



Routledge Jewish Studies Series

VIOLENCE AND MESSIANISM

**JEWISH PHILOSOPHY AND THE GREAT CONFLICTS
OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY**

Petar Bojanić



Violence and Messianism

Jewish Philosophy and the Great Conflicts
of the Twentieth Century

Petar Bojanić

**Translated by
Edward Djordjevic**

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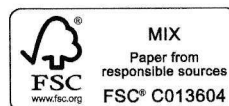
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Violence and Messianism

Violence and Messianism looks at how some of the figures of the so-called renaissance of “Jewish” philosophy between the two world wars – Franz Rosenzweig, Walter Benjamin, and Martin Buber – grappled with problems of violence, revolution, and war. At once inheriting and breaking with the great historical figures of political philosophy such as Kant and Hegel, they also exerted considerable influence on the next generation of European philosophers, like Lévinas, Derrida, and others.

This book aims to think through the great conflicts of the past century in the context of the theory of catastrophe and the beginning of new messianic time. First, it is a book about means and ends – that is, about whether good ends can be achieved through bad means. Second, it is a book about time: peace time, war time, time it takes to transfer from war to peace, etc. Is a period of peace simply a time that excludes all violence? How long does it take to establish peace (to remove all violence)? Building on this, the book considers whether there is anything that can be called messianic acting. Can we – are we capable of, or allowed to – act violently in order to hasten the arrival of the Messiah and peace? And would we then be in messianic time? Finally, how does this notion of *messianism* – a name for a sudden and unpredictable event – fit in, for example, with our contemporary understanding of terrorist violence? The book attempts to understand such pressing questions by reconstructing the notions of *violence* and *messianism* as they were elaborated by 20th-century Jewish political thought.

Providing an important contribution to the discussion on terrorism and the relationship between religion and violence, this book will appeal to theorists of terrorism and ethics of war, as well as students and scholars of philosophy, Jewish studies, and religious studies.

Petar Bojanić is Director of the Institute for Philosophy, University of Belgrade and the Center for Advanced Studies, University of Rijeka. He has published books and articles in many different languages and co-edited *Semantics of Statebuilding* (Routledge, 2014). He has also held numerous fellowships and visiting professorships in Europe and the USA.

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Violence and Messianism

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Introduction

The title of this book, *Violence and Messianism*, is neither merely a paraphrase of an influential 20th-century text, “Violence and Metaphysics,” nor indeed a simple homage to Jacques Derrida and Étienne Balibar, who have guided my doctoral work and with whom I discussed the arguments developed here. My overall intention is to reread Derrida’s famous text in accordance with a suggestion made in his late texts, *Voyous* and “Prière d’insérer,” of “messianicity [*messianicité*] without messianism.” The phrase that Derrida would take up and explain often towards the end of his life presents a *bone fide* paradigm of a deconstructionist move or act, and fits in with the understanding of violence in his text on Lévinas. By substituting the adjective “messianic” with the neologism “messianicity,” Derrida is seeking to purify messianism of all traces of the Messiah, of Judaism, and religion in general. Thus, he effaces the position and subjectivity of the one who awaits, who calls and promises the coming of the other or of the Messiah. He transforms the subjectivity of awaiting into a neutral waiting (a waiting without waiting, without horizon of the event to come). Further, the various protocols of retreating from the other (I am not waiting for the other, I am not waiting, this is not a waiting, it is a waiting without waiting) are necessary to guarantee that the awaited event (the other, the host, the Messiah, justice, democracy, etc.) effectively comes about. Specifically, I am particularly interested in two injunctions by Derrida: the requirement to “give this messianicity force and form” (how? whence? who and when?), and that we never leave the philosophical register, never abandon the institution of writing, that is, the philosophical text.

But how do we philosophically express the messianic idea? Why should we find space within the field of philosophy for the impossible arrival of what is not yet here? Is that the place of possibility of Jewish philosophy? Is text as such the condition of messianism and the coming of the other? Finally, how has the paradigm of constituting the subject been replaced by either the idea of constituting the other or the space for its self-constituting? What does it mean to withdraw, to call, or coerce another or other? *The fundamental problem of this book is how is something given “force and form” – or more precisely, are force and violence necessary for the institution to last, be sustained,*

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or even be institutionalized, and to what extent? Is violence a necessary condition for the achievement of peace or justice? What is the right amount of violence to incorporate into the state, such as the new, just state of Israel? Or, for example, which radicalism will lead us to victory? How, if at all, can we humanize war and to what extent can violence become ethical?

Seeking to elaborate answers to all these questions, as well as to justify the substitution of the word metaphysics with messianism in the title, I have followed Hegel's medical (and fatal) analogy of illness and sovereignty (the organism, the state, the body, the whole, the world), that is, the necessity of therapy (of medication, intervention, the addition and arrival of other). It seems to me that Hegel's discovery of homeopathic therapy and his use of it in his philosophy of nature, as well as in his political philosophy, could constitute the initial sketch of the figure of the absolute other. Hegel's idea of this other (which in reality is the selfsame, hence homeopathy) is that it exists as an enemy that is opposed to totality – a totality which is itself only constituted in resistance to this enemy – but also that it is possible to command and conduct the coming of this other. I have followed the development and transformation of this Hegelian idea and the different paths it takes in Rosenzweig, Benjamin, Lévinas, and Derrida. Thus, Derrida follows a strategy of auto-immunology, attempting to preserve the foreignness of the other from our power of assimilation. Yet the pursuit to protect the other and protect from the other (similarly to allergies in Lévinas) creates conflict and hostility within us, loss of identity, and illness. On the other hand, Benjamin's theory of victory carries the idea that absolute war or violence (a great global war or Rosenzweig's new forms of messianic war) can indeed lead to peace. The presence of the other leads ultimately to the revelation of the true revolutionary subject.

As an introduction to these reflections on violence and messianism, and revealing the reading protocol required in a philosophical gesture, let me present a few elements of method in the text that follows. Each chapter is an interpretation of one or several philosophical texts in which I bring together or compare certain phrases, their variations within a given text or among texts. Throughout, I am attempting to lay bare the logic according to which these texts are constructed. I am not seeking to imagine potential ties between thinkers or philosophical doctrines, nor to yet again examine known and recognized problems and debates. It seems to me that the texts ought to undergo an analytic or "symptomal" reading, the textual equivalent of evenly suspended attention in psychoanalysis, in which the reader lets himself be guided by the play of signifiers more than by the overt structure or explicit intention. This reveals, for example, that in Benjamin's *Critique of Violence*, the term "victory" recurs several times at decisive moments in the argument. Similarly, it seems fruitful and necessary to me to compare the various instances of the term "sacrifice" or else "*Zug*" in Rosenzweig's writing, as well as how each functions in context.

This process is comparable to *radiography*. A resulting image would suggest first of all that the flesh of the text covers a skeleton that gives it structure or

articulation, yet remains invisible to the naked eye. The skeletal structure of a text is neither an inessential aspect, nor *a fortiori* marginal, nor is it the interpretation found in the margins of a text, even if relevant phrasal elements are sometimes found there. The skeletal structure of the text that such radiographic reading renders visible is the latent logical structure, the un-thought of, which, although not immediately obvious, is nevertheless a necessary component. Interpretation, then, consists of going beyond the explicit dimension of the text: moving from the ensemble of identifiable signifiers and references that manifest the conscious thought of the author and structure a network of determinable meanings toward the implicit dimension that expresses the thought in whose essence it is to go beyond the limits of its references, intentions, and meanings. Evidently, such a reading method, or at least such a hermeneutical position towards philosophical texts about violence and messianism, assumes a certain idea of philosophical writing and networks of signifiers that make up its weft. What justifies making this particular distinction and paying attention to seemingly insignificant lexical repetition over the conspicuous logic of texts? And what is the result of this method of interpretation?

As I attempt to penetrate into the construction of these texts, it seems to me that it is they themselves that carry us – convey and transport – towards certain elements. If we consider the *Critique of Violence*, and if we try to understand how it is constructed, we cannot evade a number of appropriations that comprise its inter-text, nor the play of intra-references of which it consists. In this place, where the inter- and intra-textual intersect, we find Korah's rebellion, which, curiously, has only rarely attracted the attention of Benjamin's commentators. Nevertheless, everything points to this being the location where the text condenses, since it is thought that Korah's case is the illustration *par excellence* of the problem of revolutionary violence. The interpretative work of identification of these phrases shows that the philosophical project of the given text rests on them, that they are its base and spine, although they have no stable meaning on their own. It is these points that in the final analysis gather and compress ambiguities, problems, even the *aporias* of a text. Thus, for example, for Rosenzweig, the expression "Zug" [pull] is the basic mechanism, even the secret of messianism, since it condenses the relation of pacifism to war. Similarly, Lévinas' formula of "*un arrière-goût de violence*" [an aftertaste of violence] is the key to his project of inquiry into whether there is such a thing as just violence and how it ought to be used.

What is true of a term or phrase is also true of typographical devices that alter meaning: quotation marks, parentheses, italics, translation, similes and analogies, example analysis. Whatever its explicit status, the burden of both carrying *and* removing difficulties implicitly always fall on the phrase that seemingly has no decisive character.

The presentation and manifestation of these unstable elements is a particular result of interpretation. It is a sort of reduction or analysis – in the chemical sense of the terms – until we reach the irreducible element that still contains the condensed, therefore manifest, main difficulties of the interpreted

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text. Simply, the end of analysis is never a pure and simple element, but on the contrary, always a complex and impure one, such that the project of integrating or grounding violence in messianism reveals, in the final analysis, its radical impossibility. This is why the analysis of the example of Korah's rebellion in Benjamin does not reveal the solution to the problem, but its point of contraction.

In order for such a protocol of reading to be qualified as deconstructivist, it is necessary to specify that it extracts and reduces only those phrases gathered from the signifier weft, much like chemical analysis. For it to be characterized, on top of that, as structural, it is necessary to point out the heterogeneous nature of the resulting structural element. The process of reduction is the method of interpretation, while the particular and impure element is its problematic result.

This is why we ought to keep these two contradictory theses together: on the one hand, there is no way to philosophically think the relation between violence and messianism that does not seek to integrate the former into the latter, and such a project is philosophically necessary; on the other, there is no possible justification of violence that could *de jure* ground such a project and guarantee its execution. For this reason, any philosophical endeavor that seeks to think the relation between violence and messianism ultimately points to a *necessary but impossible* search for grounding that would guarantee the establishment of the institution of violence. This real contradiction in which philosophy seeks to justify violence, and draws on all that the imaginary and symbolic has to offer is the movement of justice as fiction, in a double sense of creating (fabricating) and inventing (*ingere*). Therefore, I suggest that it be qualified by the neologism *justifiction*.

In my doctoral thesis, I attempted to show that war is bound to the institution as such in general, and the institution of philosophy in particular. Theses in political philosophy regarding violence and messianism are never reducible to speech about (the ultimate) war. Philosophy sustains the necessary relation, at least in its problematic form, of violence and messianic acting. If for no other reason, it does so because it interchanges the ambiguities between the two, anchoring its activities in the social field. It thus increases the polysemy on the level of writing by transferring and translating the real difficulties of the relation between violence and messianism onto the discursive and signifying construction – the text. Text, however, is in immediate contact with the social field because it represents a fact of institution that, as such, seeks to integrate violence into a given order. Philosophy in this double sense, as writing and as institutionalization, is a discipline. This means that philosophical writing has the task of always apportioning violence, of introducing and attaining a new epoch. Finally, philosophy as practice, even *praxis*, is encompassed by an institution-becoming which not only makes it far from a purely speculative discipline (*skhólè*), but on the contrary, propels it to interiorize and constantly interchange the political *aporias* of violence and messianism.

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Translated onto the problem of messianism (heroism, responsibility, sovereignty, Judaism, nostalgia, pacifism, revolution, piracy, sacrifice, victory, revenge, etc.), the question I am posing in this book is whether there is a link between violence (war) and the coming of the Messiah (justice, democracy, order, peace)? If so, how much violence is necessary? What are the figures of violence suitable for this? Is messianic acting possible? Is it necessary to act violently in order to bring about a new epoch? This is the kind of acting that leads immediately to the other, while still anticipating it. In that sense, philosophy as *praxis* is already political action that has messianic or revolutionary potential. It calls us to joint action due to its tendency to include and associate all, to introduce everyone into active becoming, or, equally, allowing no one to remain passive. It demonstrates an urgency for the swiftest possible construction of the just city. Even the very possibility of the arrival of a new historical epoch gives us reason enough to continue reading and producing philosophy. The coming of the former is inseparable from the future of the latter.

1 Violence and Illness

Figures of the Other, Figures of Hegel

Immediately, I insist on the word “other.”

In Greek, *o allos*¹ also designates the foreigner, the remaining other, one other who is still (an)other. How can we follow (I hesitate to speak of thematization and study) the action (*ergon*) toward the other or speech (*logos*) about this other (or the work and action of this other)? Or conversely, how can we follow resistance to the other and resistance of the other in such a complicated context and on a path that begins with an imaginary analogy of sovereignty (again, *logos*) and ends with attributes (emphasis on the plural) of violence? How can we follow the transformations and deformations of *allergologies* or the *allergologic* within the framework of potential alternative strategies such as *immunologies* or (*auto*)*immunologies*, and how, simultaneously, can we seek the promising form that announces and opens greater security and protection for the other?

How at all does the detection of a violent act, or many violent acts against another – this being the premise of any *allergology* or immunology (does allergy not already belong to autoimmune strategies?) – protect (an)other? To be clear, the question is not how does it protect me or us or the selfsame or even my relation with the other (proving the benevolence and wholesomeness of the other), but precisely and above all the other. Does perhaps the protection of the other as other, certainly protection from me, from my intervention or assimilation, assume nothing but acquiescence to allergy, to prevention and distance in relation to the other? And does allergy or immunity from the other protect the other from me?

Similarly, can the finesse and the eventual move from *allergologies* into (*auto*)*immunologies* first overcome all the problems that concern the changes in meaning and context? Does (*auto*)*immunology* produce greater protection of the other by retreating before it, because the selfsame (I or we) opposes itself to itself as another? That is, does the selfsame divide itself internally, calling itself into question, because it recognizes itself as enemy and other, because it struggles against itself and its own fictions and fantasies regarding enmity and allergy?

Lévinas asks:

Can the Same [*le Même*] welcome the Other [*l'Autre*], not by giving the Other to itself as a theme [*en se le donnant pour theme*] (that is to say, as being) but by putting itself in question? Does not this putting in question [*mise on question*] occur precisely when the Other has nothing in common with me, when the Other has nothing in common with me, when the Other is wholly other, that is to say, a human Other [*lorsqu'il est tout autre, c'est-à-dire Autrui*]?²

All these questions, I repeat, are to be found in the shadow of the question regarding resistance to (something) other and resistance to another. Further, all these questions unfold in a complicated context made up of the analogy of sovereignty (the state and the sovereign organism) and various attributes of violence and war. Although the controversial status and primacy of the various elements that comprise this (bio)analogy (and counter-analogy) – the whole, the totality, the state, the community, the organism, the body – has for centuries been at the forefront, I insist that this whole time, chronic illness has also been the secret condition and factor of possibility of this analogy.

Illness provides the framework, is both the beginning and end of my inverted and intersected questions: Hegel's illness of sovereignty and his homeopathic strategy, Rosenzweig's therapy and infusion into the sick and paralyzed body of the philosopher ("*alle Symptome von akuter Apoplexia philosophica*"),³ Lévinas' discovery that the origin and birth of philosophy is in allergy ("*la philosophie est vraiment née d'une allergie*"),⁴ Derrida's epithets and attributes of violence⁵ and his construction of immunity and autoimmunity as the foundations of the community.⁶ I would first divide these four analogous interventions and four disparate actions into two columns, that is, I would simultaneously classify four sets of thoughts on violence into only two: on one side are Hegel, "the mystic of violence," as Benjamin calls him,⁷ and Rosenzweig, Hegel's moderator (and generally one of his most important readers⁸); on the other side are Emmanuel Lévinas with his own reader (and occasionally unjustified moderator) Jacques Derrida. This division can be seen as a series of banal interruptions and uneven gaps in the chronology of a single column.

If I now had to formulate an initial, new, and different division on the same axis along which these texts link and overlap with one another, then I would experiment and formulate things entirely differently. I would choose between the following two options. Either I would declare all four of these great gestures and readings, these great books of violence and enmity, as moderating efforts – for they are all moderators, all attempting to soften the extreme elements and differences that precede them (even Hegel himself or perhaps especially Hegel). Or, I would single out Rosenzweig's and Lévinas' gesture(s), as having in common that they are the first and only event in the history of Western thought. In their view(s), for the first time, it is not a question of a short episode, intermezzo, or of catching breath amid histories of violence and the infinite belief that force can execute some goal, that is, that there is no justice, law, or order without use of violence or war.

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Only this second option would then mean that this was an event *par excellence*, rare or unrepeatable, because it is strongly opposed to both the context in which it appears and everything that precedes it. But also because, paradoxically, it owes its influence and its duration, I would even say its survival, to all that follows and comes after it. Thus, placed between Hegel and Derrida are Rosenzweig and Lévinas together (in spite of all of Lévinas' wariness and hesitation regarding Rosenzweig's reading of Hegel).⁹ This option would open two problems and several layers of uncertainty and different types of responsibility.

First, following some of Derrida's objections from "Violence and Metaphysics,"¹⁰ either Rosenzweig's or Lévinas' position (and I dare say that they complement one another perfectly, as each reads different books by Hegel) ought to always be able, in any situation of renewed trust in violence (meaning today, right now), to prove its adaptability and opposition to Hegel. The demand, for example, that Lévinas neither repeats nor affirms, but also does not hide his immanent Hegelianism ("Lévinas is very close to Hegel, much closer than he admits, and at the very moment when he is apparently opposed to Hegel in the most radical fashion"¹¹), could be fulfilled by constant comparison of this position against various Hegelian formulas and combinations.

The second point, or the second responsibility, produces the first and boils down to what comes after Derrida and his *(auto)immunology* (as I have already mentioned, for my scaffolding to be justified at all, it is necessary to believe at least a little in its potential and its future).¹² In order to survive, to remain a paragon event, Rosenzweig-Lévinas' intervention that strikes at the principles of violence and war (the very first institutes of philosophy), would have to patently manifest its advantage in opposing the great mystifiers of violence prior to Hegel. I am thinking here of Kant and recent tendencies to inaugurate his 200-year-old fantasies about peace as still the most efficient response humanity has to the crisis in international law and to renewed justifications of violence and war.

Three gestures by Hegel from his lectures on the philosophy of law, three steps in the construction of a fatal analogy, could perhaps form the first condition for the construction of a strategy that holds together a few elements: war, violence, sacrifice, sovereignty, negation, enemy, and other. But before discussing these gestures by Hegel and Hegel's construction (as I wish to call it, since it is exclusively Hegel's and could be the condition for any theory of violence, war, sacrifice, enemy, etc. in Hegel), here are two parameters I am using as a preamble to this Hegelian construction:

(a) I am attempting to uncover the Hegel mediated by my reading of Rosenzweig and Lévinas. In other words, the elementary construction the two moderators instantly recognize as Hegelian and immediately oppose. Rosenzweig uses an analogy of the sick philosopher, the patient, of an idealism that needs overturning. What is it that needs overturning in Hegel? Or conversely, what is it that is sick in Hegel and turned upside down? What in Hegel is already in Rosenzweig's sanatorium?

As we have observed, our patient suffers from a radical inversion [*einer vollkommenen Umkehrung*] of his normal functions. It may be necessary to reverse the inversion, that is, turn matters upside-down [*dass es also notwendig ist, diese Umkehr ihrerseits wieder umzukehren*].¹³

(b) I am attempting to find the construction that within itself holds, and then implies, all of Hegel's potential theories of violence, negation, enemy, war, etc. A theory like that, an always problematic and debatable reduction of diverse Hegelian ideas and fragments, must, for instance, cover: two places in the *Science of Logic* on violence that comes from outside, on the other and on the reaction to the other ("Wirkung und Gegenwirkung"), and on the purpose and mechanical violence ("Der ausgeführte Zweck");¹⁴ the determination of determination, negation, limit, and absolute other from the *Enzyklopädie* (as well as from the *Science of Logic*);¹⁵ the argument regarding the other as evil, on self-recognition in the other from the 1805–6 semester (*Jenenser Realphilosophie*);¹⁶ differing versions of the struggle for recognition [*der Kampf des Anerkennens*], wars and confrontations among states, but also positions concerning external or apparent beginning of states [*äusserliche oder erscheinende Anfang*], despite understanding violence as the basis of right [*Grund des Rechts*] or violence as a substantial principle of states;¹⁷ followed by Hegel's muddled suggestions concerning first violence [*erste Gewalt*], about the violence of the hero, about the conversion of violence into right, and about the battle for right, etc.

Here are three fragments that, I believe, most efficiently construct the path towards Rosenzweig and Lévinas.

After two paragraphs (§ 160 and § 161) in which he delves in detail into war and sacrifice for the state, at the very end of paragraph § 162 of his lectures on *Natural Law* in Heidelberg (1817/1818), Hegel speaks of Kant's project of eternal peace issuing from the idea that there should be no war. War, however, says Hegel, is ethically necessary because without war, the people would drown in their private life, in security and listlessness, and would be easy prey to other peoples. Hegel varies this idea in multiple places in texts from different years.¹⁸ He continues:

In truth, this is a thought first expressed some thirty years ago and filled with benevolence, that the human race build a single state.¹⁹ What holds the individual states together in such a league of all states is merely an "ought," and the whole league is based on free choice [*Willkür*]. At all events the individual must desire the opposite of war; but war is a philosophically essential element of nature [*aber der Krieg ist ein philosophisch wesentliches Naturmoment*].²⁰

It is as if Lévinas himself formulated these two phrases, to be found nowhere else in Hegel's texts in any form – moral necessity of war and war as something essentially philosophical. War is indeed *der Naturmoment*, much as

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states are small natural units that strive towards a unified whole. And this movement toward a unified whole is again something natural, essential, and philosophical. This is war.

Two years later, in a note subsequently added to § 278, “*Der Staat als Subjekt der Souveränität*” of “*Die Rechtsphilosophie*” von 1820 (as Karl-Heinz Ilting titled it),²¹ Hegel explains what he means by sovereignty. The third of five points is called “*Der Idealismus der Souveränität*.”

The idealism which constitutes sovereignty is the same characteristic as that in accordance with which the so-called “parts” of an animal organism are not parts but members, moments in an organic whole, whose isolation and independence spell disease [*organische Momente sind und deren Isolieren und Für-sich-Bestehen die Krankheit ist*].

(Cf. *Encyclopedie* § 293)²²

Hegel probably penned this sentence in this form in 1825. From then it remained unchanged at the beginning of § 278, and is published unaltered in all editions of his *Philosophy of Right*. It is possible to see the genesis of this argument as the crystallization of the analogy between sovereignty and the organism (organization, the body), and the revelation that illness connects two different levels of Hegel’s system.²³ There is no mention of illness in the lectures on law prior to this version in 1825, even though illness as a latent metaphor is present in Hegel’s political-legal context from the beginning.²⁴ On the other hand, in an early text on *Natural Law*, illness is mentioned, and the analogy is set in the same form it would take later, but there is no mention of the figure of sovereignty or organism.

Sickness and the onset of death are there when one part organizes itself and eludes the dominion of the whole. By this isolation the part affects the whole negatively or even compels it to organize itself for this sphere alone – as, for example, when the vitality of the entrails [*Lebendigkeit der Eingeweide*], in obedience to the whole, develops into individual animals, or the liver makes itself into the ruling organ and forces the whole organism to do its bidding.²⁵

Illness (as well as various types of hypochondria²⁶) is for Hegel, in fact, something much more than a trauma that has determined his life and is the eternal companion of the philosopher and philosophy. Hegel announces the unity of the state or health and unity of the organism through an openness to the possibility of war (§ 321–4). Hegel continues that only through sacrifice [*Aufopferung*] is idealism attained and the real is arrived at (as spirit or national spirit).²⁷

Hegel’s third move is also difficult to locate in time precisely. Once again the fragment is the fruit of Ilting’s labor. Undoubtedly, it is a later or even very late Hegel. It appears as part of his commentary on § 273 of *Philosophy*

of Right (“*Die drei Gewalten*”) entitled “*Eine naturphilosophische Analogie*.”²⁸ He differentiates abstract moments of the state [*gesetzgebende Gewalt, Regierungsgewalt, individuelle Gewalt*] and the specific term of the state as a living whole in which each moment organizes its own totality for itself. Hegel defines the philosophical-natural analogy as a living body that has three determinations. The first is sensitivity or perception, while the third is reproduction. But the second determination in Hegel’s writing is *Irritibilität* or *Irratibilität*.

These moments are now determined as systems... of irritability, abstract system, with the heart at their center, a system of others [*Diese Momente bestimmen sich nun als Systeme... das der Irratibilität, ein abstraktes System welches das Herz zu seinem Mittelpunkte hat, das System der Andern*].

The system of others or the system of the other is at the very core of the living body or the living organism. The system of the other is at the heart of the state.

All these conditions of Hegel’s, which are certainly more numerous than the three I have here sketched out, are supposed to more clearly show the final construction – Hegel signals as much in § 293 of the first edition (§ 371 in the second) of the *Encyclopedia*, “Illness of the Individual.” Hegel invites the reader, in the course of contemplating the figures of the state, sovereignty, war, enemy, the other, or sacrifice and violence to consult his demonstrations of most recent theories of illnesses, pharmacology, and alternative therapies; this same invitation, however, simultaneously, paradoxically, presents a danger to the consistency of the system as such. Homeopathy,²⁹ another invented Greek word Hegel uses twice and explains in detail, is a strategy that resolves one of the main dilemmas of his political philosophy. However, homeopathy introduces an element of magic into the dialectic, inflating the importance of the analogy, which becomes not only a regulative, but a constitutive instrument of the system – since analogy is itself therapy. It privileges the selfsame at the expense of the different or other (because it presupposes negation with the same, not some other, different or opposite, which characterizes allopathy).

What is it then that we ought to find in the therapy for a sick organism that can uniquely explain the mysterious poison appearing suddenly in a sick state and state without war?³⁰ Is this delving into medicine and sickness unto death the only way to reveal the secret of that strange strategy and fantastic power of a government (the sovereign) to organize war for its own sovereignty (to its own people)? In his lecture of March 5, 1976 on Hegel’s *Logic*, Lévinas analyzes that famous passage from the *Phenomenology of Spirit*:³¹

But Spirit is at the same time the power of the whole, which brings these parts together again into a negative unity, giving them the feeling of their

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lack of independence, and keeping them aware, that they have their life only in the whole... The Spirit of universal assembly and association is the simple and negative essence of those systems which tend to isolate themselves. In order not to let them become rooted and set [*einwurzeln und festwerden*] in this isolation, thereby breaking up the whole and letting the [communal] spirit evaporate [*das Ganze auseinanderfallen und den Geist verfliegen zu lassen*], government [*die Regierung*] has from time to time to shake them to their core by war [*durch die Kriege zu erschüttern*]. By this means the government upsets their established order, and violates their right to independence [*Recht des Selbstständigkeit*], while the individuals who, absorbed in their own way of life, break loose from the whole and strive after the inviolable independence and security of the person, are made to feel in the task laid on them their lord and master, death.³²

But how is this possible? How does the government or sovereign of a state order a war from another state or states? How is the “Sovereign conserver” (Hahnemann’s favorite metaphor) able to expose its own body to the risk of death and dose it with war? Which portion of sovereignty remains always outside itself? Is the government in secret relations with the enemy? Is it a matter of a virtual enemy and virtual danger? What of the victims and sacrifices? How much – this is a question of amount, number, quantity, dose – needs taking away from the whole, for the whole to still be whole or for the whole to only then be whole and equal to itself?

It seems that the specter of analogy (and illness) haunts the space in Hegel between (his) body and state. It is as if these lines in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* are preceded by thoughts regarding medicine and therapy as well as his intuitions and suggestions of the eternal patient. Conversely, it is as if a resurrected and sophisticated theory of victorious war and community is being incorporated into a new medical practice, as if this politics always has primacy and constantly shapes the *bios*.

In appendix § 373, which deals with types of therapy, Hegel finally finds confirmation. This paragraph begins with sentences almost identical to the understanding of illness and therapy from the *Jena lectures*.³³

It is by means of the healing agent [*Heilmittel*] that the organism is excited into annulling the particular excitement in which the formal activity of the whole is fixed, and restoring the fluidity of the particular organ or system within the whole... In so far as they are negative stimuli, medicaments are poisons [*Die Arzneimittel sind insofern negative Reize, Gifte*]. When the external and alien substance of an indigestible stimulant is administered to an organism alienated from itself by disease, this organism is forced to counter its effect by drawing itself together and entering into a process, by means of which it regains its sentience and subjectivity [*Selbstgefühl und zu seiner Subjektivität wieder gelange*].³⁴

This is followed by the appendix:

Homoeopathic theory [*homöopathische Theorie*] in particular treats illness by prescribing an agent capable of bringing forth the same disease in a healthy body. The effect of introducing this poison into the organism, and in general, of confronting it with something obnoxious, is that the particularity in which the organism is fixed becomes something external for it. When the organism is diseased however, this particularity is still one of its own properties...³⁵ Every disease, and especially acute disease, is a hypochondria of the organism [*Hypochondrie des Organismus*], in which the organism loathes the external world and repulses it. The reason for this is that it is restricted to itself while containing its own negative. As the medicine now stimulates it into digesting this negative, however, the organism is restored to the general activity of assimilation. The precise way in which this effect is obtained is by administering to the organism something which is much more potently indigestible than its disease, and so forcing it to draw itself together in order to overcome it. This results in the internal division of the organism; for us the initially immanent indisposition has now become external, the organism has been duplicated internally into its vital force and its diseased parts. This effect of medicine may well be regarded as magical. It resembles the effect of mesmerism in bringing the organism under the power of another person, for it is by means of the medicament that the whole organism is subjected to this specific determination succumbing as it were to the power of a magician [*der Gewalt eines Zauberers*].³⁶

Again, Hegel insists that the connection between illness and remedy is quite specific. He continues:

Deciding which remedies are the right ones now presents us with a difficulty [*Zu sagen, welches nun die rechten Mittel seien, ist schwer*]... In general, it may be said that the relationship between disease and medicine is a magical one [*Das Verhältnis der Krankheit zur Arznei ist überhaupt ein magisches*].³⁷

Jacques Derrida noticed this magical fragment, one of the last innovations of Hegel's system, and mentioned it in *Glas* (without dwelling on "*l'homéopathie, l'hypocondrie, l'hypnose, le sommeil réparateur*").³⁸ Homeopathy is an addition to the system and a shift in paradigm, even though Hegel no longer has time to ascribe any special status to it. Homeopathy is another kind of therapy. Yet it is neither a single therapy that can replace all others, nor one whose place can be taken by some other therapy. Its particularity, its simultaneous combativeness and sophistication, its magic, resides in its impeccable influence of the other (or the influence of another man, for here *autre*, other, turns into *Autrui*, the Other)³⁹ and in its resistance to, that is, allergy against

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the other. Hegel figures he will be able to subsume and encompass new problems – such as non-recognition and undifferentiation of the same and other, the transfer of (some of) the same into the other and vice versa, internal divisions into the same and other, eternity of the production of the other, the negation of the other and the power of the other to be a carrier of negation – in his last and entirely surprising discovery: the resolution of hypochondria *into or by way of* the theory of homeopathy. It is double. The theory of homeopathy, in Hegelian nomenclature,⁴⁰ can put to an end several decades of effort to overcome this ailment, which he initially thought transient and affecting mostly men between the ages of twenty-seven and thirty-six, meaning, the moment of passing from youth to manhood.⁴¹ Only this new theory is capable of unknotting Hegel's (and not only his) endeavor regarding the understanding of the significance and importance of illness as such. "Every illness is the hypochondria of the organism."

From the *Jena Lectures* to the lectures on *Philosophy of Nature* in his later years, Hegel repeats this sentence nearly word for word. Still, the formulation from the 1819/20 lectures could perhaps show this other, resolving potential of homeopathic theory.

Hegel writes:

The aim of the cure is for the organism to emerge outside itself [*aus sich hinauskomme*]. Illness is a hypochondria with which the organism is disgusted with the outside world [*durch die dem Organismus vor der Aussenwelt ekelt*]. By way of medication, the organism receives the stimulus, overcomes the medication with difficulty, is forced by them to turn to the outside in order to return to itself [*Wodurch er genötigt wird, sich nach aussen zu wenden und zu sich selbst zurückzukehren*]. The main thing [*Hauptsache*] is for the *materia peccans* to be eliminated.⁴²

Let us leave aside for now the ending of this passage with this decisive thing, of which Hegel speaks often in his lectures. It seems that various associations and the unchecked work of the analogy could drag us well and truly outside this framework (towards sacrifice, *pars pro toto*, etc.).⁴³ Homeopathic technique, already announced and conquered here, even though it has yet to be named, finally resolves the relation between resting in a hypochondriacal cocoon and overlapping with what is exterior. Initially, in this place, Hegel uses the outside world for this exterior, elucidating hypochondria with the word disgust. Although he uses the reflexive verb "*durch die dem Organismus vor der Aussenwelt ekelt*" (in contemporary German, this would more commonly be rendered as "*sich vor etwas ekeln*"), the organism discovers *itself* only when it is forced by something else to turn towards the exterior. The organism is itself returned to itself only if it is outside and if it is turned toward the world.

The discovery of the place of self-exit and arrival of the other, the discovery of the world (poison, therapy, doctor, the other, the philosopher, etc.) and the

near Freudian split and doubling of the organism as life force and sick organism – all of this is at stake for Hegel.

The final addition to his system, homeopathy, deconstructs that very system in several stages. I would like to note and list several of these moments:

- homeopathy enters the system as therapy, in place of the organism's sickness, unsuccessful treatment, death, and the appearance of the spirit;
- homeopathy is the kind of therapy that counts on the unity and wholeness of the entire organism (this is its main difference in relation to allopathy);
- as therapy, as something artificial – meaning that this strategy requires a subject or sovereign (the brain, ratio, philosopher, statesman) who can take care of body, organism, text, system, sovereignty, people – its strategies and consequences are necessarily political;
- just as Hegel sends the readers of *Philosophy of Right* to read his *Philosophy of Nature*, so his first student, and the first to deconstruct his text, makes a counter analogy. In the margins of Hegel's book *System der Philosophie* (1841), written by Karl Ludwig Michelet, he adds the following note to Hegel's appendix § 373:

This does not contradict the statement made just previously, that poison is more powerful, the form in which it makes itself effective is less potent [*denn eben weil das stärkere Gift in milder mächtiger Form*], being a merely external hostility [*äußerer Feind*] which is more easily overcome than the internal hostility of the disease itself [*als der innere Feind, welcher die Krankheit selber ist*].⁴⁴

- the homeopathic strategy corrects Hegel's understanding of illness that remained mostly unchanged from his first texts: ultimately, illness of an organism is a consequence of the inorganic that an organism still holds within itself (“*Der Organismus hat nun seine unorganische Potenz an sich selbst, so bezieht er sich als ein Unorganisches auf sich*”).⁴⁵

The drama of illness, and then death, unfolds because the inorganic is not entirely overcome. Symptoms of the inorganic are the division of the organism, hypochondria, and the isolation of members of the organism. The homeopathic intervention to follow is multi-layered: it reveals (a) that the other (the inorganic as its prototype) cannot be entirely incorporated or assimilated, (b) that there is a remainder or remainder or negation that is not counted into the system or the organism and serves no purpose,⁴⁶ (c) that there is an exterior [*“das Äusserliche ist so für mich ein Anderes, aber ein ideelles Anderes”*],⁴⁷ an Other, a spiritual [*Geistiges*],⁴⁸ remedy, foreigner, poison, enemy, that is supremely indigestible by the organism, and which is just as hard to incorporate (this is how the idea of an absolute other, who can only initiate or whose purpose is to provoke an entity into being, but not be a part of it, was discovered; this is the other as a laxative, the other who cannot be eaten, or the other who cannot not be anything but

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Exkretion),⁴⁹ (d) that the exterior is analogous to (and not the same as) the interior, hence the other (but not the same) which is added to the sick organism is analogous to the inorganic, already present in the organism, (e) that the other, or that the enemy is a function and that it is virtual.

“*Was den Menschen interessiert ist sein Anderes*,” says Hegel.⁵⁰ The other *is not*; but its silhouette is already outlined and clear, its place determined, its independence on the way. Although its function is entirely the constitution of the organism, the task of the other – which does not bring life, as it does not carry, nor hold any vital energy – is the formation of the subject in a way never seen before Hegel’s homeopathic construction.

There is also a homeopathic construction implicitly present in the Rosenzweig-Lévinas turn. Although neither ever spoke of it directly, it is only with Hegel’s late addition to his system that their intervention becomes possible. This is evident in their strong resistance to Hegel and insistence on a therapy that is always in absolute opposition to what is essentially (or only) Hegelian in philosophy or in thought. Although correct to mark the limits of Hegel’s reversals and reservations regarding the result achieved (is not Derrida trying to do this all the time, while reading Lévinas?), perhaps it is still necessary to defend the future of such an action begun in Hegel?

Rosenzweig and Lévinas complement one another in their resistance and reversal of Hegel’s positions. It is possible to systematize and show the complementarity and simultaneity of Rosenzweig’s construction and inversion of Hegel’s figure of sovereignty (its analogy with an organism),⁵¹ and Lévinas’ displacement of Hegel’s sacrifice for the fatherland and relation and encounter with the other. It could be shown that Rosenzweig reformulates the relation between violence and law while Lévinas’ attempts to think the negation anew, all while praising Hegel’s efforts. We also have Rosenzweig’s insistence on life and Lévinas’ pages on war from *Totalité et infini*.⁵² Perhaps even before all these large topics, there is an immanent closeness and identity of their efforts (Derrida would perhaps even say that such closeness is empirical): Rosenzweig formulates this first act of philosophizing and thinking against Hegel through the ordinary fact that he is alive (and philosophizing), while Lévinas says that this first act must be against philosophy, against Hegel, in order to protect the life of the other and thus defend subjectivity.

We both know, writes Rosenzweig to a sanatorium director into which the sick philosopher is to be placed (and not only the philosopher, of course; Rosenzweig’s idea is that only common sense and the power of life itself can remedy the “sickness of reason”), that a sick reason can only be cured if it is restored – by an application of some force, if necessary – to its normal environment. The task is not to “infuse” the patient’s reason with something new, but to return it to the condition from which it is deviated. We must fight the various mountebank cures, the ointments, the vaccinations, old or new, with the slogan “Environmental treatment”... “Environmental cure” [*eine reine Terrainkur*].⁵³

This is Lévinas' wind, subjectivity free as the wind [*une subjectivité libre comme le vent*].⁵⁴ Opening to the other begins with breathing, with the lungs (lungs are the real subject and the real beginning, a beginning before any other beginning) and it appears as the splitting of the subject, as splitting of the self, as splitting the subject beyond the lungs.⁵⁵ Resistance to Hegel begins in distrust of medicine and its customary practices. Lévinas' first move has to demolish the "union of philosophy and state, philosophy and medicine" [*l'association de la philosophie et de l'Etat, de la philosophie et de la médecine*]. Only within this context, where philosophy necessarily splits with the state and medicine, can Lévinas' sudden engagement and his alternative allergology be understood. More precisely, in question is a speech against an insurmountable allergy [*d'une insurmontable allergie*],⁵⁶ a discourse against allergy, therefore an appeal for relaxation but caution at the same time.

The effort of this book [*Totalité et infini*] is directed toward apperceiving in discourse a non-allergic relation with alterity [*une relation non allergique avec l'altérité*], toward apperceiving Desire – where power, by essence murderous of the other, becomes, faced with the other and "against all good sense," the impossibility of murder, the consideration of the other, or justice.⁵⁷

However, does Lévinas' call to destroy allergy against the other (other is not all that the allergy refers to, but the word other or *absolument Autre* or *tout autre* best explain Lévinas' intention) still belong to allergology? Does an effort to resist any form of allergy (that is, an ethical engagement) fall within the domain of allergology, including allergy to allergy? Is anti-allergy or counter-allergy then still allergy? Would this remainder of allergy, this resistance to any form of allergy towards the other be the last opportunity for the subject? Is this the way in which Lévinas' defense of subjectivity from the introduction of the book *Totalité et infini* can begin?

It is as if there were something incorrect and detective-like in the thematization of Lévinas' preliminary resistance and dissatisfaction with the status of the other. As if there were something dangerous in these questions, something that renounces and abjures Lévinas, something disturbing. I dare call all these questions and my fixation and insistence on one unclear moment in Lévinas, which precedes the allergy to the other (this can be an allergy to allergy to the other or an allergy whose traces remain even when there is neither allergy nor the other), the philosophical standard or philosophical mannerism. This *moment* is bound with philosophy and with reading that belongs to a "philosophical regime," since it thematizes the unthematizable (e.g. an allergy that precedes the allergy of which Lévinas speaks all the time). This is not all. This objectification, reduction, setting of horizon, a violent revelation of violence (the violence of allergy and violence hidden or unnamed as allergy). This is the moment that continues and generates philosophy that also simultaneously degenerates it. Only the philosopher, perhaps even only Hegel, can utter the

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sentence spoken by Jacques Derrida: “Lévinas is very close to Hegel, much closer than he himself would like to be, and at the moment when he seems to be opposing him in the most radical fashion.” We are left with nothing else but to experiment with this moment, for which we do not know who is responsible: myself, Lévinas, Derrida, Hegel or Hegel alone, Hegel and forever Hegel?

How shall we then reread the status of allergy in Lévinas and in Hegel? In the Derridian or the Hegelian way (how shall we thematize without any thematization), while simultaneously preserving the radical resistance to Hegel, Lévinas, or Derrida? Only a question like this can be preceded by new questions and new answers regarding allergy prior to allergy or violence prior to violence, or in general, regarding the attributes of violence.

If we emulate Derrida’s reading and *the standards* of philosophy, we can see entirely different consequences, but Hegel will then no longer be exclusively close to Lévinas. Here are a few intervals of this one single moment:

- Lévinas introduces allergy as a negative strategy, and calls (to) us (this is in the vocative) to resistance or negation or allergy to allergy itself. The other is not thematized and not placed in the accusative; rather it is the negation of the other or allergy to the other itself that is thematized. The thematization without thematization is achieved through Lévinas’ shift in plan and a quick modulation from the accusative to the vocative, that is, by calling for a negation of negation (or an allergy to allergy).
- Only if this call is ignored, if the vocative is removed from the scene, and only if the notion of other is returned into Hegel’s context (where the other is my negation, where it is the negation of the selfsame), will Lévinas be close to Hegel and within Hegel’s negation of negation.
- In that case, and only in that case (which is also the case when omissions, blind spots, lacunae, ignorance, the unconscious, un-thematizations are sought in one’s reading), will the subject be constituted in the process of uncovering the other, that is, in the process of the destruction of negation or in the process of destroying all that negates the other. The subject is confirmed (defending the subject) as it destroys everything that negates the other, while it is allergic to any allergy towards the other. In other words, the subject defends the other only if it destroys that which negates the other.
- It would now be easy to introduce two new elements developed in Lévinas, before and after Jacques Derrida’s intervention, that is, in Derrida’s writing: (a) that violence is necessary, that the subject is violent, that a specific kind of necessary violence precedes all other forms of violence. Such violence is complementary to the violence of thematization (Derrida endeavored to de-substantiate violence in Lévinas, attempting to uncover one or a few bearable attributes of violence;⁵⁸ although it seems that his attempt is not entirely justified). (b) That the possibility of violence appears always with a third, with that which negates the other⁵⁹ – which

could take the place of allergy (over time, Lévinas takes the state and its justified violence to be the subject of violence or the violent subject who defends its kin;⁶⁰ Derrida's sensitivity, effort, and endeavor that concerns Israel and the Palestinians is, compared to Lévinas, always at a distance).

Thus, although between Rosenzweig and Lévinas, between two modes of the same intervention (on which I insist), the figure of the other has become different and more dangerous than ever before,⁶¹ it seems to me that there is no room for hesitation: first, Lévinas' allergy definitely refers to Hegel's theory of the other. Second, allergy for Lévinas is an absolute and perfect synonym for Hegel's homeopathy. Indeed, is a turbulent reaction and allergy to the other, a cure/poison, not crucial for Hegel? Is provoking resistance and allergy in an organism to some other not the very essence of homeopathic therapy? Third, Lévinas' substitution of homeopathy with allergy inverts Hegel: therapy in Hegel remains illness in Lévinas. Fourth, Lévinas' new step and opposition to allergy is more than mere opposition to homeopathy – allergy assumes innocuousness and innocence of another, whereas anti-allergy demands inquiry into the secret fiction and fantasy about a dangerous and poisonous other. Fifth, occupation with one's own resistance and allergy to the other releases the other and leaves it alone – the other (in Lévinas as in Hegel, the other is impossible to assimilate [*l'autre inassimilable*]) still contributes to the constitution of Lévinas' new subjectivity, but no longer in a homeopathic construction, but as another that fictively bombs and attacks the organism.

The relation with the other [*Autre*] – the absolutely other [*absolument autre*] – who has no frontier with the same is not exposed to the allergy that afflicts the same [*afflige le Même*] in a totality, upon which the Hegelian dialectic rests. The other is not for reason a scandal which launches it into dialectical movement... The alleged scandal of alterity presupposes the tranquil identity of the same [*l'identité tranquille du Même*], a freedom sure of itself which is exercised without scruples, and to whom the foreigner brings only constraint and limitation.⁶²

This passage from Lévinas is a good example of the ease of multiple inversions of Hegel. If we had to sketch out a place for a new reader (or therapist, immunologist), he will indeed have to confirm and think at a still great distance – on the one hand, not having a frontier with the other and the same, and on the other hand the allergy that afflict the same [*allergie qui afflige le Même*].

In the book in which he bids Lévinas adieu, Derrida circles many times around allergy and so marks a future step on the path to once and for all relieving the other of responsibility of the border, of allergy, of assault and pain. The introduction or sketch of introduction (or even just a sketch of a sketch) of a name that designates a very rare illness is the perfect addition and

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substitution for allergy. In fact, it is very difficult to draw the dividing line and distance between allergy and autoimmunity. Are allergies only a form of autoimmune diseases or is autoimmunity a special case of any allergy? The answer is quite complicated.

Nevertheless, the accent and decisive moment is the *auto*, which is Derrida's true addition to Lévinas. The precision of Derrida's intervention, the sharpening of Lévinas' engagement, is indeed multiple.

Immunis assumes only a portion of the organism or system. It is a privileged portion with special status (hence *immune* system). The main characteristic of this portion of the organism is not only to protect its own system as a whole, but the places where the other arrives and where the other is recognized as other.⁶³ The portion that recognizes the other also represents its own limit. The immune system can recognize or not recognize the other, or else it cannot differentiate its own destructive elements (in cancer or AIDS). This portion can protect its own system of the other or can tolerate the other. The immune system can be dormant or drugged in cases of acclimatization, or can tolerate the other too much in the case of organ transplants, or even beyond all measure. The immune system can also produce an other from itself within its own system (*horror autotoxicus*),⁶⁴ and then destroy it.

Derrida only rarely uses the nominative ("*auto-immunité*"), insisting instead on the process or logic of *autoimmunity*, and uses various overwrought descriptions (horrible logic, terrifying, fatal, suicidal, odd, unimaginable, etc.). He retraces Lévinas' or Michelet's move: he returns this logic (such and such a word) into the political-legal space from which it comes, in order to profit from the biological-medical constructions and mechanisms the illness conjures up (conversely, this tactic also confirms Hegel: homeopathy did not move into political logic of the sovereign from therapy and medicine, rather, the opposite happened).⁶⁵

However, with a change in context, this very rare illness (or family of illnesses) suddenly becomes something entirely necessary and elementary in a community, society, or state. All this appears very violent, including the definition of this logic that Derrida insists on repeating several times:

As for the process of auto-immunization, which interests us particularly here, it consists for a living organism, as is well known and in short, of protecting itself against its self-protection by destroying its own immune system [*à se protéger en somme contre son autoprotection en détruisant ses propres défenses immunitaires*].⁶⁶

Further, Derrida entirely leaves out Lévinas' vocative or any kind of call to negation of this destructive self-negation. Nor is there any call to separation or destruction of this logic; rather, Derrida speaks of it always in the accusative, as a phenomenon that is continuously and simultaneously happening in a state elsewhere.

Once again the state is both self-protecting and self-destroying, at once remedy and poison. The *pharmakon* is another name, an old name, for this autoimmunitary logic. Once again, the state is simultaneously a self-protector and self-destroyer, cure and poison.⁶⁷

But what is fatal in this logic, if it can still be thematized and incorporated into a living system or a living organism? What is fatal in the fatal logic of auto-immunity is an excess of violence or violence that cannot be any part of the economics of violence, which forces Derrida to correct himself. Here are these few lines from *Voyous*:

For what I call the autoimmune consists not only in harming or ruining oneself [*à se nuire ou à se ruiner*], indeed in destroying one's own protections, and in doing so oneself, committing suicide or threatening to do so [*à se suicider ou à menacer de le faire*], but, more seriously still, and through this, in threatening the I [*moi*] or the self [*soi*], the *ego* or the *autos*, ipseity itself, compromising the immunity of the *autos* itself: it consists not only in compromising oneself [*s'auto-entamer*] but in compromising the self, the *autos* – and thus ipseity. It consists not only in committing suicide but in compromising *sui-* or *self-*referentiality, the *self* or *sui-* of suicide itself. Autoimmunity is more or less suicidal, but, more seriously still, it threatens always to rob suicide itself of its meaning and supposed integrity [*priver le suicide lui-même de son sens et de son intégrité suppose*].⁶⁸

It seems that the cycle of violence over the other can only now be closed. We now see the radical nature of Lévinas' questioning of the self when he suspends the limit between the same and the other. The origin of violence that auto-immunology is attempting to thematize really does have to be thought anew in confrontation with hypochondria as auto-assimilation and as the prototype of any illness. Not only that: The success achieved by homeopathy in sufferers of autoimmune disorders (such testimonies and experiences should not be secondary) confirms a new presence of Kant and Hegel, and demands of us a discovery of a new radicalness.

Derrida is very close to Hegel, much closer to Kant than I/he would wish him to be, precisely at the moment when it seems he is resisting Lévinas and Rosenzweig in the most radical way.

Notes

- 1 The word allergy was first used in German. In 1906, the Viennese pediatrician Clemens Feilner von Pirquet published a text in the *Müncher Medizinische Wochenschrift* journal. The Greek origin of this word is of course invented. Following the analogy of the word energy, *en-érgeia* (internal corporeal force), von Pirquet coins the term *all-érgeia*, “*als Ausdruck von Reaktionen auf körperfremde Stoffe*.”

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- 2 Emmanuel Lévinas, *Transcendence and Height*, in *Basic Philosophical Writings*, eds. and trans. A. Paperzak, S. Critchley, and R. Bernasconi (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 16; Emmanuel Lévinas, *Transcendance et hauteur*, in *Liberté et commandement* (Paris: Fata Morgana, 1994), 76.
- 3 Franz Rosenzweig, *Understanding the Sick and the Healthy. A View of World, Man, and God*, trans. Nahum Glatzer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 59; Franz Rosenzweig, *Das Büchlein vom gesunden und kranken Menschenverstand* (Düsseldorf: Joseph Melzer Verlag, 1964), 57. This short book was not published during the author's lifetime. Rosenzweig wrote it in the spring of 1921, but withdrew it from publication in July ("Ich glaube, das Buch wird eine reine Blamage"). In November, he noticed the first symptoms of his illness, while his friend, Dr. Victor von Weizsäcker, finally established that Rosenzweig suffers from a severe form of paralysis. Cf. Franz Rosenzweig, *Briefe und Tagebücher, Gesammelte Schriften*, volume 2 (1918–1929) (Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979), 717–23; Franz Rosenzweig, *Die Gritli-Briefe: Briefe an Margrit Rosenstock-Hussey* (Tübingen: Bilam Verlag, 2002), 757.
- 4 Lévinas, *Transcendance et hauteur*, 76.
- 5 Derrida's text "Violence et métaphysique. Essai sur la pensée d'Emmanuel Lévinas" (1964) is above all an essay about the additions and various kinds of violence: "violence de la lumière," "réactionnaire," "historique," "païenne," "la pire et pure violence," "violence transcendante," "originale," "violence pré-éthique," "pire violence comme pré-violence," "violence absolue," "dernière et pire violence," "ontologique," "violence éthique," "violence nécessaire," "violence ontologique-historique," "première violence," "nihiliste," etc. Jacques Derrida, *Violence and Metaphysics. An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas*, in *Writing and Difference*, trans. A. Bass (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 79–153.
- 6 In his last years, Derrida speaks of these figures on several occasions: *Spectres de Marx* (Paris: Galilée, 1993), 224; *Politiques d'amitiés* (Paris: Galilée, 1994), 94; *Foi et Savoir*, in *La Religion: Séminaire de Capri*, eds. Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo (Paris: Seuil, 1996). Derrida's text was later republished as *Foi et savoir* (Paris: Seuil, 2000), 67; *Le "concept" du 11 septembre, Dialogues à New York avec G. Borradori* (Paris: Galilée, 2003), 144–7; *Voyous* (Paris: Galilée, 2003), 60.
- 7 Letter to Scholem of January 31, 1918. Walter Benjamin, *Briefe I* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1978), 171.
- 8 Rosenzweig belongs to the later generation of readers of Hegel's legal and political texts. His mentor Friedrich Meinecke includes in this group, among others, Hermann Heller, Kantorowitz, Schmitt-Dorotić, and Kluckhohn. Cf. Friedrich Meinecke, *Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat*, volume 5 (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1962), 163, 198, 201.
- 9 Cf. Emmanuel Lévinas, *Franz Rosenzweig: une pensée juive moderne*, *Revue de théologie et philosophie* 15, no. 4 (1965): 208–21.
- 10 I would classify Derrida's constant hesitations ("Would Husserl accept this interpretation of his 'interpretation'?") and numerous other objections into several groups. I am only interested in objections that refer to violence: the objection that violence is necessary, that a certain amount of violence, "en une économie de la violence," is necessary; that the "encounter with the absolutely-other" is impossible without violence; that violence exists even where Lévinas is not aware, that is, that his practice too is violent and supposes violence; that violence is impossible to rank, meaning that it is better *ad hoc* to accept violence in order to avoid the worst violence; that Lévinas' anti-Hegelianism is in one way or another inconsistent, or that Lévinas is a closet Hegelian or that Lévinas repeats Hegel, etc.
- 11 Derrida, *Violence and Metaphysics*, 99.
- 12 I would like to underscore that Derrida's sketch of a potential (auto)immunology ("une sorte de logique de l'auto-immunisation" or "la logique générale de l'auto-immunisation," cf. Derrida, *Foi et savoir*, 67) in the last decade of his life already in

- itself contains and assumes entirely different efforts to understand the community and the figure of the other. I am thinking of certain texts of Agamben, Esposito, Sloterdijk, Sontag, Nancy, Haraway, etc.
- 13 Rosenzweig, *Understanding the Sick and the Healthy*, 55; Rosenzweig, *Das Bitchlein vom gesunden und kranken Menschenverstand*, 50.
 - 14 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel's Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1969), 567, 746; Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Die Wissenschaft der Logik, Werke in 20. Bänden*, volume 6 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971), 233, 451.
 - 15 Paragraphs 91, 92, and 93 are a direct inspiration for Lévinas. In them, he could find the terms same, other, third, and infinity. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic*, trans. T. F. Geracts, W. A. Suchting and H. S. Harris (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1991), 147–50; Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *System der Philosophie, Erster Teil. Die Logik* (Stuttgart: Friedrich Frommann Verlag, 1964), 218–22.
 - 16 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Jenenser Realphilosophie*, volume 2 (Leipzig: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1931), 200–3.
 - 17 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*, volume 3, trans. M. J. Petry (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1978), 57–65; Hegel, *System der Philosophie*, § 432 and § 433.
 - 18 “War maintains the moral health of the people” (*die sittliche Gesundheit der Völker*). Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Über die wissenschaftlichen Behandlungsarten des Naturrechts, Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie*, ed. G. Lasson (Leipzig: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1923), 369.
 - 19 Reference to Kant's text “Über den Gemeinspruch” (1793) in which he speaks of his “project of an international state” simultaneously with the “impracticality” of such a project. This text was translated into the English by Mary J. Gregor in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
 - 20 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science*, trans. P. Wannenmann, J. M. Stewart, and P. C. Hodgson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 303–4; Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Naturrecht und Staatwissenschaft*, Heidelberg 1817/18, volume 1, *Vorlesungen* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1983), 253.
 - 21 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Die “Rechtsphilosophie” von 1820*, with Hegels Vorlesungsnotizen, 1821–1825, volume 2 (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1974).
 - 22 Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic*, 738; See also Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1942), 180. Cf. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts, Werke in 20. Bänden* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986), 441.
 - 23 In the Berlin lectures of 1819/20 (notes by J. R. Ringier and eds. E. Angehrn, M. Bondeli, and H. N. Seelmann) Hegel mentions the organism (“*Wie im Organismus jedes Glied*”), its members (limbs), and blood that flows and holds all these organs together. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Rechts, Vorlesungen*, volume 14 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2000), 194. In the same lectures, in the edition of Dieter Henrich, we read “organization,” “blood,” and “*Körper*.” Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts, Die Vorlesungen von 1819/20*, ed. D. Henrich (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1983), 275. In the lectures from 1822/23, K. W. L. Heyses notes mention the organism and Hegel's differentiation of *Glieder/Teile*. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts*, ed. E. Schilbach (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1999), § 269, 65.
 - 24 The analogy or its origin between the nation and the body, Hegel discovered in Mendelssohn. Here is the fragment from the famous Mendelssohn text of 1784, which Hegel takes down on May 31, 1787: “A fully formed nation knows of no

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- other danger within itself than the excess of its own national happiness, which, like the human body in perfect health [*die vollkommenste Gesundheit des menschlichen Körpers*], can in and for itself be considered an illness or transition towards illness.” Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Dokumente zu Hegels Entwicklung*, ed. J. Hoffmeister (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1974), 142.
- 25 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Natural Law (1802/1803)*, trans. T. M. Knox (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975), 123; Hegel, *Über die wissenschaftlichen Behandlungsarten des Naturrechts, Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie*, 400.
- 26 Hypochondria was part of Hegel’s system from as early as the Jena lectures in 1803/4. Hegel, *Jenenser Realphilosophie*, 183.
- 27 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie 1818–1831*, ed. K.-H. Ilting, volume 4 (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1974), 669.
- 28 Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie 1818–1831*, 662.
- 29 Its creator is Hegel’s contemporary, Samuel Friedrich Christian Hahnemann. He is in Berlin in January 1831, only a month after Hegel’s death. Hahnemann’s students are all over Europe caring for patients suffering from cholera, which made it to Western Europe from India via Russia.
- 30 “Secret poison” is a secret for Hegel, who quotes Gibbon: “Long-term peace can result, within the vital forces of the empire, a slow acting and secret poison” “*Der lange Friede und die gleichförmige Herrschaft der Römer führte ein langsames und geheimes Gift in die Lebenskräfte des Reichs. Die Gesinnungen der Menschen waren allmählich auf eine Ebene gebracht, das Feuer des Genius ausgelöscht und selbst der militärische Geist verdunstet.*” Hegel, *Über die wissenschaftlichen Behandlungsarten des Naturrechts, Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie*, 377. Derrida mentions this fragment in *Glas* (Paris: Galilée, 1974), 117.
- 31 Emmanuel Lévinas, *Dieu, la mort et le temps* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1993), 95–7.
- 32 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 272–3; Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes, Werke*, volume 3 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1976), 334–5.
- 33 Hegel, *Jenenser Realphilosophie*, volume 1, 1932, 174–7; volume 2, 1931, 167–74.
- 34 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel’s Philosophy of Nature*, volume 3, ed. M. J. Petry (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1970), 202; Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften, Werke*, volume 9 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974), 529–30.
- 35 Hegel, *Hegel’s Philosophy of Nature*, 205.
- 36 Hegel, *Hegel’s Philosophy of Nature*, 206.
- 37 Hegel, *Hegel’s Philosophy of Nature*, 206.
- 38 Derrida, *Glas*, 132–4.
- 39 On violence and power (*Gewalt*) of magic over the organism or might (*Macht*) of the foreign over the organism, Hegel writes in his lectures as early as 1818/19. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Naturphilosophie, Berlin 1819/20*, ed. M. Gies (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1980), § 295, 144–5.
- 40 Baader calls it “method,” “*homöopatische Weise*.” Baader mentions its importance very early on (letter of July 10, 1824). Franz von Baader, *Gesammelte Schriften*, volume 15, letter no. 129 (Leipzig: Bethmann, 1859), 415–16.
- 41 Hegel’s insistence and generalization of his personal obsessions (where he is certainly a great forerunner of Freud) can be found in a letter to the doctor and mystic Karl Joseph Windischmann of May 27, 1810, in which he tells of his long-standing experience with “various illnesses” and his suffering. Hegel believes that hypochondria is important, if not vital, not only for his own, but anyone’s development. Analyzing Hegel’s manuscript, Rosenzweig shows Hegel’s hesitations, modifications, and erasure of personal pronouns, that is, Hegel’s systematic

- “turning the autobiographical into the universal.” Cf. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Briefe von und an Hegel*, ed. K. Hegel, volume 1 (Leipzig: Verlag von Duncker and Humblot, 1887), 262–4; Franz Rosenzweig, *Hegel und der Staat*, volume 1 (Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1962), 101–2.
- 42 Hegel, *Naturphilosophie, Berlin 1819/20*, § 294, 144.
- 43 Two years later, in his 1821/1822 lectures, Hegel speaks significantly more in detail of animal disgust, disgust that leads to the division of the animal, playing with the verb *exkre-tieren*. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesung über Naturphilosophie*, eds. T. Posch and G. Marmasse (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2002).
- 44 Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature*, 205.
- 45 This is one of the formulations from Hegel's lectures. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Natur, Berlin 1819/20*, eds. M. Bondeli and H. N. Seelmann (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2002), 185–6.
- 46 In a 1985 interview in German to Christoph von Wolzogen, Lévinas speaks of a similar negation, this time in Hegel's *Aesthetics*. “Intention, Ereignis und der Andere. Gespräch zwischen E. L. und C. von W.” Emmanuel Lévinas, *Der Humanismus des anderen Menschen* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1989), 137; Lévinas, *Philosophie*, 93 (spring 2007), 19.
- 47 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesung über Naturphilosophie, Berlin, 1823–24*, ed. G. Marmasse (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2000), 248.
- 48 Hegel, *Naturphilosophie, Berlin 1819/20*, § 295, 144.
- 49 Cf. chapter “Prozess der Gattung,” in Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Naturphilosophie, Berlin, 1823–24*, 196–7.
- 50 Hegel, *Vorlesung über Naturphilosophie, Berlin, 1823–24*, 251.
- 51 Cf. Rosenzweig, *Hegel und der Staat*, 130–3, 142–7.
- 52 Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. A. Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 220–31; Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totalité et infini. Essai sur l'extériorité* (Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961), 243–58.
- 53 Rosenzweig, *Understanding the Sick and the Healthy*, 60–61; Rosenzweig, *Das Büchlein vom gesunden und kranken Menschenverstand*, 58, 60.
- 54 Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 22; Lévinas, *Totalité et infini*, 7.
- 55 This is a question of breathing and suspension of breathing. “The approach of kin” (*l'approche du prochain*) brings disquiet into one's body. Lévinas' resistance to proportions and theories of the organism is easy to follow even in texts that are equally close to him. He finds distant not only the first Kabbalist prototypes of theories of the sovereign organism (such as Isaac Luria in the 16th century examining the living body (*nefesh hayya*) using an analogy of the 613 commandments of the *Torah* and 613 limbs (organs), the number that the human body has), but also the organic conceptions of the community in which responsibility is exclusively proportional. For example, the Maharal of Prague (Judah Loew) elaborates a passage from the Midrash, “If one sins, we must all feel it,” utilizing the analogy of the close connection between the organs in an organism (*Netivoh Olam*, comment on *Sabbath* 54b). He is first to speak of infinite responsibility.
- 56 “*La philosophie est atteinte, depuis son enfance, d'une horreur de l'Autre qui demeure Autre, d'une insurmontable allergie*” (Since its inception, philosophy has been conducted in horror of the other that remains other, an insurmountable allergy). Emmanuel Lévinas, *La trace de l'Autre*, in *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* 25 (1963); *En découvrant l'existence avec Husserl et Heidegger* (Paris: Vrin, 2001), 263.
- 57 Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 47; Lévinas, *Totalité et infini*, 38.
- 58 Probably the model of Derrida's interventions and dissection of Lévinas' term “violence,” was Heidegger's deconstruction of the figure of *Gewalt* from *Introduction to Metaphysics*. Lest we forget, in his last seminar in 2002, Derrida promises a return to Heidegger's *Gewalt*.

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- 59 “Violence is originally justified as the defense of another, or of kin (whether family or a people!), but violence for someone.” (*La violence est originellement justifiée comme la défense de l’autre, du prochain (fût-il mon parent ou mon peuple!), mais est violence pour quelqu’un*). Emmanuel Lévinas, *Altérité et transcendance* (Paris: Fata Morgana, 1995), 174. That is, justification of violence appears with the third that is negated by the other. “My resistance begins when the evil committed against me, begins also to be committed to a third who is my kin. It is this third who is the source of justice. Violence suffered by the third justifies the other’s violence be stopped by violent means” [*C’est le tiers, qui est la source de la justice; c’est la violence subie par le tiers qui justifie que l’on arrête de violence la violence de l’autre*]. Emmanuel Lévinas, *De Dieu qui vient à l’idée* (Paris: Vrin, 1982), 134. Cf. Lévinas, *Altérité et transcendance*, 150.
- 60 Cf. Emmanuel Lévinas, *Entre Nous. Essais sur le penser-à-l’autre* (Paris: Grasset, 1991), 115.
- 61 I do not only mean this regarding the personal experience of war and terrible crimes that differentiates Rosenzweig and Lévinas, but also their “contributions” to “theory of the other” of some authors very close to Lévinas or those he may have read. Each of these authors determines the other as an enemy, but not exclusively as the enemy that ought to be destroyed or assimilated, but above all as an enemy who destroys and attacks. It is uncertain whether Lévinas read Carl Schmitt, mentioned by Meinecke, whether he read Jünger, whose analysis of heroes, war, and peace can be felt in *Totalité et infini*, or whether he knew of certain positions regarding the enemy Heidegger expressed in his 1934 seminar (GA 36/37), or whether he ever consulted Husserl’s “E Manuscripts” from 1934 (“*Feindschaft ist die totale Negation des anderen Seins in allen seinen Lebensbetätigungen*,” E III 8, 12).
- 62 Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 203; Lévinas, *Totalité et infini*, 222.
- 63 “Immunity substances... seek the enemy in the fashion of magic bullets” (Paul Ehrlich). Arthur M. Silverstein, *A History of Immunology* (London: Academic Press, 1989).
- 64 A phrase by Paul Ehrlich. Silverstein, *A History of Immunology*, 160.
- 65 Cf. Silverstein, *A History of Immunology*, 1.
- 66 Jacques Derrida, *Faith and Knowledge in Religion*, trans. S. Weber, eds. J. Derrida and G. Vattimo (London: Polity, 1998), 80; Cf. Derrida, *Foi et savoir*, note 23, 67. It is not the police that destroys the police, nor does the immune system destroy the immune system. When they receive the wrong information from monitor cells, the so-called killer cells do not destroy themselves, but other living and healthy cells of the same living organism. There is disarray in levels, substitution of suicide for murder, a change and disorder of identity, and, of course, a complete deviance from the notion of subsistence.
- 67 Giovanna Borradori, ed., *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 124.
- 68 Jacques Derrida, *Rogues, Two Essays on Reason*, trans. P. A. Braut and M. Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 45.

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2 Translating War into Peace

Quid pro quo

How does Rosenzweig formulate his resistance to Hegel? Can we follow Rosenzweig in translating Hegel's sovereign war into peace? The word translation designates and promises balance and peace. Yet, this word is rather imprecise, for at least two quite trivial, paradoxical reasons: first, there is something untranslatable that nevertheless leaves a certain trace in the translation. And second, what is to be translated is already a translation of something else (either prior to or yet to come). If, for example, war is translated or transformed into peace, then peace, aside from resting on war, also contains war and carries along its authentic and intact (untranslatable) traces.¹ Also, perhaps war is already a translation of something much more terrible or even something gentler than peace. Yet, what is truly peaceful in the word translation concerns a continuous promise that the translation of war into peace, that is, that the future status of peace, be eventually possible and achievable. A translation is an ever unfinished project that provokes and calls forth peace. Translation as such, then, already calms and brings together what seemed entirely foreign and unacceptable.

However, the *counter*-project or *counter*-institution of the translation (we can certainly recognize militarism here) concerns the return to the original. Returning, retranslating, rechecking, returning to the *original*, returning to a pre-*original* place are all operations that divert and call into question translation, that is, a project of peace. This analogy and *counter*-analogy² with translation and the return is intended to encompass and reveal a few well-known gestures or moves retraced by the most famous projects of peace. Such moves or warrants more or less always assume violence. Any text calling for peace and announcing peace, by diagnosing the situation as lacking peace, also warrants the performance of an act to bring about peace.³ The act (to be) performed for peace to happen (take place), does not have as its only consequence that a text about peace is always a design for a future text. A project discussing peace is always provisional and not testamentary (containing any number of indefinite articles and assumptions, anticipating the absolute definitive), even if it is a *par excellence* case of striving (without ever achieving) to be absolutely definitive and binding (meaning testamentary). Nevertheless, the call to peace itself, to which an answer is ever forthcoming, does not

unconditionally exclude violence in the achievement of peace. It is quite probable that this problematic idea, promoted throughout history in philosophical-juridical texts (the idea that the centralization or monopolization of violence, a quantity of violence, its dosing, shock therapy through violence or a gradual reduction of violence, etc. could bring about a state of peace⁴), originates above all in the “how” of the performance of this diagnosis, claiming neither peace nor security. It is not the conclusion that is problematic (although its absolute validity is always uncertain), but the premises. For they inexorably decide and dictate further forms of prevention⁵ and therapy. All three basic prisms of overseeing peace – that peace is a state between (*contra*) at least two subjects, that peace begins with or issues from the other, and that peace begins with me (that peace is above all my peace,⁶ my state of being) – are still only versions of a famous principle: *quid pro quo*.

In trade, in passing sentence and suffering it, in providing compensation, little and large, between states and peoples, in the course of negotiations and arrangements, in economies with God, in beliefs and superstitions, in acknowledgment of guilt and at a time of atonement, in conceiving of gift, debt, or friendship,⁷ peace first represents a mathematical question. More specifically, the beginning of peace would have to be a warped tautology – something for something; same for same; eye for an eye; tooth for a tooth – which is established or establishes or simply adjusts. But certainly, it is potentially regulated through reciprocity, until balance and identity are achieved. Yet not only through a return or leveling, but also through a call to return what has been given in advance, or by regulating through interception, obstacle, prevention, even deterrence. Peace and non-peace (war) oscillate and quiver in the word *pro* that replaces and protects the initial opposition (*contra*).

Quid pro quo. But how exactly does the *pro* quiver and vibrate in the very place of myriad oppositions where once stood *contra*?

It would seem that war appears only with connections and exchanges, with crossings from the space of *contra* to the space of *pro*. *Quid pro quo*, or for example, eye for an eye, really announces the beginning of the extinguishing of an eye in an eye, a tooth in a tooth, etc. This hesitant beginning of the abolishing of exchange in exchange (in substitution), exchange between two in one, in favor of one, in the name of the following and sole – the perishing of the other in the one, the other (the different) in the same. *Quid pro quo* concerns the advancement towards unity by way of substitution, that is, erasure of the previous in the subsequent. Non-peace only begins its exchange and continues with unsuccessful regulation by way of reciprocation and deterrent. When lack of peace is diagnosed in this way, signposts are placed towards an impossible peace, one that never excludes future violence.

We ought to slightly delay this future violence, necessary violence, with violence that moves towards peace, with violence that does not bring peace. Is it even possible to be sufficiently extricated from the legal principle of *quid pro quo*, from all the versions and forms of *talio* (*lex talionis*), *ius talionis* or *iure*

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talionis as Kant writes, separate the *quid* from the *quo*, from accounting and settling of accounts? The account of the same, the act of reciprocating, of getting even, ought to always be marked in the same way. The habit in various languages to maintain the unchanged word on the left and right side of the connector *pro* originates from the Hebrew *ayin tahat ayin* or *shen tahat shen* (eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth).⁸ Nor are these metaphors of eye or tooth: indeed, an eye just ripped from the socket, or tooth just pulled, this is right to retribution conducted by actually pulling out the other eye, cutting off a finger, killing a brother or slaughtering a lamb. Further, these words probably are not *evened out* with a metaphor of equality, and quite a bit of righteous and legislative imagination is required to equate theft with a severed hand, lying with a tongue cut out, adultery, or rape with other mutilation and disfigurement. Later, we find more and more interesting abstractions such as same for same, like for like, measure for measure, evil for evil, favor for favor, deed for deed, all of which are disloyal to the habit of sameness, such as *quid pro quo* (altered here on one side due to the case nature of Latin, much as *Gutes mit Gutem* or *die Vergeltung vom Gleichem mit Gleichem* is in German).

The Slavic language equivalent, *vratiti milo za drago*, adds a shade of malice and evil that reveals the principle is saturated in terrifying metonymy and cruel disproportion. Literally meaning “return kindness for what is dear,” *milo za drago* makes plain that the two sides, *milo*/kindness and *drago*/dearness are not even, even if they do emerge from the same reservoir of meaning, closely connected with peace and intimate love. *Milost*, grace, is a word with which one’s guilt is forgiven and erased. While *drago*, what is dear or cherished, is a word used to include back into an intimate community of one who has fallen out. The words *milost* and *milo*, grace and kindness, bring peace; conversely, any cessation of enmity begins with an address and salutation: “dear etc.” No proper translation of *milo za drago* (such as tit for tat, favor for favor) can preserve the perverse cynicism of the use of the words for kindness and dear to designate a return of violence for (un)like violence.

Yet, beyond the cynicism, what the phrase bears out is that the use of the word *milo* indicates that the response must be at least slightly different (same, yet different, synonymous) and at least slightly more forceful than the initial strike (*drago*). The English phrase “responding in kind” approaches the perversity of designating violence with a word that, even if coincidentally, matches the word kindness, but it does not touch on the need of the response to be slightly different. *Vratiti milio za drago* means that it is necessary to respond a little stronger, always necessarily with a little more intensity.⁹

Even the phrase *quid pro quo* implies a faint disorder in the accounting and amount of violence used to respond, and alludes to the idea of a punishment (*Wiedervergeltungsrecht*, Kant). However, it is important to differentiate a twofold critical logical disorder of the principle *quid pro quo* during punishment. First, an answer to violence is always disproportionately stronger in order to partially remove the possibility of further response, that is, the

continuation of this chain of response (in the way that capital punishment, the highest possible punishment, takes away the possibility of response). And second, the small infringement of the principle *quid pro quo* conditioned by time: (a) the duration of the response threat (“I will not only get you back in kind, but I will get you back [in time] when you least expect it,” meaning I will get you back for your strike, *along with* the anticipation of the response). (b) By obsolescence or oblivion of the initial event due to the new event of response (to return something or repay in kind is to remove and erase one kindness with another, that is adding in order to take away, returning, so that mine could be last). Precisely because of this initial critical and at the same time hypo-critical violence done to mathematics,¹⁰ it is important sometimes to think the word “for” (*pro*, *anti*, *tahat*... or the word “against”) entirely outside this centuries-long context dominated by the principle *quid pro quo* and a regulative settling of accounts.

Could this little word *pro* (or *for*) be the place from which the decisive first gesture of seeking peace through violence and war is issued? Does this warrant issue all other gestures that still ground all the texts that think peace? The word translation that simulates this register and effort for peace in this text is appropriate due to the fact that it takes up a few directions in which *pro* (or, better still, *tahat*) sets up the substitution. The Latin *pro* refers to advancement, encouragement forward, and as opposed to the word *contra*, which it complements but which it also contradicts, maintaining distance – before, on the other side – with its significant etymological framework of holding within itself defense and protection, *pro*, paradoxically, advances towards the other. *Pro* is initiated forward and pressed ahead, because an attack (the cause) has taken place, and because something has initiated something else (another). Something has taken place, and then what appears in the course of withdrawal and defense are the connectors for, due, because, therefore... Under coercion and withdrawing, *pro* steps forward, into advantageousness, onward. The Hebrew *tahat*, above all, indicates place and space. *Tahat* also means down, underneath, the ground. In a way, the crucial characteristic of the use of this word in Hebrew pacifies all the Latin advancements and distancings. *Tahat* exists where a substitution (instead) and displacement exists, a new something in the place of something other.

“*Vratiti milo za drago* / To respond in kind”

If we remove for a moment the infinitive, which has subsequently taken over this phrase entirely, turning it into a written or unwritten unconditional law, *tahat* confesses a situation where something is exchangeable *for* something else or where something here present (at this moment), or soon to be present, can stand in the place of something else. The other, that is, to go back to our Slavic phrase, kindness can replace the dear, that is, it is possible to change and exchange, and then it is possible to fill a space that used to be here, down here, underneath, with something else (or same). If we use two other words – translation and

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substitution – to simulate help to the effect of the word *tahat*, and when opening this miraculous operation of substituting kindness for dear, then apart from a terrible truth uttered in *Michpatim* (“life for life, soul for soul [*nepesh tahat nepesh*], hand for hand [*yod tahat yod*], foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise ...”), the truth that all is the same (equal) and that practically anything can be exchanged (same replaced with same), that nothing is irreplaceable and irreparable, this whole construction will appear even more complicated.

Step by step, the process of replacing could be as follows. The event marked as dear first sweeps clean the space, a pure *contra* (peace projects often invent their origin and their justification in this place of original opposition even before the striking event). The strength of the event of the arrival of this cherished into some space at the same time splits the original peace-loving community into kindness and dear. Further, *milo/kindness* has to erase *drago/dear*, making it disappear, much as the warrant of translation consists in the demand to entirely absorb into itself the original, inheriting it entirely. *Milo/kindness* follows *drago/dear* in time and space. However, *milo/kindness* has yet to take place. Finally, when *milo/kindness* catches up and takes over for *drago/dear*, all further continuation will be abolished.

It seems as though the order of these steps that ought to complete the substitution are impossible to describe in a spatial-temporal succession, that is in sequence. What follows, what has yet to come and take over for *drago/dear*, which has already taken place having begun this sequence, ought to ultimately abolish any further consequence, that is, any new series or new answer or new exchange. Only truly in this case, is the warrant of the return of *milo za drago*, the kindness for the dear, completed. But in this rare instance, we already begin to glean the contour of an insoluble *aporia*. If we truly return *milo za drago*, the kind for the dear, such that no further response or sequence is possible, even no further possibility of war or threat of force, then there is no peace either, nor satisfaction of justice, nor satiation or substitution, since eternal peace has been established. Although the question of whether eternal peace is really peace might be relevant,¹¹ much more important is this impossibility of justice, peace, satisfaction, satiation ... the impossibility of a substitution. Perhaps the more appropriate question is how *not* to return kindness for dear, *milo za drago*? And apart from that, there is a crucial interruption in this whole process – perhaps the place where responsibility for the impossible is hidden – a change of direction and a hesitation placed between what has arrived (*drago/dear*) and what is yet to come (*milo/kindness*). It is as if a certain spatial-temporal interval is necessary, a pause, a hesitation, until this reversal written into the word *pro* can be actualized. *Pro* (*za*, for, *tahat*) marks the ending and connection between arrival and acceptance of an event, and the announcement that *milo/kindness* has yet to take place. The first (strike), announcing the forthcoming answer (of *milo/kindness*) and the sequence taking place, is the consequence of the acceptance and accumulation (taking over) of violence (*drago/dear*). Violence, first of all, reserves the

subject, overwhelms and overcomes it, becomes its main content and its reserve. It is as if the violence that has taken root and memory (and has ended)¹² is the condition of the constitution of the *subject* (the sovereign, sovereignty, individual, community ...) precisely by way of its orientation towards the source of this violence and by way of deterring that very violence from whence the force came ... or *quid pro quo*. *Pro* is proof that the redirection of force has been done and that the retort, response in kind, is yet to take place. Only now, only when this turn has been formulated, is there another entirely unusual period in which the beginning of the retort and return to the source of violence is prepared.

Responding in kind, or *vratiti milo za drago*, means returning and retracing the same path from whence the violence came, in a very precise time frame. The time of retribution as well as the time of sedimentation of threat (intimidation or prevention, exaggeration, coercion, expectation, but also preparation and arming, but above all that, mourning) ought to concern an immediate future time. This timeframe ought to coincide and be analogous to the time necessary for a project to still be valid as a peace project. The assumption with time (or a time reserve), which begins to tick at the moment when the *pro* has stirred the sequence of response and retribution, is that it simultaneously initiates a single period of projection (*projection*, *pro-jacere*, means to throw down, forward) and the promise of peace. This assumption does not pay attention and does not concern itself with the amount of time, number of years, months, or hours necessary for the completion of these analogous processes. It is a question of the timeframe necessary to respond or a deadline in order to be able to respond to violence – with violence. Further, we can hypothesize that this period is equal to the time of pacification conducted by a project (or a call, a law, a contract, an archive, etc.). In other words, the challenge (*Herausforderung*, *pro-vocatio*) of peace, or the conjuring, the thinking of peace, could appear and exist only in this time period. (And however many varied ways it manifests there, it must certainly fail, because it is impossible to respond in kind and also prevent future violence. The grounding of law in force cannot root out lawlessness or violence. A contract must of necessity be broken because it levels unequal forces and sides, and a compromise must of necessity fail because it is based on the two sides' promises fading into obsolescence.)

The difficulty is not only in the incorporation of the principle *quid pro quo* into every potential thinking about peace, that is, the introduction of untranslatable war into every possible translation or transformation of war into peace. The coercion that initiates the constitution of the subject is far more intriguing: the subject is a subject because it is prompted (initiated, provoked) by violence, because it is marked, opened, and closed by violence, because it got hurt, because it was damaged, because it answers and reacts. In this case, it reacts to the violence that orients it in its exposition. Yet that very same prompting of the subject to do something, to be engaged in order for peace to come about, it turns out, is also hesitation, a wavering and delay, foot-dragging and

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time-wasting. The subject does not immediately answer violence – it will answer only later, and only after it first calls for peace or utters the word peace.¹³

But why is war, or violence, something immediately given, while peace must of necessity be institutionalized, rendered in statute, restored? Why does peace not fall from the sky?

What is peace? What are we saying when we say “peace”? What does it mean “to be at peace with” – to be at peace with someone else, a group, a State, a nation, one-self as another? ...

If one thinks, like Kant, that everything in nature begins with war, then at least two consequences follow. First, peace is no longer a natural phenomenon, one that is symmetrical and simply opposable to war; it is a phenomenon of another order, of a non-natural nature, of an institutional (and thus politico-juridical) nature. Second, peace is not simply the cessation of hostilities, an abstention from making war or an armistice; it must be instituted as perpetual peace, as the promise of eternal peace ...

Only this allows Kant to conclude that there is no natural peace, and that, as he says immediately thereafter, the state of peace must thus be “instituted” [founded, *gestiftet*] ...

Kant continues: “A state of peace, therefore, must be instituted [*es muss also gestiftet werden*], for in order to be secured against hostility it is not sufficient that hostilities simply be not committed; and, unless this security is pledged to each by his neighbor (a thing that can occur only in a civic state [*in einem gesetzlichen Zustande*]), each may treat his neighbor, from whom he demands this security, as an enemy.”¹⁴

Let us leave aside the complex question of whether Kant and his famous gestures towards eternal peace ought to even find themselves on a long and uncertain journey to the Holy Land, undertaken nearly a thousand years ago by Judah Halevi. A few fragments by Immanuel Kant that Derrida cites, and one of his favorite words, *stiften* (as the German equivalent for Derrida’s important word, institution), appear in a book of parting in which Jacques Derrida bids farewell to Emmanuel Lévinas at the very moment when the text moves towards Jerusalem, when the path to peace and towards Israel is revealed, with various lurking detours. Kant is introduced in the text in order for Derrida to more easily hesitate with “Kant,” that is, more carefully circumvent analysis and avoid heavily critical words for some of Lévinas’ positions referring to Israel. Everything Derrida systematically uttered in seminars and during his parting presentations from Lévinas is concisely put, entirely in a Kantian spirit, in one of his last public appearances. But before I attempt to quickly sketch the gesture that could be common to both Kant and Derrida, and before we “return to Jerusalem, a year since the *séparation de séparation*,”¹⁵ from the death of Jacques Derrida, let me quote those few sentences, in which, probably entirely surprisingly, Europe is preparing to

respond in kind/*vrača milo za drago* to the United States of America. And not only to the US:

Europe finds itself under the obligation to undertake a new responsibility. I am not talking about the European community as it currently exists, or as the currently neo-liberal majority imagines it, and literally menaced by so many internal conflicts, but of a Europe to come, and that is still in the process of seeking itself. In the geographic Europe and elsewhere. What is algebraically called “Europe” has to assume certain responsibilities, in the name of the future of humanity, in the name of international law – this is my faith and my religion. And there I do not hesitate to say “we the Europeans”; it is not a question of wishing for the creation of a Europe as military superpower, protecting its markets and acting as a counterweight against other geopolitical blocs; but rather of a Europe that would sow the grain of a new post-globalization politics. That to me is the one and only possible issue. This movement is coming. Even if the outlines are still forming, I think that nothing will stop it. When I say Europe, this is it: a post-globalization Europe, transforming the concept and the conventions of sovereignty and international law. And availed of a real military force, independent of NATO or the UN, a military power, neither offensive nor defensive, which would firmly enforce the resolutions of a reconstituted UN (for example, and with utmost urgency, in Israel, but also elsewhere).¹⁶

Nothing, then, can any longer prevent the swift and recent descent of a new or different Europe to Jerusalem. This testament by Derrida (which testifies about what we still do not know or what we did not know, yet which definitely binds us), this testamentary move towards peace, more than a call, and on the path to be entirely institutionalized and grounded, ought to begin immediately and first of all in Israel. What does it mean to institutionalize peace in Israel? What does it mean to institutionalize (to found, *gestiftet*) peace? What does it mean to say that peace must be guaranteed or ensured, i.e. institutionalized?¹⁷ Today, over 200 years after Kant’s question (and Kant’s answers that never exclude violence¹⁸), is it possible that the only thing missing from the strength of his fiction about the arrival to the Holy Land is haste? To what extent did Kant already lose sight of this uncertain road? Is it possible to simply add to Kant’s alliance of states practically no more than a handful of the strongest European states, and then years later, just a few new ones? Establishing peace is not (it is as if Derrida, unlike Kant, has absolutely no doubt on this point) an endless restraining from enmity, from violence, from responding in kind [*vračanja milo za drago*]. For Kant, the aforementioned example – to have a call and offer of peace before the gates of a city last endlessly, ever deferring revenge and debt – would be insufficient and obviously unacceptable. Establishing, actually, first of all assumes a community, but also joint mobilization and a coming together of force and strength

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of all.¹⁹ To possess a true military force means collecting everything that can be used to answer violence, that is, produce violence, in one place, one reservoir, to be guarded by a single gaze, commanded by a single voice, and held in reserve. This ideal reserve or ideal instance or ideal archive of force – Derrida calls it the military or army force or power – is neither offensive nor defensive, nor preventive. In what way can this force be military if it is none of those? What remains to this *pure* force that still makes it military or armed?

Only with this incredible description of violence necessary for the establishment of peace does Derrida's move acquire shade and difference from Kant. But by uttering the word preventive – rather popular at the time (preventive war, preemptive attack) – Derrida is once again in lockstep with the German philosopher. Kant's *ius praeventionis* (although he is far from alone on this point), which as I mentioned, appears in § 56 of *Metaphysics of Morals*, is precisely introduced in order to reduce the time in which violence is answered. To institutionalize [*stiften*] peace really means the establishment of the kind of violence capable of preventing or preempting future forms of violence, that is, future damages.²⁰ It is not enough to answer someone's injustice or violence immediately, nor right away, or on time, or even in due time – it is important that it be returned *before the given time*. Such time before time ensures the institute of preventive right.

The one who first inflicted the *laesio*, the injury, is the aggressor. The one who began the *hostilitaet*, the hostility, is not necessarily the aggressor, because in war, the *laesus*, the injured, holds the *jus praeventionis* that is the right to first inflict *hostilitaet* (that is, the hostility).²¹

Kant continues straight away: “*Melius est praevenire quam praeveniri* is the rule of prudence. From a legal point of view, it is a defensive war ... from a military point of view, this is an offensive war.”²² In this way, he preemptively abolishes the difference between defensive and offensive, overcoming it. It is better to preempt than to be preempted, says Kant. Certainly, a wiser principle from responding in kind [*vratiti milo za drago*] is responding before kind [*vratiti milo pre dragog*]. Much better, quicker, and cleverer than *quid pro quo* is *quid ante quo*. Kant elaborates his position by saying that from a juridical point of view, it is still returning and responding to violence, but *as if* already given. However, in the military sense, something Derrida notes as well, this is not returning, but the giving of violence before violence (with the excuse that it prevents the latter violence).

When all these considerations regarding *ius praeventionis*, occupation and intervention, war and (a)symmetrical enmity, etc., from 1784 by Kant are translated into (entirely uncertain) analogies, the space of international law fifteen years later (taking the form of *Perpetual Peace* or *Metaphysics of Morals*), their participation in the institutionalization of peace will be impossible to deny. In order to ensure and establish perpetual peace (to prevent

breach of contract, treason, change of balance of powers), Kant, with some important corrections, expands on the idea of Friedrich the Great: that all sovereign states should always form an alliance of countries against one country or perhaps one peace violator. Peace is established (legally and politically) after everyone commits and accepts to give others security – to leave others alone, at peace, and to be able to count on that same security in return. Withdrawing from this security, that is, no longer extending it to another, would trigger all the others forming an opposition alliance. The possibility of anyone being excluded from the whole at any moment, the possibility of the whole responding in kind right away or even in advance, ought to be one of the main pillars of this institutionalization of peace. Of course, this pillar is also the whole structure's weakest point and place where the institution of peace is always ruptured. Exclusion – above all the exclusion of minorities, the defeated, the dead – also seems to be a bearing wall of any democracy, of any (ac)counting and balancing (or substituting and translating), and should be ascribed with great care to precisely that violent element which every institutionalization, even the institutionalization of peace, necessarily assumes. But before we once again return to Derrida and his pure force or power, it is perhaps entirely sufficient to mention and enumerate what is left out, what must of necessity be uncounted, in order to reveal how and where any construction of peace can be cracked.

Let us begin from Kant's note on enemies and exclusion of those who do not institutionalize peace (a note Derrida excluded from his considerations, even though it follows the passage he quotes in its entirety). Then, it would be very interesting to speak of a possible quiver in Derrida's hand, moving all too quickly towards the Holy Land – why is the European military at the gates of Israel? Is Israel in Europe? Has Israel joined forces with Europe? Why is Israel beyond Europe in the first place, why is it excluded?

It would be necessary to get closer to the problem. Does violence exclude another or the one who commits it? This leads us to an immensely important discussion about Kant's alleged unreserved interdiction of military intervention and meddling in the sovereignty of another country. All the interventions in the last few years have, more or less, taken place entirely in the spirit of Kant, impacting those states from which the characteristic of statehood was vanishing, in which there had already been fatal problems of sovereignty, which lost (or never properly held) the monopoly of violence over territories they covered *de jure*.

Invariably, strategies of exclusion would have to lead us to the cardinal and ultimate case that paradoxically erases Kant's entire peaceful construction, clearing the path perhaps for a new institution of peace on the other side of sovereignty: the appearance of a state (or group of unified states) that the other states cannot overpower, erasing all existing contracts and regimes of seeking peace.

Let us return at once to the gates of Israel. All that is unfortunately irreparable and harrowing in Derrida's search for force (or power) that is neither

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offensive, nor defensive, nor preventive, is limited by the fact that it is a military intervention. Derrida reduces the time from *drago/dear* to *milo/kind*, imagining an ideal instance, one that certainly initiates a kind of violence, but an instance also that is not entirely subject to the principle of *quid pro quo*, nor indeed *quid ante quo*. This force (power) is quicker than any potential form of *quid pro quo* (it waits for nothing, is not tardy, is urgent and leaves nothing to time). But also, simultaneously, this force (power) is slower than any possible violence *quid ante quo*. The force that has to take place, to arrive somewhere – first to Israel and then elsewhere – responds to violence, but it is *as if* it also does not respond to violence, which is why it is neither punishment nor vengeance, just as it is not preventive. Perhaps in Derrida's passage, there was a chance for the swiftest possible intervention, the swiftest possible response which is not a response, the swiftest and impossible intervention that requires peace to be entirely cleansed not only of any neo-European uniform or weapon, but of any potential force or power. Is it possible to have peace, or an intervention that brings peace to Israel (and not only Israel), which really falls from on high, without being a projectile of peace? Is it possible to respond to war, not in kind, but with peace?²³

Does that mean that *drago/dear* precedes both the initial violence and its response (of *milo/kind*)? What would happen if the violence of the other were indeed *drago/dear* to one?

Notes

- 1 "The peace of empires issued from war rests on war" [*La paix des empires sortit de la guerre repose sur la guerre*]. Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. A. Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 22; Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totalité et infini. Essai sur l'extériorité* (Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961), 6.
- 2 Constant vigilance is required against the manipulative use of analogies in texts on peace. For example, translation also betrays the original, given that it can be brutal and violent as opposed to the peaceful return to the original. Cf. *Soferim*, section I, § 7 and 8.
- 3 Or else, the performance of an act before even beginning reading some such text (of completely undetermined status) in which peace is announced, a text in which philosophers "announce peace" or "deduce a final peace from reason" [*déduisent une paix finale de la raison*] (Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 22; Lévinas, *Totalité et infini*, 7), but which cannot be based on human reason alone [*Der Friede darf nicht allein auf menschliche Vernunft gegründet sein*] (Ernst Jünger, *Der Friede*, SW, volume 7 (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1980), 225), for whose writing there is never enough paper (cf. Ernst Jünger, *Pariser Tagebücher*, volume 1, notes from January 5, August 18, July 26, 1942 that evoke the writing of *Der Friede* under the name *The Call*). A text on peace has to be very simple and understandable, clear and direct, just as peace accords and legal contracts ought to be written, in order to remove the possibility of improper interpretation (Kant). A text on peace ought to be written in a realistic way, and by a conscientious writer who thinks about tomorrow, and where "utopian pacifism is in any case serious danger." Hans Kelsen, *Peace through Law* (Chapel Hill: University Press of North Carolina, 1944), viii.
- 4 Hans Kelsen, *Law and Peace in International Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942), 12, 14. Certain sudden and entirely unedited formulations

- that govern this fragment are not a consequence of Kelsen's translation of his thought from German to English during the "Oliver Wendell Holmes Lectures" (1940–1), since they were reprinted in several different books by Kelsen from periods "between" war and peace (e.g. *Principles of International Law* (New York: Rinehart, 1952), 17; *Peace through Law*, 3; *General theory of Law and State* (New York: Russel and Russel, 1945), chapter I, "The Concept of Law," part B, article f). In *Peace through Law*, immediately after this fragment, Kelsen develops a few ideas that are quite current today: the assumption that it is possible for the United Nations in the name of democracy to accept victims of war, that victims can be incorporated into the peace that follows (10). Kelsen favors force theory over contract doctrine in the construction of international peace (7–9), that history teaches us that peace is reached through violence rather than law (6).
- 5 Kelsen, *Law and Peace in International Relations*, 13. This sentence also recurs in his various texts from this period.
 - 6 "Peace must be my peace, in a relation that starts from an I and goes to the other, in desire and goodness, where the I both maintains itself and exists without egoism." [*La paix doit être ma paix, dans une relation qui part d'un moi et va vers l'Autre, dans le désir et la bonté où le moi, à la fois se maintient et existe sans égoïsme.*] Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 306; Lévinas, *Totalité et Infini*, 342.
 - 7 "One such giver, who can be possibly identified as beneficiary of the gift of absolutely incapable of returning the gift, is accurately named the enemy. It is one who does not love in return and does not allow to love without payment, as pure loss and without return; giving to one's enemy, that is to give ultimately, for nothing, without reason." Jean-Luc Marion, *Etant donné. Essai d'une phénoménologie de la donation* (Paris: PUF, 1997), 129.
 - 8 *Lev. (Emor) 24, 20, or, ofthalmon anti ofthalmon* (Septuagint). Also, *Exod. (Michpatim) 21, 21–5*.
 - 9 The strength of the response (the retort) to the *lesio* is increased by the time spent suffering the damage, as well as the impossibility of achieving complete *restitutione* (it is impossible with the response to turn back time to the state before the violence, that is, annulling an act of violence with a new act of violence is never fully proportionate because it is subjected to a different context). When Kant speaks of *jus indemnitate*, certainly under the influence of Gottfried Achenwall, he is examining the difference between quantity and quality of violence, and introduces the phrase *die Quantitas der Satisfactio*. Within *jus naturale belli*, the analogy of war and military occupation with a duel and satisfaction is one of Kant's ruses he utilizes in order to ground *just praeventionis*. Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Naturrecht*, "Sect: IV Jus naturale belli, De modis jus suum persequendi" (Feyerabend's notes), *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, Band XXVII, *Kants Vorlesungen*, Band IV, *Vorlesungen über Moralphilosophie*, 2/2 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1979), 1372–3. This passage, presented in 1784, represents the source and elaboration of Kant's § 56 *Die Metaphysik der Sitten* (1798). Immanuel Kant, *Die Metaphysik der Sitten, Gesammelte Schriften*, Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften, volume 6 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1969), § 56.
 - 10 *Hypokrinein* means an approximate differentiation or distinction (also *hypokrineshai* is to respond).
 - 11 In his last interview with *Le Monde* (August 18, 2004), a few months before his death, Jacques Derrida speaks of war and disquiet taking place in himself and the eternal peace that will only come upon death (which ought to belong to the register of violence and violent events). Cf. Vittorio Bufachhi, *Why Is Violence Bad?*, *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 41, no. 2 (April 2004), 170. These remarks by Derrida ("I am in war with myself") recall an important letter from Husserl to Eugen Fink (March 6, 1933, Freiburg), about philosophers who cannot live like other people (*Wir können nicht leben wie andere Menschen*): "We have the worst

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- enemy in ourselves... (*wir haben den schlimmsten Feind in uns selbst*)." Edmund Husserl, *Briefwechsel. Die Freiburger Schüler*, volume 4 (Dordrecht: Kluwer A. P., 1994), 90–2.
- 12 Violence (*drago/dear*) is temporally ended, but the response (*milo/kind*) renews and prolongs it. *Midrash, Bereshith Rabbah* 38, 3.
- 13 What follows the most famous call (and offer) to peace ever uttered and ordered is certainly the violent act that constitutes peace. It is conducted either by way of Kant's *occupatio bellica* (Kant, *Vorlesungen*, 1784) or by way of the most terrifying destruction. "When you go near a city to fight against it, then proclaim an offer of peace to it. And it shall be that if they accept your offer of peace, and open to you, then all the people *who are* found in it shall be placed under tribute to you, and serve you. Now if *the city* will not make peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it. And when the Lord your God delivers it into your hands, you shall strike every male in it with the edge of the sword. But the women, the little ones, the livestock, and all that is in the city, all its spoil, you shall plunder for yourself; and you shall eat the enemies' plunder which the Lord your God gives you." *Deut., Choftim*, 20, 11–14. Following this call to peace (certainly it takes boundless capability of forgetting all these commands for destruction) and what precedes the word peace [*le-sheloim*] – the intention to go to war, to strike [*le-hilohem*] – together surround and compress the lasting time of the blackmail and the ultimatum (peace time). However, the intention to go to war is also preceded by the enemy [*ojev*] who is profaning against us: "the word 'enemy' [*ojev*] refers only to one who causes us violence, only of an invader who enters our domain in order to take our land despoil us. Then we are to wage war against him – offering him peace first." Commentary by Samuel David Luzzato on verse 20:10, taken from Michael Walzer, *War and Peace in the Jewish Tradition*, in *The Ethics of War and Peace*, ed. T. Nardin (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 101. This passage was translated into English by Menachem Lorberbaum. Cf. Aviezer Ravitzky, *La pensée halakhique a-t-elle développé la notion de "guerre interdite"?* and *La paix, Pardès, Guerre et paix dans le judaïsme*, no. 36 (2004), 125, 129, 244.
- 14 Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Lévinas*, trans. P.A. Brault and M. Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 85, 86, 89. The last passage in which Derrida quotes Kant is in disarray (even containing a mistake in the article, *er muss*, and not *es muss*, as it stands in the note): "*L'état de paix doit donc être institué; car l'abstenir d'hostilités ce n'est pas encore s'assurer la paix et, sauf si celle-ci est garantie entre voisins (ce qui ne peut se produire que dans un état légal, chacun peut traiter en ennemi celui qu'il a exhorté à cette fin)*." Jacques Derrida, *Adieu à Emmanuel Lévinas* (Paris: Galilée, 1997), 157. Here's the original: "*Der Friedenszustand unter Menschen, die neben einander leben, ist kein Naturstand (status naturalis), der vielmehr ein Zustand des Krieges ist, d.i. wenn gleich nicht immer ein Ausbruch der Feindseligkeiten, doch immerwährende Bedrohung mit denselben. Er muß also gestiftet werden; denn die Unterlassung der letzteren ist noch nicht Sicherheit dafür, und ohne daß sie einem Nachbar von dem andern geleistet wird (welches aber nur in einem gesetzlichen Zustande geschehen kann), kann jener diesen, welchen er dazu aufgefordert hat, als einen Feind behandeln*." Immanuel Kant, *Zum ewigen Frieden. Ein philosophischer Entwurf, Kants gesammelte Schriften*, volume 8 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter and Co., 1923), 349.
- 15 "*Rendons-nous à Jérusalem, un an après cette séparation de séparation, depuis la mort d'Emmanuel Lévinas*." Derrida, *Adieu*, 177.
- 16 Jacques Derrida, *Learning to Live Finally. The Last Interview*, trans. P.A. Brault and M. Naas (New York: Melville House, 2011), 89; Jacques Derrida, *Apprendre à vivre enfin* (Paris: Galilée, 2005), 43–4.
- 17 In the passage from Kant that Derrida translates and quotes, Kant uses the word security [*Sicherheit; denn die Unterlassung der letzteren ist noch nicht Sicherheit*

- dafür*], whereas in the French, the translator – unjustly, it would seem – uses *garantia*. Here is the conclusion of Kant’s passage in one of its English translations: “*A state of peace, therefore, must be established, for in order to be secured against hostility it is not sufficient that hostilities simply be not committed; and, unless this security is pledged to each by his neighbor (a thing that can occur only in a civil state), each may treat his neighbor, from whom he demands this security, as an enemy.*” Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace. A Philosophical Sketch*, trans. T. Humphrey (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2003), 7.
- 18 In the last decade of his life, Kant uses *stiften* or *gestiften* more frequently. *Stiften*, without doubt, implies violence. Kant believes, and in many a place publicly manifests (several times in the notes he left unpublished) his belief that something can be established or institutionalized through violence. A violent act, namely, is the inaugural act of any establishment, even that of peace. For example, § 55 of the *Metaphysics of Morals* begins with Kant’s hope that it is possible to establish a state that approaches a legal order through war [*um etwa einen dem rechtlichen sich annähernden Zustand zu stiften*]. In his lectures of the winter semester 1793/4, edited for publication by Johann Friedrich Vigilantius (*Metaphysik der Sitten Vigilantius*), Kant is quite explicit: “*dass ohne Gewalt kein Recht gestiftet werden kann, so muss dem Recht die Gewalt vorausgehen, statt dessen der Regel nach das Recht die Gewalt begründet muss. Man nehme Menschen in statu naturali, sie sind exleges, in keinem rechtlichen Zustande, sie haben keine Gesetze, noch äusserliche Gewalt, die sie aufrecht erhält.*” Immanuel Kant, *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, Band 27, Kants Vorlesungen, volume 4, Vorlesungen über Moralphilosophie, 2/1 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1975), 515.
- 19 It is interesting to follow Derrida’s variations and uses of the (French) terms *force* and *puissance*.
- 20 To “establish” means to establish forward, to force through prevention. In *Foundations of Natural Right*, Fichte expresses his complete agreement with Kant, citing that the first condition of establishment [*stiftung*] of peace is the right to coercion in order to subject the other to the law. Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Foundations of Natural Right*, trans. M. Baur (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
- 21 “*Der die laesio anfängt, ist agressor, der die hostilitaet anfängt ist nicht immer agressor, denn in bello hat laesus jus praeventionis, das Recht, die erste Hostilitaet zu thun.*” Kant, *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, 1373.
- 22 This is a fragment from a magical passage from Kant, written part in German, part in Latin: “*Melius est praevenire quam praeveniri ist die Regel der Klugheit. Juridice ist defensio Krieg, bellum Laesi contra laedentum, und der laedens contra laesum führt Offensionskrieg. Im militärischen Verstande ist der defensiv, der nicht die erste hostilitaet anfängt, und der andre offensiv. Der laesus hat ausser dem Recht, restitutionem zu fordern, noch ein Recht possendi securitatem, de non laedendo in futurum, denn der Laedens ist laesionem intentans, bis er Sicherheit gestellt hat.*” Kant, *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, 1373.
- 23 *Trans. note.* In the original, the author asks, *da li je moguće vratiti mirno za drago?* This is word play on the previously discussed phrase *vratiti milo za drago*, replacing the word *milo* (here rendered as “kind”) for the word *mirno*, that is, peace, peaceful.

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3 Love of the Enemy

*Feindesliebe*¹

*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;
denn seine Faust trifft Deines Schlags Gebreite.
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.*²

In order to remain faithful to Franz Rosenzweig and the Hebrew in which Judah Halevi wrote this hymn and prayer, we need to classify and organize what determines the absolute impossibility of a translation, an original translation, the love of an enemy, or love towards an enemy, of peace even. I would like to offer a few unbridgeable difficulties, a few directions that open unresolvable problems for translation (in particular this sketch of a translation) in Rosenzweig's commentary penned in the margins and in Halevi's choice of words and amphibolies. I would like to indicate stores of meaning in the text, absent but still belonging, hinted at in these verses. Finally, I would like to linger somewhat on the sixth verse, that is, on what looks like Rosenzweig's correction or attempted correction to the translation, made between the first and second editions of the book.

My loyalty to Franz Rosenzweig is motivated by two letters from two different periods of his all too brief life. The first is to Scholem, of March 10, 1921, the same year he published *The Star of Redemption* and began his first translations of Halevi's hymns. It was also the year in which the first symptoms of his terrible illness appeared. The second letter was written on June 5, 1929, to his mother, a few months before his death.³ In the letter to Scholem, Rosenzweig explains that he has begun translating from the Hebrew mostly for his Christian friends and those Jews who do not read the language. If it so happened that a guest knew how to read Hebrew, he would cease with the translation because in his view, even a poor muttering through the Hebrew

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original would offer a person more than any possible German translation. However, when one did venture to translate into German, it was of necessity somewhat a translation into a Christian language.⁴ Rosenzweig locates all these difficulties in an important sentence that, as he puts it, ought to be understood in general, because it refers to any translation and any act of translation:

Übersetzen kann nur, wer von der Unmöglichkeit innig überzeugt ist.

Only one deeply (truly, intimately, to one's core) convinced of the impossibility of translation can begin to translate. Perhaps translation can happen, says Rosenzweig, but only after the bearer of this act first concludes and accepts, entirely and without either remainder or condition, that translation is impossible. Translation appears when the true impossibility of translation is revealed. Only then.

Could this remark by Rosenzweig – demanding, as it does, dedicated work on uncovering the impossible acquiescence, impossible translation, and response of language to language – serve as an impossible analogy concerning peace? It is possible to make or conduct peace, if we are first completely convinced that peace is impossible. In this Halevi-Rosenzweig hymn we have to think of the principles of impossible peace and impossible translation and reconcile them with necessary translation and necessary peace-making (without reaching for necessary violence).⁵ It might help to divide the poem into the first eight and last two verses. The first eight are not an introduction that would in any way condition the last two, dedicated to salvation and peace (peace falling from the sky). There are no questions, no pleas, no cries.⁶ The ninth verse only announces the end to certain, but not yet actual, self-loathing. The time of impossible peace announced by the last two verses will exclude previous time. Just as salvation will exclude toil and trouble. After this division, it is immediately necessary to emphasize the first two verses compared to the following six: love precedes God the enemy, love precedes the enemy, love precedes God as the enemy and myself as the enemy.

Let us now look at Halevi's poem, offering a reading significantly different from Rosenzweig's interventions.

Always [*me'az*] **thou hast been** (You have been) **love** [*me'on ha-ahava, hayita*] or the dwelling place of love;

In that love of thine (Yours), **my love rests and nests**;

In Hebrew, the second verse can be read with the first in the following way: since You (the Lord) have been the dwelling place of love or love itself, those who love me have dwelled in the same place as me.

Injuries (insults, perhaps even swearwords, *tokheh, Züchtigungen*) **from my enemy** (*mrivi*, my enemies, plural in the Hebrew, while Rosenzweig

renders it in the singular) **give me joy** (make me glad) **because of Your name** (in Your name the enemies carry out Your punishment; punish me with Your punishments and that is what gives me joy).

Allow them (the injuries and insults) **for they torment, pressure the one** (me) **who thou hast already tormented** (with your injuries).

The enemy (enemies) [*oyev*] **has learned** (the enemy has probed) **thy wrath: that is why I love** [*va-ohavem*] **him** [them];

In Hebrew, the verb to love could be read as being in the future tense, hence I will love them.

For he (they) **torments the corpse Thou hast killed** (literally);

Because the enemy's fist strike approaches [*radaf*] (joins, continues, follows, pursues) Thy strike at the ruin (cadaver, tired and wearied body of mine); the enemy (enemies) follow [*radaf*] on who has fallen, the corpse [*halal*]. The enemy continues to strike (attack) the one who You have already beaten (up) (killed, *erschlangen wurde, hukeh*); His or their fist(s) hits where thou hast already stopped hitting, in the place of your absence, you lacking (*Geberste* is very rare word and an old Medieval expression for lacking, *Mangel, Ausfall*).

Since the day thou hast despised me (when You, my Lord have despised me) **I despise myself**;

For I cannot respect one who thou hast despised (me);

How could I wish the best for one who you have banished from yourself?

Until such time (referring to my own self-respect) **as thy wrath quiets and thou sendest further salvation** [*padah*].

Thy inheritance, thou hast once a long time ago already atoned.⁷

In order to see the impasse in Franz Rosenzweig's interpretation and commentary, it is necessary to undertake the long and difficult work of uncovering the archeology of meanings of the word enemy in Hebrew. Why does Halevi, of the multitude of more common words, choose a very strong figure – *mrivi* (verse 3) – designating one who is bothersome and who induces trembling? First of all, *mrivi* is a complicated word referring to rebellion or the rebel. The root of the word is *marah*, meaning struggle or argument, and derives from the root *rijv* or *ruvb*, to fight, attack, be against. In verses 3 and 4, the function of the word is to insult or punish, but not to test and incite to opposition. Rosenzweig translates both *mrivi* and *oyev* as *der Feind*, the latter appearing in verse 5 and having an entirely different function in this text. These are two completely different forms, two separate characters that Rosenzweig unjustly reduces to one (marked equally with *Feind*): *mrivi* insults and disparages,

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oyev is angry and wrathful. Verses 3 and 5 are entirely complementary, as are verses 4 and 6, in which *mrivi* pressures me and treads on me, just as the Lord did. *Oyev*, however, pursues my corpse, already killed by the Lord. The third and final enemy, the third and final figure am I myself. Specifically, in verses 7 and 8, I myself perform what the Lord has begun against me: I continue the contempt [*buz*, *buzah*] toward myself.

The I from the beginning of the poem, in verses 1 and 2, testifies to the closeness to the Lord, the same love and loving dwelling, while at the end, with the arrival of verses 9 and 10, the I solemnly promises the Lord to continue self-loathing until He himself holds him in contempt. In between, from verse 3 to verse 8, the I follows without responding, acknowledging, confirming – it rejoices, loves, accepts – the three different enemy forms that complete what the Lord has begun. What is surprising is the stability of the testimony of the I in the period before the appearance of the pursuers (in verses 1 and 2) and certainty in what arrives at the end (9 and 10). The survival is surprising. How is it possible that, after Halevi's choice of the most difficult words and entirely unacceptable and still unpredictable torments, there is still a certainty and rejoicing in the wholeness and unity of all? Namely, verse 7 – “If You spurned me, I myself would spurn the day” – marks the definitive shift to the side of God of the enemy (clothing in enemy form and continuation towards oneself in the form of pursuer), regardless of God being the absolute Other.⁸ It offers very short-lived hope that only that specific part of me will survive, thanks to its ability to oppose and drag itself out of the hymn (prayer), expose the self as the true enemy of God. Verse 9 repudiates this kind of thinking (abolishes the possibility of the self as victim) and exclusion, just as the text of the poem makes no mention of he/they my enemy/enemies who perform(s) God's will, who is His tool, standing on a lower rung of significance and importance than I who suffer his blows or I who suffers those blows or the I who joins God in striking and contempt for myself. God uses neither his own nor my enemies. He does not abandon them when they finish their task. Nor does he take me back into his arms, regardless of whether I remain no more than a shell or am indeed strengthened by this terrible trial. The enemy of which Halevi speaks, or the forms of a fictional figure of the enemy Halevi has in mind, among whom the poet, the I itself, are different from any possible and heretofore known enemy. Why is that the case? Let me explain and include some of Rosenzweig's observations about this hymn:

1. The enemy, *der Feind* in Rosenzweig's translation (Halevi's *mrivi*, *oyev*, or *buz*) is not a relative, nor a neighbor, nor the other, nor a stranger – none of these. First, the enemy is completely removed from any political context, of belonging (to a nationality), and any relation that equates the enemy with us is ignored. For example, even in the first and most famous exchange with other histories of texts, there is a store that presupposes the return and translation of one love into another love. It is as if, prior to the great dictum “love thy neighbor as thyself,”⁹ what was neglected to be said is the violence

of that neighbor which is immanent. Further, love [*ahav*] that is returned ought to be translated to love we have for ourselves [*kimokha*]. Despite it being quite inappropriate to question the validity of this whole verse by doubting the amount of love each one of us has for him or herself, obviously, the relation to oneself and one's own will determines both the name of the neighbor¹⁰ and the duration of validity of the dictum. For Lévinas, this is the place where politics begins and where kin turns into the neighbor and vice versa. However, politics does not begin with the defense of the neighbor from an attack by another neighbor who thus becomes the enemy (turning the first into kin). Nor does politics begin when one, for some reason or other, is closer than another, or if one is endangered in advance. Politics begins with fleeing, with evasion, with haste to avoid violence or haste (or fear, the two words share a root in Hebrew¹¹) to respond to violence.

2. “*Es ist schwer, Gott l-bebek-bekel [mit deinem ganzen Herzen] zu lieben.*”¹² It is difficult to love God with all of one's heart, concludes Rosenzweig in 1921, after a number of attempts to equate the commandment to love God and the commandment to love one's neighbor. Similarly, one would equate love for God and love for one's neighbor.¹³ In a letter to his great love, Margrit Rosenstock, of April 13, 1918, he makes his first attempt, testing these two loves in a single one:

In life, I love my neighbor, the one I see with my eyes, who sees himself in my eyes, and love him even more “resting in the shadow of God,” love him “in” God. Indeed, I love him more than I can love God. For that is how it should be. Man cannot see God's face and stay alive. But the face of my neighbor I see, while I am alive. In eternity, I see the face of God and I can love him, just as in time I can only love my neighbor – *Auge in Auge* (eye to eye).¹⁴

Eye to eye, not eye for eye, *Auge für Auge*. A gazing. Before the one he loves, entirely neglecting the second half of the dictum “love thy neighbor as thyself,” Rosenzweig manages to find the concrete other, the one who is there and who is near him, one who is nearer than any neighbor.¹⁵ Here we could, without much circumlocution or hesitation, feel the one who is as distant as God, yet also closer than any other neighbor: the lover, Halevi's enemy and Rosenzweig's *der Feind*.

3. “If we take the dictum ‘love thy enemy’ from the Sermon on the Mount and consider it an ethical imperative (a postulate), then from the vantage point of the un-real, we cannot claim it as more just than any other great reality.” This is how Rosenzweig begins his commentary, immediately burdening it with something new and uncertain. To what extent does Rosenzweig's interpretation push and impose onto Halevi's poem a few great distinctions (between Christianity and Judaism, between Hegel's “effective” [*das Wirkliche*] and real, un-real, fictitious, etc.), which occupy his thoughts in his early years and his studies? How would a different way of loving one's enemy further underscore a difference between Christianity and Judaism?

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When Rosenzweig says that in Christianity love of the enemy [*Die Feindsiebe*] becomes the strongest weapon for occupation (subjugation) of the world, because the enemy is loved as a future brother¹⁶ – anticipating some ideas by Kant and Fichte about transforming the enemy into a brother¹⁷ – then it would be necessary to return to a few important passages in the Talmud that perhaps even more convincingly speak of the importance of such transfers.¹⁸ Rosenzweig's next remark, about the grounding of the Jewish community in defeat, which directly follows the one on missionary work and proselytism of victorious Christianity, is infected with opposition to Christianity. Perhaps it returns us all too quickly to Lévinas and the right of a community to recognize, defend, pursue an enemy, and banish him beyond its borders, affirming the right of the community to borders and to victory. Could we really, with and around Halevi, presuppose a real-impossible *community* – community without borders and community without community – a *community* that accepts the enemy (the inimical, other), yet which does not turn him into a brother?

4. How can violence be accepted without a response? How can the enemy be protected from my gaze? There is yet another line from a later comment on Halevi's hymn by Rosenzweig, which again claims that the Jew alone does not have his Jew (his victim) who could take onto himself the will of God. This line could indicate the possibility of the end of violence. As we have seen, Halevi's hymn does not deal with the impossible (peace, salvation, redemption, etc.), although it does foresee it. Rather, it deals with containing and ceasing violence. Halevi performs this above all with his specific choice of three basic figures and functions of the enemy (*mrivi*, *oyev*, or *buz*). All three words are burdened and determined with clear histories and repositories of responding to violence, and there is probably absolutely no text that testifies about love towards a *provocateur*, towards a nemesis, towards one who incites hatred (in Hebrew or any other language).¹⁹ With the decisive act of rupturing the subject in verse 7, Halevi manages to gather and bind the previous two enemy activities (from the previous four verses), hold them in a single place, and also to and within himself.

The beginning and end, I dare say, of this analysis with no end, initiated by Halevi's and Rosenzweig's text, must certainly follow Rosenzweig's correction of his translation of verse 6, in which the main dilemma is precisely the word "follows" (pursues, harrows). The enemy is the one who pursues, but also the enemy is the one who is pursued. Here, the enemy is the one who pursues the laws or force of God. He is the executor of God's intent (judgment). Let us look at the two versions by Rosenzweig that the Hebrew original presupposes, but can hardly honor, on which Rosenzweig insists.

*denn seine Faust trifft Deines Schlags Gebreste.*²⁰
for his fist meets the ailments of Your blow.

God and his strike ought to first enter the enemy's hand. God enters the fist – thus begins Rosenzweig. The enemy's fist drifts [*triffi*] to the spot where the

divine strike has already taken place. *Die Faust* is a word chosen by Rosenzweig to mark this place and this moment of transition from the strike taken by God (the law) and the anticipated strike of the enemy. In the word *Die Faust*, God and the enemy ought to change places – to enter one another. Rosenzweig imagines the erasure of God before the enemy, the initiation of the new strike, in the form of a hand made into a fist. The enemy ought to follow, to continue the violence God has begun, conducting it to its end. All the drama and uncertainty of this verse can be found in the still empty place of transition and handover of God into enemy. The enemy is doing God's work and is His tool. Rosenzweig uses Halevi to introduce us into this reversal: it is not "I" (Kant's *subject*) who is the means of God, nor am I the one who names and pursues the enemy. I do not respond, nor is God the one who directly executes His righteous and pure violence; rather, *I* am the enemy, who is marked by God as his enemy, who accepts violence from God by accepting the violence and punishment from an enemy who is bringing it to me, and the one with whom any further violence stops. This reversal will not be further corrected:

denn den Erschlagenen hetzt er, den du schlugest.
for he pursues the slain one, whom you slew.²¹

All these obscure and difficult words used by Rosenzweig (there is an echo of Wagner's Parsifal here, "*Du schlugest unsre Gespielen*"), which announce striking and killing, are driven by the change from *trifft* to *hetzt*. This is no longer a strike by God who has yet to be the inspiration or initiation of the enemy's strike (God's strike and a new future strike by the enemy have to meet in the fist). Rather, Rosenzweig speaks of pursuit, of *hetzen*, and announces the end. "To the end" is the meaning and subtext of *radaf*. To death, to our death and destruction we anticipate God, accepting the enemy and the end of violence.

Rosenzweig's drastic change of verse 6 between the two editions of Halevi's poems is not merely a correction or all too free translation. It is above all a secret amendment that reveals a complicated chain of different corrections, impossibilities of translation, and an incredible disquiet among texts.

First, there is no trace or acknowledgment from Rosenzweig that the correction is the result of a mistake or perhaps of a late study of verse 27 of Psalm 69. In general, the very presence of this verse is surprising in the context and rhythm of David's psalm. What is even more surprising is the incredible use and correction of this verse by Halevi. The assumption that Rosenzweig corrected his initial translation of verse 6 once he found out about this psalm could be based on his patent correction of Luther's translation (which he conducts at the same time): "*denn den Erschlagenen hetzt er, den du schlugest*" could be a deliberate distinction from Luther's "*denn sie verfolgten, den du geschlagen hast, und rühmen, daß du die Deinen übel*

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schlagest.” The assumption that Rosenzweig did not know Psalm 69 at all could perhaps, no less convincingly, be verified by the fact that in *Schrift*, Buber translates verse 27 as follows: “*Denn sie jagen, den selber du schlugst, beim Schmerze deiner Durchbohrten erzählen sie sich.*” The least compelling part of Buber’s translation is the frequent neglect of the two translators’ harmony after Rosenzweig’s death.

Second, the disturbing content of Psalm 69, which begins with listing all the ills committed by the enemies [*oyev, Feind*], appears in verses 5 and 19 (*oyev* dominates the previous psalm, the psalm of victory). But with verse 23 it turns into a summoning of terrible vengeance against those same enemies, lasting until verse 29. In this last verse, God is supplicated to erase the enemies from the book of the living (from future life) and is implored that they not stand alongside the just (to be written and differentiated from the just [*tsadiqim*]). “Gewischt seien sie aus dem Buche des Lebens, bei den Bewährten seien sie nimmer geschrieben!”²² Verse 27 represents a sudden break from this rhythm of revenge and punishment God is to perform against the enemies. The Psalmist first tells us the essence of the enemy’s action (that he is the enemy and what he does, what makes him the enemy) and simultaneously confirms that nothing is worse than this. The enemy should thus (*ki, denn*, because) be most terribly punished. They (the enemies) pursue [*radafu*] those (probably the people, us, the just) who God has already struck [*asher hiqita*], they sentence (punish, add insult to injury, pierce the already bleeding wound) those who God has already killed [*halalekha*].

Radaf, Rodeif, Radûfe, radoûfe, even *rédiîfâ*, to pursue, or *légéradêfe*, to be pursued, and *rédiîfâ*, banishment ... The one who pursues, who is pursued. *Radaf* am I myself. If anyone is to be designated with the word *Radaf*,²³ it would presuppose that he is ready to commit violence, that he is ready to kill, and should therefore be killed. *Radaf* is the enemy. I, as the enemy, am allowed to be pursued as *radaf*, with the intention of being killed by the pursuer. I am allowed to be killed if there is no other way to save the one who pursues me. But also, if there is no other way to save the one who I am pursuing as *Radaf* (*nirdaf* is the sacrifice I follow), to whom I return having already committed violence. However, even though this terrible banishment could ultimately confuse the pursuers and the pursued, Halevi directs the word *radaf* to the corpse of the one who had already been *radaf*, who had once already been pursued and killed by God. This addition is agonizing. How much more must one who had already been tread upon be tread on? What else can be pursued in one who has possibly already perished?

It is as if we were dealing with a double commandment to banish violence, which must be fulfilled before the final verses in which both the pursuer and pursued are to be appeased: the enemy will cease with the use of force, while I will yield the ultimate possibility of responding as a corpse.

Notes

- 1 The poem title, *Love of the Enemy*, that is, *Feindesliebe*, is given by Rosenzweig himself, translator and interpreter of Judah Halevi. The two editors of the works of Abu el-Hassan Jehuda ben Samuel ha-Levi, Samuel David Luzzatto (in Padua in 1864) and Haim Brody (in Berlin from 1894 to 1930) only offer the first words of the verses as titles. Cf. Franz Rosenzweig, *Jehuda Halevi, Fünfundneunzig Hymnen und Gedichte, Gesammelte Schriften*, Band 4 (Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1983), 183–4. The version of the poem in the *Complete Works* is a reproduction of the second edition of Rosenzweig's translations of hymns and poems by Judah Halevi, dated 1927. Jehuda Halevi, *Zweiundneunzig Hymnen und Gedichte*, Zweite Ausgabe (Berlin: Lambert Schneider Verlag, 1927).
- 2 Rosenzweig, *Jehuda Halevi*, 183. The Hebrew original is at the top of page 183. This poem has been translated into English twice. Cf. Barbara Ellen Galli, *Franz Rosenzweig and Jehuda Halevi. Translating, Translations, and Translators* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1995). Thomas Kovach, Eva Jospe, and Gilya Gerda Schmidt, trans. *Franz Rosenzweig, Ninety-Two Poems and Hymns of Yehuda Halevi*. Edited and with an introduction by Richard A. Cohen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000).
- 3 In this letter, Rosenzweig reconstructs his true and first (Hebrew) name. The letter begins with his cousin Leo's claim that Hermann Cohen insisted that when his texts were translated into Hebrew, his Hebrew name, *Jecheskel*, be used (the name Hermann is to be put in parentheses, says Cohen). Then Rosenzweig recounts the tragicomic events of his bris [*brit milah, Brismile*], his uncle not pronouncing his name, and concludes that regardless of complete ignorance and forgetfulness (meaning the first years of his life), his name is *Levi*, just as the name of his uncle is Jehuda. "Based on which, my real name ought be *Jehuda ben Schmuël*, which is the name of that great man, whose middle-great form of reincarnation on the road to *Ibbur* is myself" [*also genau mit dem Namen des grossen Mannes, dessen mittel-grosse Wiederverkörperung auf dem Wege des Ibbur ich bin: Jehuda Halevis*]. Rosenzweig, *Briefe und Tagebücher, Gesammelte Schriften*, Band 2, 1979, 1215–16.
- 4 Notker, Luther, and Hölderlin are the three most responsible for this Christianization of the German language. Rosenzweig, *Briefe und Tagebücher, Gesammelte Schriften*, Band 2, 1979, 698–9.
- 5 In a diary note from December 27, 1915, Rosenzweig comments that the pacifist mixes pure language with Esperanto.
- 6 In two different poems, Halevi reacts completely differently to an attack. Rosenzweig translated one of the two ("*Zürnende Liebe*," marked by Brody as III/4). The other bears the marking III/175–7 and begins with the words "On the day when my enemy has conquered me, I will return to You." In both poems, the poet cries, implores, wails, rails (speaks of his own merits and injustices) for being left at the mercy of his enemy. He is angry with the Lord, hence *Zürnende Liebe*, angry or wrathful love.
- 7 Here is Rosenzweig's commentary following Halevi's hymn (with two corrections of verses 6 and 8) in German: "*Man wird dem, Liebet eure Feinde*" der Bergpredigt so wenig wie andern großen Wirklichkeiten gerecht, wenn man es als ethische Forderung, also unter dem Gesichtspunkt der Unwirklichkeit, ansieht. Die christliche Feindesliebe ist eine Wirklichkeit, wo sie – nichts anderes sein kann. In diesen Stand des Nichtanderskönnens tritt sie da, wo die Kirche oder der Einzelne dem Urgebot des Christentums folgen: zu missionieren. Die Feindesliebe wird da die stärkste Waffe der Weltbeziehung, der Feind geliebt als der künftige Bruder. Jüdische Feindesliebe muß also wohl etwas ganz anderes sein, wenn sie wirklich sein soll. Denn hier ist die Wirklichkeit nicht die einer mit den Gnaden des Siegens, sondern mit denen des Unterliegens begnadeten Gemeinschaft. So wird hier Feindesliebe an dem

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Punkt entstehen, den Jehuda Halevi in diesem Gedichte enthüllt. Denn um ein Enthüllen handelt es sich; das Wirkliche ist selten das unmittelbar Ausgesprochene; das Wort fällt, wenn es objektiv zu werden versucht, leicht in die Unwirklichkeit. So wird hier die objektive Wahrheit enthüllt, grade weil nur ganz subjektiv gesprochen wird. Der Jude liebt im Feind den Vollstrecker des göttlichen Gerichts, das, weil er es auf sich nimmt – 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 – zu seinem eigenen wird. Die Liebe, mit der ein Mensch Gott liebt, wird zum Lebensgesetz aller Liebe, mit der er Menschen lieben kann, bis hinaus in das Extrem – aber gibt es für die Liebe ein Extrem? – der Feindesliebe. “Von eh warst Du der liebe Himmelsveste.” Zur Übersetzung: Zeile 6: “denn den Erschlagenen hetzt er, den du schlugest.” – Zeile 8: “verwarfst, wohl Ehre!” Rosenzweig, *Jehuda Halevi*, 183. This commentary has also been translated by Barbara Ellen Galli, *Franz Rosenzweig and Jehuda Halevi*, 252–3.

- 8 Cf. “dass Gott der Ganz-Andre ist” [For God is entirely other]. Rosenzweig says this sentence in interpreting the hymn “Der Fern-und-Nahe.” Rosenzweig, *Jehuda Halevi*, 70. “L’ennemi ou le Dieu sur lequel je ne peux pouvoir et qui ne fait pas partie de mon monde, reste encore en relation avec moi et me permet de vouloir, mais d’un vouloir qui n’est pas égoïste, d’un vouloir qui se coule dans l’essence du désir dont le centre de gravitation ne coïncide pas avec le moi du besoin, d’un désir qui est pour Autrui.” [The enemy or the God over whom I can have no power and who does not form a part of my world remains yet in relation with me and permits me to will, but with a will that is not egoist, a will that flows into the essence of desire whose center of gravitation does not coincide with I of need, the desire that is for the Other.] Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. A. Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 236; Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totalité et infini. Essai sur l’extériorité* (Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961), 263.
- 9 “v’ahavtah le re-akha kimokha,” *Lev. (Kedoshim)* 19, 18. Buber and Rosenzweig alter Luther’s translation of this verse: “Du sollst deinen Nächsten lieben wie dich selbst” sa “Liebe deinen Genossen dir gleich.” In his 1921 text, “Anleitung zum jüdischen Denken,” Rosenzweig still repeats Luther and compares this demand with the miraculous categorical imperative [*Liebe deinen Nächsten – was für ein seltsamer “kategorischer Imperativ.” Liebe – und geboten... Die Geschichte von Frau Cohen*]. Rosenzweig, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Band III, 1984, 608. The allusion to Hermann Cohen’s spouse who appears at the end of this fragment is an allusion to two texts by Cohen dedicated to the neighbor, “Der Nächste” and “Die Nächstenliebe im Talmud.” Hermann Cohen, *Jüdische Schriften* (Berlin: C. A. Schwetschke und Sohn, 1924).
- 10 Who is this other [alter] or neighbor, *rea* – the Jew (*Volksgenossen*, as Cohen says), one who is not Jew but has taken residence on Jewish territory, the foreigner (which foreigner: *goyim, leumim, sharim, zarim...?*) *Guer*, the foreigner who lives among us and who also must be loved? (The Sermon on the Mount concerns this word or assumes it, according to Matthew 5:44 and Luke 6:35.) Cf. *N. Reflections on the Biblical gêr*, in *The Anchor Bible commentary* (on *Lev. 17–22*), trans., ed. J. Milgrom (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 1416 and Gianni Barbiero, *L’asino del nemico. Rinuncia alla vendetta e amore del nemico*. (Rome: EPIB, 1991), 183, 201–2. *Nokhri* is also a foreigner, but requires a certain distance (cf. Hermann Cohen, *Die Nächstenliebe im Talmud, Jüdische Schriften* (Berlin: C. A. Schwetschke und Sohn, 1924), 149, 150). Or else *zar*, the one who approaches the holy place, the foreign Jew as the greatest possible enemy because he is enemy of God and like Korah deserves a death sentence? Cf. Lambertus Arie Snijders, *The Meaning of Zar in the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1953).
- 11 Cf. *Judg. (Choftim)* 20, 3.
- 12 Rosenzweig, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Band 3, 1984 603. *Deut. (Vaethanan)* 6, 5.

- 13 Cf. letter to Edith Hahn of January 16, 1920. Rosenzweig, *Briefe und Tagebücher, Gesammelte Schriften*, Band 1, 1979, 663; Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 239, 267.
- 14 “And also man in God. But, no longer man as my neighbor. For now, no man can any longer be my neighbor where God has become my neighbor. Now I love them all and all equally, but no longer as ‘neighbors.’” “*Im Leben liebe ich den Nächsten, den, dem ich ins Auge sehe, der mir ins Auge sieht, und liebe ihn vielleicht, sitzend im Schatten Gottes, liebe ihn “in” Gott. Ja ich liebe ihn mehr als ich Gott liebe, ja lieben kann. Denn es soll so sein. Gottes Antlitz “sieht kein Mensch und bleibt Leben.” Aber das Antlitz des Nächsten sehe ich, solange ich lebe. In der Ewigkeit aber sehe ich Gottes Antlitz und kann ihn lieben, wie ich in der Zeit nur den Nächsten lieben kann – Auge in Auge. Und in Gott auch den Menschen. Aber doch nun nicht mehr den Menschen als “Nächsten.” Denn nun, wo Gott mir nächst geworden ist, kann mir kein bestimmter einzelner Mensch mehr Nächster sein. Ich liebe sie nun alle, und alle gleich, also nicht mehr als “Nächste.”* Franz Rosenzweig, *Die “Gritli” – Briefe* (Tübingen: Bilam Verlag, 2002), 72.
- 15 Perhaps it bears repeating that French, as opposed to German or English, strongly differentiates between *prochain* and *proche* (neighbor and kin). Thus, loving one’s neighbor is to love one who follows, who arrives, who is next, and who is not present (much like God), as opposed to loving one’s kin, *le proche*. The neighbor would therefore always have to be fictitious, just as would love feel towards him. It is not clear why Lévinas terms the arrival of the enemy with arrival of the neighbor, and not arrival of kin.
- 16 There are a few unforgettable parts of *The Star of Redemption* in which Rosenzweig, deconstructing the notions of border and sacrifice, sketches a distinction between Christianity and Judaism. The chapter “Two Paths: Essence of Christianity” speaks of spreading and mission work, while in the section “Peter’s Church” he discusses the Church that “essentially, no border can satisfy (sate).” Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 386, 310–11.
- 17 Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Zwei Predigten aus dem Jahre 1791, 1. Über die Pflichten gegen Feinde, Sämtliche Werke*, Band VIII, 1845/1846 (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1971), 255–6. In his lectures on ethics, Kant speaks about transformations of friends into enemies. Immanuel Kant, *Kant’s gesammelte Schriften*, Band XXVII, *Kant’s Vorlesungen*, Band IV, *Vorlesungen über Moralphilosophie*, 1/1 (Collins’ notes) (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1974), 429–30.
- 18 “I promise to make a friend out of your enemy,” *Baba Metzia* II 26; “Who is the hero of all heroes... one who makes a friend of one’s enemy,” *Avot de Rabbi Natan*, 23; Cf. Reuven Kimelman, *Non-Violence in the Talmud*, in *Judaism*, 17, no. 3 (1968), 316–34.
- 19 The only indication of hesitation before the property of the enemy comes in the following verse: *Exod. (Michpatim)* 23, 4.
- 20 In Rosenzweig’s and Buber’s translation of the Torah, the word *Gebreste* appears only once, designating what has gone putrid, fetidness (rot): “*Verderbt hat ihm ihr Gebreste zu Unsöhnen ein krummes verrenktes Geschlecht.*” *Deut. (Haazinu)*, 32, 5.
- 21 Galli, *Franz Rosenzweig and Jehuda Halevi*, 124.
- 22 Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, *Die Schrift* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1992).
- 23 *Radaf* is the aggressor (the opposite is *nirdaf*, victim). When *radaf* (close in meaning to *sacer*) is used today, it designates the one against whom there is suspicion of fatal danger, that his own body is his weapon, that he will commit suicide by killing many around him. *Radaf* is also *Saul* (1 Samuel 31) who decides to take his life so as not to fall on another’s sword and in order for thousands of other Jews not to be executed because of him.

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4 Grounds for War

Und da bin ich nun (ohne sagen zu können j'y suis j'y reste)

The above phrase,¹ attributed to the great French general MacMahon, is polysemous. First, legend says that the general does not remember ever uttering these words. Second, if he did utter them, it was after the victorious feat of occupying an important strategic “position” (the Malakoff redoubt). Third, they were a response to a warning issued by an English general to retreat because MacMahon’s position was actually precarious (the enemy, i.e. the Russians, laid explosives in the redoubt before retreating). Finally, if the courageous words were indeed uttered, they were nothing but the general’s reaction to discovering that he had fallen into a trap from where there was no way back. As opposed to the general, Franz Rosenzweig, finding himself in Belgrade in October 1918, says that he is incapable of uttering, of repeating the declaration of the famous military leader from the Crimean War.² I am here in Belgrade now, writes Rosenzweig to his mother, yet I still cannot set aside the defeat and say: “*j’y suis, j’y reste.*” I am here, yet I am incapable of remaining here, I do not accept where I stand.

I would like to leave aside completely the impending German capitulation, the inevitable peace (the opening words of the letter are “*Der Frieden ist ja nun ganz sicher*”),³ the malaria that forced Rosenzweig to spend a month in a military hospital in Belgrade, the problems with sending mail to his mother in Kassel, even Rosenzweig’s daily expectation of a train that is to take the remaining wounded out of barbaric and loathsome Serbia.⁴ Rosenzweig is in a hurry. It would be easy to show today that this urgency is entirely unjustified and that the malaria contracted south of Niš probably saved him from certain death.⁵ Yet, his haste, along with the defeat of the soldier and German intellectual Rosenzweig, lie in the shadow of a much more serious defeat, which he only admits when in Belgrade. In letters to his mother of October 13 and 19, Rosenzweig says that peace has resulted in his unpublished war opera (*das blonde Putzanium*) becoming outdated. Interestingly, he adds two comments to the fact that the war is over and that his “position,” relentlessly pursued over the course of 1917, has collapsed: the first is the demise of the idea of Central Europe (“*Mitteleuropa ist Essig*”), along with the insignificance

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of the theory of Friedrich Naumann, the prophet of Central European thought.⁶ The second is a surprising comment, namely, that only at that point has he fully understood the extent to which throughout the war he had been a monarchist, yearning for a king!⁷

Rosenzweig thinks his position so untenable, so indefensible that it does not allow him to remain where he is for another second, thus preventing him from saying “*j’y suis, j’y reste.*”

What is it that is going on in 1917, and what exactly is Rosenzweig’s failed and impossible project? Is it necessary to think this project with Rosenzweig, yet completely against him, in order to preserve, by possibly amending, his intentions? Is it even possible to reconstruct this attempt and perhaps continue writing the unfinished book? Or has perhaps a book on (the) war not yet even begun to be written?

There are, of course, other questions and sets of questions that introduce even more uncertainty regarding the status of Rosenzweig’s project. One path of inquiry would refer to the assumption that a project like this depends strictly on the duration of the war. It would appear that in writing about the cause and goals of war, peace is the perfect enemy. In that case, it would be important to pay attention to Rosenzweig’s patriotic games, the influence of war propaganda on his texts,⁸ his analyses of articles in the daily press, his constant attempts to anticipate movements on the front and in world politics, that is, to align the construction of his text with the rhythm of war. How can we understand his despair and utter loss of faith in the outcome of the war (and by extension in the fate of his text), when he hears of the resignation of the Reich Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg, a moderate patriot who, according to Rosenzweig, was aware of the meaning of war in shaping the world?⁹ How do we understand his numerous brutal and all too quick comments, his rage regarding the end result of the war (“[The English] are a barbaric people. It is truly tragic that they have won”)?¹⁰ Further, how do we understand his impatient expectation that America or Japan will enter the war, his swift change in paradigmatic construction of text (“Thalatta. Hegemony of the Seas and Freedom on the Seas,” of over forty typed pages, written in four days, from 23 to 27 December 1917)?

Rosenzweig’s way and speed of writing lead us into a still more complicated issue, concerning the status of a text he wrote and kept, but whose publication he deferred. I do not only mean those never completely understandable, essentially unacceptable, and always obscure “archive politics,”¹¹ but also certain technical problems in the reconstruction of certain manuscripts, as well as what I would call “archival fictions.” It is not possible to properly reconstruct texts written on postcards and scraps of paper, nor is it possible to publish printed texts with Rosenzweig’s subsequent notes in the margins. Besides, it is nearly impossible to produce a critical edition of Rosenzweig’s “war” texts because his inspiration is often newspaper articles and editorials he never cited.¹² Finally, previously unpublished texts and texts never made

open to the public constantly fuel fantasies about the potential fictional influence on other authors and texts of the same era.

The war project¹³ – let us call it “war” and accept that it was nothing more than an ingenious project – was given different code names by Rosenzweig. From “*Kriegsopera*” and “*Putzianum*” (for which the inspiration came from his cousin Victor Ehrenberg, nicknamed Putzi, with whom Rosenzweig constructs a joint plan), to calling it “*Hansiaca*” (because he planned a similar project for a book with his friend Hans Ehrenberg), to “*Kriegsausgang*” and “*Kriegsgrund*,” as well as “*Theatrum Europaeum. Ein Versuch über den Schauplatz der Weltgeschichte*.”¹⁴ In the three letters sent to three different addresses in the first half of 1917,¹⁵ Rosenzweig explains in detail the origin of his idea for a big book on the war and says he has begun writing, aware that he would be unable to finish the whole project on the front. For us it is certainly important to notice that “*Globus*,” conspicuously longer than the other ten, is the basic part of the first projected book, and that the other texts are miniature pieces and portions of that same big book. He tells us that in 1910 or 1911, while writing his thesis on Hegel and the state, he intended to write the history of grounds for war (*Kriegsgrund*). He hastens to finish his doctorate so as to dedicate himself to this task, since on 25 November 1910, Carnegie established a foundation financing projects that deal with the causes and origins of war.¹⁶ In the three letters of January, March, and May of 1917, Rosenzweig offers a few more details: that he wished to analyze wars from 1494 until today, that he is particularly interested in the relationship between the grounds for war (*Kriegsgründe*) and beginning of war (*Kriegsanfänge*). He adds that he writes primarily about what is currently taking place, that previously he wished to work in diplomatic archives and examine everything that grounds war, that is, the reasoning that would lead to the beginning of wars. Yet, he also says that he could never write such a book at present, that if he were to write it now, it would be part of some larger book, which demands even more time. Ultimately, this is why he must “abort” the book.

It would appear that it is now impossible to reconstruct this “beginning” of the project of which Rosenzweig speaks. There is no note from the period of his thesis writing that could confirm whether he indeed intended to write a book on grounds for war, nor is there any clear trace of *Kriegsgrund* in his doctorate itself (he would not write the introduction, “Hegel and the State,” until after the war, in May 1920 in Kassel).¹⁷ A few months upon defending his thesis, Rosenzweig is inspired to speak of a new, coming war, already visible on the horizon, but whose form and morality is yet unknown to us: “We do not face one war, rather an epoch of wars, and from the European point of view, we are already in this epoch.”¹⁸ That is all. Still, there is no reason to exclude the possibility that Rosenzweig really could fantasize about this project as a perfect complement to Hegel’s theory of war. Further, in several other places in his correspondence during the war and shortly after, Rosenzweig places his project regarding war in the same register as his thesis (his “Hegel”).¹⁹ Indeed, a few times, he compares his position in the war with

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Hegel's in Jena. However, perhaps it is important to preemptively insist on certain reservation regarding Rosenzweig's self-interpretation about the self-same register of these two entirely different conceptions. Because in his doctorate, possibly as no one before him, Rosenzweig deconstructed (and demolished) a few key points of Hegel's theory of right, places that defend war and a state "established on weapons":²⁰ the notion of violence and legitimation by way of violence, sacrifice (in particular sacrifice for the homeland), the connection of patriotism and sovereignty, the analogy of sovereignty and the organism, etc. It is interesting that Rosenzweig returns to these topics from 1917 only once thereafter, when he analyzes sacrifice for the homeland, and that in a rather different context and lacking any anti-Hegelian enthusiasm.²¹ Besides, is not Rosenzweig's project regarding war conceived to do precisely what Hegel did not – to think war, to find and give meaning to war, but not as the foundational element that constitutes a state (any state, even a unified world state), but rather as a key factor that creates a world without states, without borders, creates peace?²² In that sense, this project is in its intention and origin absolutely Hegelian. But its unfolding, that is, Rosenzweig's specific search for grounds and goals of war, bring entirely anti-Hegelian results, and distance Rosenzweig from his mentor Meinecke.

Thus, this war was not politically unproductive and without aim, as Meinecke contends... Meinecke's fundamental mistake is that *malgré tout* he still thinks of states, and not unions of states. He says: unions of states make wars useless, they introduce nothing politically creative, by this Meinecke means that wars creatively influence only the single state. However, states are no longer the carriers of history, rather it is unions of states, and it is precisely on them that war, this war in fact, has a creative influence. The truly realpolitik source of the idea of pacifism is: to overcome the national within the federal state.²³

This passage from a letter to his parents is part of Rosenzweig's tempestuous and anxious reaction to Meinecke's pacifist engagement and text of September 1917, "*Demobilmachung der Geister*."²⁴ This was not only a good opportunity for Rosenzweig to once again express his reservations towards pacifism and show in detail the limits and militaristic (and profane) origins of pacifism, as well as an opportunity to underscore the conservatism of his teacher; it also allows him to explain that there can be no world peace even if states and "spirits" (intellectuals) were completely pacified and demobilized. It is as if Rosenzweig thinks that the war must not end yet because it will not have fulfilled its most fundamental role: the creation of common world space, the unity of peoples, the abolishing of states, and the recreation and transformation of borders.²⁵ This brief, programmatic text by Friedrich Meinecke forces, but also anticipates, a future end of enmity between states and the swift termination of World War I. What is clear is that it is now possible to compare Rosenzweig's anxiety upon reading this pamphlet with the two

epilogues in his text “Globus,” specifically the last chapter of the first part (“*Oekumene*”), entitled “World,” in which he says that “the greatest struggles, biggest battles for the true world-idea (*die wirkliche Weltidee*) are only coming.” (In the last sentence, he concludes that the world is *a priori* one, because God “the warrior” (*Kriegsmann*) has made it such.²⁶) To which I can also add the finale of the second part (“*Thalatta*”). It seems to me that Rosenzweig wrote both of these in those three days at the end of 1917.

At the end of “*Thalatta*,” with which Rosenzweig brings both “Globus” and his overall endeavor to an end, interrupting and abandoning his war project, he claims that there are still borders and divisions in the world, that there are still areas which are separated and do not belong to the world (far away areas, *in* the world, but not *of* it).²⁷ Humanity is still not collected under one single roof. It is perhaps necessary to reject and leave aside that paradoxical last sentence about Europe that has not yet become the soul of the world, as well as Rosenzweig’s thoughts regarding Turkey, Islam, the Far East, etc., all of which appear from time to time in Rosenzweig’s political texts. His vision of the world and globe (not only Europe), formulated like this, is a vision that surpasses by far some seductive analogies and comparisons with Schmitt’s notion of *Nomos* or his distinction between land and sea – it remains incomplete simply because the war effort is incomplete, because the war has not fulfilled his expectations. In other words, Rosenzweig is unsatisfied with his text because he is unsatisfied with how the war is ending, unsatisfied that it is preventing and interrupting his writing.²⁸

This is no simple dissatisfaction with how the war turned out, not uncommon in the ensuing years. Certainly the disappointment with the outcome of the war, as a consequence of exhaustion or mobilization or patriotism, could be said to be common to Schmitt, Meinecke, Cohen, Naumann, as well as Franz Rosenzweig. They all write about war.

How, then, are Rosenzweig’s uses of war different? Why do Rosenzweig’s writings about the history of grounds for war suddenly, in the space of a few months, turn into writing about the current war? Why does writing about *Kriegsgrund* and *Kriegsziel* turn into writing as constant anticipation of the result of war (*Kriegsausgang*)?

Rosenzweig’s evocation of the beginning of his project, in January 1917, at the very moment when returning to it, is particularly important for us. The return to the initial considerations of the project implies an important dilemma about how and why the work on this book on war will twice be interrupted and put aside.

Is it then possible to assume that the study of Jewish text blocks Rosenzweig’s geopolitical construction both times? The first time is the time between his doctorate and the war, when he first considers these texts. The second is at the end of the war, or perhaps at the end of 1917, when he is unsatisfied with what he wrote about the war and when he abandons historical texts to concentrate on Jewish books.²⁹ For both interruptions, five or six years apart, Rosenzweig gives the same reason: his focus on expounding a Jewish theory

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of war and why the ongoing war is not his problem nor has anything do with him.

On 9 October 1914, he writes in his diary:

Differentiating between the right to war in a religious and profane war is the essence of Judaism. Christianity knows only religious war. Judaism knows them as contrary to one another, and in the [case of the] second [religious war] does not put itself above the ethics of its century. This also means that religious war serves as the affirmation of existence, while the rest of the world remains “very faraway from you.”³⁰

Rosenzweig changes several words here for *The Star of Redemption*, written shortly after the end of the war.

Belonging to the most significant passages of our ancients law is the distinction [*Unterscheidung*] between the usual war [*gewöhnliche Kriegs*] against a “very faraway” people [*gegen ein “sehr fernes” Volk*], which was waged according to the universal rules of martial law for which war is a usual expression of like form of the State, and the war of faith [*Glaubenskriegs*] against the “seven peoples” of Canaan, by which the people of God captured the necessary living space for it ... The people of the Christina era [*der christlichen Weltzeit*] can no longer uphold the distinction. In conformity with the spirit of Christianity that tolerates no borders [*Grenzen*], there are no “very faraway” peoples for them ... That which Jewish law could separate as concerns its public law, war of faith and political war [*bloss weltlicher Krieg*], is blended into for them. Precisely because they are not real peoples of God, but only on the way to becoming so, they cannot draw those distinct borders; they cannot at all know how far God’s will is realized in the warlike destinies of their States [*in den kriegerischen Geschicken ihres Staates verwirklicht*]. Somehow – the how remaining puzzling [*Irgendwie – das Wie bleibt rätselhaft*] ... the war alone decides [*entscheidet*], which rages on above the consciousness of the individual ... Somehow – the how remaining puzzling [*Irgendwie – das Wie bleibt rätselhaft*].³¹

How [*Wie*] is the will of God realized, how does God decide and command states (Christian states)? How [*wie*] does war (God) decide? How [*Wie*]?

Only this riddle and these questions could explain Rosenzweig’s efforts and project from the previous years. There is no sentence in this famous passage that had not been in one way or another written in his diaries, letters, and texts during the course of the war. However, remarkably, Rosenzweig puts this riddle, which troubles him so much and is the secret of his war engagement (the riddle being the incomprehensible connection between the Christian peoples and states – who risk perishing in the war – and God who decides and directs them) entirely aside. Namely, the following two paragraphs are

patently direct instructions to the Jewish people, but also to the Jew, Rosenzweig, us, or anyone who in the future wishes to explore the grounds for war. Just as Rosenzweig's project is infused with his considerations of Jewish texts from before and after the war, so the riddle in *The Star of Redemption* finds itself between the knowledge of distinguishing between wars (what he calls "the substance of Judaism") and Rosenzweig's message to the Jewish people:

And since it [Jewish people] possesses the concept of the war of faith, it therefore can not take them seriously [*ernst nehmen*]... Of course, the Jew is really the only man in the Christian world who cannot take war seriously [*nicht ernst nehmen kann*], and therefore is the only genuine "pacifist" [*der einzige echte "Pazifist"*]³² ... the Jewish people stands outside the world [*steht es ausserhalb der Welt*] ... by living eternal peace, it stands outside of a warlike temporality [*steht es ausserhalb einer kriegerischen Zeitlichkeit*].³³

It would seem that this sudden forceful resistance to the temporality of the world and war could better explain the strength of Rosenzweig's efforts from the previous years. The unwritten book on war is only an epilogue of a very complicated "messianic investment" conducted by Rosenzweig. There are several conditions for the solution to the riddle Rosenzweig intensely prepared in anticipating war or divine judgment.³⁴

It is necessary, insists Rosenzweig, to think ("this") war as if last.³⁵ Avoid naïve chauvinism. Develop catastrophic thinking, and not only differential.³⁶ The distinction between and unity of war, which is the father of all things, and peace, which is the mother of all things, is fulfilled in the fate of the world. The secret reason of (world) war³⁷ and history is in people's search for their respective souls, for a world without borders and a world without (distant) peoples. The grounds for war (*Kriegsgrund*) always overlap with the goal of war (*Kriegsziel*).³⁸ The Messiah arrives only in the warring expression of the world [*nur im kriegerischen Ablauf der Weltgeschichte*]. The Messiah arrives today [*"Heute" kommt Messias*].

But today "is still not the true 'Today.'"³⁹

Notes

- 1 Letter to his mother, 13 October 1918, Franz Rosenzweig, *Briefe und Tagebücher*, volume 2 (Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979), 613.
- 2 Only a year before writing this letter, Rosenzweig writes about the Crimean War in his text *Oekumene*. Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Mensch und sein Werk, Gesammelte Schriften*, 3. *Zweistromland. Kleinere Schriften zu Glauben und Denken* (Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), 333.
- 3 Letter to his mother, 13 October 1918, Rosenzweig, *Briefe und Tagebücher*, 612.
- 4 In "Deutschland und der Weltkrieg" (29 August 1914), Friedrich Meinecke says that Austria and Germany have been provoked into war because the Serbian people and state are incapable of leading an honorable and loyal war, and are

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- conducting fanatical, barbarian, and criminal policy. Meinecke insists that he understands entirely the Serbs' desire to found their national state; however, for a people to do so, it must first prove that it is a cultured people (*Kulturvolk*). Friedrich Meinecke, *Politische Schriften und Reden, Werke*, volume 2 (Darmstadt: Siegfried Töche-Mittler Verlag, 1958), 96–7.
- 5 I am referring to the atrocities committed against the defeated Austrian and German military taking place on Serbian territory in the last months of the war.
 - 6 “A Central-European cannot create Central Europe; rather, Central Europe must create the Central European.” Rosenzweig, *Briefe und Tagebücher*, 612. Naumann is certainly Rosenzweig's first port of call for geopolitical thinking from the very beginning of the war until Rosenzweig's mature age. He reads Naumann's articles during the war, often referring to the ideas of the (German) “new orientation,” “military goal,” “Central Europe,” “necessary war as creator of the Central European soul,” as well as the programmatic first chapter of Naumann's book *Mitteleuropa*. Friedrich Naumann, *Der gemeinsame Krieg und seine Folgen* (Berlin: G. Reimer Verlag, 1915), 1–32. Cf. Rosenzweig, *Zweistromland*, 304–5, 344–6.
 - 7 Letter to his mother, 19 October 1918, Rosenzweig, *Briefe und Tagebücher*, 614.
 - 8 Cf. Gérard Bensussan, Marc Crépon and Marc Buhot de Launay, *Introduction to Confluences. Politique, Histoire, Judaïsme*, by Franz Rosenzweig (Paris: Vrin, 2003), 15.
 - 9 Letter to his parents, 20 July 1917, Franz Rosenzweig, *Briefe und Tagebücher*, volume 1, 1900–1918 (Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979), 422–3. Cf. Paul Mendes-Flohr, *Divided Passions. Jewish Intellectuals and the Experience of Modernity* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 323–5.
 - 10 Rosenzweig's comment after a visit from his relatives (*die Londoner*), who he has not seen in nine years and in whom he detects a subtle “change in essence” (*Englischkeit des Wesens*). Letter to Gritli, 6 July 1920. Franz Rosenzweig, *Die Gritli-Briefe: Briefe an Margrit Rosenstock-Hussey* (Tübingen: Bilam Verlag, 2002), 621.
 - 11 Kant speaks of the “obscurity of archives” in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, § 61. Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. M. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Some very interesting passages from Rosenzweig's *Diaries* were unnecessarily left out. Still, the most significant document, never published and decisive for the understanding of Rosenzweig's “war” texts, is the list of books he read from February 1916 to August 1918, i.e. the “*Bücherliste*.” This document carries the marking “V” and contains seven pages. Franz Rosenzweig Collection; AR 3001; box 1; folder 3; Leo Baeck Institute at the Center for Jewish History. The books are listed by month of reading, totaling over 300 titles.
 - 12 An excellent example is one of Rosenzweig's most important texts about war, written in December 1917, “*Cannae and Gorlice*. Explanation of the Strategic Notion of Space.” In the manuscript, Rosenzweig systematically removed the word *Vernichtungsstrategie*, substituting it for *absoluter Krieg*. This amendment is unusual, as is the long text in the margin dedicated to Clausewitz on page 2 (Rosenzweig, *Zweistromland*, 284). Franz Rosenzweig Collection; AR 3001; box 2; folder 34; Leo Baeck Institute at the Center for Jewish History.
 - 13 The eleven texts from 1917 that “comprise” this project were neither published when first composed, nor under the author's name (four were published under a pseudonym). In *Gesammelte Schriften* these texts were classified under “*Zur Politik*,” while at the Leo Baeck Institute they are broken down into three groups: 1. “*Globus*,” 2. “*Vox Dei*,” and “*Cannä und Gorlice*” are in a large group of texts labeled *Other*, while the remaining eight texts are under 3. “*Prolegomena zur Politik*.”
 - 14 Francesco Paolo Ciglia, the editor of the Italian edition of *Globus*, provided, as an addition to the study of Rosenzweig, a detailed overview of the letters and notes that reconstruct this project. Francesco Paolo Ciglia, *Per una teoria storico-universale*

- dello spazio*, trans. S. Carretti (Genoa: Marietti 2007 [1820]). Cf. “*Sezione documentaria. Lettere e appunti personali sul Globus*,” 113–40.
- 15 These are letters to his parents of 11 January 1917, to Rudolf Ehrenberg of 29 March 1917, and to Gertrud Oppenheim of 1 May 1917. Rosenzweig, *Briefe und Tagebücher*, 334–5, 375, 395.
 - 16 At the time, the Carnegie Foundation was organized in three sections. The second section was intended to study the causes and impact of war.
 - 17 Franz Rosenzweig, *Hegel und der Staat*, volume 1 (Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1962 [1920]), V–XIII.
 - 18 Letter to Hans Ehrenberg, end of November 1912, Rosenzweig, *Briefe und Tagebücher*, 124.
 - 19 In a letter to Mawrik Kahn, probably written in the fall of 1919, Rosenzweig calls “Globus” and his “Hegel” “dead writings.” Rosenzweig, *Briefe und Tagebücher*, 652.
 - 20 Rosenzweig, *Hegel und der Staat*, 133.
 - 21 Cf. Rosenzweig, *Zweistromland*, 267–82. Cf. *Vox Dei? Die Gewissensfrage der Demokratie*, F. Rosenzweig, *GS, Zweistromland*, 267–82.
 - 22 “a state at war has a form which would lead it outside of its borders during peacetime, without as within; a state at war has the form of a future state yet to come about during peacetime.” Rosenzweig, *Cannä und Gorlice, GS, Zweistromland*, 294.
 - 23 Letter to his parents of 1 October 1917, Rosenzweig, *Briefe und Tagebücher*, 459. His comments regarding Meinecke continue in several letters from this period.
 - 24 In his correspondence, Rosenzweig never mentions the title of this text published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung und Handelsblatt* on 23 September 1917 (and reissued in Meinecke, *Politische Schriften und Reden, Werke*). Meinecke is the second main reference point of Rosenzweig’s geopolitical texts. In the letter to parents from 30 January 1917 (342), aside from Naumann and Meinecke, Rosenzweig also notes the names Kjelen, Leusch, Tröltzsch, Simmel, and Ranke as authors who are decisive for the execution of his war project (Ranke’s text from 1833 “Die grossen Mächte” is particularly important for Rosenzweig; Meinecke edited a special edition of this text and published it in 1916). To these authors, I would like to add a few titles Rosenzweig read, without which his efforts would have been impossible: in July 1916, he reads Julius Kierst’s brief book *Die antike Idee der Oekumene in ihrer politischen und kulturellen Bedeutung* (1903). In January 1917, Eugen Schriber’s *Vom Kriegsgrund zum Kriegsziel* (1889). In May 1917, Clausewitz’s *Vom Kriege* (1816–30). Franz Rosenzweig Collection; AR 3001; box 1; folder 3; Leo Baeck Institute at the Center for Jewish History.
 - 25 In “Globus,” written at the end, when the whole project is finished, Rosenzweig says: “To be outlined (*Begrenzbarkeit*) by borders is in the nature of land, the absence of any border (*Unbegrenztheit*) is its ultimate purpose.” Rosenzweig, *Globus, Zweistromland*, 313.
 - 26 Rosenzweig, *Zweistromland*, 348. In a letter to his parents of 17 February 1917, Rosenzweig reveals that he used Luther’s translation, “*der rechte Kreigsmann*” (*Book of Moses* 2, 15:3). Meanwhile, “In morning prayer, Jews name God as *Meister der Kriege, Schöpfer des Neuen*.” Rosenzweig, *Briefe und Tagebücher*, 350.
 - 27 Rosenzweig, *Zweistromland*, 368.
 - 28 This drama between the war and writing manifests often in Rosenzweig’s uncontrollable statements. Throughout 1917, he is very excited and happy that his text is advancing. The day before writing “*Thalatta*,” he tells of how important it is for him to work on this text, only to tell his parents four days later that he now dislikes the text entirely. In time, he will take exception to its form, that it is not scientifically objective, etc. Rosenzweig, *Briefe und Tagebücher*, 497, 502, 504. Hilary Putnam’s argument that Rosenzweig did not want to publish *Das Büchlein vom guten und kranken Menschenverstand* during his lifetime because it was

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- anti-philosophical could partially refer to “Globus.” Hilary Putnam, *Jewish Philosophy as a Guide to Life* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 19.
- 29 Cf. Letter to Hans Ehrenberg of 26 December 1917. Rosenzweig, *Briefe und Tagebücher*, 501–3.
- 30 “*In der Scheidung des Kriegsrechts in Religions- und Profankrieg (5. Moses 20, 15–16) steckt das ganze Wesen des Judentums. Das Christentum kennt nur den Religionskrieg. Das Judentum kennt beide nebeneinander und erhebt sich in der Ethik des zweiten nicht über die Ethik des Zeitalters. Auch bezeichnend, dass der Religionskrieg nur der Existenzbegründung dient, die übrige Welt bleibt... So tue allen Städten 'sehr entfernt von dir' [heraym harchokot mimecha me'od]. Moses, 5, 20:15.*” Rosenzweig, *Briefe und Tagebücher*, 175–6. Cf. others who write of this differentiation, which, with the existence of the state of Israel, is today more active than ever: J. David Bleich, *Preemptive War in Jewish Law, Tradition* 21, no. 1 (1983), 3–41; Geoffrey B. Levey, *Judaism and the Obligation to Die for the State, AJS Review* 12, no. 2 (1987), 175–203; Michael Walzer, *The Idea of Holy War in Ancient Israel, Journal of Religious Ethics* 20, no. 2 (1992), 215–28; Michael Walzer, *War and Peace in the Jewish Tradition*, in *The Ethics of War and Peace*, ed. T. Nardin (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 95–113.
- 31 Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans. B. E. Galli (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 350–1; Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1996), 367.
- 32 The quotation marks around the word “*Pazifist*” exist in the first edition of the book of Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 416.
- 33 Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 351. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 368.
- 34 “*Der Krieg ist ein 'göttliches Gericht,' aber kein einfaches Strafgericht, sondern 'Krisis,' Scheidung, Böcke und Schafe.*” Letter to his parents of 17 February 1917. Rosenzweig, *Briefe und Tagebücher*, 350.
- 35 Rosenzweig, 3. *Paralipomena, Zweistromland*, 90. Ciglia claims that these passages, discovered thirty years ago, were written in 1917, not 1916. Rosenzweig, *Globus. Per una teoria storico-universale dello spazio*, 126.
- 36 Rosenzweig, 3. *Paralipomena, Zweistromland*, 72.
- 37 Letter to his mother of 3 July 1918, Rosenzweig, *Briefe und Tagebücher*, 586. In constructing this messianic investment by Rosenzweig, I have used Daniela Toti’s book *Franz Rosenzweig: possibilità di una fondazione della nuova filosofia nella storia* (Rome: Gregoriana, 2000), 202–9.
- 38 Rosenzweig, *Globus, Zweistromland*, 366.
- 39 Rosenzweig, 3. *Paralipomena, Zweistromland*, 91.

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5 “Pazifistischer Zug”

I would like to attempt to understand Rosenzweig’s complicated project of grounds for war, as well as his abandonment of the project, in light of his reservations about pacifism. “[T]he Jew is really the only man in the Christian world who cannot take war seriously, and therefore is the only genuine ‘pacifist.’”¹ His strategies and politics of quotation marks – a likely consequence of his long and detailed reading of Hegel, the master of scare quotes – could probably decisively determine a potential “ethics of war.” My addition of quotation marks to the phrase *ethics of war* indicates my hesitation regarding Rosenzweig’s interpretation of war and pacifism, as well as their uncertain influence on theories of (un)just war within the Jewish political tradition. Setting aside the issue of quotation marks, I would nevertheless like to construct an (im)possible (or “possible”) influence of Rosenzweig’s texts (letters, diary entries, brief notes) on contemporary thought about war.

It seems to me that his rather obscure fragments on pacifism, his opposition and his entirely original interpretation and even his “acceptance” of pacifism (the “wild sect” of pacifists),² could best demonstrate the difficulty of constituting a just war, that is, the justification for a final, messianic war. Let us begin with a few questions. Can Rosenzweig’s fragments about war and peace, his arguments and his constant hesitation and changes in position, at all be useful in contemporary debates about new wars and final wars? Is it possible to consider, with Rosenzweig, the decades-long wars of the state of Israel, new ethical theories of war, and right to war? Do Rosenzweig’s “messianic politics” and his attempt to consider messianic war refer exclusively to the future, one which tugs on the present and one which withdraws and opens the “today” – a today never truly and authentically today?³

The three very different, very complicated questions reveal my intention to show that Rosenzweig’s fragments about pacifism could potentially represent a condition and introduction to his “theory” of messianism. Yet, despite Rosenzweig’s haphazardness and inconsistency in determining pacifism (war, messianism, etc.), and despite my own fear of violent reduction and simplification of Rosenzweig’s “suggestions” into strictly demonstrative argument, it seems to me that Rosenzweig’s original distinction of pacifisms allows for a

new understanding of war and new – I dare say “final” – wars. Rosenzweig’s “ideal pacifist” (Jew) and the Jewish people are the true keepers of the secret of the differentiation of wars, and have a special role in Rosenzweig’s thinking about war.

The ten-page chapter from *The Star of Redemption*, which Rosenzweig subsequently entitled “Peoples of the World: Messianic Politics,” is his “political” testament and represents an introduction to the following very brief and obscure chapter, “Eternity of the Promise,” in which he insists that the “eternal people” are always foreign and opposed to the state and to universal history. (Put otherwise, “the true eternity of the eternal people must remain always foreign and annoying to the State and to world.”) This brief chapter opens an important explanation about the Jewish people, who have finally nearly reached the goal:

In the cycle of its year the future is the motive power; the circular movement does not give birth as it were by push [*Stoß*], but by tug [*Zug*]; the present elapses, not because the past shoves it forward, but because the future drags it along.⁴

Rosenzweig expands on the difference between two very polysemous words, *Stoß* and *Zug*, in the second part of the sentence: the present does not occur primarily because the past pushes it forward. The future as such is the strength (it does not possess strength, but *is* it), that *draws out*, *tugs* the present. This sentence perhaps most clearly describes “messianic topology,” and “messianic action” or “the messianic move” in general, and could thus be part of an ideal introduction to a theory of messianic time. Rosenzweig’s addition and decisive turn is not achieved by simple opposition of the strength of the future to the strength of the past, nor indeed by the substitution of two kinds of movement (pushing and drawing out), but rather by the use of the word *Zug* (*sondern durch Zug*).

Why *Zug*? And does this word, with all its various meanings and ambiguities, really belong to a “messianic register?” What does it have to do with violence and war? When we compare Rosenzweig’s other uses and variations of this phrase from the period of writing *The Star of Redemption* – the word starts to recur primarily towards the end of the war, in 1917, 1918 – would we then be justified in considering messianism in the context of war and vice versa?

Although used rarely in contemporary German, Rosenzweig uses *Zug* several times, in particular in the phrase *Zug um den Mund*. For us, however, what is of utmost importance is Rosenzweig’s insistence and juxtaposition of the words pacifism and *Zug* in *pazifistischer Zug* and *pazifizistischer Zug*. The three very close variations (*Zug*, *pazifistischer Zug*, and *pazifizistischer Zug*), which I will nevertheless attempt to differentiate and explain, indicate the way in which Rosenzweig resolves his dilemmas and difficulties with pacifism. It is as though pacifism, as Rosenzweig ultimately interprets it (notwithstanding

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all his hesitations and inhibitions), is the “movement” that brings ever closer war and messianism. Pacifism is the conditionless condition of messianic war(s).

The first and second variations of pacifist movement and pull (the basic and least incorrect translation of *Zug* is tug, pull) are always associated with sudden, revolutionary directedness. The “revolutionary” that is explicitly present in these two sentences reveals the revolutionary form of the future’s movement: the “revolutionary” as *Zug* and messianism, and the “revolutionary” as opposite to pushing (*Stoß*). Rosenzweig’s *durch Zug* assumes a sudden and surprising emergence, drawing out of something hitherto hidden, as if from a hole. The “messianic” is double: it is always present as veiled in the present (today still not the true today); and it appears abruptly, in a single move. Tugging or pulling out something in a single move is truly more than an ordinary, gradual emergence, that is, withdrawal in several steps and phases. The following two sentences by Rosenzweig are entirely complementary. “Robespierre too had the pacifist movement on his face (his mouth);”⁵ and “But you must never look like Lenin: this is Jensen’s Mongol, without – alas! – cruelty; rather, with a pure ‘pacifist move’, not only around his mouth, but all his orifices, eyes, ears, nostrils. I could swear it, the eye too, even the eye.”⁶

If we follow, from text to text, from letter to letter, Rosenzweig’s effort to understand and give meaning to pacifism (trying not to reject it), we can see that his dissatisfaction appears always at the moment of inability to integrate pacifism (as the unreserved desire for peace) into war and into militarism. Rosenzweig’s idea is precisely that pacifism ought to serve war and be incorporated into militarism. All the while, his dissatisfaction and awareness that he is wrong is above all a linguistic dissatisfaction and resistance to any kind of “poeticization.”⁷ These two “revolutionary” examples feature openings and holes, with traces (attributes, contours, dashes) of pacifism “around” them. The openings are above all on the face, while the phrase *Zug um den Mund* also helps him locate pacifism as the grimace of war, that is, Robespierre’s and Lenin’s rhetoric advocating peace. The metaphor of the hole appears in several forms throughout Rosenzweig’s texts, sometimes as the grave or abyss,⁸ but it is also certainly not difficult to read Hegel’s influence here: we have seen in Chapters 1 and 2 Hegel’s discussion of holes and sexual difference.

What is Rosenzweig’s intervention into pacifism or into the adjective “pacifist?” We have seen that “pacifism” leaves a trace and can be located “around the openings,” as well as that “pacifism” is tacked onto a forceful action Rosenzweig marks with the word *Zug* (it is not only war or militarism that is cruel; pacifism is as well). But also, Rosenzweig constantly wavers on how to determine pacifism in relation to war. It is uncertain whether pacifism is an addition or an accessory of war, whether it precedes or postdates war, whether it is simultaneous to or deep within it, whether its birth is perhaps laid in the enemy. All these positions of pacifism in the course of war are

engendered by Rosenzweig’s main dilemma: does pacifism obstruct and prevent the war, which is turning into a world war and then into a “messianic war”; or else, does pacifism produce and foster the arrival of a new time because it possesses knowledge of the only true peace that arrives upon the final war?

Rosenzweig vacillates a lot on this point: in August and September 1916, he is convinced that pacifism ought to be abandoned because final peace cannot be the work of man, but must be the direct action of God.⁹ And as late as December 1922, he mentions the inadequacy of believing in pacifism and the strength of “spiritual weapons.”¹⁰ Yet, perhaps at the end of all that meandering, it is possible to insist on two suggestions regarding the function and role of pacifism in (messianic and world) war. Both are based in Rosenzweig’s acceptance of violence and the conviction that war is the path to reaching something unreachable through peace. In other words, he has a theory of two kinds of peace or pacifism. Rosenzweig, much like Walter Benjamin, is completely certain that violence can engender something (for example, that it can produce new law, that old law becomes new by way of violence).¹¹ Further, the geopolitical theological construction helps Rosenzweig claim that only by way of war can there be a transition from nation states and Europe into the planet and world (making war a form of transition); moreover, war is a kind of subject (God) that has the power to decide its own beginning, duration, and end (“*Der Krieg ist der große Entschneider*”).¹² In a very long and important letter to his parents of 1 September 1916,¹³ he speaks of the peace before (on the eve of) potential war, that is, of peace that exists in paradise, and of peace after war(s), that is, peace that reigns in the time of the millennial rule of the Messiah. The first kind (the natural state or natural peace), with which so-called materialist pacifism concerns itself, is the peace between beings and things that have no relation to one another, where friction and discord are at a minimum, and where identities and entities are completely separated from each other. In international relations, such peace is based on the tolerance of all peoples. The other peace or the other world peace, idealist and messianic, for which idealist pacifism is engaged, and which arrives after the final war – Rosenzweig adds that it is put forth by German thinkers – is based on the close connections of people and peoples. The latter pacifism examines the reasons for war and attempts to transform them into reasons for peace and a new common living. The condition of this new peace and the stake of idealist pacifism, according to Rosenzweig, it bears repeating, is the final war(s).

With this strategy (which indeed recalls Schmitt’s strict differentiation of peace and pacifism¹⁴) Rosenzweig manages to defend the meaning of pacifist endeavor within his idea of a catastrophic world war as the beginning of a new age and new thinking. To paraphrase Rosenzweig’s analogy between war, conversion, and life from his famous text “New Thought,” war must of necessity begin with war, and not a peace accord, as the (materialist) pacifists would have it. War precedes peace and war must actually happen first.

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Rosenzweig’s two original contributions to histories of war and pacifism, his two suggestions for the solution to the pacifist dilemma, are to be found at the end of a letter to his parents of 6 January 1917. Rosenzweig writes that he has finally realized the exact nature of pacifism, and that it came shortly after the official offer of peace made by Wilhelm II (on 12 December 1916):

Pacifism is in fact – this has become clear to me in the past days, since the 12th – an essential equipment of war. So, war is not led in order to *force* the enemy – it would be impossible for that to last long – but to *subjugate*, to impose on him one’s own will, to *replace* his will with mine. The victor does not wish to make a *tool* of the vanquished (because he *cannot* persevere in it), but rather his slave. The goal of the victor is not the *destruction* of the enemy, but the basing of a new *contract*. But this supposes that in the enemy there is a fragment of “desire for peace,” which has fallen asleep and the mission of the war is to awaken this desire. If this desire for “peace at all cost” becomes stronger than the ability to suffer (Heroism), then the hour of peace has struck. All this of course applies with two victors as it does with one. Therefore pacifism is “as old as” war (namely, *human*, slave-directed war; animals only know a war of destruction, and hence have no pacifism).¹⁵

Despite all the reservations we might have today regarding this incomplete and controversial passage, I would like to insist on two moments that could indeed be decisive for an ethics of war. The first is whether pacifism or desire for peace is a necessary addition to war that prevents it from stopping being a war. The second is that in war, pacifism is always to be found in the enemy, the other. It would appear that the desire for peace or desire for peace at all cost does not come from somewhere else, but is an integral part of the military conflict and is at the core of violence and coercion, that is, at the very heart of war. Regardless of the possible connotation and colloquial meaning of the words *Zug* or *Zubehör*, “the draw” of peace issues from war itself. War calls for peace and is continued in peace; peace emerges from war. War is succeeded by a completely new community in which the adversaries approach one another and coexist in an entirely new way.

Let us return to Rosenzweig’s third and last use of the phrase *pazifistischer Zug* from 1917, in reference to Robespierre and Lenin. A text by his mentor, Friedrich Meinecke, also helps Rosenzweig to, yet again, remove any uncertainty regarding pacifism. This time, pacifism (the materialist kind) is the true victor of any war, but instead of peace and freedom that such pacifism only desires, it creates nothing but “*pax* (‘*Landfrieden*’) *und Libertät*.”¹⁶ In the letter to his parents, Rosenzweig describes the crucial error of his mentor:

Thus, this war was not politically unproductive and without aim, as Meinecke contends... Meinecke’s fundamental mistake is that *malgré tout* he still thinks of states, and not unions of state. He says: unions of states

make wars useless; they introduce nothing political creative, by this Meinecke means that wars creatively influence only the single state. However, states are no longer the carriers of history, rather it is unions of states, and it is precisely on them that war, this war in fact, has a creative influence. The truly real politics source of the idea of pacifism is: overcoming the national within the federal state.¹⁷

Which further shows, continues Rosenzweig, that the national and liberal state idea was in its inception also *ein pazifistische Zug*. Both formulations shift the meaning of the phrase *pazifistischer Zug*: the pessimistic – that pacifism does not reach true world peace and freedom, but only imperial peace determined by borders and government; the optimistic – based on which pacifism (the idealist kind) is that part of the war machine that takes down state borders. The idea (of the national or liberal state) does not possess *Zug*, but is *Zug*, at its beginnings, at the moment when it begins to constitute itself. However, that *Zug* is the beginning of its constitution is also really the beginning of its future end. To be or to possess the *pazifistischer Zug* means ultimately to cease to be or cease to have – not to be a nation state and not possess sovereignty.

Thus, in an entirely different register, Rosenzweig is able to find at the heart of the state itself – the main characteristics of which are violence (right), war, and revolution – the very thing that destroys it. *Pazifistischer Zug*, as a deconstructive or affirmative element found within the construction and at the foundation of the national state, can be gleaned in a few places in the chapter “Peoples of the World: Messianic Politics.” Rosenzweig has a surprisingly inspirational way of speaking about the state and resistance of the Jewish people to a state that would make them but one of the peoples of the world. He reveals that at its core, the state possesses something contrary to the Jewish people, something entirely alternative, which, paradoxically, has the power to deprive the eternal people of its eternity. Rosenzweig really confirms the potential of a state to achieve something entirely new and alternative (if the state could achieve what it ostensibly aims for), and bring about that a people conquer its enemy.¹⁸

But who reveals the world (world peace) and who is the ideal subject of pacifism? Who ought to be the bearer of this process, according to Rosenzweig? Here again is that passage from *The Star of Redemption*, in which he speaks of Jewish internationalism, achieved thanks more to pacifism than Zionism.

Opposite this constant life in the war of faith, the Jewish people has its war of faith behind it in a mythic past. Therefore all wars that it still experiences are purely political wars for it. And since it does possess the concept of the war of faith, it therefore cannot take them seriously, like the ancient peoples for whom this concept was foreign. Of course, the Jew is really the only man in the Christian world who cannot take war seriously, and therefore is the only genuine “pacifist”... by living the

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eternal peace, the Jewish people stands outside of a warlike temporality; by resting at the goal that it anticipates in hope, it is separated from the march of those who draw near to it in the toil of centuries.¹⁹

The Jew is the true or authentic “pacifist,” because he cannot take seriously the wars conducted among Christian states. Twice Rosenzweig underscores that the Jew *cannot* accept and take seriously these political wars. They are foreign to him because they do not belong to the register or notion of religious wars. Regardless of the fact that in the chapter “War of Faith,” preceding this passage, Rosenzweig says that as opposed to Christian peoples, the Jewish people know both types of war and are the sole guardian of the knowledge of the distinction between them, and regardless of the fact that Rosenzweig reveals the possibility of existence of yet another, third kind of war (in which the religious and political are mixed), the Jewish people remain entirely outside the world and outside the warring present. In “War of Faith” he says:

Belonging to the most significant passages of our ancients’ law is the distinction between ordinary war against a “very faraway” people, which was waged according to the universal rules of martial law for which war is a usual expression of like form of the State, and the war of faith against the “seven peoples” of Canaan, by which the people of God captured the necessary living space for it ... The people of the Christian era can no longer uphold the distinction. In conformity with the spirit of Christianity that tolerates no borders, there are no “very faraway” peoples for them ... That which Jewish law could separate as concerns its public law, war of faith and merely ordinary war, is blended into for them. Precisely because they are not real peoples of God, but only the way to becoming so, they cannot draw those distinct borders; but, in any case, they know how far God’s will is realized in the warlike destinies of their States. Somehow – the how remaining puzzling; the people must become accustomed to the idea of a possible destruction; whether as a people it will be used as a stone in the edifice of the Kingdom – the consciousness of the individual decides nothing concerning this; the war alone decides, which rages on above the consciousness of the individual.²⁰

The last several sentences in this passage could indeed be interpreted in the messianic key. There are wars between states and peoples (in which these peoples risk their demise – this being the basic characteristic of so-called political wars for Rosenzweig), which are decided, in an entirely miraculous and enigmatic way, by God’s will or by war itself, and which reside beyond the consciousness of individuals. Is it truly possible that such wars are entirely without importance for Rosenzweig, for the Jew? Was Rosenzweig’s entire effort not precisely an attempt to overcome this strict distinction between the two types of wars within the Jewish political tradition, and construct or renew the idea of final, messianic wars? If we leave aside Rosenzweig’s own doubts,

his own dissatisfaction with the outcome of World War I, the abandonment of the project of grounds for war – what does it even mean to take no heed of political wars and be the only true “pacifist?”²¹

I believe that correct answers to these difficult questions could not only justify the relevance of Rosenzweig’s arguments in favor of war (they are really little more than sketches of an argument, rather intuitions or suggestions), but also perhaps explain another epoch in the history of the Jewish people, one which Rosenzweig could not have had in mind: the Holocaust, the formation of Israel, the wars of the state of Israel, new wars (preventive, asymmetric wars, etc.) for world governance, and so on. Although in his political manifesto, “Peoples of the World: Messianic Politics,” he places the Jewish people entirely on the other side of any state or conflict between worldly states, it might still be possible to defend the consistency and logic of his project, adding to it the existence of the state of Israel. It would also seem important to advocate for a paradoxical harmony of his project with the changes that occurred after his death. The defense of Rosenzweig’s endeavor in a complex Jewish political tradition could move in the following three steps.

First, the sentence “the Jew is the only authentic ‘pacifist’” requires purification of the crucial ambiguity of Rosenzweig’s use of quotation marks on the word pacifist and the controversial proximity of the words *authentic* and *pacifist*. Is the Jew really the sole true and authentic pacifist or the sole true and authentic “pacifist” (in which case he is the sole true pseudo-pacifist, that is, a true pacifist who is not a pacifist, a “militant pacifist”). Which returns us to the crucial word, *der einzige*, the only, the true. Only the Jew is the true idealist pacifist. In that context, the Jew is not interested in purely political wars, but what follows them – true peace at all cost that interrupts those wars, God (war) who decides their end, the Messiah who turns political wars into final wars, thus finally bringing eternal peace.

Second, Rosenzweig *de facto* protects the distinction between a religious and ordinary war(s),²² but very carefully opens an uncertain field where this distinction might be reduced. The existence of a great world war allows Rosenzweig to construct the idea of political war or political wars that must not be interrupted before they become final, messianic wars. Only the final war ought to be brought to an end, and this only when God’s will does so or when the enemy unconditionally accepts peace.²³

Third, a new world war and the existence of the state of Israel and its wars does not necessarily have to degrade Rosenzweig’s project, nor the greatness of a people once within reach of its goal. Neither a closing, nor an expansion of a state, but above all a new acceleration of world history ... the renewal of what Rosenzweig once, a long time ago, called *pazifistischer Zug*.

Notes

- 1 Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans. B. E. Galli (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 351.

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- 2 In a letter to Gritli of 28 December 1918, he writes: “*Quisque patimur sous manes – jeder hat seine eignen Pazifisten in der Familie, ihr ja auch; es ist ein wilde Sekte.*” Franz Rosenzweig, Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy Fund web page, The “Gritli” Letters (1918), accessed May 7, 2017, www.erhfund.org/online-article/gritli-letters-gritli-briefe-1918/.
- 3 Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Mensch und sein Werk, Gesammelte Schriften*, 3. *Zweistromland. Kleinere Schriften zu Glauben und Denken* (Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), 91.
- 4 Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 348. “*In dem Kreislauf seines Jahres ist die Zukunft die bewegende Kraft; die kreisende Bewegung entsteht gewissermaßen nicht durch Stoß, sondern durch Zug; die Gegenwart verstreicht, nicht weil die Vergangenheit sie weiterschiebt, sondern weil die Zukunft sie heranreißt.*” Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1996), 364.
- 5 Letter to Gritli of November 10, 1918, Franz Rosenzweig, Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy Fund web page, The “Gritli” Letters (1918), accessed May 7, 2017, www.erhfund.org/online-article/gritli-letters-gritli-briefe-1918/
- 6 Letter to Eugen Rosenstock of December 15, 1917. Franz Rosenzweig, Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy Fund web page, The “Gritli” Letters (1918), accessed May 7, 2017, www.erhfund.org/online-article/gritli-letters-gritli-briefe-1917/. This passage was left out of Rosenzweig’s collected works. Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Mensch und sein Werk, Gesammelte Schriften*, 1. *Briefe und Tagebücher*, volume 1 (Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979), 489. Rosenzweig’s published correspondence, as well as his *Diaries*, were systematically censored, and various passages were often entirely unnecessarily omitted. Cf. Franz Rosenzweig Collection; AR 3001; box 1; folder 17–19; Leo Baeck Institute at the Center for Jewish History.
- 7 Cf. Letters to parents of August 17 and September 1, 1916. Rosenzweig, *Der Mensch und sein Werk*, 204 and 214.
- 8 Both in his youth and later, at the beginning of *The Star of Redemption*, in defining philosophy, Rosenzweig often employs the metaphor of the grave or opening.
- 9 Cf. Letter to parents August 17, 1916, Rosenzweig, *Der Mensch und sein Werk*, 204; the note in *Diaries* was made in September 1916, 90–1.
- 10 Letter to Martin Buber of December 12, 1922. Rosenzweig, *Der Mensch und sein Werk*, 874.
- 11 Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 370.
- 12 Cf. “*Globus*” and “*Vox Dei? Die Gewissensfrage der Demokratie*,” in which Rosenzweig often speaks of war that decides and judges. Rosenzweig, *Der Mensch und sein Werk, Gesammelte Schriften*, 3. “*Zweistromland. Kleinere Schriften zu Glauben und Denken*,” 279; “*Der Krieg ist ein ‘göttliches Gericht,’ aber kein einfaches Strafgericht, sondern ‘Krisis,’ Scheidung, Böcke und Schafe.*” Letter to parents, Rosenzweig, *Der Mensch und sein Werk*, 350.
- 13 Cf. Letters to parents, September 1, 1916; Rosenzweig, *Der Mensch und sein Werk*, 210–14.
- 14 Regardless of the myriad similarities between Schmitt and Rosenzweig (relation towards pacifism, obsession with geopolitics, thematization of the figure of the enemy, original differentiation between land and sea, etc.), there is no evidence that they had ever read one another. Schmitt mentions Rosenzweig once and in passing, on page 153 of his diaries after the war, published under the title *Glossarium* (Berlin: Dunker and Humblot, 1991), when talking about the tragedy of assimilation in Germany. In the Schmitt archive in Dusseldorf there are several files that confirm Schmitt’s extraordinary interest in Benjamin, Scholem, Bloch, Marcuse, Lukacs, etc. Based on my research, however, there is no indication that Schmitt knew of the few Rosenzweig texts published under a pseudonym during World War I.
- 15 Letter to parents, January 6, 1917, Rosenzweig, *Der Mensch und sein Werk*, 327–8 (emphasis added).

- 16 Rosenzweig, *Der Mensch und sein Werk*, 462.
- 17 Letter to parents, October 1, 1917, Rosenzweig, *Der Mensch und sein Werk*, 459. His comments regarding Meinecke continue in several letters from this period.
- 18 Does this not sound like an announcement of a *pazifistischer Zug* of the state of Israel?
- 19 Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 351; Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 368.
- 20 Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 350–1; F. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 367. In certain places, I have slightly modified Barbara E. Galli’s translation.
- 21 When we follow Rosenzweig’s intention to render functional and bring into his own time the distinction of kinds of war in the Jewish tradition and find some third solution that refers to world war or the current conflict between the peoples, it is clear that he is above all working through Maimonides’ efforts. Rosenzweig never uses the Christian phrase *holy war*, eliminated by Maimonides (*Mishna Yadaim* 4, 4; Maimonides, *Sefer ha-mitsvot*). Further, just like Maimonides, Rosenzweig, due to the inexistence of Sanhedrin or a Decision of the Court, who assume the existence of political wars, commits an error. Namely, either he reduces all wars to exclusively political wars of other peoples (the sentence “Thus, all present wars are for this people purely political wars,” does not mean that Jewish political wars are impossible, and even if these political wars are frivolous and unimportant, it does not follow that it is not possible to participate in them). Or else he reduces all political wars to religious or messianic. For Maimonides, an obligatory war of his time was a “war for the liberation of Israel from an enemy attack” (*Hilkhot Melakhim*, 5. 1). This construction does not exist in the Talmud, just as there is no variation in obligatory war (*milhemet hashihhur*, war of independence (of Israel)) in contemporary students of Maimonides, the recently deceased Yehudah Amital and Yitzhaq Kaufman.
- 22 Rosenzweig almost certainly adopts the distinction between fully warranted, imposed, or obligatory wars (*milhemet mitzvah*) and discretionary, authorized, or voluntary wars (*milhemet reshut*) (*Babylonian Talmud*, *Sotah* 44b; *Mishnah*, *Sotah* 8:70; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilkhot Melakhim* 5:1) from Hirsch’s famous commentary. Cf. Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Der Pentateuch*. 5. *Deuteronomium* (Frankfurt: V.J. Kaufmann, 1878), 331.
- 23 Today, there are several important attempts to add to the ancient distinction between wars. Cf. “Pre-emptive or perhaps preventive wars,” Norman Solomon, *The Ethics of War: Judaism*, in *The Ethics of War. Shared Problems in Different Traditions*, eds. R. Sorabji and D. Rodin (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006), 111. “Banned or forbidden war,” Michael Walzer, *War and Peace in the Jewish Tradition*, in *The Ethics of War and Peace. Religious and Secular Perspectives*, ed. T. Nardin (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 97. “Wars of defense,” Reuven Firestone, *Holy War in Modern Judaism? “Mitzvah War” and the Problem of the “Three Vows.”* *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 74, no. 4 (December 2006), 968.

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6 “That aftertaste of violence”

Violence against Violence

I would like to elucidate the connection between three kinds of violence: violence committed by someone, by myself or Emmanuel Lévinas, or even by the state in response to this initial violence; “violence against violence,” a paraphrase of a famous hesitation by Lévinas concerning the use or right to violence (*droit à la violence*¹); and third, a violence that lingers in the mouth and throat, that aftertaste – lingering taste, *goût*, and disgust, *degoût* – of violence, of which Lévinas speaks in his 1963 *Messianic Texts – cet arrière-goût de violence*² or *un quelconque arrière-goût de degoût* [a kind of aftertaste of disgust].³

Before I discuss certain passages in Lévinas, that is, before I discuss the third [*le tiers*], politics and the state in Lévinas, his notion of the institution, legitimacy of violence, even what he calls necessary violence and ethical necessity, I nevertheless must insist on several difficulties. There are three of them, they are all Lévinas’ and all three call into question any hospitality and openness towards the other, towards the other’s violence or towards violence of my neighbor [*prochain*]. All three difficulties (or dilemmas) in Lévinas have their beginning in phenomenology, in his equal measures of adherence and resistance to Husserl.

The first difficulty has to do with the definition of violence. It seems to me that Lévinas’ first explanation of what violence is does not allow for the possibility of extreme or destructive violence.⁴ Conversely, Lévinas gives the illusion that the other’s advantage is infinite, that the acceptance of the other is unconditional, and that hospitality is absolute and limitless. In four of his main texts from the early 1950s, Lévinas speaks about violence as partial negation (“*Négation partielle qui est violence*”⁵) – murder as total negation is already, in 1951, diluted by his constant repetition that “in the presence of the other’s face” or “when face to face with the other,” it is impossible to kill.⁶ Although these definitions of violence are patently influenced by Eric Weil,⁷ Lévinas nevertheless constructs three new ideas. The first is that “violence is any action we commit as if acting on our own” [*est violente toute action où l’on agit comme si on était seul à agir*],⁸ and “violence is consequently also any action which we endure without at every point collaborating in it.”⁹ Two years later, Lévinas changes and adds to this formulation: “An action is

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violent when it does not seek a relation with the other; it is the moment we act as if on our own” [*L’action violente ne consiste pas à se trouver en rapport avec l’Autre; c’est précisément celle où on est comme si on était seul*].¹⁰ And he demonstrates that seemingly, violence comes from outside and that in principle it does not exist between two people. The third novel idea can be found in one of his most complicated and important works, *The I and Totality*, first published in 1954, where it is finally revealed that the source of true violence is outside “intimate association” [*société intime*] or “association of love” [*société de l’amour*] (a closed association, a couple [*société close, couple, entre-deux*]) – i.e., in “a ‘true association’” [*une “vritable société”*], which refers to the third (“a third man, a third way, a true ‘thou’, a plurality of thirds” [*le troisième homme, une troisième voie, le “tu” véritable, une multiplicité de tiers*])).¹¹

However, Lévinas completely removes any sacred aura from the space of violence and injustice, characterizing it as a space for things and goods, material bodies, and money. (Lest we forget, the idea of justice for Lévinas is above all economic.)¹² Only just reparations through money can bring an end to the history of human violence, says Lévinas.¹³ Furthermore, despite implying the existence of “a real injury” [*une blessure réelle*], it seems that the third (party) is not the subject of violence. Lévinas repeatedly speaks in the first person, about an “I” who can damage the third and cause him harm.¹⁴ It is the “I” who brings violence or damages; not the other or the third.

This leads us to the second difficulty in Lévinas: who is the subject of violence and who tolerates it? Who is violent? I (the “selfsame”), the other, or a third person (third party)? The neighbor [*proche*] or kin [*prochain*]? Or else the state? Or God? Who should be defended, who should defend who, who is bringing harm to whom? Do not the foundations of all these questions, which Lévinas continuously repeats and reformulates an infinite number of times, contain the first questions about the constitution of the subject and about the limits of intersubjectivity? On the other hand, how is violence lessened or how can it be erased? If pardon and vengeance cannot break the infernal cycle of violence (“*le mal engendre le mal et le pardon à l’infini l’encourage*”¹⁵), what is left? Perhaps it is necessary and somewhat acceptable, at this time, to question the very basic foundations of Lévinas’ texts: do not the histories of great crimes and murders tell us that the face does not stop crime (on the contrary), and that the reasons for the existence of violence can perhaps be explained by an absence of others? Perhaps violence is possible because the other (or third) is not present?

The third difficulty is methodological and probably most complex. It is necessary to carefully and systematically explain how Lévinas understands the notion of institution and what “to institute” [*instituer*] means to him. This preliminary task should again show Lévinas’ proximity and distance from Husserl,¹⁶ but also something much more important. When Lévinas, in 1977, writes about the third, about justice, about my relation to *autrui* (which is “always the relation with the third”), he says the following:

one must compare, weigh, think; one must do justice, which is the source of theory. The entire recovery of Institutions – and of theory itself, of philosophy and of phenomenology, which explicate what appears – is done, according to me, starting from the third party.¹⁷

It is necessary to closely follow Lévinas’ numerous attempts and variations of this sentence, in order (for him) to be able to explain the connection between philosophy and institution, that is, the state.¹⁸ As early as 1953, Lévinas writes: “To conceive of and to bring about a human order is to set up a just State, which then is the possibility of surmounting the obstacles that threaten freedom. It is the only way to preserve freedom from tyranny.”¹⁹ In 1982, Lévinas continues: “Yes, there is a possible harmony between ethics and the state. The just state will come from just men and women and saints rather than from propaganda and preaching.”²⁰ Philosophy (or theory, or phenomenology) should bring justice into institutions or into the state. Immediately, I would pose two questions here: is philosophy responsible for the regulation of violence (“resisting evil by force,” “the legitimacy of violence,” “the justification of violence,” “necessity of ethics,” “ethical necessity”) and does philosophy make violence just or justifiable? Does philosophy introduce elements of justice into violence or into war? This question finds its source in Lévinas’ famous insistence (in *Totalité et Infini*) that Western philosophy produced war and that it is structured like war (an unjust and criminal war, of course).

The second question is especially problematic: how does Lévinas’ philosophy repair (provide justice to) institutions (the state) or perhaps to a world state, to laws, etc.? This question assumes that we have answers to another series of questions: how do we read and translate Lévinas today? How do we write about him? Can Lévinas’ theory function in the Anglo-American space and in Israel (and if so, in what way?), in new discussions concerning the ethics of war, concerning self-defense and the defense of the civilian population, concerning the immunity of civilians (non-combatants), concerning permissible killing, concerning asymmetrical war, etc.?

If I were to attempt to sketch a short answer to this great question regarding Lévinas’ intervention in existing institutions or in an ideal future institution (ultimately always present in a philosophical gesture), I must begin with the ineradicable trace of violence. In several messianic texts and comments from the 1950s (although unpublished until 1963), Lévinas discusses, for the first time in detail, the violence of others (evil ones) and the possibility of a just violence. He does so completely in accordance with his “economic justice” from 1954. He investigates several fragments from the Talmud and the coming of the third (the other, the closest, the Messiah), “as a person who comes to put a miraculous end to the violence in the world [*aux violences qui régissent ce monde*].”²¹ Apart from the end of violence and political repression [*fin de la violence et de l’oppression politique*]²² in the messianic epoch, Lévinas especially fears whether the Messiah will bring an end to poverty and social violence. Here are these unforgettable words:

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Can the end of political violence be separated from the end of social violence? Does Samuel announce a capitalist paradise in which there is no more war, no more military service, no more anti-Semitism, in a way that leaves savings untouched and the social problem unsolved? A parallel text – for there are many parallel texts in the Talmud – possibly indicates the reason put forward by Samuel in support of his thesis: “There is no difference between this world and the days of the Messiah except (that in the latter there will be no) bondage of foreign Powers, as it says: For the poor shall never cease out of the land” [*Il n’y a entre l’époque messianique et ce monde-ci d’autre différence que la fin de la violence et de l’oppression politique, car il est dit dans la Bible (Deut. 15. 11): ‘Le pauvre ne disparaîtra pas de la terre’*] (Berachoth, 34 b).²³

This problem creates an entirely new complication: how will violence and injustice be erased? Lévinas continues:

Because at the messianic moment He must sacrifice the wicked to the good. Because in the just act there is still a violence that causes suffering. Even when the act is reasonable, when the act is just, it entails violence ... This is also why the necessary commitment [*engagement*] is so difficult for the Jew; this is why the Jew cannot commit himself (*s’engager*) without also disengaging (*se désengager*), *voilà pourquoi il lui reste toujours cet arrière-goût de violence*, even when he commits himself to a just cause; the Jew can never march off to war with banners unfurled, to the triumphal strains of military music and with the Church’s blessing.²⁴

Lévinas first changes his perspective and stops defining the violent act as such. A just or correct (and rational) act probably contains violence because it brings pain and suffering to the other (the evil, unjust one). However, this violence cannot be erased by justice or rationality. Yet, on the other hand, violence cannot be hidden or forgotten by the state, the community, or by the church or religion. The bitter taste (aftertaste) in one’s mouth or the remaining violence in the throat (in another place Lévinas talks about Abraham’s “after-taste of ashes and dust” [*arrière-goût de cendre et poussière*]²⁵) is the precondition for true proof that violence was present (and that it has yet to occur) and that there will always be eternal responsibility for it. Only this remnant of violence which is found *a priori* in Lévinas’ every testimony and which best explains his discourse concerning responsibility for the other, can lead us to an examination of violence perpetrated by the other against the third or the third against the other. But, I must once again repeat that with Lévinas “that aftertaste of violence” absolutely eliminates my discourse or my testimony concerning violence committed against me. This is Lévinas’ great innovation.

I would now like to mention several sentences from a very famous interview with Lévinas of September 28, 1982.²⁶ The state of Israel is also mentioned in

this interview, as is the Jew and violence which the other commits against the third and the third against the other.

Before and after this interview, and certainly in accordance with the difficulty of constituting a just state of Israel, Lévinas begins to speak about “my” legitimate resistance to violence. In 1977, Lévinas says:

My resistance begins when the harm he does me is done to a third party who is also my neighbor [*lorsque le mal qu'il me fait (autrui), est fait à un tiers qui est mon prochain*]. It is the third party who is the source of justice, and thereby of justified repression; it is the violence suffered by the third party that justifies stopping the violence of the other with violence [*c'est la violence subie par le tiers qui justifie que l'on arrête de violence la violence de l'autre*].²⁷

In two interviews, given on October 3 and 8, 1982 to “Philosophie, Justice et Amour,” Lévinas adjusts and changes this perspective:

When I speak of Justice, I introduce the idea of the struggle with evil, I separate myself from the idea of nonresistance to evil. If self-defense is a problem, the “executioner” [*le “bourreau”*] is the one who threatens my neighbor [*le prochain*] and, in this sense, calls for violence and no longer has a Face ... So the whole problematic of the executioner is opened here; in terms of justice and the defense of the other, my fellow [*de l'autre homme, mon prochain*], and not at all in terms of the threat that concerns me ... There is a certain measure of violence necessary in terms of justice [*à partir de la justice ... There is an element of violence in the state, but the violence can involve justice [comporter la justice]*]. That does not mean violence must not be avoided as much as possible; everything that replaces it in the life between states, everything that can be left to negotiation, to speech, is absolutely essential; but one cannot say that there is no legitimate violence... The other [*Autrui*] concerns you even when a third does him harm, and consequently you are there before the necessity of justice and a certain violence. The third party isn't there by accident. In a certain sense, all the others are present in the face of the other [*le visage d'autrui*] ... “Offering my cheek to him that smiteth” ... But I am responsible for the persecution of my neighbors [*prochains*]. If I belong to a people, that people and my relatives [*mes proches*] are also my neighbors [*sont aussi mes prochains*]. They have a right to defense, just as do those who are not my relatives [*Ils ont droit à la défense comme ceux qui ne sont pas mes proches*].²⁸

Another of Lévinas' variations of this idea can be found in the 1985 interview, “Violence du Visage:” “Violence is originally justified as the defense of the other, of the neighbor [*de l'autre, du prochain*] (be he a relation of mine, or my people!), but is violence for someone [*mais est violence pour quelqu'un*].”²⁹

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Nowhere does Lévinas explicitly discuss the difference between neighbor [*prochain*] and kin [*proche*]. This is perhaps why *proche* is initially translated into English as kin and as “someone who is near to me” (*prochain* is always neighbor). However, *proche* is one who is closer to me than my neighbor [*prochain*] (*proche* can be my friend and can certainly be of a different nationality). Lévinas says so implicitly. I will repeat several suggestions by Lévinas which can certainly be a precondition for a future text concerning Lévinas’ greatest problem, “self-defense.” Can or must one, but also when and who, defend themselves from the other (from the third, from the state)?

All these suggestions are overshadowed by the transformation of my (Lévinas’) fear of hurting the third (1954) and fear for the innocent (1969), into my fear for the other person [*la crainte pour autrui*].³⁰ Looking at the dates, only much later does Lévinas introduce the possibility that the other or the third can commit violence. And his answer is quite explicit: I am responsible for this, I must use violence and protect the other, and I must die for the other and sacrifice myself for the other.

Lévinas’ two innovations here are as follows. In contrast to Heidegger, my concern is always concern for the other. In contrast to Hobbes, the necessary existence of a just state (the instance of a protector) is a consequence of my fear for the life and security of the other.³¹

His proposals, therefore, are: (a) Lévinas gives the same name – neighbor [*prochain*] – to both the one who is my other and my third; (b) *le proche* has no privileged position in relation to one who is not my *proche* (both have the right to defense); (c) “to have the right to defense” is an ambiguous formulation: “to have the right” to defend myself or “to have the right” for someone else to defend me?; (d) the privileged position of *le proche* in relation to *le prochain* – only *le proche* “has the right to defense” – is definitely erased by Lévinas because sometimes the other attacks the third, and sometimes the third attacks the other. Therefore, my *proche* can be violent towards the one who is (only) my neighbor.

In the interview of September 28, 1982, following the civilian (non-combatant) massacre, Lévinas repeats the idea of violence which never has the same direction. This is Lévinas’ game of personal pronouns that begins with violence that “we” [*nous*] or “I” [*moi*] suffer, but definitely ends with the suffering of “others” [*autres*], and with my responsibility.

I don’t at all believe that there are limits to responsibility, that there are limits to responsibility in “myself.” My self, I repeat, is never absolved from responsibility towards the Other. But I think we should also say that all those who attack us with such venom have no right to do so, and that consequently, along with this feeling of unbounded responsibility, there is certainly a place for a defense, for it is not always a question of “me,” but of those close to me, who are also my neighbors. I’d call such a defense a politics, but a politics that’s ethically necessary. Alongside ethics, there is a place for politics.³²

However, the others [*autres*] who should be defended are the same others from whom someone else must be defended.

My definition of the other is completely different. The other is the neighbor, who is not necessarily kin, but who can be. And in that sense, if you're for the other, you're for the neighbor. But if your neighbor attacks another neighbor or treats him unjustly, what can you do? Then alterity takes on another character, in alterity we can find an enemy, or at least then we are faced with the problem of knowing who is right and who is wrong, who is just and who is unjust. There are people who are wrong.³³

“But if *your* neighbor attacks another neighbor or treats him unjustly, what can you do?” [*Mais si VOTRE prochain attaque un autre prochain ou est injuste avec lui, que pouvez-vous faire?*] Is not the origin of Lévinas' question, his concern, and hesitation, not already found in this sentence: “that is why the Jew cannot engage without also disengaging immediately, that is why there always remains that aftertaste of violence, even when he is engaged in a just cause” [*voilà pourquoi le juif ne peut pas s'engager sans se désengager aussitôt, voilà pourquoi il lui reste toujours cet arrière-goût de violence, même quand il s'engage pour une cause juste*].

Notes

- 1 Emmanuel Lévinas, *Nouvelles lectures talmudiques* (Paris: Minuit, 1996), 70; Emmanuel Lévinas, *New Talmudic Readings*, trans. R. Cohen (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2007), 65.
- 2 “*Même lorsque l'acte est raisonnable, lorsque l'acte est juste, il comporte une violence... Voilà pourquoi l'engagement nécessaire est si difficile au juif, voilà pourquoi le juif ne peut pas s'engager sans se désengager aussitôt, voilà pourquoi il lui reste toujours cet arrière-goût de violence, même quand il s'engage pour une cause juste.*” Emmanuel Lévinas, *Difficile liberté. Essais sur le judaïsme. Essai sur le judaïsme* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1963), 109. There is as of yet no English translation of this passage. The addition, “that is why [the Jew] always retains that aftertaste of violence,” has never been translated. “This is also why the necessary commitment (*engagement*) is so difficult for the Jew; this is why the Jew cannot commit himself without also disengaging, even when he commits himself to a just cause; the Jew can never march off to war with banners unfurled, to the triumphal strains of military music and with the Church's blessing.” Emmanuel Lévinas, *Difficult Freedom. Essays on Judaism*, trans. S. Hánd (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 80. This omission, as well as others, which occur often in the translation of Lévinas, force me to follow only the French original and offer my own solutions in the English.
- 3 Emmanuel Lévinas, *De Dieu qui vient à l'idée* (Paris: Vrin, 1982), 66; Emmanuel Lévinas, *Of God who Comes to Mind*, trans. B. Bergo (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 193.
- 4 The term “absolute other” (in 1957, Lévinas says that this term belongs to Jankelevich; but it is also Hegel's term) never has a negative connotation. When, in certain places, Lévinas uses the word “enemy” or “hostility,” he is solely attempting to find a figure which is the absolute other and which cannot be assimilated.

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- 5 Emmanuel Lévinas, *L'ontologie est-elle fondamentale* (1951), *Entre nous* (Paris: Le livre de poche, 1993), 20.
- 6 Lévinas, *Entre nous*, 21. Lévinas first mentions “visage” in a series of lectures he gave in 1946–7, published in 1948 in *Le temps et autre*.
- 7 Lévinas mentions Weil’s book *Logique de la philosophie* (1951) in a text titled *Ethique et esprit* (1951) and speaks of its importance in understanding violence in opposition to discourse. Cf. Lévinas, *Difficult Freedom*, 17–18.
- 8 Lévinas, *Difficile liberté*, 21. Lévinas, *Difficult Freedom*, 6.
- 9 Lévinas, *Difficile liberté*, 20. Lévinas, *Difficult Freedom*, 6.
- 10 Emmanuel Lévinas, *Liberté et commandement* (1953) (Paris: Fata morgana, 1994), 43–4.
- 11 Emmanuel Lévinas, *Le Moi et la Totalité*, in *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 4 (1954), 358 (published again in Lévinas, *Entre nous*, 23–48). It is curious that Derrida omits an analysis of Lévinas’ text in “Violence and Metaphysics.”
- 12 Lévinas, *Le Moi et la Totalité*, 27. Conversely, in *Adieu* Derrida repeatedly speaks of right, that is, of “*l’exigence de la justice comme droit*.” Cf. Jacques Derrida, *Adieu à Emmanuel Lévinas* (Paris: Galilée, 1997), 190.
- 13 Lévinas, *Le Moi et la Totalité*, 47–8.
- 14 Lévinas, *Le Moi et la Totalité*, 30.
- 15 Lévinas, *Le Moi et la Totalité*, 48. English translation: “Evil engenders evil, and pardon extended infinitely encourages it.” Emmanuel Lévinas, *Entre nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other*, trans. B. Harshav and M. B. Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 45. In this text, Lévinas puts forward a hypothesis concerning justice that can bring an end to violence. I repeat, Lévinas does not strictly connect justice with the state or rights. In fact, Lévinas rarely uses the word right [*droit*], even later in life. In *Autrement qu’être ou au-delà de l’essence* (Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), the problem of “breaking the cycle of violence” is solved by a call for patience.
- 16 Here I am referring to Lévinas’ understanding of Husserl’s terms “to institute,” “to institute initially” [*stiften, urstiften*], as well as to Husserl’s first readers and translators in France who wrote about the institution (Merleau-Ponty, Ricoeur, Lyotard). Paradoxically, the responsibility for concealing the uniqueness of these words is borne by Emmanuel Lévinas, who translates the word *Urstiftung* in *Cartesian Meditations* (1929) in two ways. In § 38, Lévinas and Gabrielle Peiffer (Alexandre Koyré examined this translation) translate *Urstiftung* as “*formation première*,” and in the famous § 50, as “*création première*.” Edmund Husserl, *Méditations Cartésiennes. Introduction à la phénoménologie, 1931* (Paris: Vrin, 1992), 181.
- 17 Lévinas, *De Dieu qui vient à l’idée*, 132; Levinas, *Of God who Comes to Mind*, 82.
- 18 “*Les institutions et l’Etat lui-même peuvent être retrouvés à partir du tiers intervenant dans la relation de proximité. Peut-on déduire les institutions à partir de la définition de l’homme “loup pour l’homme” plutôt qu’otage de l’autre homme? Quelle différence y a-t-il entre des institutions naissant d’une limitation de la violence ou bien naissant d’une limitation de la responsabilité? Au moins celle-ci: dans le second cas, on peut se révolter contre les institutions au nom même de ce qui leur a donné naissance.*” Emmanuel Lévinas, *Dieu, la mort et le temps, 1976* (Paris: Grasset, 1993), 211–12. Cf. Emmanuel Lévinas, *Autrement qu’être ou au-delà de l’essence*, 248, 251, 256, 263; Lévinas, *Totalité et infini*, 276, 282, 284.
- 19 Lévinas, *Liberté et commandement*, 39; Emmanuel Lévinas, *Freedom and Command, Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. A. Lingis (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987), 17.
- 20 Lévinas, *Entre nous*, 139; Lévinas, *Entre nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other*, 120. “It takes institutions to arbitrate and a political authority to support all this. Justice requires and establishes the state [*La justice exige et fonde l’Etat*].” Lévinas, *Entre nous*, 216; Lévinas, *Entre nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other*, 195–6.

- 21 Lévinas, *Difficile liberté*, 83. Lévinas, *Difficult Freedom*, 59.
- 22 The English translation omits these words. Lévinas, *Difficult Freedom*, 61.
- 23 Lévinas, *Difficile liberté*, 86–7; Lévinas, *Difficult Freedom*, 61. In a text from 1969 concerning Judaism and revolution, Lévinas again goes back to just violence (violence that puts an end to all future violence), necessary violence against evil, and “The God of Armies” [*Dieu des armées*]. Cf. Emmanuel Lévinas, *Du sacré au saint* (Paris: Minuit, 1977), 45.
- 24 Lévinas, *Difficile liberté* 108–9; E. Lévinas, *Difficult Freedom*, 79–80. As I mentioned, that portion of the sentence, “*cet arrière-goût de violence*,” does not exist in the English translation.
- 25 Lévinas, *Nouvelles lectures talmudiques*, 92; Lévinas, *New Talmudic Readings*, 122.
- 26 Cf. Emmanuel Lévinas, *Israël: éthique et politique*, interview with S. Malka (and with A. Finkielkraut), in *Les Nouveaux Cahiers*, 18, no. 71 (Winter 1983), 1–8. In the past few years this interview has been heavily criticized in England and the United States. Cf. “the well-known fiasco of Lévinas,” Slavoj Žižek, *Organs without Bodies* (London: Routledge, 2003), 106. It has been translated into English as *Ethics and Politics*, trans. J. Romney, in *The Lévinas Reader*, ed. S. Hand (London: Basil Blackwell, 1989). As an introduction to this translation, the genesis of an incident that occurred on September 15 is explained (on page 288). An incident during which “Christian soldiers massacred several hundred people in the Sabra and Shatila Palestinian camps with no intervention on the part of the Israel Defense Forces. At first, Menachem Begin refused to set up a judicial enquiry, commenting in the New York Times that ‘Goyim kill goyim, and they immediately come to hang the Jews.’” David K. Shipler, *The Massacre Brings on a Crisis of Faith for Israelis; Mourning, Anger and Moral Outrage*, *New York Times*, September 26, 1982.
- 27 Lévinas, *De Dieu qui vient à l'idée*, 134; Lévinas, *Of God who Comes to Mind*, 83.
- 28 Lévinas, *Entre nous*, 123–5; Lévinas, *Entre nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other*, 105–7.
- 29 Emmanuel Lévinas, *Violence du Visage, Altérité et transcendance* (Paris: Fata morgana, 1995), 173; Emmanuel Lévinas, *Violence of the Face, Alterity and Transcendence*, trans. M. B. Smith (London: Athlone Press, 1999), 172. It seems that “prochain” (the other in a moral sense [*au sens moral du terme*], as Lévinas says), appears for the first time in the text “Langage et proximité” in 1967. Lévinas capitalizes the word *le prochain*. In the introduction to the book *L'au-delà du verset: Lectures et discours talmudiques* (Paris: Minuit, 1982), written in September 1981, Lévinas speaks about “my” people and “my” family, who also, like strangers, demand justice and protection (they are the others, near to me and my neighbors [*autres, proches et prochains*]).
- 30 Lévinas, *Entre nous*, 139; Lévinas, *Entre nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other*, 130.
- 31 “*Il signifie un Etat au sens complet du terme, un Etat avec une armée et des armes, une armée qui puisse avoir une signification dissuasive, et s'il le faut défensive. Sa nécessité est éthique: c'est en effet, une vieille idée éthique qui commande précisément de défendre nos prochains. Mon peuple et mes proches, ce sont encore mes prochains. On défend le prochain quand on défend le peuple juif; chaque juif en particulier défend le prochain quand il défend le peuple juif.*” “It signifies a State in the fullest sense of the term, the State with an army and arms, an army which can have a deterrent and if necessary a defensive significance. Its necessity is ethical indeed; it's an old ethical idea which commands us precisely to defend our neighbors. My people and my kin are still my neighbors. When you defend the Jewish people, you defend your neighbor; and every Jew in particular defends his neighbor when he defends the Jewish people.” Lévinas, *Israël*, 4; Lévinas, *Ethics and Politics*, 292.
- 32 “*Je ne crois pas du tout que la responsabilité ait des limites, que la responsabilité en “moi” ait des limites. Le moi, je le répète, n'est jamais quitte envers autrui. Mais je*

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pense, et il faut aussi le dire, que tous ceux qui nous attaquent d'une manière si hargneuse n'y ont pas droit et que, par conséquent, il y a certainement à côté de ce sentiment de responsabilité illimitée une place pour une défense, car il ne s'agit pas toujours de “moi” mais de mes proches qui sont mes prochains. A cette défense je donne le nom de politique, mais de politique éthiquement nécessaire. A côté de l'éthique, il y a place pour la politique.” Lévinas, *Israël*, 3; Lévinas, *Ethics and Politics*, 291–2.

- 33 “*Ma définition de l'autre est tout à fait différente. L'autre, c'est le prochain, pas nécessairement le proche, mais le proche aussi. Et dans ce sens-là, étant pour l'autre, vous êtes pour le prochain. Mais si votre prochain attaque un autre prochain ou est injuste avec lui, que pouvez-vous faire? Là, l'altérité prend un autre caractère, là, dans l'altérité peut apparaître un ennemi, ou du moins là se pose le problème de savoir qui a raison et qui a tort, qui est juste et qui est injuste. Il y a des gens qui ont tort.”* Lévinas, *Israël*, 5; Lévinas, *Ethics and Politics*, 294.

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7 Sacrifice

Word, Institution, Institutionalization

Let us return to Rosenzweig once again. I would like to retrace Rosenzweig's reconstruction of the word sacrifice and that empty word *Opfer* in the context of his "struggle against institutions." (That phrase is cobbled from Rosenzweig's correspondence with Buber.¹) Immediately, I would like to put forth the following four premises.

(1) Rosenzweig, the philosopher and translator, could be one of those new people of calm demeanor, who could potentially be more successful in the fight against institutions than pompous prophets. In a letter to Buber, Rosenzweig speaks about the degradation of sacrifice among prophets and in the Psalms, and admits that the prophets' fight against the institution of sacrifice always seemed impossible. This is why he expresses a need for new people who will be calm and probably systematic. The battle against institutions is too long-term an endeavor for volatile prophets.² Judaism – Rosenzweig cites one of his friend's several lines before this word – is a system of knowledge.

(2) If the battle against the institution of sacrifice, more precisely, against sacrifice that becomes institution, or that is institutionalized – Buber corrects Rosenzweig and transforms the abstract word institution into the more concrete institutionalization of sacrifice occurring in Temple³ – if this battle, begun by prophets and carried on by Rosenzweig, is supposed to end with the final substitution of sacrifice for kindness [*Wohltätigkeit*] and study,⁴ then the status of philosophy is doubly marked. In one sense, philosophy is the shape of the battle against that which is institutionalized or enclosed, because to philosophize is to translate and reveal the untranslatable (that which cannot be translated, but which must be translated); in the other, philosophy, as a system of knowledge or as text, is structured as sacrifice. Philosophy, always limitless and never determined or disrupted by law, can add to and develop the practice of sacrifice.

(3) The uncertain status of philosophy in Rosenzweig determines the possibility or impossibility of the shift *par excellence* of a pagan practice into Judaism. The possibility of Jewish philosophy determines the question of substituting (but also adding to) the practice of sacrifice or the empty word *Opfer* with philosophical text structured as a *korban*. Therefore, philosophy

can be called Jewish philosophy only if *korban* is kept within its activity, if it remains within it, and is contained by philosophy. If philosophy or a philosophical text attracts another or draws towards another, if the distance to another and relation to another is reduced, then philosophy remains within the register of actions aimed at messianic time. This means that philosophy has a radical effect, that philosophy teaches about the hardship of the radical and that philosophy is a radical introduction to radical change, meaning to messianic time. The radical change that Rosenzweig (or Judah Halevi)⁵ speaks about, assumes an end to the hell of world history, absolute responsibility, assumes the closeness of God, and, perhaps most importantly, visibility or complete transparency or visible sacrifice.

(4) The battle of both prophets and poets against the institutionalization of sacrifice, and the development of this battle by Rosenzweig, effectively marks the reinstatement of sacrifice.⁶ Rosenzweig's (and Buber's) systematic erasure of the word "sacrifice" (*Opfer*) from his (their) translation of the Torah⁷ and the deconstruction of the basic elements of sacrificial practices, is not merely a substitution of sacrifice. Reading, studying the Torah or philosophy as a theory of the translation of the Torah, does not replace sacrifice (all these operations are not simply *as if* of real sacrifice); rather, they accomplish quite the opposite – they affirm sacrifice. But first, they complement and overcome it [*Überhöhung*]. In a translator's note to a Halevi poem, which Rosenzweig refers to in a letter to Martin Buber, he analyzes the poet's anticipation of the future and his dream of the restoration of visible sacrifice. The poet's "sacrifice of his own heart" in the Temple, does not represent substitution for sacrifice. Rather, Rosenzweig compares it to "prophet-psalmist's struggle for sacrifice" (this note about the struggle *for* sacrifice was written at the same time as the letter to Buber in which the struggle is *against* sacrifice). The heart does not replace the flesh of the sacrificed animal, despite being more precious – continues Rosenzweig together with Halevi – but the heart on the altar of the Temple is almost an introduction to the final objective and the final of all final aspirations – a grave in the holy land.⁸

These four assumptions can perhaps be the condition for a possible reconstruction of Rosenzweig's resistance, that is, for his theory of radical change. The theory of the radical is really a theory of a radical approach to God. The final objective is a grave – a grave where once was a Temple – and then in death, a proximity to God.⁹ It seems to me that before Rosenzweig's endeavor and intervention are recognized as messianism, and perhaps as a complicated and systematic charge towards a new time, it is important that we locate this register of sacrifice within a system of knowledge. Indeed, this can be considered Rosenzweig's first innovation in relation to tradition. He never even attempted, nor did he have the time, to develop in detail the figure of sacrifice or *korban* as the most general term for this act. All we have are several fragments scattered in Rosenzweig's letters to friends over the years, in which he speaks about the limits and meaning of sacrifice, as well as several notes concerning the difficulty of translating and erasing the German word *Opfer*.

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In spite of all of this, the problem of sacrifice is constantly present in Rosenzweig's circle of friends. Indeed, immediately following the philosopher's death, his closest collaborators (his wife, Buber, and Viktor von Weizsäcker) decide to publish fragments from several letters that concern this very question.¹⁰ It is clear that Rosenzweig's interpretation of sacrifice evolves immensely and that it is only at the end of his life, when he translates the Torah and reconstructs the word *Opfer*, that he recognizes sacrifice as *korban* ("proximity is not sacrifice, but only proximity").¹¹ Still, from the very beginning, as he is translating and thinking sacrifice as a gift or present, Rosenzweig's efforts are completely transparent. What Rosenzweig is examining is proximity to the other, proximity to God.

How do we get close or what is getting close to another? What is proximity? How do we successfully or efficiently get close to someone, and conversely, what must we do for another to get close to us? But also, how do we confirm and radically reveal previously promised or previously existent proximity? At its core, Rosenzweig's intervention (it is also often difficult to reconstruct the exchanges with Buber and differentiate his influence) follows the great efforts of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch.¹² However, it would not be enough to simply say that Rosenzweig merely completes a task already labeled by Hirsch as difficult and almost impossible: to truly translate *korban* into German without losing what *korban* hides and what, if anything, is left of the significance of the gesture once designated by this word.¹³ (*Korban*, plural *korbanot*; the root, *karav*, in the transitive *hif'il* form, *hakrev*, means to come closer, but also *to be* closer.) Rosenzweig is dissatisfied with Hirsch's interpretation (as well as his translation), and it is this resistance to Hirsch that in some way leads Rosenzweig to his argument about prophets, doctors, and the limits of substituting sacrifices into other practices.¹⁴

Rosenzweig's position is characterized by several important moments. *Korban* is already an institution as it represents a general name for several specific sacrificial forms for getting close to God (*olah*, *minchah*, *chelamim*, *hattat*, *zabah*, *asham*, etc.). Rosenzweig imagines it as the most efficient activity that ever existed and which has yet to be visible and real. To sacrifice in order to get (something) closer to God and to get oneself closer to God (by offering, communal offering, killing of an animal, destroying an animal, eating, burning, etc.) is not a paradigm of a process which shortens the distance, rather, it is a symptom of an already established and recognized proximity. In an inspired letter to his great friend Eduard Strauss, Rosenzweig explains this in a similar way.¹⁵ Sacrifice is a symptom of an orderly state of things. "If sacrifice can occur in a Jewish manner, then it is because God gave an order to things. Order is not created through sacrifice. Rather, sacrifice is a visible sign that order is already established."¹⁶

The visibility to which Rosenzweig continually refers in this letter – an epiphany is visible, we pray for visibility, only commandments create visibility – is taken from the Musaf Kedushah. Rosenzweig mentions this prayer, spoken during religious festivals to evoke so-called additional sacrifice (*musaf*

means additional or supplementary), in order to present sacrifice as a gesture which produces proximity or renders the existence of God visible. Sacrifice is an addition which illustrates that proximity exists or that it is being added (approaching). To sacrifice means to render proximity visible by adding or making something else closer. This is the crucial moment of Rosenzweig's interpretation. For Rosenzweig, Jewish sacrifice represents a clear stand against and separation from the pagan or Christian practice of sacrifice.¹⁷ It seems that Rosenzweig truly takes up Hirsch's interpretation of the word *korban* (despite having read it quite late); however, he also greatly radicalizes it. The radical nature of Rosenzweig's (and Buber's) translation and thinking about the word *korban* begins the distancing from Hirsch.

For Rosenzweig, to oppose the pagan form of sacrifice is not to interpret and accept sacrifice as a means of getting closer to the other or to God. *Korban* is not a means or *korban* surpasses the pagan economic logic, from which Hirsch does not distance himself enough when he differentiates between sacrifice in Judaism and paganism.¹⁸ Despite taking up Hirsch's basic strategy for thinking sacrifice in opposition to paganism (and despite repeating some of his positions), Rosenzweig is not happy with Hirsch's translation of the word *korban*. Even though Hirsch says that ultimately *korban* is not connected to gift or giving/bringing, that *korban* is "*nahen, näher kommen, also: in innigere Beziehung zu Jemandem gelangen*" (close, coming closer, but also achieve intimacy with someone),¹⁹ he keeps the word *Opfer* in his translation, as well as the word to bring: "When any one of you brings an offering to the Lord, you shall bring your offering of the livestock."²⁰ Hirsch's answer is a compromise (above all a compromise with Luther) that requires we bring something of our own, dear to us, close to God. The reason for doing so most likely being (something completely hidden in Hirsch's translation) that we ourselves wish to be close to (in harmony with) God's will. For Rosenzweig, this translation and understanding of sacrifice is completely useless. By erasing the word *Opfer*, and keeping the preposition "*dar-*," which requires motion (instead of the word *Darbringen*, they use the extremely rare word *Darnahung*), Rosenzweig and Buber enable a completely experimental translation: "*Nahung, Darnahung.*" "We bring closer proximity to Him (God)" or "We bring closer our proximity to Him" (we make ourselves closer to Him).

It was Buber, in his famous 1927 lecture,²¹ in which he interprets the use of *hif'il*, a form of the word *korban* used in Korah's rebellion, who almost certainly determined the aforementioned translation. He also revealed his (that is, their) intention. Namely, in contrast to *paal* or *qal*, both forms of the noun *korban* (*karav*, means to bring together, *nahen*), the transitive *hif'il* form (in Buber and Rosenzweig *hakrev*, *darnahen*; in Luther *opfern*²²) indicates the so-called causal form of the verb. In this case the accent is not placed on what we today call the subject of the action (this would be, for example, myself as I approach and get closer to the altar). Nor is the accent on me as I approach the altar with something in my hands (this would mean that I could not get

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close to the altar or the other if I had nothing in my hands, which is meaningless), nor is the accent on what I have in my hands. Rather, it is on the approach itself to the other whom I am approaching. When we get close to Him, we do so because we were told to approach and because the closeness was given in advance. We approach because we are already close. Thus, the command or imperative: “come closer!” (or “Sacrifice!”) becomes I approach You because I bring You closeness, because You are close, because I oblige You to be close, because You said You would be close, etc.²³

Rosenzweig and Buber give preference to *Korban* as (self-)proximity (to bring proximity closer, bring closer proximity, the bringing closer of the other) over Hirsch’s mystical²⁴ sacrifice as a means of winning the favor of another or compromise with another or representing identification with the killed animal. I do not kill or destroy in order to remove an obstacle that lies between God and me, nor do I give in order to get something in return, nor do I, by killing an animal, manifest or simulate or imagine my own murder. “In the end, I have my body. I eat and drink,”²⁵ says Rosenzweig and renounces the comical opposition to the killing of innocent animals by confirmed non-vegetarians. “The natural taking of food” and “he who gives food” could be justification enough for the sacrifices in ancient times, as much as holy wars were.²⁶ Only the Jewish people remember sacrifice and recognize its limits (and the limits of the substitution of sacrifice):

What is created does not perish. Working to make something that has been created perish is asceticism. Buddhism is a legitimate consequence of an old Indian religion of sacrifice. Jewish sacrifice is a strict denouncement of asceticism. Here, we are “self-” sacrificing. No more, no less. The existence of the world has been confirmed. “*Auf*”-*geopfert* is not at issue, as only things are sacrificed.²⁷

I am not talking about destroying everything; about sacrificing everything along with the one who is performing the sacrifice (*Aufopferung* is Hegel’s or Weizsäcker’s main word). Rosenzweig, in a letter written to Rosenstock six years earlier, points out that sacrifices occur and nothing comes out of them *other* than the sacrifice itself remaining as a lasting, permanent element of faith and proximity.²⁸ This is where we find the key change in comparison to paganism.

In the end, the word *korban* can be a general name for a completely different practice which restores lost proximity. And we have already seen Rosenzweig writing about love of the other, about kindness and goodness, about the fantasy of the poet who shortens the distance to God, about a prayer that institutes closeness and is composed of words that refer to closeness and the reinstatement of sacrifice, about the (final) war that brings history to an end and hastens the coming of the Messiah.

The significance of philosophy as translation, that is, the importance of philosophy as a way to get close to another and which eliminates fear of

proximity (fear of death), was discovered very early. Philosophy, at the end of Rosenzweig's life, foreshadows and develops the difficulty of radical change and confirms the ultimate objective: a grave where once stood a Temple, followed by a proximity to God in death. Ten years earlier, the task of philosophy was not simply to stand against philosophy (*in philosophos!*) and the possibility of understanding everything:

The inexhaustible womb of the earth ceaselessly gives birth to what is new, and everyone is subject to death; each newly born waits with fear and trembling for the day of its passage into the darkness. But philosophy refutes these earthly fears. It breaks free above the grave that opens up under our feet at each step. It abandons the body to the power of the abyss, but above it, the free soul floats off in the wind.²⁹

On November 17, 1906, Franz Rosenzweig, still a medical student, makes six notes in his diary about the difference between philosophizing and not philosophizing. The first fragment is *Words Are Gravestones*. Words are either bridges over chasms or planks over the abyss, they are frequently passed carefully without observing what is beneath them. To look down would be to cause vertigo. Unphilosophical people differ from philosophical ones in that they are not interested in what is currently in the grave; rather, they look at what is written on the gravestones, or perhaps at the meaning of what is written. Some simply go over the bridge to get to the other side and become acquainted with it, some enjoy the walk, etc. "To philosophize means to open graves, stare into the abyss, descend into the shaft."³⁰

Notes

- 1 Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Mensch und sein Werk, Gesammelte Schriften*, 1. *Briefe und Tagebücher*, volume 2 (Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979), 1049–50. Buber answers Rosenzweig's letter on July 5, 1925. Martin Buber, *Briefwechsel aus Sieben Jahrzehnten*, volume 2 (Heidelberg: Verlag Schneider, 1973), 226–7.
- 2 "Kampf gegen Institutionen ist eine viel zu langatmige Sache für den Sturmtem des Profeten." Rosenzweig, *Der Mensch und sein Werk*, 1050.
- 3 "Opfer – nein, gewiss nicht, gegen eine Institution haben die Propheten nicht gekämpft, aber gegen ein Institutionwerden." Buber, *Briefwechsel aus Sieben Jahrzehnten*, 327. In his response of July 7, Rosenzweig does not comment on Buber's stance on sacrifice. We do not see if Rosenzweig has changed his stance after Buber's interpretation of sacrifice which he, three years earlier, termed an "uncertain Jewish position." Cf. Letter to Eduard Strauss January 5, 1922. Rosenzweig, *Der Mensch und sein Werk*, 738.
- 4 *Michna, Peah*, 1. 1. Cf. Rosenzweig, *Der Mensch und sein Werk*, 738. Rosenzweig mentions two of five activities which are not predetermined by law and measure.
- 5 Cf. Annotation of the Judah Halevi poem, *Im Heiligtum*. Franz Rosenzweig, *Jehuda Halevi, Fünfundneunzig Hymnen und Gedichte, Gesammelte Schriften*, volume 4 (Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1983), 206–8.
- 6 Rosenzweig, *Jehuda Halevi*, 206. The dilemma that appears in the book *Menahoth* 110a concerning the possibility of a sacrifice occurring at any other location after

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- the destruction of the Temple is interpreted in two ways: “One who studies the Torah is like one who were offering a burnt-offering [*hattat*], a meal-offering [*asham*], a sin-offering [*korban*] and a guilt-offering.” *Menahoth* 110a. Meaning, whoever studies the Torah can do so anywhere. Cf. Solomon Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*, chapter 17, *Forgiveness and Reconciliations with God* (New York: Schocken Books, 1961 [1909]), 293–312. Rambam develops the idea that private altars existed in the period after the destruction of the Bet ha-Mikdash. Cf. J. David Bleich, *Contemporary Halakhic Problems*, volume 1, chapter 12, *Reinstitution of the Sacrificial Order* (Jersey City: KTAV, 1977), 244–67.
- 7 The word sacrifice or the German word *Opfer* does not appear in the German translation of the Torah. *Opfer* appears only five times in the *Schrift*, only in the Psalms (*Ps* 4:6; 27:6; 116:17), probably after Buber’s revision, as a translation of the Hebrew word *zabach*. However, this word is exclusively translated as *Dankmahlschlachtung* in the Levite book. Buber mentions this last word in his text “Zu einer neuen Verdeutschung der Schrift.” Martin Buber, *Die fünf Bücher der Weisung*, volume 1 (Gerlingen: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1976), 20.
 - 8 “und die allerletzte der letzten Erfüllung und des letzten Ziels: das Grab in der heiligen Erde.” Rosenzweig, *Jehuda Halevi*, 226. Here is the final stanza of Halevi’s poem, as translated by Franz Rosenzweig: “Und wohnen dort und binden dir mein Herz auf / den Altar, köstlicher als Tiereshessen, / Und werd mein Grab in deinem Lande haben, / aus dass es dort mir Zeugnis sei all dessen.” Rosenzweig, *Jehuda Halevi, Fünfundneunzig Hymnen und Gedichte*, 225.
 - 9 Rosenzweig, *Jehuda Halevi*, 208.
 - 10 The final edition of the first Judeo-Christian journal, *Die Kreatur* (volume 3, 1929/30, 424–34), contained a number of fragments under the title *Aus Franz Rosenzweigs Nachlass, Die Kreatur* 3 (1929/30): 424–34. I assume that von Weizsäcker (Rosenzweig mentions him in a letter to Buber dated July 3, 1925) is responsible for choosing these fragments and that his exchange with Rosenzweig concerning sacrifice still remains unexplained (despite Wolfgang Jacob’s text, read at the first Rosenzweig Congress in Kassel in 1986).
 - 11 Letter to Gertrud Oppenheim of July 10, 1928. Rosenzweig, *Der Mensch und sein Werk*, 1192.
 - 12 I am above all referring to Hirsch’s translation and commentary of the Torah. Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Der Pentateuch* (Frankfurt: J. Kauffmann, 1873), particularly volume 3, *Lev.* 3–8. Nevertheless, Rosenzweig’s referencing of Hirsch is minimal, while in Buber it is almost entirely missing. In the text *Oeffene Anfrage an Martin Buber* signed by R. B., published in the journal *Nach’lath Z’wi* (9, no. 10, 1931; published by *Rabbiner Hirsch Gesellschaft*), the author minutely presents Hirsch’s efforts in translating the word *Opfer*, something completely forgotten by Buber. At the end, the author wonders why Buber has been silent on this point and whether he even knows Hirsch and the praise he deserves in correcting Luther’s translation (318).
 - 13 *Lev.* 1: 2, “Speak to the Israelite people, and say to them: When any of you presents an offering of cattle to the Lord, he shall choose his offering from the herd or from the flock.” *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). Rosenzweig and Buber translate this sentence as: “*Ein Mensch, wenn er von euch IHM eine Nahung darnaht* [jakriv mikem korban LAdonai], *vom Vieh; von den Rindern und von den Schafen, mögt ihr eure Nahung darnahn* [ta’krivu].” Luther translates it as “*Welcher unter euch dem Herrn ein Opfer tun will,*” and Hirsch as “*ein Mensch wenn er von Euch ein Opfer Gott nahebringen will... sollt ihr euer Opfer nahebringen.*” Hirsch, *Der Pentateuch*, 4–6.
 - 14 It is interesting that Nahum Glatzer, in his 1976 text *The Concept of Sacrifice in Post-Biblical Judaism. Quest for Substitutes for Sacrifices after the Destruction of the Second Temple*, never mentions Rosenzweig or his dilemma concerning

- substitution. Cf. Nahum Norbert Glatzer, *Essays in Jewish Thought* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1978), 48–57.
- 15 In a 1919 letter Rosenzweig calls Strauss “*ein profetische Jude*.” The letter to Strauss of January 5, 1922 is Rosenzweig’s response to Strauss’s “*Opferbrief*.” It is almost certain that a key portion of Strauss’ letter is the undated work titled “*Über die Opfergebete*,” today kept in the Eduard Strauss Collection; AR 7192 / MF 703; box 6; folder 83; Leo Baeck Institute at the Centre for Jewish History.
 - 16 “*Wenn jüdisch geopfert werden darf, ist die Ordnung der Dinge wie Gott sie will hergestellt. Sie wird nicht durch Opfer hergestellt. Sondern das Opfer ist das sichtbare Zeichen, dass sie hergestellt ist.*” Rosenzweig, *Der Mensch und sein Werk*, 739.
 - 17 Rosenzweig develops this dual opposition during World War I. Writing to Eugen Rosenstock on July 7, 1916, he analyzes Abraham’s and Agamemnon’s sacrifice, as well as the sacrifice of Jesus, in an attempt to oppose pagan sacrifice to the sacrifices of Golgotha and Moriah. Rosenzweig, *Briefe und Tagebücher*, 284–5. In his doctorate on Hegel and in *The Star of Redemption*, sacrifice for the state is interpreted as a Christianized and spiritual form of pagan sacrifice. As discussed in Chapter 1, in Hegel, sacrifice is a precondition for the existence of the state, rights, or order. Cf. Franz Rosenzweig, *Hegel und der Staat*, volume 1 (Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1962 [1920]), 127, 159–60; Franz Rosenzweig, *Zweistromland. Kleinere Schriften zu Glauben und Denken* (Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), 270–4.
 - 18 In Hirsch’s commentary on *Lev. 10: 1*, the pagan sacrifices in order to instruct God and bend him to the pagan’s own will, while the Jew wishes to serve God through sacrifice; with his sacrifice, he wishes to serve God’s will. The economic logic is restored with Joseph, but before that also with Jesus. In Mark (7: 11) and Mathew (27: 6) *korban* appears in the Greek text and means more security than vow.
 - 19 Hirsch, *Der Pentateuch*, 6.
 - 20 *Lev. 1:2*.
 - 21 The lecture “*Die Bibel als Erzähler*” was published in Martin Buber, *Werke, Schriften zur Bibel*, volume 2 (Munich: Kösel Verlag, 1964), 1135–9.
 - 22 Rosenzweig mentions this differentiation in two places. Cf. Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Mensch und sein Werk, Gesammelte Schriften*, 4. *Sprachdenken im Übersetzen*, volume 2 (Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), 134; and also in a synopsis of a conversation regarding translation reconstructed by his wife on July 7, 1927. Rosenzweig, *Briefe und Tagebücher*, 1164–5.
 - 23 Both Buber and Rosenzweig open the word *korban* with two other lines: Buber recalls Numbers 15: 4, “*Darnahe, wer seine Nahung JHWH darnacht*,” “the closest one will be he who brings his closeness closer” or “I will bring closer the one who comes closest to me,” Buber, *Schriften zur Bibel*, 1137; while Rosenzweig recalls *Lev. 10: 3*, “*An meinen Nahen erheilige ich mich*” [*bikrovai ekadesh*], “Through those near to me I show myself holy.” Rosenzweig, *Briefe und Tagebücher*, 1164.
 - 24 In a commentary for *Er Rief 1: 1–2*, speaking of Hirsch’s translation, Rosenzweig writes: “Hirsch is very unsympathetic here. Sacrifice as a means by which one gets closer to God is quite magical” [*Das Opfer als Mittel zur Gottesnähe ist doch arg magisch*]. This means, continues Rosenzweig, that man can bring [*nachbring*] something to God from the place where he (man) resides, where he is, which is as if a small child allowed his parents to take a piece of his cake [*Dagegen daß der Mensch aus seinem ihm eingeräumten Gebiet Gott etwas nachbringt, ist so sinnvoll, wie wenn ein kleines Kind seine Eltern abbeißen läßt*]. Rosenzweig, *Sprachdenken im Übersetzen*, 134.
 - 25 Rosenzweig, *Briefe und Tagebücher*, 738.
 - 26 The killing of animals *en masse* certainly predates the time of the Temple. Perhaps it is justifiable that I should paraphrase Rosenzweig’s dual standard concerning pacifism, that is, the Jew as the only true “pacifist” [*der einzige echte “Pazifist”*]. Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1996), 368. The Jew is the only true “vegetarian” [*der einzige echte “Vegetarier”*].

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- 27 “*Die Schöpfung verschwindet nicht. Sie verschwinden machen, ist Askese. Der Buddhismus ist die legitime Konsequenz der altindischen Opferreligion. Das jüdische Opfer ist die strenge Ablehnung der Askese. Es wird da ‘nur’ geopfert. Nicht je mehr umso besser. Es wird das Vorhandensein der Welt anerkannt. Sie wird nicht “auf“-geopfert. Sondern es wird nur von den Dingen geopfert.*” Rosenzweig, *Briefe und Tagebücher*, 738–9.
- 28 Rosenzweig, *Briefe und Tagebücher*, 285.
- 29 Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 1.
- 30 This portion of the *Diary* was left out of publication. Diaries III–IV 1906 September 29–1908 March 4. Franz Rosenzweig Collection; AR 3001; box 1; folder 18; Leo Baeck Institute at the Center for Jewish History. “*Worte sind Grabsteine. Worte sind Brücken über Abgründe. Man geht hinüber, meist ohne runterzusehn. Tut man es doch, so wird einem leicht schwindlig. Worte sind auch Bretter, die über einen Schacht gedeckt sind, sodass man ihn nicht mehr sieht. Philosophieren heißt: Gräber öffnen, in die Abgründe hineinspähen, in die Schächte hineinklettern. Der unphilosophische Mensch unterscheidet sich vom philosophischen darin, dass er die Grabinschrift liest, ohne dabei zu denken, was nun eigentlich in dem Grab liegt (selbst dem – unphilosophischen – Gelehrten, den Historiker, liegt diese Frage fern; er deutet nur die Inschrift und fragt, wie sie gemeint sei); weiter darin, dass er über die Brücke einfach läuft, um auf die andere Seite zu können (oder – wenn er zufällig Dichter ist – weil ihm das Gehen spass macht); weiter darin, dass er von Schächten, die ins Erdinnere führen, nichts weiss. In ihrem Verhältnis zu den Worten unterscheiden sich also die beiden. Der eine läuft über sie weg, der andere stolpert über sie, beide aber – und das macht die Sache so kompliziert – haben sie ein Portemonnaie und können nur mit ihnen zahlen.*”

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8 “Divine Violence,” “Radical Violence” Korah’s Rebellion

The same year that Franz Rosenzweig published *The Star of Redemption*, 1921, Walter Benjamin published his famous text *Critique of Violence*. And although there is little to suggest that the two men considered each other’s work in detail, I would like to claim that there is nevertheless a harmony between these texts. Indeed, the reason for the rich history of reconstruction of Benjamin’s text – from Scholem and Löwenthal, all the way to Honneth, Žižek, and Butler – might not only stem from the exceptional deconstructive power of the striking montage. It also emerges from a fantastic misunderstanding concealed by Benjamin’s surprising analogy: divine violence and Korah.

To this connection of divine violence and the name Korah, I would like to add two annotations that should delimit and complicate any further interpretation of Benjamin’s text.

(a) Unlike Leo Löwenthal,¹ I treat Benjamin’s writing as a collection of messianic categories and figures. Analogous to this, (b) I follow Scholem’s famous qualification of Benjamin’s “purely Jewish text,” as a manifestation of “positive nihilism” or “noble and positive violent destruction.”² These two elements (messianism and positive nihilism) could double the power of my intervention into Benjamin’s text and perhaps negate the advantage its title enjoys over its subtitle (“The Rebellion against Moses as the First Scene of Messianism [Numbers, 16]”). In that case, the alternative title, concerning the connection between divine violence and the name Korah, would fall into the background and become dominated by Benjamin’s remarkable suggestion or intuition: that the first great rebellion (or revolution) in the histories of justice (and the ultimate one within myth³ or right) evokes or provokes something messianic. An important episode in the life of one nation, initiated by Korah and a handful of rebels, represents the beginning of the construction of messianic theater.

Yet, conversely, if we attempt to find signs of messianism within the rebellion as such,⁴ if, for example, Korah, in opposition, but also always together with Benjamin, is the “first left oppositionist in the history of radical politics,”⁵ then the final and divine violence carried out by God would, in fact, be Benjamin’s pure revolutionary violence perpetrated precisely against this first

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revolutionary. The circulation of the alternative title of this text in the subtitle (and vice versa) is an accurate description of the misunderstanding in connection to the conception of revolution in Benjamin. For, the one who carries out revolutionary violence is not found where we, all of us, expected him to be. Is it not perhaps precisely this betrayed expectation which constantly brings us back to *Critique of Violence*? But before dealing with this, we must ask, what exactly do we expect? A final violence of catastrophic proportions negating every future violence and time of expectation? Do we expect the subject of this positive violence – the noble subject of the revolution? Do we expect justice?

Here now is Benjamin’s famous fragment about the difference between mythic violence and divine violence that forms the culmination of this text. It is preceded by several ambiguous sentences in which, referring to Hermann Cohen, Benjamin speaks of rebellion as the main characteristic of the fight against the spirit of mythic legislation (thus reducing the importance of the figure of the rebel), and about our – perhaps most important – task. The harmful role the mythic demonstration of immediate violence (that is, the violence of right) has played in history demands its destruction. According to Benjamin:

This very task of destruction poses again, ultimately, the question of a pure immediate violence that might be able to call a halt to mythic violence. Just as in all spheres God opposes myth, mythic violence is confronted by the divine. And the latter constitutes its antithesis in all respects. If mythic violence is lawmaking, divine violence is law-destroying; if the former sets boundaries, the latter boundlessly destroys them; if mythic violence brings at once guilt and retribution, divine power only expiates; if the former threatens, the latter strikes; if the former is bloody, the latter is lethal without spilling blood. The legend of Niobe may be contrasted with God’s judgment on the company of Korah, as an example of such violence. God’s judgment strikes privileged Levites, strikes them without warning, without threat, and does not stop short of annihilation. But in annihilating it also expiates, and a profound connection between the lack of bloodshed and the expiatory character of this violence is unmistakable. For blood is the symbol of mere life. The dissolution of legal violence stems (as cannot be shown in detail here) from the guilt of more natural life, which consigns the living, innocent and unhappy, to a retribution that “expiates” the guilt of mere life – and doubtless also purifies the guilty, not of guilt, however, but of law. For with mere life, the rule of right over the living ceases. Mythic violence is bloody power over mere life for its own sake; divine violence is pure power over all life for the sake of living. The first demands sacrifice; the second accepts it.⁶

Therefore, Benjamin reveals divine violence to be a force possessed or carried out by God while judging Korah and his band. That is his only example. This

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syntagm (imprecise yet frequent in theological texts) already encompasses several of the alternative formulations with which Benjamin opposes the violence of right, that is, violence created and kept by right. Divine violence is at once pure and immediate violence, Sorel’s proletarian strike which is in fact not violent, but is destructive, and pedagogical violence which is similarly different from the law. According to Benjamin, divine violence happened long ago, and together with the crisis of mythic legal norms, establishes a new historical epoch. At the beginning, Benjamin announces the arrival of something new, something that is no longer distant from us (which is certainly not a new right⁷). Afterwards he confirms that revolutionary violence is no longer impossible, and in the end, he proclaims a completely new and secretive violence that has yet to unfold and seems to possess all the messianic and sovereign characteristics.⁸ Divine violence is, it seems, constantly present, as it can occur in any form, imaginable (war, capital punishment, etc.) and unimaginable. At the end of his text Benjamin insists that this violence is completely unclear and incomprehensible to all of us.

The second fragment, just cited, is considered the most important and perhaps most original part of the *Critique of Violence*. Benjamin attempts to formulate his argument by differentiating the kind of violence used to punish Niobe from the kind used to punish Korah. He does so in order to mark and institutionalize a new form of violence and in order to strongly oppose revolutionary and radical pacifism, as well as Kurt Hiller’s Judaism and understanding of life.⁹ It seems to me that this fragment is especially complex because Benjamin is reading anew and rearranging all the elements of his text in light of this difference and the new violence he recognizes in the case of Korah.

I wish to quickly note these elements and perhaps mention several possible sources and reasons for Benjamin’s introduction of Korah into the text. I would like to explain the fact that so few readers of this text have dealt with this analogy,¹⁰ by showing that the traces that concern Korah and his band have been carefully removed or that they still remain inaccessible to us. These elements are in fact the texts that Benjamin uses during the composition of his text. It is relatively easy, starting with the numerous texts from the cited passage, whether referred to directly or not, and then in the whole *Critique of Violence*, to reconstruct the histories of their receptions and readings.

The first group comprises texts Benjamin explicitly cites. Their authors are Kant, Erich Unger, Sorel, Cohen,¹¹ and Hiller. Next is a group of books or texts or ideas known to have influenced Benjamin’s writing in one way or another, which include: Hugo Ball’s *Kritik der deutschen Intelligenz* from 1919 (besides the identical use of the word critique, it seems to me that Benjamin recalled well Ball’s analysis of Dante’s *De Monarchia*, chapter 1.1); followed certainly by Ernst Bloch’s *Geist der Utopie* from 1918 and *Thomas Münzer, als Theologe der Revolution* from 1921, and Baudelaire whom Benjamin read and translated before writing this text (the notions “*frappe*,” “*choque*,”¹² or “*catastrophe*”¹³ are found quite often in Benjamin).

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A group of writings almost never mentioned, but which definitely played a significant part in the construction of Benjamin’s text, are Rickert’s 1920 book *Die Philosophie des Lebens*,¹⁴ David Baumgardt’s article from the same year concerning the problem and concept of the possible¹⁵ (and impossible), and of course Hegel, without whom Benjamin’s writing is inconceivable. Benjamin does not merely repeat some of Hegel’s motifs and figures of violence, such as the violence of the hero or pure violence,¹⁶ nor does Benjamin copy and correct some of Hegel’s phrases;¹⁷ rather, Benjamin’s entire thematization of the relation between right and violence is completely lifted from Hegel, that “mystic of violence.”¹⁸

Texts written by jurists and those concerning jurisprudence represent a special source of Benjamin’s inspiration. There is no reason to assume that Benjamin was unaware of Stammler’s works that deal with anarchism or the right of the stronger, nor that he was unaware of a series of studies on differing values published annually from 1909 in French, and concerning the relationship between right and force (from authors such as Daniel Lesueur, Edgard Milhaud, Jacques Flach, and Raoul Anthony).

Conversely, Benjamin could obviously not have read the most systematic book on the topic, as it was published in the same year as *Critique of Violence*: Erich Brodmann’s *Recht und Gewalt*.¹⁹ Nonetheless, the direct inspiration for writing his text could be the jurist Herbert Vorwerk’s text “Das Recht zur Gewaltanwendung,” published in September 1920.²⁰ I would assume that this text and the debate it stirred led Benjamin to quickly write a short text in response to the problem of right and the legitimacy of the use of violence. Benjamin’s notes on Vorwerk’s work might constitute a sketch for the *Critique of Violence*. Simultaneously, the *Critique* could perhaps represent the perfect *resumé* of several of Benjamin’s contemporary lost texts, sketches, and projects concerning politics. If it is at this point that I must find the connection between these three “hands” (Vorwerk’s one and Benjamin’s two hands, since he produces the notes and the text within the span of a few months), then I would choose, in Vorwerk’s text, a passage that fundamentally distances Benjamin from right and the violence of the right (or state violence). On page 15, Vorwerk writes that “The ‘right to a revolution,’ as jurists have taught for hundreds of years, is conceptually impossible.”²¹

Such a concept does not exist, that is, there is no right that leads to revolution, nor is a revolution within the law possible. The phrase right to a revolution is simply worthless. At the very end of the *Critique of Violence*, Benjamin seems to find yet another space for violence and revolution: “But if the existence of violence beyond the law, as pure immediate violence, is assured, this furnishes proof that revolutionary violence is possible and is the name for the highest manifestation of pure violence by man.”²² For Benjamin’s answer to be possible, to make the conceptually impossible possible, a complete change of register is necessary, as is the complete separation of right and violence. Only violence which can be completely separated and isolated from right can be called revolutionary violence (divine, absolute, pure,

sovereign, etc.). This strict separation is the precondition for discovering a completely new space (and time) outside right. In his note and first reactions to Vorwerk’s text, that is to say, several months before the *Critique*, Benjamin opposes the coercion of right or the intensive efforts of right to become real [*intensive Verwirklichungstendenz des Rechts*]. His intention is to limit the urgency and impatience of right to occupy the world. It seems that his reservations about right are an introduction to something completely different: “What is at issue is violent rhythm of impatience, in which law exists and has its temporal order, as opposed to the good <?> rhythm of expectation in which the messianic event unfolds.”²³

The question mark found after the adjective “good” is Benjamin’s own intervention. It points not only to a latent uncertainty, or Benjamin’s hesitation in the hopes of finding a more precise adjective, but also to the very same uncertainty and ignorance before an event announced as final and divine. The question mark does and does not break the horizon of a predictable event, already occurring²⁴ and which is, at the same time, consistently late. A messianic event,²⁵ as an event supposed to break (and which breaks) the violence of right, as a final act of violence that ends any future violence, determines and structures expectation. Only expectation will render real what is completely impossible.

Benjamin’s reading of Vorwerk’s text and his resistance to the violence of right leads us to the final and most important group of texts and observations that compose the *Critique of Violence*. This is the endless and complicated “text” of Benjamin’s friendship with Scholem, still impossible to fully reconstruct. I am not only referring to the difficulty in classifying the influence Scholem and the Benjamin–Scholem relationship had on Benjamin’s text,²⁶ but also to Scholem’s secret and obfuscating archival strategies. I would like to put aside questions that cannot stop with Scholem or Adorno or Buber without opening up a far vaster issue regarding the use and manipulation of twentieth-century archives, in order to concentrate on Benjamin’s text and divine violence. It seems to me that Benjamin’s mention of Korah and his band would be a lot more transparent if, for example, Scholem’s letter, to which Benjamin refers on August 4, 1921, were found.²⁷ It would be much simpler to thematize Benjamin’s intentions if Scholem’s diaries and letters (from 1918 to 1922) were available to the public. It is also impossible to tell how different the reception of *Critique of Violence* would be had the greatest thinker of violence of the past century – and Benjamin’s good friend – Hannah Arendt written about it.

Three texts or three experiences in post-war Germany are at the root of Benjamin’s analogy in the alternative title of this text:

(a) Hermann Bahr’s 1919 novel *Die Rotte Korahs*, which deals with the fate of an Austrian baron who suddenly discovers that he is the son and heir of a notorious Jew and war profiteer. Bahr’s research on the confrontation of blood and environment, that is, the relationship between biology and culture, in the determination of one’s race, followed by the relationship between law

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and money, morality and corruption, as well as his hysterical anti-Semitism, and, paradoxically, the belief in the regeneration of the Jews, are elements which almost certainly caught Benjamin’s attention.²⁸

(b) Benjamin read Kant meticulously over the course of several years, and he could have come across the following passage from *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. In the second edition of the book (1794), Kant abandons his usual formulation of “a human being ought to leave behind in order to enter (into a politico-civil state).”²⁹ Instead, he offers, first, a pleonasm, which is supposed to intensify the effort: “the natural human being ought to endeavor to leave behind.” Then he indicates urgency with “a human being ought to endeavor to leave behind as soon as possible;” finally, he asserts that “man cannot leave alone,” because this task does not concern him alone but is the task of the human race as a whole. More precisely, this task “requires a union [*Vollkommenheit*]... a system of well-disposed human beings... a totality.”³⁰

The great duty “of coming out,” which differs from all others, presupposes two more conditions Kant mentions immediately. The “requests for assuming the idea of one morally superior being, that is, the idea of God” (which enables Kant to call the resulting community, the “people of God”). And second, the existence of one further idea which would oppose that first idea and community: “the idea of a band under the evil principle.”³¹

To such a *people* of God we can oppose the idea of a *band* under the evil principle a union of those who side with that principle for the propagation of evil. It is in the interest of evil to prevent the realization of the other union, even though here too the principle that battles the dispositions of virtue resides in our very self and is only figuratively represented as an external power;³²

(c) Goldberg’s seminar and Benjamin’s encounters with people from Goldberg’s surroundings (I have already mentioned Baumgardt and Unger³³), whom Scholem found particularly objectionable, could perhaps be the most important influences in Benjamin’s thinking of sacrifice, blood, and violence carried out against Korah. The only argument for this assumption, for now, can be the relatively lengthy fragments from Goldberg’s book, published in 1925.³⁴ Oskar Goldberg views Korah’s rebellion (he names it *Korah-Aufstand*, but also “an endeavor,” “venture,” *Korah-Unternehmen*) as a threat to the metaphysical center. The reaction to this rebellion, which is not understood from a “theological” standpoint, says Goldberg, is similar to the reaction of a body when one of its vital organs is under grave threat.³⁵

All three potential sources of Benjamin’s analogy are of unequal value and belong to differing textual regimes. Nonetheless, if we put aside Hermann Bahr’s obscure allegory, for both Kant and Goldberg, the band of rebels is reduced to a small “part” that is opposed to the “whole.” The evil part cannot constitute an entity or community which can successfully resist. In

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other words, the part cannot succeed as a part within a whole, and therefore, the reaction of the whole is terrifying, necessitating the destruction of the rebels. It is interesting that in both Kant and Goldberg this “evil principle” is internalized and figuratively presented: for Kant, it is part of ourselves and within us, and for Goldberg, it is an attack against an organ of our organism or our body.

Here is Benjamin, once again:

This very task of destruction poses again, ultimately, the question of a pure immediate violence that might be able to call a halt to mythic violence. Just as in all spheres God opposes myth, mythic violence is confronted by the divine. And the latter constitutes its antithesis in all respects. If mythic violence is lawmaking, divine violence is law-destroying ... The legend of Niobe may be contrasted with God’s judgment on the company of Korah, as an example of such violence. God’s judgment strikes privileged Levites, strikes them without warning, without threat, and does not stop short of annihilation.

That Benjamin follows Kant’s and Goldberg’s interpretations can also be confirmed through the idea that divine violence opposes mythical violence in every respect. There is no *punishment* as such for this band; but there is the judgment of God that protects the whole: God’s action or divine violence destroys and saves at the same time (which is why this violence brings justice and not right³⁶). God does not warn or threaten in advance those whom he destroys (he warns only those who hear him).

But that is neither enough, nor all. It seems to me that Benjamin’s ambitions are loftier and that his use of Korah surpasses the three moments I have discussed, as well as the two I mentioned and kept aside. Namely, I initially insisted upon a surprise that appears in Benjamin’s text, when someone who seems to be a leftist and revolutionary *par excellence* (the rebel Korah) – since it is of revolution that Benjamin speaks throughout the text – is himself concurrently destroyed through divine violence. (Later, I will add another problem, one that deals with Benjamin’s exchange with Scholem, and which supposes the influence holy texts and rabbinic analyses could have had on Benjamin’s opinion of Korah.) Thus, in contrast to Goldberg or Kant, Walzer, and Scholem, Benjamin attempts to think together an incomprehensible theological point of view and a revolutionary gesture of rebellion. Only in this intersection of theology and revolution (not politics) is the impossible possible: the messianic event.

Korah is an extraordinary example of a pseudo-messiah and a false revolutionary, but also the first initiator of the messianic theater and the world to come.

But why is Korah a false revolutionary?

The most precise answer is that Korah is not the Messiah. At the moment when God destroys Korah and his followers, Benjamin (this is another great

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surprise) defines them as privileged Levites. They are privileged (“*Es trifft Bevorrechtete;*” the adjective is *bevorrechtigt*). Despite the fact that this word points to them having been attacked and destroyed before they were judged, meaning, before judgment, threat, and warning, it seems that Benjamin’s intention is completely different. Furthermore, how can those who oppose privilege and the right to leadership and the holiness of Moses and Aaron be privileged? How can only Korah, Moses’ cousin, be privileged? How exactly is it that they are privileged? Benjamin does not use the common adjective *privilegiert*, but rather he uses a word that has right, judgment, and judge in it (*Bevorrechtete*). In doing so, Benjamin comes close to a theological interpretation in which they were destroyed because they were outside of the law. God protects the law and destroys all that is apart from it (the rebels or the privileged). Afterwards, Benjamin demonstrates that this rebellion is not a revolution but is rather a product of right or law. They were destroyed because they asked for privileges within already existing laws, and they were privileged because their position was already outside of law (this dilemma is designated as the difference between their rebellion against Moses and Aaron and their rebellion against God). Korah is a false revolutionary because he is wealthy and has influence among the people prior to his rebellion. He is a politician, not poor.³⁷ And he is certainly not a revolutionary. Even if Benjamin was unaware of the source of Korah’s ambition (Korah’s wife plays an interesting role in his career³⁸), the word *Bevorrechtete* is correctly used to show that, for this band, the issue is material privilege. Therefore, for Benjamin, Korah’s struggle for leadership belongs to the register of law and mythic violence, which has nothing to do with revolution.³⁹ They must be attacked and destroyed because they cannot be constituted as an opposing community (Kant’s evil principle). They cannot succeed as part of the whole or part of the community (like Shammai in his dispute with Hillel⁴⁰), and can never destroy right (law) because their intention is to replace it with a new right (that is, new privilege).

But why does this reformist rebellion induce God to carry out his destructive violence? The work of the analogy and counter-analogy (about the same time, Benjamin writes an important text on analogy) helps him arrive at the following conclusion: absolute violence (destructive, divine, and revolutionary) destroys mythic and political violence or rebellion within law (enacted always for privilege and benefit), as the culmination of the absolute hypocrisy of capitalism. In spite of this, Korah and his band’s rebellion is simultaneously the most important precondition for the manifestation of this new and incredible violence as destructive. The false revolutionary announces the arrival of the real one. There is no revolution without false rebellion (or false rebels) and mythic violence or war.⁴¹ In this way the paradigm of revolutionary practice is found in the violent intervention of God, or rather in the expectation of the non-violent Messiah:

The guiding principle is here: authentic divine violence can manifest itself other than destructively only in the world to come (the world of

fulfillment) direct divine intervention. But where divine violence enters the secular world, it breathes destruction... In this world, divine violence is higher than divine powerlessness; in the world to come, divine powerlessness is higher than divine violence.⁴²

But why is Korah a false Messiah?

The most precise answer is that Korah is not a revolutionary. Indisputably his rebellion comprises elements of a new, future justice, and although the conditions for a messianic theater are fulfilled, Korah himself is an *arch-conspirator*, a deconstructor, and demolisher of an exiled community. He simultaneously begins four rebellions (the Levite against Aaron; Dathan and Abiram against Moses; the tribe leaders against Aaron; all together against Moses and Aaron⁴³) by taking⁴⁴ and uniting 250 children of Israel. At the onset of the rebellion Korah says the following to Moses and Aaron (16:3): “You have gone too far! For all the community are holy [*kdschim*], all of them, and the Lord is in their midst. Why then do you raise [*tinaseu*] yourselves above the Lord’s congregation?”⁴⁵ Korah does not utter another word while he lives.⁴⁶ He thinks that not only the community is holy, but that both the community and every individual (part) in it is holy. This is a complete novelty, but also serious blasphemy. It is the radical nature of this comment, bringing into question the devotion of the priest Aaron⁴⁷ and Moses as his first defender and intermediary between the people and God, that begins the horrors and great troubles. However, Benjamin’s intervention (and intuition) opens the door to another interpretation of Korah’s appearance and his destruction which, as we know, leads to a true catastrophe of people suffering in the wilderness (apart from the aforementioned 250, their women and children are also wiped out, and another 14,700 follow). God’s revolutionary violence or the divine violence of a Messiah who destroys without blood, does not judge only in Moses’ or Aaron’s or the law’s favor; rather, it gives guidance in the desert and announces a future non-violent Messiah and probably a completely peaceful revolution. It is for this reason that this dreadful episode should be (1) the measure of every future expectation and arrival of the Messiah [*mashiah*] (messianism); (2) the sign of a possible change in someone’s status and an act of God that chooses, reinforces, and anoints [*mašah*]; (3) the measure of every future strike [*mšh*] and rebellion; (4) the measure of every future speech [*meshiah*] and every sacrifice; and, finally, (5) the measure [*mashahu(m)*] of every future measure.

Yet, is this truly possible? Are Benjamin’s differentiation between two kinds of violence and his call to consider divine violence in the context of Korah’s rebellion gestures that lead to the thinking of a new and future world? Is Benjamin truly sketching the conditions for recognizing (final) violence? Or for restraint from violence? For the expectation of violence or perhaps the unconditional conditions of a final act of violence? And is all of this done in order for violence to finally be destroyed, for social injustice to be eliminated, and for the sovereignty of the world (or Israel, as Maimonides thinks) to finally be revealed?

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Benjamin uses two equally important registers to determine if a violent act has been carried out by God (or Messiah), if the violence is divine and if God and the future world are manifest through it. Paradoxically, both registers disrupt and prevent the construction and fantasy on the basis of which God only appears through violence and catastrophic destruction. Similarly, both registers prevent the possibility of terrible violence and wars being justified by and attributed to fictitious ideal authors. In the first register, Benjamin hesitates and examines the characteristics of one kind of violence using different synonyms for divine violence and examining, in detail, the relationship between right and violence. For already carried out violence to be attributed to the Messiah or God, it must be both revolutionary, clean, absolute, pedagogical, and, at the same time, without any attributes. This sort of violence does not create right or order, does not bring privilege, creates nothing. It completely destroys and is measured in victims, but it leaves no blood or other traces. It is as if it never occurred.

Afterwards, Benjamin recognizes this impossible violence and this impossible occurrence in a different scene and within a messianic register. The false Messiah and pseudo-revolutionary Korah was swallowed alive by the earth. This same earth opened its mouth to accept Abel’s blood in an attempt to eliminate Cain’s crime and delay Cain’s guilt.⁴⁸ For violence which has been carried out to be attributed to either God or the Messiah, and this is probably what the consequence of Benjamin’s suggestion is, it is necessary for the act of violence itself to simultaneously erase and protect (defend, hoard, keep in reserve) the revolutionary and negative moment of one community. The revolutionary removal of Korah and his band requires a reassessment of a community and a new measure. This measure is only possible in the shadow of a future world in which the Messiah awakens the entire community, including both the evil and rebellious⁴⁹ from the earth. “For all the community are holy [*kdschim*], all of them, and in their midst is ...”

Notes

- 1 Leo Löwenthal, *Gewalt und Recht in der Staats- und Rechtsphilosophie Rousseaus und der deutschen idealistischen Philosophie*, in *Philosophischen Frühschriften* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1990), 174. Löwenthal is actually channeling Jacobi. *Gewalt*, insists Jacobi, has never produced any kind of truth, nor brought people any good anywhere, ever. Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *Ueber Recht und Gewalt, oder philosophische Erwägung eines Aufsatzes von dem Herrn Hofrath Wieland, Ueber das göttliche Recht der Obrigkeit* (1781), in *Kleiner Schriften I. 1771–1783* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2009), 259–90. Kant, in contrast, speaks of the just and unjust enemy, mentioning in his lectures, which Vigilantius publishes in 1784 as “*Metaphysik der Sitten*,” that there is no right without violence (“*ohne Gewalt kein Recht gestiftet werden kann*”). Violence institutionalizes right – does not make right, nor does violence transform or convert into right. Violence makes right stable and unwavering, institutional.
- 2 Gershom Scholem, *Im Gespräch über Walter Benjamin (1968)*, *Sinn und Form* 4 (2007): 501, 502.

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- 3 Ernst Bloch writes about Korah after World War II. Contrary to Benjamin, Korah, as “*die mythische Reflexe*,” is opposite to what is in the hierarchy above. Ernst Bloch, *Atheism in Christianity*, Gesamtausgabe, Band 14 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1959–78), 108–9.
- 4 Here I again follow Bloch, from his post-war book *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, where he writes of rebellion as a messianic idea *par excellence*. The foundation of the messianic idea is already within Moses’ rebellion against the Egyptians. Cf. “Moses oder das Bewußtsein der Utopie in der Religion, der Religion in der Utopie,” Bloch, *Atheism in Christianity*, 1453.
- 5 Michael Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 111.
- 6 Walter Benjamin, *Critique of Violence. Selected Writings*, volume 1, eds. M. Bullock and M.W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 249–50; *Zur Kritik der Gewalt, Gesammelte Schriften*, Band II-1 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1991), 199–200. In the first edition, from 1921 (*Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, Band 47), this fragment is found on page 829.
- 7 Franz Rosenzweig uses the phrase “new right” in an excerpt from the book *Der Stern der Erlösung* (“Coercion in the State”), published in the same year as Benjamin’s text. “The point of all violence is to institute new law [right; *neues Recht gründe*]. It is not the denial of law as one might think under the spell of its cataclysmic behavior; on the contrary, it lays the basis for law. But a paradox lurks in the idea of new right. Right is essentially old right. And now it is clear that violence is: the renewer of old right [*die Erneuerin des alten Rechts*]. In the violent act [*gewaltsame Tat*], the right constantly becomes new right.” Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans. Francesca Galli (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1970), 333; Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1996), 370.
- 8 “Divine violence, which is the sign and seal but never the means of sacred dispatch, may be called ‘sovereign’ violence” [*Die göttliche Gewalt, welche Insignium und Siegel, niemals Mittel heiliger Vollstreckung ist, mag die waltende heißen*]. Benjamin, *Critique of Violence. Selected Writings*, 252; Benjamin, *Zur Kritik der Gewalt*, 203.
- 9 Kurt Hiller’s text “Anti-Kain. Ein Nachwort zu dem Vorhergehenden,” which Benjamin read in the journal *Das Ziel*, is preceded by Rudolf Leonhard’s short text “Endkampf der Waffengegner Hillerovom!” dealing with the Spartacist strike. Kurt Hiller, *Anti-Kain. Ein Nachwort zu dem Vorhergehenden*, in *Das Ziel*, 1919, 25. It ends with a call for a fight against arms (*Kampf gegen die Waffe!*). Hiller’s text attacks Bolshevism in the name of a revolution without arms and terror. He says, on page 27, that it is better to remain a slave than instigate an armed uprising [*gewalttätige Rott*]. Benjamin mentions this when he cites Hiller on page 25. The sentence in its entirety is: “*Brutalisiere ich nicht, töte ich nicht, so errichte ich nimmermehr das Weltreich der Gerechtigkeit, des ewigen Friedens, der Freude – so denk der geistige Terrorist, so denk der edelste Bolschewik, so dachten die von ebertreuen Millitars vorsätzlich und heimtückisch erschlagenen Spartacusführer. Wir aber bekennen, daß höher noch als Glück und Gerechtigkeit eines Daseins.*” Hiller, *Anti-Kain*, 25.
- 10 Kurt Anglet mentions Korah and his rebellion in the book *Messianität und Geschichte. Walter Benjamins Konstruktion der historischen Dialektik und deren Aufhebung ins Eschatologische durch Erik Peterson* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995), 35. Jacques Derrida also mentions Korah only once in the Post-Scriptum of the book *Force la loi* (Paris: Galilée, 1994), 145. Eric L. Jacobson includes Korah in his doctorate thesis concerning Benjamin and Scholem, presented in 1999 in Berlin (234). The only text which has as its theme divine violence and has a short analysis of Benjamin’s use of Korah’s rebellion is Brian Britt, *Divine Violence in Benjamin and Biblical Narrative*, presented in October 2006 at a conference in Berlin.

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- 11 I would like to draw attention to two exquisite texts by Günther Figal that deal with the problem of pure will and pure means in the example of the influence of Kant and Hermann Cohen on Walter Benjamin: *Recht und Moral als Handlungsspielräume, Zeitschrift für Philosophische Forschung*, no. 36 (1982), 361–77, and *Die Ethik Walter Benjamins als Philosophie der reinen Mittel*, in *Zur Theorie der Gewalt und Gewaltlosigkeit bei Walter Benjamin*, eds. G. Figal, H. Folkers (Heidelberg: Texte und Materialien der FEST, 1979), 1–24.
- 12 Herbert Marcuse writes about shock in 1964, in an afterword to Benjamin’s early texts. Herbert Marcuse, Afterword to *Zur Kritik der Gewalt und andere Aufsätze*, by Walter Benjamin (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1965), 105.
- 13 “Catastrophe” is of course present in Scholem, but also in Erich Unger, at the very beginning of the text “Politik und Metaphysik” (*jede unkatastrophale Politik ist unmetaphysisch nicht möglich*). Cf. Erich Unger, *Politik und Metaphysik* (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 1989 [1921]), 7 (3).
- 14 Heinrich Rickert, *Die Philosophie des Lebens, Darstellung und Kritik der philosophischen Modeströmungen unserer Zeit* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1920).
- 15 David Baumgardt, *Das Möglichkeitsproblem der Kritik der reinen Vernunft, der modernen Phänomenologie und der Gegenstandstheorie* (Berlin: Reuther and Reichard, 1920). This book was published as “Ergänzungshefte” in the journal *Kant-Studien*, no. 51. It could be very important in an imaginary theory of the (im)possible which would together with Faust and Hartman encompass the latter Jacques Derrida.
- 16 “Die reine Gewalt.” Cf. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Jenaer Schriften. 1801–1807*, Band 2 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1970), 474–5.
- 17 For example, in Benjamin’s extraordinary differentiation of two kinds of violence, “the first demands sacrifice; the second accepts it,” we recognize in the addition § 70 *Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*: “Hence if the state claims life, the individual must surrender it. But may a man take his own life?” Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, Band 7 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), 152.
- 18 Letter to Scholem from January 31, 1918. Walter Benjamin, *Briefe I* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1978), 171. On right and violence in Hegel, see Add. § 432 and § 433 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse 3*, Band 10 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), § 432 and § 433, 221, 223.
- 19 Erich Brodmann, *Recht und Gewalt* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1921). The considerable increase in books concerning this subject would cause, in the following years, a sharp reaction and negation that there was any connection between right and violence. Myriad jurists and philosophers write many short or extended tracts on the relation of right and violence (or force). A certain Jacques Flach, in his 1915 *Le droit de la force et la force de droit* (Paris: Sirey, 1915) speaks about “the warping of [deviation from] right in Germany” [“la déviation de la justice”] (7) originating with Bismarck, according to whom “force precedes right” (*la force prime le droit; Macht geht über Recht oder vor Recht*), Flach, *Le droit de la force et la force de droit*, 15. Flach reconstructs a German proverb about the right of the mightier to subdue the weaker, that is, about the advantage of violence over right. The proverb is “Eine Hand voll Gewalt ist besser als ein Sack voll Recht” (better a fistful of violence than a sack full of right) (Flach, *Le droit de la force et la force de droit*, 19). Violence makes right stable and unwavering, institutional. In *La force et le droit* (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1917), Raul Antony comes up with the formula [*la formule*] that offers three possibilities: “*la force fait, crée ou est le droit*” [force makes, creates, or is right]. Antony, *La force et le droit*, 9. In his *Vorlesungen über praktische Philosophie* (Erlangen, Verlag der philosophischen Akademie) from 1925, Paul Natorp maintains that right does not force [*zwingt nicht*] and that violence does not create right [*Gewalt schafft nicht Recht*] (§ 180, 457, 458). “There is the violence of law [*rechtliche Gewalt*] [*Gewalt, die selbst aus dem Rechte fließt*],

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- but there is no law of violence or right to violence; right which emerges from violence [*ein Recht der Gewalt*] [*Recht, das aus Gewalt fließt*]. Violence does not shape right. Similarly, power [*Macht*] does not shape right” (§ 197, 492, 493).
- 20 At the request of the editor of the journal *Blätter für religiösen Sozialismus* Carl Mennicke and his friend Paul Tillich, Herbert Vorwerk publishes his text in issue 4 in 1920. It is quite short (1.5 pages) and is followed by the editor’s comments, which are nearly a page in length. Carl Mennicke completes the discussion in issue 6, in 1921.
- 21 Vorwerk, *Blätter für religiösen Sozialismus*, 15.
- 22 Benjamin, *Critique of Violence. Selected Writings*, 252.
- 23 Benjamin, *The Right to Use Violence, Selected Writings*, 231.
- 24 This fragment becomes clear with one still unpublished text by Gershom Scholem: “Walter once said: the messianic kingdom is always already here. This judgment holds the greatest truth – but only in the sphere which, to my knowledge, no one since the prophets has attained.” [*Walter a dit une fois: Le royaume messianique est toujours là. Ce jugement [Einsicht] contient la plus grande vérité – mais seulement dans une sphère qui, à ma connaissance, personne après les prophètes n’a atteint*] (1917). The quotation is taken from a text by Michael Löwy, *Le messianisme hétérodoxe dans l’œuvre de jeunesse de Gershom Scholem*, in *Messianismes. Variations sur une figure juive*, ed. J.C. Attias, P. Gisel, and L. Kennel (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2000).
- 25 Cf. Gerard Bensussan, *Messianisme, messianicité, messianique. Pour quoi faire, pour quoi penser?*, in *Une histoire de l’avenir*, eds. J. Benoist and F. Merlini (Paris: Vrin, 2004), 26–7.
- 26 Apart from several letters without which an analysis of the *Critique of Violence* could not even begin (the most important being Benjamin’s letter to Scholem written in January 1921), I am also referring to Scholem’s work on Jewish sources and his continuous exchange with Benjamin. Scholem’s early studies of apocalyptic messianism and catastrophe, his brilliant manuscript “Bolshevism” [*Der Bolschewismus*], which speaks about the Jewish revolution, messianic kingdom, blood, rebellion, and the famous “dictatorship of poverty” [*die Diktatur der Armut*], Gershom Scholem, *Der Bolschewismus, Tagebücher 1913–1917* (Frankfurt: Jüdischer Verlag, 1995), 556–8. Further, there are the unforgettable notes from 1915 concerning the revolution: “*Unser Grundzug: das ist die Revolution! Revolution überall!*” (Scholem, *Tagebücher 1913–1917*, 81), Benjamin’s “theses of concept of justice,” published in Scholem’s journals (classified in 1916), and the capital difference between *mischpatah*, *Recht* and *zedek*, *Gerechtigkeit* (Scholem, *Tagebücher 1913–1917*, 401–2).
- 27 “Of course I was excited by everything that you wrote about the *Critique of Violence*. The text will be published in the coming days” (Heidelberg, August 4, 1921). Benjamin, *Briefe I*, 270.
- 28 The novel was published in 1919. Hermann Bahr, *Die Rotte Korahs* (Berlin: S. Fisher, 1919). Benjamin followed closely the works of the prolific Bahr and mentions him many times throughout his texts. However, *Die Rotte Korahs* is not mentioned in the list of books Benjamin owned.
- 29 Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason, Religion and Rational Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 132.
- 30 Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, 133.
- 31 Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, 134.
- 32 Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, 134. In the same year, in the text *The End of All Things, Religion and Rational Theology*, trans. Allen W. Wood (New Haven, CT: Cambridge University Press), 225, Kant reveals that the band he mentioned is in fact Korah’s band.

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- 33 Erich Unger’s “Der Krieg” from 1915/16 contains a few important elements we later find developed and transformed in Benjamin’s text. Unger’s text (in the form of a double dialogue between a green uniform foot soldier and a man permanently disabled for military service [“Erstes und Zweites Gespräch zwischen einem Feldgrauen und einem dauren Untaglichen”]) was published in August 1915 and February 1916 in the journal *Der Neue Merkur*, with the first part published in the same issue that featured Benjamin’s text about student life. Here is a truly “Benjaminian” passage from Unger (August 1915): “Still, world peace is a thousand times more likely to emerge from the pure cruelty [*sauberen Grausamkeit*] of the bloodiest conflict [*blutigsten Abrechnung*] among the ancients – where it was considered a crime *not* to destroy the suckling babes of the enemy because *the whole* people was a unit and *a single* enemy – than from this love towards one’s fellow man, the fruits of which can here be plainly seen.” Erich Unger, *Der Krieg. Erstes Gespräch zwischen einem Feldgrauen und einem dauernd Untaglichen*, Vom Expressionismus zum Mythos des Hebräertums: Schriften 1909 bis 1931, ed. M. Voigts (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 1992), 55.
- 34 Oskar Goldberg, *Die Wirklichkeit der Hebräer. Einleitung in das System des Pentateuch* (Berlin: Erster Band, Verlag David, 1925), 98, 99, 160–3. Goldberg works on the problems of holiness, destruction, sacrifice, blood. He mentions “Unblutige Opfer” in the context of sacrifice to the Goddess Kali (Goldberg, *Die Wirklichkeit der Hebräer*, 139).
- 35 Goldberg, *Die Wirklichkeit der Hebräer*, 194–5.
- 36 Benjamin’s use of the word “judgment” [*Gericht*] implies a differentiation between right [*mishpat*] and justice [*sedaqa*]. If God is the subject of an action that brings and fulfils justice, then his actions are not punished, but protected. That is the fundamental characteristic of the root *sdq*.
- 37 “Only the judgment of the poor has revolutionary power” [*Urteil des Armen hat allein revolutionäre Macht. Der Arme ist vielleicht nicht gerecht, aber er kann niemals ungerecht sein*]. Scholem, *Der Bolschewismus*, 556.
- 38 Cf. *Sanhedrin*, 109b–110a; “He was jealous because Moses chose another,” Rashi (*Commentary of Bamidbar*). Philon speaks of the “incomprehensible” ambition and pride of the rebels [*alogou fronēmatos*]. *De Praemiis et Poenis*, 13.74.
- 39 Cf. *Num.* 16:2, begins with “to rise up against Moses.” The phrase “*vayacoumou lifnei (Moshé)*” has a completely legal background and is used during trials when the opponent is spoken to (*Deut.* 19:15–16; *Psalms* 27:12).
- 40 In the text “*Sitra achra; Gut und Böse in der Kabbala*,” *Von der mystischen Gestalt der Gottheit* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973), 68–69, Scholem evokes Korah’s rebellion in the context of a disagreement between two great doctors, Hillel and Shammai. He cites a fragment from *The Zohar*, I, 17 b: “left merged in right [*die Linke wurde in die Rechte einbezogen*], and peace prevailed over all [*und es war Harmonie im All*]. Similarly, the conflict between Korah and Aaron was left against right ... He [Moses] endeavored to reconcile them, but the left was unwilling, and Korah stiffened his resistance [*verstreifte sich im Übermass*]. He said ... Hell must certainly join in the heat of the conflict of the left, since he does not want to join above [*Oberen*], merging in the right [*in die Rechte einbezogen werden*], he will certainly descend below by the intensity of his rage. Korah did not want this conflict to be harmonized by Moses because it was not for the sake of heaven [*um des Himmels willen*] ... A conflict arrayed as above, ascending, not descending, established rightly, is the conflict of Shammai and Hillel. The blessed Holy One mediated between them, harmonizing them. This was the conflict for the sake of heaven, so Heaven mediated the conflict, and upon this conflict the world was established.” *The Zohar*, volume I (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 130–1.
- 41 Cf. Scholem’s differentiation of the bloody Bolshevik revolution, messianic empire, and the violence of World War I. Scholem, *Der Bolschewismus*, 556.

- 42 Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, 226–7.
- 43 Jacob Milgrom, *The JPS Torah Commentary Numbers (Bamidbar)* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 5750/1990), 129, 145. On page 415, Milgrom corrects Abrabanel who thinks there are three rebellions.
- 44 “Now Korah, son of Izhar son of Kohath son of Levi, betook himself.” The use of the past simple verb “to take,” “betook” [*vayikach*] signifies that Korah has convinced and grouped some of the people’s leaders, but that he has also separated from the community (“He has separated, separated from the community in order to instigate a conflict,” Rachi).
- 45 *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 316.
- 46 After all, it is completely uncertain if Korah ended up like the others, if he also vanished without a trace (*Sanhedrin* 110 a), and if he said the words which can be heard if we carefully listen to the voice coming from *Gehinom* (*Gehenna*; *Sheol*): “Moses and his Torah are the truth, we are liars” (*Sanhedrin* 110 b; *Baba Bathra* 74 b).
- 47 Aaron is the “anointed priest” [*hacohen hamoshiyach*], *Lev.* 4:3, 5.
- 48 *Sanhedrin* 37 b.
- 49 *Sanhedrin* 108 a.

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9 Victory

The figures of the Messiah and messianism are supposed to lead to victory. The noun victory always has an advantage because it shapes the revolutionary aspect of Benjamin's Messiah, and vice versa: the use of the word messianism implies that it is not some victory (one among many), but rather, the last and final victory. What interests me nearly a century after Benjamin himself went to great lengths to resolve his own dilemmas in this regard, is that there is still an uncertain and complicated register when speaking of victory, the victor, and the vanquished. What does it mean to win, to be victorious? Who or what needs vanquishing and in what way? Is it today even possible to speak of final victory, of final anything?

All these questions assume two ambiguities we still share with Benjamin, his time and endeavor: (1) that a discourse on victory would have to imply a possibility of a grand and impartial history of victories and victors. This would immediately engender several problems: does the subject or historian of such a history have to be the victor? Is history indeed only written by the victors?¹ Could a new historian – one who Benjamin explicitly announces – write a new history in the name of the vanquished and in the name of the victory of the heretofore defeated? Is a revolutionary writing of history possible? Finally, is the historian also a revolutionary, since his use of history is at once a revolution and victory? (2) Paradoxically, defining and constituting a potential ideal register regarding the victor and victory would mean opposing the general and always present trend of winning, celebrating the winner, succession of winners, the negating and forgetting of the vanquished, etc.

Here is Benjamin's celebrated construction from the first of his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*:

There was once, we know, an automaton in such a way that it could respond to every move by a chess player with a countermove that would ensure the winning of the game. A puppet wearing Turkish attire and with a hookah in its mouth sat before a chessboard placed on a large table. A system of mirrors created the illusion that this table was transparent on all sides. Actually, a hunchbacked dwarf a master at chess sat inside and guided the puppet's hand by means of strings. One can

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imagine a philosophic counterpart to this apparatus. The puppet, called “historical materialism,” is to win all the time. It can easily be a match for anyone if it enlists the services of theology, which today, as we know, is small and ugly and has to keep out of sight.²

Could this allegory not represent the basis of the entire project, and the primary intention of Benjamin’s fantastic construction? And further: if we possibly began our reading of Benjamin with this allegory, and if we interpreted his famous theses as theses on victory or a discourse on victory, would that more easily show the limits and failure (defeat) of Benjamin’s project? In addition, would a reconstruction of victory (at present) bring us closer to victory? All these questions are meant to lead us to my last question, really, Benjamin’s question: how can we come closer (to victory, the Messiah, the revolution)?³

These three figures follow from Benjamin’s first thesis. I would assume that the second two figures, that of the Messiah (messianism) and revolution – important for his texts because they give their final, eschatological potential – are different from the first. Victory belongs to the same regime as the other two, but is both more abstract and, at the same time, more exact and concrete, because it supposes the other or others who are vanquished. Also, I would like to assume that victory or Benjamin’s figures of victory and the victor are continued and transformed into the Messiah, that is, are replaced with Benjamin’s messianisms. For example, it looks as if, of the eleven versions of the word victory appearing in Benjamin’s *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, after thesis 7 (or after the first abandoned version of thesis 12) they all disappear into the words Messiah and messianism. This vanishing of victory and victory into the Messiah is Benjamin’s constructive solution, since it seems that he remained preoccupied, even obsessed with victory until the end of his life (or at least until the very important letter to Horkheimer of March 1937). Thesis 7 (or thesis 12), then, represents neither an epistemological break nor proof that Benjamin writes his theses continuously over the course of 25 years, during which time his interests and focus change; rather it is the place in the text when the hunchback dwarf begins to emerge as himself and self-thematize. This does not at all mean that Benjamin’s sketch from thesis 1 has been abandoned; on the contrary, it has only begun to be confirmed.

The dwarf from Benjamin’s allegory, the secret invisible servant of philosophy or historical materialism who (“always”) brings victory – Benjamin designates him using the word theology – finally fulfills Benjamin’s old task, noted by Scholem in his diary on August 24, 1916: “Should I one day have a philosophy of my own – he said to me – it will be some sort of Jewish philosophy.”⁴ Jewish philosophy is thus structured above all as political theology.⁵ And the other way round: for philosophy to be Jewish or for philosophy to be Jewish philosophy – according to Benjamin – it must be *de facto* preoccupied with historical materialism and theology. Benjamin’s great *novum* is locating the Jewishness not only in the dwarf, but also in the puppet, or else between

the two, in the hands and strings. Only this combination of historical materialism and theology allows philosophy to parry anything thrown at it and always come out on top. Better still, a Jewish philosophy such as Benjamin's true political theology can only *bring closer* to victory, revolution, the Messiah.⁶ The first figure, victory (or victor, the player or puppet that wins), could broadly belong to the register of philosophy or philosophical metaphors in Benjamin's assignment of roles (revolution – historical materialism; Messiah – theology). Still, this bringing closer, guaranteed by Benjamin's construction – victory does not mean always winning anew, but being victorious or remaining in victory – destroys and renders impossible the order of the remaining figures in this little revolutionary chess drama. My intention is not to dwell on the perfect strength of Benjamin's magical *Apparatur* that implodes his rose-tinted allegory of the philosopher- (or historian-) victor. Rather, it is to sketch Benjamin's own reservations in thinking and announcing this new victory which follows or which has perhaps already begun (just as the Messiah is perhaps already here, today, now, among us). The same difficulty is immanent in the other two figures: revolution and messianism, just as it characterizes any contemporary effort seeking to abolish all forms of domination. Benjamin's very choice to construct this mechanized chess monstrosity as an allegory is a symptom of a much deeper problem that prevents any large-scale change. Benjamin predicts that: (1) philosophy is always in opposition, but never exclusively as philosophy (as pure philosophy); (2) the automaton (philosophy, historical materialism + theology) always responds to a move, that is, the first move always belongs to someone else; (3) the second is the (chess) player, but it is unclear who is the other or the defeated for Benjamin; (4) the allegory is employed because the subject of victory is unknown – the dwarf, the automaton, the string, the hand (the philosopher, theologian, historian, revolutionary, Messiah) – as is the subject (object) of defeat; (5) Benjamin's illusion is really simple cheating (since the victor does not win alone, there is a hidden dwarf); (6) it remains unclear what the fruit of victory is, and whether victory alters the arrangement of figures in play; does victory even take place?; and finally, (7) Benjamin's fantasy is clearly not the victorious solution because the philosopher (the historian materialist) and his dwarf have, in all the decades hence, not achieved the victory or the revolution. "Today" is still not the messianic today.

Benjamin's attempt to begin (or preserve) the constituting of victory as such (the last, total victory) in thesis 1 is preceded by a long and complicated revolutionary history, to which he is also witness. It seems to me that his effort is twofold: (1) to preserve the initial claim by Marx (Plekhanov, Lenin, Trotsky, etc.) about the final necessary victory of the proletariat, along with the fall of the bourgeoisie (which digs its own grave), and oppose it to endless and boring debates and fantasies of revisionists and Social Democrats about the characteristics of victory (does the victory of democracy precede the victory of the proletariat?, is this victory actually a catastrophe?, etc.). Benjamin retains a guide to victory gleaned from Marx's later position, attempting to

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resolve the inherent ambiguity (already present in Marx) whereby the dominant (class) *de facto* defeats itself, that is, in a sense is already defeated. (2) His second effort is to bring the Marx of the *Manifesto*, and revolutionary Marxism more broadly, face to face – thus ennobling it – with an extraordinary new principle or filter uncovered in his text *Critique of Violence*. Namely, victory and the victor belong to myth (to mythic violence), and the victor creates new law, sustained with so-called victorious violence (police violence). (Does this not already indicate a critique and reservations Benjamin had regarding the dictatorship of the proletariat?) In several passages, Benjamin opposes “victorious” violence. Two passages clearly show the limits of the logic of victory and defeat, winners and losers, and announce the so-called “politics by any means.”⁷ The second, found in the final section of Benjamin’s text, reveals the meaning of the famous last sentence regarding the ruling or sovereign divine violence, which is the “insignia and seal,” the paradigm and characteristic of the new victor:

The law governing their oscillation rests on the circumstance that all law-preserving violence, in its duration, indirectly weakens the lawmaking violence represented by it, through the suppression of hostile counter-violence. (Various symptoms of this have been referred to in the course of this study). This lasts until either new forces or those earlier suppressed triumph over the hitherto lawmaking violence and thus found a new law, destined in its turn to decay. On the breaking of this cycle maintained by mythical forms of law, on the suspension of law with all the forces on which it depends as they depend on it, finally therefore on the abolition of state power, a new historical epoch is founded. If the rule of the myth is broken occasionally in the present age, the coming age is not so unimaginably remote that an attack on law is altogether futile. But if the existence of violence outside the law, as pure immediate violence, is assured, this finishes the proof that revolutionary violence, is assured.⁸

The victory with which Benjamin begins his theses on the philosophy of history is beyond law, beyond historical victories and defeats up to that point. It seems that it is not, or should not be, catastrophic. Benjamin even claims to have found the violence (at once divine, revolutionary, and pure) that ought to characterize this kind of struggle. In that sense, with all the hesitations and dilemmas that Benjamin harbors in trying to define such pure and bloodless, yet destructive, violence, his *Theses on the Philosophy of History* can truly be read as a continuation of the text on violence. Benjamin’s dilemma (and also his drama) is evident in the correspondence with Max Horkheimer regarding the text about Fuchs. Here is a passage from the answer to Horkheimer of March 28, 1937:

For me, an important question always was how one ought to understand this linguistic figure [*Sprachfigur*]: *to lose* a war, a process. A war and a

process are not, however, a stake [*Einsatz*], but an act of decision about themselves. In the end, this is how I resolved it [*zurechtgelegt*]: one who loses the war or process has in that confrontation completed and thus lost one's practice; this does not apply to the side [*Partner*] that won. Victory bears entirely different fruit from the effects of defeat. This brings us into complete opposition to Ibsen's words: "Happiness is born of loss, only that which is lost is eternal."⁹

This response to Horkheimer's letter of March 16, 1937 belongs to an entirely different register from Benjamin's commentary of the same letter entered in the *Arcades* (*N 8, I*), where he opposes theology and remembrance (*Eingedenken*) to the understanding of history as science. Apart from that, this letter shows Benjamin's constant ambivalence and disquiet when thinking victory or defeat. What does it mean that defeat abolishes any action, any practice of the defeated? Who is the defeated in this context? What sort of melancholy or reservation bears on Benjamin when he takes Ibsen's Romantic sentence seriously (Benjamin examines happiness in detail in the "Theological-Political Fragment")? All these questions and dilemmas are indeed transferred into Benjamin's other theses, along with the utter confusion at the root of the subject of the revolution or the new writer of history: how can one who has always been defeated win, that is, are there any reserves of practice from which the eternally defeated can draw, in order to break away from its history of defeats?

This entirely uncertain shift from vanquished to victor – which troubles Benjamin quite a bit too – initiates a miniature reconstruction of self-sabotage, stretching from theses 2 to 7. I dare insist that the edited thesis 12 holds the key (perhaps all of Benjamin's difficulties could be explained with the history of the writing and erasure of this thesis), not only to any future conformism and any future hypo-critique/hypocrisy of the revolutionary idea (of the left), but also to the likely place where the destiny of any future great effort is decided.

Before his own deconstruction of the final, thirteenth thesis, Benjamin attests to three points on which hangs the construction of his theory of final victory: In thesis 7, Benjamin addresses the new historian (-materialist) insisting – this is the conclusion of this thesis – that her task is to distance herself from tradition, to march in opposition to history so as to avoid all the dangers that ordinarily befall historians. Namely, the (ordinary) historian belongs to the school of historicism, meaning that he, in the real sense of the word, is engaged in history or uses empathy in researching history: "with whom does historicism actually sympathize? The answer is unavoidable: with the victor. And all rulers are the heirs of prior conquerors. Hence, empathizing with the victor invariably benefits the current rulers."¹⁰

According to Benjamin, for the historian materialist to win, it is crucial that she not resemble previous victors, but rather, probably, the previously vanquished. Or, perhaps, to completely turn her back on history. Benjamin

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(the writer, philosopher, historian, chess player, Turk, dwarf, hunchback) is trying to find a formulation or a specific form of writing (after all, he gives priority to the historian materialist over other figures) that would open possibilities of victory (the revolution, Messiah), that is, pure violence. His theses, as theory or program or manual for the work of the historian revolutionary, ought to reveal a still secret thinking potential (a reserve) which is the condition of change. However, the historian materialist's engagement does not precede the revolution (the Messiah, victory), but is entirely concurrent with the process. Benjamin's perverted Hegelianism and watered down Marxism (which remains in force to this day, if influenced and muddled by psychoanalysis and Lacan), is constantly warmed in the hope that history itself (or resistance to it) holds the key to victory and contains an emancipatory element. Everything falls to history: the revolution or revolutions have already happened, weak messianic power from thesis 2 comes from the past, as does the potential for victory. Hence his favoring of the historian and his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*. His thesis 7 is mostly an edited end portion of a long passage, marked in the archive as *Ms 447* and *Ms 1094*. Again, I am particularly interested in Benjamin's technique in the course of constructing these theses, what he rejects, what he includes, and how quite often the theses emerge from much more important, rejected material. At the beginning of this long passage, *Ms 447/1094*, he is explicit: "A view of history, freed of the scheme of progress within an empty and homogenous time, will finally restore onto the scene the destructive energies of historical materialism, that have laid dormant [*lahmgelegt*] for so long."¹¹

The three destructive moments, mentioned by Benjamin in the note preceding this fragment (*Ms 446*), which release the destructive energy are the three acts of the true historian materialist against historicism: (1) the destruction of universal history (another slight correction of Marx); (2) the elimination of the element of the epic (of the delusion that history can be told, because history belongs not to narrative, but to theory); and definitely resistance to the third, strongest bastion of historicism, the one most difficult to rein in: (3) coming to believe in one's victoriousness [*die Einfühlung in den Sieger*].¹² Benjamin's decision to only speak of this third moment in thesis 7, while completely ignoring the context and destructive potential of the new victor, reintroduces weakness and inertia onto the scene. The imaginary victor is frozen before former and current victors and vanquished alike, because Benjamin hesitates to attribute to him what he himself admires in Marx: hatred and contempt, and the demand to fight.¹³

The strength of contempt (or hatred) is constantly weakened by Benjamin's shifting terminology of the object of the fight (the chess player, partner, opponent, capitalist/capitalism, fascist/fascism) and the exaggeration of the strength of the victor. Thesis 6 fulfills and develops further both of these elements.

The Messiah comes not only as the redeemer, he comes as the victor over [*Überwinder*] the Antichrist. The only historian capable of fanning the

spark of hope in the past is the one who is firmly convinced that even the dead are not safe from the enemy, if he is victorious. And this enemy has never ceased to be victorious.¹⁴

The last two sentences of this thesis are paradigmatic. As soon as he introduces this genius historian, capable of drawing that destructive energy from the past, Benjamin immediately sabotages his own optimism (thesis 1) with the claim that the enemy still has a future (because currently winning).

It is interesting that Benjamin never considers final victory as the victory of all those who precede it (the defeated, the victors, the dead) and of all those in the present. Implicitly, messianism and the revolution presuppose the end of hostility and the end of history. Instead of an option like this, which would decisively correct Marx and reconcile the historian, the materialist and the theologian, Benjamin, in a moment of Romanticism, falsifies and quiets the materialism and spirituality of the new victor. The fantasy of the characteristics of victory and the future victor is finally crystalized in thesis 12, where, using a skillful assemblage of arguments, Benjamin ought to finally join Marx's hatred and the defeated past and future. "The subject of historical knowledge is the struggling, oppressed class itself. Marx presents it as the last enslaved class – the avenger that completes the task of liberation in the name of the generations of the downtrodden."¹⁵

Benjamin claims further that thanks to Social Democrats, Marx has been let down and that the working class has been stripped of its most potent power, since it becomes a routine liberator of future generations. The problem is certainly not only in Benjamin's shortening of the first version, or first versions, of this thesis. In the abandoned versions, still very difficult to reconstruct, Benjamin drives home his point with quite an asymmetric comparison between the Bolshevik and German model regarding the origin of the revolutionary source or inspiration for victory. The Bolsheviks, armed with Marx's hatred (revenge, dedication), identify with former generations of the vanquished. Benjamin says that the Bolshevik motto "*Kein Ruhm dem Sieger, kein Mitleid den Besiegten*" (no glory for the victor, no mercy for the vanquished), perfectly represents solidarity with dead brethren. The German model on the other hand (solidarity with offspring [*nachgebornen*]), which Benjamin uses ultimately to criticize Social democracy, is well described in a letter Hölderlin writes to his brother in September 1793: "*Ich liebe das Geschlecht der kommenden Jahrhunderte*" (I love the generations in the coming centuries). In that letter, Hölderlin insists that what gives him strength and vitality is the hope that our descendants will be better than us and live in a better time than ours. We live in an epoch in which everything is oriented towards the better, coming days.

Leaving out this differentiation in origin of inspiration for struggle and victory (a difference no longer relevant,¹⁶ making any new thinking on this subject, however necessary, also more difficult), all that remains is Benjamin's diagnosis regarding the subject of the revolution, which once long ago

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possessed the force and command of violence necessary for victory. Actually, all that remains is a lament for olden times of strength. Sighing, however, does not become the true historian of materialism, nor indeed the final victor.

Notes

- 1 “History is written by the vanquished.” Cf. Carl Schmitt, *Il vinto scrive la storia*, ed. G. Agamben (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 2005), 182.
- 2 Walter Benjamin, *On the Concept of History. Selected Writings, 1938–1940*, volume 4, trans. E. Jephcott et al., eds. H. Eiland and M. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 389. I modified the translation slightly.
- 3 Walter Benjamin, *Messianische Reich oder französische Revolutionsidee, Aufsätze; Essays; Vorträge, Gesammelte Schriften*, volume 2, 1 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977), 75.
- 4 “*Wenn ich einmal meine Philosophie haben werde*’ – sagte er zu mir – ‘so wird es irgendwie eine Philosophie des Judentums sein.’” Gershom Scholem, *Tagebücher*, volume 1, 1913–1917 (Frankfurt: Jüdische Verlag – Suhrkamp Verlag, 1995), 391.
- 5 Benjamin’s reading and uses of Schmitt are inspired, and arrive at completely new conclusions in the history of the Jewish political tradition (for example thesis number 8). Regardless of the very strong impression that Benjamin left on Schmitt (above all with his book on the Baroque), there are not enough elements for us to be able to speak cogently of an influence on Schmitt. I am referring to the completely baseless claim of Giorgio Agamben about the influence of Benjamin’s text on violence on Carl Schmitt. In Schmitt’s archive in Düsseldorf, there are a few files that confirm Schmitt’s strong interest in Benjamin, Scholem, Bloch, Marcuse, Lukacs, etc. Schmitt’s interest in Benjamin begins with Benjamin’s letter to him: Schmitt read Benjamin’s book several times (the book is completely underlined and the margins are full of Schmitt’s notes and comments, cf. RW 265–29012); Schmitt held onto a newspaper clipping of Benjamin’s text about Brecht of July 6, 1930, cf. RW 265–20323; in 1972, probably, next to his own and Benjamin’s name, Schmitt adds “*eine Konjunktion*,” RW 265–19561. Cf. R. Mehring, “Geist ist das Vermögen, Diktatur auszuüben. Carl Schmitts Marginalien zu Walter Benjamin,” ed. D. Weidner, *Benjamin-Studien II* (Munich: Fink Verlag, 2011), 239–56.
- 6 For “Jewish philosophy” to be what it is, it *must* bring closer or lead into final victory (of the Messiah).
- 7 The first fragment reads “It is the fear of mutual disadvantages that threaten to arise from violent confrontation, whatever the outcome might be. Such motives are clearly visible in countless cases of conflict of interests between private persons. It is different when classes and nations are in conflict, since the higher orders that threaten to overwhelm equally victor and vanquished are hidden from the feeling of the most, and from the intelligence of the almost all. Space does not here permit me to trace such higher orders and the common interests corresponding to them, which constitute the most enduring motive for a policy of pure means.” Walter Benjamin, *Critique of Violence, Reflections*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), 290. This passage definitely contains Benjamin’s reservations regarding any form of catastrophe.
- 8 Benjamin, *Critique of Violence*, 300.
- 9 Cf. Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk, Gesammelte Schriften*, volume 2 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1982), 1338.
- 10 Benjamin, *On the Concept of History. Selected Writings*, 391.
- 11 Benjamin, *Abhandlungen, Gesammelte Schriften*, 1240.
- 12 Benjamin, *Abhandlungen, Gesammelte Schriften*, 1241.

- 13 *Ms 449*. “Stärke des Hasses bei Marx. Kampflust der Arbeiterklasse. Die revolutionäre Zerstörung mit dem Erlösungsgedanken zu verschränken (Netschajev. *Die Dämonen*.)” Benjamin, *Abhandlungen, Gesammelte Schriften*, 1241.
- 14 Benjamin, *On the Concept of History. Selected Writings*, 391.
- 15 Benjamin, *On the Concept of History. Selected Writings*, 394.
- 16 As early as 1964, Marcuse expresses some reservations towards this distinction. Cf. Walter Benjamin, *Zur Kritik der Gewalt und andere Aufsätze* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1965), 100–2.

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