation for the "I-Thou" minefield and focuses mainly on "I-It".

Other attempts by Bergman to contend with this question, such as the frequently cited description from his *Dialogical Philosophy from Kierkegaard to Buber*, do not sufficiently clarify this concept (Bergman 1991, pp. 215–45). In order to exemplify the possibility of an I-Thou encounter, he writes:

> The address itself [. . .] when one person turns to another in conversation and calls him by his name—frees the Thou from the surroundings, and when the person with whom I am talking turns to me, this relationship is created. (Bergman 1991, p. 227)

This explanation, however, is insufficient. A person's calling another by name is usually no more than a pretense of being interested, a false show of friendship. In actuality, during the conversation, this person is interested solely in the benefit he can obtain from his interlocutor. For him, the latter is merely an object, and the interlocutor's existence as a subject in his own right is no concern of his.[4]

Admittedly, most people would waste no time in denying this—every civilized person would have difficulty in admitting, even to himself, that most of his ties with the world are mechanical and alienated. On this point, however, we should adopt a cautious approach, which Paul Ricoeur called the "hermeneutics of suspicion" (see Ricoeur 1970, pp. 32 ff). Obviously, Buber, too, was cognizant of this, and in his essay, "Distance and Relation", he distinguished between routine existence, which is evident in "those popular discussions which misuse the reality of speech", and "genuine conversation" (Buber 1988a, pp. 58–59)

In any event, in *Dialogical Philosophy*, Bergman attempts to take another path in order to lucidly explain these basic words. He exemplifies the basic word "I-It" by means of the scientist, for whom things in the world are "side-by-side". That is, the scientist's attitude to the objects of his research is not one of "affinity or dialogue, but of detached manipulation that is apt to place things indifferently next to each other" (Bergman 1991, p. 226). He exemplifies "I-Thou", in contrast, as follows:

> When Jephthah calls his daughter "my daughter" (Judg. 11:35), or when David laments "I am distressed for you my brother Jonathan" (Sam. 1:26), on the other

> hand, there is in the address what Buber has called 'exclusiveness'. The Thou is taken out of the surroundings and is no longer contiguous with it, as the paper is to the table on which it rests. (Bergman 1991, pp. 226–27)

Here, too, we still lack sufficient clarity. Anyone who has even a passing familiarity with Freudian methodology and can adopt the "hermeneutics of suspicion" for our discussion will have difficulty in literally accepting Jephthah's grief over his daughter or David's for the loss of Jonathan.[5] In Freudian terminology, we can say that Jephthah and David bore a libidinous charge that became melancholy energy the moment that its objects were gone.[6] In the simpler wording of Buddhism, the personal mourning of each of these Biblical characters might attest to a strong past attachment, with the loss causing them much suffering, as depicted in the Bible.[7]

The basis for Bergman's explanation of "I-Thou" is then unclear. Buber repeatedly stated that when two people say to each other "Thou", then the possibility arises of the element that he calls the "third", namely, divine grace, being present with them.[8] Such an event obviously exceeds the framework of regular human communication. Bergman himself writes that such an occurrence creates an opening to the mysterious, to the "mystery of reality" (I will expand on this below). Accordingly, it cannot be explained by the usual psychological tools. Such an event can be called—and not metaphorically—an "inner miracle".[9] We, therefore, may ask what in the Jephthah and David narratives can be understood as an "inner miracle", direct contact with the "mystery of reality"? Where, in his opinion, is the "Eternal Thou" present between the two?[10]

Bergman's explanation is not the only of its kind. The literature on Buberian dialogue contains a wealth of examples that attest to a fundamental lack of comprehension of the basic word "I-Thou".[11] The above example was not cited in order to detract from Bergman's major contribution to our understanding of Buber's teachings, but rather to demonstrate the great difficulty lying in wait for anyone, aided by the conventional understanding, who wants to enter the "black hole" of "Thou".[12] A clarification of this basic element requires in-depth study that goes well beyond the usual ways in which we explain the word.

2. On the Meaning of the Primary Words "I-Thou" and "I-It"

In my opinion, the basic words "I-Thou" and "I-It" cannot be understood without carefully scrutinizing examples from the flow of life itself, ones that can easily be ignored. Furthermore, they cannot be understood without considering the basic psychological fact of the existence of the ego.[13] We should recall that we are naturally egotistical. All our relations with the ego of the other are conducted in accordance with the basic rule that "I come before the other", which suffices for a person to erase—at least to a large extent—from his awareness the very existence of other subjects.[14] Buber exemplifies this with the propagandist, who he says is tainted by:

> the lust to make use [in verbal communication] [. . .] in his relation to men remaining as in a relation to things; to things, moreover, with which he will never enter into relation, which he is indeed eager to rob of their distance[15] and independence. (Buber 1988a, p. 59)

If we think about this propagandist, we realize that he is not exceptional—this is how all of us talk regularly with people. Jacques Lacan formulated this in his sharp way, and said that, actually, four participate in every dialogue: two subjects and two "advocates" who present their set of manipulations to each other. Lacan was of the opinion that the main role of human speech is not to create communication with the other, but to confuse one's interlocutor in order to obtain one's goal.[16]

Jean Piaget showed in his studies that children seven years old and younger,[17] even if they have mastered the use of words, do not address what they say to their interlocutors, they rather speak to themselves. Children are egocentric creatures and the other, for them, is just a sort of screen on which they can project their thoughts.[18] Piaget naively thought

that as the child grows, he learns to identify his interlocutor and to direct his speech to him.[19] Within the limits of his discipline, Piaget was undoubtedly correct. If, however, we employ the "hermeneutics of suspicion", we see that as the child grows up, he does not forge any substantial connection with the other (that is, sees him as a subject), but learns how to be manipulative. He learns to pretend that he views the other as a subject and acts on his behalf—all in order to obtain, in the end, what he wants from the other (in other words, he regards him as an object). The difference between the adult and the child is not substantive: the child, unlike the adult, is still too innocent to garb himself in the cloak of a caring and considerate person, and his innocent manipulations just cause us to smile; the manipulations of the adult, in contrast, arouse our ire.

The response by the German psychotherapist Lorenz Wachinger should be useful for our discussion. In a conference held at Ben-Gurion University, Wachinger told the learned participants that they were discussing the definition of these basic words from a philosophical perspective. If, however, they were to be examined from a psychological viewpoint, their meaning would be quite clear. These basic words, in his opinion, actually define two states in our mental life when we relate to the world around us. According to him:

> The evocative rhetoric of *I and Thou* misleads the reader into a feeling of having understood, which does not stand up to close examination. My objection is that the center of Buber's thought lies outside the objectifying, noetic[20] domain of critical philosophy since Descartes. Our task in dealing with Buber's work is to thematize the practical components in a philosophically appropriate manner: to pay attention not only to its concepts and logic, but also to the dynamics of intersubjective relations which accompany his logic, or are mixed in with it—the delicate or direct play of the struggle for power over and influence on the Other, the pressure toward a desired change and the resistance of the other to that pressure, in short, the game that is played whenever two or more people confront each other.[21] Buber's interest in problems of psychotherapy shows his sensitivity to the dynamic aspect of language, and only from this aspect can he be adequately understood. (Wachinger 1984; see also Kosman 2007a, pp. 511–16)

3. The Basic Word I-It

As an example, I will examine a seemingly unimportant event from among the many that occur every day in each of our lives (the reader will forgive me if I exchange the language of objective reporting for a literary confessional tone).

Let us assume that the following sequence of events happened to me one day:

1. I settled in with a pile of books in my living room in order to prepare the material for an article that I committed myself to write by a specific date for a prestigious journal.
2. All of a sudden, my eyes started closing and I thought that I should take a short nap.
3. I left the books, but on my way to my bed I remembered that my wife would soon return from work. I knew that she would be upset by such a pile of books in the living room.
4. Now, a silent battle is being waged within me between two voices.[22] On the one hand, since I was so tired, I did not marshal my flagging strength for this paltry task to return the pile of books to my already overflowing study, knowing full well that I would have to return them to the living room when I went back to working. On the other hand, I also knew that if I would not clean up the living room and fell asleep, this would result in tension between me and my wife. This tension would not be pleasant for me, and not only that, it would waste precious time.
5. The rational consideration won out over my tiredness and laziness. I went back to the living room and returned the pile of books to my study.

I will use this chain of events, some version of which is familiar to each of us, to explain the dialogical idea. It should be stressed that this idea will always be intimately

linked to the most normal events in our everyday lives. It is not really related to the abstract philosophical formulations that occupy their place of honor in the exalted realms of learned tomes. Buber himself wrote:

> This essential two-foldness cannot be overcome by invoking a "world of ideas" as a third element that might transcend this opposition. For I speak only of the actual human being, of you and me, of our life and our world, not of any I-in-itself and not of any Being-in-itself. (Buber 1970, pp. 64–65)[23]

An initial, and quite simple, analysis of this chain of events shows that, during the entire time, I saw my wife only as an absolute "It"; that is, an object that intruded from the outside into my territory. All the considerations that I took into account and that led me to act as I did, came from this egocentric center and its needs, and remained untouched by my wife's inner world (that is, I did not see her as a subject). To add somewhat of an additional dimension to our inquiry, we will draw on a phenomenological analysis:

1. The striving-for: For weeks, I was driven by the need for results, to finish the academic work that I had taken upon myself. On the one hand, I wanted to remove the tenseness of this situation and enjoy some peace (homeostasis); on the other hand, there was also the desire for the pleasure I would derive from completing this work. Additionally, in my heart of hearts, I anticipated the enhanced power of the "cultural capital"[24] at my disposal. In my mind's eye, I imagined that society would appreciate the greatness of my contribution and reward me for it in some way or another.
2. Physical tiredness: The tiredness that suddenly came over me prevented me from seeking a solution that would reduce my suffering. My urge to get up and leave my work in the middle ensued from the thought that sleep would assuage the physical suffering that I felt at that moment. Moreover, I knew that while sleeping I would gain new energy, which I would put to good use when I resumed my work.

Importantly, in the first stages, the realization that I would cause my wife mental anguish never entered my mind. When I did think of this consideration, its motivations were purely egotistical. The inevitable—albeit unpleasant—conclusion is that, at that moment, my wife was a limiting factor—an element that entered my life from outside and endangered my "kingdom of the self".[25] This conception, obviously, is based in the hubris that developed in my childish imaginary world, a sort of image of the "I" as a monarch who is unbridled in his rule of all around him.[26]

This penetration into my "I" gives me no rest, whether I am totally aware of it, or whether it flickers somewhere in my subconsciousness, since it suffices to endanger the imagined status of the ruling "I"—that closed and impervious egocentric kingdom. It forces me to unwillingly consider my wife and her wishes and to take them, too, into account. I suddenly realize that my wife and her needs limit the endless expansion of my imagined "kingdom of the self". It seems that this is the hidden, primal root of human violence. The egocentric center responds aggressively to any such invasion from the outside.[27]

At that moment, even if it is embarrassing to admit this, the ego, which is closed within itself, does not at all want the existence within its realm of the wife or any other person. The primitive energy of aggressiveness bubbles up from the depths of the ego; if it only could, at this moment it would choose to destroy all that threatens the territory that it rules.[28] In Jean-Paul Sartre's precise and brutal formulation:

> The fact of the Other is incontestable and touches me to the heart. I realize him through uneasiness; through him I am perpetually *in danger*. (Sartre 1966, p. 275)[29]

Theodore Dreyfus explains Sartre's analysis of our attitude to the other:

> The other is not only the one whom I see; to the same degree, he sees me. And just as, while seeing, I turn him into an object, so, too, while seeing, he turns me into an object. By his turning me into an object, by clipping my wings, by

> his freezing me, the other constitutes for me (and I for him) a constant threat. (Dreyfus 1993, p. 152)[30]

In Buber's thought, the word "It" equals the word "something".[31] At that time, my wife was for me "something"—an object that penetrates into me and endangers the territory of my "I" (and that, in other instances, causes me pleasure).[32]

It should be stressed that even if we attempt to explain the action of removing the books from the living room by means of rational philosophical–moral considerations (which, presumably, are more sublime), for example, as an action required by Kant's categorical imperative, we will still remain in the closed territory of the "I" and in the context of its needs.[33] As Buber puts this:

> The life of a human being does not exist merely in the sphere of goal-directed verbs. It does not consist merely of activities that have something for their object.
>
> I perceive something. I feel something. I imagine something. I want something. I sense something. I think something. The life of a human being does not consist merely of all this and its like.
>
> All this and its like is the basis of the realm of It. (Buber 1970, p. 54)

Schopenhaur, who formulated many of the insights that Buber would later draw into clearer focus, already highlighted this egocentrism, through his penetrating scrutiny of the unwitting psychological motives behind this action, in complete accordance with the "hermeneutics of suspicion":

> Now I confidently maintain that what opens the hand of the above-described [. . .] loveless doer of good, who is indifferent to the sufferings of others, can never be anything [. . .] but a slavish deisidaimonía [=Greek: superstition, irrational fear], no matter whether he calls his fetish "categorical imperative" or Fitzlipuzli [=a Mexican deity]. For what except fear could move a hard heart? (Schopenhauer 1995, p. 66)[34]

4. The Basic Word I-Thou

Now, to imagine another chain of events, a different "script". Let us assume that when I decide to stop working, I visualize my wife bearing a burden, in a completely different corner of the world. This burden is shared by both of us: work, shopping, and endless everyday concerns. At that moment, I might even be able to see in my mind's eye her distress, and sense how she wages the daily struggle for survival, just the same as I do.

In that moment, I see her in my mind's eye, coming up the stairs in the building, opening the door, and seeing before her the daunting pile of books that I left in the living room—a "red flag". Like someone who returned after an exhausting day at work to find that a stranger has invaded his "kingdom" and disturbed the harmony that reigned in it.

Obviously, if I had seen these pictures of the suffering subject (namely, my wife) in my mind's eye, it would not have been difficult for me to patiently delay by a few minutes the sleep I longed for and clear the living room of the pile of books.

And this is not all—I might even have continued to tidy up the house for her, and I might even have discovered that this action filled me with joy and "recharged all my batteries". I would be flooded by totally unexpected positive thoughts and creativity. For example, I might have gone to the florist's shop on the corner and bought some blushing roses to put in the vase on the white tablecloth in the living room, to greet her on her arrival home.[35] This possibility, that usually is not realized in our lives, is what Buber suggested when he described the basic word "I-Thou".

"I-Thou" is not necessarily a face-to-face encounter, or some sort of verbal communication, but the possibility of the occurrence of an "inner miracle"; that is, my egocentric center will be weakened for a moment, and room will be made in my inner world to sense the other, to see him as a subject, and to act toward him as if his inner considerations were mine. Even though this is not the total negation of the ego and the ecstatic experience of

union, Buber maintains that the quality of such an encounter is spiritually superior to that of the ecstatic experience, since I can accept responsibility for another only by means of my functioning ego. Accepting responsibility is the mark of an I-Thou relationship.

Needless to say, in the situation described above, too, despite the pretty flowers, I must use the "hermeneutics of suspicion" to sincerely ask myself if I did not act out of unconscious utilitarianism, self-deceit in the guise of generosity and morality. It seems that the answer to this pointed question is that the very question attests to doubt, which is a sure sign that this is not the true realization of the basic word "I-Thou". If this were truly realized, no question would arise.

To explain this, the certainty of the believer cannot be examined, explained, or proven with physiological or psychological tools. Certainty is a state of mind of inner assurance that results from contact with the absolute.[36] For the person of faith, the clearest sign of this certainty is the disappearance of the dual status,[37] which is the normal situation, and to be filled instead with power and vitality.[38] Being filled with a sense of spiritual energy drives loving action, which derives its certainty from the absolute (I will expand on this below). From Buber's viewpoint, this is the only realistic interpretation of revelation. Revelation is always accompanied by a feeling of being filled with power and vitality due to contact with the absolute, and keeping one's distance from the doubts that accompany life in the kingdom of the It.

If the skeptic were to question this teaching of Buber and declare that he does not know what he is saying, Buber's response would be silence (see Katz 1984, p. 116; cf. Kosman 2002a). This silence means that he and the skeptic are standing at a crossroads, and from here their ways must part.

Here is a fine parable, an example of that "crossroads", from another discussion. Michael Wischogrod attempted to explain one side of the "crossroads",[39] and said to the participants at the above conference held at Ben-Gurion University:

> I am sure you all know the story of the engineer who wrote a very long and learned paper about how the bumble bee cannot possibly fly by the laws of aerodynamics; but the bumble bee *does fly* [. . .] Therefore the trick is not to ground the bumble bee, but to adjust the laws of aerodynamics [. . .] **The "I-Thou" flies**, and the job of the philosopher is not to show that the "I-Thou" doesn't fly, but to show how we must readjust our ontology, our logic, our categories of thought, to deal with this, or at least cope with it. (Wyschogrod 1984, p. 115)[40]

Steven Katz, who took the role of the skeptic here, was somewhat shocked when he responded to this, and stated decisively: "your [Wyschogrod's] point of view, that the 'I-Thou' flies by itself, is false".[41]

At this point, we should return to what was written by Schopenhaur.[42] After he completely rejected the possibility raised by Kant that people will conduct themselves morally on the basis of rational considerations, he concluded that only love of people (*Caritas*) can bring a person to act in a truly moral manner, because then:

> [. . .] another's suffering in itself and as such directly becomes my motive [. . .] not only restrains me from injuring another, but even impels me to help him. Now according as, on the one hand, that direct participation is keenly and deeply felt, and, on the other, the distress of someone else is great and urgent, I shall be induced by that purely moral motive to make a greater or smaller sacrifice for another's needs or distress. Such sacrifice may consist in an expenditure of my bodily and mental powers on his behalf, in the loss of property, health, freedom, and even life itself. (Schopenhauer 1995, p. 163)[43]

How are we to describe what happens in such an encounter? Schopenhauer relates:

> But now how is it possible for a suffering which is not *mine* and does not touch *me* to become just as directly a motive as only my own normally does, and to move me to action? As I have said, only by the fact that although it is given to me

> merely as something external, merely by means of external intuitive perception or knowledge, I nevertheless *feel it with him*, *feel it as my own*, and yet not *within me*, but *in another person*; and thus there occurs what is expressed by Calderon:[44]
>
> que entre el ver
>
> Padecer y el padecer
>
> Ninguna distancia habia.
>
> ("No siempre el peor es cierto", *Jornale*, II, p. 229)
>
> ("that there is no difference between suffering and seeing suffering") (Schopenhauer 1995, p. 165)

Now we must ask: how does something so mysterious happen? We should realize that now we are moving from one field of discussion to another; that is, from philosophy to faith,[45] from everyday speech to poetry.[46] Our discussion will now touch the most sensitive nerves of the concept of "religiosity" (which, for Buber, is not the same as the declared belief of religion).[47] Schopenhauer writes on this:

> But this presupposes that to a certain extent I have identified myself with the other man, and in consequence the barrier between the ego and non-ego is for the moment abolished; only then do the other man's affairs, his need, distress, and suffering, directly become my own. I no longer look at him as if he were something given to me by empirical intuitive perception, as something strange and foreign, as a matter of indifference, as something entirely different from me. On the contrary, I share the suffering *in him*, in spite of the fact that his skin does not enclose my nerves. Only in this way can *his* woe, *his* distress, become a motive *for me*; otherwise, it can be absolutely only my own. I repeat that this *occurrence is mysterious*, for it is something our faculty of reason can give no direct account of, and its grounds cannot be discovered on the path of experience. (Schopenhauer 1995, p. 166)

Buber said of this that "the unity of the contraries is the mystery at the innermost core of the dialogue"(Buber 1948b, p. 17)[48] and the mystery happens when there is the "act of inclusion" between the two.[49,50] We can also speak here of love,[51] which, according to Buber, contains the best possibility for the existence of an I-Thou relation (Buber 1970, pp. 67–73, 92–95; see also Shapira 1994, pp. 54–55). He maintains that such love "does not invalidate the 'I'; on the contrary, it binds the 'I' more closely to the 'Thou'" (Buber 1970, p. 210; see also Buber 1970, pp. 67–68).

The possibility portrayed here, which is actually the innermost core of Buberian faith,[52] is totally opposed to Sartre's harsh depiction of the encounter with the other. In Buber's view, my territory can be open to penetration by the other as a subject, to the extent that his being and mine, to a certain degree, become one—and the momentum of the energy of love fills my relation to him with grace.[53]

Nevertheless, Buber's stance on this issue becomes even clearer when we follow his disagreement with Simone Weil,[54] who, for Buber, represented the ecstatic–mystical Christian notions that demand man's complete negation of his ego. Buber summarizes Weil's understanding as follows:

> Simone Weil's idea was to serve mankind and so she again and again took to heavy manual labor on the land, but her soul was always put to flight by reality. And she began with her own reality: she contested the "I"; it was one's duty, she thought, to slay the "I" in oneself. "We possess nothing in this world", she wrote, "other than the power to say I. This is what we should yield up to God, and that is what we should destroy". (Buber 1967c, p. 210)

Buber then argues against this in the name of Judaism:

> Such a basic orientation is, indeed, diametrically opposed to Judaism; for the real relationship taught by Judaism is a bridge that spans across two firm pillars,

> man's "I" and the "I" of his eternal partner. It is thus the relation between man and God, thus also the relation between man and man. Judaism rejects the "I" that connotes selfishness and pride, but it welcomes and affirms the "I" of the real relationship, the "I" of the partnership between I and Thou, the "I" of love. For love does not invalidate the "I"; on the contrary, it binds the "I" more closely to the "Thou". It does not say: "Thou are loved" but "I love Thee".[55]

Thus, for Buber, in the state of mind in which there is a functioning "I", but which is not "the 'I' that connotes selfishness and pride", the manipulative entity that usually conducts an individual's life is noticeably weakened. Akibah Ernst Simon, Buber's student and close friend, defined this state of mind as one in which a person is "without the human desire to have the object for producing pleasure or to change it" (Simon 1985, p. 263). During such a true encounter with another, a miracle can happen, with man being filled with energy whose source is divine.[56] In the manipulative entity's regular state, in which it dominates us and channels the movements of our life, it would like to receive something in return for that commendable behavior. But in a moment of revelation, the "I-Thou" rises to the ascendant within us and we are filled with the energy of giving, while the manipulative entity loses some degree or other of its control of the "steering wheel" that directs our actions.

The state of mind evident in the weakened power of the manipulative entity should be called "humility".[57] This, then, is the attenuation of the ego, that usually is vigorously engaged in the manipulations meant to take advantage of the other for one's own purposes; that is, to act toward him as "It".[58] Making room for the other begins with our volitional intentionality, and concludes when the blessing of "Thou" rests upon us, and an opening unfolds before us to the mystery of which Schopenhauer spoke, and which Bergman calls "the mystery of reality".[59] Humility facilitates openness in our contacts with the world of subjects around us and the acceptance of responsibility.[60] Jean Klein finely described this:

> In intimate or problematic situations, each must speak in humility of how they feel. It is simply a statement of facts with no justification, no interpretation. We must not look for a conclusion. If we allow the situation complete freedom from evaluation and judgment and pressure to find a conclusion, many things appear which do not belong to our memory.
>
> Humility arises when there is no reference to an 'I'. This emptiness is the healing factor in any situation [. . .] Be open to non-concluding. In this openness the situation offers its own solution. (Klein 1988, p. 23)[61]

It should be stressed in this context that the tool of speech changes its usual direction. In most cases, its purpose is to transmit messages from me to the other; while here, it is meant to provide an opening for my attentiveness to the other's speech. Here, silence is more appropriate. Buber writes:

> The more powerful the response, the more powerfully it ties down the You [=Thou] and as by a spell binds it into an object. Only silence toward the You [=Thou], the silence of *all* tongues, the taciturn waiting in the unformed, undifferentiated, prelinguistic word leaves the You [=Thou] free and stands together with it in reserve where the spirit does not manifest itself but is. All response binds the You [=Thou] into the It-world. (Buber 1970, p. 89)

Following the study of the essence of human speech by Chaim Nahman Bialik (the Israeli national poet), we can assert that such speech, with the opening to the other that it enables, is transformed from the "husk of speech" to poetry, in which the words are not the main thing but, rather, as Bialik writes about this element in the language of the famous Kabbalistic work, *Sefer Yetzirah*, "there is *belimah* [holding action, restraint]; man's lips are closed".[62] Thus, we may now say, that the words in a dialogue in which "Thou is present" are constantly being pulled out from their settings [. . .] Meanwhile, between concealments [of the words][63] the void [Nothingness, *Ayyin*] looms".[64]

Now, we can understand why the world of "I-Thou" has only a single criterion, that of "How", namely, what is the quality of the inner intent with which a person comes to a meeting. In the world of "I-It", on the other hand, there is only an external criterion that gauges the "What" or the "How many". Buber writes:

> This truth is not a What but a How. Not the matter of a deed determines its truth but the manner in which it is carried out: in human conditionality, or in divine unconditionality. Whether a deed will peter out in the outer courtyard, in the realm of things, or whether it will penetrate into the Holy of Holies is determined not by its content but by the power of decision which brought it about, and by the sanctity of intent that dwells in it. Every deed, even one numbered among the most profane, is holy when it is performed in holiness, in unconditionality. (Buber 1977a, p. 87)[65]

This passage is consistent with Bialik's conclusions regarding touching "concealments of the words":

> It has come to the point where the human language has become two languages, built upon one another's destruction: one, an internal language, that of the individual and the soul, in which what is essential is 'how?' as in music—the domain of poetry; the other, the external language, that of abstraction and generalization, in which the essential is 'what?' as mathematics—the domain of logic.[66]

We now can state more clearly regarding the ego, the egocentrism inherent in humans—that blinds us to the existence of the other as a subject: we are not speaking here of narcissistic obtuseness regarding the existence of the other; on the contrary, this rather refers to the ego's focused and precise identification of the existence of the other. But I am immediately overcome by the egotistical element within me, and I waste no time in swooping down upon the other, like a hunter on his prey. Before my very eyes, the other is transformed from a living person to an object, whose entire purpose (from my perspective) is to aid me in realizing my goal.[67]

5. Belief in God and Revelation in Buber's Thought

The question of belief in God seems to me to be the most difficult of all in Buber's thought. It obviously is intimately related to his distinction between the two basic words, "I-Thou" and "I-It".

A study of Buber's theological writings shows the need for a comparison between the revolution in theological thought brought about by Buber and the effect that Descartes had on Western philosophy. Buber, similar to Descartes, consistently refused to accept any theological statements regarding the reality, unless they could be examined, personally experienced, and seen whether they contain any substance or are mere extensions of the imagination. Buber maintained that he could make a definite theological statement only if based on personal experience. In this respect, Buber's entire thought is an account of an explorer who set forth to an unknown land and who delivers a first-hand—and rational—report, one that is subject to exacting self-criticism.

It should be stressed that this is not like someone who undergoes a profoundly moving experience during which he sees mystical visions of which he reports to his audience. The divine revelation of which Buber speaks is experienced in quite regular moments of everyday life, as Buber repeatedly underscores.

Already in his initial probing for these primary words, Buber formulated the following sweeping statements:

> Religions speak of God in the third person, mostly as a He. People seldom realize the extent to which this pronoun is already an anthropomorphism or, more correctly, to what extent this pronoun means a displacement of God into the world of things [. . .] into the creation that has run away from God. In other words, in [the] history [of religions] God is a thing. (From the seventh of the "Religion as Presence" lectures, in Horwitz 1988, p. 108)[68]

Rivka Horwitz explains:

> The third-person God was invented [according to Buber] by human imagination, a figment of the imagination which is fed by the worldly at the expense of the experiences from this world. This is a creation in the image of man which is anthropomorphic. It can take shape in the image of God or the image of an idol or in the nonmaterial abstraction of metaphysics. (Horwitz 1989, p. 179)[69]

Buber's rejection of the common religious conception of a third-person God explains why he does not speak like a theologian trying to persuade people to believe in something far from us, but as a researcher of the consciousness, a phenomenologist, who argues for the patent presence of divine revelation in our inner lives.[70] Why are we not aware of this? Because we have not been attentive,[71] and perhaps because we could not name it when we encounter it, thinking that this was a marginal matter, one of no importance in the flow of everyday events.

Buber refrained from searching for a method in thinking about God that would be based on the premises made by human intellect,[72] just as he abstained, in a certain stage, from seeking out the ecstatic experience.[73] He wanted only to describe what he had actually experienced in his life.[74] Since he refused to view God "in the third person", because of the constant danger that the image of God is simply a product of human imagination,[75] Buber rejected the theoretical possibilities of the type prevalent in the various religions. He was not occupied with the image of God in any form. His religious conception plainly, and totally, disclaims the usual human imagination, that portrays God in terms of directions in space; as if God, the "really super", resides somewhere above us, at the top of an imaginary pyramid. Buber writes on this point (in a response to Nathan Rotenstreich):

> But I have not been at all concerned about a metaphysical thesis. Rather, I have been concerned about establishing the simple fact that I do not mean by 'God' the highest idea but that which can be fit into no pyramid as its apex, and that, accordingly, the link between God and man does not go by way of the universals, but by way of concrete life. (Buber 1967b, p. 694. The translation is mime)

This was so obvious to him that he refused to call himself a theologian, not even to identify, if even for a fleeting moment, with the theology of negation. He writes:

> But I am absolutely not capable nor even disposed to teach this or that about God. Certainly, when I seek to explain the fact of man, I cannot leave out of consideration that he, man, lives over against God. But I cannot include God himself at any point in my explanation. (Buber 1967b, p. 690)[76]

Buber's precise formulation is noteworthy. He does not argue with any side in the theological speculations about God, and merely states that he has no interest in expressing an opinion of what lies totally beyond the bounds of his world. This entire theological debate has no meaning for him, since it does not pertain to real life.

Walter Kaufmann presents Buber's religious conception simply yet trenchantly:

> He [Buber] wanted a religion in which the individual could address God and be addressed by God,[77] but a religion that left no room to talk about God. (Kaufmann 1984a, p. 17)

All this is closely related to a response, in the name of Judaism, to Spinoza (see Buber 1948a, pp. 95–116). Buber maintains that Spinoza erred when he attempted to discuss an all-encompassing concept of "God", and he did not understand he was not permitted to discuss God Himself, His "self". "From being the place of meeting with God, the world becomes to him [Spinoza] God's place" (Buber 1948a, p. 100). Buber uses the Kabbalistic–Hasidic model of the divine *Sefirot* (the ten stages of divine emanation) to explain the Jewish position. According to this model, nothing can be said about God Himself, since God's "self" is beyond human comprehension, and this infinite and eternal existence cannot be discussed in human language. But from this point on, as for everything related to the emanation of the divine light through the *Sefirot*, we can speak of the divine that is revealed

to man within the world, but only within the world, and through it—that is, through the objects that were created in this world.[78]

God, says Buber, is "infinite and nameless, "but also"—at the same time—"a father who teaches his children to call him". God speaks to man solely through the world, through the things and people that surround him.[79] If man will be attentive to God, he will hear Him speaking to him at every moment, by the agency of whatever he comes into contact with: other people, all the surrounding world, and his inner world.[80]

From this respect, we could say that Buber was the most cautious empirical researcher in recent generations who dared to fearlessly explore the theological thicket.[81] If we were to ask which "tools" he took with him on his inner journeys, it seems that he brought with him the most precise research tool available to the phenomenologist of our inner worlds: distance. From a distance, the individual can objectively observe the impressions left in this inner world, his moods and thoughts, as if they were a research object (see Mendes-Flohr 1980, p. 89). Distance affords man the ability to carefully observe his experience and what occurs in his inner world, with the caution of a researcher. This, of course, entails a major difficulty, one which Buber himself wrote about in many of his writings: we cannot ignore the fact that 'Thou' becomes 'It' in the process of scientific observation. Nevertheless, as we saw above, for Buber, the 'It' is not a negative tool, as it is created in order to serve us—when we use it in a proper way. In this regard, Putnam even reinforces this point by arguing that:

> Buber's 'I-You [=Thou]' relation is one that can only be of short duration, but its significance is that after one has had an 'I-You [=Thou]' relation with the divine, the 'It-World' is transformed. There are, so to speak, [according to Buber] two sorts of 'I-It' relations: mere 'I-It' relations and transformed 'I-It' relations. (Putnam 2008, p. 63)[82]

Profound thinkers have already argued that the discovery of the I-Thou primary word in Buber's inner journeys is an event of equal importance to the Copernican revolution, since it completely changes human thought.[83] What things, then, that Buber discovered in his life experience led him, like "Abraham the Hebrew", to stand on one side of the divide, with the entire world on the other?[84]

Buber himself admitted that in his past he, too, had been completely blind to the possibility of God being revealed to man in the most banal everyday moments in his encounters with all that surrounds him. This was the case, as Buber explained, because he had previously sought God in "the-something-beyond", in a quest that included "the exception, extraction, exaltation, ecstasy" (Buber 2002c, p. 54). But then, "I know no fullness but each mortal hour's fullness of claim and responsibility" (Buber 2002c, p. 55). He attests, however, that he was not always successful: "Though far from being equal to it, yet I know that in the claim I am claimed and may respond in responsibility and know who speaks and demands a response" (Buber 2002c, p. 55). As to whether this discovery belongs to the realm of religion, he continues: "If that is religion, then it is just *everything*, simply all that is lived in its possibility of dialogue" (Buber 2002c, p. 55).

It should be stressed that the I-Thou relation fundamentally differs from the ecstatic experience. Ecstasy does not address the other, nor does it oblige me to accept any responsibility for his fate. And this is not all: it is directed to the ego, which always acts on its own behalf (even when it seeks to neutralize the ego). The "I-Thou" primary word, in contrast, by its very nature builds a bridge to the other. It demands of the ego to exceed itself and share the burden with the other.

It should also be emphasized that Buber concluded that there is an unfathomable chasm separating the ecstatic experience from that of I-Thou. Ecstasy is the result of a process. A person seeks such a type of experience, which he finds at the end of the search process. At times, to reach an ecstatic state, a person can be—and sometimes is—aided by drugs or other chemical substances. Experiencing I-Thou, on the other hand, is in no way a process—it is revealed to a person only when he himself ceases to hunt for it. Buber

thought that the Thou is a fact from the very creation of all; that is, it is the ego that blinds us and by its very nature conceals the fact of our existence on the solid ground of the reality of the Thou. Accordingly, this solid ground—the reality of the Thou—will be palpable to us only if we do not seek the Thou, do not regard it as our possession, as an object that can serve us.[85] Buber writes:

> Feelings dwell in man, but man dwells in his love [. . .] love does not cling to an I, as if the You [=Thou] were merely its "content" or object; it is between I and You [=Thou]. Whoever does not know this, know this with his being, does not know love. (Buber 1970, p. 66)[86]

Moreover, a matter mentioned above bears repeating: experiencing I-Thou, unlike any common experience, is singular in its being some sort of mix of will and grace: **will** on our part ("Only when two say to one another with all that they are, 'It is *Thou*', is the indwelling of the Present Being between them"),[87] and **grace** on the part of the divine presence that dwells in the space **between** two who are engaged in true dialogue. Buber says on this: "The You [=Thou] encounters me by grace—it cannot be found by seeking" (Buber 1970, p. 62).

He explains, when speaking of Hasidic thought, how these elements are so intertwined that they cannot be isolated within the processes that occur in the reality:

> [. . .] it is senseless to ask how far my action reaches, and where God's grace begins; there is no common border-line; what concerns me alone, before I bring something about, is my action, and what concerns me alone, when the action is successfully done, is God's grace. The one is no less real than the other, and neither is a part-cause. (Buber 1948a, p. 110)[88]

6. "Hebrew Humanist" versus the "Arbitrary Man"

A description of Buber's attitude to faith will aid in explaining his complex position: on the one hand, he was a humanist and professed ideals similar to those championed by secular humanists; while, on the other, he was an advocate of passionate faith, who spoke for adhering to God with all one's heart.[89] He writes at the beginning of the third section of *I and Thou*:

> Extended, the lines of relationships intersect in the eternal You [=Thou].
>
> Every single You [=Thou] is a glimpse of that. Through every single You [=Thou] the basic word addresses the eternal You [=Thou]. The relationship of the You [=Thou] of all beings accounts for the fullness of our relationships to them—and for the lack of fulfillment. The innate You [=Thou] is actualized each time without ever being perfected. It attains perfection solely in the immediate relationship to the You [=Thou] that in accordance with its nature cannot become an It. (Buber 1970, p. 123)

Buber says here that by means of our sincere and loving contact with someone with whom we have an I-Thou relationship, we also encounter the Eternal Thou, namely, God. This is, as he explained, an "extending" that results in meeting God Himself.[90] Buber forges a strong bond between love of man, which is one of the foundations of humanism, and belief in God: "Our faith is based on our humanity, and our humanity is based on our faith" (Buber 1966, p. 19). Buber assumes that:

> Creation is not a hurdle on the road to God, it is the road itself. We are created along with one another and directed to a life with one another. Creatures are placed in my way so that I, their fellow-creature, by means of them and with them find the way to God. (Buber 2002d, p. 60)

And in another formulation:

> Above and below are bound to one another. The word of him who wishes to speak with men without speaking with God is not fulfilled; but the word of him

> who wishes to speak with God without speaking with men goes astray. (Buber 2002a, p. 18)[91]

It seems, however, that this is still not sufficiently clear. What distinguishes the atheist humanist from the believing humanist who adheres to God? Loudly declaring that God exists or adopting a worldview that asserts this is not enough. What is the substantive difference between the nature of the simple human encounter between an empathic person and another—and that between the I and the Thou, which, by means of this "extending", joins with the encounter with the Eternal Thou?

These questions cannot be answered without understanding the profoundly religious considerations underlying Buber's arguments. Buber wrote about what he learned from Hasidism, and it seems that this element is the basis for his entire teaching:

> I do not know of any other proper way to convey what I believe, what Hasidism taught me to believe: that the divine being is concealed in things and objects, and that I have no way to sense this being, but only incidental to sincere contact with them, incidental to contact of I and Thou. In this contact, however, I have the way to act upon it, I have the way to perform a 'redemptive' action upon it. (Buber 1945, p. 6)

This passage presents the first concept by which the I-Thou relation differs from any other empathic stance. We can say that for Buber, following Hasidic teachings, something deep and primal in our being is hidden from us (others would say: is flawed, and needs mending), and man is to uncover and redeem this. In other words, if we let things flow in the world as they are, sooner or later we will find ourselves alienated, and inner and external conflicts will fill our entire world. If we are not prepared to face this fundamental flaw in our mental reality, we will be doomed to stand at a distance from the divine source. The human state of consciousness is such that if we allow things to flow as they are, and if we do not understand that something in the manner in which we are thrown into the world and act in it is basically faulty, the ego will take control of our lives like a monster and will blacken our world. The "kingdom of the ego" is imperfect, since it is only illusion. It is ruled by only a single egocentric center, for whom all was created to serve it, and it, therefore, distorts our perception of the reality.[92]

What, then, is the opposite of the humanism that follows the path of faith of which Buber speaks? Not the "secularist", who might live his life in closeness to Thou and the fervor of faith, even though he does not belong to any community of believers, but rather the "capricious man", namely, the one who is thrown into his arbitrary life with no direction, the one who "does not believe and encounter" (Buber 1970, p. 109). This is a person who is "a slave to his emotions and desires, and a slave to the historical forces that act upon the society to which he belongs" (Barzilai 2000, p. 207). Buber found a close connection between seeing the other as an object and denying the existence of God, or perhaps in the opposite direction: between denying the existence of God and viewing the other as an object.[93] Buber explains this point in an essay in which he responds to Sartre's philosophy:

> But the Other for Sartre is he who "looks at" me, who makes me into an object, as I make him. The idea of God, moreover, he also understands as that of an inescapable witness, and if that is so, "What need have we of God? The Other is enough, no matter what other". (Buber 2016c, pp. 55–56)

Buber argues against this notion:

> But what if God is not the quintessence of the Other, but rather its absoluteness?[94] And what if it is not primarily the reciprocal relation of subject and object which exists between me and the other, but rather the reciprocal relation of I and Thou? (Buber 2016c, p. 56)

Now, we come to the second element that makes Buber's humanism profoundly religious: the concept of sacrifice. In Buber's view, "in all realms of human existence, including language, [the position of the person of faith] is viable only by means of sacrifice".[95] This

element is of the greatest import for understanding the argument that was highlighted above, regarding the importance of humility and making room for the other when we meet—just as the "sacrifice" of which Buber speaks is nothing other than the sacrifice of one's ego.[96] This element, however, is completely lacking in atheistic humanism. Dana Freibach-Heifetz, who described atheistic humanism, attempted to defend what she calls "secular grace". She compares Buber's teaching with her notion regarding secular empathy, that is detached from belief in God:

> [. . .] there are other differences between secular [i.e., empty of any foundation of faith, in Freibach-Heifetz's definition] grace and I-Thou relationship. The most important of them concerns individuality: secular grace is not understood as a foundation of the self,[97] indeed the opposite, grace (at least from the perspective of the inviter) is an existential choice of the self that is already established, as an expression of individualistic self-realization, completely unlike Buber's self-individualist position. The difference is also expressed in the understanding of self-love: according to Buber, self-love is a delusion, and it's possible for a person to love himself only by means of mutual love with the other.[98] In secular grace, self-love does not depend on love of the other, but vice-versa. This also means that the I-Thou—unlike grace—involves responsibility. (Freibach-Heifetz 2017, pp. 94–95)

This teaches that grace that does not come from faith cannot intrinsically include the central element of dialogue: sacrifice. Accordingly, central concepts taken from the religious world cannot apply to the relation between the two: self-abnegation, humility, and self-sacrifice. For this reason, I dare to state that we should be suspicious of the "secular grace" proposed by Freibach-Heifetz, which, by its very nature, can exist only superficially, as the seeming appearance of momentary empathy, but which will lack the depth dimension provided by the vertical line,[99] which facilitates the acceptance of the power that is expressed, in the final analysis, in the acceptance of responsibility for the world of the other.

It should also be noted that the religious experience, that seeks to draw the individual to the other side, to withdraw from this world and to adhere to God—Buber deemed this experience, too, concentrating on oneself, and one of the seductions of the ego. Buber said, against Kierkegaard:

> Precisely what appears to us as the highest form of piety—to let everything earthly go—is the highest egoism. (Buber 2002d, p. 66)

7. Applying the Dialogical Idea in the Everyday Life of the Modern Individual: The Disagreement between Buber and the Opponent

To exemplify what Buber meant when he spoke of the believing humanist and how he contends with the difficulties of everyday life, we should bring an example provided by Buber. The following passage is from a conversation between Buber and the "opponent" who raises harsh arguments regarding the possibility of applying Buber's philosophy in the reality. Buber cites the words of the opponent:

> "In all this actuality of our present life, the conditioned nature of life as a whole is not taken into account. All that you speak of takes place in the never-never-land, not in the social context of the world in which we spend our days, and by which if by anything our reality is defined. Your 'two men' [=in the imagined 'dialogue'] sit on a solitary seat, obviously during a holiday journey. In a big city office, you would not be able to let them sit, they would not reach the 'sacramental' there [. . .] That may be quite interesting for people who are not taken up with any duty. But is the business employee to 'communicate himself without reserve' to his colleagues? Is the worker at the conveyor belt to 'feel himself addressed in what he experiences'? Is the leader of a gigantic technical undertaking to 'practice the responsibility of dialogue'? You demand that we enter into the situation which approaches us, and you neglect the enduring situation in which everyone of us,

> so far as we share in the life of community, is elementally placed". (Buber 2002a, pp. 39–40)

Buber responds to these claims by first declaring that he does not demand anything of anyone. This answer teaches something fundamental about the essence of dialogue: a person who is aware of his inner state must clearly know when he slips into preaching, in which the demon of the ego dominates the address to the other:

> I beg you to notice that I do not demand. I have no call to that and no authority for it. I try only to say that there is something, and to indicate how it is made: I simply record. And how could the life of dialogue be demanded? There is no ordering of dialogue. It is not that you *are* to answer but that you are *able*. (Buber 2002a, p. 40)

Second, Buber proclaims, with all the ardor typical of his faith, that his message is totally relevant for every individual, in every situation in which he finds himself in the tumult of life, provided that he has faith in the possibility of redemptive dialogue:

> Yes, precisely him I mean, him in the factory, in the shop, in the office, in the mine, on the tractor, at the printing-press: man [. . .] Dialogue is not an affair of spiritual luxury and spiritual luxuriousness, it is a matter of creation, of the creature, and he is that, the man of whom I speak. (Buber 2002a, p. 41)

Buber explains to the opponent that he is inclined to bring ideal, "pure" examples in what he writes "in order to make myself intelligible about what has become so unfamiliar, in fact so sunk in oblivion. For this reason, I appear to draw my tales from the province which you term the 'intellectual'" (Buber 1977b, p. 41). All this, however, is for explanatory purposes only. Buber knew full well that the situations we encounter in daily life are very murky, complicated, conflicted, and replete with hostility and bad features—and under such condition, the ego dictates to us how to respond to those around us:

> But I am not concerned with the pure. I am concerned with the turbid, the repressed, the pedestrian, with toil and dull contraryness. (Buber 2002a, p. 41)

Third, Buber wanted to explain that he did not intend to present us with the challenge of fundamental change, but rather something much more modest: what he called a "break-through". In our wording, we might say "a spark of understanding" or "a spark of sight", the intent being to the possibility of expressing the basic word I-Thou in everyday life:

> With the break-through and not with a perfection [. . .] not with the great catastrophic break-through which happens once for all (it is fitting to be silent for a while about that, even in one's own heart), but with the breaking through from the status of the dully-tempered disagreeableness, obstinacy, and contraryness in which the man, whom I pluck at random out of the tumult, is living and out of which he can and at times does break through.
>
> Whither? Into nothing exalted, heroic or holy [. . .] only into this tiny strictness and grace of every day [. . .] glance to glance, look to look, word to word [. . .] And now, in all the clanking of routine that I called my reality,[100] there appears to me, homely and glorious, the effective reality, creaturely and given to me in trust and responsibility. (Buber 2002a, pp. 41–42; cf. Frankl 1963, pp. 212–13)

Buber explains to the opponent that the latter charges Buber with having an "all or nothing" attitude and, therefore, attempts to "then prove the impossibility of my alleged demand".[101] All this enables us to understand the following example, which Buber puts forward to clarify his arguments against the opponent by observing the gray lives of factory workers or office employees:

> No factory and no office is so abandoned by creation that a creative glance could not fly up from one working-place to another, from desk to desk, a sober and brotherly glance which guarantees the reality of creation which is happening—*quantum satis* [the amount which is enough]. And nothing is so valuable a service

> of dialogue between God and man as such an unsentimental[102] and unreserved exchange of glances between two men in an alien place. (Buber 2002a, p. 42)
>
> ***
>
> If there is a single life lesson, a sort of abstract of all of Buber's teaching that we can adopt today, it is this: the ladder that ascends to the heights is never in heaven, but is always firmly planted in the earth, in the commotion of life: in the office, the marketplace, the kitchen, the kindergarten, and the bedroom. Those are the places where God demands that man sanctify himself, and the world around, by constant openness to the sincere encounter, I-Thou, with the other.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

1 Some translations of I and Thou merely added to the difficulties in understanding the book. Take, for example, the first translation to Hebrew, that was done carried out during Buber's lifetime, and which he probably examined closely before its publication (see the translation by Wislavsky in Buber 1959a, pp. 1–103; on Buber's intense personal involvement in the translations of his books, see, for a typical example, Kaufmann's testimony in Kaufmann 1984a, p. 39). Yochanan Bloch complained to an audience of German-speaking scholars: "You cannot imagine what a tangled-up, mysterious book I and Thou is in the available Hebrew translation [. . .] Here, as with Nietzsche, a certain gracefulness of language can be misleading" (Bloch 1984a, p. 65). On the difficulties in translating the book, and on the errors in Wislavsky's translation, see also (Kosman 2007a, p. 519, note 23). Kaufmann adds an even stronger claim. He argues that the book was written in a vague and artificial style: "The most obvious of these [failings] is the style, which is affected rather than ruthlessly honest [. . .] We are confronted by a pose without redeeming wit or irony. It approximates the oracular tone of false prophets [. . .] Hence the note of falseness in I and Thou cannot be discounted" (Kaufmann 1984a, pp. 8–9). Kaufmann explains why he claims that Buber's voice rings false: "in Ich und Du there is in places a false, oracular tone that is affected and brings to mind role-playing. Buber certainly was not beyond doing that; but at his best he transcended that, and there was an electrifying directness that spoke directly to the listener" (Kaufmann 1984b, p. 19). For Buber's own testimony about the writing of the book "under the spell of an irresistible enthusiasm", see (Kaufmann 1984a, p. 9). Admittedly, there is a kernel of truth in Kaufmann's harsh criticism of the book's murky style, and Buber himself wrote in a letter to Franz Rosenzweig on 19 September 1922, that, in his estimation, I and Thou is nothing more than "rather a sparse and difficult beginning, and yet will have to go out into the world that way" (Buber 1991, p. 282). While he was engaged in writing the second volume (he planned to write five volumes, but in the end, only I and Thou was published), he wrote, in the same letter to Rosenzweig: "The second volume, on which I am toiling [. . .] will turn out simpler and clearer, it seems to me".

2 Logic would dictate that Buber would not agree with this. It seems to me that Bloch confuses our subjective difficulty in identifying "Thou" situations (i.e., "I-Thou") and those of "It" ("I-It") with the two objective situations. Even when a person finds himself in an I-Thou situation, this is not a permanent state, but rather one of rapid fluctuation. This is like a person who watches a movie, and the pictures merge before his eyes until it seems to him to be a single reality, even though the motion picture is composed of separate pictures. Moshe Schwarcz writes on this: "A person can pay attention to the changes that occur at times in relation situations by the wondrous forces that are hidden from sight, but he cannot understand the inner connection between these changes" (Scwarcz 1976, p. 125). See also (Silberstein 1989, p. 142).

3 The term "primary words" refer to what I call (following Kaufmann) "basic words" (Bergman is variously spelled "Bergman" or "Bergmann". For the sake of consistency, I use the former spelling throughout.)

4 For an expansion of this, following Jacques Lacan, see Kosman 2012, pp. 11–18.

5 For our purposes, the question of whether we regard them as literary or historical figures is unimportant.

6 Freud distinguishes between egotism and narcissism (see Freud 1963, pp. 417–18), but this distinction is not directly related to our discussion, since in each of these instances the contact is between objects and not subjects. Even when someone is "completely in love", in which "altruism converges with libidinal object-cathexis" (p. 418), this does not refer to "I-Thou", since being in love is merely a consequence of the various needs of the self-centered "I" projected onto the other. On love and being in love, see also below, notes 51, 102.

7 In Buddhist terminology, this attachment is called "upadana", and it ensues from "thirst", which represents the desire to attain (in Pali, "tanha"). Upadana and tanha give birth to suffering ("duhkha") (Keown 2004, pp. 317, 310, 81, respectively). In their explanations of the word duhkha, Buddhists frequently mention this situation of parting (see Rahula 1974, pp. 16–20).

Keown writes that duhkha describes all the types of suffering in life, such as sickness, death, separation from loved ones, or the nonacceptance of things that we desire (Keown 2004, p. 81).

8 The "third" element (which, of course, is not to be confused with "the third person", which means relating to an object in the world (see below, notes 11, 84, 90)) is the "secret of life" (on that "secret" in Buber's teaching, see Kosman 2021, pp. 114–16) is present between the two in a true meeting, in which each opens up to the other. This secret is what the person of faith calls "the presence of God". The possibility of identifying it is a sort of crack that opens in the world that is dominated by the law of cause and effect, that acts only for the benefit of the ego. This is the opening to the fervent belief that "Nature, as a whole and in all its elements, enunciates something that may be regarded as a self-communication of God to all those ready to receive it" (Buber 1977b, p. 221; see also, on this third element in the Thou-meeting according to Buber: (Barzilai 2000, p. 229). Koren writes that the "third" element that is present between the two in dialogue is Buber's interpretation of the ancient term "*Shekhinah*" (that already appears in the Rabbinic literature): "The dialogical principle is a redemptive dialogue between man and God, whether by means of the created beings or directly with 'the Eternal Thou' requiring both an active encounter between the two entities and their joining in the encounter with the attribute of *Hesed* [loving-kindness] which, as I have shown, is identical to the revelation of the Shekhinah" (Koren 2010, p. 231). On the Divine Presence (*Shekhinah*) as an immanent element in the Rabbinic literature, see (Urbach 1987, p. 43). For a discussion of the feminine aspect of the *Shekhinah* (in the Rabbinic literature as well), see (Kosman 2009, p. 56, n. 36). On this topic in the Kabbalistic sources, see (Roi 2003, pp. 132 ff).

9 I took this fine expression from the diary of Etty Hillesum, which is one of the rare texts that so powerfully highlights the very possibility of the basic word I-Thou. See (Hillesum 1996, p. 333 (letter from 18 August 1943).

10 These expressions will be explained below.

11 In another place, Bergman offers an example even weaker than those discussed here. He discusses the response to the Priestly Blessing (see Num. 6: 23–26) of the congregants in the synagogue in which he prays, and writes that whoever "secretly derides his neighbor, [. . .] Mr. Cohen or Mr. Katz [i.e., those whose only 'claim to fame' is their being of priestly descent] [. . .] who dares to bless him, and sees the time of the blessing as propitious for chatting with the one next to him" (Bergman 1967, p. 255). On the other hand, he identifies the basic word I-Thou in the attitude of the one who "hears the Priestly Blessing as it was spoken, as it has been recited from Aaron the priest to this day, from one generation to the next, with trembling and awe" (Bergman 1967, p. 255). This example, too, naturally arouses the need for the "hermeneutics of suspicion", because those who prepare themselves with trembling and awe to receive the Priestly Blessing usually do so in an I-It state. This is so because they believe that this blessing, that is delivered by the *kohanim* (those of priestly lineage), is sufficiently powerful to shower them with bounty and protect them from the difficulties of life outside the synagogue; for them, God is an anthropomorphic God whom they address in the third person (see also below, notes 84, 90).

12 Walter Kaufmann (who translated *I and Thou*), too, exhibited such a misunderstanding. He attacks the polarity of the basic words I-Thou and I-It, and argues that, in Buber's view, "a genuine relationship to another human being can be achieved only in brief encounters from which we must always relapse into states in which the other human being becomes for us merely an object of experience and use", (Kaufmann 1984a, p. 10) while, Kaufmann maintains, this is not the case in the reality. He brings as an example the world of the painter: "But the painter does not lapse from the genuine I-You [=I-Thou] relationship into a deplorable attitude in which he notes the color of the hair or other qualities, reducing the You [=I-Thou] to a mere It. On the contrary, he must pay some attention to qualities and details to reveal the You [=Thou] on the canvas" (p. 12). This example, however, does not support his objection to the polarity argument. The "revealing" for which the artist strives when he examines the inner world of the person whom he paints (which presumably is the revealing of "Thou") could express the artist's cynical use of his capacity for empathy, whose end is only to win glory, at the expense of the person in the portrait. Only in rare instances, in which the artist's ego is silenced and he does not seek to attain some goal by observing the physical object, can we say that this is a true encounter with "Thou".

13 A conceptual clarification: my use of the word "ego" does not allude to the trait we usually call "egoism", it rather refers to what we call "egocentrism", which is expressed in inner blindness to the existence of the other as a subject (which is also the conception of Buber, who states in "Dialogue": "This [the contrast between the two basic words] must not be confused with the contrast between 'egoism' and 'altruism' conceived by some moralists" ("Dialogue", p. 24)). Everyone suffers to some degree from egocentric blindness. But not all people are egoists. Piaget argued that children seven years old and younger are naturally egocentric; that is, they are inclined to place the self in the center. They cannot think about things from an objective perspective; that is, one outside themselves. At this age, law or moral law, as well, are given an egocentric interpretation (Ormian 1969, cols. 379–81; see also below). The typical egocentric orientation of childhood is often at work in adulthood, too, with the adult tending to see his interlocutor as an object meant for his use. This inclination ensues from the striving-for to which (in psychoanalytical terminology, following Lacanian interpretation) the phallic dimension alludes (see Kosman 2012, 1–25; and in this context, we could also mention the concept of "will" in Schopenhauer's thought). Heidegger draws a similar distinction. As Hubert Dreyfus puts this: "*Dasein* is simply oriented toward the future, doing something now in order to be in a position to do something else later on, and all this makes sense as oriented toward something which that person is finally up to but need not have, and probably cannot have, in mind" (Magee 2009, p. 265). Buber naturally took note of this, and called this inclination "reflexion", which "is something different from egoism and even from 'egotism'" (see Buber 2002a, p. 27; and at length: Kosman

2007a, pp. 513–14; Kosman 2021, pp. 106–16). The Hasidic term "*bittul ha-yesh*" teaches of the possibility of swimming against the regular tide of life, that is driven by striving-for.

At this point, we need to clarify the relationship between striving-for, that is, the individual's egocentric striving for achievements, and the Freudian concept of ego. For Freud, the ego is an intermediary. This is the part of the id in which changes occur because of its proximity to the outer world. It is meant for the reception of stimuli, while at the same time protects against them (see Quinodoz 2005, pp. 203–6; Shatil 1994, p. 45). The ego also mediates between the opposing energies in the superego and the id, operating by the reality principle. From our perspective, however, these three components are a whole single unit that seeks to expand (i.e., phallically; since this is an inner image, it should be located, following Lacan, in the imaginary dimension (Evans 1996, pp. 85–87)). What characterizes them as a whole single unit is only the striving-for, the desire to expand. Freud would argue that the "ego" or "self" that we are discussing is not composed of a single simple element, as it might seem superficially. Freud maintains that observation of the self teaches that its activity is composed of three factors that are quite conflicted with one another. This, however, does not suffice to contradict the straightforward viewpoint that encompasses the activity of all these factors together to attain a shared goal (it is noteworthy that scholars of Freudian thought found a lack of clarity on this question in his writings. On this, and on the discussions on the definition of the ego or the self in post-Freudian psychoanalysis, see (Laplanche 1976, pp. 50–55; Noy 2006, esp. pp. 22–24). On the way in which this process of integration takes place at the beginning of life according to Winnicott, see (Phillips 1988, pp. 70–76). On relevant theological aspects in the teachings of Levinas and the Kabbalistic doctrine of Rabbi Ashlag, see (Ahituv 2007).

14 In the same spirit, this idea could be described by saying that such blindness is also the source of all of man's bad attributes. All ethical teachings are to be found in the gap between the two basic words. Importantly, however, the causal relationship depicted by Buber acts in the opposite direction: it is not improving one's virtues, or character traits, that draws a person closer to the level in which he can sense Thou, but the opposite: making room for the encounter with the other inherently generates the good attributes (Buber 2016b, p. 86, and his preceding discussion). Plato declared: "But the truth is that the cause of all sins in every case lies in the person's excessive love of self. For the lover is blind in his view of the object loved, so that he is a bad judge of things just and good and noble" (Plato 1942, 5:731, vol. 1, pp. 338–39; see also Halevi 1972, pp. 42–43). Cf. the observation by Reines: "Self-love: this attribute, that is inherent in the heart of every individual, brings much evil on its wings, for all snares, disputes, and all manner of punishments by which a person controls another to do evil to him originate in this attribute" (Reines 1926, vol. 1, p. 11). The opposite connection that Heschel observed, between devotion to God and sympathy for the other, should, therefore, not be surprising (Heschel 1962, pp. 307–23). Buber, as well, although his conception of revelation is different from that of Heschel, asserts that "the word of him who wishes to speak with men without speaking with God is not fulfilled" (Buber 2002a, p. 18); see also below. Levinas wanted to take this basic lack of confidence in man a step further, and argued in the name of Judaism that, "this heteronomy among the conditions of autonomy in human fraternity is acutely thought in Judaism with the category of divine paternity as its point of departure" (Levinas 1994, p. 104). The truth be told, this view was already voiced in the past by several Jewish sages, who, in some instances, even expressed a more extreme approach, and viewed the system of commandments (including the ritual commandments "between man and the Omnipresent [=God]") as a sort of spiritual training meant to prepare a person to be better to his fellow (see *Leviticus Rabbah* 1993, 13:3, p. 277). A clear example of this approach can be found in the commentary of R. Obadiah Sforno (thirteenth century; see (Sforno 1992, p. xi, chp. 3), and editor's note). Max Kadushin asserted that the Rabbinic literature already evidences the notion that "man's attitude to the Creator is the decisive and primal factor in his ethical consciousness [i.e., his attitude to others]" (see Holtz 1978, p. 131).

15 The term "distance" denotes man's turning inward to distance himself from the other, which is not necessarily a negative step. Buber thought that a person must constantly move between relation and distance, because "in order to be able to go out to the other you must have the starting place, you must have been, you must be, with yourself" (Buber 2002a, p. 24). In *I and Thou* Buber speaks of the encounter with three possible spheres: "Three are the spheres in which the world of relation arises. The first: life with nature [. . .] The second: life with men [. . .] The third: life with spiritual beings" (Buber 1970, pp. 56–57). Somewhat later, he also added a fourth realm: "Besides man's threefold living relation there is one other, that to one's own self" (Buber 2002e, p. 213). See also the extensive exposition in (Shapira 1994, pp. 177–83).

16 See (Hill 1977, pp. 25-35). Wittgenstein, as well, noted this, in his own way: "Language disguises the thought; so that from the external form of the clothes one cannot infer the form of the thought they clothe, because the external form of the clothes is constructed with quite another object than to let the form of the body be recognized" (Wittgenstein 1922, 4.002, pp. 62–63). See also Kosman 2012, pp. 14–15, note 31.

17 There might be a need for greater flexibility in these determinations according to the specific culture, but that is not our concern here.

18 See above, note 13.

19 See (Schlesinger 1969, col. 484): "This egocentric speech wanes as a result of life-experience, to be replaced by the social speech that serves the communicative purpose".

20 The term "noetic", that originated in Husserl's philosophy, refers to the consciousness's ways of subjective intentionality to objects in the world: perception, remembering, and the like.

21 The ego's most conspicuous trait is its inherent manipulative nature. This should be especially emphasized when we discuss the basic word I-It (see also below).

22 In earlier generations, they were simply called "the Good Inclination" and "the Evil Inclination". See, e.g., the midrash's fine use of the expression, "appointed [literally, gave rulership to] the Good Inclination over the Evil Inclination", in the context of seeing the other (*Eccl. Rabbah* 9), and the explanation, in the spirit of the current discussion, in (Kosman 2009, pp. 101–6).

23 The intent is to the term coined by Pierre Bourdieu.

24 See note 23 above.

25 Based on the expression that presents this notion: "I will be king [*ani emlokh*]", in I Kings 1:5, that took root in the Hasidic literature (in the Kabbalistic context of the *Sefirah* of *Malkhut*).

26 On the essentiality of the development of the infant's consciousness of omnipotence (that does not completely disappear when we mature and face the reality) for the building of the sense of being and the self, see (Gamlieli 2006, pp. 228–32). Donald Winnicott emphasizes that the sense of being on which the existence of the self is based is limitless in regard to the reality in general (Gamlieli, p. 222). In his view, each child must undergo the primal experience of omnipotence, in which he feels as if he rules all. Thanks to the fact that in the beginning of his way in the world he feels as if he possesses infinite powers, he will later be capable of developing a self sufficiently confident in itself to waive the "subjective 'throne' and enable the existence of others besides himself" (Gamlieli, p. 228). In Freudian terms, this is the transition from the "oceanic feeling", in which the pleasure principle dominates the child's mental life, to the stage in which the reality principle begins to act (p. 222). According to Gamlieli, the challenge facing the child who is deposed from his "throne" (when he is about a year old, he begins to hear the word "No" and gradually comes to learn the limitations to which he is subject (p. 217)) corresponds to the Kabbalistic notion of the primordial "breaking of the vessels", which requires man's rectifying action (pp. 222, 224–25). Parallel descriptions are to be found in Buber's teachings, since he, too, stresses that the possibility for a person to pass from the basic word I-It to I-Thou comes about only when the "I" reaches the level of separate being for itself. Buber writes about the primal, oceanic stage: "Every developing human child rests, like all developing beings, in the womb of the great mother—the undifferentiated, not yet formed primal world. From this it detaches itself to enter a personal life, and it is only in dark hours when we slip out of this again (as happens even to the healthy, night after night) that we are close to her again. But this detachment is not sudden and catastrophic like that from the bodily mother. The human child is granted some time to exchange the natural association with the world that is slipping away for a spiritual association—a relationship" (Buber 1970, pp. 76–77). On Buber's approach, see the extensive discussion by Koren 2010, pp. 247–314. In this context, it would be instructive to draw a comparison with the following midrash, which gives mythical expression to the inner struggle to limit the primal demonic and limitless expansion in the human psyche: "R. Judah said that Rav said: When the Holy One, blessed be He, created the world, it continued to expand like two strips of warp, until the Holy One, blessed be He, rebuked it and halted it, as it is said, 'The pillars of heaven were trembling, but they were astonished by His rebuke' [Job 26:11]. This is what Resh Lakish said: What is the meaning of 'I am God Almighty' [Gen. 35:11, *El shaday*]—I am He who said to the world: Enough [*Day* in Hebrew]! Resh Lakish said: When the Holy One, blessed be He, created the sea, it continued to expand, until the Holy One, blessed be He, rebuked it and caused it to dry up, as it is said: 'He rebukes the sea and dries it up' [Nahum 1:4]" (BT Hagigah 12a).

27 Often, this violence is not outwardly visible, but rather is directed inward, resulting in tension, which people try to conceal from society, with different character types acting in disparate ways. See (Shatil 1994, pp. 40–41).

28 "But the question remains: do we know about the origin of this force that is inherent in human beings and that underlies destructive activity or its equivalent in suffering under self-control? Behind it all is *magical destruction*. This is normal to infants in the very early stages of their development, and goes side by side with magical creation. Primitive or magical destruction of all objects belongs to the fact that (for the infant) objects change from being part of 'me' to being 'not me', from being subjective phenomena to being perceived objectively. Ordinarily such a change takes place by subtle gradations that follow the gradual changes in the developing infant, but with defective maternal provision these same changes occur suddenly, and in ways that the infant cannot predict" (Winnicott 1987, pp. 238–39).

29 From the perspective of the It, we should add to what Sartre wrote that not only does the other cause anxiety due to his facing me, by the very fact of his seeing me as an object, the encounter with him frequently reflects a hidden struggle between "slave" and "master". In Hegel's view, the relationship between people is dictated by a concealed power struggle. Each side wants to be the "master", and force the other to acknowledge him, and not look at him only as an object that can be used. This aggressive domination of the submissive slave by the master brings the slave to only externally view the master as a "subject". See (Evans 1996, pp. 32–33).

30 For Buber's response to Sartre, see below.

31 See (Buber 1970, p. 54). It should be reiterated that the It, or in my formulation the striving-for or the ego, is not, for Buber, something bad which should be annihilated. It rather is a positive element, for when it is directed to the good, it serves as "a chariot to the Throne of Glory". In this respect, as well, Buber follows Hasidic thought, with its characteristic claim that evil is a ladder to the good; furthermore, divine service with the Evil Inclination is cardinal—for it is there that the highest divine sparks are to be found (see the literature referenced by Rosenak 2007, pp. 56–57, note 86, and his comparison to other Jewish conceptions). This enables us to understand the dictum of the Baal Shem Tov to desire everything with one's entire inclination (see Scholem 1975, p. 321; see also Kosman 2007b, pp. 134–39, and the entire discussion in this chapter). Buber thought that this was the main difference between Judaism, that represents a monistic faith, and Pauline Christianity, that represents the dualistic position, which cannot contain the other or the Evil Inclination as an element that calls upon men to use it as a "ladder to the

good". Buber concisely expressed this profound difference with a quotation from Rabbi Hanokh of Aleksander: "The other nations too believe that there are two worlds. They too say: 'In the other world'. The difference is this: They think that the two are separate and severed, but Israel professes that the two worlds are essentially one and shall in fact become one" (Buber 1988c, p. 166). Using Buberian terminology, we can say that a sincere encounter in which the two parties to dialogue are truthful is conceivable only after the constitution of the "It" of the other (see Koren 2010, pp. 299–301); see also below, n 82.

32 It could be argued against this claim, in a Heideggerian spirit, that most of our everyday actions are automatic and are unaccompanied by any thought. Such an assertion is to be rejected, because an entity that uses the other as if it were an object to attain something hides behind our automatic actions. Furthermore, the more automatic the action, the less the probability that we will view the other as a subject.

33 The need of the Kantian moral man to say to himself (or to those around him) that he adheres to the framework of a moral life is itself an egocentric need, that results from high self-esteem, since his aspiration to be more moral than others apparently attests to his moral superiority.

34 He continues: "A good deed performed merely out of regard for Kant's moral principle would at bottom be the work of a philosophical pedantry" (p. 170).

35 Here, according to Buber, is the early basis of the classical Jewish term "*mitzvah*" (commandment): an action accompanied by power and good energy, that results from entering into a "Thou" relation with the other. See (Kosman 2002b, p. 236, note 73).

36 For the absolute in Buber's thought, see (Buber 2016b, p. 86); see also below, notes 52, 56.

37 For an explanation of the dual status in people's lives according to Buber's teaching, see (Shapira 1994, pp. 29–55).

38 We will expand on this point below, in the discussion of the meaning of revelation for Buber. The status of the Thou, as Buber frequently emphasizes, is characterized by a person not being split, he rather is entirely within the Thou. Shmuel Yosef Agnon (according to the testimony of Zvi Kurtzweil) explained this once, saying that the state of Thou requires "'*rikuz atzum*', enormous concentration or powers of concentration" (see Kaufmann 1984b, p. 21); at that moment, there is nothing else before me, only this Thou that I face (p. 21).

Noteworthy in this regard is the debate (which exceeds the scope of the current essay) between Bloch ("The Justification and the Futility of Dialogical Thinking") and Theunissen ("The Other: Studies in the Social Ontology"). Theunissen—based on the negative descriptions of the "Thou" in Buber's various statements, argued that Buber's "Thou" belongs to the transcendental plane, i.e., beyond what exists in the reality of the world). Gilad (2005, pp. 190–97) discusses this debate in length, and joins Bloch in opposition to Theunissen. This debate, for me, is further proof that it is not suitable to try to grasp the "I-Thou" relationship with logical–philosophical tools (cf. Lorenz Wachinger, quoted above). The "Thou" manifests itself as a certain state of mind—of being filled with "energy", which Buber describes in different places (e.g., Buber 1970, p. 158: "man receives, and what he receives is not a 'content' but a presence, a presence as strength"). From a phenomenological point of view, the logical–philosophical discussion that Gilad explains at length there seems unnecessary, since the state of "Thou" manifests itself phenomenologically, first and foremost, as a "change of the heart" (otherwise it has no meaning at all!—see (Buber 1970, p. 158): "The man who steps out of the essential act of pure relation has something More in his being, something new has grown there of which he did not know before and for whose origin he lacks any suitable words"), filled with a sense of power and divine energy, seeking peace and unity in each and every meeting in the world (this, of course, is in contrast to the usual egocentric state of the mind, which lacks this divine power). Buber's statement regarding the tension between the options of determinism versus free choice can be applied to this debate as well, as an example of the pointless attempt to fully understand logically the state of mind of the "Thou". Buber argues: "[. . .] it is senseless to ask how far my action reaches, and where God's grace begins; there is no common border-line; what concerns me alone, before I bring something about, is my action, and what concerns me alone, when the action is successfully done, is God's grace. The one is no less real than the other, and neither is a part-cause" (see below, Buber's citation near note 90). Here, then, as well, a leap of faith is required beyond normal logical thought. Buber himself made a clear statement in regard to the question of rational considerations in the discussion on the "Thou": "The difference regarding this question, however, is by no means that between the "rational" and the "irrational", but that between the reason that detaches itself from the other forces of the human person and declares itself to be sovereign and the reason that forms a part of the wholeness and unity of the human person and works, serves, and expresses itself within this wholeness and unity" (Buber 1967b, p. 710; and see Kosman 2021, pp. 106–16).

To be perfectly clear: I do not maintain that Buber understood that the state of "Thou" is a mystical state (at least not that of the "Unio Mystica"). My intention is only to say that the rational effort to clearly define the state of "Thou" must necessarily end in failure, since it belongs to that which is beyond our understanding, of which Buber thought that "what can be comprehended in this world is only a 'footstool' of what cannot" (see below, note 82). Buber himself says: "The clear and firm structure of the I-Thou relationship, familiar to everyone with a candid heart and the courage to pledge it, has not a mystical nature. From time to time we must come out of our habits of thought in order to understand it; but we do not have to leave the primal norms which determine human thinking about reality. As in the realm of nature, so in the realm of spirit—the spirit which lives on in word and work, and the spirit which wishes to become word and work: what is effected upon us may be understood as something effected by the ongoing course of being (Seiendes)" (Buber 1967b, p. 710).

In our case, this is especially evident, since the logic used by Theunissen in his analysis of citations from Buber would completely destroy Buberian thought, especially for those who are aware of the Hasidic background of Buber's thought. Gilad (2005,

p. 197) himself asks that question—namely, to what extent is it possible to view Buber's statements on the "Thou" as part of the philosophical discourse? Gilad believes that the answer is positive, and to this end he adapts the arguments of Herman Cohen, in order to clarify Buber's "Thou" concept. I, however, do not agree with this forced line of thought. Suffice it to say, that from a phenomenological point of view, the statements of Buber on the "Thou" are quite well understood.It seems to me, however, that the attempt to explain the "Thou" with rational tools stems from an inability to distinguish between the rational understanding of the phenomenon itself and the analysis of the phenomenon. I will explain this point by the following example: the emanation of the artistic work, a poem for instance, which "appears" in the mind of the poet, is obviously a mysterious phenomenon (see Lester 2021). It is possible to surround the poem with a rational understanding, analyse it, and find parallel literary tools, allusions, puns, and the like, but the poem itself is not something that can be created with rational tools. As a matter of fact, Buber himself says it, i.e., that with the move toward the Thou we are moving from seeking answers to our daily questions in the realm of the "logic"—toward another realm (ueberlogische, beyond the logic), namely, the direct "hearing" of God. See his discussion with Tovia Ben-Chorin, in (Ben-Chorin 1978, pp. 172–73).

39 In his response to the lecture delivered by Steven Katz at the conference at Ben-Gurion University, on the difficulty of rationally comprehending the possibility of the existence of the basic word I-Thou (and see note 38 above).

40 Bold emphasis added. The moral of this parable by Wyschogrod is what Mendes-Flohr portrayed as the insight of a circular reasoning (Petitio principii) of the dialogical man. This is expressed in the need for a person to have a dialogical predisposition in order to break through to dialogue. Without this disposition, Wyschogrod's parable would be incomprehensible. See the discussion of this in (Barzilai 2000, p. 22).

41 (Katz 1984, p. 116). Nonetheless, Katz does not rule out the possibility of the realization of the basic word I-Thou, he merely does not accept it as self-understood, and attempts to systematically analyze Buber's ideas. See Katz, p. 116. According, however, to Mendes-Flohr (see the preceding note), Katz's goal is unattainable. Accordingly, Mendes-Flohr would argue that either a person, as "I", "flies" to meet the dialogue with the other, as "Thou", or not.

42 Buber, however, opposed the duality inherent in Schopenhauer's thought (see, e.g., Buber 2002e, pp. 221–22). Rivka Horwitz presented the early Buber as tending to dualism (see Horwitz 1984, pp. 127–29; Horwitz 1978–1979), but Koren highlights Buber's rejection of viewing the "It" as representing evil (Koren 2010, pp. 235–36 and note 31). Buber writes in *I-Thou* (p. 95): "The basic word I-It does not come from evil—any more than matter comes from evil. It comes from evil—like matter that presumes to be that which has being". See (Kaufmann 1984a, pp. 14, 18; Kaufmann 1984b), and see below, near note 82 (Putnam's important observation on the status of the "It" in Buber's teaching).

43 Horwitz showed that Buber first came across the distinction between these two basic words in Ebner's thought (see Horwitz 1988, pp. 151–59). It should be noted, however, that Schopenhauer preceded both Ebner and Buber in this profound understanding of the Thou (without using this specific terminology). On the sources of the dialogical idea, see also below, note 83.

44 The reference is to the Spanish playwright Pedro Calderon de la Barca (1600–1681).

45 When Buber was asked whether he should be defined as a philosopher or theologian, he defined himself as "an atypical man", since the starting point for his thought is "*one* great experience of faith", and the aim of his writing was to "insert" his experiences "into the human inheritance of thought". Buber explained that his choice of philosophical language, of all the various forms of expression, does not teach that he viewed himself as a philosopher, only that this language suited him more than other forms of expression (Buber 1967b, p. 689). See also (Barzilai 2000, pp. 59–63), for the standing of logic and methodicalness in Buber's thought, and (Amir 1987, pp. 290–91). See also below.

46 Therefore, it is not surprising that the young Buber thought that he was meant to be a poet. For the assertion that Buber, following the German philosopher Johann Georg Hamann (1730–1788), thought that poetry is a "natural form" of prophecy, see (Schaeder 1991, p. 14). The unique—and difficult—lyrical style of *I and Thou* might be connected to Buber's special relation to poetry. On *I and Thou* as a philosophical–dialogical poem, see (Diamond 1967, p. 235).

47 On the gap between religion and religiosity according to Buber, see (Amir 1987; Kosman 2002b, pp. 226–30). Rosenak, following Mary Douglas, proposed a useful typology for classifying the types of religious thought (Rosenak 2007, pp. 411–21). Rosenak correctly defined Buber as an individualistic religious type who lives his religiosity without a fixed outer norm (pp. 416–17).

48 Buber, Martin. (1948b, p. 17). This mystery, Buber explains there, is also the unifying secret between man's active act and his being entirely passively in the hands of God.

49 On this expression, see (Bergman 1991, p. 225).

50 Another important term of Buber in this regard is"umfassung" (inclusion). See (Levinas 1967, pp. 142 and 148–149).

51 It should be recalled that the word "love" has many meanings not intended by Buber—romantic love, for example. Buber wrote on this: "Love without dialogic, without real outgoing to the other, reaching to the other, and companying with the other, the love remaining with itself—this is called Lucifer" (Buber 2002a, p. 24; see above, notes 10–11 and below, note 102). On the I-Thou relation as the thought of love, and a discussion of Eros and love between man and woman in Buber's thought, see (Koren 2010, pp. 315–38; Cherniak 2014, pp. 51–52; cf. the parallel discussion of Levinas's thought in Meir 2007).

52 From which bursts forth a doctrine so ramified that, in my opinion, some Buber scholars go astray in the thicket of the forest and cannot see what is the trunk and what its branches. As an example, I will mention Theunissen's puzzling claim that Buber was primarily concerned with social reform and, therefore, any diversion from this goal into questions of faith does not naturally

ensue from Buber's theses. Theunissen finds something artificial in the extension of the I-Thou relation to the eternal Thou (see Theunissen 1984, pp. 333–46, and see the opposing view of Sagi(e) 1981, pp. 149–51). For Buber, we can speak about the anthropological aspect of humanism without religiosity, but for him, this is a sort of movement that was stopped in its tracks on its way to a more complete view of the reality. Such a view would realize that this is merely a single relation in a whole array of relations that point to the Absolute Thou (see also below note 56). Buber himself attests that he had no method, but we cannot conclude from this the lack of any single and primal nucleus in his thought (see Shapira 1994, pp. 15–19).

53 The element of giving is indeed central in this context, but it should be noted that it ensues from the understanding of the oneness of the I and the other, and may be attributed here to the negation of the gap between the giver and the recipient (or, to be more precise, the merging of the two to the extent that the gap between the two is somewhat blurred). See (Kosman 2002b, p. 235).

54 A French religious Christian thinker of Jewish origin (1909–1943), who expressed in his writings forceful opposition to the Jewish tradition. For this disagreement, see also (Shapira 1994, pp. 188–89).

55 That means: In true loving relations, the concrete, actual "I" (not the egocentric center which deceptively call itself "I") turns to the other and says to him: "I love you". The destruction of the self of which Weil speaks could also be interpreted as a type of apathy and departure from the true encounter with the other, and certainly an abandonment of the responsibility implicit in such an encounter. See (Kosman 2009, pp. 9–11).

56 See (Buber 1970, pp. 157–60): "What is it that is eternal: the primal phenomenon, present in the here and now, of what we call revelation? It is man's emerging from the moment of the supreme encounter, being no longer the same as he was when entering into it. The moment of encounter is not a 'living experience' that stirs in the receptive soul and blissfully rounds itself out: something happens to man. At times it is like feeling a breath and at times like a wrestling match; no matter: something happens. The man who steps out of the essential act of pure relation has something More in his being, something new has grown there of which he did not know before and for whose origin he lacks any suitable words. Whereever the scientific world orientation in its legitimate desire for a causal chain without gaps may place the origin of what is new here: for us, being concerned with the actual contemplation of the actual, no subconscious and no other psychic apparatus will do. Actually, we receive what we did not have before, in such a manner that we know: it has been given to us. In the language of the Bible: 'Those who wait for God will receive strength in exchange' [Isa. 40:31] [. . .] Man receives, and what he receives is not a 'content' but a presence, a presence as strength". And in the same passage: "This is the eternal revelation which is present in the here and now. I neither know of nor believe in any revelation that is not the same in its primal phenomenon. I do not believe in God's naming himself or in God's defining himself before man. The world of revelation is: I am there as whoever I am there. That which reveals is that which reveals. That which has being is there, nothing more. The eternal source of strength flows, the eternal touch is waiting, the eternal voice sounds, nothing more". See the discussion by (Amir 1987, pp. 191–93). This imparting of power gives a person a certainty that cannot be attained by normal mental faculties (even for a person who seeks to live a moral life), and which is a gift from above: grace. See (Buber 2016b, p. 86): "The man who seeks distinction and decision in his own soul cannot draw from it, from his soul, absoluteness for his scale of values. Only out of a personal relationship with the Absolute can the absoluteness of the ethical co-ordinates arise without which there is no complete awareness of self" (on the Absolute, see also above notes 36, 52). In light of this, we can understand, and Buber indeed said that, in the final analysis, God demands of man "not much more than the fundamental ethical" (Buber 2016a, p. 103); but, we cannot conclude from that, as did Sagi (2000, p. 155), that "Buber was of the opinion that morality realizes all that God wants from man". This formulation omits the most basic condition, which for Buber is the be-all and end-all: God does not demand of man more than basic morality—provided that this morality ensues from his adherence to God, and that his activity in the world drives from the power given him by his very adherence to the I-Thou relation. Buber's intent is not to every person who fulfills the demands of morality for other reasons, such as the individual whose way of life is based on Kant's categorical imperative. The assertion by Sagi and Statman (1993, p. 135) that Buber thought that "belief is the source of spiritual force and trust [in God]", is similarly inaccurate. Buber did not think that belief itself is the source of power. He rather maintained that **at times** the power given to man is the result of divine revelation; that is, the intervention of grace in will. And this grace, that might or might not be present between two individuals, is not a condition for the encounter with the other. For Buber, faith is merely a condition that prepares a person for his entry to the encounter, while the encounter itself only contains the **possibility** of the person's receiving of power. See, in this regard (Buber 1967a, pp. 186–87, note 7).

57 Now, we can understand why at times Buber dared to describe himself as a disciple of the Baal Shem Tov (see Buber 1948c, p. 43: "Listen only to a saying like this, which more than forty years ago made me into a Hasid of the Baal-shem-tov"). For Buber's attitude to Hasidic teachings, see the extensive discussion: (Koren 2010, pp. 187–219). Buber does not use Hasidic terminology in his philosophical doctrine, but he found the distinction between the two basic words in Hasidism as well, albeit formulated differently (see Koren 2010, pp. 270–73; see also, Simon 1985, p. 259). Buber himself offers the reader a precis of the teaching of R. Bunam of Przysucha (Pzhysha), who depicted two fundamental human states that clearly express the two basic words in Buber's thought: "In like manner, Rabbi Bunam saw the advance of human history on its way to redemption as an interaction between two types of humans. One type is the arrogant one who always has the self in mind, even when expressed in the most elegant style. The other is the humble one who always has the world in mind. Arrogance will be redeemed only when it submits to humility, and only after arrogance is redeemed can the world be redeemed" (Buber 1988c, p. 22; see also, Buber 1988b, pp. 102–14).

58 See the discussion by (Statman 1995), and my response: (Kosman 1997).

[59] See (Bergman 1991, pp. 220–21). This sentence should be cleansed of any nuance of achievement, since this point is the very heart of contact with the "mystery". Anyone who, out of a lack of awareness or out of spiritual ignorance, turns his experience of contact with the mystery into a new inner "possession" all at once rids his world of the presence of God, since this presence does not tolerate such a coarse appropriation. As regards the degree of mystery and how the later Buber viewed the dimension of mystery in dialogue, see (Koren 2010, pp. 147–83). See also below.

[60] On responsibility, see (Buber 2002b, pp. 109–10; Vogel 1970; Margolin 2013; Mendes-Flohr 1988; on the humility of the educator, see Buber 2002b, p. 112) and see above note 50. For what Buber writes about the element of humility in Hasidism, see (Buber 1988b, pp. 109 ff).

[61] From a sociological point of view, Weigert (1981, pp. 111–12) writes that such a meeting is therapeutic and facilitates profound insights. He then writes: "The power of dialogue to manifest the what and how of persons' lives and their worlds derives from the direct and immediate contact with each person's symbolic presentation of self and world. The full flesh and spirit of self and other is given as a unified event; two momentarily become one—to the dismay of quantified and mechanistic thinking. The oneness is a symbolic achievement, a merging of minds and hearts, and perhaps bodies, which can occur only by means of and within the symbolic worlds of human lives" (p. 113).

[62] (Bialik 2000, p. 16). The normative meaning of "*belimah*" is "restraint".

[63] "Every speech, every pulsation of speech, partakes of the nature of a concealment of nothingness" (Bialik 2000, p. 16).

[64] Bialik 2000, p. 25. He also writes: "human beings when they speak [. . .] without having any conception of how shaky is their bridge of mere words, how deep and dark the void is that opens at their feet" (Bialik 2000, p. 15). In Lacanian language, we can say that, according to Buber, we have here an opening to the transition from the symbolic and the imaginary to the real (for an explanation of this, see Evans 1996, pp. 157–59). See also (Liebes 2000, p. 153): "Such *Belimah* is, first and foremost, a waiver of the ego, of the hubris inclination generally found at the basis of human creativity. Just as the correct awareness demands the trait of humility [. . .] so, too, is it necessary while creating".

[65] See also (Buber 1988c, p. 13): "God does not say: '*This* is the way to me but *that other* is not'. God does say, 'Whatever you do can be a *way* to me, provided that *way* leads you to me'". See also (Buber 1983, p. 234). Scholem (1976, p. 140) indicates that Buber never abandoned this view, although he formulated it in different ways over the course of time.

[66] Bialik 2000, p. 14. I slightly amended the English translation to what I believe to be more accurate (AK).

[67] Buber's early formulations in his book, *Daniel*, aid us in clarifying the meaning of the basic words. We can say, in this case, the realization approach was replaced by an orientational one. Bergman writes: "What invariably interests us [in the interaction with the people or things we encounter on the way to our goal] is the context and the usefulness [. . .] of what we can derive from the individual thing [what we find in the interaction with it, in accordance with the orientation]. The individual thing is always a springboard or transition to something else" (*Dialogical Philosophy*, p. 219). On the other hand, in the realization approach (which Buber some time later replaced with the more accurate basic word "I-Thou"), "the individual who realizes, or actualizes, and gives himself totally to whatever he is with. He takes it in with all his senses" (p. 219).

[68] Bergman related that already when he met Buber in Prague in 1909, the latter declared, "I do not know the transcendent" (Horwitz 1989, p. 174). Paul Mendes-Flohr reminded me in this regard that Buber himself writes in his memoirs that he clearly realized this only after Reverend Hechler visited Buber in his home in May 1914 (see Buber 2002c, pp. 50–53). Hechler, as reported by Buber, put him in a quandary when he asked him directly if he believes in God. Buber evaded answering the reverend immediately, but he wanted to clarify for himself what was his answer to the question. Then, Buber relates, "Suddenly in my spirit [. . .] there arose without having been formulated by me, word for word distinct: 'If to believe in God means to be able to talk about him in the third person, then I do not believe in God. If to believe in him means to be able to talk to him, then I believe in God'. And after a while, further: 'The God who gives Daniel such foreknowledge of this hour of human history, this hour before the "world war", that in its fixed place in the march of the ages can be foredetermined, is not my God and not God. The God to whom Daniel prays in his suffering is my God and the God of all'" (pp. 52–53).

[69] The theory that explains how God became a sort of inner superego that pursues man was first presented by Freud and was later developed by the psychoanalysts who succeeded him. The version that was developed by the proponents of the objects relations theory seems to be the most convincing. See, in this regard (Gamlieli 2006, pp. 165–252, esp. pp. 243–45).

[70] Mendes-Flohr wrote about Buber's religious philosophy: "Buber understood his religious philosophy to be a phenomenological elaboration of what is experienced in the divine-human encounter, which in his view was preeminently refracted through man's dialogical encounter with his fellowmen and with the world in general" (Mendes-Flohr 1991, p. 238). Buber's view challenges the Jewish rabbinic tradition, since this understanding of the concept of revelation implies that, in practice, it is suitable for every man. Thus, for Buber, the idea of revelation underwent a process of democratization: every person who is capable of directing himself to hear the word of God can experience revelation, without needing the mediation of rabbinic teaching. The assumed cessation of prophecy, that for so many years gave Judaism its unique rabbinic coloration, ensued, in Buber's opinion, from a misunderstanding of the phenomenon of revelation and the tendency to impart it excessive exaltedness (see Kosman and Hadad 2020, p. 245 and note 148). For this, see also (Diamond 2011, especially pp. 338–39). Although I cannot completely accept his position regarding Buber in this matter, still, as an introduction to this question, his presentation is very helpful.

71 It seems that we can say about the existence of the ego what Heidegger argued about being, that we are unaware of it because it is so basic to our existence that we do not discern it (Bergman 1984, p. 126 explains it as follows: "Being tends not to see itself. It is cloaked by the world within which it dwells"). Usually, we can be aware of the ego only when we encounter distorted phenomena that spring from the egocentrism of someone who hurts us—but we have difficulty in identifying similar distortions when they result from our own egocentrism. On Jung's position regarding this problem in relation to the Western person, see (Jung 2020, p. 154).

72 For this reason, Buber also opposed his close friend Franz Rosenzweig's methodical thoughts about God in his book, *The Star of Redemption*. Buber argued: "Es passt zu gut", meaning: this seems too fine (as attested by Samuel Hugo Bergman (cited by Horwitz 1989, p. 184, note 31)).

73 For more on this, see below. At this stage of his life, Buber regarded the ecstatic experience as another way of focusing on the self, its aim of attaining pleasure, and its achievements (even if, in this case, they are enclothed in pseudoreligious garb).

74 He, therefore, thought that the mystic, who seeks the peak experiences of ecstasy, is sunken within his egocentric tendencies. For Buber, the mystic sees in his "I" (the ego)—the divine "I"—and as proof of this: mysticism, unlike relation, does not impose responsibility on a person. See (Bergman 1958, pp. 10–11). Buber himself expressed a quite decisive opinion on this matter. He declared that he was not a mystic, since "I still grant to reason a claim that the mystic must deny to it. Beyond this, I lack the mystic's negation. I can negate convictions but never the slightest actual thing" (Buber 1957, p. 28). See the discussion in (Koren 2010, pp. 147–83).

75 In most instances, Freud would say, and rightly so, that this is a projection of some sort of father figure. See above, note 69.

76 This is why Buber consistently avoided any theosophical hypothesis that would turn mystery into knowledge (what he called "gnosis"). See (Bergman 1958, pp. 10–12).

77 God calls to man in encounters which happen, every day and every moment. Every such meeting is a question or speaking that the Absolute Thou directs to man. Buber says: "In the signs of life which happen to us we are addressed" (Buber 2002a, p. 17). See also (Kosman 2002b, pp. 230–34).

78 In several places in his writings, in this context, Buber uses the phrase "the realization of God". To prevent misunderstandings, he stresses to the reader that this is not simply a meaningless play on words that masks a lack of belief in God, "for this term lures us into the glittering notion that God is an idea that can become reality only through man" (Buber, *On Judaism*, p. 8). He calls such a position (that God is an idea) a "hopelessly wrong conception", which contains a (Feuerbachian) assumption (see Buber 2016b, p. 96) that "God is not, but that He becomes—either within man or within mankind" (Buber, *On Judaism*, p. 8). According to Buber, this view is "hopelessly wrong, not because I am not certain of a divine *becoming* in immanence, but because only a primal certainty of divine *being* enables us to sense the awesome meaning of divine becoming, that is, the self-imparting of God to His creation and His participation in the destiny of its freedom, whereas without this primal certainty there can be only a blatant misuse of God's name" (Buber, *On Judaism*, p. 9; see Simon 1985, p. 247).

79 (Buber 1945, p. 10). Accordingly, it cannot be claimed that Buber did not delineate a clear boundary between the transcendental and the immanent (see Dreyfus 1993, p. 156), since he vigorously rejected any direct or indirect occupation with the transcendental God Himself.

80 The following passage by Buber is relevant for this question: "'Faith', however, should not be taken in the sense given to it in the Epistle to the Hebrews, as faith that God exists. That has never been doubted by Jacob's soul. In proclaiming its faith, its *emunah*, the soul only proclaimed that it put its trust in the everlasting God, *that he would be present* to the soul, as had been the experience of the patriarchs, and that it was entrusting itself to him, who was present" (Buber 1948d, p. 29). In this context, Paul Mendes-Flohr reminded me of the connection that Hebrew makes between *emun* (trust) and *emunah* (faith). See, in this regard (Margolin 2021, pp. 409–13). That faith, *emunah*, is not faith in the existence of any object, but has a different meaning: to **entrust** my life in a practical way into God's hands. Faith means to trust in His faithfulness, to give my life to Him out of trust. Buber explains that only God can be trusted, one can have faith in an idol only in one's own imagination, because how can one give life to a statue. Buber adds that the Torah is a set of testimonies about the surrender's life relationship with God. The entire Torah is a chain of "stories" about God's guidance of this people of *emunah* in their way of life—as this God is always the God of man's way (see Buber 1961, first introduction (this introduction is missing in the English translation: (Buber 1960))).
It should be added that faith is a "daring leap" of which Buber was fully cognizant. He thought that only one who dares can be a person of faith (see Horwitz 1989, p. 176 and note 8; the question Horwitz raises there can be answered by noting that this was stated outright in *I and Thou*, p. 60: "The deed involves a sacrifice and a risk"). Buber does not refer to the daring of the skeptic, who chooses to gamble regarding belief, in the spirit of Pascal. He rather asserts that the one who truly experienced an encounter, too, tends to fear drawing the necessary daunting conclusions (on the ensuing total claim of this faith, see Schweid 1992, p. 168). Consequently, he could find himself fleeing from God, whom he encountered for a moment, in order to hide in the everyday of routine life.

81 For introspection, in the spiritual sense, and research, in its conventional sense, as two objective possibilities for studying the reality, see (Aren 1993, pp. 25–27).

82 See above note 42. It also should be mentioned that Buber thought that all that can be comprehended in this world is only a "footstool" of what cannot. See (Buber 1957, p. 27; Koren 2001, pp. 110–14).

83 See, e.g., (Brunner 1967, p. 309). Buber was not the first to realize the significance of the basic words. Although we may assume he had some glimmerings of this notion even before he was familiar with Ferdinand Ebner's writings (see Brunner 1967, p. 309; Horwitz 1975; Horwitz 1989, pp. 176–77), nonetheless, at least chronologically, Ebner's book was published before Buber's publication of the I-Thou relation. Gabriel Marcel, too, developed this idea at about the time that Buber began to fashion it (see Marcel 1967, p. 41). For Rosenzweig's possible influence on Buber in the development of this thought, see (Horwitz 1975, pp. 171–80), and for the distinctions drawn by Schopenhauer regarding the basic words, see the text at note 43 above. It should be stressed that although the idea itself might have been expressed in various formulations before Buber wrote *I and Thou*, Simon correctly wrote on this question:"[Buber's] independent and decisive contribution to the I-Thou philosophy should be defined in that only he, by his singular conception of Hasidism, transformed it into a defined concept. Actually, we cannot speak of 'dialogical thought' before Buber" (Simon 1985, p. 259).

84 This division can have two different meanings. The first, most of the modern educated Jews at that time (including many of Buber's colleagues in the Zionist movement) totally refuted the possibility of God's existence, and certainly the possibility of His revelation to human beings. The second, most of those professing religious stances struggled to imagine God in their mind's eye, based on the mythos of religion, as a "third person (see above, note 11)" When Buber formulated his dialogical position, a third meaning came about, as well: Buber stands on one side, and all the mystics of the various religions (who seek to attain a trance state) stand on the other.

85 Cf. a similar sentiment preserved from the teachings of the Hasidic rabbi, R. Kalonymus Kalman Shapira (the Piaseczner Rebbe): (Shapira 1991, pp. 406–7).

86 Cf. (Stace 1961, pp. 326–29), on the place of the emotion of love in the heart of the mystic. In my opinion, Buber is much more accurate than Stace in defining the interim state. Despite the importance of Stace's discussion, he confuses the different types of love. Love that has a biological origin and is built on identification and attachment should not be included in the same discussion with the type of love of which Buber speaks, which consists of totally giving oneself over, without attachment, to the other.

87 (Buber 2002a, p. 35). See (Dreyfus 1993, pp. 150–51).

88 I explained this issue at length in (Kosman 2007a, pp. 519–24).

89 Buber (1959b) called this stance "Hebrew humanism" (see his essay by this name: "Hebrew Humanism"; see also Bergman 1968, col. 681). In a more specific Jewish context, Buber termed this path the "holy way" (see Buber 1977c; Schweid 1992, p. 164). On the background for the writing of "The Holy Way", see (Mendes-Flohr 1980, p. 92; Shapira 1994, p. 109, note 29).

90 For the development of the term "the Eternal Thou" or "the Absolute Thou" (instead of the word "God"), see Horwitz 1988, pp. 143–60. Horwitz notes that this conception, on which Ferdinand Ebner's writings were based, assumes that "God is always the true 'Thou'" (Horwitz 1989, p. 176). Every I-Thou encounter is, therefore, an encounter with God, who can no longer be called "He" or "It", since third-person appellations are anthropomorphic (see above, notes 8, 84). See (Horwitz 1989, pp. 151–59) and "Martin Buber's Concept", pp. 176–77. See also the note by J. Amir and M. Ron, the translators and editors of Buber's collected correspondence (Buber 1990, vol. 2, pp. 116–17, note 4).

91 For a precise understanding of what Buber says in this passage, see Sagi(e) 1981, p. 151, and below, note 93.

92 The Buddhist worldview is remarkably similar on this point, although it usually relates to it from the perspective of the experiences of the egocentric world accumulated from within a series of states of consciousness that create *samsara*. See (Aren 1993, pp. 36–40). On the affinity between Buber's ideas and Buddhist notions, see (Raz 2013). On Buber's closeness to several elements of Eastern teachings, see also (Buber 1967d). Buber asserted that "the Jews are the Orient's latecomers" ("Spirit of the Orient", p. 63). Cf. Koren 2001, pp. 106–9.

93 In order to avoid misunderstandings, it should be stressed that Buber assumed that there is a place for humanism without religious faith, even though such humanism will lack the depth dimension that is present in religiosity. On the other hand, Buber emphasized that the opposite possibility—of belief without humanism—is a serious error, see (Sagi(e) 1981, pp. 149–51). Many psychological doctrines, that ascribed importance to dialogue only on the human level, might have "borrowed" parts of Buber's teachings, based on this intuitive understanding. See, as one of many possible examples, the use that Gestalt psychology makes of Buber's teaching, with extensive quotations from his writings, in (Saruk and Rabinovitch 1984, pp. 144–61). Note should be taken of Buber's criticism of Ludwig Feuerbach's method. Buber argued that Feuerbach sought to reduce the Thou relation to the level of a plain meeting between humans and rid it of the divine element. See (Meir 2002, p. 265, note 27). See also (Margolin 2021, pp. 23–24). Even according to Silberstein's claim, that from the 1950s onwards Buber began to hide the religious basis of his teaching (for rhetorical reasons) in some of his writings, still, as Silberstein emphasizes, "This does not mean that Buber no longer grounded his view of humanity in religious faith. On the contrary, religious faith continued to occupy his attention, and he devoted many writings to it. However, in his later writings on dialogue and the interhuman, he no longer found it necessary to support his philosophical-anthropological and social position by recourse to religious rhetoric. His writings therefore became more useful to social scientists and psychologists" (Silberstein 1989, p. 146).

94 Buber apparently means to say that God is not a sort of limited, bodiless copy of the other (which Sartre obviously rejects), but rather the total Absolute who faces him and who can never be "It". See also above, note 36.

95 See (Simon 1989, p. 23). Incidentally, even though Koren is correct, in great measure, when he shows that Buber was inclined to negate the vertical axis of ascent to the divine and to emphasize the horizontal axis of religious strivings (see Koren 2010,

pp. 212–19), Buber does not entirely reject the vertical axis. Rather, in his thought, the down–up axis (that is, man's will and religious strivings; "up–down", in contrast, expresses the descent of the Divine Presence, the imparting of divine grace) is understood as the inner effort of sacrifice, namely, man's disengagement from the obtuseness of the ego, so that he can be aware of the existence of the other and be ready for the encounter with him.

96 In this context, see Bergman's conversation with Buber on the question of sacrifice. In this conversation, Bergman spoke with Buber about the approach of Rabbi Zalman Schachter. Schachter was said to speak about different possibilities for renewing the service of God in daily life, and raised the following possibility: "When you sit on the dentist's chair, you can bring the pains you feel as an offering to God". Significantly, Buber unreservedly accepted this idea (Buber 1992, p. 148).

97 Freibach-Heifetz refers to the statement by Buber: "I require a You [=Thou] to become" (Buber 1970, p. 62; in simple words: 'I' become more and more **me** (myself)—only by my meeting with the 'Thou'"). On this point, Buber writes elsewhere: "the individual does not have the essence of man in himself [. . .] man's essence is contained in the unity of man with man" (Buber 2002e, p. 203). See also (Barzilai 2000, pp. 193–94; Cohen 2019).

98 I do not agree with this statement by Freibach-Heifetz, but I cited it because of the importance of this passage for the continuation of our discussion.

99 See above, note 95; see also above, note 14.

100 That is, the world in which I find myself, based on my inner reality, with all its accompanying inner tumult. This is the world that Hinduism calls "maya".

101 Buber (2002a, p. 42). For Buber's opposition to perfectionism (since this is a product of the demand by the egocentric center, or the superego, in this case, and contains an element of hubris—the humble person will never be inclined to perfectionism, but will try to act according to his ability), see (Buber 1983, p. 234): "improvement where improvement is possible—improvement and not perfection". In another conversation, with A. Ch. Elhanani, Buber explained that he kept his distance from perfectionism, and called himself a "millieurist" (see Stern 1989, p. 196). Consequently, our constant drifting into the It is unavoidable, even for individuals exceptionally sensitive to the Thou (see Buber 1970, pp. 68–69). It should be emphasized that this minimal demand, of the modest aim of the first glimmerings of encounter and no more, does not contradict the fact mentioned above, that when the "Divine Presence" rests between two, this opens the way for the appearance of the element that Buber called the "third" (see above, note 8). There is no inconsistency here because, as was explained above, what is important is not to be found in the "what" or the "how many", but in a person's inner intent; that is, the "how". If the two are rewarded by having the "third" present between them, this experience will be intensified—and it might be possible to speak of the revelation of the Divine Presence or of the "mystery of reality" within the flow of life. Obviously, the two who understand the secret of dialogue do not open their hearts to each other **in order** to attain this experience, nor do they do so **on condition** that this happen.

102 Buber uses this term to thwart the possibility of including in the I-Thou relation falling in love and similar sentimental fantasies, which, according to him, have nothing to do with this relation (see above, notes 6, 7, 51). Buber's words here are nothing other than an expression of the purest possible openness to the other—which is, at the same time, an expression of the openness to those who are **created by God**—and were sent to us for the meeting by (**and with**) God.

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Article

Franz Rosenzweig on Divine Love and on the Love of Enemies: Complications of Agape in the Secularized World

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Abstract: Love is a keystone in Franz Rosenzweig's philosophy, which reaffirmed Judaism's emphasis on vital, relational love. What "love" exactly means, however, is controversial. In the Christian context, love is often denoted by *Agape*—which implies (1) that "God is Love", (2) that love is universal, impartial, and rather endorses the sinner; and (3) that humans should practice and emulate such love. The ultimate expression of Agape is the commandment to love one's enemy, which is rooted in the *Sermon on the Mount* (Matthew 5:44). This essay considers Rosenzweig's understanding of Agape, at the implicit level (since the coining by Anders Nygren of Christian love as "Agape" became widespread only after Rosenzweig's death). This essay opens by contextualizing Rosenzweig within political theology, in particular vis-à-vis Schmitt. Secondly, it considers Rosenzweig's approach to Agape in the sense of divine love, and in the sense of the love of enemy. Concerning divine love, Rosenzweig criticized theological Agapism ('God is love') which equates God with love, and hence makes love into a dogma or noun, rather than an action or verb, thus depriving divinity's personal loving agency. Concerning the agapic love of enemy, Rosenzweig discredits its Christian version (for being imperialistic), and advocates its Jewish version of accepting divine judgement. His surprising advocacy of the love of enemies may result from Rosenzweig's opposition to Gnosticism, which excludes the 'good God' from involvement in the physical world. The essay's conclusion reflects on the role of Agape and its pragmatist versions in the post-secular world of the 21st century and conveys Rosenzweig's pragmatist contribution in this regard, of recognizing the significance of worldliness and togetherness.

Keywords: Franz Rosenzweig; divine love; human love; love of enemy; Agape; Anders Nygren; secularization; Carl Schmitt; political theology

Citation: Berman, Nadav S. 2024. Franz Rosenzweig on Divine Love and on the Love of Enemies: Complications of Agape in the Secularized World. *Religions* 15: 806. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15070806

Academic Editors: Ronen Pinkas and Elad Lapidot

Received: 15 May 2024
Revised: 21 June 2024
Accepted: 25 June 2024
Published: 2 July 2024

1. Introduction

This essay explores the approach of Franz Rosenzweig (Kassel, Germany 1886—Frankfurt, 1929) to divine love with a special emphasis on its Christian context (*Agape*) and its notion of the love of enemy.[1] We shall see that Rosenzweig thought that strict Agapism, which identifies God with love in a propositional or dogmatic manner, might deprive the vitality of God, humans, and love itself. At the same time, Rosenzweig remarks upon a poem written by the medieval Jewish thinker and poet Judah HaLevi (Toledo 1075—Jerusalem, 1141) on divine love as involving enmity, in a surprising way that might seem agapic, but ultimately predicates on old Jewish motifs. This observation will invite a comparison between Rosenzweig and the German jurist Carl Schmitt, who seemingly walked an opposite path—from Christian love to a binary division (a la Joshua 5:13) between friends and foes. However, Schmitt's views on Jews and on Judaism are marked by intense negative prejudices.[2] To account for this complicated and perhaps surprising juxtaposition, we will start by remarking on political theology.

1.1. Political Theology and the Transformations of Virtues and Vices

The discipline of Political Theology examines complicated processes of how ideas migrate from religious traditions into the secularized world, and on several meanings of secu-

larization (Casanova 1994). The term political theology is associated predominantly with Carl Schmitt (Plettenberg, Germany 1888–1985), to whom we turn soon. A good way to present the complications of secularization is by citing the following paragraph from the essayist Gilbert Keith Chesterton, who traced the origins of the modern crisis in the Reformation:

> The modern world is not evil; in some ways the modern world is far too good. It is full of wild and wasted virtues. When a religious scheme is shattered (as Christianity was shattered at the Reformation), it is not merely the vices that are let loose. The vices are, indeed, let loose, and they wander and do damage. But the virtues are let loose also; and the virtues wander more wildly, and [inflict their] damage. The modern world is full of the old Christian virtues gone mad. The virtues have gone mad because they have been isolated from each other and are wandering alone. (Chesterton 1908, pp. 38–39)

According to Chesterton, the modern project is full of good intentions, but it often ignores the ideational force of traditional virtues and vices as well as their fragile holistic textures. Paradoxically, Chesterton asserts, it is not necessarily the *vices* whose wandering in secularized societies is most hazardous, but the virtues. When they travel unleashed in the modern world, most people are not aware that these virtues have a history and religious contexts, and might be distorted. The more powerful an idea is, the more important it is to mediate it and open it to pragmatic public reasoning (Berman 2022b).[3] Steven Kepnes illuminates another aspect of the religious–secular predicament:

> Modernity was and continues to be, in its transformed postmodern stage, an age of revolutions with promised utopias. […] The lesson of the political and philosophical revolutions of modernity and postmodernity is that it is impossible to move forward without taking the past with you. Taking the past into the future for the sake of the future, however, requires creative strategies—strategies of repetition, interpretation, and mediation—that sublimate and re-present the past as a usable past. (Kepnes 2007, p. 9)

"The Past […] Stuck like Glue […] and Caused an Excess Weight"

This problematic (or perhaps supersessionist) approach in modernism toward the religious past, was addressed by Rosenzweig himself, who contends that Friedrich Schleiermacher played a pivotal role in developing a secularization system that was dedicated "to denying the permanent value of the past and to anchoring the always present experience of the feeling of belief in the eternal future of the moral world" (Rosenzweig 2005, p. 110, which translates Rosenzweig [1921] 1988, p. 111; the references to *The Star* are henceforth abbreviated: *The Star* 110/*Der Stern* 111). The religious past, insists Rosenzweig,

> [W]hich was overly encumbered with miracles and now suspicious, could be thrown overboard, and it could be imagined that the ship of faith, already dangerously shaken without this ballast, yet could still safely cross the sea of the present. But this does not say that what was sunk also really—sank. Far from pleasing theology by really sinking, the past stuck like glue to the exterior of the vessel from which it had been thrown and caused an excess weight, worse than previously when it had been stowed inside, which is the proper nature of things. (*The Star* 110–11/*Der Stern* 111–12)

To Rosenzweig's mind, the modern secularization project, Schleiermacher being one of its pioneers, tried to dispose of an intuitive sense of tradition, and gave birth to unintended matters. This essay suggest that one such virtue, which in Chesterton's words was "let loose" in the modern world, and in Rosenzweig's words survived the attempts to throw it to the sea, is the Christian *Agape*.

Despite its foundational role in Christian theology (Nygren 1953), Agape is not often discussed in scholarly engagements with political theology, virtue epistemology, and related discussions. Agape, to put it briefly, is the threefold assertion that (1) *God is love*

(1 John 4:8); that (2) this *love is universal*, impartial, and endorses the sinner; and (3) that the *supreme human vocation is practicing and emulating agapic love*. Agape has its basis in the Hebraic instruction of neighbor love (Leviticus 18:19, see Mendes-Flohr 2007), though its radical or ultimate expression is the commandment to love one's enemy, in the *Sermon on the Mount* (Matthew 5:44). As we shall see below, Agape and its implications are disputed among and appropriated by Christians, but also by Jews, and at an implicit level Agape is relevant for every human being, Abrahamic or other. In what follows, we consider these issues in the context of Rosenzweig's philosophy of love.

1.2. Rosenzweig within the Thicket of Political Theology, War and Love

Rosenzweig was not a political theologian in the sense this term received following Carl Schmitt's 1922 book *Politische Theologie* (political theology). Schmitt had famously claimed in this book (Schmitt 2005, p. 36) that all our pregnant or significant political concepts, despite modernity's presumption of complete novelty, are secularized and eventually imported from the theological domain. Modern sovereignty discourses are thus recapitulating old patterns of authority. As Samuel Hayim Brody writes, "For Schmitt, 'political theology' meant that no matter how modern and secular a political concept might seem, if we analyze its intellectual history and trajectory, we will discover that it is a transformed version of a theological concept. Schmitt thought this was especially true of concepts related to the legitimation of authority." (Brody 2018, p. 3). Schmitt famously defined sovereignty as the ability to declare war and the state of emergency. He thus defined in his *The Concept of the Political* (Schmitt 1996) the inner realm of the political by sharply dividing between a friend and an enemy. Schmitt thus suspends or annuls the agapic dictate, by restricting love to the private rather than the public domain (see Schwab's remark in Schmitt 1996, p. 29).

On Schmitt's side, I am not aware of any intellectual engagement he had with Rosenzweig; Raphael Gross, in his work on Schmitt and the Jews (Gross 2007, p. 121) mentions Rosenzweig only in passing. As for Rosenzweig, I do not know of any explicit remark he made on Schmitt; it also plausible to assume that Rosenzweig would endorse Buber's democratic ethos of *Theopolitics*. What can be said of Rosenzweig vis-a-vis Schmitt? Among many oppositions to Schmitt's conceptualization of political theology, we may mention that of Rosenzweig's close friend and colleague, Martin Buber. Brody makes the following observation: "Buber rarely uses the term "political theology," but he frequently uses the term *Theopolitik* (theopolitics), a word that seems at first as though it might mean the same thing. However, I follow Christoph Schmidt's belief that for Buber, the term "theopolitics" is intended to function as a deep inversion of "political theology," a conceptual attack on Schmitt and what he stands for." (Brody 2018, p. 3)

Rosenzweig, for his part, addressed religious tradition without secularizing it (see Bensussan 2013, p. 130); at the same time, he was not a conservative political thinker in the sense of ascribing divine properties to human rulers. Rosenzweig, however, was not free of the modern vicissitudes of secularization. His approach to both philosophy and religion is thus a subject of recent scholarly discussions in political theology and implicit juxtapositions between him and Schmitt in the context of WWI and its aftermath (Cotesta 2015; Alonso 2021). Rosenzweig should of course be contextualized within the theological battles of the Weimar Republic (see Lazier 2008), and within broader schemes of political theology. Through the influence of his combat experience in WWI, Rosenzweig indeed wrote (Rosenzweig 1984, pp. 61–124, 313–68) about war as part of a dialectical and even prophetic process of world-unification (Alonso 2021), which has a redemptive potential (see Pollock 2004; Herskowitz 2024). However, Bruce Rosenstock (2010, p. 262) contended that "Rosenzweig is clear that redemption will not be achieved through war", whereas "Schmitt insists that only war can defend the hope of redemption against the hubristic drive of a sinful, atheistic humanity." (In Section 2.3, below, we return to a comparison of Rosenzweig and Schmitt). As in the case of Rosenzweig's approach to death, which is ultimately pro-life (see Turner and Berman 2022) and thus very different from, say, that

of Schopenhauer and Heidegger, Rosenzweig's approach to war was not a mere celebration of bloodshed; his life-affirming approach—similar to that of Hans Jonas and many others—emphasizes world preservation and repair. When Rosenzweig wrote about the love of enemies, he was by no means charmed—as were other WWI-era thinkers such as Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak HaCohen Kook—by the phenomenon of war. Against this background, let us consider Rosenzweig's approach to Agape in its senses of divine love and of the love of enemies.

2. Rosenzweig on Divine Love and on the Love of Enemies

Love is a keystone in Rosenzweig's philosophy. It binds together his conceptual triad of God, the human creature, and the world, through the relational triad of revelation, creation, and redemption. Love played a pivotal role in Rosenzweig's philosophical attempt in *The Star* to revitalize Jewish tradition within and against the totalitarian trajectory found in German Idealism (esp. in Hegel) and against the stark secularization waves of early 20th century modernism. In short, Rosenzweig strived to reaffirm Judaism's emphasis on a relational and ever-renewing covenant with God.

The concept of *Agape*, or divine love, is central in Christian theology, and became foundational in the 20th century due to Anders Nygren's *Agape and Eros*, which portrayed a sharp distinction between these two motifs. To Nygren's mind, Christianity is predicated on *Agape*, which is categorically different from Eros, "heavenly" as it may be: "there is no way, even not that of sublimation, which leads from Eros to Agape" (Nygren 1953, p. 52). To Nygren's mind, Agape is universal, impartial, disinterested, self-giving (as in Jesus Christ) and ultimately moves top–down: "it must be spontaneous and unmotivated, uncalculating, unlimited and unconditional […] Agape is God's way to man" (Nygren 1953, pp. 91, 118).

Nygren's work was originally published in Swedish in the early 1930s and has been translated into English by the late 1930s, so Rosenzweig, who died in 1929, was not aware of Nygren's coining "Agape" for what has been previously called "Christian love" or *Christlische liebe* (e.g., by Nietzsche). Juxtaposing Rosenzweig with Agape, then, is only at the *implicit* level. Yet this exploration is important, since the signified phenomenon behind the signifier "Agape" clearly existed before Nygren. We start (Section 2.1) with a brief of Rosenzweig's critique of agapic, divine love as formulated in the idiom "God is love", then (Section 2.2) narrow down the particular sense of Agape as the "love of enemy" and consider Rosenzweig's commentary on one poem by Halevi, then (Section 2.3) discuss the ideational relationship between Rosenzweig and Schmitt concerning the love of enemies, and then propose a conclusion (Section 2.4).

2.1. Rosenzweig on/against Agapic Love

Love, as it is said, is central to Rosenzweig's dialogical thinking. This emotion is also pivotal in Western civilization. Simon May (2011, p. 4) writes: "In the wasteland of Western idols, only love survives intact". But love remains a highly complex concept, often mutated, secularized, used and abused. Agapic love, thus, merits close attention.

Rosenzweig expounds on love especially in Part II, Books I–II, of his magnum opus *The Star of Redemption* (*Der Stern* 123–28/*The Star* 103–220). He presents love as attentive, ever-present and ever-exposed to life, and hence vulnerable to refusal, disappointment, and failure.[4] In accordance with biblical theology, Rosenzweig assumes a connection between God's love and human love; humans ought to emulate the divine flow of love and plentitude love.[5] But what kind of love exactly is God's love? Rosenzweig insists that "Love knows only the present, it lives only out of the present, aspires only to the present" (*Der Stern* 174/*The Star* 169). Love is erotic and particular, not universal in the ex-personal sense; it is passionate, not disinterested.

That is why Rosenzweig emphasizes the *Song of Songs* and views it as a summit of the Jewish work of love, as "*Kernbuch der Offenbarung*" (*Der Stern* 225/*The Star* 217), namely, the "focal-book of revelation" (Mendes-Flohr 2015, pp. 95–96). The *Song of Songs* (*Hohe*

Lied, literally: the high/sublime song) is for Rosenzweig a text which is the "most eloquent statement in the Hebrew Bible on the meaning of revelation, of the divine-relation" (Mendes-Flohr 2015, p. 95; see also Greenberg 1996; Turner 2014). Rosenzweig's attraction to the *Song of Songs* coheres with his interest in Judah Halevi's poems, which often express friendship, passion (*heshek*), and longing.[6] In Nygren's terms, Halevi highlights *eros* rather than *agape*. Halevi enabled Rosenzweig to return to the ancient Hebraic Scripture and to its vivid or Dionysian ethos (Benjamin 2009, pp. 65–102). Motivated by the need to mediate *agape* with *eros*, Rosenzweig criticizes the Johannine, agapic principle that "God is love", in the third part of *The Star*, toward its conclusion, where Rosenzweig states:

> What we experience is that God loves, not that God is love [*Daß Gott liebt, erfahren wir, nicht daß Gott die Libe ist*]. In the love, he draws too near to us for us still to say: he is this or that. In his love, we experience only that he is […] but not what he is. The what, the essence, remains hidden. It hides precisely by revealing itself.
>
> (*Der Stern* 424/*The Star* 403–4)

Love, then, is an *attribute* of God, and more so an *action attribute*, and should not be *equated* with divinity, as in the agapic formula "God is love". Rosenzweig is possibly concerned that the agapic description of God is turning divinity into a dogmatic object, rather than a relational persona, at the expense of God's agency. It should be noted that Christian theologians are well acquainted with this issue about the *strict* versions of Agape. Pragmatist Christian theologians since St. Origen, Paul Tillich, Martin Cyril D'Arcy, Nicholas Wolterstorff, Jean-Luc Marion, and many others, hold (contra Nygren and Kierkegaard) that Agape must be mediated with Eros and with Nomos: not only at the human normative level, but at the theological level (since our aim here is Rosenzweig, space is limited for engaging in an in-depth exploration of Christian responses to Rosenzweig or to the normative lessons of the Sermon on the Mount).

Strict agapism has its influence on the normative sphere. Non-erotic images of divine love tend to create a God-idea which is full in Himself, and thus works top-down. Such visions of Agape emphasize divine grace, and leaves the human creature scarce room for agency (on Luther's version of agapic love as characterized by such passivity, see Simon May 2011, pp. 87–91).[7] The risk goes further: even God risks losing His personhood once squeezed too tight with Love, or in other words, once love is deified. In such constellation, God seems like yet another component of the pantheistic All or universe. This may be the source of Rosenzweig's discomfort with Spinoza's Pantheism, and with some conceptions of divine love, e.g., Hegel's idea of the Oneness of divine love and the complete immersion of the human self "in the All of life limitless in the infinite" (see the citation and remark by (Pollock 2014, p. 169, n. 44)). Rosenzweig's pragmatist insistence on freedom and on the idea of the *possible*[8] made him worry about making divine love into the great chain—or handcuffs—of being. Rosenzweig's pragmatist trajectories were highlighted by Hilary Putnam (Putnam 1999, p. 33), Benjamin Pollock (2021), and Cass Fisher (Fisher 2016, p. 353, regarding pragmatists such as Nicholas Rescher), who highlighted his worldly and anti-dogmatic approach, which is yet metaphysically rooted and driven.

Rosenzweig further problematizes the universal resonance of Agape when writing that "God always loves only whom and what he loves; but what separates his love from an "all-love" [*Allliebe*] is only a "not-yet" [*Noch-nicht*]; it is only "not yet" that God loves everything besides what he already loves" (*Der Stern* 183/*The Star* 178). This hovering component, of the "not-yet" and of future tense, is vital for Rosenzweig in order to defend the idea of possibility. A full realization of anything is, by definition, beyond human reach, and beyond the conditions of this world.

In passing, we note that Rosenzweig was, for the same reason, worried about the identification of God with truth. Namely, to save the living cosmos from rigidity (or 'freezing'), to save the human mind from the tyranny of hyper-rationalistic (rather than pragmatist) Idealism, and to save God from the atomist or pagan worldview. Rosenzweig insisted: "Truth is not God. God is truth [*Die Wahrheit its nicht Gott. Gott its die Wahrheit*]. […] Not

truth itself is enthroned above reality, but God, because he is truth. Because truth is his seal, he can be One above the All and One of reality. Truth is the scepter of his reign." (*Der Stern* 429/*The Star* 408; see the comments by Elliot R. Wolfson 2014, pp. 45–47).

Loyal to his praxis-orientedness, Rosenzweig amends or takes the sting out of strict agapism, and emphasizes that "neighbor love" as we know it from Leviticus 18:19, which pertains to flesh-and-blood human beings: it necessitates an egalitarian vision of humanity, as mandated by the biblical principle of *imago Dei* (or the createdness of all human beings in God's image, see Rosenzweig's remarks in *The Star* 234, 252–8, 278). In this crucial sense, God's impartial care for humanity (and not only for the people of Israel) is constitutive of the very becoming into a person out of the otherwise chaotic surrounding world (*Der Stern* 267/*The Star* 257; cf. with Gordon 2003, p. 216). For Rosenzweig, a pragmatist universalism was not conceived as foreign to Judaism.

2.2. Rosenzweig on the (Agapic) Love of Enemies

In the previous section we saw that Rosenzweig was critical about theological Agape. What did he think of the normative agapic precept of the love of enemies, which (as said above) has its origin in the Sermon on the Mount? As Wayne Cristaudo remarks in the context of Rosenzweig and war, "Perhaps the most anti-natural injunction of the New Testament […] is the commandment to love one's enemies. Enemies are naturally those who threaten our very existence—the extinction of the enemy is thus the most natural thing in the world […] the injunction to love the enemy […] awakens us to a reality that is contrary to what appears to be the case" (Cristaudo 2014, pp. 77–78). However, as Barry Dov Walfish observes, "Love of enemies is not something that is specifically mandated in the HB/OT [Hebrew Bible/Old Testament] and consequently is not a commandment in Judaism" (Allington et al. 2019). As we shall see below, Rosenzweig thought a bit differently.

To Rosenzweig's mind, the Sermon on the Mount deserves serious consideration rather than ridicule, lest Christianity would be depicted narrowly (similarly to a prevalent simplistic caricature of Judaism as merely 'legalistic').[9] Agape, thus, need not be simply excluded from Judaism's axiological horizon. By considering agapic ideas, Rosenzweig followed his teacher, Hermann Cohen, who thought that "hatred is always wanton hatred" (or *sinn'at ḥinnam*). Cohen insisted, in a clear reference to the New Testament, that "the Old Testament does not contain this command" (Cohen 1995, p. 451), but he believed hate and hatred could be abolished (Cohen 1995, p. 452). Motivated by Spinoza's contention in chapter 17 of the *Tractatus Theologico Politicus* concerning the Hebrews' hatred of other nations, Cohen sought to free Judaism from this charge (see the discussion by Myriam Bienenstock 2018). Cohen, in his last years, witnessed WW1, and so did Rosenzweig. But both of them did not experience WW2 and the Holocaust, and both 'were privileged by God not to see the atrocities of the Shoah' (as Aviezer Ravitzky used to say of Rabbi A.Y.H. Kook). As we turn to consider Rosenzweig's address of the love of enemy, this alleged evil-blindness should be taken into consideration.

A fascinating case study for Rosenzweig's approach to the agapic love of enemies, is found in his translation of Rabbi Judah Halevi's poem "מָאָז מָעוֹן הָאַהֲבָה הָיִיתָ" (Thou hast been our dwelling-place, in allusion to Psalms 90:1). Here is Halevi's Hebrew poem, and its German translation by Rosenzweig, as well as an English translation of it:

Loving One's Enemies	**Feindesliebe**	**מֵאָז מְעוֹן הָאַהֲבָה הָיִיתָ**
Of old you've been the heavenly vest of love, my loving settled with you in the nest. Angry words of my enemy, I enjoy them, for Your sake; Leave him—he will pressure him whom you have long pressured. Your enemy learned Your anger: that's why I love him; for his fist meets Your blow head on. If You would cast me away, on that day I would cast myself away, how could I wish the best for him, whom You cast away! Until some day Your anger disappears and You send salvation to the remnant of the heirs redeemed by You. (Rosenzweig 2000a, p. 196)	Von eh warst Du der Liebe Himmelsveste/mein Lieben nistete bei Dir im Neste. Scheltworte meines Feinds, sie freun mich, Deinethalb/laß ihn—sein Druck preßt, den dein Druck längst preßte. Es lernte Deinen Grimm der Feind: drum lieb ich ihn/den seine Faust trifft Deines Schlags Gebreste. Verwarfst du mich, den Tag verwarf ich selber mich/wie gönnt' ich dem, den du verwarfst, das Beste! Bis einst dein Groll vergeht und Du Erlösung schickst/des einst von Dir erlösten Erbes Reste. (Rosenzweig 1927, pp. 108/233)	מֵאָז מְעוֹן הָאַהֲבָה הָיִיתָ חָנוּ אֲהָבַי בַּאֲשֶׁר חָנִיתָ תּוֹכְחוֹת מְרִיבַי עָרַבוּ לִי עַל-שְׁמֶךָ עָזָבֵם יַעֲנוּ אֶת-אֲשֶׁר עִנִּיתָ לָמְדוּ חֲרוֹנְךָ אוֹיְבַי וְאֹהֲבֵם כִּי רָדְפוּ חֶלְלְ אֲשֶׁר הִכִּיתָ מְיוֹם בְּזִיתַנִי בָּזִיתִינִי אֲנִי כִּי לֹא אֲכַבֵּד אֶת-אֲשֶׁר בָּזִיתָ עַד יַעֲבָר-זַעַם וְתִשְׁלַח עוֹד פְּדוּת אֶל-נַחֲלָתְךָ זֹאת אֲשֶׁר פָּדִיתָ. (cited in Rosenzweig 2011, p. 272)

We cannot discuss here the poetic qualities of Helavi's poem, nor expound on Rosenzweig's translation of this poem vis-a-vis its biblical allusions (see Schwarz's notes in Rosenzweig 2011, pp. 272–73). Our focus here is Rosenzweig's remarks on this poem. Here is an English translation of his commentary, with references to the German original:

> One does as little justice to the dictum "Love your enemies", [*Liebet eure Feinde*] from the Sermon on the Mount [*Bergpredigt*], as one does to other great realities if one views it as an ethical demand and thus from the point of view of unreality. The Christian's love for his enemies [*Die christliche Feindesliebe*] is a reality [*Wirklichkeit*]—wherever it cannot be anything else. And it enters this state of not being able to be anything else wherever the church or an individual obeys Christianity's original command: to missionize [*zu missionieren*; (Glatzer 1972, p. 348), translates: "the proselytize"]. Loving one's enemies here becomes the most powerful weapon for world conquest: the enemy is loved as a future brother [*künftige Bruder*].
>
> So Jewish love for an enemy must be something totally different [*ganz andres*[10]] if it is to be real. For here the reality is a community that has been granted not the blessings of victory [*Gnaden des Siegens*] but instead those of defeat [*Unterliegens begnadeten*]. Thus love for one's enemies arises here at the point that Yehuda Halevy reveals in this poem, for what we have here is truly a revealing. The real is rarely that which is spontaneously expressed, and a word easily falls into unreality when it attempts to become objective. But what is here revealed is the objective truth, precisely because it is expressed in an entirely subjective manner. The Jew loved in his enemy, the executor of divine judgment [*Der Jude liebt im Feind den Vollstrecker des göttlichen Gerichts*], a judgment he accepts. In contrast to all other people, he has no other choice since he alone does not have at his disposal the Jews whose fault it is—and therefore makes his own [*und es bleibt ihm im Gegensatz zu allen andern Menschen nichts andres übrig, denn er als einziger hat nicht die Juden zur Verfügung, die daran schuld sind*]. A man's love for God becomes the law of life for all the love with which he can love other people [*Die Liebe, mit der ein Mensch Gott liebt, wird zum Lebensgesetz aller Liebe, mit der er Menschen*

> *lieben kann*], even, to take it to the extreme (but is there an extreme for love?), his enemies. "Of old you've been the heavenly vest of love."
>
> (Rosenzweig 2000a, p. 197, [see also Galli 1995, pp. 252–53]; the bracketed German sentences are cited from Rosenzweig 1927, p. 233)

What interests us here the most is Rosenzweig's engagement with the Christian precept of love for the enemy (*Gebot der Feindesliebe*). In an essay concentrating on this particular poem and Rosenzweig's commentary of it, Galili Shahar remarks:

> The Christian, Rosenzweig argues, demands *Feindesliebe* as a means of imperialistic love, that of a mission. With his love the Christian occupies the world. The Jewish *Feindesliebe* is, however, different, for it expresses the being of the occupied, the experience of destruction, defeat, and loss, which is related to and justified as the judgement of God. The Jewish love for the enemy is not a gesture of religious mission; its task is not an opening toward the world. It is not a gesture of Reformation, nor is it an attempt to enter *Weltgeschichte* […] it is rather a gesture of acceptance.
>
> (Shahar 2014, p. 169, see until 171)

Joseph Yahalom (2009, p. 3) remarks that Rabbi Shmuel David Luzzato (ShaDaL), the 19th century Italian Jewish sage who first compiled this poem of Halevi in a collection (*Diwan*; see Luzzato 1864), conjectured that this motif of self-contempt or self-despising while endorsing the foe, was possibly borrowed from an Arab or Muslim (Ishmaelite) poet. Israel Levin, in a study on the influence of Arab passion poetry on Hebrew medieval poetry in Spain (Levin 2009, pp. 251–353), argues that the specific source for Halevi's motif was a poem by the eighth century poet Abu al-Shiṣ al-Khuza'i (Levin 2009, pp. 191–96). Beyond the genealogical question of intellectual influence, the seeming deeper theological puzzle remains: is it true that enemy love is genuinely Christian? How could Rosenzweig claim that it actually has a Jewish aspect that far exceeds the "imperial" and much-less-demanding Christian love? Why did Rosenzweig title this poem as "love of enemy", whereas Halevi's title emphasizes God's love?

One response would be to accuse Rosenzweig of being a 'diasporic' (or even masochistic) Jew, who "turns the other cheek" to the enemy. Yet a diametrically opposed response would suggest that such an "agapic" stance, in fact, has its sources in the moral ethos of the Hebrew Bible: "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. […] Let him give his cheek to him that smiteth him, let him be filled full with reproach." (Lamentations 3:27,30); and in the ethos of the Sages (*HaZaL*), which manifests the conclusion of the 18th Blessings (*Amidah*) prayer, which instructs the pious Jew to remain silent in the face of another's cursing of her or him. At the theological level, Rosenzweig stands here on a solid biblical ground: the Pentateuch teaches that history and worldly occurrences (including suffering) are an indispensable expression of God's providence. According to the speeches of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, worldly events, and success as well as suffering, should in some way indicate or communicate something profound about God's satisfaction with, or anger caused by, human behavior (see also Berman 2022b). This is indicative at the *collective* level, namely, without presuming to say that the destiny of suffering of any *individual* testifies for their flawed morality or piety. This trajectory coheres with biblical statements such as Isaiah's prophecy, which makes a connection between sin, suffering, and destruction:

> Ha! Those who write out evil writs, and compose iniquitous documents. To subvert the cause of the poor, to rob of their rights the needy of my people; that widows may be their spoil, and fatherless children their booty! […] Ha! Assyria, rod of my anger, in whose hand, as a staff, is my fury! I send him against an ungodly nation, I charge him against a people that provokes me, to take its spoil and to seize its booty, and to make it a thing trampled, like the mire of the streets.
>
> (Isaiah 10:1–2, 5–6, trans. NJPS)

A similar trajectory is found in later verses by Isaiah (12:1): "In that day, you shall say: "I give thanks to You, O God, although you were wroth with me (*odekha Hashem ki anafta bi*), your wrath has turned back and you comfort me"". How could anyone, then, blame God for his wrath? In the Hebrew Bible [HB] that was the case for Isaiah, who in the same breath pleas for redemption and comfort. But when looking back, at a *past* event, the HB urges human beings to harness evil for promoting the unending task of self-criticism and improvement (or in other words *Teshuvah*, repentance).

2.2.1. The Jew Does Not Have the Other "At His Disposal"

The biblical vision of 'evil as rebuke' might seem incomprehensible for moderns who inhabit a world that is said to be disenchanted, and nature which is allegedly mute. Moderns thus tend to make a sharp distinction between God and humanity. However, this disenchanted vision was foreign to Rosenzweig, who rather insists that "In contrast to all other people, he [the Jew] has no other choice since he alone does not have at his disposal the Jews whose fault it is—and therefore makes his own". Jews have, or should have, a humble sense of dis-ownership: other Jews, or even The Other, is not (so to speak) in their pocket; not their fellow Jews, let alone the rest of humanity. At this point there is an implicit agreement between Rosenzweig, who leans toward the rabbinic approach (see Fisher 2012, pp. 153–206) and between Emmanuel Levinas (for example, in his *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*) concerning the radical alterity of the other, which is deeply contrasted with an imperial ownership of the world—or even an idolatrous appropriation of God (and, in this sense, of a *god*).

The biblical notion of taking worldly events seriously was interestingly endorsed by Sigmund Freud, who (despite his secularism) conjectured in his *Culture and its Discontents* on the mentality of the ancient Hebrews, who faced the destruction of the First Temple, and reacted to it by accepting upon them the prophets' rebuke and by establishing the priestly rites, thus assuming responsibility for the divine wrath they experienced.[11] Regardless of Freud's historical assumptions about Bible Criticism (or his conjecture about the patricide urge), he seems to convey a non-fetishist or reality-attentive consciousness message, which is akin to Rosenzweig's.

2.2.2. Accepting Divine Judgment as a Theological Safeguard against Gnosticism

For Rosenzweig, we may speculate, receiving from God not only the good but also the evil could have been an important way of *contending with Gnosticism, which allocated goodness to the wholly other God*, while leaving evil to lowly and satanic, demonic authorities (see Lazier 2008, pp. 29–33; Pollock 2014). One way of reconstructing this latent Rosenzweigian assertion is by elimination: if the meaning of Jewish reaction to the agapic enemy-love mandate would be to remove God's presence completely from this world, while leaving the mundane world mute and blocked from revelation, and in this sense non-redeemed or even non-redeemable, this Gnostic outcome could hardly be reconciled with the traditional Jewish *weltanschauung* (on Judaism vis-à-vis Gnosticism, see Dan 2009, pp. 319–61, esp. 349).

Exploring the occurrences of the love of enemy in Rosenzweig's work, we may trace another source for his (otherwise surprising) inclusive approach toward the fruits of enmity. In a letter Rosenzweig sent to Gertrud Oppenheim in 1907, he described how he "objectivized" himself, thus feeling reluctant and critical toward his own subjectivity which appeared to him as "an enemy which I don't know" (cited in Pollock 2014, pp. 25–26). The attitude toward the enemy is thus correlative, in some sense, toward the enemy-within of the self itself. In this regard, tolerance and suspension may be a very utilitarian (or even egoistic?) way of self-preservation. This self-questioning or partial self-alienation was—in the above case—pivotal in Rosenzweig's decision to remain Jewish, and possibly contributed to the developing of his approach as more tolerant toward concrete, external enemies. In addition to this 'mental interiorizing' of enmity, Rosenzweig made a relevant distinction between space and time when he wrote to his friend Eugen Rosenstock "who

never stopped trying to convert him to Christianity" (in the words of Ephraim Meir 2006, p. 53) that he is "my enemy in space, my friend in time" (*"mein Feind im raum, mein Freund in der Zeit"*; see Meir 2006, p. 43). The ability to view enmity in a modal way—enemy in this regard, but not otherwise—revels a pragmatist quality, of discerning complexity and avoiding simplistic binaries (on Rosenzweig's pragmatism, see more below). And, in the case of Jewish–Christian relations, Rosenzweig did not deny the tensions between them, but provided some lenses to identify certain continuities (or an 'overlapping ideational consensus', to paraphrase John Rawls).

To sum up this section: on the one hand, Rosenzweig criticized theological agapism ('God is love'), which equates God with love and hence makes love into a dogma or a noun, rather than an action or verb, thus depriving divinity's personal agency of loving. On the other hand, Rosenzweig surprisingly defends the agapic love of enemy, while debunking its Christian version (as being imperialistic), and advocating its Jewish form of accepting divine judgement. This is not love of enemy per se, but an acknowledgment of the evil that already happened. This is no surprise, since for Rosenzweig, as Leora F. Batnitzky remarks, "Love is commanding and judgmental: Love demands that I change, that I be different" (Batnitzky 2000, p. 162). Rosenzweig did not straightforwardly reject the love of enemy, which is a central facet of Christian gospel (as did Elia Benamozegh (1873, pp. 65–103) and others), but challenged it and even subverted the standard universalistic view of agape, while contending that Jewish love of enemies is far more challenging than the love of the other-who-is-not-yet-brother. The Jewish love, according to Rosenzweig, requires the more challenging brotherly love of all human creatures, who are ultimately all God's children (as in Malachi 2:10).

This surprising advocacy may result, as I speculated above, from Rosenzweig's opposition to Gnosticism, which excludes the 'good God' from being involved in the physical, created world. Similar to Rosenzweig's idea of love, which is dynamic and modular, enmity too was not for him a simple, bedrock concept. The way Schmitt divides humanity into friends and foes, which seems Gnostic at the social level ('sons of light' vs. 'sons of darkness'), is contrasted with Rosenzweig's way of thinking, and this is where we turn to discuss the differences between them.

2.3. Between Rosenzweig and Schmitt on the Love of Enemies

For Schmitt, it is quite clear, enemies should be fought against. In this regard, Schmitt can be viewed as an explicit rebel against strict Agape.[12] But does that make Schmitt "Jewish"?[13] This question exceeds our discussion, but we may note that Schmitt's implied opposition to Christian universal love makes him a relevant candidate to examine Rosenzweig's engagement with Agape.

Rosenzweig did not preach some idyllic love; he participated in a very concrete war—WWI. But he nevertheless asserted that, from a Jewish perspective, the enmity of enemies should in some sense be perceived as a divine judgement. Several questions come to mind about Rosenzweig's worldview, and concerning the conceptual relationship between him and Schmitt. There were some scholars who argued that there indeed *is* a large common ground between the two. Peter Eli Gordon, for instance, makes the following comparison: "Rosenzweig's claim that a religious community first appears upon the basis of an unprecedented "decision" (*Entscheidung*), which first singles out the We from the You (those "enemies of God"). Rosenzweig admits that such a decision is "dreadful" (*grauenhaft*) […] But he also assures the reader of its necessity, especially for a community that creates its boundaries without the benefit of statehood or land." (Gordon 2003, p. 215). Gordon contends that Rosenzweig's idea of 'decisionist' and dreadful revelation results in an a-rational (or even anti-rational) moment of polity founding; and that this gloomy conception of the We-formation has much in common with Schmitt's anti-liberal stance (Gordon 2003, p. 216).

From another angle, Mark Lilla compares Rosenzweig and Karl Barth, and states that neither of them "thought of redemption in political terms. But once the theological discourse they helped to shape took an eschatological and apocalyptic turn following the First

World War, it was only a matter of time before those inspired by it began speaking of the political crises of Weimar in the very same language" (Lilla 2007, p. 260, see further 251–95). Lilla's argument implies that Rosenzweig's approach to miracles (which amounts to what we might call 'miraculous ontology') is tantamount to Schmitt's 'decisionism', namely that Rosenzweig had a share in sowing the seeds of what enabled the rise of Nazi authoritarianism.

It seems, however, that the comparison with Schmitt might stretch Rosenzweig too much. As for Gordon's claim, recall that in conjunction with the immediate European "other", namely the Christian, Rosenzweig dedicated much effort to strengthening and widening the interreligious bridge (it is not 'by blood alone'). The building blocks of this inter-human association, for Rosenzweig, were love and openness, not hate and dread. The fact that both Rosenzweig and Schmitt had these and other critiques of the liberal German society they knew does not mean that they shared the vision of the ideal society.

As for Lilla's claim, we may mention Bruce Rosenstock (2010, pp. 244–63) and Bonnie Honig (2009, pp. 87–111), who read Rosenzweig as rather endorsing a worldly and democratic political scheme which prefers dialogue over tyranny. Whereas for Schmitt the miracle is a fertile ground for the ruler's determination, which is then imposed politically top–down, Honig claims that for Rosenzweig the "miracle is an ambiguous sign that thrusts upon humans the responsibility to receive it. That responsibility presupposes and requires a readiness and preparation provided by community membership, neighborliness, liturgical practice, material preparation, and study" (Honig 2009, p. 95). Rosenzweig's idea of miraculousness, then, stems from a completely different political theology (and philosophical anthropology) than that of Schmitt, and intends to give rise to a very different kind of society.

As a Jewish thinker leaning toward an open-minded conservatism or moderate orthodoxy, Rosenzweig appreciated pragmatic *lawfulness* rather than *lawlessness* (or Gnosticism and messianic Sabbateanism in this regard; see Lazier 2008, pp. 146–60; Pollock 2014, p. 105). This positions Rosenzweig in an intellectual place very different from that of Schmitt. This distinction provides an important context for Rosenzweig's commentary on the love of enemies: similar to Maimonides (and Spinoza), Rosenzweig believed in the significance of the worldly (rather than the otherworldly) realm. For this reason, the ability to identify evil and suffering *within* this world is a crucial element of being a citizen of the planet: life's predicaments are not an exclusive product of blind historical forces, but rather ought to be viewed—at least retrospectively—as authored by a benevolent divine sender.

2.4. Conclusion: Rosenzweig, Agape, and Political Theology

Up until now we have seen that Rosenzweig was critical of strict Agapism at the theological level (not "God is love", but "God loves"), and also at the moral, normative level. Rosenzweig distinguished between the Christian love of enemy (which is, inherently speaking, the ideal of normative or applied agape) and between the Jewish love of enemy, which is to his mind more demanding—because it forces the Jews to recognize the deep alterity of the enemy, of the other person, and to accept worldly evil and suffering as a genuine, and indeed awful, manifestation of the real God—rather than a fruit of Satan or some cosmic accident.

As remarked above (Section 1.2), Rosenzweig was not a political theologian in the standard sense. He truly lived and believed in an enchanted world, in which God's love is revealed eternally and constantly. Rosenzweig's world, and his *weltanschauung*, are not secularized in a bold sense. Yet, when considering his philosophy against his contemporaries and, in particular, with Schmitt, as juxtaposed here, we may draw some conclusions about Rosenzweig and about the vicissitudes of Agape in the secularized world. First, it seems that Conservation Laws apply also in the ideational world: the profound energy of Agape persists in the modern world, despite the eulogies over the "death of God" and the prophecies concerning the disappearance of Religion. In fact, Nietzsche, who was a key player in the secularization of the modern world, was a fervent critic of the Agapic ethic

(as said above in Section 2), without using the word Agape. But the secularization of the modern, industrialized and urbanized world did not eliminate the forcefulness of Agape, and it is maybe the case—if Chesterton's assertion is correct—that ignoring the potential explosiveness of Agape made the secularization project less stable than it could have been. Neither Rosenzweig nor this study gives us final answers about the proper form of Agape in the Christian, Jewish, or other context. It only aimed to raise some questions, and to seek to refine some existing questions, while providing some conjectures, distinctions, and observations, and highlighting the potential contribution on pragmatism in this regard. In the next section, we will engage with the latter challenge, of navigating pragmatism and agapism in a world and within societies that are often polarized and radicalized, and unaware of the religious ideas which still motivate them.

3. Agape in the 21st Century—Some Reflections following Rosenzweig

What may this dialectical exploration of Rosenzweig's commentary on divine love and on the love of enemy mean for Jews, Christians, Muslims, and others in the post-secular conditions of the 21st century? Surprisingly perhaps, it could be argued that we live in an agapic age, which is marked by the 1967 song by the Beatles, "all you need is love"; the late modern era is saturated with messianic hopes and failures, religious and secularized. For the sake of our discussion of the agapic "love of enemy", it should be noted that the current period is one of a war between Iran-Hamas and Israel, between Russia and Ukraine, and other global conflicts. This surely reminds us of the urgency of the topic and of what is at stake. Do enemies deserve love or hate? Can any sustainable reconciliation and peace be achieved without the engine of love, and at least some degree of agapic love of enemies? We end this study by remarking on (Section 3.1), The Significance of Political Theology and its Secularizations, on (Section 3.2), Rosenzweig's Thought and the Task of Fostering of Humanist, Caring Approaches, and on (Section 3.3), Emotional Theology and the Covenant of Being-with.

3.1. The Significance of Political Theology and Its Secularizations

This essay examined Rosenzweig in conjunction with two umbrella terms: political theology and Agape. A first lesson I wish to draw is acknowledging and considering their dominance, and to take political theology seriously (as did Paul W. Kahn 2011), including its intersections with Jewish tradition and its halakhic branches (see Rothschild 2022). This, however, does not mean subscribing to Schmitt's specific axiology and political philosophy, which advocated firm binaries of the political sphere, and rigid or dictatorial sovereignty. Rather, a constructive approach would ask what are the ideational conditions for a democratic liberal order (see Vatter 2021), and how can theopolitics promote such an ethos.

This task can benefit from Rosenzweig's implicit engagement with Schmitt, and, in particular, with Rosenzweig's insistence (in the spirit of Hermann Cohen's ethical monotheism and its robust Jewish sources) on the universal extension of *imago Dei*, which opposes Schmitt's friend/enemy division, as well as racist, pseudo-scientific (or scientistic) ideologies that became powerful in the modern era. Rosenzweig did not deny the idea of enmity, but he clearly thought that it should not become into the only or first lens one employs. Martin Buber (1993, pp. 86–89) provides further critique of Schmitt's tenacious division: "The radical distinction which Schmitt supposes appears in times in which the common life is threatened, not in times in which it experiences its stability as self-evident and assured. The distinction, therefore, is not adequate to yield the principle of "the political"." (Buber 1993, p. 87; see also Brody 2018, pp. 67–80; Lesch 2019).

To do so, post-secular societies (see Casanova 1994), surely within such conditions of bloody conflict, may ask what kinds of political theology support and foster the refinement of discursive tools for engaging with religious traditions in a dialogical and pragmatist way. When thinking about religious traditions of the West in this regard, Agape is a crucial concept, and yet an under-discussed one. Agape is influential not only as a religious concept,

but also as a secularized one. In particular, the strict agapic trajectory of a boundaryless love, which supersedes every familial, tribal, national, and even biological distinction, is forceful in the modern world, and is traceable, for example, in Karl Marx's universalism, in Peter Singer's 'Pan-Species' Utilitarianism (Berman 2022a, pp. 85–97), and elsewhere.

From a Jewish perspective, the Christian dispute over the proper balance between Agape, Eros, and Nomos (Nygren 1953) raises the challenge of mediating between the Catholic emphasis on embodiment (the collective and the individual body) and the Protestant inclination toward spiritualism. As I suggest elsewhere (Berman 2022b, p. 451), pragmatism could be seen as a mediation between Catholicism and Protestantism; Rosenzweig's middle path may serve as a pragmatist beacon in this regard. In this context, an important question concerns Islam, and Rosenzweig's seemingly biased approach to Islam in *The Star*; another question pertains to the ability of the Arabic language (and Islam in this regard) to be the "third element" which redeems the Jewish–Christian relationship from its complexities (this direction is evoked by Shahar 2014, p. 172). Given the basic predicaments of human existence, it makes sense to consider such hopes with a grain of salt. However, it seems necessary to take Islam into consideration; the Jewish–Christian couple should foster not only their dialogue, but also the dialogue with their younger Abrahamic brother, and surely with pragmatist or humanist Muslim branches.

3.2. Rosenzweig's Thought and the Quest for Humanist, Caring Approaches

Rosenzweig's critique of theological agapism studied here, as well as his surprising commentary on the agapic precept of the love of enemies, is a fascinating example of how 'interpretive walls' between religions and communities (Judaism and Christianity, in this case) can be viewed dialectically, and how such walls may be softened or lowered, while promoting human empathy, care, and solidarity. A central question, at least for those endorsing pragmatism, is its relationship with fanaticism(s) and fundamentalism(s).

Among many possible outlooks on the relationship between pragmatism and fundamentalism, we deal here with agapic love. Peter Ochs, for instance, challenges—similarly to Rosenzweig—the proposition "God is love". To Ochs's mind (Ochs 2011, p. 8), it represents a non-pragmatist, "dyadic thinking", which is seemingly problematic for Christianity itself. This Johannine idiom, in itself, might not be inherently fanatic, and surely neither are its wide range of multifaceted interpretations, but there may be something problematic with *identifying* God with love. There is a need, then, for pragmatist engagements with religious traditions, and, in particular, with 'explosive' religious concepts, such as Agape, whose override of *eros* is allegedly problematic (as D'Arcy and various others held).

This pragmatism is evasive. As Ronen Pinkas observes in the context of Rosenzweig and the need to defend open-mindedness: "revelation means allowing myself to take the risk of being open to God's love, hearing His words, and following His demands for bringing redemption to the world—that is, accepting that my moral responsibilities (whether in the personal, social, political, or environmental sphere) are necessities because they are divine demands" (Pinkas 2023, p. 125). As Eric Santner claims, Rosenzweig thought that a significant portion of the human predicament results from inner mental complexes. Contending with them religiously requires attentiveness to what Santner (2001) calls *The Psychotheology of Everyday Life*, or a sense of spiritual worldliness absorbed with metaphysical meanings that call for constant, contrite reflection, longing and moral perfection (Santner 2001, p. 25). This attunement suggests that worldly pain, enmity, and suffering need not be ignored or ascribed dogmatically to some satanic or impersonal forces. Worldly afflictions should rather be addressed (but not necessarily blessed), with hope for worldly redemption, rather than an apocalyptic doomsday vision.

3.3. Emotional Theology and the Covenant of Being-With

Our discussion of religious emotions and the dialectics of Agapic love relates to broader questions about the 'emotional theology' between Judaism and Christianity. Strict agapism holds that God is love, and only love. The Hebrew or biblical God, who is involved in the crea-

turely world, is consequently accused by Marcionites as being wrathful (Jonas 1963, p. 93); it is eventually easier to despise hate, than to hate love.

Interestingly, biblical Judaism, or the Hebraic God, similarly accuses the ancient gods of being furious and non-predictable (see the remark by Hermann Cohen 1995, p. 170); the Hebrew Bible rather displays a deed-based retribution, which channels hate toward proper objects (e.g., "O you who love the Lord, hate evil", *Psalms* 97:10). This complexity invites an exploration of virtue ethics, and of the role that sublimated negative sentiments may play in attaining human perfection. Rosenzweig's partial endorsement of the agapic love of enemy may suggest such dialectical or therapeutic processes of negative emotions. Rosenzweig's insistence on God's unity on the one hand, and on God's relatedness to the created world, entails that nothing worldly should be simply dismissed; enmity or its consequences, too, should not be excluded from this eco-system of 'emotional theology', nor from emotional *anthropology*.

One way to address the tenacious dualist urge, which constantly divides or dissects ontology and anthropology into (respectively) spirit and matter, and body and mind, is to rethink the very idea of togetherness. The Hebrew language is instructive here. When reflecting on Menachem Fisch's book *Covenant of Confrontation* (בְּרִית עִימּוּת, *brit immut*; Fisch 2019), I pondered on the etymology of the Hebrew word עִימּוּת. This word, which is a verbal noun, is usually pictured negatively by Hebrew speakers as denoting conflict, or aggressive confrontation. But according to the *Even Shoshan* Hebrew dictionary, this word is derived from the preposition "עִם" (literally: "with," or "being with"[14]). To express this idea of interrelation, and make it explicit, the word עימות can be transcribed as עִים-וּת (*imm-ut*), or 'con-front-ation', or 'fronting each other together', or mutually *facing* each other. This framing of עִים-וּת is proximal to Emmanuel Levinas's idea of compassion and to what Michael Fagenblat (2016) conceptualizes as "com-passion". By doing this, *imm-ut* is perceived as the mutual or inter-personal conscious decision to *face* one another, to *be with* one another, despite possible disputes.

This philosophical anthropology, of facing your human friend, interlocutor, or even enemy, underlies the dialogical assumptions of normative-oriented thought, be it Jewish, Christian, or other. The key for 'seeking the face' (as elaborated in the works of Menachem Lorberbaum, Melila Hellner-Eshed, and others) is insisting on not restricting reality to its present appearances, and being open to potentiality. In the case of Rosenzweig and his vision of divine and human love, such openness seeks to avoid the suffocation of the present by letting in some fresh future air: "By conceiving of the All as future […] Rosenzweig presents system once again as a *task*, as the program human beings are called upon to carry out" (Pollock 2009, p. 234). Divine and human love are, in this regard, an indispensable oxygen.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Data are contained within the article.

Acknowledgments: This essay benefited from a seminar I gave in 7 March 2024 at the Institute of Jewish Studies (IJS), University of Antwerp, in collaboration with its University Centre Saint Ignatius (UCSIA). I thank Vivian Liska, Director of the IJS, for her feedback on that seminar. I also thank Ronen Pinkas, the anonymous reviewers of *Religions*, Paul Mendes-Flohr, Samuel Hayim Brody, and Barbara Loerzer for their constructive remarks. Any error remaining is my own (N.S.B.).

Conflicts of Interest: The author declare no conflict of interest.

Notes

1 This essay is a part of a broader research project on intersections between Jewish Thought, Pragmatism and Agape.

2 Jacob Taubes wrote in his book *Ad* [To] *Carl Schmitt* (p. 25) that "For Schmitt Christianity was 'Judaism for the Gentiles', he always longed to stand up against its power" (cited in Gross 2007, p. 18). Raphael Gross remarks (Gross 2007, p. 17) that Schmitt

in his public writing described himself *Judenkritisch* (critical of the Jews), but in the "notebooks, however, Schmitt refers to the Jews as 'the true enemy'".

3 This paragraph and the citation from Chesterton are borrowed from (Berman 2022a, p. 89).

4 See also (Rosenzweig 2000a, p. 25), and the remark by Yehoyada Amir in (Rosenzweig 2011, pp. 26–27).

5 On Rosenzweig's understanding of divine love as expressed in Jewish liturgy, see the discussion by Steven Kepnes (2007, pp. 79–129).

6 See, e.g., the poems "The City on High" and "The Pilgrim", in (Rosenzweig 2000a, pp. 232, 240).

7 Erich Fromm (1941, p. 81) viewed Luther's approach of human submission to divine authority as one of the sources of the human "escape from freedom" in the modern era.

8 The category of the Possible has its basis and outcome in the psychological phenomenon of the unconscious (*das Unbewußte*); see (Santner 2001) and (Pinkas 2023). The latter states (121) that, for Rosenzweig, "the unconscious implies a spiritual potential", of liberation from Idealist Absolutism on the one hand, and from idolatry on the other.

9 Rosenzweig wrote: "One could not do a greater injustice [to Christianity] than to present it in terms of its own catechism. [...] These legalistic machines, lacking humor and soul, whom the Christian so gladly represents under the [name] "Pharisees", would be incapable of living; just as little as those pale lilies of heaven, whom the Jew, on the basis of reading the Sermon on the Mount, would recognize as the only "true Christians." If one wants to understand a spirit, then one must not abstract it from the body that belongs to it" (Rosenzweig 2000b, pp. 100–1).

10 This is the spelling in the original. The capitalizations in the cited texts are according to the original.

11 In Freud's own words: "The people of Israel had believed themselves to be the favourite child of God, and when the great Father caused misfortune after misfortune to rain down upon this people of his, they were never shaken in their belief in his relationship to them or questioned his power or righteousness. Instead, they produced the prophets, who held up their sinfulness before them; and out of their sense of guilt they created the overstrict commandments of their priestly religion. It is remarkable how differently a primitive man behaves. If he has met with a misfortune, he does not throw the blame on himself but on his fetish, which has obviously not done its duty, and he gives it a thrashing instead of punishing himself" (Freud 1961, p. 126; see also his elaborated remarks in *Moses and Monotheism*).

12 Exploring how Schmitt could run counter to Agape and the divine dictate of universal love, exceeds our discussion here (see Gross 2007, p. 311; Nirenberg 2014). On Schmitt's critique of Christianity, and in particular its idea of *Katechon*, or "restrainer", see (Lapidot 2020, pp. 41–43). Schmitt's stance vis-à-vis Christianity is a mirror-picture of Rosenzweig, a Jewish philosopher who endorsed the agapic love of enemies, as we saw above.

13 Any proponent of such a conjecture would have to address David Nirenberg's claim that Schmitt's concept of the political, and more broadly the Christian image of the political, was heavily influenced by its negative approach to Judaism and used "figures of Judaism to think about Christian politics and law" (Nirenberg 2014, p. 2).

14 A similar grammatical form is found in the Hebrew words מָהוּת(lit. essence) which is derived from מָה(what), כַּמּוּת(quantity) which is derived from כַּמָּה(how many), and אֵיכוּת(quality), which is derived from אֵיךְ(what).

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The Return of Chrysoloras: Humanism in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Middle Eastern Contexts

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Abstract: The journey of Byzantine scholar Manuel Chrysoloras and his stay in Florence at the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries has been celebrated as an event that decisively shaped the course of European humanism. The later return of Enlightenment humanism to Ottoman lands in the eighteenth to early twentieth centuries can be described as the return of Chrysoloras. This return is generally known in a fragmentary form as a regional phenomenon: the story of Greek, Arab, Turkish and Jewish nationalisms and of the Ottoman reforms. It is also framed historically as the evolution from a traditional and theological society to new forms of epistemic, literary, civic and national communities, while often leaving aside failures and later contradictory transformations. The present essay offers an integrative study of modern humanism in late Ottoman and post-Ottoman contexts. The migration of Enlightenment humanism to the Middle East raised a wide range of expectations, projecting a new national or imperial organization within a harmonious diplomatic relationship with Christian Europe and the Americas. Yet, the more the revivalist and reformist projects evolved, the more they involved ethnic and religious conflicts and colonial intervention. This article illuminates the rise and fall of humanism in Middle Eastern contexts.

Keywords: humanism; enlightenment; late Ottoman history; Arab nationalism; Greek nationalism; Zionism; Tanzimat; Muslim religious reform

Citation: Cohen-Skalli, Cedric. 2024. The Return of Chrysoloras: Humanism in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Middle Eastern Contexts. *Religions* 15: 637. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15060637

Academic Editors: Ronen Pinkas and Elad Lapidot

Received: 22 April 2024
Revised: 15 May 2024
Accepted: 20 May 2024
Published: 22 May 2024

1. Introduction

The migration of Byzantine scholars to the Italian Peninsula at the end of the fourteenth century and during the fifteenth century decisively shaped Italian and later European Renaissance humanism. This transfer of Greek knowledge from the Christian East to the Latin West anticipated and accompanied the progressive fall of Constantinople (1453). A famous story is that of Byzantine scholar Manuel Chrysoloras (1350–1415) being invited by Coluccio Salutati (1331–1406) to teach Greek in Florence to a group of distinguished humanists. Indeed, Chrysoloras, who brought with him many rare Greek manuscripts, taught Greek language and literature during the years 1397–1400 to figures like Guarino Veronese (1374–1460), Jacopo d'Angelo (*c.*1360–*c.*1410), Roberto de' Rossi (*c.*1355–1417), Niccolò Niccoli (1364–1437), Leonardo Bruni (*c.*1370–1444), Pier Paolo Vergerio the Elder (1370–*c.*1444), Uberto Decembrio (1350–1427), and Poggio Bracciolini (1380–1459)[1]. Out of this unique training in grammar and literature emanated a comprehensive literary effect, most visible in a wide range of direct translations from and imitations of Greek classical literature. This new access, rendering and use of Greek sources became a marker of fifteenth-century *studia hunanitatis* and later a central cultural issue in nineteenth- and twentieth-century elaborations of humanism[2]. Western scholars' dependence on earlier medieval Arabic or Hebrew translations decreased progressively. Bruni's translations from Plato, Aristotle, Xenophon, Plutarch and other Greek classics attracted the attention and criticism of his contemporaries and were later celebrated as a paradigmatic shift defining Renaissance humanism (Baron 1955a, pp. 114–21; Botley 2004, pp. 5–62). No less important in this context was Bruni's 1403–1404 *Laudatio Florentinae Urbis* (Panegyric

of Florence), written in clear imitation of the Greek tradition of panegyrics of Athens, and more specifically of Aristides' *Panathenaic Oration* (155 AD; Aristides 1973), a text to which he was introduced during his studies under Chrysoloras' guidance (Bruni 1978; Santosuosso 1986)[3]. Bruni's *Laudatio* stood at the center of Hans Baron's notion of civic humanism developed in *The Crisis of Early Italian Humanism* (1955) and often served to demonstrate the supposed humanistic shift of orientation, from earlier theological to new urban concerns (Baron 1955b, pp. 163–99)[4]. The opening words of Bruni's (1978, pp. 135–36) *Laudatio* have often been heard in this sense:

> Would that God immortal give me eloquence worthy of the city of Florence, about which I am to speak, or at least to my zeal and desire on her behalf; for either one degree or the other would, I think, abundantly demonstrate the city's magnificence and splendor . . . Indeed, this city is of such admirable excellence that no one can match his eloquence with it. But we have seen several good and important men who have spoken concerning God himself, whose glory and magnificence the speech of the most eloquent man cannot capture, even in the smallest degree . . . Therefore, I too shall seem to have done enough if, marshaling all competence, expertise, and skill that I have eventually acquired after so much study, I devote my all to praising this city even though I clearly understand that my ability is such that it can in no way be compared with the enormous splendor of Florence.

Bruni's new humanistic knowledge of Greek language and literature seems here emphatically invested in a new historical and secular task: the praise of the civic perfections attained by the most developed urban center of the period, Florence. Humanism has often been centered around this civic or secular shift of interest, leaving aside many other aspects of early modern humanism and religion. This essay is devoted to a forgotten aspect of humanism and its interplay with religion. It does not retell the well-known story of the migration of Greek knowledge from the decaying Byzantine Empire to Italian Renaissance centers. On the contrary, it sketches the opposite journey, the "return of Chrysoloras"—or rather the return of humanism to Ottoman lands, and its deployment and fate in the eighteenth to early twentieth centuries[5]. The type of humanism that will stand at the center of this essay is not the fifteenth-century humanism of Bruni. It is a later type developed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe that centered not only on the renewed literary mastery of classical sources but also on a new scientific and technological mastery of nature and human societies. God and religion are often reduced in this context to a simple pre-requisite for natural order and human civilization (Taylor 2007). The historical context of this essay is also radically different from the *Quattrocento*. Whereas the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries saw the parallel rise of the Ottoman and the Atlantic empires, the eighteenth to early twentieth centuries witnessed a reorientation of Western empires toward the East after the loss of the Americas, together with a progressive dismantling of the Ottoman Empire. From the eighteenth to early twentieth centuries, European conquests and imperial influence, regional nationalisms and religious reformist movements, as well as Ottoman attempts to restructure the Empire, shaped a new, evolving Ottoman and post-Ottoman sphere in which ideas played a new political role. The following pages attempt to narrate the return, or rather the rise and fall, of humanism in the Ottoman East under new national and international conditions. They propose a nuanced and yet comprehensive interpretation of its hopes and effects, aiming at elucidating the specific Middle Eastern dialectics of secularization and religious renewal in the age of nationalisms, Ottoman reforms and Europeans' growing colonial grip.

2. The Re-Appearance of Humanism in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Context

In his 1803 *Mémoire sur l'état actuel de la civilisation dans la Grèce*, Greek scholar Adamantes Koraes (1748–1833) solemnly announces "to the whole of enlightened Europe . . . the efforts . . . [the Greeks] are making to enlighten" themselves too (Coray 1803,

first page of the introductory letter)[6]. This great news sent to Western Enlightenment circles was meant to anticipate the closure of a great historical cycle: Greece, cradle of science and civilization, wrote Koraes, was about "to regain possession of the lights of our ancestors, from which a long series of misfortunes had, so to speak, deprived us" (Coray 1803, first page). In the bulk of the *Mémoire*, one reads an eloquent secular narration of the conditions under which Greek enlightenment developed between the Ottoman lands and Europe:

> By a new direction which various circumstances had just given to the channels of commerce, in a short space of time, several Greek houses came into possession of extraordinary wealth; and for the first time, the name of millionaire was heard to be pronounced among a people who were accustomed to regarding the small number of those who possessed a capital of a hundred purses, as men showered with the favors of fortune. (Coray 1803, pp. 17–18)

Koraes elegantly sums up the complex ascension of a Greek elite within the Ottoman administration, commerce, and liberal and intellectual professions in Istanbul or Anatolian shore cities, in the Balkans or in the Greek lands. Referring to the "invisible hand" of commerce rather than to divine providence, Koraes had in view the growing role of Greek merchants in maritime commerce during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It generated a new wealth and class relatively independent from the ruling ecclesiastical class (Pizanias 2011). Since the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Greek Orthodox ecclesiastical rule was operating under Islamic Ottoman domination and protection, which granted to the Orthodox clerical class grouped around the Patriarchate of Constantinople spiritual and administrative rule over the Christian Orthodox subjects. This ecclesiastical class, which functioned for centuries as a dual intermediary between the Ottoman Sultan and the Christians as well as between the current subjugation to Islam and the expected Christian redemption, was progressively challenged by a new emerging group, which began to play a new mediatory role in commerce, education and knowledge, and also in forging new secular representations of future liberation.

Koraes shrewdly describes the new epistemic orientation of this merchant elite: "These newly-rich people [. . .] were quick to realize that, while fortune poured out its gifts blindly, they needed eyes, and clear-sighted eyes, to preserve and make the gifts of fortune bear fruit" (Coray 1803, p. 18). Their first step was to replace "the services of European clerks to manage their affairs" with "national youth, now forced to learn by the lure of considerable salaries" (Coray 1803, p. 18). As consequence, a progressive but radical change occurred in the relationship of the Greek merchant families vis-à-vis knowledge. First, "studying the languages of the countries with which one had commercial relations . . . gave them a tincture of erudition and belles-lettres" (Coray 1803, p. 18). Then, "learning arithmetic and the fine art of bookkeeping" provided the minds of the merchants "with the means of discovering the truth" (Coray 1803, p. 18). Koraes depicts the "desire for education and expatriation [that] took hold of the souls of young people", and also the drive "that great wealth should naturally inspire in its possessors, to expand their trade through establishments in foreign countries" (Coray 1803, p. 19). Soon, "capitalists were setting up new trading houses in [. . .] Italy, in Holland, in various German countries, and above all in Trieste" (Coray 1803, p. 19). This new network of Greek merchants went hand and hand with the quasi-autonomous development of a Greek fleet. "The islands' current navy is owned exclusively by Greeks, and from the skippers down to the mousses [apprentice sailors], it is manned exclusively by Greeks" (Coray 1803, pp. 24–25). This fleet was another factor for "multiplying the means of earning" money and education (Coray 1803, p. 25).

Out of the commercial and technological achievements of a transnational Greek merchant class, Koraes derives a larger effect of enlightenment, later to be labeled Greek enlightenment and nationalism[7]. Following a logic of imitation and emulation, learning foreign languages revealed to the Greeks "the advantage of studying our own [language]" (Coray 1803, p. 19). Furthermore, narrates Koraes, "in some [. . .] cities, colleges are being enlarged, and foreign languages and even the sciences taught in Europe are being added" (Coray 1803, p. 33). On the island of Chios, a kind of university and polytechnic is even

evoked by the author of the *Mémoire*. Yet, the most visible result of this diffusion of enlightenment was the "printing of [Greek] books translated from Italian, French, German and English" (Coray 1803, p. 34). If Chrysoloras contributed decisively to fifteenth-century Italian humanism by teaching Bruni and his colleagues how to translate Greek literature, Koraes envisions nineteenth-century Greek enlightenment coming out of an inverse movement of translation. Therefore, he mentions with great pride the Greek translations of Locke, Candillac and Montesquieu (Coray 1803, pp. 54–55). The rebirth of Greek literature and philosophy encapsulated the new secular promise of the Greek merchants and intellectuals to the Greek people and to Western Europe:

> we can already sense that this language is also undergoing a kind of revolution. Cultivated by so many different feathers, it's still difficult to predict exactly when it will settle down . . . Judging by its infancy, it promises to be a meeting of good qualities, difficult to find elsewhere. (Coray 1803, p. 56)

Yet, Koraes did not satisfy himself with this vision of a Greek cultural renaissance. He added to it a careful analysis of the new geopolitical situation of the Ottoman Empire following the Russo-Turkish War in 1768–1774. "By virtue of a prestige that is difficult to reconcile with the progress of enlightenment, [. . .] Europeans still imagined themselves to see in this [Ottoman] power the heroes who had conquered the empire of the East" (Coray 1803, p. 20). The Russo-Turkish War "dispelled this prestige forever" insists Koraes (Coray 1803, p. 21). Moreover, it proved "to the whole of Europe that this volume of power, which she took for the stoutness of a vigorous and well-constituted state, was nothing but a dropsy which sooner or later would lead the Ottoman Empire to its destruction" (Coray 1803, p. 21). In consequence, "as the Greeks regained their courage, the Turks felt discouraged and humiliated" (Coray 1803, p. 22). The commercial and cultural ascension of the Greeks in the Ottoman Empire is cast by Koraes within a larger historical transformation in which European powers are gaining an irresistible ascendency over the Ottomans. He also adds to this growing military and epistemological gap between Europe and the Ottoman Empire a new internal division, according to which "the bachas [pashas] and intendants of the provinces [. . .] no longer received their emperor's orders except with haughtiness, and as associates of the empire" (Coray 1803, p. 23). In the cultural and geopolitical fresco painted by Koraes, an emerging Greek enlightenment promised to reconnect the Greeks, in a near future, to the growing European superiority, while taking advantage of Ottoman weaknesses and divisions.

Several models of the reconnection of the Greeks to Europe are sketched in the *Mémoire*. Koraes explains that during the eighteenth century, "the Greek nation, by an instinct that is not difficult to explain, had a sort of predilection for the English and the Russians" (Coray 1803, p. 43). The Russians were perceived as a possible protector. Indeed, they had always been "the natural enemies of their oppressors" (Coray 1803, p. 43). The English, however, were considered a global moral defender of "dignity against the hubris of a barbarous court" (Coray 1803, p. 43), that is, against the exactions of the Ottomans. Yet, "no sooner had the revolution begun than the same instinct drew the Greeks to the side of the French" (Coray 1803, p. 43). Following the radical changes in France and the military campaigns in Europe and Egypt, the Greeks began to imagine the "consequences that this revolution could have produced in relation to the fate of Greece" (Coray 1803, p. 43). "Admiration for the prodigies performed by the armies of the Republic" and "memories of those that had once been performed by the Greek armies" (Coray 1803, p. 43) merged in the minds of the Greeks, who started to support the idea of regaining their national independence by virtue of a French military expedition rather than by divine intervention. Thus, the rebirth of humanism in Ottoman Greek communities did not limit itself to a cultural and economic ascent within a declining Ottoman Empire, but set the blueprint for the war of independence in the 1820s and the secession of Greek lands under the protection of Christian European powers.

3. Arab Humanism: The Return of a Long-Departed Guest

George Antonius' famous book *The Arab Awakening*, published in 1938, was to a certain extent similar in its intention to Koraes' *Mémoire*[8]. It also sought to broadcast to the West the linear and secular story of another regional awakening in the Levant: not that of the Greeks, but of the Arabs. Similarly to Koraes, Antonius looks back to the "earliest stirrings" "down to present day" and beyond. He sketches the outline of a new historical movement, "the Arab movement", over a century, until he reaches the contemporary problems it will have to face. Following in the footsteps of Koraes, he begins his narrative with the appearance of a new Arab enlightenment and humanism:

> The story of the Arab national movement opens in Syria in 1847, with the foundation in Bairut [*sic*] of a modest literary society under American patronage. (Antonius 2001, p. 13)

Antonius is referring to the Syrian Society for the Acquisition of Sciences and Arts (al-Jamʿiyya al-Sūriyya li-Iktisāb al-ʿUlūm wa-l-Funūn), founded by a group of Christian missionaries and Christian Arab scholars based in the newly expanding city of Beirut. The first goals of that society, as expressed in its statutes, were:

1. "to make its members learn sciences and arts by the means of discussions, scholarly correspondences, learned speeches, and exchanges of information";
2. "to collect books either printed or in manuscript, in particular those written in Arabic and corresponding to the scholarly interests of the society";
3. "to revive the appetite to learn general notions about sciences and arts independently from controversial religious and legal issues, since these do not pertain to the society" (Al-Bustani 1990, p. 19).

These three goals design a clear humanistic and enlightenment project. On the one hand, the society created a new private–public sphere in which scientific and artistic knowledge, Arabic literary expression, and book collecting and reading practices were cultivated by a relatively close group of scholars. This sphere, although promoted by foreign and local Christians, was conceived as independent from religious and state institutions and fostering new collaboration between scholars of different religious communities. On the other hand, the constitution of this limited sphere of enlightenment, based in the rapidly developing city of Beirut and centered around the Arabic language and Arabic literature and expression, was supposed to produce a significant effect in the larger public, creating a virtuous circle of change by education and various means of diffusion of new cultural values[9]. The use of the verb form "*inhāḍ*" (the reviving or the rebirth) associates the expected dynamic relationship between the "Syrian society" of scholars and the broader society in Beirut and other urban centers in Ottoman Syria with a cultural and proto-national notion of renaissance (*nahḍa*). This notion of revival effected by a newly enlightened group repeated a central motif of Koraes' earlier *Mémoire*: the renewed humanism of a few, of an elite, announces a renaissance of an entire historical group identified with a language and a territory after a period of decadence corresponding partly to Ottoman rule. Exemplary of these hopes of enlightenment was one of the learned speeches given at the Syrian Society during that period. The speech, entitled "On the Education of Women", was offered by the man who was soon to become leader of this awakening movement, Butrus al-Bustani (1819–1883) (see Abu-Maneh 1980; Hanssen and Safieddine 2019; Tibawi 1974, pp. 238–52; Zachs 2005, pp. 126–54). There, al-Bustani presented his conclusions derived from the reading of "men of knowledge and research" and the practical consideration of "effect and impact" of women's education or ignorance "on the social body and public in terms of culture, prosperity, misery, and good and evil" (Al-Bustani 1990, p. 40). He demonstrated in the speech "the necessity of educating women and its benefits as well as the damages resulting from their state of ignorance" (Al-Bustani 1990, p. 40). Learning about books, social observation and discussions within a scholarly forum were expected to effect changes to long-inherited habits.

One notable difference existed between the Greek renaissance of Koraes and the Arab renaissance of the Syrian Society. The former took for granted that the Greek revival would eventually eliminate the Muslim presence in Greece. It constituted a religious, national and geo-strategical secession from the Ottoman Empire and a return to the Christian and European sphere of influence[10]. Although heavily influenced by Christian missionaries and the rapidly growing commercial contact with Europe and the Americas, the intentions of members of the Syrian Society and later similar groups were entirely different (Zachs 2005, pp. 39–85, 126–54). In a later famous speech on *Ādāb al-ʿArab* (Arab culture or literature) delivered in 1859, Al-Bustani constructs a narration of the historical conditions that could lead to a renewed growth of an Arabic epistemic and literary culture in late nineteenth-century Syria (Al-Bustani 1859). There, he associates sciences with a series of rather secular conditions: gradual development, the "gathering of many intellects to reach the desired goal", "movements and travels from one place to another", reading of books, "freedom of thought" and learned speeches. Accordingly, the rebirth of *adab al-ʿArab*, understood as an Arabic epistemic and literary culture in the spirit of modern science, is not a sectorial or confessional project, but a comprehensive transformation of the society and its religious structuration. "Sciences are like guests", writes al-Bustani, "they stay only at the house of who hosts them well" (Al-Bustani 1859, p. 2)[11]. The three parts of al-Bustani's speech describe the appearance, disappearance and expected reappearance of this guest, the epistemic condition of sciences and literature, while *disconnecting* it from confessional divisions. Thus, in the first division, he recasts the Islamic theological notion of the period of "*Jāhiliyya*" (pre-Islamic Arab paganism or ignorance according to the Qur'an) as an epistemic period of illiteracy and knowledge limited to Arabic language, poetry and rhetoric. In the second part, which focuses on the Islamic period, al-Bustani begins with an even bolder statement:

> Qadi Sa'aid Ben Ahmad al-Andalusi said that the Arabs in early Islam did not care for sciences, only for the sciences related to their language and the knowledge linked to their religious laws. They did not even consider the craft of medicine. (Al-Bustani 1859, p. 4)

Instead of presenting the Qur'anic revelation as transforming the epistemic state of the Arabs, al-Bustani proposes an alternative narrative for the later appearance of the socio-political conditions for an Arabic epistemic and literary culture, *adab al-ʿArab*. He designs a ruse of reason typical of the Enlightenment. First, the "strong inclination [of early Muslim Arabs] toward invasion and military campaigns and their exaggerated interest for expanding the sphere of their control distracted them from paying attention to matters of literature and sciences" (Al-Bustani 1859, p. 5). This historical contradiction between early Islam and sciences is dramatically exposed by al-Bustani in the following story:

> when Amr ibn Al-As conquered the city of Alexandria in the year 640 CE under the Caliphate of Umar bin Al-Khattab, after a long siege, Yahyia Yaakubi of Alexandria, known as [John] the grammarian (see Meyerhof (1932)), told him one day when he was accompanying him: 'You have seized the all the riches of Alexandria and taken hold of all its contents. Things that interest you, I am not hindering you from having them. And things that do not interest you, let us have them first.' Amr told him: 'What do you require?' He said: 'The books of wisdom that are in the royal libraries.' He replied: 'I cannot offer them before asking the authorization from the commander of the faithful, Umar bin Al-Khattab.' Amr wrote to Umar explaining to him the request of Yahyia and he received the following reply from Umar: 'Concerning the books that you have mentioned, if their content agrees with the book of God, then the book of God is richer and suffices us. And if they contain matters that disagree with the book of God, then there is no need of them, and proceed to their destruction.' When Amr received the reply of Umar, he dispatched the books in the different hammams [Turkish baths] of Alexandria to be burned in their fireplaces. And they fed the fires for a

> long time. It is said that the number of the books was 400,000. (Al-Bustani 1859, pp. 5–6)

This bold legend about the early Islamic stance toward the sciences was probably taken from European sources that minimized similar attitudes in early Christianity[12]. Yet, al-Bustani did not satisfy himself with this critique of early Islam, as many Europeans did. He composed out of it a story of cultural and epistemic reconciliation between Muslims and Christians. The "great irreplaceable loss" of the Alexandrian libraries, first feared and felt by the Christians only, is progressively understood, internalized and mourned by the Muslim Arabs themselves, eventually producing their epistemic transformation. "When the Arabs awoke from the darkness of ignorance and stupidity after this event, they begun to share with the rest of the world sentiments of sadness and sorrow for the loss of this considerable library" (Al-Bustani 1859, p. 6). The awakening from *Jāhiliyya* is thus not a theological event, but a progressive socio-cultural transformation that resulted from "the expansion of religion" and the "control of the prosperous countries which were centers of ancient good taste and elegance" (Al-Bustani 1859, p. 6). Out of this mixing of populations and an interreligious exchange of knowledge and habits came a new "spirit of gentleness and civilization" for the Arabs and the progressive end of "their rejection of sciences". This mélange of ancient and Christian cultures with the new Arab Muslim one created the conditions for *adab al-ʿArab*. From this moment on, the "progress [of the Arabs] in these matters was as fast and astonishing as it was earlier in matters of war" (Al-Bustani 1859, p. 6).

After a long description of the many achievements of medieval *adab*, al-Bustani closes the cycle of this epistemic transformation:

> The Arabs remained as such until the desire of kings and elites for science ceased, therefore, the causes for seeking and acquiring science and studying its books dropped until many of these volumes had been lost and the sciences could not find clients anymore. Time made scientists disappear. Ignorance took strong hold of people to the point where they began believing that acquiring and seeking sciences are an error and a waste of time. (Al-Bustani 1859, p. 21)

Al-Bustani goes on to describe the *translatio* of sciences "to the lands of Europe through the Maghreb and Spain" and the refuge they found there. Christians in Europe "opened their gates and hearts welcoming the old friend who had left them [for] many generations" (Al-Bustani 1859, p. 22). They "commanded the translation of the best writings of the Arabs into Latin", leading sciences to return "with abundant profits from the East to the West" (Al-Bustani 1859, p. 22). Enlightenment decreased in the East while increasing in the West until Europeans achieved a "great superiority over the Arabs" (Al-Bustani 1859, p. 22).

> Where were the Arabs and where are they now? The golden generation of their culture has passed and a dark generation has come and settled. The beginning their dark age started by the end of the fourteenth century, and kept growing and increasing until it became pervasive in their countries and among their peoples.
>
> (Al-Bustani 1859, p. 22)

Yet, this third cycle was about to reach its end according to al-Bustani. The nineteenth-century Arab enlightenment, like the earlier medieval one, is presented as a Muslim–Christian endeavor, recreating the epistemic conditions for Arab *adab*, between Cairo, Beirut and Istanbul. On the one hand, "Muhammed Ali Pacha did in this generation with the writings of the Europeans what Charles the Great did with the Arabs, he ordered the translation of the best of their writings to Arabic" (Al-Bustani 1859, p. 28). On the other hand, al-Bustani describes at length the many Christian schools, learning institutions, libraries and printing houses that developed in Beirut and other sites in Syria. The combination of the two processes leads al-Bustani to make his famous final call and profess his utopian vision of enlightenment and humanism:

> O Compatriots! O offspring of notables and grandchildren of Syriac and Greek kin, mounted on the camel's hump of the nineteenth century, the century of inventions and discoveries, the century of culture and knowledge, the century of manufacturing and arts! Rise! Get up! Be aware! Wake up! Roll your sleeve up your forearms of determination! Culture is standing at your doors from all sides, knocking, requesting entry into your majestic and radiant mountains, your valleys, your plains, and your deserts, which nature has decorated with lofty ornaments of beauty. Reject your sectarianism, partisanship, and personal prejudices and outstretch your hand to shake the hand of culture. Open the doors to this old friend who is coming back to you after a long absence. Welcome it and greet it with utmost happiness, so that it can fill your land with contentment and comfort, and dress it in splendor and pride. (Al-Bustani 1859, p. 42)[13]

The returning guest is a recurring metaphor in al-Bustani's speech for a set of epistemic conditions, relatively independent from religion, that have been moving over the centuries between East and West and have been responsible for the several renaissances of science and literature. Such a precious guest should this time be hosted not just as a passing guest, but as a long-term guest who will completely transform the divided houses of the confessional Syrian society toward a new shared notion of the nation. Arab humanism is carefully constructed by al-Bustani as a set of epistemic conditions developed over time, which can periodically transform a limited tribal and confessional society into a universal civilization. Yet, the great difference between the Abbasside humanism and that of the nineteenth century consists of the fact that the first happened in a period of conquest and expansion, whereas the second took place in a period of recession. The medieval *adab* was mainly an internal cultural exchange (Hellenistic, Persian, Christian, Jewish, Muslim) within the newly established Muslim empire. The modern *adab*, however, meant the welcomed influence or return of European sciences, literature and technology within Ottoman society. The guests to welcome were not any more the Christian or Pagan people conquered during the first Islamic expansion but also the powerful, expanding European empires.

4. Antonius' Suspicion Regarding Mehmet Ali and the Tanzimat Reforms

In the second chapter of *The Arab Awakening*—in fact, the first narrative section after the general considerations developed in the opening chapter—Antonius coined a strange notion regarding the historical achievements of Mehmet Ali (1769–1849) and his son Ibrahim (1789–1848). This notion is "the false start" (Antonius 2001, pp. 21–34). With this harsh historical judgment, Antonius conveyed an unacknowledged suspicion of Muslim political reforms. In sharp contrast with the leading role attributed by al-Bustani to the educational and cultural reforms introduced by "the Ma'mun of the nineteenth century Muhammad [Mehmet] Ali Pasha" (Al-Bustani 1859, p. 42)[14], Antonius described Mehmet Ali and his son as having ontological "weighty handicaps":

> They were not Arabs and had not mastered Arabic, although Ibrahim had learnt to speak it with a certain fluency; and their advocacy of an Arab national revival, wanting in the incentive of race and the eloquence of a rich language, lacked the force of spontaneity. (Antonius 2001, p. 27)

Antonius' notion of a "false start" points at an unbridgeable gap between the nature of Mehmet's and Ibrahim's political endeavor and their own personal, racial and cultural background. Al-Bustani did not mention this tension; on the contrary, he praised at length the "Bulaq Press in Cairo [developed with Mehmet Ali's support] which has enriched the Arab race with a diversity of books . . . Arabic works and translations" (Al-Bustani 1859, p. 38)[15]. Rifa'ah Tahtawi, the leading figure behind the press and the cultural changes in Mehmet Ali's time, developed—a generation earlier than the al-Bustani circle in Beirut—a patriotic notion of Egypt as a national homeland (*waṭaniyya*). He combined in this notion natural motives (the homeland is like a "nest for man in which he grows, and from which

he proceeds into the world") and Islamic and historic motives (Egypt is "a land of honor and glory in ancient and modern times" and "an image of the eternal haven crafted on earth by the hands of divinity") (Tahtawi 1973, p. 429). Antonius (2001, p. 32) denigrated Mehmet's and Ibrahim's attempt at carving an Arab empire because of "the lack of anything approaching national solidarity" among the elites as well as among the larger population. The author of *The Arab Awakening* saw in the decadence of the Muslim Arab empire in the Middle Ages and the later rise of Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal rule "centuries of decadence and misrule" which "had debilitated the collective spirit of its population and loosened its former cohesion" and resulted in "disintegration" and "sectarian distinctions" (Antonius 2001, p. 31). An Ottoman Muslim, a non-Arab like Mehmet Ali or Ibrahim could not correct this fateful sectarianism, according to Antonius. Their "driving motive was personal ambition" (Antonius 2001, p. 27) and, likewise, the goals of the confessional communities remained particularistic. Throughout *The Arab Awakening*, Muslim religious and political reformism is not acknowledged as a possible form of modern universality and pluralism. In sharp contrast, the rediscovery and implementation of a general Arab notion is the story of the Arab national movement that Antonius chose to tell and achieve. Therefore, he framed Mehmet's and Ibrahim's conquest and reforms as a "false start", a national change accomplished by the wrong actors: Mehmet Ali and the still confessionally minded populations.

This is not the only Muslim reformist case in which Antonius opposed the views of al-Bustani, while on the other hand crediting him and his associates with the real start of Arab nationalism. Indeed, al-Bustani closes his 1859 speech on Arab *adab* with praise for the Ottoman Tanzimat reforms:

> His Sublime Highness the great Sultan Abd Al-Majid Khan is munificent toward ensuring happiness, comfort, safety, success, and progress in all the realms of his domain. His sound decrees and expanding these schools throughout his protected lands have inevitably stirred emotions among his subjects and moved them to love him and raise their calls to God Almighty to prolong his reign and reinforce the pillars of his state. (Al-Bustani 1859, p. 43)[16]

Such praise for the Tanzimat decrees of 1839 and 1856 would be hard to find in Antonius' *Arab Awakening.* It deals with the Tanzimat period (1839–1875)[17], but not with the contents and goals of the reforms. The book focuses only on the intellectual circles responsible for the birth of Arab nationalism. In contrast, Antonius devotes two chapters to later stages of Ottoman politics, regarding Abdul Hamid II and the role of the Young Turks in the early twentieth century, whose goal was to establish a notion of Turkish-Ottoman despotism over the Arabs, as well as the incompatibility of Turkish and Arab national revival (Antonius 2001, pp. 61–78, 101–25).

Al-Bustani, on the contrary, perceived a complementarity between the reemerging *adab al-arab* and the Tanzimat reforms (Abu-Maneh 1980). Beyond the 1839 commitment of the new Ottoman Sultan guaranteeing a set of rights and norms of procedure to all his subjects, in his 1859 speech on *adab*, al-Bustani referred more specifically to the 1856 confirmation and reform of the legal status of the different religious communities[18]. Indeed, following the 1856 Islahat Firman of the Sultan,

> Patriarchs, Metropolitans, Archbishops, Bishops, and Rabbis shall take an oath on their entrance into office according to a form agreed upon in common by my Sublime Porte and the spiritual heads of the different religious communities [*Bâb-ı Âlî' mizle cemaat-ı muhtelifenin rüesa-yı rûhaniyesi beyninde karargîr olacak bir sûrette*]. (Bailey 1942, p. 287)

The formalization of the relationship of each non-Muslim community with the Sultan went hand in hand with the declared will to reform and harmonize the powers previously conceded to the community with "the progress of civilization and knowledge" [*medeniyet ve malûmat*] and with the new "generous and beneficent intentions" of the monarch (Bailey 1942, p. 287). It meant among other things the creation of new representative assemblies

composed of both "ecclesiastics and laymen" (Bailey 1942, p. 288). Thus, the *firman* of 1856 sketches new relationships between creeds in mixed cities:

> In the towns, small boroughs, and villages where different sects [*edyân-ı muhtelifede*] are mingled together, each community [*bir cemaatin*], inhabiting a distinct quarter, shall, by conforming to the above-mentioned ordinances, have equal power [*muktedir olabilmesi*] to repair and improve its churches, its hospitals, its schools, and its cemeteries. When there is a question of the erection of new buildings, the necessary authority must be asked for through the Sublime Porte [Bâb-ı Âlî']. (Bailey 1942, p. 288)

In this mixed urban center, the authority of the Sultan presents itself innovatively as warranting a new civic equality between religious communities. This new civic urban space serves as a model for the entire empire in which "no subject [. . .] shall be hindered in the exercise of the religion that he professes, nor shall be in any way annoyed on this account [*tebea-i şâhânemden hiçbir kimesne bulunduğu dinin âyinini icrâdan men'olunmaması*]" (Bailey 1942, p. 288). A similar principle is applied to the administration of the empire, to the civil and military schools of the government and to taxation and military recruitment.

The *firman* also established mixed tribunals to address "all commercial, correctional, and criminal suits between Muslims and Christian or other non-Muslim subjects, or between Christians or other non-Muslims of different sects" (Bailey 1942, p. 289). It went so far as to make it "lawful for foreigners to possess landed property" (Bailey 1942, p. 290).

The last two decrees of the *firman* sum up its spirit:

> Steps shall also be taken for the formation of roads and canals to increase the facilities of communication and increase the sources of the wealth of the country. Everything that can impede commerce or agriculture shall be abolished. To accomplish these objects means shall be sought to profit by the science, the art, and the funds of Europe [*bunun maarif ve ulûm ve sermaye-i Avrupa'dan istifadeye*], and thus gradually to execute them. (Bailey 1942, p. 291)

The series of measures taken by the Muslim ruler to effect a new free civic, commercial, communicational and scientific space did not rely so much on the overcoming of the religious and ethnic divisions as upon their acknowledgment and more liberal arrangement in order to facilitate as many exchanges as possible. Therefore, the *firman* states that "every community is authorized to establish Public Schools of Science, Art, and Industry" (Bailey 1942, p. 288). This was the background for the establishment of many Christian educational establishments in the Ottoman Empire, among them the educational institutions in which al-Bustani and his colleagues worked. It seems easy to understand why Mehmet Ali's reforms and the Tanzimat were perceived by al-Bustani as a new Muslim political framework facilitating an Arab renaissance. In concealed opposition to the views of this "founding father", Antonius constructed a selective history of the "national movement" in which the *nahḍa* of al-Bustani and the political, economic and cultural reforms led by the Muslim rulers in Egypt and Istanbul were concurrent and even conflicting evolutions.

5. The Dreamed Harmony of Reforms and Colonial Influence

In a recent article revisiting the complex cultural and historical background of the 1839 edict of the Tanzimat, Edhem Eldem (2021) deploys a vast range of sources to explain the intriguing articulation of the Islamic and Ottoman background of the *firman* with new ideas and projects elaborated in contact with the expanding colonial empires of England and France. Thus, he opens a fascinating window into the complexity and even contradictions of Islamic reforms. The edict, according to this reconstruction, is neither a new elaboration of former Islamic and Ottoman trends nor a direct adaption of identifiable European ideas. A certain lack of sources renders opaque the transition from Islamic and Ottoman conceptions of the state and its reform to the liberal notions of the rule of law, protection of individual property, the modern economy, the state budget and the army implemented in the Tanzimat decrees. In the middle of the article, Eldem analyzes an uncanny, secret 1839 memorandum

of Rashid Pacha (the leading figure behind the Tanzimat) to Lord Palmerston (Bailey 1942, pp. 271–76). There, Rashid Pacha develops the idea of a combined interest of the European states and the Ottomans in the regeneration of the Ottoman Empire:

> If we refuse to recognize the imminence of the peril, in order to deal only with pacification with Egypt, along with the sole issues of the Empire's integrity and independence of the Empire, we would miss our intended goal, that is to say, the powers who wish to maintain the Empire, would see their desire only imperfectly fulfilled. (Bailey 1942, p. 273)

Rashid Pacha envisions this joined aspiration of the Europeans and the Ottomans, the regeneration of the Ottoman Empire, as a kind of voluntary colonization by a series of European states:

> But it may be said that the remedy to this evil would be a sort of invasion of the Sublime Porte's internal administration, as such conduct would be contrary to the respective rights of nations.
>
> To answer this objection, it would suffice to ask whether this invasion of the rights of nations would intend any action harmful to a people, and whether, when its preservation is necessary for the equilibrium of Europe, there cannot be any harm or disadvantage in attaching oneself to everything that must make up the strength and prosperity of this people, even if this can only be achieved by interfering in its internal administration within certain limits. (Bailey 1942, pp. 273–74)

In a striking moment of lucidity, the soon-to-be leader of the Tanzimat acknowledges that the reforms would imply not only the adoption of general principles already in use in Europe but also a set of direct influences on the young Sultan who would "enable the friendly powers to show him the road to be taken"; on the Divan, which would welcome "the proposals made by Europe"; and on the "populations [. . .] eagerly awaiting [. . .] improvements" (Bailey 1942, p. 274). Notwithstanding the dangers, Rashid Pacha indulges in a fantasy of a successful reform–invasion:

> As soon as the [European] powers would only hint at their generous attention, the heads of government, appreciating for themselves the full importance of such a conquest, would hasten to complete protective laws, whose benefits would extend to the Christian subjects of the Sublime Porte, which would find in this work of justice the most powerful element of its regeneration. (Bailey 1942, p. 275)

The reform of state administration and the establishment of a new rule of law are envisioned as a perfect complementarity of European generosity and Ottoman gratefulness, resulting in a diplomatic integration of the Ottoman Empire within Europe and in civic equality between Muslim and Christian Ottomans. Reform, pervasive European influence, civic and economic regeneration and international and interreligious harmony are fusing together in an esthetic moment of reconciliation and appeasement of antagonism and tensions.

About twenty years after Rashid Pacha's astonishing memorandum, the joint endeavor of the European powers and the Ottoman Empire reappears in a far less irenic context:

> News of the spell of atrocities and abominations committed this summer by the troublemakers in our midst has reached the corners of the Earth. (Al-Bustani 2019, p. 65)

Al-Bustani refers in his 1860 pamphlet *The Clarion of Syria* to the civil and interreligious war in 1860 in Syria, mostly between Druzes and Christians[19]. "The destruction and damage [. . .] unparalleled in historical chronicles" provoked general concerns (Al-Bustani 2019, p. 66). "All over the civilized world, it has drawn pity and gloom" (Al-Bustani 2019, p. 65). Similarly, "Sultan ʿAbd al-Majid [. . .] was deeply moved" (Al-Bustani 2019, p. 68).

This Ottoman and European concern and common desire to put an end to interreligious violence inspires great expectations in al-Bustani:

> Our country is world renowned for its water, air, and soil. It is the most proud and praiseworthy. Yet for a number of generations, it has been afflicted by the corruption of uncivilized segments of its people. That is why you see it increasingly lagging behind other countries and becoming even more backward following the recent unrest. But we hope that with the help of God, with the stamina of our Sublime State and the friendly Great Powers, this current setback, whose echoes have reached the corners of the inhabited Earth, will turn into the beginning of great goodness and usher in a new age for Syria. (Al-Bustani 2019, pp. 78–79)

Not unlike Rashid Pasha, Al-Bustani imagines out of the concrete collaboration of the Ottoman Sultan and the French and English empires a regeneration of Syria from its situation of corruption and uncivilization to achieving a new socio-political goal, which he described using the famous Arab term *waṭaniyya* (patriotic love for the homeland):

> People of the homeland have rights vis-à-vis their country which in turn has obligations toward them. It goes without saying that the more these rights are fulfilled, the more people grow attached to their country, and the more desirous and pleased they are in rendering those duties. Among the obligations that a country owes its people is to secure their precious right to life, honor, and prosperity. These obligations also include upholding civil, moral, and religious freedoms, especially the freedom of conscience in confessional matters. (Al-Bustani 2019, p. 77)

Under the joined protection of the Sultan and Europe, al-Bustani imagines a transformation from religious sectarianism, particularism and antagonism into new civic ties and a general patriotic sense of belonging to the homeland. Al-Bustani's envisioned Syrian patriotic citizenship is an internal process meant to complete work started by the joint external intervention of the Sultan and European powers. Whereas the latter represent an external repression of sectarian violence and protection of each confessional community, the former launches a historical process of gradually dissuading Syrians from seeking sectarian goals and investing them in the open-ended task of increasing the general welfare of the country. The ability of the envisioned Syrian citizens "to take part in [the country's] affairs and to get involved in its welfare increases their desire for its success and their enthusiasm for its progress" (Al-Bustani 2019, p. 77). Yet, al-Bustani's civic transformation also generates a new antagonism with traditional religious denominations:

> As for those who exchange patriotism for confessional fanaticism and who sacrifice the welfare of the homeland for personal interests, they do not deserve to belong to the homeland. They are its enemies. Those who do not expend any effort to prevent or alleviate incidences harmful to the country are equally its enemies. (Al-Bustani 2019, p. 78)

The 1861 "Règlement organique" issued by the Sublime Porte and the European powers to restore order did not follow the dream of al-Bustani: a joint Ottoman and European intervention completed by an inner civic transformation of the Syrians. On the contrary, a new confessional regime was created under Ottoman and European protection, which would lead to the later division of Syria and Lebanon after World War I and under the French Mandate. Nothing gives a better idea of this confessionalism than Article 2 of the "Règlement organique":

> There shall be a central administrative Medjliss [Assembly] for the whole [Lebanon's] Mountain, composed of twelve members, namely: two Maronites, two Druses, two Greek Orthodox, two Greek Catholics, two Metualis and two Muslims, charged with distributing taxes, controlling the management of revenues and

> expenditures, and giving its advisory opinion on all questions put to it by the Governor[20].

Rashid Pasha's 1839 memorandum and Al-Bustani's 1860 *Clarion of Syria* displayed a similar imagined complementarity of local reforms and external European influence. Yet, instead of this harmonious complementarity, historical evolution in the second half of the nineteenth century fueled colonial dependency and ethno-religious conflictuality, revealing a concealed face of humanism in the Middle Eastern context.

6. The Domination of Politics and the Collapse of Humanism

World War I and the post-war mandates of the British and French empires over the former Ottoman lands continued the nineteenth-century collaborative and colonial model of European external influence and internal civic and national regeneration. This collaboration was supposed, in the Greek, Egyptian, Ottoman and Syrian cases briefly studied above, to effect a harmonious cultural, economic and scientific revival within a favorable diplomatic environment. Yet, the two more ambitious projects of reforms, in Egypt and in Istanbul, ended with similar negative results: an enormous debt to European financial markets, which prompted British rule over Egypt from 1882, and direct involvement of European powers in the management of the Ottoman finances during Hamid II's reign (Gayffier-Bonneville 2016, pp. 127–43; Hanioğlu 2010, pp. 135–38). This growing colonial influence, often associated with the socio-cultural ascent of Levantine Christians, sparked a series of Islamic reactions (the Urabi revolt in Egypt) and interreligious conflicts (anti-Armenian violence). To this disillusion of the *fin de siècle* was added a new national revival project, Zionism, which soon came to crystallize much of the earlier political tensions. This is surely one of the reasons why Antonius closes his magnum opus with the particular case of Palestine:

> Once the fact is faced that the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, or of a national home based on territorial sovereignty, cannot be accomplished without forcibly displacing the Arabs, the way to a solution becomes clearer. It is not beyond the capacity of British, Jewish and Arab statesmanship to devise one. There seems to be no valid reason why Palestine should not be constituted into an independent Arab state in which as many Jews as the country can hold without prejudice to its political and economic freedom would live in peace, security and dignity, and enjoy full rights of citizenship. Such an Arab state would naturally be tied to Great Britain by a freely-negotiated treaty which should contain provisions for the safeguarding of British strategic and economic interests, for ensuring the safety and the inviolability of the Holy Places of all faiths, for the protection of all minorities and minority rights, and for affording the Jewish community the widest freedom in the pursuit of their spiritual and cultural ideals. (Antonius 2001, p. 410)

As al-Bustani in 1860, Antonius envisions a local and European collaboration to settle interreligious and interethnic tensions and conflicts. Once again, he resorts to the model of the Tanzimat *firman* of 1856 granting equal civic rights to religious and ethnic minorities. Yet, the simple repetition of these earlier solutions and models acknowledges their former failure and the growing national and religious tensions, as famously expressed in the frightening closing words of the book:

> But the logic of facts is inexorable. It shows that no room can be made in Palestine for a second nation except by dislodging or exterminating the nation in possession. (Antonius 2001, p. 412)

The reformist dream of interreligious, interethnic and international harmony, imagined for more than a century, turned into a dire logic of power.

The same political background, not at the eve of World War II but at the eve of the 1948 Arab–Israeli war, led Martin Buber (1878–1965) in his 1947 essay *Two Peoples in Palestine*

to rehabilitate a bi-national and interreligious model, partly similar to the late Ottoman communitarian model:

> What is really needed by each of the two peoples living one alongside the other, and one within the other, in Palestine is self-determination, autonomy, the chance to decide for itself. But this most certainly does not mean that each is in need of a state in which it will be the sovereign. The Arab population does not need an Arab state in order to develop its potential freely, nor does the Jewish population need a Jewish state to accomplish this purpose. Its realization on both sides can be guaranteed within the framework of a joint bi-national socio-political entity, in which each side will be responsible for the particular matters pertaining to it, and both together will participate in the ordering of their common concerns. (Buber and Mendes-Flohr 1983, p. 199)

After fifty years in which many Zionists promised great benefits for the Arab populations and the Middle East from Zionist settlements, in 1947 Buber is contemplating with great anxiety the fact that "the continuous growth and domination of the political element has interfered to an ever-increasing extent with the creation of this mutual trust" between Jews and Arabs (Buber and Mendes-Flohr 1983, p. 199). The repeated ethnic and interreligious confrontations between Jews and Arabs in the 1920s and 1930s and the gloomy prospects of the end of the British Mandate in 1948 brought Buber to desire not the realization of Jewish or Arab nationalism with its ever-growing exclusivist consequences of sovereignty, but the suspension of it, the restraint of it and a return to an ethnic and religious solution similar to the post-1860 "Règlement organique". Instead of identifying the state administration with Jewish or Arab national renaissance, Buber intended to dissociate it, leaving it only a foreign protector of the autonomy of each national–religious community, while leaving the national and religious revival as an internal communitarian process. This never-to-be-found benevolent protector, reminiscent of the nineteenth-century associations of the Ottoman Empire and its "European allies", had several names, including an American or international trusteeship or a bi-national state. Yet, these names could with difficulty hide the fact that the expected civic overcoming of religious and ethnic divisions under Ottoman and European rule had not happened, and had rather evolved into fully fledged ethno-religious conflicts and a logic of communitarian identification and exclusion.

7. The Religious Restructuring of the Failed National Revival

The full meaning of Buber's step back is not to be found in the evasive formulas of an international trusteeship or bi-nationalism, but in the growing religious restructuring of the failed national revival in the former Ottoman lands. The religious reformulation of the national and civic unification can be read in Rashid Rida's famous *Muhammadan Revelation* of 1933, written after the failure of the attempted Syrian national state in the aftermath of World War I[21]:

> The Qur'an is a book that was revealed to an unlettered man who grew up with a natural purity of self, possessed a sound mind, a virtuous soul, and a strong moral character; and who was, moreover, unaffected by any established religious tradition, or blind faith. The reason for this was that the one so chosen was to bring about a revolution, a major upheaval among the Arabs and the other peoples of the world, one that would sweep away the darkness of idolatry and ignorance. The purpose of this revolution was to liberate the human mind from servitude to those with the audacity to claim divinity for themselves, or to claim to represent the divine and carry out his or her will, thereby taking control of peoples' lives, bodies, and wealth. The revolution brought about by Muhammad, upon him be peace, was aimed at the emancipation of the human soul, and the restoration of human dignity, through proclaiming that there is no god but Allah, and that all of humankind are equal before Him.

> Such a revolution can only come about on the basis of the Qur'anic principle which says that: Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change it themselves (13:11). (Rida 1996, p. 70)

The cultural, civic and national regeneration imagined and imperfectly performed in the late Ottoman Empire and in its colonial dismantling after World War I is re-invested here through the terminology of revolution, liberation, equality and humanity, in the Qur'anic revelation that once successfully transformed the Arab tribes and other nations, and which should now be repeated instead of the failing enlightenment and nationalism. Yet, the repeated religious revolution envisioned by Rida is no simple return to the past. It wants also to be the more successful continuation of the efforts of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, combining the demand for justice, the search for civic agency and a renewed sense of religious mission. This combination of continuity with nineteenth-century nationalism and its religious correction is also visible in Rabbi Abraham Kook's religious–Zionist approach:

> The Land of Israel is not something external, not an external national asset, a means to the end of collective solidarity and the strengthening of the nation's existence, physical or even spiritual. The Land of Israel is an essential unit bound by the bond-of-life to the People, united by inner characteristics to its existence. Therefore, it is impossible to appreciate the content of the sanctity of the Land of Israel and to actualize the depth of love for her by some rational human understanding—only by the spirit of God that is in the soul of Israel. This spirit radiates natural hues in all avenues of healthy feeling and shines according to the measure of supernal holy spirit, which fills with life and pleasantness the heart of the holy of thought and deep Jewish thinkers. [. . .] The true strengthening of the Jewish idea in exile will come about only through the depth of its immersion in the Land of Israel, and from the hope of the Land of Israel it will receive always its essential characteristics. The expectation of salvation is the force that preserves exilic Judaism; the Judaism of the Land of Israel is salvation itself. (Kook 1993, pp. 89–90)

As in the previous quote from Rida, Rabbi Kook positions himself after the early Zionist national awakening and its instrumentalization of the Land of Israel for affecting a national, economic and cultural transformation of Jews. In this text written during World War I, he clearly delimitates the value of cultural and political nationalism, making it a confused formulation of a theological, mystical and messianic bond between the Jewish people, the Land of Israel and God. The examples of Rida and Rabbi Kook highlight the shift from the nineteenth-century expectations of epistemic, civic and national transformation of the Ottoman populations to their reformulation as a renewed religious opportunity to accomplish a religious mission abandoned over the centuries. The attractiveness of these religious reformulations relied on the fact that failed attempts to overcome confessional and ethnic divides resulted in growing religious and ethnic conflicts, which prompted renewed religious identification. Instead of the hope of making religious denominations parts of a new civic and national/imperial order, the civic and national reforms are only becoming elements of a renewed notion of a confessional society.

8. Conclusions

The story of Byzantine scholar Chrysoloras' journey and stay in Florence at the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries has been celebrated in early modern and modern times as an event that decisively shaped the course of European humanism. The later return of Enlightenment humanism to Ottoman lands in the eighteenth to early twentieth centuries can be described as the return of Chrysoloras. This return is generally known in a fragmentary form as a regional history: the story of Greek, Arab, Turkish and Jewish nationalisms and the story of the Ottoman reforms. It is also framed historically as the evolution from a traditional and theological society to new forms of epistemic, literary,

civic and national communities, while often leaving aside failures and later contradictory transformations. The present essay has offered an integrative study of modern humanism in late Ottoman and post-Ottoman contexts. The migration of Enlightenment humanism to the Middle East raised a wide range of expectations, projecting a new national and imperial organization within a harmonious diplomatic relationship with Christian Europe and the Americas. Yet, the more the revivalist and reformist projects evolved toward their implementations, the more they involved ethnic and religious conflicts and colonial intervention. Neither the Ottoman reforms nor the territorial nationalisms succeeded in realizing the humanistic dream. The sets of scientific, literary, civic and national conditions borrowed from Europe by the humanists in Ottoman lands were insufficient to affect the grandiose transformation, while they became instrumental regarding both Europeans' colonial grip and interreligious and interethnic conflicts. The failure of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European humanism is well-known, especially in connection with the two world wars and the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century, which spread in the wars' aftermath. The failure of humanism in Ottoman lands, however, is rarely acknowledged as an important historical and intellectual evolution; also not known is its role in the reformulation of various religious–political projects attempting to continue and correct the humanistic expectations of the nineteenth century. The Middle Eastern dialectics of secularization and religious renewal is still considered as a regional particularism without broader signification. It is time to add humanism's rise and fall in the Middle East to its complex fate in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the West—not to get rid of humanism, but to save it from itself.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

1 For an overview, see Thomson (2003). The list is the subject of debates.
2 For an overview, see Abbamonte and Harrison (2019).
3 For the Latin text, see Baron (1968, pp. 232–63).
4 For a critical perspective, see Hankins (2004).
5 For a partial overview, see Hourani (1983).
6 My translation, as are all the following translations from this book. For a broad overview of Greek enlightenment, see Dimaras (1972).
7 For an overview, see Argyropoulos (2014); Dimaras (1972, pp. 187–268).
8 For the historical background behind the publication of the book, see Kramer (1996).
9 For an overview of this broad transformation, see Zachs (2005).
10 For a broad overview, see Mazower (2022).
11 My translation, as are the subsequent quotations.
12 For an overview of this legend in European literature, see Thiem (1979).
13 Translation taken from El-Ariss (2018, pp. 11–12).
14 Translation taken from El-Ariss (2018, p. 11).
15 Translation taken from El-Ariss (2018, p. 8).
16 Translation taken from El-Ariss (2018, p. 12). For al-Bustani's views on the Ottoman reforms, see Abu-Maneh (1980).
17 For an overview of the Tanzimat period, see Berkes (1998).
18 For the texts of the two edicts of reforms, see Bailey (1942, pp. 277–79, 287–91).
19 For an overview of this conflict, see Al-Bustani (2019, pp. 13–22); Salibi (1965, pp. 106–19).

[20] For the complete French text of the "Règlement organique", see https://mjp.univ-perp.fr/constit/lb1861.htm (accessed on 2 May 2024).

[21] For an overview of Rashid Rida's intellectual evolution, see Thompson (2020).

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Article

Talmud Today: A Politics of Forgetting

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Abstract: The article deals with the way in which the "theological" as the question of the Biblical G-d's involvement in the world, as in the Talmuds, and in light of Heidegger's thought about forgetting and forgetfulness (*Verborgenheit* and *Vergessenheit*), becomes a political question about the attitude of the Jew and Israel toward the *Heimat*. In Heidegger, forgetting is about beings hiding from the view rather than about a psychological or "subjective" process to which forgetting has been reduced in modernity. The Heimat hides from the persons' life, no matter how strongly the persons strive for their Heimat "subjectively" or politically, Heidegger argues. The essay further detects a residual modernity and subjectivism in Heidegger's concession to forgetting as only a secondary operation, a loss, in comparison to the primary, "authentic" relationship to the Heimat, which, for him, one can and should hope for. That residual modern subjectivity in Heidegger enables and necessitates a comparison with the roles forgetting plays in relationships between G-d, Israel, and the Land in the two Talmuds as, similarly to Heidegger, dealing with and working against forgetting, if not Being, then the Law of the mutual obligations between G-d and Israel. The resulting analysis distills a conundrum in the Palestinian rabbis. Delivery on Israel's obligations towards G-d conditions Israel's arrival to the Land, that is to say Israel's fully successful exodus from Egypt. Yet, any clear memory of, and delivery on, these obligations, i.e., any humanly delivered testament to the law of G-d, constitutes an acute danger of forgetting masked as a would-be-certitude in the "memory" of the would-be-original law. Regaining the status of a full-fledged, never-tamed primordial power in relationships between G-d and Israel, forgetting, in the Palestinian rabbinic thought, undermines the deployment of logos as a way to formulate the Law fully. Letting the G-d in the world, logos however proves prone to reducing G-d to (a) *theos*, thus drawing the G-d into disappearance and forgetting. Such a counter-current to the copulation of *theos* with *logos*, the primordial power of forgetting operates even before any memory captured in words and images becomes possible. Arriving from antiquity to modernity, this counter-current continues to operate despite the currently prevalent demotion of forgetting to a subjective political act of a person or nation.

Keywords: forgetting and memory; Heidegger; Palestinian Talmud; homeland/*Heimat*; exodus; modern subjectivity

Citation: Dolgopolski, Sergey. 2024. Talmud Today: A Politics of Forgetting. *Religions* 15: 722. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15060722

Academic Editors: Ronen Pinkas and Elad Lapidot

Received: 28 April 2024
Revised: 28 May 2024
Accepted: 7 June 2024
Published: 12 June 2024

1. Introduction

Theism, the key, central power in focus in this Special Issue, implies positing a god or gods, one or many. This god or gods impose order on the primordial chaos of untamed elements. Forgetting, the main concern in this paper, belongs to these elements. Theism, the advent of the thetic gods, who are definitive, defined, and defining everything in the thereby ordered world, promote order by demoting the primordial elements. That means, in part, demoting the primary, elemental forgetting to a secondary role of a memory loss. In the theistic order of god or gods, memory, whether it is understood as a faculty or as a content, is promoted to a primary position of a default, and forgetting is demoted to a secondary position of either a lost memory (content) or a threat to memory (in which case forgetting means a negative power, undermining the faculty to remember). From an elemental, originary power or operation, forgetting recedes to a secondary operation of negation of the would-be already pregiven memory.

Where does the tetragrammaton of the Bible belong to theism? Does the four-letter name introduce a position both between and above the thetic order of god(s) and the primordial chaos of elements? These broader questions inform this paper's inquiry into a reversal of relationships between forgetting and memory on the double helix of relationships between antiquity and modernity.

A closely related concern of this Special Issue is the secularization of theism and the limits of theism in the sense described above. One facet of "secularization" of religious tradition in that particular sense is the question of the role of the Talmud in the modern context. The question is more specifically of the pertinence and the transformation of the tradition of tradition (Gérard Granel) of Talmud without the "the", as a discipline of thought and action in and for the politics of forgetting. The argument unfolds between late ancient prevalence of forgetting as a primary operation and memory as a struggle against the ever-looming sway of forgetting on the one hand and the modern reversal and thus "secularization" of the relationship between memory and forgetting, wherein memory becomes the initial state and forgetting is reduced to a loss of memory.

The essay locates the beginnings of this reversal not only in modernity, but also in late ancient strata of thought. The analysis proceeds through Heidegger's reading of forgetting in light of his interpretation of *lethe* as concealment (a notion that for him was broader and more precise than forgetting in a psychologized, modern form of "an experience of the soul"). The analysis consequently turns to discussing the Palestinian schools of rhetoric (in the Palestinian Talmud) to retrieve a version of forgetting that precedes, undergirds, necessitates, and makes insufficient any effort or attempt at memory and remembering. The resulting argument is that of the transformations of the politics of forgetting from late antiquity to modernity.

In method, the essay advances with reading slowly as distinct from and complementary to close reading and distant reading. The latter two methods regulate distance between a reader and the chronologically and geographically localized text. The former negotiates the temporalities in which the tradition of tradition to which a read text belongs changes. Such a change is not necessarily chronologically progressive and must instead be checked up in two directions at the same time: not only on the way "forward" from antiquity to modernity, but also on the way "backward" from modernity to antiquity, towards what it helps to see about ancient texts, as modernity and antiquity help to shed light as well as heuristic darkness on one another.

2. Results

A primary, elemental power of forgetting continues to work in the modern context, despite the dominant modern constellation in which memory becomes a primary given and forgetting recedes to a memory loss. The modern constellation is predicated by the horizon of subjectivity, in which a subject–agent (either an individual or an individual nation) is the one who is foundationally defined as remembering oneself. Lived in that modern context of subjectivity, as self-conflictual and as monstrous and heterogeneous as modern subjectivity is (de Libera 2016), the tradition of Talmudic thought runs the risk of becoming lost to and due to the modern subject. The same lived tradition, however, carries resources yet to be mobilized in order to invoke a politics of forgetting promising both a backward and forward movement beyond the horizon of the modern individual and national subject–agent. The applied version of this result is both the necessity and insufficiency of the *Heimat* (homeland)—either local or traveling—as the *topos* to which to anchor today's politics of forgetting and memory.

3. Discussion

My argument in this essay concerns Talmud as a politics of forgetting.[1] I am careful in saying "Talmud" without the "the" to gesture to the *tradition* of the Talmud as a way of learning, reading, interpreting, and acting practically in view of the folios of the medieval manuscripts of the Talmud and its modern printed editions, taken not only as tractates

in the medieval sense of the terms, but also as archives of rabbinical schools in Palestine and Babylonia.

Summarily, this constitutes Talmud (rather than *the* Talmud) as the tradition, and even more precisely as a tradition of that tradition, in Gérard Granel's terms (Granel 1972). It unfolds, changes, appears, and disappears in and from the view century by century and epoch by epoch. Each century and each epoch casts a new view on the beginnings and the future of Talmud as a tradition. Talmud as a tradition of tradition also spells out an epistemic direction, a discipline of thought and of practical action regarding how one engages with the world and with others therein.

Why forgetting? The topic is instigated by Daniel Boyarin's *The No-State Solution: A Jewish Manifesto*" (Boyarin 2023) as a part of a larger constellation of discussions about "solutions": "no-state "solution", "two-states solution". The instigation consists of asking: a solution to which problem, to which question? This is one element that informs my thinking here.

The second element can be introduced in theoretical terms as "gnome". Aristotle differentiates three elements in thinking (and action): (1) syllogism, (2) enthymeme, and (3) gnome. The first is in the sense of topical or logically necessary combination of logoi, for which combination there stands the term "syllogism". The second, enthymeme has a sense of *either* (2a) "truncated syllogism", for a convenience of persuasion (according to Boethius), *or*, alternatively (2b), the sense of co-consideration of confronting "logoi" or "logics" of action in the area of the "possible" (the area of *ars rhetorica*) as distinct from the logoi introducing the "necessary" or the "impossible" (with the latter two not pertaining to action at all). Finally, the third interest here is gnome: a very short-circuited version of thinking or acting, that of a simple phrase, hashtag, slogan, association, etc., and the acts carried out thereupon. None of these simple logoi (slogans, half sentences, etc.) raise up to enthymeme, let alone to syllogism.

One example of such *gnome*, such a short-circuit "logics", is a view of (the) nation-state as an answer or a solution to the Holocaust. In this gnome, the emergence of the State of Israel is often understood or misunderstood (I am bracketing the difference for now) as directly connected, in whichever way this connection is thought of, with the Holocaust.

3.1. The Problem in First Iteration: How Not to Forget It, When You Cannot Remember It Either: In a Limbo

This is where, in the context of such a gnome, the question of forgetting comes in its first iteration: We must remember; and we also must not forget. Is that the same? The very first approximation to the problem of forgetting here is that the Holocaust is either denied or commemorated under the name of genocide.[2] The State of Israel is often "gnomically" understood as a solution to that. A problem of forgetting here is that on either scenario, in either denying or commemorating the *genocide*, the Holocaust is forgotten. This transpires precisely because the event so named does not yield itself to any kind of full recollection, to any kind of descriptive or narrative account; it does not yield itself to any kind of memory. This is where my question comes from: how not to forget if you cannot remember. There is a Yiddish proverb, "If you cannot remember it, forget it!" There is a kind of limbo in between, between forgetting and memory. This limbo between inability to forget and inability to remember interests me here.[3]

3.2. A Trajectory of Analaysis

By necessity, which I will immediately explain, navigating this limbo between memory and forgetting of or after the Holocaust makes me travel and visit the areas of Heidegger's thought and of German language, in which I humbly ask to be treated as a guest. My *first* reason necessitating such a trip is that Heidegger's thought might have grasped the Holocaust philosophically much more precisely and even more intimately than any kind of either memorializing or denying the Holocaust under the rubric of genocide. My *second* reason of turning to Heidegger is that, in his thinking about the war in 1944–1946

(Heidegger 2020), he thinks and writes about forgetting and forgetfulness, arguably in direct connection with the war (whether he does so with or without regrets about the defeat of the German National Socialist State; this has been sufficiently argued both ways and I bracket this question as irrelevant for the argument at hand). My *third* reason of turning to question of forgetting follows from the second and concerns forgetting in relation to the tradition of tradition of Talmud today, i.e., in both modernity and more specifically after the Holocaust, which, as indicated, we cannot forget, but are too quick to memorialize or deny as a genocide. Let me slow down to elaborate on this third reason more.

Today, we can only work on and interpret forgetting and forgetfulness in (and as I will argue, of) the rabbinic tradition against the backdrop of the philosophically worked-up interpretation of forgetfulness in a most developed and, again, perhaps most intimate version of Holocaust: Heidegger's critique of the tradition of Western philosophy. Heidegger criticizes this tradition for having taken a false "new beginning" with Kant, having lost the power of its "first beginning" in pre-Socratics and Heidegger's own working up of the "other beginning" both in pre-Socratics and in the future to be hoped for, a future from which the Kant's "new beginning" (with its emblem, *subjectivity*) has locked "all of us" out. It is against the backdrop of this Heidegger's critique of Western thought and practice that we have to take up the tradition of Talmud's tradition and, for the present argument, of the role of forgetting therein.

3.3. Stakes

In this, the stakes cannot be higher. For a position on and of Israel today (in the altogether unavoidable homonymy of Israel as Biblical Israel, Rabbinic and Christian Israels, the Jewish Israel of the Law of Return, along with the Jewish "racial" Israel of the camps, to name just a few elements that are nearly inseparably enmeshed in the homonym) *must* take Holocaust and its forgetting into account to move beyond the gnome of the direct connection between Holocaust and (the State of) Israel. To articulate and to live up to these stakes takes no less then considering the forgetfulness of Holocaust behind the new collective memory thereof re-styled, as it became, into the memory of genocide. Only in this framework can the problem or the question to which the two "solutions", the state and the no-state, come into view. We, therefore, have to keep this problem in view as clearly as we can, and if not, then, at the very least lay out its obscurity as articulately as possible.

3.4. A Key

This also introduces a key in which my argument concerning the past, the future, and the forgetting of the tradition of tradition of "Talmud" develops: I sense even more danger in falling for the future Heidegger spells out than I sense in the past of gas chambers (or their glaring absences in concentration camps to have been transformed into memorials and museums) for today's Jews, Germans, and the Germany WWII victors alike.

At the very least, thinking of Germany, we should trust Hegel that philosophy could still be "the epoch grasped in thought". To grasp the epoch in thought was the hope for Hegel and German idealism. The same can be trusted to have remained for Heidegger, and even more so for him. For his philosophy's aims grasp more than an "epoch;" offering instead "another beginning", which means another view on the past which is another view on the future for the humans across and beyond the epochs. I submit, therefore, that, in 1944–1946, Heidegger, the philosopher and pronounced "German" (even if also a criticizer of the "Deutschland über Alles"), had understood and "grasped" the war and the Holocaust "in thought" better and more intimately, reliably, and precisely than perhaps any less critically apt national socialists or their enemies did.

Heidegger casts a future for which Israel, if Israel were not to lose its own tradition (be it rabbinic Israel, Christian "Israel in Spirit", or civic Israel of the State of Israel), should rather not fall into. Heidegger's future means dissipation of Israel's future. That relationships between the two futures needs to be accounted for. To do so, we have to take Heidegger's cast of the future even more seriously than how the current world of the victors

and losers of WWII understands the past of the camps and chambers, including the ensuing collective future of the guilt, regret, victory, "never again", and "never forget" as parts thereof.

The front line of the future at stake is not merely the solution of either state or (no)state, but rather *the question* to which the state, be it understood as a nation-state, sovereign state, or more loosely as modern state, became, is and threatens to continue to be an answer in the first place. What is the question or the problem to which the modern state, including the "no-state solution", is a response. The question in question is the one of the futures at stakes. Both futures, the one Heidegger hopes, in which Israel dissipates, and the future in which Israel has a portion, have to do with a cast of the past, and more specifically with forgetting.

A future, which means the very possibility of a future, is defined or cast by what one forgets; and more precisely by the powers of forgetting as such. The stakes of the future concern the role of forgetting.

If this is so, Heidegger thinking about forgetting and forgetfulness becomes important for sorting out the future without Israel that he anticipates and the future for Israel as the question to which "solutions" had been offered, even if the question is yet to be properly asked. Heidegger's thinking about forgetting becomes crucial here, for it provides a starting point to think about forgetting and forgetfulness today in the Talmud or in relation to Talmud and the tradition of its tradition, in view of Israel's future.

Forgetting and forgetfulness in his thought are articulated pertinently enough to serve as a starting point to think about the role and stakes of forgetting or non-forgetting of *that* which we cannot remember (or, as it will soon become clear, even in forgetting or non-forgetting without any particular "that" or "it" to be posited.)

As a consequence of such an engagement with Heidegger in thinking about forgetting in and of Talmud today, there is yet another element informing the present analysis. In Daniel Boyarin's (and Abraham Joshua Heschel's[4]) language, this element of the future is "(the) Talmud as a traveling homeland". In Heidegger's language, that would be traveling "Heimat". For Heidegger, *Heimat* would mean neither the nationalist "Deutschland über Alles", per se, nor a state defined by its borders or by the national broadcast of always self-explanatory and therefore never sufficing news in a standardized, i.e., almost exterritorial, and surely nationalized, parlance of Hoch Deutsch. Rather, and more fundamentally, *Heimat* is a locale, a village, a place where one and one's parents and their parents grew up, lived and died. What then is a relationship between the two homelands, the one in Heschel's Talmud as a traveling homeland of Israel and the other in Heidegger's thought? This question will help guide the balance of the analysis in this essay, as, as will become clear, the question of *Heimat* as the future has everything to do with forgetting.

3.5. Two Homelands and Forgetting

In 1944–1945, in *Von der Vergessenheit* ("On Forgetting"), Heidegger directly connects forgetting with the question of the *Heimat*, namely, the question of being sent away from the *Heimat*. Forgetfulness for him is being removed from the Heimat in this local sense. That does not mean "you have forgotten your Heimat" in a psychological or subjectivist sense. In fact, in your travels and peregrinations, you might never forget the *Heimat*. Rather, that means, for Heidegger, that the *Heimat* has forgotten you. That, of course does not have to be understood in a sense that Heimat were a psychological subject, a person who forgot about you. Rather, in this economy, forgetting is not a subjective process at all; "you left" or "you were sent aways" means you are forgotten—in the grammatically speaking passive voice; but that does not mean the homeland has forgotten you, in grammatically active voice. Being forgotten is a state that is donned on you, not an action anyone takes.

Forgetting, therefore, in Heidegger's analysis, is not about something disappearing from the subject's memory. Rather, it is a human status of being forgotten—to an extent that even the *what* or a *who* that has been forgotten is forgotten as well. Voluntary or not,

leaving the Heimat means becoming forgotten altogether, to an extend of full loss of the who or the what, which would otherwise be remembered. Importantly, and again, the *Heimat* does not do that in a psychological sense. Forgetting is an act that is neither yours nor of your *Heimat*; rather it is an operation in which you and your *Heimat* are involved. Forgetting strikes at the moment at which that radically impersonal operation turns on, at the moment of leaving the *Heimat*, on whichever grounds or due to whichever forces that leaving takes sway.

Let me pause here for a moment to ask provisionally: can anchoring forgetting and memory in the traveling *Heimat* solve that problem, if, as traveling, the *Heimat* does not need to be left behind? Advancing a Heidegger argument can help prepare to address this question with due attention.

Heidegger arrives at the above (one might say geographical) meaning of forgetting, which neither you nor your *Heimat* can control, as he makes his way from the Germans to the Greeks. To do so, in this text as in others, he, in his words, "listens" to languages beyond what and how those who use the languages for merely "communication" purposes are able "to hear". Hearing the language extends beyond adhering to the established use of the language, and Heidegger judges the latter by the former. In the case at hand, that listening involves paying attention to progressing from *Vergessen* and *Vergessenheit* to their stem "*gessen*" akin, as Heidegger finds it to be, to the English "get" (in "for*get*ting") and to the German stem "*gezzen*", to which he returns at the later stages of the analysis. Beforehand, Heidegger attends to two different meanings of the "Ver", one of amplification (his example: "einigen" versus "vereinigen", with the latter indicates an effort to come to an agreement despite differences and the former, a simple "be in agreement".) The other, and, for him, more crucial, meaning of the "Ver" is that of "failing to do something properly" or "having done something more intensely in a negative or uncontrolled sense". Examples of that negative sense of an overdoing would be "*versagen*" (to say more than planned); *versprechen* (not simply to say but to deliver it as promise); and *verändern* (to change by itself and on purpose rather than to be changed by someone.) In such a negative sense of the overdoing, the "*Ver*" means to "get into" or "fall into" the action or operation with a negative connotation of falling into a trap or a step or action in which one loses. In that second, negative sense "Ver" always connotes "falling into a trap" (*geraten*, which always implies a misstep or misfortune).

Having found the English analogue "getting" for the German "gessen"/"gezzen" and drawn on the German misfortune-tainted negative meaning of "loss" or "overdo" in the "Ver", Heidegger launches a search for a German antonym to "ver-gessen" ("forget"). At this point, he constructs what would have been but never was a word in German, a would-have-been antonym for *vergessen*: **ergessen* (I use an asterisk to indicate that the word is a hypothetical only). The "er" expresses an accomplishment of getting something done (or, in a possible English analogue, "begotten"). To schematize Heidegger's analysis here: If the German *lernen* means "to learn" then er*lernen* means "to successfully finish learning", and ver*lernen* means "to lose all your learning, to unlearn".

To Heidegger's *initial*, indeed merely rhetorical, dissatisfaction, **ergessen* is not a word; the closest the German language gets to **ergessen* and the antonym for *vergessen* ("forget") is the German *ergötzen*, Heidegger observes. Preparing to move from an initial rhetorical dissatisfaction to the victorious final move, Heidegger complains: the word *ergötzen* means something *seemingly* not related to the *vergessen* at all: *ergötzen* means "to play with, to have fun with, to cheer up oneself with, to enthrall, etc.".

However, Heidegger finds a connection! The cheering up (with) a friend or a toy is a brightening state, that of clearing up (Aufheiterung[5]) as one exits from the dark into a clearing in the forest. Out of the dark between trees, one is in the hemming: the light hems-it-out into the clearing of brightness amid dark trees around. From the merely hypothetical **ergessen* ("to acquire fully" as opposed "to get into trouble") Heidegger moves to the real word, *ergeutzen* as "cheering up", and then to *Aufheiterung* of brightening up that hems out the dark of the forest. That maneuver allows Heidegger to turn to the antonym of the

Aufheiterung, now understood as "the brightening hemming-out". That antonym is the Ver*heiterung* or clouding up, deeming up, and losing things (and oneself!) in the dark. As we move out of the hemming, the darkness looms in again and takes away the holding and the being held of the light: the brightening falls out from the hem, and the hemming out of the light and of the cheerful opening comes into a miss (Vers*aumniss*). The ground of such deeming up (Ver*heiterung*) of the cheerful bright of the *Aufheiterung* is what Heidegger was looking to articulate: the originary (rather than any kind of psychological or subjective) forgetting (Ver*gessen*). One can summarize the result: Ver-gessen or for-getting is, thus, the getting of that which one was not seeking to get, in the negative sense.

In the final analysis in its English and German part, this deeming up is, for Heidegger, the forgotten ground of not being able to hold the ground—we normally understand forgetting as simply not being able to hold, without understanding the ground thereof: the ground of the *Verheiterung* or the deeming up. That means, as Heidegger concludes the German part of his analysis, that "the originary essence of forgetting [as such] remains forgotten" (Heidegger 2020, p. 941). It does, even if Heidegger succeeds in finding a symptom of that forgotten forgetting in the impersonal operations of deeming up versus hemming in, i.e., in forgetting as deeming up versus brightening of the cheer.

From the German "region of meaning" achieved thereby, Heidegger continues his diagnosis of the forgetting forgotten or deemed up by having reduced the forgetting to either a subjective state or objective status. He does so by moving to symptoms in the Latin and Greek languages. In using German to help diagnose the Latin and the Greek better, the remainder of his analysis of the Latin and Greek allows him to discover the connection of that deeming up of the cheer to the *Heimat*. The German helps the Greek to be understood in its affinity with the German—yet only with a stipulation: the present-day Germans of the Hoch Deutsch and nearly exterritorial (and surely delocalized) nationalism have fallen into the darkening of the deeming up and failed to cheer up. By listening up to what such a deemed-up Germans fail to hear in their own language, Heidegger now turns to a similarly careful listening of Latin and Greek.

The Latin for forgetting, *obliviscor*, comes from "oblino": "to scribble all over", to "smear" what is written on the wax tablet; that entails wiping away and, thus, making it inaccessible, Heidegger argued. This is where the tinological moment of forgetting as forgetting *something* (including somebody) is fading away: *obliviscor* is a median form, he highlights. This bespeaks, "I am smearing and erasing for myself, so that the erased will be and remain inaccessible to me". The shift is from the *what* is being erased (a tinological approach, in this case the what is the writing erased) to the *who* becomes erased, or over whom does the erasing take sway. This is counterintuitive: the erased is not the writing, but the one whom this writing corresponds to, whom or to whom does it articulate. The emphasis here shifts: erasing is what takes hold of me, no longer what specifically is erased. Erasing means becoming inaccessible for me. It is not that I erase, but rather that the erased becomes inaccessible to me, just as I am no longer accessible as a reader or writer of what has been erased.

Transposed back to German, that "erasing and making inaccessible means the following: forgetting (Ver*gessen*) is misplacement (Vers*tellen*) and losing—having no longer preserved. Interpreting the *obliviscor* as "getting the writing on the wax table lost on me" is a very important step here. What I render here in the context as "lost on me" is "Ver*bergen*". The interpretation of *obliviscor* as Verbergen connects Heidegger's analysis in 1944/45 with his 1931/32 lectures on the "essence of truth" (Heidegger [1931] 1977). Heidegger insisted then, in *The Essence of Truth*, that the true meaning of any forgetting is Ver*borgenheit* (usually rendered as "concealment"), a term Heidegger connects with the Greek *lethe*, generally understood as the river of forgetting. For him, rather than interpreting it as forgetting, *lethe* is better interpreted as Ver*borgen* = "concealment". At this earlier point, Heidegger explicitly doubts that it is even possible to interpreted *Verborgenheit* as *Vergessenheit*, or concealment as forgetting, for forgetting, at the time, for him seems to be a subjective state, a state of the subject, and thus borders on the *contradictio in adjecto*: "I still leave open the question of

whether one can at all comprehend forgetting by conceiving it as psychological event (seelisches Erlebins, experience of a soul) or occurrence in consciousness".[6] In 1946, however, Heidegger was more affirmative in outlining the contours of forgetting as an "experience of a soul", even if reducing it, as he still does, to *Verborgenheit* or "concealment".

At this crucial point of arrival from *Vergessenheit* (forgetfulness) to *Verborgenheit*, generally understood as concealment, I need to pause this exposition in order to question that regnant interpretation of forgetting as concealment, even if only for the purposes of my argument here. That would mean to apply Heidegger's wits about the "*Ver*" to reading and listening to his "Ver*bergen*" and Ver*borgenheit*, too. That means listening to "bergen" and "borgen" more closely. *Kluge etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* derives "*bergen*" from balto-slavic root "*$b^h herg^h$ "bewahren" connecting that with *bírgintí* "sparen" ("save"); *nebrešti* "außer Acht lassen, missachten" (leave without attention, fail to attend to) and with Russian *beréč* "hütten, bewahren, schonen, sparen" (protect, care/beautify, save/preserve)" (Seebold 2011, p. 111).[7] The region of meaning of *bergen* as saving, caring about, preserving, and holding in keep allows one to interpret *Verborgenheit* not merely as concealment, but rather as falling out of saving, protection, or care. Just as a river is kept by its embankment (*bereg*) and flows out of keep or beyond the embankment when flooding, so too can *Verborgenheit* be heard as escaping the keep, failing out from keeping in check.[8]

With this reinterpretation of Ver*borgenheit* as not only concealment, but, rather, also as falling out of keep, Heidegger's next move is from Latin to Greek. There, Ver*borgenheit* reaches, in his terms, a new "region of meaning" as well. The Greeks, as he argued in 1944/45, experienced what German calls *Vergessen* and Latin *oblivisci* rather differently. The Greek word for that which German and "we the Germans" articulate as Vergessen is ἐπιλανθανομαι. The base of this word is λαθ-λαθω, and that means "Ich bin verborgen" (Heidegger 2020, p. 942): I am lost, I have fallen out of check, I am out of keep (rather than only "I am concealed"). This is the same word base, λαθ-λαθω, of the Greek word for what "we" (the Germans) name "Wahrheit" (to mean "truth", but to hear and connote "protection, being in custody, being taken under ward (Bewahren) or keep"), Heidegger argues. Similarly to Latin *obliviscor*, ἐπιλανθανομαι is a median form, but the disposition or the way one holds oneself is radically different, Heidegger continues. In Greek, it is neither about an act, action, or operation (*Tun*) of erasing, nor about "letting" something happen—letting something to become erased). Rather, ἐπιλανθανομαι bespeaks a gift and/or fate (*Geschick*, idem), he argues further.

At this point, to exemplify the result, i.e., the diagnosis Heidegger had achieved, the *Heimat* comes into focus. When one is pushed out in a foreign land and forgets home, the Greek is not talking about "an experience of the soul;" the Greek expression επιλανθανεται της πατριδος means to Heidegger that, away from Heimat where he/she himself/herself falls out of keep, one remains un-preserved ("er bleibt sich selbst verborgen").

Thought of in the "Greek" way, forgetting thus means to fall out of keep of one's own lack of protection of the *Heimat*, whereas the *Heimat* also and by the same token becomes unprotected or fallen out of keep of the person. This falling out of keep in the relation to the Heimat means that the Heiman has also fallen out of keep, and no recollection of the traveler about his/her homeland, nor the homeland memorialization of its hero travelers, can help: the homeland falls out keep. The double falling out of keep furthers the person in the darkening (Verbeiterung, idem[9]).

This is why, when away from the homeland, humans, despite their most sincere efforts to remember, can and indeed are destined to forget, Heidegger concludes. For him, this conclusion means that, in such an arrival into the darkening of being away from the homeland (which means into a nationalized or national-socialized exterritoriality), something that was accessible and permissible to the humans and even already transferred to them becomes moved away from them; yet, this moving away works and remains unwatched and out of keep (verborgen bleibt). Forgetfulness (Ver*gessenheit*) is, thus, the condition of the humans who, unwatched and unguarded, run out of keep in their relation to the *Heimat* (Heidegger 2020, p. 943).

3.6. Homeland-Forgetting in Travel and a Traveling Home-Land

In short, forgetfulness for Heidegger is (a) a condition of having fallen out of keep of the *Heimat* with the *Heimat* having fallen out of keep and (b) this condition having fallen out of keep of the humans as well. This is not a "an experience of the soul" in which something disappears and/or is erased from memory without return, but rather a human status of having fallen out of keep. If you are elsewhere outside of your *Heimat*, one can say in a diaspora at this point, you are risking being forgotten, which means risking having fallen out of keep in the condition of unguarded forgetfulness.

Such a result, as provisional as it might be, posits a problem: the traveling homeland becomes an impossibility, for it entails a delocalization with and despite all the efforts to re-localize. A traveling homeland remains a form of forgetting. A traveling homeland for Heidegger would still mean "verborgen bleiben". The question therefore becomes: can Talmud overcome this impossibility of the traveling homeland? How can Talmud undo the fate of forgetting, which any travel and any exterritorialization or ex-localization tacitly brings?

3.7. Talmud and Forgetting beyond "the Experience of the Soul": A Possibility

The stakes in this analysis of forgetfulness beyond the experience of the soul—either individual or collective, on the one hand, and beyond the reduction of forgetfulness to concealment, on the other hand—are tremendously high. For what kind of a collective does one build, when one appeals to the Talmud as one's *Heimat*? One can say yes to such a collective built by reading the same newspapers and the same pages of the printed editions of the Talmud, or even of the daily page of the Talmud (*daf yomi*), with all and everyone reading the same thing globally to have a common parlance. Yet, what exactly is being read? Under which circumstances? Under which "tradition of tradition" (to borrow Gérard Granel's term) are we operating when we are talking about Talmud today?

My concern, indeed, an invitation and a necessity to think further, is that even if the Talmud is something that exists and continues in time (rather than in space, as Heschel and Boyarin have it, each in his own way,) the question becomes what happens to Talmud with time, and what happens to time with Talmud? This second part of the question means: what role does time, rather than, say, a genealogical order or sequence of events, play in the intellectual horizons of Talmud as way of thinking in and approaching the world?

We tend to think about and read the Talmud today in the context of modern state. It can be understood as a nation-state such as, say, France, or as a not-a-nation state, which, in Hannah Arendt's assessment, the USA is. We can equally well think about the modern state as defined by internationally recognized and/or contested borders, or else as a sovereignty operating under a constitution by the mechanism of exception. I bracket these important distinctions for now—in part because the emphasis is on the locality of Heimat/Homeland, rather than on an abstract map of, say, *Deutschland*. The point is that, even in the context of diaspora—as always localized and universalized as diaspora is—the latter is still a version of a nation in the modern sense.

In other words, under *any* notion of a modern nation, under these differing assessments of modern states and modern diasporas, we are running (on a preliminary assessment, at least) a modern discourse of what Alain de Libera (de Libera 2015) analyzed and historically localized as modern "subject–agent", or as what Kant first introduced according to de Libera's analysis with a philosophical neologism Subjektivität, which has become a common and even self-explanatory word, "subjectivity" to underly our modern thinking about nation-states and diasporas alike. As a modern invention of Kant, "subjectivity" serves as a common, uniting principle for a nation, whether in space or in time. This is precisely where the question of traditions of tradition of the Talmud, that is, of the changing nature of the question "What Talmud is as an intellectual enterprise", comes afore and becomes crucial in thinking about the role of the Talmud today for a nation.

3.8. Talmud without the "the" and a Nation with/out (before) the Land

In this and following sections, I would like to offer a couple of general observations concerning the foundational narrative structure of Israel as not necessarily and primarily a state, but rather a homonym in an Aristotelian sense: a speech about several distinct but closely interconnected and easy to confuse things ("human" as a living being and "human" as a portrayal—two things which are all too easily confused in speaking, thinking, and, as a result, in practical action). Biblical Israel (the title Jacob has earned, and his heirs received), Israel as a Biblical kingdom, or else the modern State of Israel would be just several foundational and not easily fully separable elements at work in such a homonymy.

Many more crucial elements intertwine in the living being and the portrayal of Israel. Daniel Boyarin's work indicates the Paulinian and then Christian "Israel in Spirit" versus Paul-created "Israel in flesh" from which the Christian theological-political designation "Jews" stems following the Roman geographical designation "Judeans". These, in turn, are followed by the biological reduction of theological difference down to difference posited by racist elitism and anti-elitism. These rather different elements are working together in the theological–political and geographical figure of "Israel" today, often without practical separation—either in life or in description.

3.9. Exodus as a Celebrated Lost Part of the Homonymy "Israel"

I would, however, like to highlight an underappreciated or, indeed, forgotten element of the narrative of which the homonymy of Israel is a part. This element has to do with the canonized version of the Five Books of Moses. The canon was built on the five books of Moses, which meant the sixth book, that of Jehoshua, was placed in the **Prophets**. What that means, however, is that, from a narrative standpoint, The Five Books is a cliffhanger. It also means the main narrative move or constitutive move, or, if I may borrow the term, "existential" move of the Five Books is what is either under-translated as "exodus" or over-translated as "expulsion" of Israel from Egypt.

It, rather, is a movement of getting out (I am very close to say "a movement of forgetting", as it is not necessarily that Israelites leave Egypt, but rather that Egypt, through the exodus, forgoes them and they it. This movement of getting out from Egypt integrates therein the *getting* of the first husband and wife *out* from the Gan Eden, of Abraham from his *Heimat*, and most obviously, the moving out of Israel or the moving of Hebrews (for Egyptians) out of Egypt.

This moving out, getting out (and if I can still risk it, forgetting) *is* the constitutive of the foundational narrative of Israelites. The Five Books are centered at and stop at that move, reaching, as they are, at the cliff right before its conclusion. Getting out of Egypt is the cliffhanger. Of course there is a sequel, and not one. In the books of Prophets, the history of Israel in relation to land and landing begins. Yet, in a substantial way, the sequel repeats the main move: landing, having the moment of exodus fall out of keep, the forgetting of the moment of exodus, the repeat of an exodus followed by another landing, followed by forgetting.

Importantly, here, being forgotten is not a *Heimat*, but rather the *Exodus* and the G-d of exodus therewith. This is a forgetting that is radically different from what Heidegger had; even if the Biblical "exodus" is, too, in Heidegger's words, far from "an experience of the soul". Exodus, landing, forgetting, and new exodus are all outside of what psychology of the "experience of the soul" (including the soul of a nation) can account for. The prophetic motive of forgetting the G-d of Exodus is not an experience of the soul either. Instead, the forgetting strikes where one seems to worship the G-d of Exodus in the most obvious way: though the sacrifices in the land-based shrine of the Holy Temple and of the Holy of the Holies therein. Forgetting of exodus is not a psychological movement, which has no space, but rather a spatial movement: landing.

The constitutive move first expressed in the Five Books becomes and continues to be the main concern of Israel's history: not to forget. Specifically, it means how exactly

not to forget the exodus behind the landing. If, in Heidegger, forgetting is instigated by expulsion/exodus form the *Heimat*, the Biblical forgetting is the forgetting of the exodus.

3.10. The Forgotten Exodus in the Two Talmuds

3.10.1. The Babylonian Fumes of Forgetting a What

Drawing closer to the pages of the two Talmuds, I would like to highlight the elements of this problematization of forgetting and forgetfulness of Exodus in two different iterations: in the Palestinian and Babylonian rabbinic schools of rhetoric. It is easier to begin with the Babylonian schools because the politics of forgetting in these schools is, for us, the moderners, easier to be grasped. In the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sanhedrin, there is a sensitivity the rabbis express about their schools located in Babylon as the place where the Biblical Babylonian Tower was.[10] The fumes of forgetting are still there, coming from that very place, even if the tower is no longer, the rabbis felt. These fumes are still dangerous, for them. The existential concern for their—if you wish a modern term—diasporic community is as follows: how not to forget the Mishnah or, even more broadly, the Torah beyond what the community has in the Scripture.

Not to forget the Mishnah means: it is not enough to reproduce the Mishnah by recorded notes or have it regurgitated by heart. Involving no understanding, such a mechanical regurgitation is necessary, lest an understanding of the reciter cripples in terms of leaving a trace and distorting the remembered (or, to come back to Heidegger's imagery of forgetting, making the Mishnah erased from the wax-tablet.)

These mechanical ways of remembering the words are, thus, insufficient. Rather, the mechanical memory needs to be subjected to scrutiny through the dance of refutations and counter-refutations in hopes that, if this process repeats time and again, in as many variations as one can have, the sense of a greater reliability of the Mishnah's memory becomes stronger and the Babylonian fumes of forgetting recede.

The fumes of forgetting in Babylon can, therefore, be read as an analogy for the powers by which exodus is becoming forgotten through solid landing. In such an analogy, the Torah, given as the memory of the exodus, becomes forgotten if reduced to land-solid mechanical remembering in recitation and regurgitation.

3.10.2. To Palestine from Alexandria: The Forgotten Who

If we now move from this scene of forgetting in Babylon back to Palestinian rabbinic schools of rhetoric, then the concern with forgetting becomes even more fundamental. It is no longer just how to remember the Mishnah better, as if there already were something fixed to remember. Rather, and more blatantly, the concern is how not to forget. But what? What is **it** that is not to forget?

The Palestinian rabbinic concern about non-forgetting could be understood better if we move even further down in chronology and geography to Alexandrian schools, to Philo, who at the end of *On the Creation of the World* polemically responds to the godless or atheists. These were not modern-day atheists denying the "existence" of the G-d of the Bible; rather they were "godless" in the sense of people in despair about G-d's involvement in their lives. Educated in Greek philosophy and thinking about the G-d of the Bible, who by the standards of that philosophy is not a part of the world, these "atheists" argued: if G-d is not a part of this world, how can G-d intervene with the matters of the world? How can G-d help anybody? Theirs was not an act of denial of G-d, but rather an act of despair.

Their "atheists" question how the G-d-who-is-not-a part-of-the-world can take part in the matters of the world became the definitive question to inform Rabbinic thought through the medieval period as well (which would have to be a matter of a separate exposition and analysis). Pertaining to the present argument, however, is that Philo, who arrived into the Western philosophical and theological tradition mainly through Latin reception in Marius Victorinus, is held responsible for introducing the notion of *existentia* in application to G-d and beyond. Namely, at the end of *On the Creation*, Philo firmly responds to the godless or atheists that G-d of the Bible "is and exists" (*esti* kai *huparxei*; *On*

the Creation: 170). That means that G-d is, and the world is literally "under his arche". The world being "under the G-d" would correspond to the Rabbinic sense of G-d as the קונה, master, proprietor, or acquirer of the world. In short, Philo's answer to the "atheists" was that the owner can control the property without being a part of that property.

Philo's heralding notion, *huparxein*, was translated by Victorinus in Latin as *existentia*—not in the Heideggerian, or, if you wish, Fichtean sense of *Vorhandene* as "an object [Objekt] within reach of hand", but rather in a more foundational sense, which, then, through a long history of Church Fathers and scholasticism, shaped the question: what does it mean for G-d to "exist" without having an "essence"? Philo's "*esti*" came to mean "essence" and "*huparxein*", "existence". The latter meant "to be", yet without any definable "essence" attached. That complex and multifaceted reception and transformation constitutes one better known line of *huparxein's* life in the history of thought.

Yet, *huparxein* had another life, too.

In the life accounted for above, "the world's being under the G-d" came to mean G-d's *existentia* in the world, even if precisely not as any definable essence, thing, or part of that world. In a parallel life I expose below, "the world's being under the G-d" or "the world's being under dominion of the G-d" comes to mean something else. Alas, that meaning is far less self-explanatory for us, the moderners. That other meaning and that other life of *hyparxein* is: G-d is testified to in the world.

How then, did we reach this meaning and this life of the *huparxein*?

This other life is that of rabbinic reception and rethinking of *huparxein.* It unfolds not by interpreting *huparxein* as existentia, but rather as קיום, לקיים מקיימין and derivatives. Under-interpreted, this rabbinic idiom means "to fulfill" (*plerosai*). For example, in Mishnah Yevamot 8:4, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Betira witnessed (העיד), regarding a son of Mesiga, that he followed the procedures of exemption from the requirement of levirate marriage to the widow of his brother (who was a man-neutered eunuch) in order to "testify to" [לקים] the teachings of Rabbi Akiva. The teaching to which Mesiga testified was that, because a man-neutered eunuch was once upon a time able to procreate, his brothers were still subject to levirate marriage, that is if the eunuch left no children.

Rabbi Akiva testified [קיים] too. He famously recited the *shema*-prayer when tortured by Romans. He did so in order to testify [לקיים] that the verse "and you shall love Lord, your G-d … with all your soul …" must be *practically* interpreted and, in that sense, testified to mean: "recite that verse even when your soul is brutally tortured". In this, Rabbi Akiva also testified to his disagreement with his own students, who considered torture an exemption from the obligation to recite the *shema*-prayer.

These practical interpretations of or testaments to a commandment of levirate marriage and of reciting the Shema-prayer, respectively, extend beyond the meaning of "to fulfill" to another, otherwise inaccessible, region of meaning, that of testifying or providing a testament.

To access that region of meaning in the rabbis, we, not fully unlike Heidegger, are not simply to listen, and but also to listen in, to advance beyond what the words of the rabbis convey to what they express.

Along the lines of such a listening in, once interpreted as a testament, קיום affords us an opportunity to hear the answer the rabbis provided to the question of the "atheists" in Philo: G-d intervenes in the world if and when G-d and its law is testified in the world by and through *practical* interpretations of that law in the exemplary deeds of the rabbis, such as Rabbi Akiva's recitation of the Shema-prayer at the time of his torture or Mesiga's performance of the laws of levirate marriage for his deceased neutered brother.

Consisting of testifying to the divine law by performing that law, that answer was heavily inflected by the Roman senses of law of *ius*, that is, of the law of obligation, contract, and procedure. The procedure (or in rabbinic terms, *halakhah*) was the law of obligation or the law of contract between G-d and Israel. The answer to Philo's atheists thus becomes: the G-d of the Bible participates in the world through Israel, who testifies to the contract with G-d by following the procedures (*halakhah*) on Israel's part of their mutual obligations

in hopes that G-d will, therefore, follow the procedures on G-d's part. That latter part, of course, works only on a condition: Israel must uphold Israel's part of the contract meticulously. Such meticulous upholding constitutes the "testament" to, perhaps one can even say the performance of, G-d's involvement with(in) the world.

3.11. From a Testament to the G-d to the (Non)forgetting of the Law

In this economy of testifying to G-d's involvement with the world by meticulously performing the procedures of Israel's part of the contract with G-d, forgetting becomes a real danger. If Israel forgets how to deliver on Israel's part of the contract, G-d might forget to deliver on G-d's part.

That makes the danger of forgetting these obligations, or any detail of such obligations, cosmic in scope. In this scheme of things, קיום, which, in Palestinian Aramaic, has the meaning of "oath, confirmation, answer"[11], shifts from rendering the Biblical ברית to expressing the Latin "contract" and "covenant" including a sign thereof, קיומא (circumcision), as well.

There is more to the קיום as a testament to the contract between Israel and G-d. In a region of meaning of the rabbinic parlance in Palestine, לקיים is not only to testify, but also to accept as a testimony in court. There are conditions and procedures by which a testimony offered by the witnesses can be accepted in court as a testament. That applies not only to court-hearings of the witnesses and their testimonies in monetary or capital cases, but also, and indeed much more importantly, to how the court or the students of the law are to examine the witnesses and their testimonies to what the law is. The judges and/or the students of the law must ask themselves: can we accept such and such witness or and such and such testimony of that witness as a testament to the law, that is, as the way in which the law is to be presented, interpreted, and therefore practiced? In Rabbinic parlance, this is the question of מה (אנן) מקיימין, what [testimony] do (we/they) accept as a testament (to the law). The question is, thus, of קיום.

(In brackets, we could listen and hear this today in the formula "הקמת מדינת ישראל" translated descriptively as "pronouncing or proclaiming the establishment or existence of the State of Israel", the language could also be heard as "testifying to the State of Israel; and accepting that testimony as testament", so that the State becomes the testament to and of itself.)

Collectively, in these regions of meaning, לקיים as a testimony that has been accepted and, therefore, become a testament (to the law and thus to G-d in the world) is a version of an answer the rabbis in the Palestinian schools of rhetoric have to the Philo atheists' question of how the G-d can interfere in the matters of the world. Namely, "we", the rabbis in the schools of rhetoric, in the schools of judges, and in our courts, need to decide מה לקיים, what to accept as a testimony and, therefore, as a testament to the divine instruction, for this instruction is nothing else but G-d's interference with and enmeshing in the world.

3.12. Between the Ius of Mutual Obligation and Nomos of Unilateral Berith

A more down-to-earth answer to the godless of Philo, I submit, is the rabbinic preoccupation with the *halakhah* in Roman Palestine. In the Roman context, *halakhah* is *ius*, i.e., the way, the procedure, the procedural law. This is in distinction from *nomos* in the sense of the divine law of apportionment that needs no procedure, but rather just feels and falls and befalls upon. At stake for the rabbis in the Palestinian schools of rhetoric, and this is where forgetting looms large, as what are the exact procedures, exact *halakhah*, in a mutual contract, fancily called covenant, between Israel and G-d. The question of the forgetting becomes: do we know and therefore testify to and fulfill, i.e., provide testament to that contract, or do we instead find ourselves forgotten by G-d? If what we do is a testament to these contractual procedures carried out correctly, that gives us hope that G-d upholds G-d's part of the contract, as well. The Palestinian preoccupation with what is the exact procedure in each segment of providing a valid testament to the contract, i.e., to every single divine precept, has to do with these very stakes: If we testify correctly and our tes-

timony is accepted as testament, then we have hope that G-d will do G-d's part. Yet if not, we have no hope. This marks an epistemic transition from Philo and *nomos* to the Roman context of *ius*, the context in which the stakes of forgetting sky-rocketed: If we forget the proper procedure, G-d may forget us.

To highlight a resulting contrast with the Babylonian schools of rhetoric, the rabbis there did not preoccupy themselves with the dangers of forgetting. Instead, they focused on how to remember the Mishnah better. The difference is decisive. The Babylonian rabbis assumed that they already had the Mishnah as the formulation of such a proper procedure, and their real question was only to remember and thereby to apply this procedure in the best way possible. That means the question of forgetting becomes, for them, the same as the question of remembering. To forget, for them, is just not to remember properly, despite the fumes of the place of the Babylonian Tower.

Not so in the Roman Palestine: there, the stakes of forgetting were much higher. Since the *halakhah*—as the very possibility of testifying to and having a testament to the contract (covenant) by way of having cited the contractual and procedural law as a fully accepted testament to the law—is always yet to be established among the Palestinian Rabbis (in the Mishnah and in the Palestinian Talmud alike). The question is of מה אנן מקיימי: what we accept as a testament to the law is the genuine question without an ultimate answer. Failing to testify and to attain the testament to the law runs the risk of forgetting that which does not yet present itself to memory either. On the hand, and in other words, having testified to the law runs the risk of having forgotten that law as well.

3.13. From the Palestinian Academy to Heimat

This is why, in conclusion, I would like to come back, once again, to Heidegger, in order to propose if not an alternative, then a heuristic reading of his analysis of forgetting and forgetfulness. This is an attempt to rethink how the *Verborgenheit*, which, as Heidegger insisted, is the core of what forgetting and the state of forgetfulness is, can—and perhaps even needs to—be understood. In the regnant reading, *Verborgenheit* and, thus, forgetting and forgetfulness is translated and understood as concealment (of a thing from the human and of the humans from themselves once they leave their locality of their *Heimat* behind). You conceal yourself from your *Heimat*, which means you are concealed from the land, indeed from any land and from yourself; that such a concealment is concealed from you, too: forgetfulness is, thus, the concealment of that concealment. The proposed rethinking evokes the "*bergen"* and its participle form, "*borgen*", of the *Verborgenheit*. *Bergen* here is to be taken in its basic sense of "protection, help, defense, guard and ward", the protection or keeping—including the protection and keeping of that which cannot be remembered either.

Bergen indicates keeping the river in its banks, keeping it from flooding. If the river floods, is this still a river or does the river escape from view, sinking into forgetting? *Verborgenheit*, thus, has to do with *verbergen* as both "protecting intensely" and "to fail to protect" at the same time. In the Palestinian rabbinic economy of (for)getting, the testament to the law of G-d in the world means: G-d can protect us, i.e., not forget us, if we do not let the G-d's law be forgotten behind having that very law cited, testified to, and accepted as a testament. Does the fully accepted testament to the law not run the danger of having the law and, thus, G-d forgotten behind that very testament? This paradox of (for)getting, of the overkeep that means losing, applies, in that reading, to the Palestinian rabbis and to Heidegger's *Verborgenheit*, despite their obvious differences in relation to exodus and the *Heimat*.

If *bergen* means to keep something in check, to watch over it, to save and protect it, that does not exclude "to conceal", but it does highlight to protect the law even if and precisely where there is a problem: can the law be fully testified to? Can the river be kept in check? *Verborgenheit* thus spells not only concealment, but also failing to keep in check. If so, the powers of (for)getting sway away from a modern psychological view of forgetting

as memory loss. Instead, these powers become that which memory is attempting to tame, to keep in check, at the always imminent risk of having overdone that.

If this is how we begin thinking about *Verborgenheit*—as both keeping and overkeeping in check—then we should also think about Heidegger's analysis of *aletheia* as U*nverborgenheit* in 1931/32, in that non-psychological key of (for)getting.

In these earlier years, Heidegger questions and sidelines a reading of *lethe* as forgetting, which for him sounds too close to an "experience of soul, *seelische Erlebnis*", that is to say, to the psychology of modern subjectivity. Instead, he insists on reading *lethe* as an ongoing concealment, a current, against which a human is supposed to work by not letting things hide as they like. This is, thus, about things, not about the subject, and is therefore an "ontological" rather than "pscyhological" operation. So it was in 1931/32.

After the war, however, in 1946, Heidegger returned to this question. He worked to prove that "forgetting" is not merely an insufficient "psychological" interpretation of *lethe*. Rather, his readers learned that forgetting and forgetfulness are the "concealment" of beings and of humans as beings from each other. Far from being an experience of the soul, forgetting now becomes a geographical operation. Precisely due to having left their *Heimat* behind, one does not forget (one can even remember the Heimat vividly). Yet, one becomes forgotten. From psychology, we move to geography and "ontology", in which the darkness, the condition of having been forgotten by the lost *Heimat*, is juxtaposed with the brightening of the exodus from the dark forest to the **Heiter** of the out.

Still, in 1944/5, even after having restored forgetting to its own geographical (and thus, if one prefers, "ontological") rights, Heidegger still believed—at least, on the standard reading—that concealment is the core of what forgetting is. Heuristically missing here is a reading of *Verborgenheit* as not only "concealment", but also as failing to save and protect. This dual power of *Verborgenheit* as both having in keep and becoming lost precisely because of that becomes more noticeable in the duality of (for)getting as always risking having it overdone. In this, there emerges a commonality and a difference between Heidegger and the Palestinian Rabbis. For Heidegger, what falls into concealment is one's relationship to one's own Heimat, however much one remembers it. For the rabbis, by contrast, it is about failing to protect, that is to say to remember, the moment and movement of exodus—a failing that is taking sway in remembering, i.e., in testifying to the law all too well.

In the final analysis, if, for Heidegger, having left the *Heimat* means to become forgotten, then for the Palestinian rabbis, it is the movement of leaving, the exodus from Egypt, which has never been the *Heimat*, constitutes the geographical movement in the scope of which the drama and the danger of having forgotten the G-d and G-d's law is unfolding. The danger for the rabbis is not in the leaving. Rather, the danger of forgetting the exodus hides in having landed, that is, in having to have remembered all too well.

3.14. A Resulting View on Wahrheit

Contrary to what immediately meets the eye, in 1931/32, in Heidegger's analysis of *Wahrheit* (truth) as U*nverborgenheit* (*un*consealment) at least two negatives operate. One is a privative negation of *bergen* (keep in check) as one of the two aspects of Ver*borgenheit* (the aspect of having failed to save, failed to protect). Then follows another, more noticeable privative negation, that of U*nverborgenheit* ("*un*concealment", the lack of failure to save and protect"). This double privative negation, if *lethe*, a basic operation with no negation involved, becomes interpreted in Heidegger, as Ver*gessenheit* or Ver*borgenheit* in 1946, entails the third, indeed, initial negation built in: the double-edged sword of the *Ver* of both failing to keep (or failing to get) while also overly keeping and getting, that is, keeping too well.

This double and, indeed, triple negation in English (for)getting and German Ver*gessenheit* is not what can be seen as primary operations of *lethe* and שכחה in Greek and in the Hebrew of the Bible, respectively. That induces a contrast between the secondary nature of the operation of forgetting in German and English and the primary nature of the

operation of שכחה in the Biblical command לא תשכח, usually translated as "do not forget" and understood as "erase the memory of Amalek …, do not forget!" (Deut. 25: 17–19).

The contrast works out as follows. If one reduces forgetting to modern psychologized terms of "seelisches Erlebnis" or, more broadly, to a subjective experience of either having forgotten or having been forgotten, then the Biblical commands to erase the memory of Amalek and not to forget what Amalek done to you are not quite adding up. Yet, if "forget" there entails not a psychological operation of a memory loss, but rather the primary geographical operation of continuing the exodus with a continuously suspended landing in sight, then "not-forgetting to erase the memory of Amalek" means to continue exodus despite all the dangers of not only Amaleks attacking from behind, the attack of the past, or the attack of having just left, but also the dangers of the safe, perhaps all too safe, arrival in the too-solid land of firmly established memories that relegate the exodus to the past, which again exposes one's back to the other Amalek, that of having firmly and surely arrived. The second Amalek strikes from the back, too; this time, however, it takes a form of forgetting that is reduced to a subjective (passive or active) experience of the *Heimat*, which thus hinders the primordial power of exodus by a sense of the collective subject who thinks of themselves as staying put in a national border, be it the national border in which one finds oneself in diaspora or at home.

If שכחה, then, is retrieved as a primary operation, geographical or otherwise, that of always unfolding and always adverting exodus, the primary operation for which any effort at memory is only a secondary attempt at taming (with the said and always present risk of having overdone that to the effect contrary to the effort), then that operation of exodus or שכחה needs to be understood in a median voice. In that operation, there is nobody, i.e., no subject who, as Heidegger thought in 193, forgets the mode of the experience of the soul, nor is it there, unlike what Heidegger posited in 1946, anybody forgotten either. However necessary they might be, neither the *Heimat* (lived or left) nor the transnationally construed localities of the modern diaspora can suffice to live up to the primary operation of forgetting for which the median voice of the Exodus is the name.

What, then, remains?

The open space or the open time between forgetting and remembering, which is at work in how the Palestinian rabbis were answering the question of how to go about the powers of forgetting even if and precisely when their concern was with what, and more precisely with who cannot be fully remembered, cannot be forgotten either. Theirs is the time or the place we would have had a hard time grasping without Heidegger. However, for grasping that space or time, Heidegger's orientation to the *Heimat* does not quite suffice either. Instead, if read together with and despite Heidegger, the Palestinian Talmud presents itself as a display of a politics of forgetting which we are challenged to work very hard not to forget today.

4. Conclusions

In the modern predicament, forgetting is (a) a loss of memory, which (b) the subject (either the individual "I" or national "we") suffers and/or eschews. Heidegger disconnected the forgetting from that modern "psychological" notion of the subject, as well as from the national or individual subjectivity. He, therefore, is helpful in articulating forgetting as independent from any subject or person (be it even the *Heimat*, thought of as a subject or person) "to do" the forgetting. Rather, forgetting strikes. It does so when triggered by one giving up the life in the *Heimat* in favor of living in another place, or even in the same place, conceived as a nation-state. In that, Heidegger helps to see: contrary to modern sensitivities, forgetting is not an action of any subject. Still, Heidegger runs the (a) part of the modern predicament, still approaching forgetting as a memory loss. Despite or perhaps due to that, Heidegger helps to make legible the attention the Palestinian rabbis pay to forgetting as the primary power, to which any memory—including the memory of the Law as the contract/covenant between G-d and Israel—is an always-limited attempt to remember the G-d, who can be neither remembered not forgotten. Similarly to Heidegger, the

Palestinian rabbis, therefore, do not ascribe forgetting to an act of any person (individual or collective), be it Israel or even the G-d. Dissimilarly, they approach forgetting as a primary power operating in relationships between G-d and Israel, while relegating memory to a secondary and never-sure effort to prevent forgetting from striking and undermining the relationships between G-d and Israel.

In a broader perspective, forgetting thus entails a primary operation to always threaten any achievement of memory. However, in the modern horizon of subjectivity, the relationship between the elemental, primary forgetting and its remediation in and by memory is reversed. Forgetting recedes to a secondary role of the loss of memory that takes place "in the modern subject". In the theology of the latter, even the Biblical G-d remains always remembered in the first place. By reducing G-d to *theos* always connected to *logos*, "the modern subject" becomes numbed to a possibility for G-d to become forgotten, unless such forgetting is a choice the "subject" makes or else unless that forgetting takes place "in the subject".

The main applied result of the argument is in detecting limitations of the modern figure of either localized or traveling *Heimat*/homeland as the (im)possiblity of the Exodus-driven politics of primordial forgetting. In this, the tradition of the Palestinian rabbis and its continuation today is a counter-current in the politics of forgetting and memory, as opposed to the dominant politics of memory and forgetting.

5. Materials and Methods

The materials are the texts quoted and referred to in the argument. I employed the method of slow reading, as articulated at the end of the introduction.

Funding: Research leading to this work was supported by the University at Buffalo SUNY Gordon and Gretchen Gross Professorship in Jewish Studies.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Notes

[1] An earlier version of this essay was presented on 27 April 2023, at Lille University (via Zoom). I thank Elad Lapidot for the intivation and for providing a stimulating environment for discussion. I thank Edouard Nadtochi of the University of Lausanne for readings and discussions we had on the problem this essay addresses. I am also thankful to the anonymous reviewers for the very helpful feedback on the earlier draft of the essay.

[2] Commemorations of Holocaust by visiting the sites of the concentration camps or else Holocaust and Genocide museums evoke what has been described a collective post-memory. In 2021, I took a train to Oranienburg, Sachsenhausen and have a gamut of feelings as if it was me being transported there, even if I know all well that this is not a personal recollection it feels like one. This and similar effects of post-memory and places of such post-memory through which collectives, "imaginary" that is to say real "communities" are come together introduce memory (a pseudo-memory even if it is a true one, yet they do not account for what this essay is after: that which cannot be remembered, does not yield itself to a narrative; but cannot be forgotten either.

[3] As Ernest Renan has it in his "What is a Nation?" (1882) "Forgetting, I would even say historical error, is an essential factor in the creation of a nation", in Ethan Rundel's translation (Renan 1992). The limbo between memory and forgetting concerns not what a nation forgets, but what it can neither forget nor remember. The issue also extends beyond the scope of a modern nation, for which forgetting and remembering are parts of the nation's collective subjectivity. The argument below probes the limbo between forgetting and memory, which subjectivity, an all too modern a notion, cannot account for.

[4] The relationships between Boyarin's "traveling homeland" and Heschel's "the palace in time" in his *Shabbath, Its Meaning for Modern Man* (Heschel [1951] 1994) calls for a separate thinking through—a task to be mentioned here only to indicate that the archeology of the figures "traveling home land" and "civilization in time", as well as related figures of thought, such as "traveling police" and "invisible college" are still awaiting their explorer.

5 *Aufheiterung* may connote both (1) what one finds upon exiting from or entering the dark forest, i.e., a clearing and (2) what one feels about it: cheering up, being out of the gloom. *Verheiterung* may complement the two connotations with their opposites in both what one finds and how one feels.

6 Ted Sadler'd translation, slightly modified (Heidegger and Sadler [1931] 2002, p. 103; Heidegger 2020, p. 141).

7 *Verborgenheit* derives from past participle of verbergen: verborgen. In semantic interplay "being concealed or more intensively "being kept in concealment or confinement" could also mean to have escaped from the watch, to hide; thus a river that floods over the embankment escapes and hides from the watch, being no longer captured as a river, becomes a flood in its stead.

8 For interpreting Heidegger's analysis here, it is important to highlight his refraining from inscribing *Verborgenheit* (concealment, falling out of keep) or, for that matter, *Vergessenheit* (forgetfulness, forgetting, being forgotten) into the economy of action or agency in either passive or active voice; Heidegger insists instead on the median form, which means, in this case, the operation, rather than on the operator or the operated.

9 "Verbeiterung" stands in the text (Heidegger 2020, p. 943). It may well be a typo (either in the type-writer-produced text or in the edition); and the word was likely to be Verheiterung.

10 In bSanhedrin 109a, one reports a dictum in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan, "A third of the tower [of Babylon] was burned, a third was swallowed [by the earth] and a third stands (קיים)", followed by a dictum/commenatry of Rav: "The air of the tower causes forgetting [משכח]", followed by a dictum in the name of Rabbi Yosef, "Babylon and and Borsif is a bad omen/sign for the Torah", followed by an anonymous question, "And what is *Borsif*"? answered in the name of Rabbi Asi: "*Borsif* reverberates with [the Aramaic for] "empty pit" [בור שאפי,] which is a phonetic cognate of the toponim Borsif.] The "Babylon" in Rabbi Yosef's words can mean narrowly "(the remnants of the tower of) Babylon" or broadly "(the land of) Babylon", both implying a place that induces forgetting. Translated above as "stands", קיים, the verb also connotes "testifies", "serves as a sign, as a wittness" of the once fully errected Babylonian Tower, of the edifice of the humans to have forgotten of G-d behind the towering elation of human achievment.

11 Sokoloff (2002b, p. 489) The terminology of קיים discloses a region of meaning related to "testament" not only in the Palestine but also, residually, in Babylon. That means not only in the Palestinian מה (אנן) מקיימין ("where do we stand/what do we take/approve as a testament") but also by the Babylonian קיימה לן ("[it is] standing by testament to us that…] or we have a testament" (Sokoloff 2002a, p. 1012) is suggesting that the region of meaning of "testament" reaches the Babylon, too, where it is overshadowed, however by the Babylonian's rabbis' larger concern with making sure they do not forget–that is deflect every possible attacke on—the Mishnah. This is distinct from the Palestinian concern that any formulation of the law should not be a form of losing the law to forgetting masked as the certitude of remembering the law clearly. Following the English translators of Heidegger, who rendered das Sein as Being and das Seinde with beings, one can propose a similarly rendered distinction between Law and laws, as far as the Palestinian rabbis are concerned with making sure the Law is not forgotten behind the all-too-certain formulations of laws.

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Article

Back to Exile: Current Jewish Critiques of the Jewish State

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Abstract: This article reviews recent books by Jewish thinkers that critique the idea of a Jewish state from the perspective of Jewish exile. It outlines two main approaches. The first, secular approach, rejects the Jewish state in favor of a secular state, seeing Judaism itself as the problem, whether arising from biblical violence or collective identity. The second, post-secular approach, rejects the Jewish state as secular, and finds resources in Jewish tradition for an alternative political vision centered on exile, understood as resistance to sovereignty and violence. This article argues that Jewish opposition to the Jewish state aims to limit sovereignty, integrate Jews into the Middle East space, and recover an exilic Jewish tradition of social ethics and pluralism. The idea of exile thus provides resources for envisioning decolonization and coexistence in Israel–Palestine.

Keywords: State of Israel; Jewish state; exile; diaspora; galut; sovereignty; secularism; post-secularism

Citation: Lapidot, Elad. 2024. Back to Exile: Current Jewish Critiques of the Jewish State. *Religions* 15: 250. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15020250

Academic Editor: Malachi Hacohen

Received: 5 January 2024
Revised: 31 January 2024
Accepted: 1 February 2024
Published: 19 February 2024

The 75th anniversary of the State of Israel is no celebration. The difficulties touch the soul of the Jewish state. On the surface, it has been greatly strengthened in recent years. In 2018, a Basic Law was passed declaring that the State of Israel is for the exclusive national existence of the Jewish people. The current government, led for the first time by the national-religious right, has taken drastic steps to strengthen the Jewishness of the state, while causing unprecedented damage to other values, to non-Jewish sectors, and to the stability of the state's institutions themselves.

The shocks were not long in coming. A broad Jewish public opposed the transformation as a threat to the secular and democratic nature of the state. The protest movement swept away the centers of power in Israeli society—the economy, the legal system, and the army and threatened a constitutional crisis and even civil war. But the internal Jewish struggles were abruptly ended by the violence that erupted among Palestinians, from Gaza, in the October 7 Hamas attack.

The horror overwhelmed Israeli Jews, who suddenly felt defenseless. The Jewish state evaporated for a long moment in the minds of many, and the nightmare of persecution raged. Their hearts were pierced by the pain of losing the Jewish state, and the absolute, urgent need for it was felt as a commandment. The feeling of weakness unleashed a lust for power in the killing machines, and in the rage unleashed on Gaza, Israel is revealed as a warlord. In this revelation it becomes clear again that the Jewish state is purchased with human sacrifice.

The political situation in Israel-Palestine, long frozen as a fact, has flared up again as a burning question. At the heart of the situation is the question of the Jewish state. How is violence inherent in the Jewishness of the State of Israel, and how might a conceptual change in the relationship between Judaism and the state change the situation?

The following pages explore this question through a series of writings published in the years leading up to October 7. They are all written by Jewish thinkers who oppose the idea of the Jewish state from a Jewish perspective. All the authors are rooted in Western academic discourse. But they all turn to the Jewish tradition and renew the idea of exile at the heart of contemporary political thought.

They understand the meaning of exile in Judaism in different, contradictory ways. Surprisingly, for most of them exile does not oppose the state; on the contrary, it justifies it.

For those, exilic thought rejects the Jewish state in favor of a non-Jewish state. The others draw from the thought of exile an opposition to the very idea of the state. The disagreement between them stands on the question of secularism, that is, of transcendence.

1. Pagan State

A profound criticism of the Jewish state project emerges from the latest book by Israeli expatriate philosopher Adi Ophir, one of the prominent voices of the Israeli left intelligentsia, *In the Beginning Was the State: Divine Violence in the Hebrew Bible* (Ophir 2023). The book does not deal directly with Israel, but I read it—stretching beyond Ophir's explicit intentions in his book—as a sophisticated expression of secular opposition to the Jewish state.

The concern of the book is a critique of the modern state, that is, the model of the state that emerged in modern Europe and that has become the hegemonic model of politics in general. It is part of a broad conversation in contemporary political philosophy with interlocutors such as Walter Benjamin, Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben, Jan Assmann, and Michael Walzer. A particularly important interlocutor is Carl Schmitt, since Ophir argues that critical thought must examine the state in its theo-political context, that is, in relation to the idea of God.

Schmitt, the father of political theology, argued that "all basic concepts of modern state theory are secularized theological concepts" (Schmitt [1922] 2009, p. 43). In particular, he pointed to the connection between the concept of the sovereign, which Schmitt argued was the foundation of the modern state, and the concept of God in Western theology. He claimed that modern sovereignty is a secularized embodiment of the monotheistic God as an absolute power beyond any law.

Ophir's fundamental move both reverses and radicalizes Schmitt's claim. Ophir agrees that there is a connection between the power of the sovereign and the power of the monotheistic God who transcends the world order. The reversal is the evaluation. While Schmitt justified the sovereign power of the state, Ophir is critical. His basic concept of sovereign power and the modern state is negative: not just power, but harmful power, "violence".

The radicalization of Schmitt's thesis is at the heart of Ophir's book. Whereas Schmitt argued that the sovereign is the modern substitute for God, Ophir argues that the sovereign is the modern manifestation of God. In other words, if for Schmitt the state is the absence of God, that is, secularized existence, for Ophir the state embodies God: "the state is monotheism's true contemporary figure" (Ophir 2023, p. 252).

The claim is theological: it touches on the nature of the monotheistic God and the nature of His presence. Ophir polemicizes not only with Schmitt, but with the entire monotheistic tradition, including Catholic-Christian, rabbinic-Jewish, and even philosophical, without once mentioning Islam. According to him, all these traditions, from the philosophical God of Philo and Josephus, have presented God as the opposite of violence—as Logos, Spirit, and Law. According to Ophir, this representation is false, which means that God has actually been hidden by tradition, not by modernity, in which God appears in His true form, as sovereign violence. According to Ophir, the tradition of the nonviolent God did not provide an alternative theology. On the contrary, the tradition "repressed" the violent God, that is, it did not eliminate Him, but perpetuated Him.

Resistance to the modern state as sovereign violence requires resistance to the monotheistic God as transcendent violence, and resistance to God requires exposing Him behind the screens of tradition in His true being. Ophir's resistance to the state is thus carried out, and this is the center of the book, through an act of revealing God, resistance through revelation.

Where does God reveal Himself to the philosopher? Ophir seeks revelation before tradition, at its beginning, in its purity. He finds the source in the Bible. The opposition to the modern state is a hermeneutic act: the exposure of "divine violence in the Hebrew Bible". To expose the Jewish God and condemn Him as evil is to repeat the operation of the Gnostic theologians since Marcion, to whom Ophir explicitly refers, who tried to separate Christianity from Old Testament Judaism and was declared a heretic by the Church.

Ophir's polemic with tradition is based on a distinction between two ways of reading Scripture. The traditional reading, according to him, is a concealing, "non-literal" reading that hides the literal meaning of the text in allegories (Christian) and midrashim (rabbinic). Ophir, on the other hand, adopts a reading that seeks to break away from tradition and return to the simple biblical word. He appeals to the doctrine of sola scriptura, which the founder of Protestantism, Martin Luther, turned against the Catholic tradition.

But Ophir challenges not only theological tradition, but also the secular reading of the biblical text. He accuses tradition of covering up God's violence with conciliatory allegories. Secular readers such as Michael Walzer or Jan Assmann have identified and rejected the violence of the biblical God. But, Ophir argues, by clinging to the secularization thesis, they have defined divine violence as "religious" and neutralized its political essence. Ophir's thesis, as noted above, is that the monotheistic God in his biblical, literal manifestation is essentially political violence: "In the beginning was the state."

The bulk of the book is devoted to Ophir's reading of the Pentateuch. It is a fascinating reading, and there is no room here to discuss its details. He presents the Pentateuch as a Hebrew "politeia" in which transcendent divine violence lays the foundation for a political order that Ophir claims will later emerge in the modern state. Ophir identifies three models of Hebrew political theory: three "theo-political formations." Each formation he attributes to one of the historical layers of the Pentateuch text according to the accepted documentary hypothesis: the pre-priestly, the priestly, and the Deuteronomic. The three formations represent three stages in a conceptual-historical development.

The evolution proceeds from violence to law. In the pre-priestly formation, the divine sovereign is revealed as catastrophic violence, without any restraint, as in the Flood in the days of Noah. The priestly model restrains sovereign violence and regulates it through laws of sacrifice. In the last stage, that of the Deuteronomist, violence is sublimated from reality into language, from the present into the past as historical narrative and into the future as threat. Sacrifice is internalized into a rational system of commands of the individual subject. In the internalized divine violence, Ophir sees an ideology of submission to transcendent power, manifested in the ethos of self-sacrifice of the citizen in the modern state.

The alternative vision that Ophir points to is that of a "pagan state" devoid of any transcendent authority, which is secular. The secular state is governed not by divine force but by human law, rational and absolutely immanent, a law without God.

One should ask whether Scripture itself does not offer a vision of the replacement of divine violence with human law. Ophir's readings point to quasi-secular biblical figures such as Joseph, Korah, and Jethro. He claims that this direction is rejected in the text. However, his readings point to a progression from brute violence at the beginning of the Pentateuch to rational individual law at its end.

And Scripture does not stop there. Hermann Cohen, for example, continued to read the development of rationalization from the Pentateuch to the prophets, who influenced the development of a variety of post-biblical traditions. These traditions, philosophical, Christian, and rabbinic, continued intra-biblical trends to develop nonviolent theologies that indeed fulfill Ophir's vision, which he actually recognizes in relation to the anarchic legal cultures of the diasporic rabbinic tradition.

He rejects these traditions not on substance but on hermeneutical grounds, as based on a non-literal reading. Yet Scripture itself, sola scriptura, already suggests complex ways of interpreting itself. The biblical corpus is built on internal intertextuality, one part read by another, the book of Exodus by the book of Deuteronomy, or the Pentateuch by the prophets. This hermeneutic, revealed in revelation itself, has guided later traditions.

Is not the absolute break that Ophir seeks to make with the monotheistic tradition in the name of the "pagan state" itself an expression of transcendent violence? Does not this extreme secularism, in declaring the biblical God to be evil, in corrupting all his traditions-philosophy, Christianity, Judaism, and why not Islam and in wanting to liberate the world from all of them, to liberate the world from history, perform a radical theological movement of transcendence, a Marcionite gesture, turning to a good world beyond the evil world, to a

hidden, loving God, completely separated from the revealed, wrathful God? And is not this combination of radical secularism and transcendence at the root of modernity and the modern state, as a combination of Lutheranism and secularism-the religion of the spiritual God separate from the human sovereign?

The important point for us is that Ophir's critique of the state leads us to the same conclusion as religious Zionism, namely, that Judaism is fulfilled in statehood. The Jewish state, in its present catastrophic violence, in brimstone and fire, is the figure of Judaism; it is the revelation of its God. This contention joins that of Ophir's previous book, co-authored with Ishay Rosen-Zvi, *Goy: Israel's Others and the Birth of the Gentile* (Ophir and Rosen-Zvi 2018), which found in rabbinic tradition the basis for racism in the State of Israel. In the new book, Ophir's secular response to the disaster of the Jewish state is the removal of Judaism from the state, that is exile.

2. Exile from Judaism

Exile appears in the title of Nottingham University and Polish Academy of Sciences philosopher Agata Bielik-Robson's latest book, *Derrida's Marrano Passover: Exile, Survival, Betrayal, and the Metaphysics of Non-Identity* (Bielik-Robson 2022a; see also Bielik-Robson 2014, 2022b). This book, too, does not deal directly with the Jewish state, but with the Judaism of the philosopher Jacques Derrida. However, in sophisticated Derridean readings of a variety of Derrida's texts, Bielik-Robson develops an independent and personal thought on contemporary Jewish identity. She continues Adi Ophir's secular response to the crisis of the Jewish state from the sources of Judaism.

The Jewish tradition to which the Warsaw philosopher turns is not the Bible, but the tradition of the conversos. The conversos were Jews who were forced to convert their religion by non-Jewish authorities and continued to live their Judaism in secret. The best-known example is the converts of the Catholic Inquisition on the eve of modernity in the Iberian Peninsula, who were also called New Christians or and this is the term Bielik-Robson chooses, following Derrida Marranos.

The question of the Marranos and their legacy has preoccupied contemporary Jewish historians and thinkers. In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the unique customs developed by Marrano communities, some of which survive to this day, for example on the island of Mallorca. Benzion Netanyahu, the father of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, argued that the Marranos were mostly devout Christians and that their persecution as Jews by the Inquisition was carried out for ethnic reasons and heralded modern anti-Semitism, as also claimed by Yosef Haim Yerushalmi. Yitzhak Baer, on the other hand, saw the Marranos as Jews with a split identity, and Yirmiyahu Yovel discussed the Marrano split as a model for the consciousness of the modern secular subject.

Bielik-Robson follows Yovel in presenting the Marrano consciousness of hidden Judaism, alienated from itself, non-Jewish Judaism, not as a forced consciousness but as the core of a liberated, modern selfhood. Her book seeks "to defend the diasporic Marrano culture as a separate Jewish non-identity." (Bielik-Robson 2022a, p. 20) She does this by exposing the ideological foundations of the Marrano experience in the writings of Jacques Derrida, whom Bielik-Robson consecrates as the prophet of Marranism, "our new Marrano Moses." (id.) She herself identifies as a "*marrane* of Polish Catholic culture." (id.) By interpreting the term Marrano in a pun with the French word marre, "fed up," she strikes a provocative, protesting tone: "I grew very tired marre of constantly feeling apologetic about my own Jewishness." (Bielik-Robson 2022a, p. 19)

Note that Bielik-Robson's protest is not against Catholicism, which forced her to deny her Judaism, but against Judaism, which sees this denial as a problem. The Marrano Judaism that Bielik-Robson seeks to defend is based on the renunciation of Judaism, on the identity of non-identification. The paradox is expressed, among other things, in the designation of the negation of Judaism, from which Marranism lives, with the Jewish category of exile. The Marrano is exiled from her Judaism. Since for the Polish Catholic

Marrano this exile is not forced but chosen, she provocatively describes Marranism as an ethos of betrayal.

Bielik-Robson's Marrano betrayal of Jewish tradition has two faces that parallel the two sides of Adi Ophir's heretical theology: extreme immanent secularism combined with a Gnostic vector of extreme transcendence.

The first aspect of the Marrano exile from Judaism is secular. Like Ophir, Bielik-Robson opposes the metaphysics of religion, the world of values directed towards God outside the world. She too criticizes "the sacrificial logic inherent in all cultic religions," (Bielik-Robson 2022a, p. 52) the sacrifice of life for God. Betrayal is done in the interest of survival. "Instead of choosing *kiddush ha-shem* [martyrdom], a glorious death which sanctifies the Name, [the Marrnos] chose life as living-on, the sheer *survival*." (Bielik-Robson 2022a, 64).

The secular interpretation of the idea of exile as a distancing from Judaism was also offered by Jessica Dubow, a scholar of Jewish thought at the University of Sheffield. In her book *In Exile: Geography, Philosophy and Judaic Thought* (Dubow 2021), she points to a tradition of "exilic" thinking among 20th-century European Jewish thinkers. She understands exilic thought as critical thinking, which she finds, for example, in the way the prohibition of images served Walter Benjamin's anti-consumerist conception of the modern city, or in the way the idea of exile underpinned Franz Rosenzweig's critique of the nation-state and Hannah Arendt's critique of national, ethnic, or religious identity.

The secular thrust appears in the chapter on the British-Jewish intellectual Isaiah Berlin. Here Dubow formulates a critical exilic thought on the idea of exile itself. She employs Freud's distinction between melancholy and mourning as two opposing ways of living with loss, which she interprets as two opposing ways of existing in exile. The melancholic refuses to accept loss, reality. Dubow interprets the melancholic denial of loss as a reactionary exilic stance that rejects existing reality, rejects life in this world, and clings to utopian ideals. The secular critique of the transcendent God and sacrifice in Ophir and Bielik-Robson generates here anti-idealism.

Against the reactionary, melancholic exile, Dubow advocates an exile based on mourning. According to Freud, mourning does not refuse to accept loss like melancholia, but comes to terms with it and learns to live in the new reality. This is an exile that does not reject the real in the name of the ideal, but, on the contrary, abandons utopia in favor of pragmatism, as Isaiah Berlin did. Accordingly, Dubow's secular interpretation of the Jewish tradition of exile translates it as a project of Jewish assimilation into liberal society, the integration of Jews into the European state.

The category of exile serves Dubow to remove the idealistic, messianic sting from critical thought. One must ask what this analysis leaves of the concept of critique, and whether all that remains is not just the critique of realism against idealism, what is against what should be, that is, a critique of critique. A similar paradox appears here in the concept of Jewish exile, since Dubow proposes an exile whose essence is the abandonment of the exilic stance, the alienated, non-integrated stance that is, an exile from exile, a negation of exile.

The paradox of the secular Jewish position, which promotes not only non-Jewish Jews but also non-Jewish Judaism, brings us back to the Marrano theology of Bielik-Robson and reveals its second vector, not the immanent secular, but the transcendent spiritual. The exile from Judaism, the betrayal, is justified by the Derridean philosopher not only in the name of the value of life, which overrides the value of religion. Her more complex claim is that the abandonment of Judaism constitutes the essence of Judaism.

Bielik-Robson learns here from Derrida, who declared himself "the last Jew," the worst Jew, the last in his quality, the least Jewish, who therefore constitutes precisely the most authentic Jew, the last one left.

Bielik-Robson, like Dubow, does not build on pragmatism, but on messianic logic. The Marrano betrayal reveals itself as the true fidelity to Judaism by virtue of the "messianic reversal." The reversal is that the Messiah, the subject in whom the ideal of Judaism is embodied, is the one rejected by Jewish tradition as a heretic.

Bielik-Robson outlines a long Jewish tradition of heretical messianism. She quotes, "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone" (Psalm 118:22), which was interpreted in the New Testament as fulfilled in Jesus. At the center she places the Lurian myth of God's exile, which she posits, following Gershom Scholem, as the seed of the sinning Sabbatean Messiah, the Polish antinomian legacy of Jacob Frank, and Derrida's Marrano Messiah. Scholem leads her further from Sabbateanism to Haskalah and secularism, which Bielik-Robson interprets as Marranism to the second power, Marranism from Marranism, exile from exile, which betrays Judaism even as a tradition of betrayal.

In Derrida, Bielik-Robson reads the final stage of Marrano eschatology: universalization. If Scholem pointed to the traitor Messiah as the secret of the modern Jew, she suggests that Marranism is the secret of the modern human. In her view, unlike conventional universalism, which promotes a unified positive concept of the human, Marrano universalism is based on a negative act of continuous self-denial, a selfhood based on "non-identification". The modern subject is a universal Marrano exile.

Within secularism and assimilation, at the heart of the sanctity of life, Bielik-Robson therefore preserves the negating exile as the secret at the heart of the Marrano subject, as the "non-" at the core of its identity. This secret crypto-Judaism constantly prevents full identification and perpetuates an inner alienation from the world. This is transcendence at the heart of immanence, reminiscent of inner faith as the religion of the secularized world, the religion of the hidden God, and it joins Marcion and Luther in Adi Ophir's pagan state.

One should ask whether Bielik-Robson's Marranism, insofar as it seeks to distinguish itself from "traditional" universalism, does not return to the mother of all Western universalist traditions, Pauline theology: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, there is neither slave nor free, nor male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28), where the Messiah, the redeeming subject, is nothing but the infinite function of denying all identities.

The continuation of this thought continues to disturb: to understand the Marranos not as forced converts, but as voluntary ones, and their apostasy as the messianic realization of their Judaism, is this not precisely the ideology of the Inquisition and the Christian mission to the Jews? To Elliot Wolfson's criticism that, according to Bielik-Robson, Jesus is the last Jew, she replies, "Why not?" since for her heresy is the heart of Judaism. But she does not explain why her doctrine should not be seen as postmodern Christian theology and herself as a Lutheran Marrano in Jewish thought.

Some conversos became inquisitors, and betrayal also involves violence. This is revealed in Bielik-Robson's theology when she gestures at, quoting Derrida, "the 'death of Judaism, but also its one chance of survival'" (Bielik-Robson 2022a, p. 23). "Similar to Sabbatai Tsevi, who claimed that the ultimate goal of studying the Torah is the viola-tion of the Torah, Derrida will maintain that the final destiny of the Jewish archive is to turn into a heap of ashes," in which nevertheless "the embers keep glowing", but this is the glow of infinite extinction. (Bielik-Robson 2022a, p. 46) If Adi Ophir's book gestures toward the exile of Judaism from the secular state in response to the catastrophe of the Jewish state, the arguments of Agata Bielik-Robson and Jessica Dubow suggest that citizenship in the secular state is an exile from Judaism.

3. Everywhere at Home

Ophir, Bielik-Robson and Dubow generate opposition to the Jewish state by separating Judaism from secularism. A profound critique of this move from within the opponents of the Jewish state is formulated in Daniel Boyarin's latest book, *The No-State Solution: A Jewish Manifesto* (Boyarin 2023). A professor emeritus of Talmudic cultures at UC Berkeley, Boyarin is one of the foremost scholars of Judaism and one of the best-known Jewish intellectuals. In decades of prolific work, much of it in dialogue with his brother Jonathan Boyarin, an anthropologist of contemporary Judaism at Cornell, and in thoughtful engagement with cultural theory, Daniel Boyarin has developed a historical and conceptual vision of Jewish

existence. His new book offers a systematic articulation of his conception a "manifesto" as a summation of his work.

Boyarin's manifesto is explicitly directed against the Jewish state. His conception of Judaism is formulated as a response to the political hardship posed by the present existence of the State of Israel, first and foremost vis-à-vis the Palestinians. Defiantly rejecting the two conventional formulas for resolving the Jewish-Palestinian conflict, the two-state solution, one Jewish and one Palestinian, and the one-state solution of a single Jewish-Palestinian state, Boyarin proposes a "no-state solution", meaning no Jewish state.

Boyarin's rejection of the Jewish state is not, as in Ophir, based on a critique of Jewish tradition, but on the contrary, on that very tradition as Boyarin understands it. He begins by explaining what he does not mean. The opening move of his book rejects the conventional way of conceiving Judaism as opposed to the Jewish state or the idea of the state as such, that is, the notion of Judaism as a religion. Boyarin is taking aim at the dominant concept of religion, which refers to belief in a transcendent, otherworldly, metaphysical God. This concept of religion is based on an individual, inward faith, so that religion is seen as a private matter between a person and God, outside of any public or political dimension, outside of any cultural or historical context.

Boyarin's opposition to understanding Judaism as a religion is based on his earlier work, in which he contributed to the contemporary critique of the general use of the category of religion. At the heart of the critique is the claim that the concept of religion in the sense of faith describes a specific cultural formation, European Protestant Christianity, based on a Pauline conception of pure inward spirituality. Abstracting religion from its European context, positing it as a general concept, and applying it to other contexts, so the critical claim, constitutes cultural imperialism.

This was the claim made by Tomoko Masuzawa in her 2005 book *The Invention of World Religions, Or: How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Masuzawa 2005) with respect to non-European cultures, and by Boyarin herself, along with Carlin Barton, in their 2016 book *Imagine No Religion: How Modern Abstractions Hide Ancient Realities* (Barton and Boyarin 2016), regarding pre-modern cultures. In his latest book, Boyarin shows how European cultural imperialism, which seeks to reduce world cultures to private beliefs through the propagation of "religion," complements its conquest of the public sphere with a discourse of cosmopolitan universalism that erases all cultural difference.

Boyarin's opposition to Pauline religion goes even deeper, touching on the historical tension between Judaism and Christianity. Boyarin has shown that religion as an inward belief developed in Pauline Christianity through the redemption of the pure spirit from the impure flesh, which has been historically interpreted as the liberation of Christianity qua inner Judaism from outer Judaism law, culture, nation, and state. The cultural imperialism of Christian Europe emerged in late antiquity in the form of supersessionist theology, according to which spiritual Israel, Christianity, replaced Israel in the flesh.

Boyarin fights against the erasure of Judaism through the allegorization of outer Jew by inner Jew, flesh by spirit, in a long tradition from Paul's own writings to modern French thought, in Nancy or Lyotard, for example (Boyarin 1994). To this list one can now add the Derridean Marranism of Bielik-Robson, which preaches the renunciation of Judaism as tradition in favor of Judaism as secret in the heart of the subject, as well as Dubow's Jewish exile as exile from Judaism.

When Boyarin calls for a Judaism without a state, he does not mean Judaism as a pure inner spirituality, as a religion. On the contrary, his book is a radical manifesto for Judaism as a nation. He rejects the notion of the Jewish nation as based on "Judaism", a system of ideas that he identifies as the basis of Paulinism. Boyarin does not speak of Judaism, but of Jewishness, as the national culture of the Jews, what he calls Yiddishkeit, which is the antithesis of religion. The Jewish nation is not a community of believers, a church, or a school of thinkers, but a family, a group of people united not by an idea but by blood ties. "Existence without prior essence: a Jew is a Jew is a Jew, not one who believes this or does

that, but simply one who is born to a certain people anywhere or has become naturalized into that people" (Boyarin 2023, p. 51).

If Paul's religion stands for purity of spirit, Boyarin's Jewish nation stands for purity of flesh. His Judaism is devoid of any transcendence, of any God or faith, and in this sense it is secular. If Ophir and Bielik-Robson oppose Judaism to secular existence, Boyarin posits Judaism itself as secularism.[1]

Boyarin's anti-Pauline move from spirit to flesh is reminiscent of Nietzsche's anti-Platonic move from the metaphysical to the physical, from the idea to life. One may wonder here, as Heidegger did with respect to Nietzsche, whether the inversion of Paulinism is not after all just an inverted Paulinism, one that preserves the distinction between spirit and flesh, between religious and secular. Talal Asad has already noted that religion, in the sense that Boyarin criticizes it, is itself a secular category.

To be sure, Boyarin's Yiddishkeit is not just flesh, devoid of any ideal content, any Judaism. "Existence without prior essence" is not devoid of any essence, only a prior one, but it has an essence that follows its existence. Judaism is the culture developed by the Jewish nation. To explain his conception, Boyarin turns to Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialism, according to which human consciousness arises from the specific situation into which each person is "thrown".

Sartre described the emergence of Jewish consciousness from the Jew's situation of anti-Semitism, and of black consciousness from the black person's exposure to racism. Sartre's thought inspired black thinkers—Aimé Césaire, Léopold Senghor, Frantz Fanon—to develop the idea of black culture, *négritude*. Boyarin applies the same idea (a spiritual world arising from a given existence) to Jewish culture. Yiddishkeit is *judaïtude*, which Boyarin, inspired by Judith Butler's gender theory, defines as "the performance of being Jewish." Unlike Sartre, who limited Judaism to anti-anti-Semitism, Boyarin places the Jewish soundscape at the center of Jewish performance: Yiddish and Jewish multilingualism in general, along with the discourse of the Talmud, "the music of Jewish life," which Boyarin describes as jazz.

It is doubtful that Boyarin finds support where he looks. The main thrust of the thought of Sartre, Fanon, and Butler is not the subjugation of the spirit to the flesh, but just the opposite. They show that the supposedly natural, biological fact-skin color, gender-acquires meaning and existence only as a social construction. Race and gender are not biological givens, but political-conceptual positions.

Is Jewishness really an existence without a prior essence? Is there such a thing? Even if not a Pauline inward spirituality, has not Jewish historical existence-including the familial-depended on some narrative, value, or idea, in short, on Judaism? Does not the Jewish nation, like the black race, embody a political positioning? If not, is this nation not somehow still a kind of religion, a private family matter without political significance that does not interfere with cosmopolitan universalism?

And yet the title of Boyarin's manifesto is political: "No State." The Jews are a nation without a state; they are in *galut*. Does Boyarin breathe into carnal Israel the spiritual denial of the state? The answer is no, and the root of the problem lies in understanding the meaning of "no". Boyarin insists that the rejection of the Jewish state does not mean that Jews lack statehood. He rejects the understanding of the concept of Jewish *galut* in terms of exile, that is, the lack or absence of a state or home. According to him, understanding the Jewish nation as lacking a state means that Jews miss the state, that is, they want a state. As exile, *galut* is not the opposite of a Jewish state, but rather the longing for one.

Hence Boyarin's conception, developed in the past, that Jewish *galut* should not be understood negatively, as exile, but positively, as *diaspora* (Boyarin 2015). Unlike exilic, stateless existence, which is at home nowhere, Jewish diasporic existence is, on the contrary, at home everywhere. Moreover, it has a double home, in two spaces. First, the Jew feels at home in Jewishness, in the diasporic space of the Yiddishkeit family. Second, the Jews feel at home in their place in the local space, each person in their own "here," hence the

principle of "hereness," *doykayt* in Yiddish, which Boyarin borrows from the language of the Bund.

But the Bund—the General Union of Jewish Workers in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia was defined not only by Jewish flesh but also by the spiritual, socialist workers' ethos. The socialist struggle determined whether the Jewish worker was "here," at home, or not. Since Jewishness is defined in Boyarin's conception as "existence without prior essence," it is not clear what idea or ideal will determine the Jews' identification with their place. In their diaspora, the Jews are always at home, in every "here," whatever its essence may be. In other words, the Jewishness of the UC Berkeley Talmudist does not in itself seem to provide any political principle, negative or positive.[2].

Boyarin's Diaspora Jews, with no Jewish state, have all the other states—American, German, French. In this sense, Boyarin agrees with Ophir, and also with Bielik-Robson and Dubow, that Jews are at home in the modern state. Unlike Ophir, who criticizes the nature of the sovereign state, Boyarin's stance is not against the state as such, but against the mono-national state, accepting any multicultural political framework, including empire and multinational state. Boyarin's Jewish nation feels so much at home in the state that it is unclear why it should not also have one in the "here" of the Land of Israel, if not as a Netanyahu-style Jewish state, then as a Herzlian state, a (Boyarin quotes Dimitry Shumsky) "non-Jewish state for Jews".

And maybe there already is one?

4. State of Exile

This is what Danny Trom, a sociologist at the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences in Paris (EHESS), claims in his new book *State of Exile: Israel, the Jews, Europe* (Trom 2023). In Trom's book, the idea of Jewish exile is interpreted not as resisting the State of Israel, but as justifying it.

The way in which Trom characterizes Jewish existence is close to that of Boyarin, and also to that of Bielik-Robeson and Dubow, that is, the secular conception. For Trom, Jewish existence is not defined by an idea, an ideal, or a metaphysical affiliation; Jewishness is not in the spirit but in the flesh. Boyarin spoke of "existence without prior essence"; Trom speaks of "the Jewish fact," *le fait juif*.

Trom's secularism is extreme. If, for Boyarin, Jewish existence nevertheless developed the essence, culture, and spirit of Yiddishkeit, and the non-Jewish Jew of Bielik-Robson and Dubow retains inner transcendence, Trom's Jews exist simply as a fact of nature, as an organism. Their only concern is to be, that is, to survive.

The only content of Jewishness that Trom discusses, the only question that preoccupies it and him, is the struggle for survival against the threat to the existence of the Jewish fact. For Trom, Judaism is entirely defined by anti-Semitism. This is a Jewishness whose entire soul is resistance to its negation, Jewishness as anti-anti-Semitism, an attitude that was greatly strengthened among Jews after October 7.

The political reality that emerges in Trom's book, as developed in earlier books (Trom 2019), is therefore Schmittian. For Trom, as for Carl Schmitt, the political collective is defined by the life-and-death struggle with its enemies. This leads to the inevitability of war, which Schmitt based on a political theology of original sin, according to which man is evil by nature until he is redeemed from sin by the second coming of Jesus. The pre-redemptive human existence, in which evil is necessary and war is natural, is marked in Trom's language by the concept of exile.

For Trom, as for Schmitt, politics enables survival in an evil world, that is, it offers protection. The polity is a mighty force against evil, what Hobbes called "Leviathan" and Schmitt identified with the sovereign. Trom draws on Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, who described historical Jewish politics as a "vertical alliance" of the Jews with the sovereign, the prince or king, against the Jews' enemies. It follows that the Jews are the paradigmatic citizens of the Schmittian state, which strengthens Adi Ophir's thesis that the modern state is the true contemporary manifestation of biblical theo-politics.

Trom adopts Jean-Claude Milner's claim that the great crisis in modern Jewish history was the rise of the democratic republic, in which the people became sovereign. The disappearance of the sovereign as one elevated above the people, as a king, eliminated for the Jews the possibility of defending themselves against their haters through a vertical alliance. Democratic Europe exposed the Jews to genocide. The only solution was to "divorce Europe," that is, to establish a separate state for the Jews, and that was the purpose of Zionism.

Trom dismisses the socialist-Zionist visions of creating a better society, of tikkun olam, in the spirit of Buber, as a childish "petite bourgeoisie." The Parisian sociologist focuses on Herzl's political Zionism. Like Boyarin, Trom emphasizes that Herzl did not speak of a nation-state or a Jewish state. But while Boyarin reads Herzl's Jewish state as a diasporic autonomy in a multicultural space, Trom reads it as a refuge against anti-Semitism. Zionism did not seek to create a Jewish state that would redeem the Jews from exile; on the contrary, it sought to create a Leviathan, a sovereign in the European style, that would protect the Jews in their continued exile. The Zionist creation, the State of Israel, is not the negation of exile, but the "state of exile".

Trom's position contradicts the conception of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people and offers a secular opposition to current Israeli chauvinism, as in the Basic Law Nation-State and the intensifying religious nationalism. A major difficulty is that Trom's conception, even if it is faithful to Herzl, does not fit the reality of the State of Israel, at least since its establishment.

Particularly perplexing is his assertion that the State of Israel, since its role is to protect Jews in exile, should be understood not as a project of national self-definition but as part of the international effort to protect minorities and refugees. This assertion ignores the enormous enterprise of creating Israeli national existence. To ignore Israeli nationhood is to ignore the reality of the State of Israel. Worse, this claim ignores that the establishment of Israel created the Palestinian refugee crisis, which has only worsened over the years, and today more than ever, in defiance of all international protection mechanisms.

Justifying the persecution of the minority in the name of protecting the majority in the state as a minority in the world is an abomination not only in Zionism, but in the nation-state in general. In fact, Trom's "state of exile" is not at all opposed to the nation-state, but reflects its logic, that is, to protect the national group threatened by imperial power or other nations. The self-conception of the sovereign majority as a persecuted minority—"exile"—produces endless violence in the name of endless self-defense, creating more and more persecuted, refugees and exiles. The mystifying discourse of liberal Zionism is worse than the open racist messianism of religious nationalism, which at least calls reality by its name.

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The positions presented so far are opposed to the religious-national vision of the Jewish state on two pillars. First, they are secular in the sense that they are committed to a worldly existence without reference to divinity, that is, to metaphysical otherness. Ophir, Bielik-Robson, and Dubow contrast secularism with Judaism, while Boyarin and Trom reconcile them. Second, for these authors, Jews are at home in the modern state. This homeliness is paradoxically based on the concept of exile—exile from exile in Bielik-Robson and Dubow, exile as diaspora in Boyarin, and exile as sovereignty in Trom.

An agreement between the religious supporters of the Jewish state and its secular critics emerges here. A number of thinkers have addressed this agreement and the difficulties it poses. Menachem Lorberbaum, professor of philosophy at Tel Aviv University and one of the leading Jewish theologians of our time, co-editor with Michael Walzer of the series "The Jewish Political Tradition," recently pointed out that not only in Israel, but also in America, Jews "feel at home" and do not experience exile in the sense of not belonging to the state. Shaul Magid, a professor of Jewish studies at Dartmouth College and an expert on Hasidism and contemporary Judaism, argues in a new book that the abandonment of

exile has robbed liberal Zionism and Diasporism of the ability to effectively counter the chauvinistic patriotism of religious Zionism.

Accordingly, in their recent writings, Lorberbaum and Magid, along with Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, have developed another front of Jewish opposition to the Jewish state. In contrast to the movement that uses the concept of exile to domesticate Judaism in the secular state, these thinkers emphasize in the idea of Jewish exile a non-secular dimension in which they anchor a radical critique of the modern state.

5. Phenomenology of Exile

Menachem Lorberbaum developed his thoughts on the subject in an important article, "A Theological Critique of the Political" (Lorberbaum 2023; see also Lorberbaum 2020). Like Adi Ophir, Lorberbaum formulated a political-theological critique of the modern state that focused on the figure of the sovereign. The Jewish God also plays a key role in Lorberbaum's analysis. But unlike Ophir, for whom "the state is monotheism's true contemporary figure," that is, the modern sovereign is the manifestation of the transcendent God, Lorberbaum agrees with Schmitt that secularization separates the sovereign from God: the sovereign is not God but his substitute.

According to Lorberbaum's analysis, the institution of the modern state usurps the absolute status of the extra-worldly God; it usurps the sovereignty of the world's sovereign and vests it in a worldly authority, man. The sovereign of the modern state, the Leviathan, is, as Hobbes said, a "Mortall God." Unlike the Catholic Schmitt, who saw the secular sovereign as a necessary substitute for God in His absence, Lorberbaum sees the secular state as a declaration of the "death of God." The sovereign does not take God's place, but steals it.

The transition from divine to state sovereignty, which for Adi Ophir is identity and for Carl Schmitt is translation, for Menachem Lorberbaum constitutes idolatry. This is his theological critique of modern sovereignty. "Sanctifying a secular institution" is the idolatry that Lorberbaum also attributes to religious Zionism, which, in the spirit of Rav Kook, has dedicated itself to the cult of the Jewish state. The problem, he emphasizes, is not only theological; it is not only an apostasy from God. The deification of the state, Lorberbaum agrees with Ophir, sanctifies the absolute power of the sovereign and produces unlimited violence, which in the Jewish state is manifested in the endless oppression of the Palestinian people.

Whereas Ophir's position locates this violence at the foundation of Judaism ("In the beginning was the state"), as opposed to secularity, Lorberbaum identifies the source of violence in secularization and finds in the sources of Judaism not the state but resistance to it. Lorberbaum's source is not the Bible, but the post-biblical rabbinic tradition built on the ethos of exile.

To understand the idea of exile as a critique of the modern state, Lorberbaum turns to modern Jewish exilic thought. He refers to Kabbalah, which in its modern Lurianic manifestation, as we have seen in Bielik-Robson, attributes exile to God Himself, expressing His concealment, His transcendent otherness. The theological exile is translated by Lorberbaum on the human level into a "consciousness of exile" that produces a "political sagacity" in rabbinic Judaism.

Rabbinic exilic political wisdom, as Bielik-Robson and Danny Trom suggest, aims at the survival of the Jews in the Diaspora. However, in contrast to Trom's Schmittian logic, for Lorberbaum the survival of the Jews in exile does not mean the preservation of their organic existence through an alliance with sovereign violence, but the preservation of their exilic existence, that is, an existence that does not submit to the logic of sovereign power. Unlike Boyarin, who interprets exile as the absence of a state whose purpose is a state, Lorberbaum interprets exilic statelessness as a resistance to the state that survives within the state.

In contrast to the secular vision of Boyarin and Trom, Lorberbaum's rabbinic exile project draws on God's transcendent otherness. Divine metaphysics is not translated here,

as in Ophir and Schmitt, into sovereign absolutism, into lawless power. On the contrary, for Lorberbaum, transcendence is an anchor for an ethical ideal beyond political reality. Here he follows Jewish thinkers such as Hermann Cohen and Emmanuel Levinas, for whom the relationship to the extra-worldly God provides a "moral compass" outside the power field of the state. Beyond a carnal existence concerned with self-preservation, the relationship to otherness offers Judaism a different kind of existence, an ethical one.

Bielik-Robson narrows the relation to transcendent otherness to an inner secret in the individual that prevents any collective identification, that cuts off all belonging. In contrast, Lorberbaum (again, like Cohen and Levinas) measures the power of exilic existence precisely in its ability to create community. He draws from the Jewish political tradition the institution of the kahal, a community based on brotherhood and mitzvot, as opposed to the state body held by sovereign power.

Lorberbaum sees the exilic kahal as a model for a multicultural civil society that resonates with Boyarin's diaspora and sustains a moral reality that limits state violence. He also suggests an alternative direction for the Jewish state project that is non-secular but opposed to nationalist religiosity whose vision is territorial sovereignty. Like Levinas and Buber, Lorberbaum argues that understanding the Land of Israel as holy land nullifies any claim to sovereignty and entrusts the government of the land not with ownership but with stewardship, that is, the duty to ensure justice, not only for Jews but for all citizens, and not only for them but also for the stateless: the indigenous, the uprooted, the refugee, and the immigrant.

6. The Necessity of Exile

Lorberbaum outlined the theo-political contours of opposition to the Jewish state based on the Jewish exile tradition. The application of this idea to the current situation—until October 7—of the Jewish discussion on the State of Israel is provided by Shaul Magid in the essay collection *The Necessity of Exile: Essays from a Distance* (Magid 2023).

Magid joins Lorberbaum and Boyarin in diagnosing the acute problem of the Jewish state project as the injustice to the Palestinian people-oppression, occupation, dispossession-in the name of the sovereign claim to exclusive Jewish ownership of the land. His alternative vision is one of Jewish-Palestinian coexistence. According to Magid, both the settlement movement and the BDS movement, the former in Jewish discourse and the latter in Palestinian discourse, have erased the Green Line, the separation between Israel and the occupied territories, thus sealing the fate of the two-state solution. In reality and in imagination, Jews and Palestinians live under one rule. The choice today is between apartheid rule or liberal democracy, a state of all its citizens, in the spirit of Brit Shalom.

Magid speaks of one state, liberal, and sounds less extreme than Boyarin, who says "no state". However, his opposition to the Jewish state leads him to an even more extreme contrast between Judaism and the state. He sees the need for *galut* not as diaspora but as exile, that is, as Judaism essentially opposed to the state. More precisely, the need is to renew exile, that is, to negate its negation. Magid, like Lorberbaum, identifies the negation of exile in both liberal Zionism and American diasporism, which do not resist religious Zionism enough because for them, too, Jews are at home in the state.

Magid's essays trace the idea of exile in modern Jewish thought in a variety of forms. In Peter Beinart and Judith Butler, he identifies a "new secular Jewish identity" (Magid 2023, p. 65) that is premised on a diasporic existence. From Bashevis Singer he draws a spiritual Judaism without territorial sovereignty, and from Martin Buber a possession of the land that is not sovereign, not ownership, but (as Lorberbaum says) rather stewardship.

Particularly important is a quote from Reform rabbi Eugene Borowitz, who published *A Theology for the Post-Modern Jew* in 1991: "Anybody who cares seriously about being a Jew is in Exile and would be in Exile even if that person were in Jerusalem. That Exile results because our Jewish ideal is unrealized anywhere in the world." (quoted in Magid 2023, p. 3) This is the idealism that Lorberbaum found in Levinas and that Jessica Dubow rejected in

the name of Isaiah Berlin's pragmatism: exile as clinging to an ideal beyond reality, what can be called a pre-redemptive messianic existence.

Here the connection between the relation to a transcendent otherness beyond the world, beyond secularism, and the consciousness of exile as resistance to the given order is sharpened. The modern Jewish thought in which Magid finds the deepest consciousness of exile is therefore that which has offered the most significant resistance to the modern world order, namely Haredi Judaism. Magid's discourse, as well as that of Lorberbaum and Raz-Krakotzkin, joins a post-secular trend that sees secularism not as rebellion but as hegemony, and therefore looks for critical thought not on the secular side but on the side of tradition, Orthodoxy, or ultra-Orthodoxy (See for instance, Milbank et al. 1999).

The Necessity of Exile proposes to rethink the importance of Haredi culture as a resistance to the false redemption offered by modernity in the sovereign state. According to Magid, the Haredi rejection of secular-liberal assimilation in the style of Bielik-Robson and Dubow is not an apolitical rejection of the world, as it is often portrayed. The thinkers he discusses show a deep political awareness of resistance to state violence, similar to that formulated by Adi Ophir and Menachem Lorberbaum. This is the basis of Haredi anti-Zionism, which rejects the state and its military as the quintessence of secular violence.

Two prominent figures stand out in the book. The first is the founder of Satmar, one of the largest Hasidic groups, Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum, a well-known anti-Zionist Haredi. Teitelbaum laid out his doctrine in several writings, including *Vayoel Moshe* (1961) and *Al Hageulah ve-Hatmurah* (1967), a selection of whose ideas and translations will appear in Shaul Magid's forthcoming book. The Satmar Rebbe criticized Zionism for its worship of sovereign national power as false messianism and heresy. In contrast, he posited the necessity of exile as a messianic act of spreading Torah throughout the world in preparation for redemption, a project also promoted by Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, leader of the Chabad Hasidic movement.

The second, lesser-known figure is the Lithuanian Rabbi Aharon Shmuel Tamares. He rejected Zionism "not because it is secular or even a form of premature messianism, but because it is violent." (Magid 2023, p. 217) Tamares is an example of a critique of the modern state from traditional Jewish exile thought. He was, Magid writes, "more focused on what Judaism could offer Europe in its time of nationalist crisis, that would soon explode into a world war, rather than what European political philosophy had to offer a fledgling Jewish state." (Magid 2023, p. 221) Judaism offers exile as a "collective positionality outside the realm of nation-states," (Magid 2023, p. 216) that is, social responsibility beyond state interests. Are anti-Zionist Haredim the embodiment of the nonviolent ethical community envisioned by Levinas and Lorberbaum?

Magid, however, is not anti-Zionist, but "counter-Zionist," meaning that he does not use exilic thinking to oppose the State of Israel outright, but rather to correct it. The key thinker he relies on is Shimon Gershon Rosenberg, Rav Shagar, whose essay "On Religious Post-Zionism: A Sermon for Independence Day," Magid translates in his book.

The essay is directed against religious Zionism in the spirit of Kook. Shagar criticizes Kookism as modernism that abandoned exile and positioned itself as redeemed, master of the world, as a force of nature. Like Boyarin, he condemns as oppressive the cultural unity that the modern state seeks to impose. Shagar called the alternative "post-Zionist religiosity" or "religious post-Zionism. It combines the mysticism of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov with postmodernism's embrace of difference and multicultural plurality. The idea is to undo Zionist hegemony and create equal space in the country for haredi and Arab cultures. Magid describes Shagar's vision as an "exile in the Land [of Israel]" whose purpose is Jewish-Palestinian coexistence.

One might ask how much exile is really necessary for Magid's vision of a binational state. Martin Buber and Brit Shalom did not advocate exile, but socialist redemption. Shagar, too, wrote of a "paradoxical peace that sees the other, the Arab, as belonging to the homeland, without relinquishing the feeling of being at home in one's homeland" (Rosenberg 2014, p. 176).

To the extent that the renewal of exile means alienation from the institutions of the liberal state, it cuts both ways. Magid locates the rise of post-Zionist religiosity in the rift that emerged between the state and religious Zionism in the wake of Israel's 2005 disengagement from Gaza. In this rift, settlers positioned themselves against the state like indigenous people defending their land against foreign forces. Magid's personal narrative of his journey as a young American in and out of the settlement movement reveals the settlements as a counterculture, "odd amalgam of Rav Kook, Aaron David Gordon, and Bob Marley." (Magid 2023, p. 41) The Contra-Zionism that emerges from this cocktail could foster citizenship without sovereignty, in the spirit of Menahem Forman, who promoted Jewish-Palestinian neighborliness. On the other hand, as Schmitt's prophecy is fulfilled before our eyes, the settler rebellion could take over the state, unleash sovereign power from all restraint, and in racist messianic intoxication perpetrate what Ophir describes as divine violence, that is, a holocaust.

7. Exile in the Land of Israel

The above review revealed two contrasting trends in current opposition to the Jewish state in the name of exile: one rejects the Jewish state as a religious idea in favor of secularism; the other rejects the Jewish state as a secularized religion in favor of Jewish tradition. Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, professor of Jewish history at Ben-Gurion University, who in the 1990s wrote an essay that became a canon of thinking about exile (Raz-Krakotzkin 1993, 1994), in his new book *Mishna Consciousness, Bible Consciousness: Safed and Zionist Culture* (Raz-Krakotzkin 2022), offers a complex analysis for understanding the deeper connections between the two trends and how the first, secular, falls under the critique of the second, post-secular.

Raz-Krakotzkin's intervention is not only about history, but also about historiography. In contrast to linear historiography, he draws inspiration from Walter Benjamin to write history as struggle, "against the grain." In the shadow of the hegemonic narrative through which the rulers of the present find their future in the past, the Benjaminian historian searches the past for moments when the hegemonic continuum is disrupted. He uncovers events that are not causes for the present situation of power, but that resist power and thus constitute "a hidden indication towards redemption." (Raz-Krakotzkin 2022, p. 218). This is the theo-political essence of post-secular historiography.

The historiographical struggle that Raz-Krakotzkin wages revolves around the understanding of modernity itself. As the title of the book suggests, it is a struggle between two consciousnesses, two narratives, one hegemonic and one in its shadow. Both narratives are theological in that they give meaning to modernity as a time of God's absence, when God has disappeared from His place in the world, from the center of culture. The contention of the book is that the two modern consciousnesses are connected to two consciousnesses of Jewish existence in Israel/Palestine, constructed on two textual traditions: "mishnaic consciousness, biblical consciousness." The Bible is the foundation of a hegemonic modern consciousness that not only competes with the Mishna consciousness, but erases it. Raz-Krakotzkin's historiography resists this erasure, first of all by exposing it.

The hegemonic narrative belongs to the dominant modern Western culture. The dominant Western consciousness makes sense of the modern absence of God through a secular-Protestant amalgam. Raz-Krakotzkin refers to Max Weber. For us, this amalgam was revealed in the thought of Ophir, Bielik-Robinson, and Boyarin. It is a dualistic movement that, on the one hand, grasps God's absence as His liberation from the world into radical transcendence, accessible only through an individual inner spirituality: the Pauline faith. On the other hand, God's liberation from the world also liberates the world from God, which is interpreted as the secular redemption of matter.

Western modernity understands God's absence as the liberation of man to feel at home in the world and to do with it as he pleases. Hence capitalism for Weber, technology for Heidegger, and hence what Raz-Krakotzkin calls the millenarianism of progress that drives colonial expansion and sustains the absolutism of state sovereignty. Raz-Krakotzkin's cri-

tique of Western modernity places him at odds with secular projects such as Bielik-Robeson's Marranism, Dubow's assimilationism, Boyarin's diasporism, and Trom's Schmittianism.

Raz-Krakotzkin proposes that the theo-political narratives of modernity are expressed in conceptions of the Jewish connection to Israel/Palestine and to Judaism itself, the Jewish text. The Western secular-Protestant narrative sees modernity as man's salvation from religion, but also religion's salvation from human history, by returning to religion's source in the Bible, purified of all interpretive tradition, sola scriptura.

The biblical source from which modern national liberation finds its model is the conquest of the Promised Land by the Israelites. Hence the paradigmatic role in Western consciousness of the return of the Jewish nation as an exiled sovereign to its land, or Zionism. Lutheran secularized modernity is embodied in the consciousness of Jews who, in the mirror of the Bible, see themselves as the people of Joshua, son of Nun, and Palestine as the land of Canaan. The Zionist conquest re-enacts biblical geography as a model for European colonialism. This analysis confirms the link between the ethos of the Jewish state and the secular opposition to it of the model that I outlined through Ophir's book, which, like Luther, brings Jews back to their biblical source as the beginning of their redemption from Judaism.

Western modernity perpetuates its domination by hiding its alternative and resisting this concealment is at the heart of Raz-Krakotzkin's book. In the shadow of the Western narrative, he points to traces of another, repressed, Oriental modern existence. In contrast to the Protestant West, Oriental modernity is Muslim in character, and the book points to its Western affiliation with Catholicism, to which we could add Eastern, Orthodox Christianity.

This modern consciousness does not understand God's absence as a severing of transcendence from immanence, as the redemption of the world, but, on the contrary, as an intensification of the tension between the world and God, sharpening the awareness that the world remains unredeemed. Through this narrative, man does not feel at home in his world, as master of it, but rather as a stranger, in exile. He does not rejoice at the death of God and surrender to the body of the present, but clings all the more fiercely to any means that mediates him to the absent divinity. Oriental modernity is committed to tradition.

The Jewish embodiment of Oriental consciousness is exilic, and exile par excellence, modern, is Israel's exile from its exile (in Spain) in its land. The "hidden indication" that Raz-Krakotzkin's Benjaminian historiography redeems from Zionist historiography is a concentrated moment of Jewish exilic community in Ottoman Palestine in the third quarter of the sixteenth century, in the city of Safed. "The moment of Safed" gathers a group of figures who shaped the face of early modern Judaism after the expulsion from Spain, led by Rabbi Joseph Karo, author of Beit Yosef and Shulhan Arukh; Rabbi Isaac Luria Ashkenazi, father of Lurianic Kabbalah; Kabbalist Rabbi Moses Cordovero; poet Rabbi Israel Najara; Rabbi Solomon Alkabetz, and others.

Unlike Zionism, which is characterized by a Lutheran return to the biblical kingdom of Judah, the Safed consciousness relates Jewish existence in Israel after the destruction, whose place is not Jerusalem but the Galilee, and whose discourse is not prophetic but rabbinic. This is not Bible consciousness but Mishna consciousness, not source but tradition. More precisely, it is the tannaitic consciousness that in the Safed discourse founded the tradition not only as Mishnah, but also as Kabbalah, given in the Zohar by Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai.

The Safed nation is not founded on Joshua son of Nun conquering the land, but on Rashbi maintaining the exile in the Land of Israel. The connection through Rashbi between Mishnah and Kabbalah, Karo and Luria, law and narrative, is central to Safed's vision of exile, according to Raz-Krakotzkin. It opposes the common narrative from Gershom Scholem's school of the Lurianic exile of the Shekhinah as the seed of Shabbetai Tzvi's heretical Messianism and from there to secular Judaism, a foundational narrative in both Zionism and Bielik-Robeson's Pauline Marranism à la Derrida. In Safed, Raz-Krakotzkin argues, the awareness of God's exile does not lead to His abandonment and the proclamation of secular redemption, but, on the contrary, to a sharper understanding of

the world's corruption and the need to repair it through mitzvot. Luria's core legacy is not Shabbateanism, but Shulhan Arukh.

Against the Jewish state, Lorberbaum posits the exilic community as a pluralistic civil society; for Shaul Magid, exilic Judaism means opposition to the state by anti-Zionist Haredim or counter-Zionist settlers. For Raz-Krakotzin, modern Jewish exile is embodied in Mizrahi traditionalism, which resists not only the Jewish state but also the political theology of the West. *Mishnaic Consciousness, Biblical Consciousness* locates Jewish opposition to the Jewish state in Ottoman Safed, that is, in the Muslim-Arab space that is Israel's concrete space today.

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Political sovereignty represents the ultimate vision of the modern political imagination. The establishment of the state is perceived as the moment of liberation, independence, redemption from enslavement, and the end of exile. However, as Danny Trom has noted, the European sovereign state does not offer redemption, but rather shelter in a world without redemption, a world whose law is war.

The mistake that perpetuates evil is not only to confuse the state with redemption, but to see it as a refuge from war. Because the state itself, as Adi Ophir and Menahem Lorberbaum explain, is war; it is the Leviathan that does not protect from violence, but is its embodiment. And the harshest manifestation of the violence of the modern state was not the war between states, the world war, but the violence of the European state against what is perceived as outside it, as outside the state and the laws of war: such as the European Jews and non-European peoples.

In this sense, the state of Israel is a European state. Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel, supposedly redemption, supposedly refuge, has in practice been the negation of its otherness. First and foremost, this is the non-European, the Palestinian. As Raz-Krakotzkin shows, Zionism did not negate Europe; on the contrary, it carried out the European negation of Islam and the Arab world by erasing Palestine. The existence of Israel is the existence of the Nakba, the Palestinian catastrophe, which is not in the past but in the present, and its name today is Gaza.

But the state of Israel is also European in its negation of the Jews, from both of its locations, according to Boyarin's geography. First, the sovereign Jewish state alienates the Jews—exiles them—from their "here" in the Land of Israel, that is, from their concrete existence in the Middle East. The negation of Palestine perpetuates Israeli Jews as occupiers, settlers, and colonialists. Second, Jewish sovereignty negates Judaism itself as a tradition of exile, not in the secular sense of diaspora or lost sovereignty, nor in the religious sense of apolitical spirituality, but as resistance to state sovereignty and its violence.

The contemporary meaning of exilic thought is the negation of the three negations: of Palestine, of the Jews, and of Judaism. The idea of exile aims to end the negation of Palestine without the genocide of the Palestinian people by limiting Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel. The idea of exile aims at limiting Jewish sovereignty without expelling the Jews from the Land of Israel, by integrating the Jews into the Arab and Islamic space. The idea of exile aims at integrating the Jews into this space without erasing Judaism, but on the contrary, by restoring it as a tradition of social existence whose essence is not sovereign power.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

[1] Jewishness as the inversion of Paulinism was described in Boyarin's earlier books, most famously in *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Boyarin 1993).

[2] Julie Cooper described this, comparing Boyarin's diasporism to Simon Dubnow's, as "reducing a powerful repository of political templates to a dissident subculture" (Cooper 2023).

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4052 Basel
Switzerland
Tel.: +41 61 683 77 34

Religions Editorial Office
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ISBN 978-3-7258-2008-5