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YEARBOOK

Gebet, Praxis, Erlösung  
Prayer, Praxis, Redemption

12

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Erlösung

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Redemption

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Rosenzweig Jahrbuch  
Rosenzweig Yearbook

12



VERLAG KARL ALBER



Rosenzweig Jahrbuch / Rosenzweig Yearbook 12

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Prayer, Praxis, Redemption

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Im Auftrag des Vorstands der  
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**Gebet, Praxis,  
Erlösung**

**Prayer, Praxis,  
Redemption**

Gedruckt mit Unterstützung der Internationalen Rosenzweig-Gesellschaft  
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## Inhalt / Table of Contents

*Luca Bertolino, Irene Kajon*

Vorwort / Preface . . . . . 9

Inhaltsangaben / Abstracts . . . . . 13

*Ephraim Meir*

Redeeming Religions . . . . . 23

*Martin Fricke*

»Da hört man nichts mehr von Sache noch von Tat«  
(Rosenzweig) – Liturgie und Erlösung . . . . . 37

*Gesine Palmer*

Redeeming Liturgy: A Eulogist's Perspective on  
Rosenzweig's Concept of Liturgy . . . . . 46

*Hanoch Ben Pazi*

Linking Redemption to Prayer:  
Rethinking Redemption from the Perspective of  
Jewish Prayers . . . . . 60

*Giacomo Petrarca*

Erbeten, Prayer and Action: Theological-Political  
Glimpses at Franz Rosenzweig . . . . . 79

Inhalt / Table of Contents

*Gabriella Caponigro*

The Suffering of the Kingdom of Heaven.  
Violence and Tyranny in *The Star of Redemption* . . . . . 95

*Stephanie Brenzel*

The Gnostic Problem of Prayer . . . . . 112

*Elias Sacks*

Liturgical Counter-Symbols: Jacob Taubes,  
Franz Rosenzweig, and the Politics of Redemption . . . . . 127

*Naomi Tanaka*

Die Bedeutung von »Erlösung« in sozialer Dimension.  
Zur Akzeptanz des Rosenzweig-Gedankens in nicht-  
jüdischen Kulturbereichen . . . . . 142

*Eveline Goodman-Thau*

In Search of Life – Franz Rosenzweig and the  
Deconstruction of Historical Dialectics as the  
Birth of Self . . . . . 158

*Sebastian Wogenstein*

Rosenzweig’s Silences: Tragedy and Life in  
*The Star of Redemption* . . . . . 173

*Josiah Simon*

The New Pygmalion: On Aesthetics and Redemption in  
the Work of Franz Rosenzweig and Hans Ehrenberg . . . . . 190

*Ellen De Doncker*

Rosenzweig and Chalier on *Teshuva*: Repentance and  
Redemption . . . . . 205

Inhalt / Table of Contents

*Francesco Valerio Tommasi*

Redemption and the Commandment to Love  
the Neighbour.

Rosenzweig's Critique to Kantian Ethics . . . . . 220

*Lucas Scott Wright*

*Das All ist nur virtuell: Paganism, Fiction, and the Concepts  
of Redemption, Truth, and God in Der Stern der Erlösung .*

. . . . . 230

*Jules Simon*

Truth and *Bewährung* – Imparted by Rosenzweig . . . . . 245

Autorenverzeichnis / Authors Index . . . . . 263

Inhaltsangaben / Abstracts

Ellen De Doncker (Catholic University of Louvain)

*Rosenzweig and Chaliier on Teshuva: Repentance and Redemption*

This article studies the concept of *teshuva* within the thinking of Franz Rosenzweig and Catherine Chaliier, who both consider *teshuva* as a special kind of repentance. Re-reading Rosenzweig's *The Star of Redemption* through the lens of *teshuva* shows the importance of anticipatory acts in the present as an impatient awaiting of the redemption that is always yet to come (*à-venir*). First, the concept of *teshuva* is explored. Next, Rosenzweig's and Chaliier's interpretation of *teshuva* are analyzed. Finally, two challenges to *teshuva* (complacency and despair) are examined. Through this analysis, *teshuva* appears as a part of the messianic anticipation as a *Liebestat* which, by acts of redemption in the present in response to the omnipresent love of God, anticipates and prepares the future redemption, without determining it as would be the case with a *Zwecktat*. In doing so, *teshuva* radically breaks with the notion of evil as fatalistic, while acknowledging the irreversible character of evil.

Keywords: redemption, *teshuva*, messianism, repentance

Francesco Valerio Tommasi (Sapienza University of Rome)

*Redemption and the Commandment to Love the Neighbour.**Rosenzweig's Critique to Kantian Ethics*

Rosenzweig shares two Kantian theoretical moves: ethics should be detached from metaphysics. But ethics is also able, for its part, to ground a new metaphysics, rooted in the idea of man as a finite being. Despite this general affinity with Kant, in the pages of the third book of the second part of *The Star of Redemption* Rosenzweig introduces a critique to Kantian ethics and especially to its formalistic character. To avoid ambiguity, ethics must have a content. This content is love for the neighbour. Rosenzweig's critique can be seen as one that focuses the decisive point in Kantian moral philosophy: its formalism. However, an interpretation of Kant is possible that permits him to be brought closer to Rosenzweig,

even on this point of apparent distance and contrast. It is actually possible to read the Kantian categorical imperative as grounded on the principle of intersubjectivity. This intersubjectivity would consequently allow love of neighbour to be taken as an adequate formulation of the categorical imperative.

Keywords: Kant, categorical imperative, ethics, love, intersubjectivity

**Lucas Scott Wright (University of California, Irvine)**

Das All ist nur virtuell: *Paganism, Fiction, and the Concepts of Redemption, Truth, and God in Der Stern der Erlösung*

In this article, I attempt to make clear the pluralistic impulse of Rosenzweig's thought by explicating how Rosenzweig distinguishes between redemption, truth, and God in *The Star of Redemption*. Following the approach of Elliot R. Wolfson, I argue that Rosenzweig's description of all three rests upon an approach to narrating history that confounds fiction and non-fiction. As an example, I highlight Rosenzweig's critique of paganism contra the monotheism of Judaism and Christianity. I argue that despite this critique, wherein Rosenzweig maintains the truth of paganism, the pluralistic impulse of his thinking lies in his claim that were somebody other than he to write in accord with his idea of a *neues Denken*, the elements and narrative would look rather different.

Keywords: Elliot R. Wolfson, redemption, truth, fiction, paganism

**Jules Simon (University of Texas, El Paso)**

*Truth and Bewährung – Imparted by Rosenzweig*

Franz Rosenzweig pairs truth with *Bewährung* as the penultimate moment of his midrashic response to the question that he sets for his readers in the opening act of *The Star of Redemption*, when he asks: what happens when we deconstruct the truth that the world – by which he means the world of philosophy – has given us? An

*Francesco Valerio Tommasi (Sapienza University of Rome)*

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## Redemption and the Commandment to Love the Neighbour.

### Rosenzweig's Critique to Kantian Ethics

»Der philosophierende Jude fühlt sich wie heimatlich angehaucht auf dem Boden Kants«  
(Hermann Cohen, *Innere Beziehungen der Kantischen Philosophie zum Judentum*)

#### 1. Rosenzweig and Kant

»A Jew who works in philosophy feels at home in the world of Kant's thought«: an essay, published in 1993, by Irene Kajon on Franz Rosenzweig's interpretation of Kant begins with this famous quotation by Hermann Cohen. Kajon's text, contained in an important volume of *Archivio di Filosofia* dedicated to the history of Jewish philosophy, describes Rosenzweig's relation to Kant in terms of an »elective affinity«.<sup>1</sup> Kajon analyses the specific character of Rosenzweig's interpretation of Kant in the light of the readings of Kant that were more common at that time. After that, she examines the way Kant contributed to define Rosenzweig's idea of Jewish philosophy. In the third part, finally, Kajon evaluates the link between a philosophy, such as Kant's, radically based on the autonomy of human capacities, and the structural openness to revelation which, on the other hand, distinguishes the thought of Rosenzweig, and Jewish thinking in general. The three elements are closely connected to each other: Rosenzweig's reading of Kant is certainly original, both with regard to Kantian interpretation in

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Irene Kajon, »Storia della filosofia e filosofia ebraica. L'interpretazione di Kant in Franz Rosenzweig«, *Archivio di Filosofia* 61 (1993), no. 1–3, 305–338.

## Redemption and the Commandment to Love the Neighbour

general and in regard to the question of the link – historical and theoretical – between Kant and Judaism.

As is well-known, Kant's judgement on Judaism is highly controversial, and has repeatedly been a subject of dispute. On the one hand, there are many passages in the published works where Kant expresses very negative opinions of Jews, their culture and their religion. Some of those passages are often surprising for their rudeness and banality. It is really incomprehensible how the standard bearer of the enlightenment was able to offer such prejudices.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, Kant had very good personal relationships with prominent Jews of his time – as his correspondence testifies – with figures such as Moses Mendelssohn, who was highly esteemed by Kant; or like Marcus Herz, who was chosen as »respondent« of Kant's dissertation. Moreover, Kant's thinking has been considered by highly reputed Jewish thinkers to be very close to the Jewish spirit and to some extent even as a philosophical expression of Judaism: Saul Ascher, for example, a contemporary disciple of Kant, who found critical philosophy particularly convenient for Judaism. Very recently, Steven Schwarzschild called Kant even a »Jewish non-Jew«.<sup>3</sup>

Julius Guttmann was one of the first who explicitly tried to analyse the contradictory, surprising and paradoxical relationship between *Kant und das Judentum*.<sup>4</sup> This somehow irresolvable matter has gained attention also in recent debate. In her recent book on *Heidegger and the Jews*, Donatella Di Cesare traces back in German classical philosophy and in Kant the roots of what she calls »metaphysical antisemitism«, a way of thinking proper to the western philosophical tradition – we may say »from Ionia to Jena« – that implicitly or explicitly has been totalitarian in its theoretical

<sup>2</sup> Cf. e. g. Immanuel Kant, *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, AA VII, 205 f.

<sup>3</sup> Steven Schwarzschild, *The Pursuit of the Ideal*, ed. Menachem Kellner, Albany: SUNY Press, 1990, 4. Cf. also Silvia Marzano, *L'eredità di Kant e la linea ebraica*, Milano-Udine: Mimesis, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Julius Guttmann, »Kant und das Judentum«, in: Nathan Porges, *Joseph Bechor Schor, ein nordfranzösischer Bibelerklärer des XII. Jahrhunderts*, Leipzig: Fock, 1908, 41–61.

Francesco Valerio Tommasi

presuppositions.<sup>5</sup> For what concerns transcendental philosophy, already Joshua Halberstam describes a path *From Kant to Auschwitz*, underlining the fact that the idea of duty for the sake of duty led to the possibility of blind obedience.<sup>6</sup> On the contrary, in 2001, Bettina Stangneth wrote a long and detailed essay on *Antisemitische und antijudaistische Motive bei Immanuel Kant*, considering in a very attentive and moderate way all possible aspects of the question. Stangneth contextualizes the notions of antisemitism and anti-Judaism in the period, and underlines especially the strictly religious critique made by Kant.<sup>7</sup> In 2008 Daniela Tafani also wrote in the Italian review *Studi Kantiani* a very well-informed essay, considering especially the context and the milieu of Prussia at the end of the eighteenth century, where Kant's judgments on Judaism must unavoidably be included.<sup>8</sup>

Rosenzweig can be placed in a line inaugurated by Hermann Cohen and followed – in many respects – by Emmanuel Levinas: according to this interpretation Kant, theoretician of the impossibility of a totalising manner of thinking, the defender of human finitude, the protagonist of the primacy of ethics over speculative reason, is a philosopher who has much in sympathy with fundamental traits of Jewish thinking. In this line of interpretation, it is significant that Rosenzweig is also felt to be very close to Martin Heidegger – as I have been able to show in a contribution I made at the recent Rome conference of the Internationale Rosenzweig-

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Donatella Di Cesare, *Heidegger e gli ebrei*, Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Joshua Halberstam, »From Kant to Auschwitz«, *Social Theory and Practice* 14 (1988), no. 1, 41–54.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Bettina Stangneth, »Antisemitische und antijudaistische Motive bei Immanuel Kant? Tatsachen, Meinungen, Ursachen«, in: Horst Gronke, Thomas Meyer, Barbara Neißer (eds.), *Antisemitismus bei Kant und anderen Denkern der Aufklärung. Prämierte Schriften des wissenschaftlichen Preisausschreibens »Antisemitische und antijudaistische Motive bei Denkern der Aufklärung«*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2001, 11–124. Cf. also Susan Meld-Shell, »Kant and the Jewish Question«, *Hebraic Political Studies* 2 (2007), no. 1, 101–136.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Daniela Tafani, »Religione e diritti civili. La questione ebraica«, *Studi Kantiani* 21 (2008), 33–58.

## Redemption and the Commandment to Love the Neighbour

Gesellschaft.<sup>9</sup> On these aspects – and especially on the affinity between Rosenzweig and Kant as a theoretician of »finite freedom« – Irene Kajon herself also reflected in the text cited at the start of this contribution.

In the first part of her study, Kajon draws attention to how Rosenzweig considered Kant, alongside Schelling, to be one of his two »guardian angels«. The defence of existence and its irreducibility to thought, and therefore the critique of the identity between thought and being, are a decisive element that permits Rosenzweig to value Kant as a thinker who refutes rationalism and the totalising and absolutizing pretences of philosophy. But Kant does not stop there. Thanks to the fact of reason's being constituted by freedom, he also shows the specific nature of the »ego« and the immediacy of self-awareness that everyone has. Kant is the philosopher of freedom, but of a freedom that is tied to the concrete conditions of the world, and so of a finite freedom. Such finite freedom is contemporaneously open to the possibility of attaining metaphysical ideas and even to a theological plane, without its being the case that the idea of God found or be confounded with the ideas of the soul or the world.

In this way, for the Rosenzweig of *The Star of Redemption*, Kant is a philosopher who, from his critique of rational metaphysics, by means of self-awareness as spontaneity of an individual's existence, arrives at ethics as a body of teaching independent of any preceding consideration about being, and finally in its turn at metaphysics.<sup>10</sup>

Kajon's text carries on with an analysis of interpretations of Kant contemporary with *The Star of Redemption* which were analysed and discussed by Rosenzweig in his work; then she goes on to show how the critique of philosophy's pretensions to embrace the absolute, and existence as a given datum are decisive characteristics for Rosenzweig's concept of Jewish philosophy.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Francesco Valerio Tommasi, »Il corpo come ›Und‹. Cohen, Heidegger e lo ›scambio di fronti‹ rosenzweighiano«, *Archivio di Filosofia* 86 (2018), no. 1, 183–189.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Kajon, »Storia della filosofia e filosofia ebraica«, 314.

Francesco Valerio Tommasi

## 2. Rosenzweig and the Categorical Imperative

Now, in my opinion, these aspects can be developed on the basis of a specific element in Rosenzweig's reading of Kant, namely the question of the categorical imperative. Indeed, in the pages of the third book of the second part of *The Star of Redemption*, that are devoted to the idea of redemption, Rosenzweig introduces a critique to Kantian ethics and to his formalistic character.

Rosenzweig writes:

Moral laws do not seek only to be rooted in freedom – as love toward the neighbor also wants it – they actually do not want to recognize any pre-supposition other than freedom. This is the famous requirement of »autonomy«. The natural consequence of this requirement is that the laws destined to determine this act lose all content, for any content would exert a power which would ruin the autonomy; one cannot will »something« and yet will only »in general« [...]. In the moral domain, everything is uncertain; all things considered, everything can be moral, but nothing is so with any certainty.<sup>11</sup>

To avoid ambiguity and equivocity, ethics must have a content. This content is love for the neighbour.

In contrast to moral law which is necessarily purely formal, and hence not only ambivalent, but infinitely ambiguous as regards content, the commandment of love is clear and unambiguous in its content, and for this love which springs from the oriented freedom of character, it needs a presupposition that is situated beyond freedom.<sup>12</sup>

Love of neighbour is unequivocal, but at the same time it represents again a universal principle. The neighbour is someone, but he or she could be anyone. Love of neighbour is a commandment, but it commands love. All these paradoxes are grounded in the peculiar structure of the synthesis, that Rosenzweig describes a few pages after: the »and« (*und*) is the form of mediation that

<sup>11</sup> Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1988 (hereafter: *Stern*), 239 / *The Star of Redemption*, transl. Barbara E. Galli, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005 (hereafter: *Star*), 230.

<sup>12</sup> *Stern*, 239 / *Star*, 230 f.

## Redemption and the Commandment to Love the Neighbour

can keep together universality and particularity, formality and materiality. The »and« takes the form of the matrix sentence »God is good«, which allows the imperative »Love thy neighbour« to be grounded. Freedom still has its full autonomy, but this autonomy is grounded elsewhere. »God is good« is the originative source of all other ethical judgements. This »and« of redemption

must reunite the root words of Creation and Revelation, that-which-was-only-predicate, the »good!« with that-which-was-only-subject, the divine I.<sup>13</sup>

The originative matrix proposition of redemption is therefore the »I am good« of God, which repeated by the world and by human beings obviously becomes, »He, God, is good«. This is the only sentence that is true, always and in all circumstances, uttered by whoever. If, for example, a parrot were to utter a mathematical truth, it would have no sense on its mouth, in contrast to the foundational matrix sentence which is full of meaning even if it spoken by an animal.

An analysis of this specific critique allows therefore a deeper understanding of Rosenzweig's general reading of Kant: Rosenzweig shares what he sees as two Kantian theoretical moves: ethics should be detached from metaphysics. But ethics is also able, for its part, to ground a new metaphysics, rooted in the idea of man as a finite being.

Rosenzweig's critique can be seen, above all, as one that focuses on the decisive point in Kantian moral philosophy: its formalism. From Hegel to Husserl, the presumed emptiness of the categorical imperative has often been subject to objection. However, an interpretation of Kant is possible that permits him to be brought closer to Rosenzweig, even on this point of apparent distance and contrast. It is actually possible to read the Kantian categorical imperative as grounded on the principle of intersubjectivity. This intersubjectivity would consequently allow love of neighbour to be taken as an adequate formulation of the categorical imperative.

<sup>13</sup> *Stern*, 257 / *Star*, 248.

Francesco Valerio Tommasi

Let us consider the question in detail. Above all we should note that between the empty formalism of the law and the specific content of concrete actions there are, according to Kant, levels of mediation. It is possible in fact to distinguish between perfect and imperfect duties, or, following the terminology proposed by Onora O'Neill, between *contradiction in conception* and *contradiction in the will*.<sup>14</sup> Not every maxim – as Hans Kelsen had previously argued – can be raised to the level of law. It is for example clear that for Kant the prohibition of suicide and the prohibition of lying were perfect duties, even though they have an explicit material content and therefore by commanding something concrete reach the level of empty formality and purity required by the moral law. It actually seems that these commands cannot envisage any kind of exception.

In fact, the Kantian foundation which seems to guarantee the move from empty formality of the law to concrete contents seems to be respect of human dignity, and so of a human being's rational and moral nature. The denial of such nature implies a self-contradiction. There are consequently ends, or contents, that are perfect, or which are immediately coincident with a duty. Following what Kant says in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, the ends that are at the same time also duties are the perfection of oneself and the happiness of another person. On this basis the further subdivision between duties to oneself and duties towards others is grounded.

But now it is necessary to observe that in the *Metaphysics of Morals* the technical way in which self-contradiction is defined as a criterion for deriving an end as a duty as well, is in fact based on what Kant considers a real and true duplicity in human nature: according to Kant, the human being divides into *homo noumenon* and *homo phaenomenon*. This division lies at the base of all duties to oneself, as is shown by the first paragraphs of the *Tugendlehre* (Doctrine of Virtues). But this idea of the distinction between

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Onora O'Neill, »Consistency in Action«, in: Nelson T. Potter, Mark Timmons (eds.), *Morality and Universality. Essays on Ethical Universalizability*, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1985, 159–186 (esp. 174–180); id., »Universal Laws and Ends-in-Themselves«, *The Monist* 72 (1989), no. 3, 341–361 (esp. 347f.).

## Redemption and the Commandment to Love the Neighbour

*homo noumenon* and *homo phaenomenon* actually grounds the very idea of duty *überhaupt* already in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* and then in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. In human beings the law takes the form of an imperative which should subdue human inclinations. Human beings are not animals, nor God; and in fact neither animals nor God have the possibility of lying, or of committing suicide; animals spontaneously follow their nature which is uniquely phenomenal and God spontaneously follows his or her nature which is uniquely rational. A contradiction can be verified only in the case of a separation. Reason commands with its »Thou shalt«, which paradoxically seems to root autonomy completely outside a person's own power. The voice of conscience seems to be that of a »Thou«, of another. Human beings are possessed of a moral reason rather than possess one themselves.

So, on the basis of the individual's two-fold nature, indeed on the basis of the real and actual presence of two *homines* in the same individual, it seems possible to assert that all duties, including duties to oneself are always already intersubjective duties. Duties to oneself also seem to be duties to another. More than that: this alterity is not only figurative or metaphorical but must necessarily be understood as a concrete alterity as well.

If I were alone in the world – if there were no one else in the world besides me, not even God – could I lie or commit suicide? If I did not have to answer to anyone else for my actions, could I do so? The only way of saying »no« is, precisely, to presuppose an »other« within me. But in regard to this other, how can the criterion of universalizability be thought? If moral reason implies immediately and even coincides with universal validity, it seems immediately to imply a real and concrete intersubjectivity. The categorical imperative is not thinkable without the presence of others. The moment of moral objectivity is in fact always and already a moment of inter-subjectivity.

More than that: the noumenal part of human being is reason. But pure reason has a moral nature. It immediately coincides with the law, which is defined as *Faktum der Vernunft*. Morality, accordingly, is rationality itself, and the dignity of being consists in

Francesco Valerio Tommasi

this noumenal nature on which moral ends can consequently be based. This is where the *homo noumenon* resides. But this reason is a reason that is characterised only by universality. The plurality of subjects internal to the individual – or the distinction between *homo noumenon* and *homo phaenomenon* – seems secondary and derived as a result in relation to the plurality of real subjects external to oneself. The deeper self-contradiction in moral reason is therefore constituted by the attempt to assert solipsism of human nature.

Following Kant beyond Kant himself, one can therefore assert that, on a logical level and in principle, commandments towards others seem necessarily to precede commandments towards oneself. This assertion seems to me fully to reflect the spirit and premises of Kantian moral philosophy. This approach seems to me to be capable – at least in principle – of perhaps contributing to a resolution of certain difficulties that have characterised Kantian ethics, and over which interpreters have clashed – for example the possible conflict between the perfect duty always to speak the truth and the possible requirement of protecting and hiding an innocent who is being unjustly pursued.

Rather than introduce a critique of formalism, and a reassertion of the material and substantive aspect of ethics, the Rosenzweig's analysis seems to me to be open to an interpretation in this direction: it deepens a trait already present in Kantianism and which can be asserted on the basis of Kant's own philosophy. It is not about reasserting the material aspect against the formal aspect of ethics. Rather it is to observe that the formal aspect is not grounded on an empty notion of freedom but on the plurality of subjects. Duties towards others precede duties towards oneself.

In this way it is also possible to take the closeness of Kant to the principles of Jewish philosophy still further in the interpretative line of Cohen-Rosenzweig-Levinas, which I mentioned at the start, referring also to the article of Kajon. Kantian freedom is a finite freedom because it is a freedom for others. Kantian autonomy can then be understood – paradoxically – as a radical heteronomy, because the command of reason is an unconditional command. The »ego« that must decide with its freedom how to

Redemption and the Commandment to Love the Neighbour

act does not find itself before an infinite range of equivalent possibilities. Nor does it find itself before an abstract and empty law. The »ego« finds itself before a concrete face – that of its neighbour. And perhaps this concrete face appeals immediately to goodness as an originary source, as a matrix.

## Autorenverzeichnis / Authors Index

cation, dialogue, translation, ethics, and the thought of Hannah Arendt. She co-translated some of Rosenzweig's texts about the *Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus* and the theory of translation etc. with Shinichi Muraoka in the book: Franz Rosenzweig, *Atarashii Shikou* [*The New Thinking*], Tokyo: Hosei University Press, 2019).

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