Cultural Memory in the Present

Exemplarity and Chosenness

Rosenzweig and
Derrida
on the Nation of Philosophy

DANA HOLLANDER

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Mieke Bal and Hent de Vries, Editors

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To my mother, Vita Hollander,
and in memory of my father, Zander Hollander

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Abbreviations

WORKS BY JACQUES DERRIDA

AC	*L'Autre Cap, suivi de la démocratie ajournée* (Paris: Minuit, 1991). *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).
Adieu	*Adieu à Emmanuel Levinas* (Paris: Galilée, 1997). *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).
AR	*Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2002).
Archive	*Mal d'Archive. Une impression freudienne* (Paris: Galilée, 1995). *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
Babel	"Des Tours de Babel," ed. Joseph Graham, in *Difference in Translation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 209–48; reprinted in Psyché. Trans. Joseph Graham, ibid., 165–205; reprinted in AR.
Circumfession	"Circonfession" in Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, *Jacques Derrida* (Paris: Seuil, 1991). "Circumfession" in *Jacques Derrida*, trans. G. Bennington (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). Cited by section number.
DP	*Du Droit à la philosophie* (Paris: Galilée, 1990). Translated as *Who's Afraid of Philosophy? Right to Philosophy 1*, trans. Jan Plug (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002); and *Eyes of the University: Right to Philosophy 2*, trans. Jan Plug et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).
ED	*L'Écriture et la différence* (Paris: Seuil, 1967). *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).
EO	*The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation; Texts and Discussions with Jacques Derrida*, ed. Christie V.

	McDonald, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Schocken, 1985). French edition: *L'Oreille de l'autre. Otobiographies, transferts, traductions: Textes et débats avec Jacques Derrida*, ed. Claude Lévesque and Christie V. McDonald (Montreal: VLB, 1982).
FL	"Force de loi"/"Force of Law," trans. Mary Quaintance, *Cardozo Law Review*, vol. 11, no. 5–6 (July/August 1990), 920–1038 / 921–1045. French version later reissued as *Force de loi. Le "fondement mystique de l'autorité"* (Paris: Galilée, 1994).
FS	"Foi et savoir: les deux sources de la 'religion' aux limites de la simple raison," in J. Derrida and G. Vattimo (eds.), *La Religion* (Paris: Seuil, 1996), 9–86. "Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of 'Religion' at the Limits of Reason Alone," trans. Samuel Weber, in Derrida and Vattimo (eds.), *Religion* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 1–78; reprinted in AR.
G	*De la grammatologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1967). *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorky Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974/1997).
IAW	"Interpretations at war. Kant, le Juif, l'Allemand" (1989), in *Psyché: Inventions de l'autre II*, rev. ed. (Paris: Galileé, 1987–2003). "Interpretations at War: Kant, the Jew, the German," trans. Moshe Ron, *New Literary History*, vol. 22, no. 1 (Winter 1991), 39–95; reprinted in AR. Revised translation forthcoming in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other*, vol. 2, ed. and trans. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).
Intro.	Derrida, Introduction to Edmund Husserl, *L'Origine de la Géométrie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962). *Edmund Husserl's "Origin of Geometry": An Introduction*, trans. John P. Leavey, Jr. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989).
Mono	*Le Monolinguisme de l'autre, ou la prothèse de l'origine* (Paris: Galilée, 1996). *Monolingualism of the Other, or The Prosthesis of Origin*, trans. Patrick Mensah (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).
MP	*Marges de la philosophie* (Paris: Minuit, 1972). *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).
Onto-Theology	"Onto-Theology of National-Humanism (Prolegomena to a Hypothesis)," *Oxford Literary Review*, vol. 14, no. 1–2 (1992), 3–23.
PGH	*Le Problème de la genèse dans la philosophie de Husserl* (1953–54) (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990). *The Problem of Genesis in Husserl's Philosophy*, trans. Marian Hobson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

Positions	*Positions* (Paris: Minuit, 1972). *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).
Psyché	*Psyché: Inventions de l'autre* (Paris: Galilée, 1987).
Sig	*Signéponge/Signsponge*, trans. Richard Rand (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).
SM	*Spectres de Marx* (Paris: Galilée, 1993). *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (London: Routledge, 1994).
VM1	First edition of "Violence et métaphysique," in *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* (1964), no. 3, 322–54, and no. 4, 425–73.
VP	*La Voix et le phénomène* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967). *Speech and Phenomena*, trans. David Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973).
Weber	"Un témoignage donné... " (1991) in Elisabeth Weber (ed.), *Questions au judaïsme. Entretiens avec Elisabeth Weber* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1996), 73–104. "A Testimony Given . . . ," in Elisabeth Weber (ed.), *Questioning Judaism: Interviews by Elisabeth Weber*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 39–58. Originally published in German as *Jüdisches Denken in Frankreich* (Frankfurt am Main: Jüdischer Verlag/Suhrkamp, 1994).

Materials from the Jacques Derrida Archive at the University of California, Irvine, are cited by Box and Folder number. See the Appendix for an overview of archival materials from the "philosophical nationality" seminar cycle.

WORKS BY FRANZ ROSENZWEIG

AD	"Apologetisches Denken," in GS III, 677–86. "Apologetic Thinking," trans. Joachim Neugroschel, in *The Jew: Essays from Martin Buber's Journal "Der Jude," 1916–1928* (University: University of Alabama Press, 1980), 265–72. Alternative translation in PTW, 95–108.
AT	"Atheistische Theologie" (1914), in GS III, 687–97. "Atheistic Theology," in PTW, 10–24.
B	*Das Büchlein vom gesunden und kranken Menschenverstand* (Königstein: Jüdischer Verlag/Athenäum, 1984), ed. Nahum Glatzer. (First German edition: Düsseldorf: Josef Melzer, 1964.) *Understanding the Sick and the Healthy: A View of World, Man, and God*, ed. and trans. Nahum Glatzer (Cambridge: Harvard

	University Press, 1999). (First English edition: New York: Noonday, 1953.)
Cohen-Einleitung	"Einleitung," *Hermann Cohens Jüdische Schriften* (Berlin: C. A. Schwetschke, 1924), vol. 1, xiii–lxiv.
GB	Letters from Rosenzweig to Margrit Rosenstock-Huessy. Cited by date of letter. Available in two editions: Franz Rosenzweig and Margrit Rosenstock, *Vollständiger Briefwechsel. Franz Rosenzweigs Briefe an "Liebes Gritli,"* ed. Michael Gormann-Thelen (2002) http://home.debitel.net/user/gormann-thelen/eledition.htm (accessed July 4, 2005). Franz Rosenzweig, *Die "Gritli"-Briefe. Briefe an Margrit Rosenstock-Huessy*, ed. Inken Rühle and Reinhold Mayer (Tübingen: Bilam, 2002).*
GS	*Der Mensch und sein Werk. Gesammelte Schriften*, 4 vols. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976–1984). Cited by volume and page number.
JDC	Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy (ed.), *Judaism Despite Christianity: The "Letters on Christianity and Judaism" between Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy and Franz Rosenzweig* (University: University of Alabama Press, 1969). The original letters translated here by Dorothy M. Emmet appear in GS I.1.
Nachwort	"Nachwort zu den Hymnen und Gedichten des Jehuda Halevi," in GS IV.1 (where it appears as a preface). "Afterword" in Barbara Ellen Galli, *Franz Rosenzweig and Jehuda Halevi: Translating, Translations, and Translators* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 169–84. Alternative translation in Rosenzweig, *Ninety-two Poems and Hymns of Yehuda Halevi*, trans. Thomas A. Kovach, Eva Jospe, and Gilya Gerda Schmidt, ed. Richard A. Cohen (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000).
ND	"Das neue Denken. Einige nachträgliche Bemerkungen zum 'Stern der Erlösung'" (1925), in GS III, 139–61. "'The New Thinking': A Few Supplementary Remarks to the *Star*," trans. Alan Udoff and Barbara E. Galli, in Udoff and Galli (eds.), *Franz Rosenzweig's "The New Thinking"* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 67–102. Alternative translation in PTW, 109–39.
PTW	*Philosophical and Theological Writings*, trans. and ed. Paul W. Franks and Michael L. Morgan (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000).
S	*Der Stern der Erlösung* (1921), 4th ed., GS II. *The Star of Redemp-*

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* For a discussion of the two editions, see Michael Zank, "The Rosenzweig-Rosenstock Triangle, or, What Can We Learn from *Letters to Gritli*? A Review Essay," *Modern Judaism* 23 (2003): 78–79.

	tion, trans. William Hallo (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985; originally published 1970). Alternative translation by Barbara Galli (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005).
SL	"Die Schrift und Luther," GS III, 749–72. "Scripture and Luther," in ST, 47–69.
ST	Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, *Scripture and Translation*, trans. Lawrence Rosenwald with Everett Fox (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994). Originally published in German in 1936 as *Die Schrift und ihre Verdeutschung.*
Urzelle	"'Urzelle' des Stern der Erlösung," GS III, 125–38. "'Germ Cell' of *The Star of Redemption*," trans. Alan Udoff and Barbara E. Galli, in *Franz Rosenzweig's "The New Thinking"* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 45–66. Alternative translation in PTW, 48–72.

WORKS BY OTHER AUTHORS

BR	Hermann Cohen, *Der Begriff der Religion im System der Philosophie* (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1915). Reprinted as vol. 10 of *Werke* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1996).
ERW	Hermann Cohen, *Ethik des reinen Willens*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1907). Reprinted as vol. 7 of *Werke* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1981).
Hua	Husserliana edition of the works of Edmund Husserl (The Hague: Nijhoff). Cited by volume and page number.
Krisis	Edmund Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie*, in Hua VI. *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970). Cited by section number.
LRE	Hermann Cohen, *Logik der reinen Erkenntnis*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1914). Reprinted as vol. 6 of *Werke* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1977).
PIM	Hermann Cohen, *Das Prinzip der Infinitesimal-Methode und seine Geschichte. Ein Kapitel zur Grundlegung der Erkenntniskritik*, 3rd ed. (Leipzig: Brandstetter, 1914). Reprinted in *Werke*, vol. 5 (Hildesheim: Olms, 1984).
PSW	Edmund Husserl, "Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft," *Logos* 1 (1911), 289–341. "Philosophy as a Rigorous Science," trans. Quentin Lauer, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965).

RV	Hermann Cohen, *Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums*, 2nd ed. (1929) (Reprint, Wiesbaden: Fourier, 1978). *Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism*, trans. Simon Kaplan, 2nd ed. (Atlanta: Scholars Press / American Academy of Religion, 1995).
SZ	Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 16th ed. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1986). *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper, 1962). *Being and Time: A Translation of* Sein und Zeit, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996). Cited either by section number or by page number in the German edition (which is given in the margins of both English translations).
UG	Beilage III of the Husserliana edition of Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie*, in Hua VI, 2nd ed., ed. Walter Biemel (1962; first edition published 1954), 365–86. Known under the title “Der Ursprung der Geometrie” (“The Origin of Geometry”), trans. David Carr and included in Derrida, *Edmund Husserl’s “Origin of Geometry”: An Introduction* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 157–80.

NOTE: I have drawn on published translations to varying degrees and have modified them wherever necessary.

EXEMPLARITY AND CHOSENNESS

Introduction

One of Jacques Derrida's later works on the thought of Emmanuel Levinas, a long lecture written a year after Levinas's death called "A Word of Welcome" ("Un mot d'accueil") and included in the book *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, begins with a consideration of Levinas's thought of opening (*ouverture*), welcome (*accueil*), and hospitality. Derrida proposes to look at hospitality "*in the name* of Levinas, . . . by speaking, not in his place and in his name, but along with him, speaking with him as well, first by listening to him today, by coming to places where, in order to recall their names to them, he renamed, made renowned, Sinai and the face, 'Sinai' and 'face.'" Derrida asks: "These names were brought together for the sake of this gathering, but do we know how to hear them? In what language? As common or proper nouns? As translated from another language? From the past of a holy writing or from an idiom to come?" (Adieu, 44/19). With these lines, Derrida indicates first that it is not possible to conceptualize something like hospitality in general without recourse to particular names or outside of a particular idiom. But these lines also suggest that with such names we are immediately in a bind of translatability: What do they carry with them? What needs to be abstracted from them in order for them to communicate generality, to function as common nouns?

This dual thought about naming the general is developed in a conversation of sorts between Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida—an ongoing conversation whose first volley was Derrida's 1964 essay "Violence and

Metaphysics" (which is both a relatively early work within Derrida's oeuvre and the very earliest systematic treatment of Levinas's thought by anyone). Here, as in the past, Derrida builds and comments on Levinas's own efforts to take account of the tension and relationship between the biblical and the Greek-philosophical traditions—the relationship between fundamental insights into the ethical (Levinas being known as the thinker of an ethics of the "face-to-face") and their articulation in biblical "names" ("Sinai"). But the issue of translatability and philosophical language cannot simply be described as an abstract philosophical problem. What makes Derrida's presentation effective is that it does not itself take recourse to a philosophical language that purports to articulate generalities in an abstract way. Rather, by presenting the problem as one of *names*, as one of interpreting hospitality "*in the name* of Levinas"—and thus in the name of the names to which Levinas refers his readers—Derrida conveys that the problem of translatability and philosophical language is one that we inhabit, as philosophers.

This book is in part a study of the philosophy of Jacques Derrida in view of the tension articulated in these lines in *Adieu* between philosophy as an enterprise of conveying the general and the challenges posed by particulars of various kinds: proper names, particular languages, and national discourses. My aim is to trace a question that runs throughout Derrida's oeuvre, beginning from his earliest studies of Husserl's phenomenology: How may we account for the possibility of philosophy, of universalism in thinking, without denying that all thinking is also idiomatic and particular?

In order to trace this thread, I have centered my study of Derrida on the "philosophical nationality" project that was the focus of his teaching, and of many of his public lectures and publications, from 1984 into the early 1990s. This project pursued the insight that philosophy is challenged in a special way by its particular, "national" instantiations and that conversely, no nationalism, no discourse invoking a nationality, is without an element of philosophical ambition, a claim to universal validity. I shall seek to show how the work on "philosophical nationality" carries forward Derrida's early discoveries, through his work on Husserl, regarding questions of history, language, and "exemplarity."

A core figure that emerges in Derrida's explorations of exemplarity is that of chosenness—the biblical idea of a people elected by God for a particular purpose. The idea of election poses philosophical problems akin to that of nationality: how is the elevation of a particular people reconcilable with a universal God? The writings of the preeminent modern thinker of Jewish chosenness, Franz Rosenzweig—who is one of the authors Derrida read closely in his "philosophical nationality" seminar—provide the ideal resource for exploring this question for our times. I have thus paired my study of Derrida with a study of the philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig, in which I trace how this German-Jewish thinker who has had such a great impact on contemporary thought arrived at his core insights about chosenness as constitutive both of human individuality and of Jewish existence.

Let me indicate some of the questions and principles that have guided my readings of Derrida and Rosenzweig, respectively—though, to be sure, these overlap to some extent, as my readings of the two figures are often conjoined.

Derrida

Derrida's "philosophical nationality" writings explore what he terms the "exemplary" structure of discourses of national affirmation—their quality of asserting the most universal, "philosophical" values in the name of the most particular national, cultural, or linguistic entities. They thus form a body of work in which his thinking about particularity and universality in philosophy comes to a head. My purpose in this book is in part to situate these writings in the development of Derrida's oeuvre as a whole and to thereby show that one of his ongoing concerns, from his earliest essays to his most recent works, is how to account for philosophy's cultural determinations without giving up on its universalist aims—that is, without succumbing to a cultural relativism.

It is a significant feature of Derrida's work that questions are pursued, to take up the formulation from *Adieu*, "in the name of" other thinkers who have also been engaged or pursued by them. In this book, my intention is to approach Derrida's work in a way that does justice to the idea that, as Derrida recognizes and demonstrates, the problem of particularity and universality in philosophy cannot be approached except by reflecting this problem in the very way one proceeds to present it. For Derrida, this means letting the problem articulate itself through readings of individual philosophical texts, readings that are meant to perform or demonstrate, each time in a singular way, general insights through, or in view of, the most particular names or idioms. Consequently, I have found it necessary to trace Derrida's insights as they are developed, each time in particular ways, in his readings; it would in my view be neither possible nor desirable to "abstract" from Derrida's writings summary arguments or conclusions without regard for the ways in which the particularities of a text, context, or thinker are negotiated with the general themes that are at issue.

In focusing from the outset on the problem of history as it is articulated in Derrida's reading of Husserl's "The Origin of Geometry" and trying to trace a concern about historical and cultural relativism through Derrida's early writings through to the writings of the 1980s and 1990s, this book aims to break with the prevailing habit among readers of the early Derrida of focusing primarily on problems of language. Here I am in part following Geoffrey Bennington's important insight that questions of language are not at the center of Derrida's philosophy—at least not in the sense of specialized questions, belonging to a special domain of something like the "philosophy of language." This is because the way Derrida asks about language implicates all of the most fundamental or "general" philosophical questions. It should thus be possible to read Derrida's oeuvre in a way that focuses on its importance for any number of classic philosophical questions. For the present study, I have found Derrida's early attention to history crucial for understanding the overall trajectory of his thought, and I show how this attention to history, and to the associated questions of cultural particularity and philosophical universality, continues even in the works in which language is foregrounded. Besides finding history to be an important concern in the early work, one of the results of rereading Derrida's oeuvre with special attention to the question of history is that the important continuities between the earlier works and the later writings that have come to be known as "ethico-political" become far more visible.

With this in mind, it is in particular noteworthy that, besides offering an analysis of discourses of national or cultural affirmation, the "philosophical nationality" writings are also motivated by an ethico-political concern: These writings highlight the paradoxes of exemplarism—that national affirmations are neither simply particularistic, since they take place in the name of universal-philosophical values, nor simply universalist, since they make their claims in the names of cultural particulars. In thus calling into question monolithic conceptions of identity, Derrida's works challenge philosophy, as an exemplary universalist discourse, to continually renew itself and perpetually open itself to what lies outside and beyond its culturally specific heritages. His writings thus lead beyond the paradox that the more we assert a particular identity such as Europeanness or Jewishness, the more we are forced to do so in the name of the universal values and aims that this identity represents, and, consequently, the more we must deny its very particularity. For in this paradox is contained the ethical injunction to open ourselves—our national or cultural communities as well as philosophy itself—to what is to come: to what is other than, or is excluded from, such communities and to future lines of inquiry. This openness to the future is, indeed, what makes philosophy an ongoing, viable pursuit, what gives it its unity and identity.

Rosenzweig

The writings of Franz Rosenzweig (which were of course a central influence on the philosophy of Levinas) combine a systematic critique of the Western philosophical tradition with an insistence on the importance of Jewish chosenness, on the Jews' role in a universal human history. Like Derrida's questions about national and linguistic particularisms, Rosenzweig's questions about Jewish existence begin from a concern about the possibility of a universal history, or what one might call a transcendental historicity. For Rosenzweig, to ask these questions goes hand in hand with a charge against traditional philosophy that it is unable to take account of concrete human individuals. Derrida had developed his key questions about historicity explicitly out of his early readings of Husserl. I shall suggest that Rosenzweig's analyses of both human singularity and Jewish uniqueness also owe a great deal to the philosophy of one of his principal teachers, Hermann Cohen. In particular, I shall show how Rosenzweig's core views can be brought out more clearly when seen in conjunction with Cohen's logic of origin and philosophy of Judaism.

Rosenzweig's analyses of Jewish existence are an illuminating counterpart to Derrida's analyses of the paradoxes of exemplarism: the Jews emerge as an enigmatic figure whose identity, always "in retreat," is originarily constituted through, and as translation from, the foreign. This theory of Judaism is thus essentially linked to a theory of translation as a constitutive linguistic operation—and I show how both Rosenzweig, especially in writings surrounding his own translation practice, and Derrida, particularly in the "philosophical nationality" seminars, are concerned with understanding translation, especially the translatability of sacred language, in a radically new way.

Far from viewing Rosenzweig as an "ahistorical" thinker, as is often done, I find that the concern with history and time is ongoing in Rosenzweig's philosophy. In order to capture human existence, Rosenzweig developed a "messianic epistemology," a method of "narration" in place of what he viewed as static philosophical theorizing. As we will see, this went along with a view of Judaism and Christianity as two modes of "wresting eternity from time," and of Judaism in particular as inhabiting a unique time of "already-being-at-the-end" of history, a time of foreclosure. On one level, this is a typical "chosen people" narrative in that it includes a dimension of a redemptive or messianic future: if a people is asserted as unique, this is not only by virtue of its past, but also because of the promise it holds for the future. Thus, for Rosenzweig, the uniqueness of the Jewish people lies in the role it plays in universal redemption. However, when viewed in conjunction with Derrida's evocations of the "messianic" as a radical openness to the future, Rosenzweig's analysis of Judaism as a temporal-historical experience shows us the possibility of a continual enactment in the present of a messianic hope—a hope that is essentially linked to everyday forms of human temporal existence.

Derrida and Rosenzweig

We might say that in Rosenzweig's schema the Jewish people are an "exemplar" in that their very status as a particular people, as "the one people," founds a new idea of universality. In a sense, then, I am proposing Rosenzweig's writings as a further example of an inquiry into the structure of exemplarity Derrida was trying to bring out (and indeed, Rosenzweig is among the German-Jewish authors Derrida studies as part of the "philosophical nationality" project, just as the concept of Jewish election is one to which Derrida returns often in the course of that project), a thinker who is preoccupied with some of the same problems of particularity and universality that Derrida confronts. But my pairing of these two philosophers under the heading of "Exemplarity and Chosenness" has a further purpose: Since, as I am suggesting, Derrida's way of proceeding—by means of individual readings of particular texts or "names"—is part and parcel of what he is trying to accomplish, and since, as I maintain, no "argument" can be extracted from his texts without reference to the singular reading strategies he develops, I have found it fruitful to juxtapose a consideration of Derrida's procedure with a study of how Rosenzweig comes to conceive of Judaism in terms of election in view of a heightened sense of both Jewish particularity and universality. In doing so, my aim is first to illuminate a philosophico-historical context—one represented not only by Rosenzweig, but also by Cohen and Levinas—that is of central importance to the "philosophical nationality" project and to Derrida's ongoing confrontations. But beyond this, my "double" presentation of the thought of Derrida and Rosenzweig approaches them as two "exemplary" thinkers of exemplarity and as standing in an exemplary relation to one another. For something to be exemplary, it must be more than an example among others, and so I mean to present Derrida and Rosenzweig not as two instances of thinkers who engage with the philosophical problem of particularity and universality—as if this problem could be named in a way that makes it each time the same, as if such an attempt to name it would not itself be beset by what Derrida calls the paradoxes of exemplarism. Rather, the "double" reading or juxtaposition I offer of their writings may be seen as evoking the problematic of exemplarity as it affects and complicates any attempt to understand what it means to assert what is most universal in the name of what is most singular—and thus to conceive of the universalizing operations that are at the heart of the philosophical enterprise. I propose the Derrida-Rosenzweig pair as an exemplary pair—a pair that stands also for a larger cluster of related thinkers, including Husserl, Cohen, Heidegger, and Levinas—in order to explore how Derrida's investigations into "philosophical nationality" can be illuminated in an exemplary way by Rosenzweig's theory of chosenness, as well as how Rosenzweig's writings on Judaism are in turn exemplarily illuminated by Derrida's writing about particularity and universality.

To think about particularity and universality requires a reflection on individuality and individuation. Accordingly, Part I, Chapter 1 presents Rosenzweig's philosophy as growing out of his fundamental concern to preserve a notion of the concrete human individual against generalization by means of concepts, as well as a first look at his understanding of Jewish uniqueness in terms of election. I show that Rosenzweig's ideas on both of these questions are crucially informed by his reception of Hermann Cohen's philosophy—both acknowledged and unacknowledged.

Part II introduces the reader to Derrida's concern, in his early writings, with particularity, universality, and exemplarity—the theme that I am identifying as central to his thought and that culminates in his later work surrounding "philosophical nationality." Here I propose that from Derrida's earliest works, he has been concerned with the tension between the universality of philosophical concepts and the cultural or idiomatic particularity of philosophical texts. Chapter 2 begins by looking at Derrida's earliest publication, his 1963 "Introduction" to the translation he published of Husserl's short text known under the title "The Origin of Geometry." My interest here is especially in Derrida's focus on the "exemplary consciousness" that allows Husserl to evoke a European ideal in a way that is not particularist. I follow this with a discussion of Derrida's 1971 essay "The Supplement of Copula," where I find him to be pursuing a similar concern with respect to Heidegger's privileging of Greek as the language of philosophy. I view Derrida as following Heidegger in seeking to grasp how recognizing the linguistic specificity of philosophical concepts is not tantamount to a linguistic relativism. The closing section of this chapter looks at Derrida's treatment of questions of history and tradition in his early (1964) essay on Levinas, "Violence and Metaphysics." I examine how Derrida's confrontation with Levinas's evocation of a Judaic "other" of the philosophical tradition allows Derrida to extend his reflections on the exemplarity of the Greek and the European in philosophy.

Chapter 3 takes a different point of departure from within Derrida's "Introduction" to Husserl's "The Origin of Geometry" in order to trace Derrida's thinking about universality and particularity in his work on questions of language. Looking at some of the discussions of linguistic matters in sections 5, 6, and 7 of the "Introduction," I explore how Derrida launches a new "thematization" of language in the sense elaborated by Eugen Fink in an influential lecture held in Paris in 1957 that presented language as an "operative concept" in Husserlian phenomenology. By looking at both the "Introduction" and selected later works, I show how this thematization leads to insights about the interplay of singularity and universality in language, especially with respect to proper names and the question of translation.

Part III turns to the seminar cycle on "philosophical nationality" that is the focal point of my investigation into Derrida's philosophy. In this seminar cycle and works emerging from it, Derrida explores the paradoxes of what he calls "exemplarism" in works such as those of Fichte, Cohen, and Valéry that appeal to specific national identities. Chapter 4 focuses on two themes pursued by Derrida particularly in the first year of the seminar (1984–85): (1) conceptions of language involved in and implied by discourses of national affirmation; and (2) the idea that although national entities are paradoxical in their simultaneous aspiration to particularity and universality, these paradoxes yield an ethical responsibility for such entities to transform themselves and open themselves up to what they are not. Chapter 5 is a combined look at Rosenzweig's philosophy of Judaism and at the German and the Jewish as privileged examples in Derrida's "philosophical nationality" writings, in which Rosenzweig's texts on Judaism also figure prominently. Rosenzweig and Derrida are shown to share a view of (Jewish) identity or "belonging" as constituted by self-difference. An important aspect of this view is that it relies on a theory of translation as an originary linguistic operation, as I demonstrate with reference to Rosenzweig's reflections on translation and Derrida's treatment, in the seminar's final year (1987–88), of Gershom Scholem's and Rosenzweig's famous exchange in the 1920s on translation and sacred language.

"Chosen people" narratives and exemplarist national discourses regularly include the idea of a redemptive future. Part IV focuses on this temporal and historical dimension of election and exemplarity. In Chapter 6 I examine the development of Rosenzweig's thought as a philosophy of history—from his early rejection of historical relativism and "atheistic theology" in the name of individual human existence, to the messianic history he lays out in *The Star of Redemption* and the "messianic epistemology" he proposes in his essay "The New Thinking." While Jewish thought from the Enlightenment onward had reinterpreted messianism as the drive toward the realization of universal justice in history, the redemptive capacity of the Jewish people for Rosenzweig consists in their being "already at the end," a specific mode of "wresting eternity from time."

In Chapter 7 I discuss a similar turn to the question of messianism in Derrida's work, especially his evocation of a "messianicity without Messiah" in *Specters of Marx*. I trace this term's appearance in Derrida's thought as a way of taking account of a certain class of experiences of time or history, especially preoccupations with an "end of history" or an "end of philosophy." Read alongside a messianic text by Rosenzweig, Derrida's considerations of the messianic emerge as a powerful account of history's radical openness to the future. Further, I show how Derrida's concern to determine an "abstract" "messianic" apart from culturally specific messianic traditions extends his thinking about the relationship of philosophy to its particular cultural expressions, not least by inviting reflection on the very possibility of abstraction.

PART I

INDIVIDUALITY AND UNIVERSALITY

1

On Rosenzweig's Reception of the Philosophy of Hermann Cohen

INDIVIDUALITY, JEWISH ELECTION, AND THE INFINITESIMAL

There is no question, and it has often been remarked, that Franz Rosenzweig's philosophy is very much "of its time." In his philosophical development Rosenzweig belongs to a generation of German intellectuals who in the 1910s and 1920s reacted against the dominant philosophical traditions of their day and believed in the need to start philosophizing in a new way. For our purposes, it is not important whether Rosenzweig should be regarded primarily as an exponent of "existentialism"[1] (or "Jewish existentialism"[2]), as a contributor to "dialogical philosophy,"[3] or as a proponent of the "new thinking."[4] What all these movements, and Rosenzweig's philosophy in its proximity to them, have in common is, as Michael Theunissen puts it with respect to dialogism, (1) that they define themselves in opposition to traditional philosophy in such a way that their oppositional character must be understood as a positive feature that is intrinsic to them, rather than an extrinsic secondary characteristic;[5] and (2) that they grow out of an impulse to rescue concrete human individuality or facticity from philosophical generalization or abstraction.

But while Rosenzweig's "new thinking" can be understood as representative of these broader intellectual movements in its insistence on concrete human individuality, there is also a powerful and distinctive concern in his writings with developing an understanding of individuality as something that mediates between absolute particularity and absolute universality. This concern is articulated in Rosenzweig's interpretation of peoplehood, and especially of the Jews as the bearers of divine election—which he understands in terms of their unique role in universal human history. Both Rosenzweig's thinking of human individuality and his consideration of chosenness as a form of individuation between universality and singularity can be illuminated by examining his reception of the philosophy of Hermann Cohen. As I will show, this reception was anything but straightforward. Looking not only at what Rosenzweig acknowledges as his debt to Cohen, but also at those aspects of Cohen's thought that he does not directly acknowledge, but that nevertheless become effective in his thinking, will allow us to focus on how Rosenzweig framed and developed his thinking of individuality and chosenness/election.

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How does one assess the legacy of a philosophical school or movement? This was a question Franz Rosenzweig liked to raise with respect to Hermann Cohen, a figure whom he greatly admired, and his "school," Marburg Neo-Kantianism. About an "introduction" to Cohen's oeuvre written six years after his death by a Marburg disciple, he writes in a letter to his mother:

> Unfortunately, Cohen really would have been pleased. —He is now caught in a predicament of fame, it cannot elude him; if in the end the school is right, he'll be famous as the head of the school; if I am right, he'll be famous as a revolutionary of thought.[6]

To Rosenzweig, what was far more important than Cohen's groundbreaking new Kant interpretation or his own philosophical system—those works, in other words, on which his fame as a leader of a school were based—were two books written after he retired from his chair at Marburg: *Der Begriff der Religion im System der Philosophie* (1915; *The Concept of Religion in the System of Philosophy*) and the posthumously published *Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism* (1919/1929). Just as these writings marked Cohen's withdrawal from the work of the "school" and the intensification and consolidation of his efforts in the field of Jewish learning, they also marked, for Rosenzweig, the point at which his thought exceeded the bounds of his system: Rosenzweig maintained that by finally facing up to the question of religion, which he had repeatedly "deferred" in his systematic works, Cohen had found a way to account for the ultimate significance of the "human individual" over the supposedly "eternal" values of "culture" and "ethical law" held up by a "bourgeoisie of scholars" (Cohen-Einleitung, xliv).[7]

In 1929, responding to reports of the famous public confrontation at Davos between Ernst Cassirer, Cohen's best-known student, and Martin Heidegger,[8] Rosenzweig goes so far as to identify what he called Cohen's "Individuum quand même" with Heidegger's notion of Dasein. In a "reversal of the battlefronts," Rosenzweig writes, it is Heidegger, not Cassirer, who is the true heir of the "new thinking" pioneered by Cohen.[9] What is Cohen's contribution to what Rosenzweig put forward as the "new thinking"? Rosenzweig finds it in Cohen's notion of "correlation," the reciprocity that characterizes both God's relationship to nature, and, more importantly, his relationship, as the one and only God, to the human individual (RV, 101/87). "With [correlation]," Rosenzweig writes, "both a new concept of God and a new concept of man come to the fore."[10] The human being is no longer considered as a member of a universal class of "humanity," or as an abstract ethical subject, but as the bearer of suffering in the here and now, who cannot be consoled by appealing to an abstract eternity (Cohen-Einleitung, xlv). Indeed, in introducing his *Concept of Religion*, Cohen says explicitly that by turning his attention to the question of religion, he hopes to take account of the problem of the human individual (BR, v). Both his "Religion" books are concerned with redrawing the lines between ethics and religion such that "in ethics the I of man becomes the I of humanity," while it is religion that can recognize the "individuality" of this I. In this way, religion can take account of phenomena such as the "Thou," "suffering," and "compassion" that concern human beings in their individuality.[11] Similarly, the concept of God, viewed under the aspect of "correlation," is no longer simply the guarantor of moral life, a possibility Cohen acknowledged in passing in his *Ethics* and all but dismissed as an expression of "religious sentiment."[12] Rather, as Rosenzweig writes, God appears as the only one who can respond to the desperate cry of the only or singular individual—to forgive him for having sinned.[13] This is what links God and man: that each is in its way *singular*, one, *einzig*: Man in the isolation and loneliness arising from his guilty conscience, which cannot be assuaged by thoughts of humanity in general—by the knowledge, for instance, that other people, too, have sinned (BR, 62); and God insofar as he is the one (unique) God, not responsible for humanity at large, but responsible to this one human being. Both sin and forgiveness are "individual"—and God and man are thereby linked, or "correlated," in their individuality.

God and man are also linked in their *need* for one another. Not only does the guilty individual depend on God's forgiveness; God, too, yearns for man: Cohen cites approvingly the mystical view that God "cries out for" his creature (BR, 134).

But the term "correlation" is not meant only to describe a connection between two terms. In their reciprocity, the correlates also remain distinct: neither can be encompassed by, rooted in, or exhausted by the other. Nor can they be mediated or joined by way of a third term; they remain irreducible and heterogeneous—this is Cohen's way of guarding a notion of transcendence against the Spinozism/pantheism that he is at constant pains to expose and oppose. Thus, writing about one of the expressions of correlation of the "holiness" or "holy spirit" that God and man share (as is evidenced, for instance, in the biblical formulations in which God's saying "I am holy" is concurrent with his demand that his people "shall be holy," shall "sanctify themselves" [RV, 111/96, 120/103]), Cohen notes that

> the correlation of God to man actualizes the idea of God's uniqueness by averting any mediation that might creep into this correlation. If the holy spirit were to be isolated in a person of its own, the correlation would be destroyed. The holy spirit can be neither God alone nor man alone, but neither can it be God and man at the same time. (RV, 121/104)

For Cohen, this avoidance of "mediation" is necessary in order to maintain a "conceptual abstraction" when speaking of correlation: "As soon as [correlation] is not confined to a strict conceptual abstraction, as soon as it is imagined as a quasi-material combination of powers, which thereupon become persons, the connection assumes the form of a community" (RV, 116–17/100–101). Similarly, when Cohen considers the "good" as that which brings God and man together (for Cohen's interest in religion is also an interest in how religion supplements and surpasses ethics), he writes that "God and man come into a necessary community with respect to the problem of the good." The German original reads: "*am* Problem des Guten," that is, not within or through, but adjoining, at, with respect to, or occasioned by the problem of the good (RV, 39/33; emphasis added).

These aspects of what Cohen calls the correlation of God and man are familiar as the basic motivations for the philosophical approach taken by Franz Rosenzweig.[14] Rosenzweig's fundamental premise is that the philosophical tradition, in its apparently successful attempt to account conceptually for the whole of existence, has forgotten the human being. As he writes in the 1917 letter that later became known as the "Germ Cell" (*Urzelle*) of his major work, *The Star of Redemption*:

> Philosophizing reason stands on its own feet, it is self-sufficient. All things are comprehended/conceived in it, and in the end it even conceives of itself. . . . And once it has taken everything into itself and proclaimed its exclusive existence, then suddenly the human being discovers that he, who has, after all, long been philosophically digested, is still there.

By "man," Rosenzweig goes on to say, he means "I, the quite ordinary private subject, I first and last name, I dust and ashes, I am still there. And philosophize, that is, I have the impudence to philosophize omnipotent philosophy" (Urzelle, 126–27/48; PTW, 53).

In the introduction to his *Star of Redemption*, Rosenzweig offers a sketch of the history of philosophy that elaborates on this forgetting of the concrete human being and identifies the beginnings of philosophy's attempts to overcome this forgetting. Rosenzweig situates his own work in a line of efforts—by Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche—to give human individuality its due. Describing this movement in philosophy, he writes:

> Thus man—no, not man, but a man, one particular man—became a power over philosophy—no, over his philosophy. The philosopher ceased to be a negligible quantity for his philosophy. . . . [Philosophy] had to acknowledge [man], acknowledge him as something which it could not comprehend but which, because of the power he had over it, it could not deny. Man in the utter singularity of his own being, in his being determined by a first and a last name, stepped out of the world which knew itself as the thinkable world, out of the All of philosophy. (S, 10/10)

But if Rosenzweig is inspired by Cohen's notion of correlation, it is not only because Cohen endeavors to "rescue the individual" (BR, 134). For Cohen the correlation of God and man is "expressed" in numerous ways. Among these "expressions" are creation, revelation, and redemption[15]—these find their way into Rosenzweig's system as the relationships that develop between the three irreducible "elements," God, the world, and man. Likewise, by insisting on the irreducibility of the elements, but at the same time seeking to describe the "paths" they take toward one another, Rosenzweig builds on the balance Cohen sought to capture, by means of the notion of "correlation," between connection and separation of the correlates.

Returning to Rosenzweig's assessment, in "Reversed Battlefronts," of the implications of Davos, we can thus say that it can first of all be read as a straightforward testimony to Cohen's influence on Rosenzweig. As such, Rosenzweig's essay has not been a controversial text. By contrast, Rosenzweig's identification of his own ideas with what he knew of Heidegger's philosophy of Dasein has of course drawn attention from, and even impressed, a number of commentators.[16] Indeed, Rosenzweig's thought was understood as a "philosophy of existence" by some of his earliest readers.[17] Most notably, Karl Löwith in 1942 wrote a convincing account, subtitled "a postscript to *Being and Time*," of why Rosenzweig was Heidegger's only contemporary in a more than "chronological sense." Löwith cited their shared emphasis on the facticity of human existence, on death and finitude as constitutive of human being, and on the analysis of temporality and language. The tendency to read Rosenzweig in the context of *Existenzphilosophie* may seem somewhat outmoded today, and of course such readings have their limits, but Rosenzweig's "Reversed Battlefronts" is a reminder that this can indeed be a primary context in which to view his work.

Where "Reversed Battlefronts," as well as Rosenzweig's 1924 introduction to Cohen's "Jewish Writings," have drawn criticism, however, is in their assessment of Cohen. In particular, the discontinuity Rosenzweig asserts between the main body of Cohen's thought and the two "Religion" books—despite the fact that it made a decisive mark on a generation of Jewish thinkers who were avid readers of Rosenzweig[18]—has been challenged from many sides. Thus, some have argued that Rosenzweig overemphasizes the extent to which the "Religion" books represent a new departure and that even the posthumous *Religion of Reason* finally remains within the "idealist" confines of Cohen's earlier thought. (Rosenzweig himself had written in the 1924 introduction that, though Cohen may not himself have seen this, the notion of correlation and what it enabled, namely the rediscovery of nature and humanity in their "factuality," had begun to puncture "the magic circle of idealism" [Cohen-Einleitung, xlviii–xlix].) The challenge to this view dates back to a 1962 article by Alexander Altmann, who demonstrates that "correlation" is above all a logical term, rooted in the first part of Cohen's philosophical system, *Logik der reinen Erkenntnis* (1902/1914; *Logic of Pure Cognition*).[19] Altmann further points out that correlation is a relation between *concepts*—in particular between the concepts of God and man—and recalls Cohen's insistence that as concepts, God and man are products of thought. With this point, Altmann takes up the terms of Rosenzweig's remarks on Cohen, for, as already mentioned, Rosenzweig's polemics are consistently directed against classical philosophy's tendency to cover up factual reality with concepts. Echoing the language of the "Germ Cell of the *Star of Redemption*," Rosenzweig writes that in Cohen's earlier philosophy, "nature and humanity were . . . conceptually derived, conceived, explained, their foundation was laid, but the fact that they were there before any derivation, explanation, or foundation, this factuality that preceded all objectivity . . . remained excluded from consideration" (Cohen-Einleitung, xlviii–xlix).

It is necessary here to consider briefly the status of Cohen's insistence on remaining within "thought" and, more generally, what it means to speak of Cohen's system as a form of idealism. Cohen's interpretation of Kant is noted for its emphasis on the spontaneity of thought as evidenced in the Analytic of Principles, at the expense of Kant's view that cognition is dependent on intuition. In Cohen's own system, this concern develops into an insistence on the autonomy of thought and a rejection of the notion that anything is "given" to thought. Rather, it is thinking itself that generates the matter of cognition. "For thought, only that may be considered 'given' what it itself can find," Cohen writes in his *Logic of Pure Cognition* (LRE, 82).

Now, Cohen does at times characterize his thought as a form of idealism, but he sharply demarcates this idealism from that of post-Kantian philosophy—from what he calls "romantic idealism." In *Logic of Pure Cognition*, he describes his own idealism as "idealism, but not [an idealism] of consciousness or of self-consciousness" (LRE, 594). Cohen's inquiry into the productivity of thought is not founded in self-consciousness, in transcendental apperception, or in intellectual intuition. Instead, he associates idealism with the Platonic idea, which he interprets as hypothesis. In his 1878 essay on Plato's theory of ideas, which represents an important step in the development of his thought, Cohen argues against the view, inherited from the Aristotelian tradition, that the ideas belong to a realm apart from things in the world, as well as against subjectivist interpretations of the idea as *Vorstellung*, as mental representation.[20] At the same time, it is important to distinguish Cohen's use of "hypothesis" from the modern empiricist use of the word: As hypothesis, the Platonic idea represents a method of "supposing that which is sought as already having been found" (LRE, 361); it is the pro-ject or projection (*Vorwurf*) of thought (BR, 29). Cohen thus thinks Platonic hypothesis and the corresponding anamnesis dynamically as the generation of the object.[21] An interpretative problem that emerges from this is how Cohen can think the productivity of pure thought apart from any reference to consciousness or self-consciousness. But this is not our problem here. For our purposes, it is enough to point out that the term "idealism" suffices neither for characterizing Cohen's system nor for getting at what Rosenzweig regarded as the originality of the "Religion" books. Similarly, if Altmann and others have found grounds for exploring the continuities between Cohen's system and the "Religion" books, this cannot be fruitfully described either by calling his thought "idealist" or by pointing to his continued reliance on "concepts." Nor can it be a matter of closing the discussion of the Cohen-Rosenzweig relationship once and for all, as Altmann seems to want to do, simply because Rosenzweig himself did not produce an adequate account of what he had drawn from Cohen's thought.

I would like to propose a different route for looking at this relationship: I believe that Altmann and others have been right to insist on the continuities between the conceptual apparatus of Cohen's religion books and the one he developed in his system.[22] In some cases, the continuities are trivial: Thus, for Cohen, it is a matter of course to begin an inquiry into religion by framing it as an inquiry into the "*concept* of religion," into whether and how it can be conceptually distinguished from other fields of human activity. Similarly, for the posthumous work, Cohen's decision to draw on the "sources of Judaism" in developing an understanding of a "religion of reason" goes hand in hand with an interest in determining the "concept of Judaism" (see e.g., RV, 35/31). But that such discussions concern concepts, or that the correlation of God and man is a correlation of concepts, does not by itself take away from the force of Cohen's arguments about religion, Judaism, God, and man. Based on this recognition of continuities within Cohen's philosophy, I want to suggest a different route for looking at the Cohen-Rosenzweig relationship, one that will also be key to understanding some of the core features of Rosenzweig's philosophy of individuality and universality.

Logic of Origin and the Metaethical Self

For Rosenzweig is somewhat disingenuous when he disavows the early Cohen and isolates the "Religion" books as Cohen's unique contribution to the "new thinking." Rosenzweig's separation of Cohen's thought of "correlation" from the main body of his work is called into question by the fact that he himself crucially draws on the central insight of Cohen's main theoretical work, *Logic of Pure Cognition*, in the *Star*: As I have mentioned, by beginning from the three irreducible "elements"—God, world, and man—Rosenzweig clearly draws on Cohen's "correlation" of God and man in the "Religion" books. Furthermore, his fundamental procedure of "generating" the three elements by beginning from a Nothing in order to proceed to a Something derives from Cohen's "logic of origin," his "principle of the infinitesimal method."[23]

Cohen's discussion of the "judgment of origin" in the *Logic of Pure Cognition* recalls his earlier work on the Platonic idea. Considering the Socratic question, "What is?" he writes that the path to an answer "may not be direct." "The judgment may therefore not be able to avoid an adventurous detour, if indeed it wishes to find the Something in its origin. This adventure of thinking is represented by the Nothing. It is by way of the Nothing that judgment represents the origin of the Something" (LRE, 84). But this Nothing is not an absolute nothing: "The Nothing must not be thought of as the erection of a Non-Thing or an absurdity [*ein Unding*], a name for the denial of the Something."[24] Rather it is a "relative Nothing," a means for discovering the Something (LRE, 105).

For Rosenzweig, too, the Nothing has a crucial role in the generation of the basic elements. Toward the end of his introduction to the *Star*, taking stock of philosophy's failure to account for God, man, and world in their factuality, he recalls the negative results of Kant's transcendental dialectic:

> By recognizing the presuppositional nature of the idea that the task of thought is to think the All, we found that the hitherto fundamentally simple content of philosophy, the All of thought and being, unexpectedly shattered into three pieces which repel each other in a differentiated but as yet not clearly graspable fashion. Of these three pieces—God, world, and man—we as yet know absolutely nothing, even if we have spoken of them, freely relying on the general consciousness of the present time. They are the Nothings [*Nichtse*] to which Kant, the dialectician, had reduced [by way of critique: *zerkritisiert*] the objects of the three "rational sciences" of his time, rational theology, cosmology, and psychology. It is not as objects of rational science that we mean to restore them, but, on the contrary, as "irrational" objects. (S, 21/19)

In order to reach these "irrational" objects, Rosenzweig proposes a path "from the Nothings of knowledge" to the "Something of knowledge," a path that he opposes to traditional philosophy, which begins only where thought becomes wedded to being (S, 22/20). “We seek what is everlasting [*Immerwährendes*], what does not first require thought in order to be. This is why we cannot deny death, and this is why we must take up the Nothing, wherever and however we may encounter it, and make it into an everlasting point of departure of the everlasting.” For this way of proceeding, it is the science of mathematics that leads the way, for mathematics is “itself nothing but the constant derivation of a something . . . from Nothing.” Echoing the passage by Cohen I cited above, Rosenzweig adds that this Nothing is “never an empty, general Nothing, but always . . . ‘its’ Nothing,” the Nothing of “just this” Something.

This potential of mathematics as the “organon of thinking,” writes Rosenzweig, was the discovery of Hermann Cohen. It was Cohen who had discovered that the elements of mathematics are generated not from the empty Nothing of the general “Zero,” but from the “determinate Nothing” of the differential or infinitesimal. What Rosenzweig is referring to here are the accomplishments of Cohen’s 1883 book on *The Principle of the Infinitesimal Method and Its History* (*Das Prinzip der Infinitesimal-Methode und seine Geschichte. Ein Kapitel zur Grundlegung der Erkenntniskritik*). This long essay represents an important step both in Cohen’s Kant interpretation and in the development of his system. By focusing on the infinitesimal method as a means of generating the object of experience, Cohen further develops his reinterpretation of Kantian philosophy, particularly his views about the insufficiency of intuition and the need to ground cognition in thought. Looking at the history of geometry, he considers geometrical problems in which “intuition leaves [us] in the lurch” (PIM, 30) and for which the concept of the “limit” was consequently conceived of as a means to a solution. Out of the concept of the limit developed a concept of the infinitely small. In order for this notion to make sense, in order for it to gain a positive, productive significance, Cohen writes, it must have nothing to do with extensive magnitudes, that is, it must be separated from the notion of the limit, and thus from intuition. Thus, in considering the problem of the production of a tangent, the point of the tangent may be thought of as *producing* the curve, rather than as the product of successively reducing the distance between the points of a secant line (PIM, §39). Here again, Cohen is interested in elaborating a dynamic, productive process of thought.

While Rosenzweig does not follow Cohen into his technical and historical discussions of method, he does explicitly draw on the infinitesimal method and on the "logic of origin."[25] For the reader of his introduction to Cohen's Jewish writings, this would come as a great surprise, since Rosenzweig there identifies the concepts that Cohen arrives at through origin and production/generation with "conceptual thought," "explanation," and "derivation," to which he systematically opposes his own "new thinking" of factuality:

> Nature as an object of cognition, humanity as the task of the will, love of human nature condensed into the art work as the product [*Erzeugnis*] of feeling: to generate [*erzeugen*] these three in originary purity—this is where the thinker saw his task. Nature, humanity, art were thus demonstrated to be the products of reason—and here "reason" was grasped as broadly and as profoundly as in the way that German Idealism used this word. But in this way nature and humanity were philosophically graspable only as generations/productions [*Erzeugungen*], in a sense only in their conceptual *status nascendi.* (Cohen-Einleitung, xlviii)

In the *Star*, by contrast, Rosenzweig implicitly brings together the two Cohenian projects that he elsewhere opposed to one another: the principle of generation becomes the method through which universal humanity can be transcended and human individual facticity can be asserted.

In the introduction to part 1 of the *Star*, which charts a trajectory in the history of philosophy on which the system of the *Star* is going to build, Rosenzweig famously defines the projects of developing a new understanding of the "elements" God, world, and man as, respectively, "meta-physical," "meta-logical," and "meta-ethical." The "meta-" here is used in a nonconventional sense to mean an "exceeding" of the traditional concepts God-world-man that does not entail leaving those concepts behind or somehow transcending them. Rather, Rosenzweig's intention is actually to take the classical views of God-world-man as points of "orientation" (S, 21/19) for his new accounts. The "meta-" signals that each element is to be related to in a new way, that our orientation to the three elements is a new one. The elements become newly available or thinkable in that each has "stepped out" of the way it has conventionally been known (S, 12/11). Thus, the world becomes "metalogical" in that logos/reason/thought is no longer its coextensive counterpart, capable of encompassing it; and God becomes "metaphysical" in that he has an independence or a freedom that exceeds his "nature" or existence (to which he was reduced by the tradition of ontological proofs and their critiques).

Similarly, it is by means of an overcoming of the human being of Kantian ethics that we arrive at what Rosenzweig calls the "metaethical." Indeed, as I suggested above, it is the retrieval of the philosophically undigested remainder, "human being," the fact that (to cite again this key formulation from the introduction)

> man in the utter singularity of his own being, in his being determined by a first and a last name, *stepped out* of the world which knew itself as the thinkable world, out of the All of philosophy (S, 10/10, emphasis mine)

that is the impetus for all three types of "stepping out" of traditional philosophy, the three new routes of inquiry metaethics, metalogic, and metaphysics.

What is important to note for our purposes is that Rosenzweig's account of the human being of Kantian ethics being overcome by "metaethics" can easily be mapped onto Cohen's project in the *Religion* to generate a concept of religion that can transcend ethics in attending to a different facet of the human:

> Philosophy had thought it was grasping man, even man as a "personality," in ethics. But that was an impossible endeavor. For in its grasping him, he was bound to dissolve in its grasp. Ethics, however much it might have wanted in principle to assign to the deed/action [*Tat*] a special status vis-à-vis all being, nevertheless necessarily tore the deed back into the orbit/circle of the knowable All. . . . Precisely in Kant, by way of the formulation of the moral law as the universally valid act/deed, the concept of the All carried off the victory over the One of the human [*über das Eins des Menschen*]. (S, 11/10)

To attain a new understanding of the human—to get to a "something" beyond the "nothing" to which psychology was reduced by the Kantian transcendental dialectic—is the movement Rosenzweig projects from the ethical to the metaethical:

> Thus, beyond the orbit/circle described by ethics lay the virgin territory made available to thought by Nietzsche. Precisely when one does not, in the blind joy of destruction [*Zerstörungsfreude*], destroy the spiritual/intellectual labors of the past, but rather allows them to be fully valid in what they have accomplished, this being-beyond [*Jenseitigkeit*] of the new question with respect to all that alone was comprehended, and was allowed to be comprehended, by the concept of ethics must be recognized. (S, 11/11)

Rosenzweig accomplishes this in part 1 book 3 of the *Star* ("Man and His Self, or Metaethics"), where he develops a concept of human being as a "peculiarity" (*Eigenheit*) that resists (or that, once again, "remains over" after) totalization by means of knowledge as classically conceived (S, 68–69/64) and as a "self" as distinguished from standard concepts of individuality (S, 72ff./67ff.). "Individuals" are by definition capable of, or even destined for, aggregation into pluralities such as species, peoples, and groups, and, ultimately, humanity. As "personality," man "plays the role that has been assigned to him," a role that originates in "fate" and that is "one role beside others." The "self," by contrast, is utterly singular, no part of a whole, unavailable to pluralization, and incomparable. It is "Adam, man himself." This singular human being can readily be recognized as the counterpart of the individual in Cohen's "Religion" works, the bearer of suffering and compassion that attempts at ethical generalization fail to account for.

Human Singularity and Finitude

As a retrieval of human being as a concrete singularity, Rosenzweig's philosophy is also concerned with the finitude of human existence. This is famously indicated in the opening lines of the *Star*, in which its project, the questions that it will ask, are motivated "from death, from the fear of death," which philosophy, in forgetting human existence, has been unable to acknowledge.[26] At the same time, as we will see, the *Star* is also concerned with developing a theory of eternity, a messianic dimension that is distinct from finite time.[27] What I wish to show here is that Rosenzweig's dual concern with infinity and finitude, like his elaboration of the human singular "self," is continuous with Cohen's philosophical projects, and in particular with the way Cohen related the problems of infinity and finitude.

One of Cohen's stated aims in laying out and building upon the infinitesimal method is to find a way of founding the finite in the infinite. Thus, with regard to the problem of the tangent, Cohen writes that "the infinite allows the finite to develop out of itself" (PIM, 41), in that the infinitesimal of the direction of the tangent produces "the finite point on the curve and thus the scientific being of the curve" (PIM, 37). And in the *Logic of Pure Cognition*, reflecting on the history of the infinitesimal, he writes,

> It is as if it were an irony about [or a joke on: *eine Ironie auf*] the infinite which up until now was always made into the foundation of the finite as the "ens realissimum" [that is, as God]. From now on, it is not that infinite of metaphysical-

> theological speculation, but the infinitely small that must be recognized as the Archimedian point . . . of the whole of mathematics. (LRE, 125)

In *The Concept of Religion* this irony takes another turn. There Cohen argues against the Schleiermacherian tendency to view religion psychologistically as an expression of a "feeling of the infinite," which Cohen strictly opposes to what is for him the key "religious feeling," that of sympathy with another's suffering. Schleiermacher's "feeling of the infinite" is understood by Cohen to be a kind of totalization, in that it envisions man "giving himself up to" God, understood, pantheistically, as the universe. On this pantheistic model, the human being remains at once "dependent" on God and "coextensive" with God and is thus denied any autonomy (BR, 94–96).[28]

For Cohen, if there is a concept of the infinite that would be appropriate to understanding religion, it would not be capable of any pantheistic "correlation with the finite," just as correlation between man and God preserves the distinctiveness of the correlates (BR, 133):

> It is just this infinite [the "infinite" of the "feeling of the infinite" that is regarded as constitutive of religion] against which we direct our reservations. Our objection is based not only on the terminological ambiguity of the infinite, but also on its insufficiency in the very concept of man, with respect to the correlation of man and God. The correlation of the finite and the infinite leads inevitably to pantheism. (BR, 133)

For Cohen, the infinite must be understood as "contain[ing] the finite within itself." He cites Hegel's account of Spinoza in the Lectures on the History of Philosophy, in which Hegel, confronting the usual view of Spinoza as atheist, notes that insofar as this accusation is based on the fact that Spinoza does not distinguish God and world, one might just as well call him an "acosmist."[29] Hegel develops this line of argument in order to deny that Spinozism is atheism. But in Cohen's discussion of a pantheistic model of the God-man relation, the line from Hegel is rephrased and used for quite a different purpose: to rescue human individuality from a pantheism which "as Hegel has said, . . . is not only atheism, but, even more, acosmism"—that is, which threatens the concrete sphere of the human individual with annihilation:

> If we translate this thought from the world to man, it follows that in pantheism man is devoured by the all of the Deity and annihilated in his individuality.

But for Cohen, "the true task of religion" is instead "to rescue individuality"; this is why the Schleiermacherian model, a model of fusion and totalization, fails:

> This is why it is dangerous to describe religion in such a way that, as a feeling of the infinite, it allows the finite to emerge only in that infinite.

In contrast to this model, Cohen wishes to define religion, "paradoxically," as "the feeling of the finite" (BR, 134).

Here we have an important continuity between Cohen's concern to account for the finite within the infinite without taking recourse to the concept of the infinitely large (which, as Kant showed, entails a metaphysical dogmatism as soon as it is taken to be more than an ideal) and his theory of religion as that domain that allows the finite human individual to come to the fore. That Cohen in his "Religion" books in this way aligns the concern to preserve human individuality with the aim of understanding religion as the realm of the finite also puts him in line with Rosenzweig's thought: In Rosenzweig's *Star*, the metaethical self expresses the human being's confrontation with his natural death, which suspends his personality and destroys his "individuality." It is a stance of utter solitude and singularization (S, 78/71–72), but thereby also an expression of stubbornness and of will, a "proud Nevertheless" by virtue of which the human being's "remaining-over" after all conceptual totalization is concretized.

For our reading of Rosenzweig's "Reversed Battlefronts," this parallel between Cohen and Rosenzweig is most significant: There, Rosenzweig endorses Heidegger's claim that philosophy must be concerned with the human being as the "specifically finite being."[30] For this was reportedly one of the points of contention between Heidegger and Cassirer at Davos: that Cassirer professed to be at a loss to understand how Heidegger could give up the transcendence of the categorical imperative, the infinite freedom of the autonomous subject, while Heidegger stressed that the categorical imperative is addressed to man as a finite being.[31] What is interesting about Cohen is that he holds on to a notion of thinking as an infinite task,[32] while nevertheless taking finitude to be of primary significance for understanding the human being in correlation with God.

Jewish Election and the Infinitesimal Remnant

The third aspect of Cohen's significance for Rosenzweig's thought concerns the concepts both thinkers use to determine the nature of Judaism and its philosophical significance. In this connection, it is worth recalling that Rosenzweig's acquaintance with Cohen dated back to the lectures he heard Cohen give in 1913 and 1914 at the Institute for the Science of Judaism (Lehranstalt für die Wissenschaft des Judentums) in Berlin, lectures on which the two "Religion" books were in part based. Rosenzweig and Cohen share some central views in this area. Most importantly for our purposes, both regard Jewish election as crucial to understanding what Judaism is, and both interpret this election in terms of the unique role of the Jews in world history. Though their elaborations of this idea differ considerably (Cohen, for instance, will go to elaborate lengths to show why the history of philosophy, as the history of Kantianism, is in complete harmony with biblical sources and Jewish life), both Rosenzweig and Cohen are concerned to preserve a notion of universality or of humankind that represents the ultimate significance of Jewish election.

This emphasis on humanity can be seen as a counterbalance to the insistence on human being as a singularity. Yet Cohen's works on religion and Rosenzweig's writings both seek to develop a concept of humanity or universality that is not a totality into which the human being can be subsumed. Thus, for Cohen, correlation takes place not only between God and man, but also between God and humanity. Humanity here is not meant as an overarching concept that encompasses the individual. There is no abyss, writes Cohen, between the individual and humanity. Rather, "the harmony of ethics and religion will take place as soon as religion too is applied to humanity, in such a way that the full significance of the individuality of man is not curtailed" (BR, 60). Cohen regards it as the "highest triumph" of the religion of reason to have brought about "uniquely the idea of humanity" (RV, 278/238). His interpretation of Jewish election is thus systematically directed against "the suspicion that [God's love for Israel] is an anomaly in regard to God's universal love for humankind." The election of Israel is properly to be seen in "connection with the messianic election of humanity" and not as "a means for Israel's glorification." Instead,

> in Israel God loves nothing other than the human race. . . . God loves Israel only as a model, a symbol of humankind, a mark of distinction within it, for only monotheism is capable of constituting humanity. (RV, 173/149)

Thus, it is significant that

> God concludes a covenant with Abraham and already with Noah for the preservation of nature: God emerges, he produces [*erzeugt*] himself in this covenant with man; his origin is the covenant with man (BR, 96).

Nevertheless, since monotheism is the constitution of humanity, in being "the holy priest-people of monotheism, Israel is not a people like the other peoples" (RV, 173/149). In the chapter of *Religion of Reason* devoted to the "Idea of the Messiah and Humanity," Cohen traces the history of Israel as a history of the erasure of the "anomaly" of election in a particularist sense—the recuperation of election in its universal dimension. Indeed, Cohen brings the significance of this story to bear on contemporary nationalist fragmentation (he makes reference to the fact that he is writing during the time of the World War), which must be overcome (here Cohen writes in the spirit of Kant's "Perpetual Peace") by a cosmopolitan league of nations (*Staatenbund*): As this goal is realized, "messianism becomes / is becoming a factor in world history" (RV, 420/36; see also RV, 284–85/243); it is the key to the solution of the "gravest antinomy" that holds sway, since the Middle Ages, "between the peoples"—the individual nations—and the idea of "the one Christian humanity" (RV, 280/240).

Similarly, Rosenzweig's project in *The Star of Redemption*, which originates in his insistence in the "Germ Cell" on the factuality of human individual existence, winds up with a broad philosophy of history, in which universal human redemption is only attained because Judaism and Christianity fulfill their appointed destinies. Indeed, Rosenzweig's theory of Jewish election is directly informed by his understanding of the human being as singular self, discussed above. In part 1 book 3 of the *Star* ("Man and His Self, or Metaethics"), where he delineates human selfhood or uniqueness from the sort of individuality that can be a member of a plurality, Rosenzweig notes that this sort of uniqueness can also obtain for a "group":

> A group too can have a self, if it considers itself unique as such [*schlechthin einzig*], that people, for instance, for whom all other peoples are "barbarians." (S, 74/68)

Although the example Rosenzweig gives here is that of the ancient Greeks,[33] in later chapters of the *Star* (to be discussed in depth in Chapters 5 and 6), it is Judaism that is portrayed as "considering itself as unique as such." In this sense, the account of human selfhood in part 1 book 3 may at the same time be taken as offering an account of Jewish uniqueness and chosenness.

The consistency of this account with Rosenzweig's treatment of Jewish existence later in the book can be demonstrated, for example, by looking at the section entitled "The One People: Jewish Essence" in part 3 book 1, in which Jewish singularity is contrasted with what we can call, using the language of part 1 book 3, the "individuality" of peoples:

> Every border [*Grenze*] has two sides. In setting/bordering itself off, a thing borders on another. [*Indem etwas sich abgrenzt, grenzt es sich an etwas andres an.*] In being a single [*einzelnes*] people, a people is a people among peoples. Its closing-itself-off [*Sichabschließen*] in that case means at the same time a joining-onto [*Sichanschließen*]. Not so when a people refuses to be a single people and wants to be "the one people." In that case, it must not close itself off in borders, but must enclose the borders—borders which would, by virtue of their two-sidedness, make it into a single people among other peoples—within itself. (S, 339/305)[34]

In much the same way as the singular human self, then, the "one people" is presented as resisting any attempt to categorize it as one instance or individual among others of "peoplehood."[35]

As for Cohen, the uniqueness of "the one people" is for Rosenzweig based on the fact of election understood in its universal significance. In his 1914 essay "Atheistic Theology," which lays the conceptual groundwork for his theory of Jewish election, he recalls the tendencies in nineteenth-century Jewish thought to "[try] to render this difficult concept unobjectionable." Here, Rosenzweig draws a parallel with classic German philosophy's having "emptied out" the figure of Christ into "the notion of an ideal human being"; the analogous development in post-Emancipation Judaism was to reinterpret the idea of peoplehood (the *Volksgedanke*) as "the ideal community of mankind." What both "atheistic-theological" movements had in common was to subtract the "hard mark of the divine that actually entered into history and is distinct from all other actuality" (AT, 690/15–16). The force of this reinterpretation was to understand the Jewish people as "the contingent bearer of a thought not bound up with its existence [its *Dasein*]" (AT, 690–91/16), and thus to make Jewish peoplehood, and therefore Judaism, a theologically irrelevant category.

What Rosenzweig here identifies as an atheistic calling-into-question of Jewish existence he also associates with the philosophy of German idealism: The attempts of Fichte and Hegel to "interweave" the "concept of ideal humanity" with "a single people's individuality" (*Volksindividualität*), he writes,

> sought in principle to unite people [*Volk*] and humanity only in such a manner that the people had to give birth from its womb to the ideas without which humanity would "perish"; Hegel's teaching about the world-historical peoples dying after fulfilling their humanity-related task [*Menschheitsaufgabe*]—was the natural consequence of such a concept of peoplehood [*Volksbegriff*]. (AT, 691/16)

But such approaches to the conjunction between peoplehood and humanity had to remain irrelevant, writes Rosenzweig, to a "Jewish science." (Rosenzweig's mention of *jüdische Wissenschaft* here serves to remind us that nineteenth-century Wissenschaft des Judentums was strongly informed by Hegelian thinking and that its positivist historicist treatments of Judaism went hand in hand with the kind of theological watering-down that Rosenzweig is pointing to.) From a Jewish point of view, writes Rosenzweig, what was and is needed instead is a theory that justifies Jewish existence, that accounts for the necessity of the existence of the Jews beyond any contingent facts about its achievements, its living up to a human ideal:

> A Jewish science, for which Judaism was an eternally existing entity, had no use for this [the Fichtean-Hegelian] notion of the relation between peoplehood and humankind. Such a science would have required a theory that would enable it to understand the pure existence of a people, and not only its achievements, as an eternal necessity of humanity. (AT, 691/16)

Rosenzweig sees this suppression of the theological meaning of Jewish chosenness as continuing in his own day. Despite the fact that "recent decades" had seen the emergence of "pseudonaturalistic" racial and völkisch theories that do detach a necessary essence or existence of the *Volk* from contingent facts about it, these theories do not, in Rosenzweig's view, meet the Jewish need he has described. Instead they make available a notion of völkisch "essence" (*Wesen*), of a "persistent character of a *Volk*" (AT, 691–92/17) that becomes available for atheistic projection. What is then projected onto Jewish essence (here we can discern a caricatured version of Hermann Cohen's philosophy of ethical monotheism)[36] is the "autonomy of the moral law" (AT, 693/19). And, as is the case for nineteenth-century historicism, divine revelation, the transcendence of the divine with respect to the human, has no place in this projection: The people is not elected by virtue of God's election; rather, election, like other forms of transcendent "duality," becomes something that is "immanent to the human" (AT, 694/19): a "polarity" or tension in Jewish life "between the chosenness [*Erwähltheit*] of the called-upon [*berufen*] people and this people itself" (AT, 694/19–20). In an implicit extension of Cohen's association of Judaism with oneness, Rosenzweig here interprets the "most Jewish concept," "the will to unity," as a desire to overcome or "reconcile" (*versöhnen*) this tension—no longer, as in traditional Judaism, by recognizing the revealed oneness of God, but as an immanent human-Jewish "longing" for "unity of life." (A further sign of Rosenzweig's reception of Cohen at this point is that he here speaks of a *Wechselbeziehung*, a "reciprocal relation"—which is also the German equivalent Cohen uses for "correlation" between man and God—to capture this desire for unity.) Similarly, where the traditional consequence of divine revelation and the recognition of the future divine kingdom was the "assumption / taking-on of the divinely ordained way of life," this has been replaced by a belief in a historically realizable "divine kingdom" that might follow the assumption of the law (AT, 695/20–21). Though Rosenzweig takes care to point out that the enormous impact of atheistic theology would not be possible were it not to some extent theologically justifiable,[37] he concludes that the evidence from Jewish sources merely gives the "mundanization"/*Verdiesseitigung* (literally: "making this-worldly") of Judaism "the illusion of being justified." It cannot do away with the need to "think God and man inseparably together," or to think the "unfillable chasm between man as thought by both mysticism and rationalism and man as he is receiver of revelation and, as such, object of faith." This chasm cannot be filled by the contemporary-pandering (*gegenwartsgemäße*) "possibilities of intertwining the concepts peoplehood and humanity [*Volkheit und Menschheit*], and in our case of man and Jew." For the human condition is one of being "under the curse of historicity," of being "internally divided between first receiver and last fulfiller of the Word, between the people that stands at Sinai and messianic humanity."[38] Thus, like Cohen, Rosenzweig makes clear that while it is a mistake to dissolve the idea of election into a universalizable immanent human trait or condition—to understand, in Cohen's words, the Jews as a people like other peoples—Jewish chosenness is a chosenness in view of a messianic, universal history. The Jewish people derives its eternal existence not from the fact of being the contingent bearer of a trait or a message, but from living the chasm between the particularity and the universality of chosenness.[39]

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Looking now at a final point of convergence between Rosenzweig and Cohen will enhance our understanding of the contrast Rosenzweig systematically draws between the expansive universalism of the "peoples of the world" and Jewish existence between particularity and universality: For as part of their respective elucidations of the proper meaning of election, Rosenzweig and Cohen also both take up the motif from Isaiah and other prophetic books of the Bible according to which it is only ever a "remainder," a "remnant," or "rest" (*Rest*) of Israel that fulfills the Jewish destiny. This theme is taken up by Rosenzweig in part 3 book 3 of the *Star*, in the subsection on "Jewish Life." "All secular history deals with expansion," he reminds us there (S, 450/404). This refers back to Rosenzweig's earlier treatment (part 3 book 1) of what he views as the decisive difference between the life of the Gentile "peoples of the world"—which takes place within history and by way of mundane strategies of territorial expansion and missionarizing—and the life of the "one people"—"eternal" Jewish existence, which is not rooted in any territory (it knows only holy land as distinct from territory, holy language as something that cannot be spoken, and an immutable holy law) and exists outside history, in an immediate relation to the "end" of history.[40]

In the later subsection on "Jewish Life," Rosenzweig characterizes this life in terms of a sentiment (*Gefühl*), a "very simple sentiment" or "naive Jewish consciousness" that all there is is the "Jewish everyday," a "capacity to forget that there is anything else in the world, indeed that there even is world, outside the Jewish world and the Jews." This feeling then is not a consciousness of the "highest and the last," that is, of the significance of the Jews (their already being "at the end"), but is "on the contrary precisely something very 'narrow' [*etwas sehr 'Enges'*]." Just as Rosenzweig elsewhere describes Jewish worship and communal life in terms of silence, gesture, and immediate, unthinking intimate familiarity,[41] he here describes the Jewish encounter with God as a solitary and immediate one:

> But the Creator has constricted himself [*hat sich verengt*] into Creator of the Jewish world, and revelation only happened to the Jewish heart. . . . The Jewish feeling [*das jüdische Gefühl*] has here poured creation and revelation entirely into the most intimate space [a bit later, Rosenzweig will repeat this as: in the narrow (*eng*) space; S, 451/405] between God and his people. (S, 449/403–4)

This constriction or contraction (*Verengung*)[42] is also a decisive aspect of Rosenzweig's description of the "Man of Election":

> Like God, man too constricts [*verengt*] himself in accordance with Jewish feeling when this feeling seeks to unite him into a unitary glow out of the dual

> consciousness, . . . of Israel and the Messiah, of the gracious gift of revelation and the redemption of the world.

This talk of a drive toward union or unity is reminiscent of Rosenzweig's taking up Cohen's insistence on the One in "Atheistic Theology." But more important than the theme of unity here is that Rosenzweig pinpoints the remnant as the "one concept" that leads "from Israel to the Messiah," that "emerged with the prophets and has since dominated our inner history":

> One concept leads from Israel to the Messiah, from the people that stood at the foot of Sinai to that day when the house of Jerusalem shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples, a concept that emerged with the prophets and has since dominated our inner history: the remnant. The remnant of Israel, those who remained faithful, the true people within the people, they are at every moment the assurance that there is a bridge between the two poles

—that is, between the pole of "Israel" and that of "the Messiah," but also between the two poles Rosenzweig describes just before: the "highest and the latest" and the everyday, naive life of *das jüdische Gefühl.*

> The remnant represents both at the same time: the assumption of the yoke of the commandment and that of the yoke of the kingdom of heaven. If the Messiah comes "today," the remnant is ready to receive him. Jewish history is, in defiance of all secular history, a history of this remnant, of which the word of the prophet is always valid: that it "will remain." (S, 449–50/404)

The reference here is to Isaiah 11:11, which follows the famous passage in Isaiah 10:20–22 that proclaims the return of the remnant:

> [20] On that day the remnant of Israel (שאר ישראל) and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no more lean on the one who struck them, but will lean on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. [21] A remnant will return (שאר ישוב), the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God. [22] For though your people Israel were like the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return. Destruction is decreed, overflowing with righteousness.

The key verses (11:11–12) in the following chapter, from which Rosenzweig's "will remain" is drawn, read:

> [11] On that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that is left of his people (שאר עמו) which will remain (אשר ישאר) from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Ethiopia, from Elam, from Shinar,

> from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea. [12] He will raise a signal for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

Rosenzweig continues by recalling his theory of Christian worldly history in its contrast to the Jewish situation of being "already at the end":

> All secular history deals with expansion/extension/spreading out [*Ausdehnung*]. The reason power is the fundamental concept of history is that in Christianity revelation has begun to spread over the world, and thus every will to expand, even that which is consciously purely secular, has become the unconscious servant of this great movement of expansion. But Judaism, and nothing else besides it in the world, conserves itself by subtraction, by contraction [*Verengung*], by the formation of ever new remnants. This is already superficially true vis-à-vis the continuous external decline [*Abfall*]. But it is also true within Judaism itself. Judaism continually sheds un-Jewish elements [*Unjüdisches*] from itself, in order to produce out of itself ever new remnants of archetypically Jewish elements [*Urjüdisches*].

What is important about this perpetual movement of remaindering, this calculus of subtraction, is that it not be understood quantitatively—as if what matters about Isaiah's prophecy is that some Jews will survive *numerically* all the suffering that is to come. Such a quantitative interpretation, indeed, is the thrust of some of the work that has been done on biblical remnant-theology. Werner E. Müller, for instance, wants to associate the emergence of the concept of the remnant with a political development: the acceptance of less-than-total destruction of the enemy as a victorious outcome of a war—and thus the abandonment of a "strategy of total destruction" in waging war.[43] Another example of a quantitative interpretation might be the emphasis on the role of the concept of the remnant in the pragmatic politics of the prophets, such as Isaiah's call to the pro-Assyrian king Ahaz, evident in verses 10:20–21 cited above, to refrain from military alliances.[44] Indeed, as Robert Gibbs rightly points out in a commentary on Rosenzweig's evocation of the remnant (in the context of a discussion of the importance of remembrance in Jewish life), Rosenzweig's concern in this passage is not even with the eventual outcome of this "history of a remnant"—notwithstanding Rosenzweig's general project, developed at length elsewhere in the *Star*, of specifying the messianic-eschatological-historical dimension of Judaism:

> Rosenzweig cites Isaiah's promise of return. The text, clearly set in the future, offers a promise of returning of both Kingdoms (Israel and Judah) and clearly addresses a political, even world-historical situation. The diaspora Jews will be returned from each of the various enemy countries. For Isaiah, the promise is directed to a future redemption; for Rosenzweig, the intermediary situation is what interests him. He cites only the phrase WILL REMAIN, because his interest is in the remnant's act of remaining. While Isaiah talks about A SIGNAL TO THE NATIONS that will be the sign of return, Rosenzweig is interested in the way that the remnant is itself a sign before returning.[45]

Thus, rather than focusing on the instrumental purpose of the remnant, its function as a quantitative prediction about the future, Rosenzweig is here concerned with the interim, perpetual, *qualitative* condition of being a remnant, with the Jewish *present* as a "history of a remnant."[46]

To clarify what it means to understand the remnant in nonquantitative terms, it is helpful to look back at how Hermann Cohen treats the concept of the remnant. Like Rosenzweig, Cohen understands the "history of the remnant" as a process of constriction or contraction, *Verengung*.

> And just as this people is in a sense expanded, in terms of its extension, into humanity, so at the same time, in terms of its quality, it is contracted [*verengt*] by the fact that "the remnant of Israel" now takes the place of the people of Israel. The remnant of Israel becomes the bearer of the piety of the Israelites, in a sense the historical guarantor of morality. (BR, 126)

There are important cues in this passage from *The Concept of Religion* that refer us to Cohen's exposition of the infinitesimal method and his development of the logic of origin: The Jewish people, as we saw in Cohen's interpretation of election, signifies humanity—this, he writes here, is what it is "in terms of its extension." But, drawing now on the terminology of the infinitesimal method, it also has a significance in terms of its *intension*, as intensive magnitude. In other words (words that are used in the quoted passage), it is not only a quantitative entity, but must be seen *qualitatively*.

The opposition between quantity and quality plays an important role in Cohen's definition of the infinitesimal based on Kant's discussion of intensity. In *The Principle of the Infinitesimal Method*, "quality" comes up in connection with "reality"—which "must be shown to be a special presupposition of thought" (PIM, §18). In his helpful study of Cohen's theoretical philosophy,[47] Geert Edel brings together what Cohen says about "reality" in the *Principle* and in the *Logic*: In the *Principle*, Cohen writes: "The infinitely small, as intensive magnitude, signifies reality in the determinate and pregnant sense: that it makes available the *real* which is presupposed and sought in all natural science, that it constitutes the real" (PIM, 133). In the *Logic*, this point is extended to mean that the infinitely small is the only way to define or represent reality—the infinitely small understood as intensity, and not as something sensual (LRE, 134). Quality is one of the fundamental concepts that are conditions of thought (PIM, §22). If "continuity" is the principle that makes it possible to think the tangent as the "generating moment" of the curve (PIM, §§39–40), then this continuity aims at a unity that lies beyond quantity: Unity is no longer the unity of the One that is defined (quantitatively, with respect to extension) as what is discrete from another entity. "Unity, insofar as it comprises infinity within itself, is no longer a discrete, but a *continuous determinateness*"; it is thus a "unity of quality":

> This meaning of unity, which overcomes all discreteness . . . is the unity of quality, in which all quality of being is founded. Without this continuous measure all being would remain qualifiable merely by means of the senses, the eye or the tongue. Quality in the sense of mathematical natural science is based on the determination of that type of reality for which the infinitesimal calculus supplies the unit of measure. In continuous unity, quantity and quality are joined, conceptually enmeshed. Qualitative unity is reality. For this reason, one can also say: continuity is that quality which intensifies [*vertieft*] the quantity of the numeric unit [or: of numeric unity, *Zahleinheit*] into the infinitely small of reality.
>
> It is in this difference between magnitude of reality [*Realitätsgröße*] and magnitude of comparison [*Vergleichungsgröße*] that the difference between quality and quantity, between extensive and infinitesimal or intensive number, consists. (PIM, §44)

That is, the infinitesimal must not be thought of as the infinitely small in an extensive sense. It is not accessible to intuition at all, but is the qualitative generation of the object of experience, through the concept alone. Similarly, if we go back to Cohen's observation in *The Concept of Religion* that "in terms of its quality," the people is "contracted [*verengt*] by the fact that 'the remnant of Israel' now takes the place of the people of Israel," we see that for Cohen the significance of the remnant lies not in quantitative projections of what will survive of the people of Israel, but in the "idealization" of the people of Israel—its generation as a concept, as remnant. From the point of view of messianic monotheism, "The people has . . . in principle only the meaning of remnant [*Rest*].” And just as Jewish election is to be understood with a view to humanity, so too “the remnant is the ideal Israel, is the future of humanity” (RV, 304/260).

For Cohen, the quality of being a “remnant” is of course crucially tied to the prophecies about the people becoming righteous. He cites the prophecy in Zephaniah 3:9ff. according to which the “remnant of Israel” that remains after God’s punishment (“I will leave in the midst of you a people humble and lowly. They shall seek refuge in the name of the Lord”) “shall do no wrong and utter no lies, nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouths” (Zephaniah 3:12–13, cited in RV, 321/275–76). This is then the sense in which, as Cohen writes in the above-quoted passage from *The Concept of Religion*, “The remnant of Israel becomes the bearer of the piety of the Israelites, in a sense the historical guarantor of morality.”

What the calculus of subtraction that generates the people as remnant means for Rosenzweig is that it specifies the condition of “Jewish life,” the human condition of election, of the “Man of Election”:

> The human being in Judaism is always somehow a remnant. He is always somehow someone leftover [someone who still remains: *ein Übriggebliebener*], an interior whose exterior has been seized and swept away by the current of the world while he himself, what is left over of him [*das Übriggebliebene von ihm*], remains [*bleibt*] standing on the bank. Something in him waits. And he has something within himself. What he waits for and what he has, to that he may give different names, and often even scarcely be able to name. But there is a feeling [*Gefühl*] in him, as if both things, the Having and the Waiting, are most intimately connected to one another. And that is precisely the feeling of the “remnant,” which has revelation and persists in waiting for salvation. (S, 450/405)

Hallo’s translation of the *Star* misleadingly gives “survivor” for *Übriggebliebener*. But it is central to Rosenzweig’s purpose—to describe an ongoing, present condition of narrowness (*Enge*), rather than interpret the remnant with reference to a past destruction, something that could have been, quantitatively as it were, survived (*überlebt*)—that he maintains in this word the emphasis on *bleiben*, on remaining (*übrigbleiben* as remaining-over).[48] As we will also see with reference to part 3 book 1 of the *Star*, Rosenzweig tends to describe Jewish “life” in terms that make it seem as though the Jewish people is not truly alive, in the sense that it does not live in the way of the peoples of the world, but, as Rosenzweig repeats here in the quoted passage:

that its life consists in mere waiting.[49] Building on Cohen's understanding of Judaism as being generated in the ever-possible, ever-new remnant, on the idea of Judaism as a process of contraction, allows Rosenzweig to set up the messianic horizon in which the universal significance of Jewish uniqueness becomes visible.

PART II

EXEMPLARITY

2

Derrida's Early Considerations of Historicism and Relativism

From his earliest works, Jacques Derrida was concerned with how to account for philosophy's cultural determinations without giving up on its universalist aims—that is, without succumbing to a historical or cultural relativism. The purpose of this chapter is to establish this early engagement and its terms. I shall proceed in three steps that are roughly aligned with the three philosophers with whom, or through whom, Derrida first articulated his approach to this issue. First, by looking at Derrida's earliest publication—the long introduction he wrote to his 1962 translation into French of Edmund Husserl's text "The Origin of Geometry," I shall show how Derrida's retrieval of Husserl's understanding of "history in an uncommon sense," including his polemic against its relativistic misinterpretations, helps to bring into view a new understanding of exemplarity, and thus prepares the way for a new understanding of the relation between particularity and universality. I will follow with discussions of the 1971 essay "The Supplement of Copula," which, building in part on a reading of Martin Heidegger's account of Being in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, demonstrates a concern with linguistic relativism that is analogous to the concern about historical relativism that motivates much of the "Introduction"; and of the 1964 study of the works of Emmanuel Levinas, "Violence and Metaphysics." I shall highlight how the latter two essays may be seen as elaborations of the central question broached by the "Introduction" to "The Origin of Geometry": How to come to terms with philosophy's arising from a particular "Greek" or "European" tradition?

In choosing the "Introduction" as my point of departure, my aim is in part to break with the habit among readers of Derrida of centering accounts of his philosophical development and contribution on the question of language. As Geoffrey Bennington has convincingly argued, Derrida's early philosophical work, though it foregrounds questions related to language—some of which we shall also look at—is not primarily concerned with the question of language as a special domain of philosophy. Rather, the inquiries launched in Derrida's early works confront fundamental problems of philosophy—and, indeed, ask about the very possibility of philosophy—though to be sure many of them do so in a way that allows us to see, or ask, as Bennington puts it, "why philosophy has been able to determine itself as philosophy of language."[1] In particular, for the study of "exemplarity and chosenness" I am offering here, it is important to note that, along with questions of language, and really in a way that is fully intertwined with such questions, Derrida's early works also engage the question of history and historicity—and of what it means to inhabit historical time, to inherit a legacy, to "have" and carry forward a tradition, and what, in particular, is entailed by the concept of a tradition of philosophy—as one that both aspires to be universal and is marked by cultural particulars.[2]

History in an Uncommon Sense: Husserl on Philosophy and Europe

As is well known, Husserl wrote the text known by the title "The Origin of Geometry" in 1936 in conjunction with his work *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*. It is included in the Husserliana edition of the *Crisis* as a "Beilage," an addendum, to section 9a—the first subsection of the long section on Galileo. Though this Husserliana edition did not appear until 1954, the text was well known previously, as Eugen Fink had in 1939 presented a version of it in a special issue of the *Revue internationale de philosophie* commemorating Husserl's death the previous year. The fact of its wide reception as a stand-alone work is one reason given by Derrida in 1962 for once again excerpting "The Origin of Geometry" from the ensemble of the *Crisis* texts in order to translate and publish it separately as a book.[3] But more importantly, Derrida wants to insist on the specificity of the argument presented in the text. He writes:

Never had the two denunciations of historicism and objectivism been so organically united as in *The Origin of Geometry.* (Intro., 4/26)

Derrida rightly sees these two denunciations as "proceed[ing] from the same impulse," as "mutually involved" or linked with each other in the itinerary of the text. Yet he also recognizes that in their substance the two denunciations, as well as their mutual involvement, are not new in Husserl's overall itinerary. Their conjunction is most clearly visible in Husserl's 1911 article "Philosophy as a Rigorous Science," which was motivated by the concern to delimit properly philosophical methods from those of the sciences: from positivist (naturalizing and psychologizing) tendencies on the one hand, and from relativizing, skepticist tendencies on the other.

In that essay, Husserl insists that philosophy must match science in its rigor and objectivity, but that it cannot do so if it succumbs to the tendency of natural science to naturalize its objects, particularly psychology's tendency to naturalize human consciousness. Similarly, in order for phenomenology to focus, as it must, on "pure," non-empirical, consciousness, it must steer clear of an analogous danger in the empirical human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*), those that study the spiritual/intellectual (*geistig*) sphere: It must shun the tendency to relativize the truths of science or philosophy with respect to historical change. Just as empirical psychology typifies the first danger, it is the science of history that exemplifies the latter danger: Husserl devotes a large part of his essay to a discussion of historicism and what he regards as its tendency toward subjectivism and skepticism (PSW, 323ff./122ff.). Historical science cannot make a valid contribution to philosophical inquiry. Conversely, to make philosophical statements is to step outside historical inquiry. Or, as Derrida puts it, the phenomenological project required that "all history [be] 'reduced' as facticity or [as] a science of constituted and intraworldly facticity" (Intro., 26/42–43).

Derrida's observation that Husserl's critiques of objectivism and historicism have a common root can thus be understood directly from the way these critiques appear in "Philosophy as a Rigorous Science." What poses greater difficulties in "The Origin of Geometry," however, and what Derrida and other readers of Husserl have found particularly appealing about this text, is that its critique of historicism does not end with the sheer rejection of historical approaches. Rather, in inquiring into what he calls the "origin" of geometry, in considering the history of geometry as contributing something to geometry's meaning, Husserl here winds up affirming history in a way that was out of the question in the framework of "Philosophy as a Rigorous Science." This affirmation of history, Derrida writes, constitutes the "singularity" of Husserl's "The Origin of Geometry" (Intro., 4/26).

In the background of Derrida's considerations, of course, is the widespread view of the development of Husserl's thought according to which an account of history was in some sense missing from the so-called static phenomenology of the *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas I,* and that Husserl came around to filling in this gap in his mature work, especially the work surrounding the *Crisis*, and even wound up having to give up fundamental elements of his mature philosophy to do so. But though this perceived contrast is perhaps an occasion for Derrida to focus on "The Origin of Geometry," the argumentative course of his "Introduction" reveals that this is a reading he does not share. Instead, Derrida is continually at pains to show that, far from representing a fundamental shift in Husserl's attitude toward history, "The Origin of Geometry" only serves to underscore the profound continuities in Husserl's thought. Thus, he cites a passage from "Philosophy as a Rigorous Science" that typifies the exclusion of history from Husserl's "static" phenomenology. To illustrate his point that "the scientific decision about validity itself and about its ideal normative principles is by no means a matter for empirical science," Husserl had written:

> Nor will the mathematician turn to historical science [*Historie*] to gain knowledge about the truth of mathematical theories; it will not occur to him to relate the historical development of mathematical representations or judgments to the question of truth.[4]

At first glance, Derrida writes, this passage and similar "frank formulas" dating from "the period of 'Philosophy as a Rigorous Science' and *Ideas I*," are "in flagrant contradiction with [the formulas used in] the *Origin*." They appear to contradict the very idea of evoking the history of geometry in an account of its meaning. But this is so only as long as "the levels of explicitation and the meanings of the word 'history' [are not] clearly distinguished" (Intro., 26/43). "In truth, the continuity and the coherence of the propositions are remarkable: the history of facts must first be reduced in order to respect and make appear the ideal object's normative independence from" that history (Intro., 27/44).[5]

In reading Derrida's "Introduction," then, we learn that what has changed is not Husserl's attitude toward history or toward historical relativism. Rather, his use of the term "history" has changed; he is now interested in "history" in a deeper sense—not in the object of *Historie*, of the empirical science of history, but in what he calls the "universal a priori of history," history as "the living movement of togetherness and interweaving [*Miteinander und Ineinander*]" involved in "original formations and sedimentations of meaning" (UG, 380/174).

Thus, the inquiry Husserl proposes into the "origin" of geometry is not an empirical inquiry into the factical invention or discovery of geometry. As he himself puts it,

> The question of the origin of geometry . . . shall not be considered here as the philological-historical question, that is, as the search for the first geometers who actually uttered pure geometrical propositions, proofs, theories; for the particular propositions they discovered; or the like. (UG, 365–66/158)

Husserl calls the type of inquiry he is proposing "historical in an uncommon sense." It involves a "thematization" of history that reveals "depth-problems" (or underlying problems: *Tiefenprobleme*) that are "entirely foreign to ordinary history [*Historie*]" (UG, 365/157). We may know "nothing, or as good as nothing" about the "particular provenance" or the "factical spiritual source" that brought about what we call geometry, or any other product of human activities, nor anything about geometry's "first creators"; we "do not even ask after them." Yet the "tradition" of geometry that we are confronted with gives us a basis from which to pose the "retrospective question," the *Rückfrage*, concerning "the most originary sense in which geometry once arose," "that sense in which it appeared in history for the first time," or rather, the sense "in which it must have appeared" (UG, 366/158).

While Husserl explicitly proposes this historical approach in opposition to a view of geometry that is restricted to geometry as a "finished" product, as "handed down" (UG, 365/157), he also makes clear that the historical approach inquires into the ongoing meaning of geometry: geometry's meaning is originary only insofar as it concerns geometry as practiced in the present and future, as a living tradition. It is in this sense that he views this new type of historical inquiry as being capable of yielding insights into "our entire enterprise." What Husserl seeks is a type of "historical meditation" that can lead to our "taking possession of the meaning, method, and beginning of philosophy, of the *one* philosophy." By adding that the "depth-problems" addressed by this inquiry are in their own turn "historical" problems, Husserl gives us an idea of just how fundamental, how enveloping of the human situation, he takes such an inquiry to be.

Now, it is quite clear that this kind of quest for a sense of the historical in general does not imply a renunciation of the anti-historicist positions advanced in "Philosophy as a Rigorous Science" or elsewhere. Indeed, Husserl spends a good portion of "The Origin of Geometry" explicitly distinguishing what he has in mind from historicist views: Thus, in response to the possible objection that the notion of a timeless historical a priori goes against the rich evidence we have in favor of "the relativity of everything historical," he writes that this historical a priori should be understood as what makes possible historical research in the mundane sense; it is "history as a universal horizon of questioning":

> Let us consider the method of establishing historical facts in general . . . with respect to what this method presupposes. Does not the very framing of the task of a human science concerning "how it really was" contain a presupposition taken for granted, a validity-ground never observed, never made thematic, of a strictly unassailable [type of] self-evidence [*Evidenz*], without which history [*Historie*] would be a senseless enterprise? (UG, 382/176)

Thus, for Husserl any historicist or relativist objection to the idea of a historical a priori misses the mark, since such objections remain on the level of history as *Tatsachenwissenschaft*, as a science of facts.

What is striking about Derrida's "Introduction" is not only that Derrida underscores the persistence of Husserl's anti-historicist, anti-relativist stance, but also that he deems it necessary to restate or rehearse this argument in a number of ways and contexts—both in the "Introduction" and in the essay "'Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology" (whose thematic trajectory intersects in important ways with that of the "Introduction").[6] Just as Husserl had been concerned to distinguish his enterprise from the historicist tendencies of his time, Derrida is driven by what he regards as the historicist misreadings of Husserl. Consider Derrida's remark in "'Genesis and Structure'" that what is taken as the transition in Husserl's work from "the structural analyses of static constitution practiced in *Ideas I* to the analyses of genetic constitution which followed and which are at times quite new in their content" implies "no 'surpassing' (as they say), still less an option, and especially not a repenting."[7] For Derrida, to misconstrue Husserl as having "found history" late in his work runs the risk of—and, for some of the most influential interpreters of Husserl at the time Derrida wrote his commentary, *did* amount to—regarding Husserl as having "recanted," as having retreated behind the anti-historicist, anti-relativist positions advanced so forcefully in "Philosophy as a Rigorous Science."

The polemical significance of this line of argument is nowhere clearer than in section 8 of the "Introduction." Here, Derrida directly confronts a relativist, relativizing misreading of Husserl, a misreading he associates primarily with the name Merleau-Ponty. Husserl's "The Origin of Geometry" seems indeed to have been an important point of reference for Maurice Merleau-Ponty in the 1950s: For Merleau-Ponty, this text stands in contrast with Husserl's earlier writings in that it takes seriously the role of language and history in the constitution of ideal objects.[8]

In section 4, Derrida had already briefly criticized Merleau-Ponty for viewing Husserl's remarks on language as representing a radical departure from the work of the *Logical Investigations* (Intro., 71–72/77–78). But, as we will see, his main criticism does not apply directly to Merleau-Ponty's reading of "The Origin of Geometry": In section 8, Derrida's reflections on the above-mentioned objection considered by Husserl, according to which any notion of the historical a priori is vulnerable to the "relativity of everything historical," lead him to a consideration not of historical relativism but of cultural relativism. For Husserl's full formulation of the hypothetical objection which he "expects" from the point of view of the "historicism which widely dominates" the intellectual scene of his time reads as follows:

> One will object: What naïveté, to want to show and to claim to have shown a historical a priori, an absolute, supertemporal validity, after we have obtained such rich evidence for the relativity of everything historical, of all the historical [*historisch gewordene*] apperceptions of the world, all the way down to those of the "primitive" tribes. Every people, large or small [*Jedes Volk und Völkchen*, every people or "peoplet"] has its world in which, for it, everything fits well together, whether in a mythical-magical or in a European-rational way, and in which everything can be completely explained. Every people has its "logic" and, accordingly, if this logic were to be explicated in propositions, "its" a priori. (UG, 381/175)

Derrida observes that this type of objection, though it resembles the kind of historicism addressed by "Philosophy as a Rigorous Science," has a "more ethno-sociological, more *modern* style" (Intro., 113/109). This "ethnologism" is in turn an occasion for Derrida to confront Merleau-Ponty's view that the late Husserl had renounced the historical a priori and had come to view the discoveries of empirical human sciences such as cultural anthropology—and by extension, factical human experience in general—as being sources of phenomenological insight in their own right, alongside the phenomenological techniques (reduction, ideation) that Husserl had elaborated.[9] In support of his interpretation, Merleau-Ponty cites a letter written by Husserl in 1935 to the anthropologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl in which Husserl expressed his appreciation for Lévy-Bruhl's work on the mentality of "primitive" peoples.[10] Merleau-Ponty suggests that anthropological data can enrich phenomenological research as an alternative to the eidetic technique of imaginary (or "free") variation. Husserl had described the intuition of essences as being

> based on the modification of an experienced or imagined objectivity, turning it into an arbitrary example which, at the same time, receives the character of a guiding "model," of the point of departure for the production of an infinitely open multiplicity of variants—that is [as based on] a *variation*.[11]

Now, Merleau-Ponty suggests that "the imagination, left to itself, doesn't render us capable of representing to ourselves the possibilities of existence that are realized by different cultures."[12] For Merleau-Ponty, this explains Husserl's appreciation for the work of the anthropologist, which allows us "to 'feel our way into' [*einzufühlen*, in the sense of sympathy or empathy] a humanity whose life is enclosed in a vital tradition of sociality and to understand it in its unified social life,"[13] as well as his remark to Lévy-Bruhl that "historical relativism has its incontestable justification as an anthropological fact."[14]

For Derrida, however, it is crucial to understand that if historical relativism is in some sense justified, if the inquiry into cultural differences is valuable, it can only be *within* the sphere of material-factical investigations. The factical variations that come to light cannot supplant the technique of imaginary variation. Rather, the eidetic method is what makes it possible to determine differences between cultures or historical periods. For I can only determine such differences against the background of *general, common* notions of experience and culture, notions that I can acquire only by first "reducing" what is other about others' experience, and what is mine about my own (Intro., 119/114). Derrida also stresses that, conversely, the technique of imaginary variation does not serve to construct an exhaustive multiplicity of possible experiences, nor does it preclude empirical investigation into such experiences. Indeed, since this is a technique that transforms objects into "examples," it need not be performed using multiple variants, but "even has the privilege of being able to operate on only one of these possibles" in what

Derrida calls a "consciousness of the example" or "exemplary consciousness" (*conscience d'exemple*) (Intro., 117/112).

While an analysis of the true difference between Merleau-Ponty and Derrida in their understanding of the significance of Husserl's late writings exceeds the scope of my discussion, I hope to have shown how some of Merleau-Ponty's statements regarding the status of facticity in these later writings, particularly his apparent suggestion that a certain kind of historical or cultural relativism is compatible with and even called for by phenomenology, were an important impetus behind one of Derrida's chief lines of argument in the "Introduction."[15] That is to say, in tracing the continuity of Husserl's stance with respect to historicism and relativism, Derrida makes clear that in his own view, the validity of Husserlian phenomenology lies partly in its uncompromising distinction between the factical and the transcendental, and in its pursuit of universally accessible objective idealities.

Exemplarity

Let me now signal a particular feature of this anti-relativist reading of Husserl that is important for understanding Derrida's later writings on philosophical nationality. In the above-cited passage on the technique of imaginary variation, Derrida evokes an "exemplary consciousness," or a "consciousness of the example." According to Husserl, this is the consciousness in virtue of which the possibility or possibilities that I contemplate serve to yield an invariant, a "necessary general form, without which a thing such as this, as an example of its kind, would be altogether unthinkable."[16] I take it that this is the same "exemplary consciousness" that is Husserl's name in section 3 of *Ideas I* for the attitude by which I can achieve an essential intuition (*Wesensanschauung*) by considering a corresponding individual entity. It is due to this exemplary consciousness that I can move from the intuition of an individual to the intuition of an essence—that is, accomplish "ideation"—and back again to the individual by means of re-exemplification. This double movement of the exemplary consciousness is thus the guarantee for truth and objectivity in the phenomenological method.

Now, the exemplarity or exemplarism involved in ideation or in free variation is not, as far as I can tell, regularly thematized by readers of Husserl.[17] Indeed, it is possible to describe these operations without dwelling on the terms "example" or "exemplary," even if those terms make an occasional appearance in Husserl's text. It is thus striking that Derrida, in highlighting the term in connection with his disagreement with Merleau-Ponty, implicitly gives the title "exemplarism" to the relationship between the transcendental and the factical, the singular and the universal, in Husserl's phenomenology. In fact, Derrida uses the words "exemplary" or "example" in an emphatic sense with startling frequency in his "Introduction." The terms become particularly important when it is a matter of explaining the teleological dimension of the meaning of geometry. How can we think the unity of geometry, its continuity beginning from a supposed foundational act, through its permutations in the present and possible permutations in the future? Only if we take the origin not to lie in a factual past event of invention or discovery but as an ideal origin, as the way "in which [geometry] must have appeared" (UG, 366/158). This formula "must have appeared," Derrida writes,

> marks the necessity of an eidetic pre-scription and of an a priori norm—a necessity recognized in the present and timelessly assigned to a past fact.

This means that this "must," this necessity, only announces itself "*after* the fact of the event" (Intro., 34–35/49). Which is to say that "the fact does not teach us through its factual content but as an *example*" (Intro., 35n/50n).

Derrida made a similar point in the discussion that took place after he first delivered a preliminary version of "'Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology" as a lecture in 1959. In response to questions from Lucien Goldmann about the status of factual knowledge, he says:

> Certainly, I can only have this eidetic intuition by starting from the fact. But I only retain from the fact its essence, . . . its possibility, its exemplarity (and not its factuality). . . . I vary [the fact] in its factuality in order to recognize its elements of invariance.[18]

To return to Derrida's discussion in the "Introduction" of geometry as it "must have appeared": Just as the technique of variation can only produce essences if the imagined variants are taken to be exemplary, so the "gestures" or "acts" by which geometry was established must be understood as yielding "singular essences" by virtue of their exemplarity. The singular essence of geometry can thus only be an ideal, open to the future, to further possible founding acts. It is in this sense that exemplarity makes possible "the total meaning of a history that is open in general" (Intro., 37/51). History itself is constituted by this exemplarity.

Near the beginning of "The Origin of Geometry," Husserl writes:

> Our considerations will necessarily lead to the deepest problems of meaning, problems of science and of the history of science in general, and indeed in the end to problems of a universal history in general; so that our problems and expositions concerning Galilean geometry take on an exemplary significance. (UG, 365/157)

Derrida pairs this exemplarity of geometry and of science for culture and history in general with the exemplarity we encountered earlier in the eidetic method:

> The cultural form "science" (of which geometry is an example) is itself "exemplary" in a double sense of the word: eidetic and teleological. It is the particular example which guides eidetic reduction and intuition; but it is also the model example which must orient culture as its ideal. It is the idea of what, from the first instant of its production, must be valid forever and for everyone, beyond any given cultural atmosphere. (Intro., 46–47/58)

Note that the notion of exemplarity that Derrida here takes up from Husserl is wholly distinct from the standard notion of example: As Derrida pointed out with respect to the possible role of anthropological or historical data in eidetic intuition, the concepts of history, tradition, or culture cannot be obtained inductively from their particular instantiations, nor can the origin of geometry serve as an *instance* of geometry among others. Rather, history is constituted in the very process of the *Rückfrage*, of retrospective questioning, that places me in relation both to an exemplary origin and to an open-ended telos or "ideal."

Derrida points out that this notion of exemplarity is what enables Husserl to talk in the *Crisis* and in the Vienna lecture ("Philosophy and the Crisis of European Humanity") about Europe as a "spiritual form" (*geistige Gestalt*) having an "immanent philosophical idea,"[19] to talk, that is, of a "European eidos."[20] It is also an exemplarity that Derrida mobilizes in several writings of the 1960s and 1970s in which the avoidance of relativism is a central concern. Thus, as we shall see, in "Violence and Metaphysics," in pointing out how Levinas is oriented by "an intention common to Husserlian phenomenology and . . . Heideggerian 'ontology,'" Derrida writes that "the entirety of philosophy is conceived" by Levinas "from its

Greek source," adding that this view "amounts neither to an occidentalism, nor to a historicism," nor to relativism.[21] To explain this dissociation, Derrida draws explicitly on the notion of exemplarity at work in the *Crisis* and in "The Origin of Geometry":

> The truth of philosophy does not depend upon its relation to the factuality of the Greek or European event. On the contrary, we must gain access to the Greek or European *eidos* from an irruption or a call whose provenance is variously determined by Husserl and Heidegger. . . . For both of them, the "irruption of philosophy" . . . is the "originary phenomenon" which characterizes Europe as a "spiritual figure."[22]

Thus, the notion of exemplarity allows Derrida to understand Husserl's pairing of Europe as a spiritual form with the history of philosophy, the history of culture as such, to understand in what sense, as he writes in "Violence and Metaphysics," "it would not be possible to philosophize, or to speak philosophically, outside [the] medium" of the "Greek" (ED, 120/81). Even where Husserl's statements about Europe drift off dangerously toward ethnocentrism, Derrida shows them to be not merely instances of chauvinism, but as extensions of Husserl's exemplaristic thought. For Husserl's "idealization" in no way rests on the supposed factical accomplishments of a European civilization.[23] Rather, Europe represents an origin and a telos—an origin that like that of geometry has been concealed and remains to be reactivated in its teleological meaning (cf. Intro., 141–42/130–31).

In his discussion of Husserl's remark to Lévy-Bruhl about the nonhistoricity of "primitive" cultures, Derrida points out the "ambiguity" of this exemplarism, which lies in the fact that Europe serves at once as an example among others and as the "good example," the ideal. "For it incarnates in its purity the Telos of all historicity: universality, omnitemporality, infinite traditionality, and so forth." In this sense, "by investigating the sense of the pure and infinite possibility of historicity, Europe has awakened history to its own proper end. Therefore, in this second sense, pure historicity is reserved for the European *eidos*" (Intro., 120–21/115).

Language and Thought: Heidegger and "Ethnocentrism"

Through his early reading of Husserl, Derrida had first confronted the ambiguity of the idea of Europe as a "spiritual form" that is also a task for philosophy—an ambiguity that he would later make fruitful for his work on "philosophical nationality." But his intense engagement with the question of what kind of relationship philosophical universality must entertain with cultural particulars is also informed by his readings of two other thinkers who were central to his philosophical development: Heidegger and Levinas. Looking at Derrida's 1971 essay "The Supplement of Copula" will give us a good vantage point from which to consider the role of Heidegger. Where section 8 of the "Introduction" was directed against a historically or culturally relativist reception of Husserl by confronting the perspective of the ethnographer that had been conjured by Merleau-Ponty, this essay tackles an argument for linguistic relativism by way of a direct confrontation with a linguist, Emile Benveniste (whose studies of Indo-European languages are a frequent frame of reference in Derrida's works). Benveniste's 1958 paper "Categories of Thought and Language" contains a classic argument for the view that concepts are rooted in language. As a linguist, Benveniste premises his reflections on the isolatability of language from other domains. While he recognizes that thought can only be grasped as "formed and actualized in language," he proposes to approach the thought/language relationship from the other side. In order to ask how thought and language "are interdependent and why they are judged to be indispensable to each other," and in particular to observe "how [thought] adjusts to language,"[24] Benveniste proceeds from a particular example: Aristotle's categories. His examination, based on a juxtaposition of the categories with the grammatical categories of ancient Greek, yields the following result: Aristotle's distinctions, he concludes, "are primarily categories of language . . . in fact, Aristotle, reasoning in the absolute, is simply identifying certain fundamental categories of the language in which he thought."[25]

In a manner similar to his response to Merleau-Ponty's interpretation of Husserl as opening phenomenology up to the empirical sciences, Derrida here resists the linguist's supposition that analyses of language can take place without being informed by philosophical or conceptual traditions. He points out that, given the influence of Aristotle's categories—the conceptual heritage of Aristotelian philosophy—on the Western tradition, they cannot be treated simply as neutral "data" for linguistic analysis (MP, 218–19/184, 225/188, 232n20/194n24).

Further, Derrida calls attention to the fact that Benveniste, in order to advance his thesis that the categories are linguistic in origin, must begin by presupposing the language/thought opposition he seeks to dismantle. He cites Benveniste's preliminary observations that language, unlike thought, can be described "by itself," or that categories of thought can claim universality, while categories of language are always of a particular language.[26] Similarly, in analyzing the provenance of the first six categories, Benveniste notes that they "do not refer to attributes discovered in things, but to a classification arising from the language itself."[27] Thus, "language" is conceived as a distinct realm from which Aristotle (if only "unconsciously") has "taken" his classification, so as to apply it to something else. What, asks Derrida, enables Benveniste in this way to isolate language at the outset, thus presupposing a distinction that his argument as a whole is meant to call into question?

> Doubtless, Benveniste starts from this separation only in order to reduce it afterward, in order to resolve the characteristics which allegedly belong exclusively to thought into structures of language. But throughout the analysis no question is asked about the origin and possibility of that initial distinction . . . in other words the question about the very opening of the problem. (MP, 218/182)

It seems, then, that in order to relativize thought to language, it is necessary to begin by positing a realm that is outside and separate from, and thus not relative to, language. And this outside of language is implicated throughout the inquiry into the interdependence of language and its outside (in this case thought), just as philosophy is implicated throughout linguistic practice. In particular, Derrida cites approvingly Jules Vuillemin's observation that, though Benveniste finds for each of Aristotle's categories a corresponding grammatical category, he cannot bring the two systems into complete alignment. This shows that, though the categories may be linguistic in origin, they would be at least the result of a *selection* from among the available grammatical concepts or relations. As long as it has not been shown that "the arrangement of the categories borrowed from language is also the *complete* arrangement of categories as concerns language," the categories' relativity to language has not been demonstrated, for whatever governs the selection must be to some extent extralinguistic.[28]

However, Derrida is equally suspicious of the recourse Vuillemin must himself take to the separateness of language from thought, in particular in his talk of philosophy "borrowing" from language. Vuillemin's philosophical discourse is based on a presupposition that "seems to be the—symmetrical—opposite of that which supports Benveniste's [linguistic] analyses," that of the essential independence of thought from language.[29] What the two presuppositions share, however, is a reliance on the stability of the language/thought division.

Returning to Aristotle's being (whether "consciously" or "unconsciously"[30]) guided by language in formulating his system, the question is in what sense there was for him a thing such as language for his categories to be related to. Building on Derrida's suggestion that contemporary linguistics and its notion of language would not have been possible "without a certain small 'document' on the categories," let us look further into how Aristotle's notion of category has been taken to involve "language."

Categories as the "Saying of Being"

Though there have been different interpretations of the role of language in the categories, most accounts, referring to Aristotle's fundamental question *posakhōs legetai to on* ("In how many ways is being said?"), agree that the table of categories is meant to account for various types of predication. Each of the categories corresponds to a sense in which it can be said that a thing "is"—its substance, quantity, quality, and so on. This semantic account of the categories is put forward, for instance, by Hermann Bonitz, who writes that the categories "indicate the various senses in which we use the concept of being [*Seiendes*, that which is/exists]."[31] But more recent commentators have found their function to be not so much to name the senses in which the copula is used, or the meanings of the verb "is" in different propositions, but the different ways that a copula may link a subject and a predicate. For example, Charles Kahn defines the categories in terms of a threefold relation between (1) the word "being" in its function as copula; (2) a plurality of diverse things to which the word "being" is applied; and (3) the corresponding different accounts or definitions of these applications, which specify what it means in each particular case for the thing to be called a being. The last element in the relation is the class of categories. As Kahn explains,

> On the one hand (3), the account of the different applications, is given by the list of eight categories [in the *Metaphysics*] (completed by some characterization of each, such as the detailed account given for four of them in *Categories* 5–8). But (2), the things to which *being* applies, are not the eight categories as such but the entities and attributes they classify—not substance but Socrates, Coriscus, man, and animal; not quality but white, black, round, square, knowledge, justice etc.[32]

Thus, Kahn describes the categories as a third level in addition to the word "being" on the one hand and its meanings on the other. They are neither word nor meaning, but designate the ways that word and meaning may be connected. Pierre Aubenque, in his account of Aristotle's categories, expresses a similar idea when he writes that the categories do not (or do not merely) designate different signifieds of the word "being" but rather its different significations, the "figures" by which the verb "to be" can unite a predicate and a subject in an attributive proposition: "The word *being*, like the *pollakhōs legomena* [things said in many ways] in general, not only signifies different things, but signifies them differently, and we are never sure whether it has the same sense each time."[33]

This account of the categories as distinguishing types of signification helps illuminate the central role that Derrida ascribes to them in the history of our understanding of language. And this conception of the category also has implications for the questions posed earlier about the relationship of Aristotle's categories to a concept of language. For the concept of category does not so much follow from a notion of language as establish an account of language (signification, the link between word and meaning) in the first place. And this would undermine Benveniste's claim that the categories are the *product* of a transposition or projection from language—as something preexisting—onto thought.

For this reason, Derrida finds that Benveniste's explanation is undone by the fact that non-linguistic elements intervene in language, that it is impossible to separate language from its outside. If the categories provide an account of signification, if they provide the link between the word "being" and its meanings, then they cannot be said to be *either* categories of language *or* categories of thought, but are "simultaneously of language and of thought," inasmuch as both language and thought are rooted in being:

> Aristotle's categories are simultaneously of language and of thought: of language in that they are determined as answers to the question of knowing how Being *is said* (*legetai*); but also, how *Being* is said, how is said what is, in that it is, such as it is. (MP, 218/182)

Thus, the category marks Aristotle's "attempt to take the analysis back to the site of the emergence, that is to the common root, of the language/thought couple . . . the site of Being'" (MP, 218/182). And since the category serves to account for the signification of being, it is also at this "site" that language "opens onto" "its exterior, to what is in that it is or such as it is, to truth." Language cannot be thought of as a hermetic reserve, a source from which Aristotle's categories have been transposed, for any theory of language that is commensurate with Aristotle's writings would also be a theory of the category.

"Being" and the Question of Ethnocentrism

Benveniste himself also considers the possibility that "being" names a site external to, or independent of, language, and in particular as a "field of categoriality" in general:

> Beyond the Aristotelian term, above that categorization, there is the notion of "being" which envelops everything. Without being a predicate itself, "being" is the condition of all predicates. All the varieties of "being-such," of "state," all the possible views of "time," etc., depend on the notion of "being."[34]

Benveniste goes on to state that, like the categories themselves, the status of being as their transcategorial condition is linguistically or grammatically predetermined, that is, by the nature of the Greek verb "to be." In particular, Benveniste explains, what "predisposes" being to occupy such a central role in the metaphysics of Greek philosophers is the fact that it has, first, the logical function of the copula and, second, the capacity to be treated as a nominal notion.

> Let us emphasize this, because it is in a linguistic situation thus characterized that the whole Greek metaphysic of "being" was able to come into existence and develop—the magnificent images of the poem of Parmenides as well as the dialectic of the Sophist. The language did not, of course, give direction to the metaphysical definition of "being"—each Greek thinker has his own—but it made it possible to set up "being" as an objectifiable notion which philosophical thought could handle, analyze, and define just as any other concept.[35]

Thus "being" initially appears to be a parallel case to that of the categories, in that its status is shown to have been linguistically determined. Here, as with the categories, Benveniste calls into question philosophy's claim to making statements about the world of beings independently of language. And again, as with the categories, he simultaneously threatens his conclusion by positing an instance or factor that ultimately prevents Greek philosophies of "being" from being completely reducible to language. Based on this parallel, might we counter Benveniste's argument with respect to "being" in the way suggested by Derrida for the categories? We had said that since the categories are by definition those ways or significations linking language and beings, they cannot be isolated as purely linguistic formations. But clearly such an argument cannot be reformulated for "being," since "being" can in no sense be said to be a link *between* language and itself. Consequently, "being" here emerges as an absolutely singular, unique "case," dissimilar to the categories in that it is their very possibility.

Benveniste's claim, then, is stronger than was Trendelenburg's "grammatical interpretation" of the categories,[36] stronger than the historical charges that the categories are arbitrary, rhapsodical, or empirical.[37] He suggests that "being" need not occupy the central place that it does in Western metaphysics, that the fact that it does occupy this central place is due to the idiosyncratic combination of functions performed by the verb "to be" in Indo-European languages, and that another language lacking this feature might therefore breed an entirely different metaphysics, one not centered on "being." To prove his point, Benveniste introduces the Ewe language as an example of a language that has no one word or concept encompassing all the functions and meanings of "being" in Indo-European languages. In doing so, Benveniste reminds us that no reflection on the universal language/thought problematic can do without a comparison of particular languages. But the comparison, as he proposes it, proves questionable.

> This description of the state of things in Ewe is a bit contrived. It is made from the standpoint of *our* language and not, as it should have been, within the framework of the language itself. . . . It is in connection with our own linguistic usages that we discover something common to [the five Ewe verbs with meanings close to the Indo-European "to be"]. But that is precisely the advantage of this "egocentric" comparison: it throws light on ourselves; it shows us, among that variety of uses of "to be" in Greek, a phenomenon peculiar to the Indo-European language which is not at all a universal situation or a necessary condition. . . . All we wish to show here is that the linguistic structure of Greek predisposed the notion of "being" to a philosophical vocation. By comparison, the Ewe language offers us only a narrow notion and particularized uses. We cannot say what place "being" holds in Ewe metaphysics, but, a priori, the notion must be articulated in a completely different way.[38]

Benveniste's identification of a problem of "egocentrism" here represents the same linguistic relativism that characterizes his earlier discussion of the categories. He asserts that the correlation of the five Ewe verbs with the verb "to be" is the arbitrary result of a projection of Western metaphysics, that nothing would compel such a correlation. But this self-admonition is belied by the fact that, in comparing Ewe with Greek, Benveniste *does* discern five Ewe verbs as being equivalent to the Greek "to be." Thus, his comparison of the two lexicons necessarily relies on some third, unnamed one, consisting, perhaps, of universal functions or meanings. That is, a translation cannot have taken place without universalizing "being" from the outset, without taking it as an extralinguistic starting point from which to search in the native and foreign languages for the equivalents or variants of "being."

No Language Without "Being"?

In order to pursue further the question posed by Benveniste of how to read "the absence of the (unique) verbal function of 'to be' in any given language," Derrida recalls Heidegger's pronouncement in *Introduction to Metaphysics* that there is no language without "being":

> Let us suppose that the indeterminate meaning of Being did not exist and that we also did not understand what this meaning means. What then? Would there merely be a noun and a verb fewer in our language? No. *There would be no language at all.*[39]

To bring this passage into a discussion of Benveniste's relativism is an initially puzzling move, for Heidegger's notions of language and Being are far from those Benveniste operates with in his essays on linguistics. This is apparent in the explanation that follows Heidegger's pronouncement. The reason for the impossibility of a language without Being, he writes, is that language consists essentially of saying what *is*, of saying Being:

> *There would be no language at all.* No being *as such* would disclose itself in words, it would no longer be possible to invoke it and speak about it in words. For to speak of a being as such includes: to understand it in advance [*im voraus verstehen*] as a being, that is, to understand its Being.

And this possibility of saying Being is, after all, an essential feature of being human:

> Assuming that we did not understand Being at all, assuming that the word "Being" did not even have its vaporous meaning, there would not be a single word. We ourselves could never be *speakers* [*Sagende*, or "sayers"]. Altogether we could not be as we are. For to be human is to be a speaker.

Clearly, Benveniste would have no reason to disagree with this. The possibility he raises of "a language without being" does not amount to denying the fundamental human capacity or necessity of saying what *is*, because he operates with a different conception of language: As a linguist, he uses the word "language" differently from Heidegger, the philosopher.

Derrida begins to capture this fundamental discrepancy with the disclaimer he appends to the excerpt from Heidegger:

> If there were an ethnocentrism of Heideggerian thought, it would never be simplistic enough to refuse to call language . . . every non-Western system of signification. (MP, 238/199)

If we understand properly what Heidegger the philosopher means by "language," then we understand that what would be absent if "being" were absent from a given language is some sort of primordial capacity for saying what "is," and thus the very possibility of language.

In the discussion of exemplarity in the "Introduction" to Husserl's "The Origin of Geometry," Derrida had established a framework for reading Husserl's alignment of the task of philosophy with a "European eidos," as well as similar gestures on the part of Heidegger and Levinas, as not simply relativistic by showing that such theses do not operate on a factical-empirical plane. At the same time, the "Introduction" cautioned that such theses cannot be completely isolated from a pernicious Eurocentric or ethnocentric effect. At this point in "The Supplement of Copula," we encounter a similar argument against critiques of philosophy's alleged ethnocentrism. Such a critique is implied by Benveniste's double operation of aligning the five Ewe verbs with the Indo-European "to be" while at the same time denying them the status of "being" for "metaphysical" purposes. Like Merleau-Ponty, who envisioned a philosophy that can be informed by ethnographic data, the linguist Benveniste here fails to distinguish the factical-empirical plane from the plane of abstract-conceptual reflection. But "The Supplement of Copula" also moves beyond the framework of the "Introduction" in that Derrida here develops its second aspect—his own caution about ethno- or Eurocentrism—more fully. For the confrontation that Derrida stages between philosophy (Heidegger's consideration of language as such, of the essential interconnectedness of language and the Question of Being) and linguistics (Benveniste's focus on *particular* languages, on the particular "behavior" of "to be" in various languages and syntactical constructions) shows that neither of the two thinkers can successfully escape the insights of the other.

Both Benveniste and Heidegger consider the coincidence of what Benveniste terms the "grammatical" function of "to be" (the copula) with its "lexical" function in one and the same word. For Benveniste, this emerges out of his consideration of the nominal sentence, which is "characterized by the absence of the verb" but which "has a sentence with the verb 'to be' as its equivalent." How to account for the dispensability of "to be" in such sentences? To Benveniste, the answer lies in recognizing that the two functions of "to be" are absolutely distinct and that their coincidence in one word is arbitrary: "There is no connection, either by nature or by necessity, between the verbal notion of 'to exist, to be really there' and the function of the 'copula.'"[40] That the nominal sentence lacks a verb does not mean that the copula is missing, but simply that its function is performed by a zero morpheme, or pause.

Heidegger, too, remarks on the dispensability of "to be"—and does so in a manner reminiscent of Aristotle's *Categories*: Considering diverse propositions of the form "x is y" he finds that "In each case, the 'is' is meant differently."[41] The multiplicity of meanings of "is" serves to dispel the suspicion that Being is an "empty word." At the same time, this richness of meaning is possible only because the "is" itself is "intrinsically indeterminate and devoid of meaning" and is thus available "for such diverse uses," able to "fulfill and determine itself as the circumstances require." The "is" is a unique point of intersection between a plenitude of meaning and the absence of meaning.

For Heidegger, the lexical and grammatical functions cannot simply be dissociated. Language for him consists in "beings *as such* disclosing themselves in words." Thus, one cannot speak of Being—or even of the "functions of 'to be'"—one cannot "say beings as such" without "understanding beings as beings, i.e., Being, in advance." A certain understanding or comprehension of Being precedes all language.

It is at this level that we must understand Derrida's caution against interpreting Heidegger's remarks as ethnocentric. Since Heidegger distinguishes "the sense of 'Being' from the word 'Being' and the concept of 'Being,'" Derrida writes, his pronouncement that a language without "being" is not a language amounts to saying that the "being-language of language" is not based on the presence or absence of the words "Being" or "to be" in that language, but rather on "an entirely other possibility which remains to be defined. The very concept of 'ethnocentrism' would provide us with no critical assurance for as long as the elaboration of this other possibility remains incomplete" (MP, 239/199–200).

Approaching this "other possibility" is the task that Derrida pursues in the final part of "The Supplement of Copula," the essay in which he exposes Heidegger's vulnerability to the insights of the linguist. He does this by pointing out a feature of Heidegger's discussion that puts its fundamental thesis—the necessary link between "to be" as linguistic phenomenon and "Being" as involving prelinguistic comprehension—at risk. For Heidegger's account proceeds as a defense of "Being" as having a determinate, full, and unique meaning and as a refutation of the possibility that it is an empty, indeterminate, "vaporous," general, or common term. Associated with this is a tendency in Heidegger's account to "consider the growing predominance of the formal function of the copula as a process of falling, an abstraction, degradation, or emptying of the semantic plenitude of the lexeme 'to be'" (MP, 243/203).[42] This schema is suspect for Derrida; for him Heidegger, insofar as he perpetuates the oppositions of fullness versus emptiness of meaning, remains within metaphysical philosophy, which is a problem that is more fundamental than any empirically discerned "ethnocentrism." In unpacking this aspect of Heidegger's analysis of Being in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Derrida thus makes concrete the hypothetical condition contained in what at first appeared as an exoneration of Heidegger's alleged ethnocentrism: We may now retrospectively read the claim that "if there were an ethnocentrism of Heideggerian thought, it would never be simplistic enough to refuse to call language . . . every non-Western system of signification" as identifying a shortcoming of Heidegger's philosophy that is anything but "simplistic." This shortcoming rests on a metaphysical/philosophical privileging of Being, rather than on a claim about the relative merits of specific empirical languages.

Heidegger pursues the project of securing the full and unique meaning of Being by departing from merely linguistic (grammatical and etymological) analyses.[43] To the Heideggerian account of Being, Derrida opposes one that draws on Benveniste's analysis of the copula. Rather than regard the copula, and in particular the null morpheme as copula, as derivative of a more originary and full meaning of being, Derrida turns Benveniste's chain of derivations on its head, applying to it his own notion of supplementarity. He thus regards what Benveniste terms the "most generally found" case, the nominal sentence with the zero morpheme as copula, as the "most general form" of what he calls the "supplement of copula," a self-sufficient, "original possibility" of language (MP, 240–41/201).

Here the problematic that envelops both Benveniste's and Heidegger's accounts becomes clear: Derrida tries to get beyond Benveniste's account of the zero morpheme by showing that such a linguistic account is always indebted to metaphysical notions of Being, presence, and absence. He also radicalizes Heidegger's account of Being as an intersection between "emptiness" and "fullness" of meaning by identifying the meaning of "being" not with a plenitude of signification, but with the supplement of copula, with "absence itself."[44] Building on his critique of the metaphysics of presence and utilizing the notions of trace and supplementarity, Derrida is here able to open up his own critique of the "ethnocentrism" (which is thereby also aligned with what he in *Of Grammatology* also calls logocentrism and phonocentrism[45]) of philosophy, without thereby falling into a relativism of his own. In suggesting this more sophisticated account of "ethnocentrism" than the one at work in Benveniste's essay, Derrida also builds on the insights into Husserlian exemplarity that he put forward in the "Introduction" to "The Origin of Geometry."

A "Community of the Question": Levinas on the Double Exemplarity of the Hebrew and the Greek

So far in this chapter I have sought to show how Derrida's stance regarding historicism and relativism develops through his engagement with Husserlian phenomenology and, later on, with Heidegger's understanding of the role of language in philosophy. Following both Husserl and Heidegger, Derrida seeks a way to distinguish the role of philosophical questioning from the procedures of the empirical sciences—even as he interrogates the boundaries of philosophy in a way that would have been foreign to Husserl and Heidegger and that draws in its own manner, as we saw in the combined reading of Heidegger and Benveniste, on nonphilosophical disciplines. For Derrida, the concern with determining the bounds of philosophical inquiry goes hand in hand with coming to terms with the culturally specific provenance of the discourse called "philosophy." This connection, and the central place he accords to Husserl and Heidegger in making it, is most clearly articulated in Derrida's earliest study of the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, "Violence and Metaphysics."

"Violence and Metaphysics" is the very earliest systematic treatment of Levinas's philosophy by anyone[46]—it appeared in the *Revue de Méta-*

physique et de Morale only three years after Levinas published his first major work, *Totality and Infinity* (1961), and the year after he published his first collection of short pieces on Jewish topics, *Difficult Freedom* (1963).[47] But it also contains crucial statements regarding the philosophical legacy of Husserl and Heidegger and on the meaning of philosophy as a tradition. The essay opens with the question of what a contemporary philosophical community could be—contemporary in the sense of coming *after* the canonical pronouncements of philosophy's "death" by "Hegel or Marx, Nietzsche, or Heidegger." Derrida points out that questions or hypotheses concerning the "death" or "end" of philosophy themselves mark the boundary of philosophy in that they ask about a history or telos of philosophy and thereby position themselves outside this history or beyond this telos. And yet, "these should be the only questions today capable of founding the community . . . of what one still calls philosophers" (ED, 118/79). In these lines, we can hear once again the contrast between empirical history and the historical a priori that formed the backbone of the "Introduction" to "The Origin of Geometry." Only an understanding of history in terms of an exemplary "ideal" or "origin" can yield a philosophical community beyond philosophy's purported end.

What constitutes this "community of the question" according to Derrida is a common frame of reference deriving from Husserl's and Heidegger's philosophies—in particular from the ways they relate to "the tradition of philosophy." Derrida links Husserl's and Heidegger's philosophical legacy to an awareness of "the difference between the question in general and 'philosophy' as a determinate—finite or mortal—moment or mode of the question itself" (ED, 119/81). The task "ordered to us" by these two figures is described by Derrida in terms that appear as though lifted right out of Husserl's "The Origin of Geometry":

> If something is still to transpire beginning from the tradition by which philosophers always know themselves to be overtaken, then this will happen on condition that the tradition's origin is constantly summoned forth and that a rigorous effort is made to maintain the greatest possible closeness to it. Which is not to stammer and huddle lazily in the depths of childhood, but precisely the opposite. (ED, 119–20/81)

(Indeed, even the talk of philosophers as a "community" is reminiscent of Husserl's frequent evocation of an ongoing community or "open generational chain" of scientific researchers [UG, 367/159]. The same is true of the conception of the philosophers’ task as “ethical,”[48] which of course also serves, in Derrida’s signature style, to hint from the outset at the core theme of Levinas’s philosophy that will become his main concern in “Violence and Metaphysics.”[49]) There is thus a “common intention” to Husserl’s and Heidegger’s philosophies, in that both “appeal to tradition” in a manner that is “in no way traditional” and both “order us to [a] total repetition” of that tradition in the sense of the “summoning-forth” of its origin. We can understand the word “repetition” here, in the sense of “retrieval”/ *Wiederholung* conceived by Heidegger in *Being and Time*, to describe the “destruction” of the history of ontology, which is rooted in Dasein’s “historicity” (SZ, §6). Significantly, for Heidegger, repetition as transmission of a tradition is “neither a resurrection of what is ‘past’ nor a retroactive binding of the ‘present’ to what is ‘obsolete.’” Rather, history as repetition is crucially tied “to the authentic happening of existence which springs from the *future* of Dasein.” Tradition and repetition are thus “phenomena that are rooted in the future” (SZ §74, 385–86).[50]

Part of what Derrida is doing, then, in setting the stage for his discussion of Levinas, is to bring Husserl and Heidegger—the two philosophers who make up the primary frame of reference that he shares with Levinas—into alignment as thinkers who, in radically breaking with traditional philosophy and in seeking new beginnings, had a keen sense that such radical breaks are possible only in conjunction with a “retrieval” of the sort that Heidegger describes, or, to put it in Husserlian terms, with a continual reactivation of origins. Furthermore, as Derrida points out, both thinkers specify the retrieval of philosophy as something that occurs within a Greek-European horizon.

We have already linked Husserl’s remarks in this regard to Derrida’s attention to the “exemplary consciousness” in his “Introduction” to “The Origin of Geometry”; and Derrida also recalls Husserl’s vision of Europe in a footnote early in “Violence and Metaphysics.”[51] In discussing how this issue comes up in Heidegger, Derrida draws primarily on a passage from *What is Philosophy?* There, Heidegger proposes a new look at an old word, in order to use it “now no longer as a worn-out title,” but to “hear [it] from its origin,” as φιλοσοφια. In a move we will recognize as allied with his identification of “Being” as the mark of philosophical language, Heidegger notes: “Now the word ‘philosophy’ speaks Greek.” “*As* a Greek word,” he continues, it demarcates the “path” to be trodden in order to discover what philosophy is. The lines that follow clearly recall the ecstatic temporality of repetition/retrieval/*Wiederholung* that lies at the heart of "destruction" in section 6 of *Being and Time*:

> On the one hand, this [path] lies before us, for the word ["philosophy"] has long since been pre-spoken for us [or: has long been spoken ahead of us; *uns vorausgesprochen*]. On the other hand, it already lies behind us, for we have always already heard and spoken this word. Accordingly, the Greek word φιλοσοφια is a path [*Weg*] on which we are on our way [*unterwegs*]. But we only know this path very indistinctly, even though we possess and can lay out much historical information about Greek philosophy.[52]

In "Violence and Metaphysics," Derrida quotes the sentences that follow these, notably the statement that "The often heard expression 'Western-European philosophy' is in truth a tautology. Why? Because 'philosophy' is Greek in its essence." For Heidegger, it makes no sense to speak of *Griechentum*, the Greek, as an attribute that philosophy at some point took on; the two are in a sense co-originary: "Greek, in this instance, means that in origin the essence of philosophy is of such a kind that it first claimed the Greek, and only it [*zuerst das Griechentum, und nur dieses, in Anspruch genommen hat*], in order to unfold."[53]

In citing such passages, Derrida constitutes a community of philosophers—among Husserl, Heidegger, himself, and Levinas—who see themselves as standing in continuity and discontinuity with the Greek-European-philosophical tradition and whose radical questioning of philosophy consists also in thematizing their position vis-à-vis philosophical history. That Derrida begins his piece on Levinas by situating philosophy within this horizon is especially significant, because one of the central themes Derrida calls attention to in Levinas's work is its stance toward history.

In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas treats "history" simply as totalizing history, part and parcel of a totalizing philosophy of "the same" to which he opposes a thinking of "the other." What emerges is a simplified picture of a Hegelian view of history as a closed system:

> To say that the other can remain absolutely other, that he enters only into the relationship of conversation, is to say that history itself, an identification of the same, cannot claim to totalize the same and the other. The absolutely other, whose alterity is overcome in the philosophy of immanence on the allegedly com-

> mon plane of history, maintains his transcendence in the midst of history. The same is essentially identification within the diverse, or history, or system.[54]

The ethics of alterity is thus rigorously opposed to any notion of history:

> History as a relationship between men ignores a position of the I before the other in which the other remains transcendent with respect to me. Though of myself I am not exterior to history, I do find in the Other a point that is absolute with regard to history— . . . in speaking with him. . . . When man truly approaches the Other he is uprooted from history.[55]

We are thus a far cry from the "ethical meaning" assigned by Derrida at the outset of "Violence and Metaphysics" to the pursuits of the community of questioning philosophers with respect to the history of philosophy—an idea that follows, as I have suggested, Husserl's understanding of the responsibility of the generational chain of scholars. As Derrida points out, Levinas in *Totality and Infinity* leaves no room for a critical or transformative engagement with history. But in formulating his objection to Levinas's view, Derrida also draws on an important theme in Levinas's earlier essays that would seem to open up the possibility of a history beyond totality or system: Levinas's pairing of "time and the other"—in the book of that title and in *Existence and Existents*. In *Time and the Other*, for instance, in the section entitled "Time and the Other Person" ("Le Temps et autrui"), Levinas writes:

> Relationship with the future, the presence of the future in the present, seems all the same accomplished in the face-to-face with the Other. The situation of the face-to-face would be the very accomplishment of time . . . . The condition of time lies in the relationship between humans, or in history.[56]

This is how Derrida sums up Levinas's thought about "time and the other":

> It can be said only of the [wholly other, *le tout-autre*] that its phenomenon is a certain nonphenomenality, that its presence (*is*) a certain absence. . . . Such a formulation shows clearly: within this experience of the other . . . everything that Levinas will designate as "formal logic" finds itself contested in its root. This root would be not only the root of our language, but that of the whole of Western philosophy, and particularly of phenomenology and ontology. This naïveté would prevent them from thinking the other . . . . The consequence of this would be double. (a) In not thinking the other, they do not have time. Without time, they do not have history. The absolute alterity of each instant, without which there

> would be no time, cannot be produced—constituted—within the identity of the subject or of the existent. This alterity comes into time through the Other [*autrui*]. Bergson and Heidegger would have overlooked this . . . , and Husserl even more so. (ED, 135–36/91)

Like Heidegger, whose understanding of historicity is founded in his account of temporality, Derrida is sympathetic to a view of history that is linked to time. An ecstatic understanding of time would thus make for a nontotalizing understanding of history. This possibility—which seems to be envisioned in *Time and the Other* and in *Existence and Existents*, but which is decidedly absent from *Totality and Infinity*—is what Derrida wants to remind Levinas of in response to this later (and at the time of Derrida's writing, brand new) work:

> Levinas thus describes *history* as a blinding to the other, and as the laborious procession of the same. One may wonder whether history can be history, whether *there is history*, when negativity is enclosed within the circle of the same. . . . One wonders whether history itself does not begin with this relationship to the other which Levinas places beyond history. The schema of this question could govern the entire reading of *Totality and Infinity*. (ED, 139/94)

A central objective of "Violence and Metaphysics" is thus to trace a "displacement" of the concept of history between an attentiveness to history and facticity (versus the purported "eternity" of philosophical concepts) that one finds in Levinas's earlier works (especially *Theory of Intuition*) and the appeal in *Totality and Infinity* to something "beyond," or other than, history as totality (ED, 131/87–88, 140/94). To the latter conception, Derrida opposes one of history as "the history of the departures from totality, history as the very movement of transcendence . . . . History is not the totality transcended by eschatology, metaphysics, or speech"—all terms that Levinas aligns with alterity—"it is transcendence itself" (ED, 173/117).[57]

Such a model of history is what would enable the "community of philosophers" to place themselves in relationships of continuity and discontinuity with the philosophical tradition that we described above. Levinas's stance in this regard is also famously highlighted by Derrida in "Violence and Metaphysics." As for Husserl and Heidegger, it is crucial to Levinas's critiques of the philosophical tradition that he views them as being possible only in a primarily "Greek" philosophical language.[58] This is something that Derrida emphasizes about Levinas, and he does so particularly with reference to Levinas's

Jewish writings—the first collection of which, *Difficile liberté* (*Difficult Freedom*), had, as I mentioned, newly appeared at the time of Derrida's writing.

The essays collected in *Difficult Freedom* are, like most of Levinas's Jewish or, as he later called them, "confessional" writings,[59] occasional in nature: They were written as addresses in Jewish public forums or as contributions to community publications. Derrida does not explicitly remark on this, but it is thus all the more striking that Levinas should stress on just such occasions what one might expect him to evoke in a general academic sphere—what he called the universal sphere of the "university"—that Jewish traditions must be read against the background of Greek *logos* and philosophy.[60]

Although for Levinas the question of the "outside" of a mainstream "Greek" philosophical tradition is made more acute than it was for Husserl and for Heidegger by his ongoing engagement with, and regular evocation of, biblical and Talmudic texts—texts that he also identifies as a "source of inspiration" for his ethical thought[61]—Derrida rightly points out that "the messianic eschatology from which Levinas draws inspiration . . . is developed in its discourse neither as a Jewish theology, nor as a Jewish mysticism[62] . . . ; neither as a dogmatics, nor as *a* religion, nor even as *a* morality" and that "in the last analysis it never bases its authority on Hebraic theses or texts" (ED, 123/83). In stressing that the source from which Levinas "draws inspiration" is not "developed as *a* religion," Derrida reminds us that Levinas's philosophy is developed out of a *double* exemplarity: that of Jewish learning as well as that of Greek philosophy. In speaking of "Hebraism and Hellenism" as "two origins and two historical speeches" that are both "explicated" and "reciprocally exceeded [*débordé*]" by Levinas (ED, 124/84),[63] Derrida calls attention to the circumstance, already pointed out by Heidegger, that the particularity of *Griechentum* is accessed by way of the universal-philosophical claims that it originates (in Husserl's sense of "origin") and that a similar structure of exemplarity is what is recognized by Levinas in the Judaic. It is in light of this structure of exemplarity that the famous remarks on the Greek and the Jewish at the conclusion of "Violence and Metaphysics" ought to be read:

> Are we Jews? Are we Greeks? We live in the difference between the Jew and the Greek, which is perhaps the unity of what is called history. (ED 227/153)

For the purposes of our overall project, it is noteworthy that the references at the end of "Violence and Metaphysics" to Levinas's negotiation of the Hebraic and the Hellenic also involve, in an indirect way, the philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig. For one of the three texts from the collection *Difficult Freedom* from which Derrida cites there is Levinas's first essay on Rosenzweig, "'Between Two Worlds': The Way of Franz Rosenzweig" (originally an address to the 1959 Colloque d'Intellectuels Juifs de Langue Française, the forum which later became the setting of most of Levinas's public "Talmudic readings"). Among the passages Derrida points out in which Levinas articulates what I have called the double exemplarity of the Judaic and the Greek, Derrida includes Levinas's appreciation of Rosenzweig as the thinker who rejected a view of Judaism—as well as of Christianity—in terms of religion and in the sense of a particularism. Levinas stresses that Rosenzweig's notion of Judaism is "posed from the outset as emerging, in the economy of being, at the very same level of that economy at which philosophical thought emerges."[64]

What we see, then, in "Violence and Metaphysics," is an exposition by Derrida of his situation as part of a "community of philosophers" in a certain moment in the history of philosophy. This exposition is undertaken by means of the same sort of exemplary conception of the "Greek" and the "European" that emerged from and informed his "Introduction" to Husserl's "The Origin of Geometry," but it is here opened up to include an "other" of philosophy, another exemplary other, tentatively named (via references to Levinas and, indirectly, to Rosenzweig) the Judaic.[65]

*

Let me conclude with a word about the implications of what I have presented for the interpretation of Derrida's oeuvre. Some readers of the "Introduction" to "The Origin of Geometry" have suggested that it represents a stage in Derrida's thought at which he was not yet critical of history as a "metaphysical" category.[66] About this supposed turn away from history in Derrida's thought we should exercise the same caution that he counsels us to use with respect to Husserl's supposed turn toward history. Thus, Derrida's warning, in a 1972 interview, against "the *metaphysical* concept of history"[67] might appear to be "in flagrant contradiction" with his "Introduction" "if the levels of explicitation and the meanings of the word 'history' [are not] clearly distinguished" (Intro., 26/43).[68] Indeed, we find in the "Introduction" kernels of a critique of Husserl's view that history is based in a Living Present, a critique that becomes crucial for Derrida's later exposition of a phonocentric self-presence. But even a superficial reading of *Of Grammatology*, for example, reveals the centrality of notions such as origin[69] and crisis (G, 14/4, 15–17/6–8, 42–43/27, 60/40, 90/61, 109–10/74), of the reduction of the factical, of operativity and de-sedimentation (G, 21/10), and of the exemplarity of writing (G, 7/lxxxix, 110/75)—notions, in other words, that Derrida can use because he has taken seriously the essence of Husserl's understanding of history. In this sense, "the continuity and the coherence of [Derrida's] propositions" on history that, as I hope to have shown, emerge from his early works, appear as "remarkable" as the continuity of Husserl's development appeared to him.

3

Thematizations of Language

BETWEEN TRANSLATABILITY AND SINGULARITY

The preceding chapter began by looking at Derrida's "Introduction" to Husserl's "Origin of Geometry" as a consideration of questions of historical knowledge and experience. I sought to show how Derrida's treatment there of Husserl's account of history in the "Origin" is significantly guided by a concern with understanding universality and particularity. As I have indicated, to focus in this way on Derrida's discussion of history in the "Introduction" is, in a sense, to depart from how his early texts have generally been read. For one thing, as I argued, it is clear that Derrida's interest in history was never limited to dismissing it as a "metaphysical" category: In the "Introduction," Derrida takes up Husserl's project of understanding "history in an uncommon sense."

If readers of Derrida have not especially focused attention on his treatment of history in the "Introduction" (or in any other work), this is doubtless because it is also in the "Introduction" that we find Derrida's first attempt—here again taking off from Husserl's own remarks—to ask questions about the nature of language and of writing.[1] In his discussion of the "ideal objectivity" of such "spiritual-cultural" "products" as geometry, Husserl is led to reflect on the role of language in general and of writing in particular in guaranteeing that objectivity and its identity over time (UG, 368ff./160ff.). Not only is Derrida's close attention to this aspect of "The Origin of Geometry" significant given that questions of language and writing would orient almost all of his own major works through about 1973—and certainly that part of his thought with which he later became most readily identified—but his discussion of language and writing in the "Introduction" raises numerous questions that are given more sustained treatments in subsequent works. Indeed, the extent to which many parenthetical remarks and asides in the "Introduction"—not only on language and writing—seem to "announce" Derrida's ongoing preoccupations for years afterwards is often startling. It is therefore no wonder that readers of the "Introduction" have tended to focus on the treatment of language and writing in sections 5, 6, and 7 and to trace the continuities between the issues raised there and the ways they are pursued in subsequent works such as *Voice and Phenomenon*,[2] *Of Grammatology*, and the essays collected in *Writing and Difference* and *Margins of Philosophy*.

In this chapter, I do not wish to replicate such readers' efforts, but rather to look at how Derrida, responding to Husserl's reflections on language and history in "The Origin of Geometry," himself launches a new kind of inquiry into language. This new kind of asking about language is philosophical. As a "transcendental" inquiry, it avoids the pitfalls of linguistic empiricism that was the object of Derrida's critical reading of Benveniste, discussed in the last chapter. At the same time, it is clear that thematizing language will for Derrida always also involve questions about history and culture—about historico-cultural specificity and its challenge to the project of philosophical questioning. Thus, alongside what I will identify as the main line of the argument about language in the "Introduction," we also find the beginning of an exploration of what, in language, "resists" thematization—which will be represented in this chapter by examinations of the proper name and of translation. Such an exploration establishes the framework for Derrida's subsequent work, in the 1970s and 1980s, on linguistic phenomena, which also informs the work on "philosophical nationality" that I treat in the following two chapters.

The Ideality of Language

Husserl, in his fragment on "The Origin of Geometry," presents some observations on the nature of language in the course of his reflections on the historical transmission of "ideal" entities such as geometry; it is thus in the context of an account of history that the question of language comes up both for Husserl and for Derrida in his discussion of "The Origin of Geometry."

Derrida's commentary in the "Introduction" proceeds successively through the text of Husserl's fragment. It is in section 5 that Derrida encounters the question that leads Husserl to thematize language: Having established the mechanism by which "tradition" is possible (that is, having detailed how geometry is constituted by means of a continual retrospective questioning [*Rückfrage*]), Husserl is led to ask what guarantees the *objectivity* of the geometry that has been thus constituted—its availability to everyone and for all time (UG, 367 lines 40ff./160). The answer, arrived at through a succession of reflections on the ideal objectivity of geometric entities, is: "by means of language" (UG, 369 line 5/162). Language, indeed, shares with geometry, and with all other cultural and scientific artifacts, the property of being made up of "ideal objects." Such objects have an identity that is indifferent to their articulations in given languages or cultural contexts. But Husserl begins his discussion of language by differentiating the ideal objectivity of linguistic entities from that of geometric entities, before affirming that language nevertheless has a role in the constitution of geometric objectivity—that such objectivity is possible, in fact, "by means of language" (UG, 368–69/161–62).

Derrida here employs the same rhetorical maneuver with respect to language as he did in sections 3 and 8 (discussed in the preceding chapter) to situate what "The Origin of Geometry" accomplishes with respect to history. He calls attention to a supposed tension in the text—and in Husserlian phenomenology—between what appear to be two accounts of language, in order subsequently to show that Husserl's treatment of language is perfectly consistent, and that there is an essential continuity in his views from the *Logical Investigations* to the late works.[3]

However, the passages in which Husserl is sorting out different kinds of ideality (that of language and that of geometry) are also an occasion for posing questions about language in a way that Husserl does not himself explicitly pose. Derrida analyzes these passages as typifying a tendency of Husserlian phenomenology to downplay the importance of language.

Phenomenology as Reduction of Language, or Language as a Neutralization of Facticity

To ask about the role of language in Husserlian phenomenology is to ask what becomes of language in the reduction. If language is reduced along with other factical contingencies in order to arrive at the eidos of a given thing, does this do justice to the fact of language, to linguisticity? (This question is thus analogous to the inquiry into historicity that I laid out earlier.) As we saw in Derrida's reading of Benveniste, philosophy's potential to make claims across cultural specificities is in question, depending on how one conceives of the role of language in producing objective meaning. In particular, insofar as Husserl regards words as ideal objects, irreducible to any "empirical, phonetic or graphic materializations," words can be said to have the power to "neutralize": The fact that "it is always the *same* word which is intended and recognized by way of all possible linguistic gestures" presupposes a "spontaneous neutralization of the factical existence of the speaking subject" uttering that word, of the word itself in its materiality, and of the thing it refers to (Intro., 58/67). Derrida asks whether to understand language this way means to see it as a kind of immediate phenomenological reduction in itself,[4] or whether it is instead subject to a further reduction, besides the classic phenomenological reduction (just as in *Ideas I* Husserl envisions a reduction of formal logic) (Intro., 58–59/67–68, and 59n2/68n65).

Derrida pursues both of these possibilities in the "Introduction," and both lines of questioning are important for my own discussion. In what follows, I will first lay out the main line of his argument: the view that language is indeed subject to reduction, a kind of reduction that Husserl failed to envisage. This argument opens up the question I referred to at the beginning of this chapter: a philosophical inquiry into language, or linguisticity, that avoids empiricism or linguisticism, but that is necessary for securing a sense of universality that is co-constituted by cultural particularity. Following this discussion, I will look at Derrida's exploration of the other possibility—that language resists reduction—and show how this other possibility is explored by him in later works on the proper name and on translation.

Phenomenology's Non-Thematization of Language

In what I am calling the main line of his argument, Derrida favors an interpretation of Husserl according to which a reduction of language remains unaccomplished, but necessary, in his phenomenology. Husserl, Derrida notes, tends to conflate questions of epistemology with questions of language. His failure to consider language as a "specific problem" extends throughout his works and up to the one under consideration, the fragment on "The Origin of Geometry":

> Despite the remarkable analyses which are devoted to it, despite the constant interest that is paid to it (from the *Logical Investigations* to the *Origin*), the specific problem of language—its origin and its usage in a transcendental phenomenology—has always been excluded or deferred. (Intro., 59n2/68n65)

Excursus: Eugen Fink's Thematizing of "Operative Concepts"

Here, it will be helpful to recall that Derrida attributes the original insight that Husserlian phenomenology had been generally blind to language to Eugen Fink (Intro., 60n1/69n66). Fink articulated this insight in his famous 1957 article (here called "admirable" by Derrida), which he also delivered as a lecture at the 1957 Husserl colloquium in Royaumont, "Operative Concepts in Husserl's Phenomenology."[5] I want to insist on this article's contribution, and on its importance for Derrida's work, in two respects:

1. Husserl's lack of attention to language. As Derrida notes in the "Introduction," Fink points out that "Husserl did not pose for himself the problem of a 'transcendental language.'" Fink, who had edited the first published version of "The Origin of Geometry" in 1939, brings up this problem in terms that are similar to how it comes up there: Husserl, we recall, comes upon the problem of language because he views language as founding objectivity—via intersubjectivity. Fink brings it up as the mode in which we relate to fellow human beings, as opposed to how we relate to inanimate objects:

> Obviously the constitution of things is somehow different from the constitution of fellow subjects. Although Husserl performs highly interesting and subtle analyses here to separate the self-consciousness of transcendental intersubjectivity from the universal consciousness of objects related to things, the concept of constitution nevertheless does not attain sufficient clarity. This perhaps has its deeper reason in the fact that Husserl had not yet posed to himself the problem of a "transcendental language."[6]

2. Operative concepts. But this observation appears in Fink's article as only one special instance of a larger observation about the workings of phenomenology. Fink differentiates here between what he calls "thematic" and "operative" concepts: If thematic concepts are those that arise when a philosopher *thematizes* a certain problem, then operative concepts are those with which he or she *operates* in the process of thematization, "intellectual schemes" which we unknowingly use in order to form thematic concepts.[7] Operative concepts are "ideas of thought" (*Denkvorstellungen*) "*through* which [we] think toward the basic concepts which are the themes that essentially concern [us]." Such operative or "medial" "lines of thought" are described by Fink as constituting the "shadow" of the philosophy that makes use of them. "The clarifying power of a thought is nourished by that which remains in the shadow of [that] thought [*was im Denk-Schatten verbleibt*]."[8] For this reason, Fink argues, we cannot afford to be complacent about what is operative in our thematizing thought, even if it remains outside our direct view:

> But to say something is put in the operative "shadow" does not mean that it would be *out of the way* as it were, outside our interest. Rather, it is the *interest itself.* It is not "in the theme," because it is through it that we relate to the theme. It is the unseen, because it is the *medium of seeing.*[9]

Fink gives a series of examples of operative concepts in philosophy, and then considers the role of operative concepts in phenomenology: whether, "despite the comprehensive discussion of [the] central concepts [of "epochē" and "reduction"] and despite the heightened methodological self-consciousness of Husserlian phenomenology, *operative shadows* remain."[10] It is in this connection (by way of a discussion of "constitution") that Fink finds that language presents just such a case:

> The phenomenologist who carries out the reduction puts himself, in thinking, at a distance from the "natural attitude"—not so as to leave it behind, but in order to understand it as a sense formation of the sense-forming transcendental life. But in doing so, strictly speaking, he steps *outside of the situation in which* human speech is housed [*behaust*] as the naming of things, the call to the gods, the conversation with fellow men. Can he still be master of the logos in the same sense as before? . . . Here too, an unilluminated shadow remains in Husserl's thought.[11]

Beyond Derrida's indebtedness to Fink on the topic of language in Husserl's thought, the general idea of the thematic-operative relation finds a great resonance in Derrida's discussions of Husserl in the "Introduction"[12] as well as in the closely related "'Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology"[13] and in *Voice and Phenomenon*.[14]

Jean-Claude Höfliger and Jean-Pierre Schobinger, among others, have rightly pointed to Fink's article as a "key text" for understanding the interpretative approach developed by Derrida in the "Introduction" and beyond.[15] In connection with the thematic-operative distinction, Derrida in the "Introduction" identifies "a need for a certain renewed and rigorous philological 'etymological' thematic, which would precede the discourse of phenomenology" and which would allow one to ask, for example, about the

> non-thematic and dogmatically received meaning of the word "history" or of the word "origin"—a sense which, as the common focus [*foyer*] of these significations, permits us to distinguish between the "history" of facts and intentional "history," between "origin" in the ordinary sense and phenomenological "origin,"

—that is, which permits us to make the kinds of distinctions that are central to Husserl's "Origin of Geometry" (Intro., 60n1/69n66).

Note that it is crucial to this mobilization of the notion of the operative for a practice of reading that it does not in any way amount to a criticism of an author's or a text's shortcomings. As Fink writes,

> To recognize the unresolvedness of these problems is not to make an inappropriate criticism of Husserl . . . . The presence of a shadow [*Verschattung*] is an essential feature of finite philosophizing. The more originary the force which ventures to open a clearing [*die Kraft, die eine Lichtung wagt*], the deeper are the shadows in its fundamental ideas.[16]

This indeed is a principle that one finds enacted throughout Derrida's writings. Derrida's philosophizing takes place by way of readings of texts chosen out of an interest in, or appreciation for, what they venture to clarify, even when those readings are also critical. What Derrida then undertakes might well be described as an investigation into the "shadows" that are "operative" in, and thus make possible, a given thought.

A "Second Reflection" on Language

Having named the necessity of a "philological-etymological" thematic that must precede phenomenological discourse, Derrida considers further what the absence of a thematization of language means for phenomenology. But the scope of his observations far exceeds the question of the absence of language from Husserl's phenomenology. "It is rather significant," he writes, "that every critical enterprise, juridical or transcendental, makes itself vulnerable by virtue of the irreducible facticity and the natural naiveté of its language." This vulnerability is something of which we can make ourselves aware by means of a "*second* reflection" on "the fact of language," which is at the same time "oriented" toward questions of culture and history.

As he does throughout this book, Derrida is concerned to point out that this "second reflection" on language would not be empiricist. Rather, it would be "a return to facticity as the *droit du droit*" (translated by Leavey as "the de jure character of the de jure itself"), as what authorizes the transcription of (for example) a juridical thought. In this sense, it would be an inquiry into a kind of linguistic-transcendental ground of thought. Derrida speaks here of a "reduction of reduction" that would "open the way to an infinite discursivity" (Intro., 61n/69–70n66).

The non-empirical character of this inquiry is made clear by means of a parallel between the scenario of Husserl's students reproaching him for having forgotten language and a similar sort of scenario that took place among readers of Kant. It is the "disciple," according to this scenario, who is in a position to demand such a "return of a thought to itself"—even though this thought, as in the case of both Husserl and Kant, was itself defined as a project of "turning back toward its own conditions." The particular example Derrida cites is that of Herder's reproach to Kant that he failed "to take into consideration the intrinsic necessity of language and its immanence in the most a priori act of thought." (This scenario, Derrida notes, is "only one of the numerous analogies which could be taken up between the different morrows/aftermaths [*lendemains*] of Kantian and Husserlian transcendental idealisms.") The reference here is to Herder's *Metakritik* of Kant's First Critique,[17] in which Herder argues that reason stands in an intimate relationship with language. For instance, where Kant sought to account for notions such as causality as a priori concepts of understanding, Herder wants to locate them in relation to the language in which they are articulated; for Herder, they become linguistic concepts. According to this view, the shape of reason ultimately depends on the linguistic, historical, and cultural context in which it arises.[18]

As I have shown in my exposition of Derrida's responses to relativism in the preceding chapter, it is clear that Derrida would follow Husserl in rejecting the linguistic or historical relativism that guides Herder's reflections. Nevertheless, he finds the idea that "rootedness in cultural experience and history" might challenge the aprioricity of synthetic judgments important enough to consider it as a way to raise the question of whether there might be an "irreducible proximity of language to originary thought." That Derrida takes such a line of questioning to be far-reaching and potentially open-ended is clear from the remark with which he concludes his reference to

Herder: "Is this immediacy [of thought to language] the nearness of thought to itself? It would be necessary to show why that cannot be *decided*" (Intro., 61n/70n66).

Language's "Dangerous Resistance"

This last remark is one indication among many in section 5 of the "Introduction" that to thematize language—indeed, to thematize the operative in general—is not envisioned by Derrida as a straightforward possibility. This brings us to what I announced as a second strand of argument alongside the main proposal for a thematization or reduction of language, which arises from the insight that something in language would also resist or exceed such a project, and that a full "thematization" of language would therefore entail more than just a determination of its role in thought (as was envisioned by Benveniste in his study of Aristotle's categories, for example [discussed in the preceding chapter]; or as is envisioned by Husserl for formal logic). This second strand of argument announces, I would suggest, a program of research into the nature of language that orients much of Derrida's work in the 1970s and 1980s, including the "philosophical nationality" project that is the focal point of my presentation of Derrida in this book. Besides the idea, encountered in relation to Herder, that there is a profound but indeterminate proximity between language and (the most a priori) thought—that word and concept are in some sense co-originary—and that therefore concepts are not indifferent to their linguistically and culturally specific articulations, two other aspects that Husserlian phenomenology does not thematize, and to which Derrida wants to be attentive, are:

1. The idea (associated with a particular reading of Hegel) that language, apart from its function as a means of communication, also has a "neutralizing" power. This idea goes along with a special interest in the function of the *proper name*, based on the idea that names (and words, insofar as they can be understood on the model of naming) "annihilate" the facticity of what they designate; they are a form of mastery over objects.
2. The idea (suggested by contrasting the Husserlian project with the writing of James Joyce) that language can be understood as functioning between the limit-cases of absolute equivocity and

absolute univocity of expression, between untranslatability and translatability. Derrida pursues this line of thinking in various works on the nature of *translation*.

Naming as Neutralization of Facticity

In section 6, Derrida makes his demonstration that Husserl's own treatments of language accomplish just the kind of reduction that he has in mind, one that opens toward a "transcendental language" (Intro., 70–71/76–77). But the preceding account, in section 5 (esp. 58–59/67–68), of why and how Husserl tended to neglect the importance of language for phenomenology suggests that the project of thematizing language might not fully resolve language's "dangerous resistance" to thematization or reduction (Intro., 60/68).

Let us recall Husserl's view, cited by Derrida, of words as ideal objects that have the power to "neutralize" the factical, such that "it is always the *same* word" that is conveyed in each specific utterance (Intro., 58/67). What does it mean for the contingencies of the subject of the utterance, of the material sign being used, and of the material referent to be thus "neutralized"? In a footnote, Derrida explores this question as one that was "dear to" Mallarmé and Valéry and as having been developed by Hegel. The model of language he considers here is one in which naming or designation is the most fundamental operation and in which language—as an operation of naming things—is invested with an extraordinary and even dangerous force. By referring to Mallarmé and Valéry, Derrida is also recalling literary language as the arena in which the idea of an "immediate" relation between words and factical objects is explored, in which this power of language is exercised. Derrida's references to Hegel here are secondhand citations: one is to Jean Hyppolite's *Logic and Existence*; the other is to Maurice Blanchot's essay "Literature and the Right to Death," which describes literary language and language in general in terms of the power to name, master, and destroy. Derrida takes over from this Blanchot essay the following quote from Hegel:

> Adam's first act, which made him master of the animals, was to give them names, that is, he annihilated them in their existence (as existing creatures).[19]

It is worth citing more of the surrounding text by Blanchot, in order to get a sense of the kind of theory of language that Derrida is beginning to pay attention to here:

> Language is reassuring and disquieting at the same time. When we speak, we gain control over things with satisfying ease. . . . We cannot do anything with an object that has no name. Primitive man knows that the possession of words gives him mastery over things, but for him the relationship between words and the world is so close that the manipulation of language is as difficult and as fraught with peril as contact with living beings: the name has not emerged from the thing, it is the inside of the thing which has been dangerously brought out into the open and yet it is still the hidden depths of the thing; the thing has therefore not yet been named. The more closely man becomes attached to a civilization, the more he can manipulate words with innocence and composure. . . .
>
> I say, "This woman." Hölderlin, Mallarmé, and all poets whose theme is the essence of poetry have felt that the act of naming is disquieting and marvelous. A word may give me its meaning, but first it suppresses it. For me to be able to say, "This woman," I must somehow take her flesh-and-blood reality away from her, cause her to be absent, annihilate her. The word gives me the being, but it gives it to me deprived of being. The word is the absence of that being, its nothingness, what is left of it when it has lost being—the very fact that it does not exist.[20]

Equivocity and Univocity

That a certain singularity is "annihilated" in the act of naming, and, by extension, in the application of "the same" word or linguistic ideality across factical contingencies, is explored by Derrida in greater detail as part of his discussion in section 7 of Husserl's treatment of the equivocity and univocity of linguistic expressions.[21] For Husserl, it is crucial to "detach the ideal essence of meanings from their psychological and grammatical connections" in order to stake out a realm of "ideal meanings" that is the domain of pure logic.[22] So too for the transmission of geometry: The scientist, as well as the transgenerational scientific community, has a responsibility to confront the "danger" posed by the "seduction of language," by the "free play of associative [meaning-]formations":

> It is easy to see that even in [ordinary] human life, . . . the originally intuitive life which creates its originally self-evident structures through activities on the basis of sense-experience very quickly and in increasing measure falls victim to the *seduction of language*. In ever greater segments, this life lapses into a kind of talking and reading that is dominated purely by association; after which it is often enough disappointed by subsequent experience as regards the validities it has arrived at in this way.

The scientist's responsibility consists of "securing the results which are to be univocally expressed by means of the most painstaking coinage of the relevant words, propositions, and complexes of propositions" (UG, 372/165).

Derrida stresses that the equivocity of linguistic expression that Husserl proposes in this way to "reduce" belongs to the same historico-cultural sphere whose reduction or "neutralization" was at issue earlier in the text. But, consistently with his reading of the "Origin" as an affirmation of "history in an uncommon sense," Derrida points out that this "neutralization" of history is at the same time a "profound fidelity to the pure meaning of historicity" (Intro., 102–3/101). If the concern to construct and secure a language of univocal expressions can on the one hand be construed as a de-historicization of meaning, it is only such a striving toward univocity that makes the transmission of meaning across time possible—that "assures the exactitude of translation and the purity of tradition"—and that in this sense makes history itself possible (Intro., 103/101–2). Here again, we are dealing with "the reduction of empirical history in favor of a pure history" (Intro., 104/102).

In this connection, Derrida is led to offer an alternative reflection on the role of equivocity and univocity in producing linguistic meaning. For a language to work, it can be made up neither exclusively of absolutely univocal expressions—for then it would be condemned to the "indigence of indefinite iteration"—nor exclusively of equivocal expressions, which would render communication impossible. Having recalled the necessity of a certain measure of equivocity for language to be able to develop, change, and "remember," Derrida points to the example of James Joyce's prose as representing the attempt to maximize equivocity in language. Taken to its limit, such a Joycean language would aim to "equalize the greatest possible synchrony with the greatest potential for buried, accumulated and interwoven intentions within each linguistic atom, each vocable, each word, each simple proposition, in all worldly cultures and their most ingenious forms." That is, such a language would be a repository in which the traces of meanings and connotations of expressions across time and across cultures and particular languages would be legible. In this sense, it "would make appear the structural unity of all empirical culture in the generalized equivocation of a writing that . . . circulates throughout all languages at once" because it would no longer amount to "translating one language into another on the basis of their common cores of sense." Since it is the univocity or ideality of meaning that makes translation possible, absolute equivocity would amount to the erasure of linguistic and cultural difference. In this sense, an "absolutely equivocal" writing "settles itself *within* the *laby-*

rinthian field of culture 'bound' by its own equivocations," rather than "reducing" such equivocations as Husserl proposes (Intro., 104–5/102).

Of course, even Joyce's text, like any text, has to retain a certain univocity in order to be intelligible (Intro., 105/103). But Derrida proposes the "limit-cases" of absolute equivocity and absolute univocity—the ideal that Husserl envisages the scientific community to be striving toward—as a way of countering Husserl's understanding of language: Rather than conceive of linguistic meaning as being more or less oriented toward univocity as Husserl does, Derrida points out that language comprises elements of both equivocity and univocity. It is not only an ideal closed system of logical notation, but must also be a "passive" repository of past meanings, as well as being permeable to transformations of meaning—including those that call into question the boundaries of a given empirical language or culture.

*

What I have sought to draw out from the sections of the "Introduction" devoted to language is that they advance two understandings of language that are in tension with one another, but that are also both indispensable to thinking and advancing philosophical universality in a way that preserves cultural particularity: First, there is the notion that language can be grasped by means of a reduction of the factical, that it is primarily a means of universal communication that consists of ideal meanings that are completely translatable. Second, we have in Derrida's "Introduction" to "The Origin of Geometry" the beginnings of a different thematization of language in the form of reminders that there may be linguistic "functions" (or quasi-functions) that exceed the realm of communication and instrumentalization: One such "function" is that of *naming*, understood as a kind of mastery over a particular object, to the point of its annihilation. Another is the proliferation of "equivocity": the idea that language—even in its communicative function—also depends on the capacity of expressions to be associated with an endless number of meanings and on the circumstance that linguistic meaning is tied to a multiplicity of historical and cultural spheres. This capacity for associative meaning is what both makes possible and hinders *translation* across languages and linguistic epochs.[23] In what follows, I want to look at each of these functions—naming and translation—in turn as they are treated by Derrida in some subsequent works, in order to show

how Derrida's understanding of the proper name and of translation enters and helps shape his work on the idea of "philosophical nationality."

The Singularity of the Proper Name

Derrida's first explicit consideration of proper names occurs in part 2 of *Of Grammatology*, at the very beginning of his discussion of Rousseau and Lévi-Strauss. Part 1 of the book (which originated as two lengthy book review essays published in the journal *Critique* in December 1966–January 1967) presents Derrida's well-known project of analyzing and confronting an "epoch" of Western thought characterized by "phonocentrism," "logocentrism," "ethnocentrism," and a "metaphysics of presence." One of the core claims of this analysis is that "the epoch of the logos"—which dominates our thinking to the present day, but whose "end" Derrida also in some sense wants to herald or conjure (G, 13–14/4–5)—comprises a view of systems of writing as being secondary to, and derivative of, spoken language (see for example, G, 11–12/3–4, 24/12–13). Part 2 extends the analysis of this "epoch" by reframing it as the "epoch of Rousseau." Rousseau's *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, along with Claude Lévi-Strauss's ethnographic studies, are here read as representing the West's tendency to view the presence of a system of writing in a given culture as a mark of its linguistic sophistication.

Derrida is interested in Rousseau because "within [the] age of metaphysics, between Descartes and Hegel, Rousseau is undoubtedly the only one or the first one to make a theme and a system of the reduction of writing that was profoundly implied by the entire epoch" (G, 147/98). Lévi-Strauss is of interest because he represents a "dominant discourse" "in Western thought—and especially in France" ("let us call it 'structuralism,'" Derrida adds) at the time Derrida is writing and because Derrida finds in his writings some important affinities with Rousseau (G, 148/99). Most importantly, Lévi-Strauss's ethnographic interpretations allow Derrida to ask whether there is an ethnocentrism that might enter even into a discourse—that of cultural anthropology—that, by its very definition, strives to produce value-neutral descriptions of foreign (and especially, by virtue of the tradition of ethnography, non-European) cultures. It is in his reading of Lévi-Strauss that Derrida can present his view that the tendency to valorize speech over writing goes along with a European ethnocentrism. Lévi-Strauss's structural anthropology, Derrida contends, shares, especially by virtue of its "fascination" with structural linguistics,[24] in the Western tendency to "exclude" or "abase" writing (G, 151/102). For Derrida this tendency goes hand in hand with a sort of "abasement" of those peoples who do not write.

But Derrida does not want to invert the speech-writing hierarchy in order to claim that a solely spoken language should be viewed as being equal in sophistication to a written one. Rather, he shows that those features that have traditionally been associated with writing (the idea that writing is a more mediated, and thus less faithful, vehicle of meaning than speech) apply equally to spoken language, and that, indeed, the concept of "writing" can be generalized to apply to what is essentially linguistic about all language; the generalized name Derrida comes up with for writing as the originary ground of language as such is "arche-writing."[25]

It is in this context that Derrida comes upon the question of proper names. Proper names are an instance of univocity in that they pick out an object uniquely. But Derrida shows through a reading of Lévi-Strauss's account of what the latter calls the "battle of the proper names" that proper names, like absolute univocity, are a limit-case of language's possibilities.

Derrida's reading is framed by a remark he cites from Rousseau's *Essay*. The remark is from chapter 6, "On Script": Rousseau is considering what he regards as the drawbacks of writing: writing may be exact, but it lacks "expressiveness"; it forces one to be conventional in choosing expressions. Indeed, the vitality of language relies on its being spoken. A possible remedy for the defects of writing lies in punctuation. In fact, there is a need, Rousseau writes, for punctuation marks beyond those already in existence, and in particular for a "vocative mark" that would indicate whether I am addressing someone or merely mentioning his or her name.[26]

Rousseau's idea is paired by Derrida with Lévi-Strauss's observation about the language of the Nambikwara Indians: that "they are not allowed to use proper names." Lévi-Strauss and his companions had to make do with nicknames they invented for the purposes of identifying individuals. The fact that the Nambikwara have a prohibition against using proper names is driven home by a game Lévi-Strauss plays with a group of children, in which individual children hit upon the tactic of revealing other children's names to the anthropologist as a means of attacking each other. But what both Lévi-Strauss's description and Rousseau's remark illustrate according to Derrida is not that the possibility of (unequivocally) addressing someone by his or her name is somehow lacking in writing as Rousseau understands it, or in the

Nambikwara language. Derrida, instead, is led to the realization that naming, in what he calls the "absolute" sense—"recognizing in a language the other as pure other" (G, 162/110)—is not possible. Language is above all conceptual language; it consists of classifying and subordinating appellations to each other. Derrida associates such language with an originary "violence" that obliterates singularity and that is the condition of communicative language and thus of culture.

The singularity of the absolute proper name, which Derrida calls an "absolute vocative," is thus akin to arche-writing and the (arche-)trace: it is what makes language, the language of generalization and concepts, possible in being obliterated. This is what leads Derrida to disagree with Lévi-Strauss about the Nambikwara: What is revealed in the anthropologist's game with the children was not (absolutely) proper names. Instead,

> What the interdict is aimed at is the uttering of what *functions* as proper name. And this function is *consciousness* itself. . . . The lifting of the interdict, the great game of denunciation and the great exhibition of the "proper" . . . consists not in revealing proper names, but in tearing the veil that hides a classification and a belonging [*appartenance*], the inscription within a system of linguistico-social differences. (G, 163–64/111)

Thus, the same thing applies to the question of the absence of names as to Lévi-Strauss's observation that the Nambikwara do not write: "How can one deny," Derrida writes, "the practice of writing in general to a society capable of obliterating the proper, that is to say a violent society? For writing, obliteration of the proper classed in the play of difference, is the originary violence itself." (Derrida also calls this violence the "violence of arche-writing, the violence of difference, of classification, and of the system of appellations.") This is why the equivocation Rousseau discerned in writing someone's name "cannot be effaced." It belongs to the nature of language—as communicative, conceptual language—to fail to "recognize the other as pure," that is, singular, "other." (We may be reminded here of Blanchot's theory of naming as a kind of annihilation, referenced by Derrida in the "Introduction," as well as of the theory Derrida articulates there of language as the interplay of univocity/singularity and equivocity.) Language thus entails "the death of absolutely proper appellation," "the death of the pure idiom reserved for the unique" (G, 162/110).

Several years after writing *Of Grammatology*, Derrida revisited the question of proper names on the occasion of a "Roundtable on Translation" held at the University of Montreal. In that discussion, he envisioned a scenario that is reminiscent of the one described by Lévi-Strauss. Let us imagine, he proposes, someone with a secret or unconscious proper name.[27] Is it possible for that which is most proper to a self, "the unconscious proper name, that to which the other addresses him/herself in us, that which responds in us," to be secret? Such a "name" need not be imagined, Derrida proposes, as a name or even as something linguistic. Something absolutely proper, an "absolute idiom" could be

> on the order of a gesture, a physical association, a scene of some sort, a taste, a smell. And it is to this appeal that I would essentially respond, this call that would command me absolutely.

Derrida puts this forward as a "difficult hypothesis," since it is hard to imagine such a secret "name" or scent or other thing that "calls" or "commands" me. But beyond its difficulty, Derrida also says that he has "reservations" about it:

> I think it's necessary to formulate [such a hypothesis], but one must also be aware that, however daring it might be, it nevertheless presumes the possibility of some absolute properness, an absolute idiom.

Yet we know that a proper name—what Derrida wants to call, in general terms, an "idiom effect or an effect of absolute properness"—is only intelligible against the background of non-proper names: common nouns, language insofar as it is used to classify things rather than pick something out in a singular way. Thus "the secret proper name is right away inscribed—structurally and a priori—in a network where it is contaminated by common names." This makes a "secret proper name" an impossibility, "at least in a pure state." It would exist only as "effects," only as a paradox: For if "the secret mark could be what it is only in a relation of differentiation and thus also of contamination, in a network or common system" "it would give up its secret . . . at the very moment in which it would have the best and closest hold on it." The most proper idiom or properness depends absolutely on the fact that language does not deal in the proper, but in the transmission and sharing of common meanings.

The Name in Translation

That language is constituted by the idiomaticity of singular names as well as by the universal transmission of meaning is a theme that is explored in an especially revealing manner in Derrida's essay on Walter Benjamin's theory of translation and language, "Des Tours de Babel," written soon after the "Roundtable on Translation."[28] This essay is one of a couple of texts from the early 1980s—the years leading up to the seminar cycle on "philosophical nationality"—that concern issues of translation and naming as central linguistic phenomena and that thereby prepare the way for the work on "philosophical nationality."[29]

Even had Derrida at no time chosen to approach these questions by way of Benjamin's writings on language, the latter would be worth recalling here, as they are among the most important explorations of the above-cited suggestions about language we have pointed out in Derrida's "Introduction" to "The Origin of Geometry." Benjamin's two notable essays on this topic—"On Language as Such and on the Language of Man" (1917) and "The Task of the Translator" (1921)[30]—are precisely concerned with developing a theory of language that goes beyond its function as a means of communication.

Let us briefly recap Benjamin's well-known ideas in this regard: Against linguistic theories that stress the functioning of language and for which language thus becomes no more than a transparent medium, Benjamin wants to accord to language "as such" a certain weight: A language, he proposes in "On Language," is or has a "spiritual essence" apart from its communicative function; rather than merely communicating content, a given language first of all communicates "itself." This mediality of language communicating itself is a "pure" mediality (unlike the indifferent mediality of language as communication of meanings); Benjamin calls it "immediate" and adds that the "immediacy" of language constitutes its "magic" (*Magie*).

In accounting for this originary "magic" of language as such, Benjamin takes as a primary text the creation narrative in Genesis. A central feature of this narrative that interests him is that God's creation—which takes place by means of linguistic acts, by means of God's saying "let there be . . . " (Gen. 1:1–31)—is "completed" by man's naming of natural things, in accordance with Genesis 2:19–23, where Adam/man names the animals and ultimately woman as well.[31] Human language thus originates in the act of naming, which is a creative act. The essence of language, its "magic," is what is "communicated" by means of human linguistic acts; it does not lie in the content of "communications" as we ordinarily understand them. (Benjamin calls this ordinary understanding of language as the communication of content the "bourgeois conception of language.")

Here we are very close to Derrida's evocation in the "Introduction" of theories of language such as Herder's that place words in an immediate proximity to what they designate. In Saussurian terms, one might say that this is to give a certain weight to the signifier, to view it as more than an indifferent vehicle for the signified—indeed, in "On Language" Benjamin explicitly associates the theory of the arbitrariness of signs with the "bourgeois" theories that he rejects.[32] Similarly, in "The Task of the Translator," Benjamin stresses that translations can never be fully faithful to the original, since the "sense" (*Sinn*) of a word,

> in its poetic significance for the original, is not limited to what is meant [*dem Gemeinten*, what is referred to] but rather wins such significance precisely in the manner in which what is meant [*das Gemeinte*] is bound to the way of meaning [*Art des Meinens*, that is, "how" it is meant/referred to] of the individual word.[33]

> In the words *Brot* and *pain*, what is meant is the same, but the way of meaning it is not. It is due to this difference in the way of meaning that these two words mean something different to a German and to a Frenchman respectively, that they are not interchangeable for them, and even that they strive, finally, to exclude each other. As to what is meant, however, the two words, taken as absolutes, signify the same, identical thing.[34]

Acts of naming constitute for Benjamin the link between finite human language and divine language: the "addressee" of the "communication" of human essence through names is God.[35] But Benjamin also interprets the story of the Fall (Gen. 2:25–3:25) as "the Fall of the spirit of language," which is also the birth of human language properly speaking: To the expulsion from paradise corresponds a degradation of language from the paradisiac, magical language of names—which, Benjamin reminds us, is one language only—to the communicative language of words, to a multiplicity of languages, and thus to a need for translation. Where in Adamic language there is an immediacy between a thing and its name, and thus an immediate, immanent knowledge of things, the Fall introduces mediation into language as a means of knowledge.[36]

By associating the Fall with the multiplication of languages, Benjamin is of course bringing together the narrative of the expulsion from Eden with that of the Tower of Babel later on in Genesis (11:1–9).[37] The Babelian motif of the original—and ultimate—unity of all languages is a core theme of

Benjamin's essay on translation, and Derrida places it at the center of his own discussion of it. By means of Benjamin's "Task of the Translator" (and with his "On Language" serving as a background text), "Des Tours de Babel" develops the contrast between the general translatability of linguistic meaning and the non-translatability of proper names.

What has translation to do with the proper name? The proper name, as a singular expression, defies translation. When we translate from a foreign language, we leave names untranslated, even when they are homologous with ordinary, translatable words in that language (Iris or Pierre, for example). The story of Babel, in which God sees human beings building a city with a tower that reaches the heavens in order to make "a name" for themselves ("lest we be scattered over the face of the earth") concludes as follows:

> YHWH said: . . .
> Come-now! Let us go down and there let us baffle [נבלה,
> sometimes translated as "confound" or "confuse"] their
> language,
> so that no man will understand the language of his neighbor.
> So YHWH scattered them from there over the face of all the
> earth,
> and they had to stop building the city.
> Therefore its name was called Bavel/Babble [בבל],
> for there, YHWH baffled [בבל] the language of all the
> earth-folk,
> and from there YHWH scattered them over the face of all the
> earth.[38]

Bound up with the story of the multiplication (or division) of the single human language is the uncertainty of knowing whether the word "Babel" is a proper name or a generic term for the "confusion" that is imposed. Derrida sees this uncertainty as representative of the uncertainty of the legacy of God's imposition of "Babel"/confusion: the replacement of the single human language with multiple, mutually incomprehensible languages means that translation "becomes necessary and impossible, like the effect of a struggle for the appropriation of the name" (Babel, 214/170). Derrida reminds us that God's name too is an "absolutely proper name"; he is encouraged in making this connection by André Chouraqui's translation of Genesis, in which verse 11:9 ("Therefore its name was called Bavel") is rendered: "Sur quoi il [God] clame son nom: Bavel, Confusion."[39] In this rendition, it is God who "proclaims" Bavel, as his own name, over the city.

As proper names, "Bavel" and the name(s) of God transcend the given language in which they are uttered; they represent a singular, unrepeatable experience. But "Bavel" also functions as a common noun: it signifies the people's act of raising the city and the tower, which is an exercise in making a universally communicable "name" for themselves in the single universal human language. In that respect, "Bavel," though "an event in a single tongue, the one in which it appears so as to form a 'text,' also has a common meaning, a conceptual generality" (Babel, 215/171–72). The importance of seeing this duality is reflected, as Derrida points out, in Chouraqui's translation, and as we might add, in those of Buber-Rosenzweig and Everett Fox as well, all of which resort to the apposition of "Bavel" and its common-noun equivalent (Chouraqui: "Bavel, Confusion"; Fox: "Bavel/Babble"; Buber-Rosenzweig: "Darum ruft man ihren Namen Babel, Gemenge").[40]

This necessarily imperfect effort to convey simultaneously the proper name and the general term represents the limit of translation. As Derrida reminds us (here making use of the distinctions Roman Jakobson makes in his essay "On Translation"), translation traditionally understood is a transfer strictly between two languages, each regarded as a unity.[41] This means, for instance, that the "internal" or "intralinguistic" translation effected in the apposition "Bavel, Confusion" is not really a translation. It means that the proper name does not belong to the language, to any language, in which it appears (Babel, 217/173). "At the very moment when pronouncing 'Babel' we sense the impossibility of deciding whether this name belongs, properly and simply, to *one* tongue [*langue*]" (Babel, 218/174). And yet, no language can do without proper names, expressions that refer to something in a singular manner (Babel, 216/172).

A Unique Filiation and a Universal Language

The story of Babel, once again, is the story of the multiplication of languages. It asks us to imagine a pre-Babelian state in which there is only one language, and no translation in the proper sense. But this is an unstable image, not only because it is essential to language that it hold at least the potential for multiple meanings, and thus for translation, but because the story depicts a people who wish to "make a name for themselves," to ensure the permanence of their legacy. It is at this point that we see the linguistic problematic that we have been tracing in a number of Derrida's works becoming a lens through which he begins to explore the problem of universality and particularity in culture. The building of the city and the tower is meant to ensure the unity and dominance of the one people and the one language. (Gen. 11:4: "Now they said: Let us build ourselves a city and a tower, its top in the heavens, and let us make ourselves a name, lest we be scattered over the face of all the earth!") As Derrida points out, the people's purpose is thus ambiguous, it is "to found at the same time a universal tongue and a unique genealogy" (Babel, 218/174). Can the people have a (linguistic) identity if there is only one language? Derrida implicitly links this question with the sort of rhetoric that underlies the historic cultural dominance of the West:

> The Semites[42] want to bring the world to reason, and this reason can signify simultaneously a colonial violence (since they would thus universalize their idiom) and a peaceful transparency of the human community. (Babel 218/174)
>
> They want to impose their lip [or language] on the entire universe. Had their enterprise succeeded, the universal tongue would have been a particular language imposed by violence, by force, by violent hegemony over the rest of the world.[43]

One might be reminded here of the universality of reason associated traditionally with Greek as the language of philosophy—the problematic we discussed in the preceding chapter in connection with Derrida's essay "The Supplement of Copula." But Derrida wants to claim that the kind of universality aspired to by the people of Babel

> would not have been a universal language—for example in the Leibnizian sense—a transparent language to which everyone would have had access. Rather, the master with the most force would have imposed this language on the world and, by virtue of this fact, it would have become the universal tongue.[44]

How, then, are we to understand God's response, his imposition of the proper name, of (according to Chouraqui's interpretation, adopted by Derrida) his own name, which is the imposition of "confusion"? In linguistic terms, God imposes translation as something both necessary and impossible: From this point on, people are destined to bridge, however imperfectly, their linguistic differences. In terms of cultural/national identity, the supposed "peaceful transparency" offered by the single language for a universal "community" is now "ruptured." But it is ruptured in the name of a new kind of universality, one that is both subject to and guaranteed by translation, or by national-cultural difference:

> When God imposes and opposes his name, he ruptures the rational transparency but interrupts also the colonial violence or the linguistic imperialism. . . . In a stroke with his translatable-untranslatable name he delivers a universal reason (it will no longer be subject to the rule of a particular nation[45]), but he simultaneously limits its universality: forbidden transparency, impossible univocity. (Babel, 218/174–75)

Just as in the "On Language" essay Benjamin envisions an ultimate post-Babelian reconciliation of the languages of man, a crucial part of Benjamin's account of translation is, as Derrida points out, that translation is possible because individual languages complement each other to form a kind of overarching harmonious unity, which he also calls "pure language." The history of the "life" of languages, as Benjamin envisions it, consists of these languages' "growth" toward a "messianic end"; and translation participates, if only in a "preliminary" way, in this "eternal" and "sacred" movement.[46]

In Chapter 5 we will have occasion to return to the complicated relationship between universality and particularity in the biblical story of Israel in connection with the "philosophical nationality" seminars. For the time being, let us note how for Derrida the interplay between the desired universality and actual particularity of the single language to be imposed is bound up in the proper name "Babel," in the act of imposing this name. With the imposition of "Babel/Confusion," translation—and with it, the communication between particular peoples in the name of universality (whether it be the universality of a language, or the universality of God)—becomes a "debt one can no longer discharge." Furthermore,

> Such insolvability is found marked in the very name of Babel: which at once translates and does not translate itself, belongs without belonging to a language and indebts itself to itself for an insolvent debt, to itself as if other. Such would be the Babelian performance. (Babel, 218/174–75)

The performance of the name/word "Babel" thus also suggests that God cannot have done away altogether with the "colonial violence" with which the particular seeks to impose itself universally. Perhaps the residue of the un/translatability of Babel, its internal dividedness or alterity, is a reflection of the kind of overarching "kinship of languages" that is the unattainable horizon for Benjamin's translator.

The duality of translatability and untranslatability of the singular proper name that Derrida uncovers in the Babel story is an early exploration of the questions that will be at the core of the "philosophical nationality" project: To what extent can we envision the particularity or singularity of a "genealogy" or "filiation"; and to what extent does such particularity impinge upon any understanding of universality? In the following two chapters, we will turn our attention to Derrida's work on "philosophical nationality." After laying out the broader rationale for this project in Chapter 4, we will in Chapter 5 return to the question of the role of language in articulating the problematic of identity and belonging, by looking at works by both Derrida and Rosenzweig.

PART III

PHILOSOPHICAL NATIONALITY

4

On the Philosophical Ambition of National Affirmation

The Seminars on "Philosophical Nationality"

Exemplarity, as I highlighted in Chapter 2, is a core theme in Derrida's earliest works, in that they were centrally concerned with interrogating historicism and relativism in philosophical thought and sought to re-pose the question of the role of cultural particulars in constituting universality. I proposed that it is this concern that led Derrida to focus on the idea of "exemplarity" and to reflect on the question of the "language of philosophy." Chapter 3 then traced the theme of singularity in some of Derrida's writings on linguistic matters. There, we saw him trying to articulate how language is constituted as an interplay between the absolute singularity of such entities as proper names and signatures and the linguistic functions of communication and translation. In the present chapter, I shall be looking at the problem of universality and particularity as it is posed and explored in the "philosophical nationality" project—that is, in the texts that made up Derrida's seminar cycle during the academic years 1984–85, 1986–87, and 1987–88, entitled "Nationalité et nationalisme philosophiques," or works that grew out of that cycle.[1]

From the very beginning, as is often the case when Derrida launches a new topic of investigation or study, the agenda of the "philosophical nationality" seminars is defined by formulating a set of questions and identifying a class of texts that have not typically been regarded as having anything to do with each other. The questions that frame these seminars are explicitly posed as alternatives to the kinds of questions that have traditionally guided the study of the nation, national identification, or nationalist phenomena—those of the historical or social sciences: Though he does not wish to "exclude" such questions, Derrida makes plain from the outset that producing "historical, social, linguistic" analyses of nationhood or national identity is not his primary concern, though the inquiry he has in mind might well lead to a reflection of what makes such analyses possible.[2]

In this connection, it is significant that the 1984–85 seminar was Derrida's first after taking the post of Directeur d'études at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS); at the first session of the seminar, he remarks on the situation of holding a post in philosophy and a seminar on a philosophical topic in a school of social science.[3] Derrida emphasizes that the title given to his chair at the EHESS, "Philosophical Institutions," is the first at that institution "to involve the name 'philosophy.'" It represents just the sort of challenge to, and interchange with, the human and social sciences that Derrida's philosophical inquiry regularly pursues.[4] Thus, Derrida here explicitly links his choice of topic, "nationalism," with the social-science context and with the choice to distinguish a philosophical approach from an empirical-science approach. This choice represents at once a challenge to the latter and an expansion of the field of traditional philosophical questioning. And yet, this sort of expansion presupposes the sort of "sociologizing" maneuver that went into the title "philosophical institutions." For at the core of all of Derrida's writing about "philosophy" is the awareness that one cannot speak of philosophy as such apart from the institutional frameworks in which this notion is mobilized—even if at the same time "philosophy" calls upon its "practitioners" to maintain and cultivate a notion of it that exceeds its institutional forms.[5] Here again, we are dealing with the problem of "tradition" as envisioned by Husserl in "The Origin of Geometry," the very problem that, as I sought to make clear in Chapter 2, so powerfully informs Derrida's first inquiries into exemplarity.

In accordance with these sorts of reflections, Derrida makes clear that his interest in the implications of national "boundaries" or differences for philosophy concerns at the same time the "boundaries" of "the philosophical as such." Where Husserl and Heidegger treat philosophy as a metadiscourse that in some sense encompasses other types of inquiry as "regional ontologies," Derrida wants to call into question this "beautiful order of dependence," whose "territorial" rhetoric, he suggests, is itself "not far off" from "the schema of the relations between state and nation." At the same time, the "philosophical nationality" seminars seek to show that national phenomena cannot be viewed as the exclusive domain of the "regional" social sciences (Onto-Theology, 8).

Eschewing an empirical approach, then, Derrida wants to propose that philosophy has a special stake in understanding national phenomena: In the first instance, this is because the ideal of universality that orients philosophical inquiry is by its nature threatened by, and thus is structurally required to abstract from, the particularity of its historical and cultural context and the language in which it is expressed. This circumstance is what motivated the engagements with historical, cultural, and linguistic relativism that we have highlighted in Derrida's earlier works. In the second instance, Derrida will argue that philosophy participates in a special way in the production of such phenomena. No nationalism, no discourse invoking a nationality, he wants to suggest, is without an element of philosophical ambition, a claim for universal validity of the type: "To be most particularly French is to be most devoted to the universal value of equality." As he puts it in *The Other Heading*:

> No cultural identity presents itself as the opaque body of an untranslatable idiom, but always, on the contrary, as the irreplaceable inscription of the universal in the singular, the unique testimony to the human essence and to what is proper to man. (AC, 72/73)

The "philosophical nationality" seminars take as their object of study discourses of national affirmation that yield these sorts of claims. Of special interest are philosophical texts that are about national or cultural identity, or that contain appeals to nation or culture. How do the authors of such texts articulate the universal ambition of philosophy with the particular entity they claim to speak for? (If we recall the discussion of names in the preceding chapter, we can see this as a version of the question: How can Babel be at once a proper name and a common noun; how can it name both a singular genealogy and a universal condition?)

The first text to which this line of questioning is applied is Fichte's *Addresses to the German Nation*. In the opening session of the seminar, Derrida looks at how Fichte affirms a German national identity not in terms of any empirical, contingent characteristics that he attributes to Germans, but by portraying Germany as embodying, in an exemplary fashion, universal, human principles. According to Derrida, in identifying German-ness, or properly German aspirations, with certain philosophical principles, Fichte is not only describing what might be, empirically speaking, a German philosophy. Rather, he is identifying the German people with philosophy as such—insofar as philosophy is a universal pursuit. Fichte speaks of a "new age" in which "the nation that to this day calls itself [simply] *the* people" (that is, the German people) is to develop originary creative powers. He attributes this development to "a philosophy that has become clear in itself." By looking in the "mirror" of this philosophy, the nation "may recognize and form a clear conception of that which it has hitherto become by nature without being distinctly conscious of it, and to which it is called by nature." Such a philosophically achieved self-recognition, Fichte says, brings with it a challenge to "this nation to make itself wholly and perfectly what it ought to be, . . . to renew this covenant and complete the circle."[6] Derrida reads these and similar pronouncements by Fichte and others as a basis for observing that it belongs to "the structure of national consciousness" that a nation "posit itself" as the "bearer of an exemplary philosophy, i.e., one that is both particular and potentially universal—and which is philosophical by that very fact." This idea that particular national or cultural entities are constituted by a "philosophical ambition," by an aspiration to an exemplary universality, serves as a guiding thread for the analyses that make up the "philosophical nationality" project. "The self-positing or self-identification of the nation," Derrida writes, "always has the form of a *philosophy* which, although better represented by such and such a nation, is none the less a certain relation to the universality of the philosophical." In other words, "the affirmation of a nationality . . . is essentially and thoroughly philosophical, *it is a philosopheme*" (Onto-Theology, 10).

It is important to realize that while the sorts of evocations of national or cultural identity Derrida calls attention to are not reducible to any kind of chauvinism or particularism, they do not amount to a simple universalism either. Consider the continuation of the passage from Fichte's Seventh Address:

> The principle according to which [the nation, i.e., the German nation] has to complete this circle is laid before it. Whoever believes in the spirit and in the freedom of the spirit and who wills the eternal development of this spirit by way of freedom, wherever he may have been born and whatever language he speaks, is of our kind [*Geschlecht*], he belongs to us and will join us. Whoever believes in standstill [and] regression, . . . wherever he may have been born and whatever language he speaks, is un-German and foreign to us; and it is to be wished that he would separate himself from us—the sooner the better, and completely.[7]

This passage provides a good illustration of the contrast between what Derrida names "philosophical nationality" and a nation in an empirical sense: If for Fichte being German consists in aspiring to a development of spirit, this is also to say that what is properly German is defined completely independently of any empirical fact such as birth, territory, or language. Germanness is equated purely with a universal vocation. But by the same token, the universality invoked here is not neutral. After all, it cannot be indifferent to an evocation of a value such as freedom that it is asserted in the name of a particular entity such as Germany. As is suggested by what Fichte says here, such an evocation runs the risk of introducing a supposedly neutral philosophical principle on the basis of which one can decide what is and is not empirically German. Likewise, it can serve to exclude what is not German from one's understanding of the human and of the universal.

The Particular as Idiom

Considering Derrida's previous explorations of the particular, the singular, and the proper by way of linguistic phenomena, especially the phenomenon of translation, it is not surprising that many of the texts he reads in this seminar highlight language as a means of national or cultural identification. Indeed, one of Derrida's main terms for the particularity that discourses of national affirmation seek to convey is "idiom"—both in a linguistic sense and in the general sense of its Greek root *idion*, "the proper":[8] In philosophizing about national phenomena, we are initially struck by the fact that philosophy aspires to abstract from national and cultural difference:

> Philosophy ought not to suffer difference of *idiom*. . . . Any affirmation of the idiom or of the irreducibility of the idiom would be an aggression or a profanation with regard to the philosophical as such. (Onto-Theology, 3, emphasis altered)

On the other hand, philosophy, like any discourse, is quintessentially translatable and indifferent to idiomatic differences:

> The only possibility for a philosophy, for philosophy itself to speak itself, to be discussed, to get (itself) across, to go from the one to the other, is to pass through idioms, to transport the idiom and transport itself, translate itself via or rather in the body of idioms.

Derrida thus wants to suggest that what he is calling idiom is not impervious to universal philosophical discourse. It is not a "closure or enclosing of self," but is something like a passageway for such discourse, a "passage to the other," the very means of translation (Onto-Theology, 4).

The question concerning "philosophical nationality" is thus also the question concerning the role of "idiomatic difference in philosophy," both in the narrow sense of a "national idiom," of language as a means of national identification, and in the broader sense of identification or belonging in general.

Fichte speaks of a Germanity that is independent of the provenance and language of its constituents. But there is a tension, as Derrida points out, between this insistence and Fichte's talk of a true meaning to be conveyed by "that philosophy which with good reason calls itself German philosophy": Using a philosophy-of-life terminology that pits truth and vitality against falsehood and death, Fichte describes those who have "no ears to hear" the message, who are "dead" to the message, as being liable to "twist the words" of this message, to corrupt it.[9] Paradoxically, Derrida points out, German as a "living" empirical language is dissociated from the "life" that is aligned with true German speech in Fichte's sense of Germanity and philosophy:

> One may speak this essential German, this philosophical, philosophy-of-life German without speaking what is commonly called the German language; and conversely a German linguistic subject may not speak this essential German and speak, in German, a philosophy of death that is essentially foreign to the essential German.

Thus: "the foundation of essential Germanity is not even linguistic for Fichte—although it has an essential relation with a certain experience of language" (Onto-Theology, 15)—that of "not twisting the words," ensuring that philosophical truth is conveyed.

In the course of the seminars, Derrida focuses on a number of texts that serve as counterexamples to Fichte's dissociation of language and philosophical nationality. He points to a number of figures who locate their national identity in the fact of speaking their particular language, who give language a weight of its own. Here, Derrida is implicitly drawing on ideas about language such as those of Walter Benjamin, who in his "Task of the Translator" envisioned particular languages as having a "spirit," a sort of untranslatable residue. It is probably no coincidence that the three authors Derrida cites as holding such a view—the Arabic-language poet Adonis, Theodor Adorno, and Hannah Arendt—write from the experience of having emigrated, or, as was the case for Adorno and Arendt, of having been forced to emigrate, from their countries of origin. For them as exiles, and particularly as exiled intellectuals, language is a means of identification that is separable from any territory they might have once inhabited.

In what follows, I shall discuss Derrida's reading of Adonis and Adorno in regard to these questions, leaving aside his reading of Hannah Arendt.

Adonis

The first of these figures is not one of the more canonical authors identified from the outset as being on the "program" of the seminar. He is Adonis, an Arabic-language poet whom Derrida describes as a personal friend. The occasion for mentioning him is a contemporary newspaper interview given by him concerning his experience of exile and his writing.[10] (Derrida would regularly comment on material from the daily media in his seminars.) Adonis was born in Syria as Ali Ahmad Said Esber, but emigrated to Lebanon after having taken his new name. He took the name Adonis as a pseudonym and as a name that symbolizes a universal cultural heritage. He celebrates Lebanon as the ultimate cosmopolitan nation, the site of a multiplicity of cultures that embodies the aspiration to universality. This gesture on the part of Adonis, Derrida points out, is similar to that of Fichte with regard to Germany; it is the sort of national affirmation to which the seminar on "philosophical nationality" is oriented, as it identifies a place as being universal in its singularity. This conjunction is echoed in the poet's taking a Greek, "universal" name, which Derrida interprets as the invention of an idiomatic signature and, as such, as a founding poetic act.[11] What is significant about this act is that it reverses the directionality that is usually attributed to tradition: Rather than inheriting his name from his family and his homeland (his *patrie*), it is he who bestows his name on them.[12] Like "Babel" in the biblical story, "Adonis" is a proper name that nevertheless means something: It signifies universality, and Adonis's adoption of the name is an expression of both a wish and a declaration that his homeland be a cosmopolis. However, the cosmopolitanism he aspires to is by no means equivalent to a denial of the idiom and the proper. Adonis asserts that what he maintains as his "specificity" is his language.

Derrida is interested in the connection between claiming a place as one's own because it is both universal and singular and claiming a language as one's true home. Just as the geographic home Lebanon is figured by Adonis as a site of universality, the language he calls his is perhaps not, Derrida suggests, Arabic pure and simple, but "his language" in the sense that he forms it with his poetic idiom and with his idiomatic-universal name. In this connection, Derrida recalls Benjamin's notion of "pure language,"[13] a being-language of language that is, as we saw in the preceding chapter, what is communicated in the act of translating. The view that informs both Adonis's means of identification and Benjamin's theory of translation is that what makes languages foreign to one another—what makes them singular and proprietary—is also what connects them to one another, what makes them universalizable and translatable.

Adorno

The flip side of this connection between a Benjaminian theory of language and "philosophical nationality" becomes evident in Derrida's discussion of an essay by Theodor Adorno that also links the author's national-cultural identity to his language. The essay is Adorno's 1965 contribution to a series produced by the German radio channel Deutschlandfunk for which contributors were asked to respond to the question, "What is German?"[14] It begins as a general reflection on what it means to identify with Germany. Having made clear the difficulties and complexities of this broader question, Adorno turns to a more personal reflection on his own decision to return from exile after the defeat of Nazism.[15] In its first part, the essay demonstrates a close affinity with what Derrida here terms the "national philosophism" that is his seminar's primary interest: Adorno does not hesitate to affirm a view of Germany as a tradition of pursuing high-cultural, intellectual aims, in Wagner's words, "for their own sake," even as he concedes the limits of such a view. Thus, Adorno also points out that figuring German culture as being diametrically opposed to the commercialism of the "more advanced capitalist" countries (such as England) is too simple, and he recognizes that the German assertion of cultural autonomy historically went hand in hand with the glorification of the German state and with the imperialist instrumentalization of culture.[16] But Derrida notes that alongside Adorno's criticism of these tendencies, one finds in this essay a Fichtean gesture of identifying "the truest and best" of a people with the resistance to collective demagoguery, to the degradation of German-ness—indeed, this is what Adorno's own work is aimed at, including the decision to pursue this work once again in Germany.[17] The "philosophical" character of the national identification Adorno presents is especially evident in his mobilization of Kant as "the chief witness of German tradition" against all forms of "self-idolization" and "collective servitude": the name Kant stands for "the concept of autonomy, of the rational individual's responsibility for himself" as against "those blind dependencies one of which is the unreflected hegemony of the national."[18] Here, then, a "philosophical nationality" is explicitly opposed to simple nationalism.[19]

In this first part of the essay, Adorno wants to insist on two points that are difficult to reconcile: He asserts the importance of doing things "for their own sake," the spirit of critique and autonomy, and mobilizes empirical evidence that associates such values with a German experience—both with respect to the nineteenth-century scenario of German arrested economic development versus English high capitalism, and vis-à-vis his own experience of consumer culture in the United States. On the other hand, Adorno recognizes that such empirical evidence is incomplete and one-sided, and that to valorize Germanity as the site of the philosophical values of autonomy and rationality opens the door to nationalist demagoguery—indeed, that these values are all too easily commodified into "German brand-name products."[20] While I would argue that Adorno is fully aware of the tension between these two claims, Derrida, in keeping with the aims of the seminar, emphasizes that they are in their essence contradictory: Adorno cannot appeal to the Wagnerian dictum and to the "best and truest" Germanity while denying all particularism, just as "philosophical nationality" cannot be wholly dissociated from expressions of nationalism.[21]

But it is in the second half of the essay that the precariousness of Adorno's position becomes most evident. Here, in explaining his decision to return to Germany, Adorno makes his appeal to language as a founding moment of his Germany identity. He cites language as the "objective" grounds for his return—as opposed to "subjective" reasons such as the market mentality he encountered among American publishers and editors, the venerable ancient tradition of exiles returning to their homeland, his persistent belief that there was nothing inherently German in German fascism and that therefore he might have a valuable contribution to make to a rehabilitated Germany, and the simple desire to recapture a continuity with the sites of his childhood memories.[22] For Adorno, it is evident that "the German language has a special elective affinity with philosophy," and especially with what is most valuable in philosophy, its "speculative moment," which is regarded with suspicion by "the West."[23]

Like his remarks on the Germanity of doing things for their own sake, Adorno's observation here is not without ambivalence: The West's suspicions about the "dangerous lack of clarity" of the German speculative-philosophical language is "not completely without reason." Further, there is a "price" to be paid for this peculiar quality of German: the "omnipresent temptation that lies in the [German] author's sense that the immanent tendency of German words to say more than they say . . . releases one from the obligation of thinking this 'more' and, where possible, of critically qualifying it instead of playfully indulging [*plätschern*] with it."[24] Nevertheless, he does speak of this as a "specific, objective quality of the German language." The terms in which he describes this quality recall Benjamin's description, in "The Task of the Translator," of a given language having an essence or spirit of its own:

> The native-born German, at least, will feel that he cannot fully acquire for himself the essential aspect of presentation or of expression in the foreign language.[25]

And like Benjamin, Adorno explicitly opposes such a view to the notion that language is primarily a transparent means of communication. To speak a foreign language is to practice an imperfect kind of translation that ceases to engage with language on the more authentic level Adorno envisions for one's native language. It involves falling into a merely communicative mode:

> If one writes in a truly foreign language, then whether one acknowledges this or not, one falls under the captivating spell of communicating [*sich mitzuteilen*], of saying it in such a way that others can understand it.

Here again, Adorno is unsure whether to view this quality as essentially German, or whether to restrict it merely to his contingent experience as a German speaker:

> Whether this circumstance is specific to German or whether it concerns far more generally the relationship between each person's own language and a foreign language, I will not venture to decide.

However, Adorno's hesitations vis-à-vis the particularity of language are not as great as they were in regard to the particularity of German cultural values:

> Yet the impossibility of conveying into another language not only high-reaching speculative thoughts but even particular, quite precise concepts such as *Geist* [spirit, mind, intellect], *Moment* [moment, element, aspect],[26] and *Erfahrung* [experience], along with everything that resonates in them in German, and doing so

without violence/forcefulness [*Gewaltsamkeit*], speaks for a specific, objective quality of the German language.

For Derrida, this part of Adorno's essay gets to the heart of the question of idiom that he has been pursuing since the opening session of the seminar and that is one of his prime approaches to the problem of "philosophical nationality." In lamenting the situation of someone forced to speak a foreign language, Adorno suggests that to truly speak a language is to do more than communicate or convey a meaning. Like Benjamin, Adorno believes that the essence of language does not lie in communication. Similarly, philosophy does not simply consist of concepts or meanings, but also of their "presentation" in language; this is what differentiates it from other sciences.[27] This is why, according to Adorno, true translation of philosophical meaning into a second language is not possible. By pointing out the affinity between Adorno's remarks on language and Benjamin's theories, Derrida makes clear that espousing a Benjaminian, mystical theory of language is not a politically neutral act. Though we may believe, with Benjamin, Schelling, and Derrida, that language has an impact on thought, that concepts are formed by their linguistic-artistic presentation, and that language is more than a transparent and indifferent conveyance of meaning, Adorno's example shows that such a view might commit us to some form of national essentialism. That Adorno himself is aware of this danger is evident from his caveats about the risks, the excesses, and the "price" of German linguistic practice—at least when it comes to philosophy. The only guarantee against this risk, according to Adorno, is a kind of linguistic "discipline." "The metaphysical linguistic character [of the German language] is not a privilege," Adorno writes. Here again, as Derrida points out, there is a tension between the Adorno who celebrates this character and the Adorno who wants to guard against it in the name of a Kantian spirit of critique.

The question we are left with with respect to idiom is summarized best at the conclusion of the first session of the seminar: Is the only way to guard against the nationalistic pitfalls of a more-than-instrumental theory of language to "[take] the risk of reducing or effacing linguistic difference or the force of the idiom"? Must we deny that there is no concept without form, that is, "[make] that metaphysico-technical gesture which consists in instrumentalizing language . . . , [make] it a medium which is neutral, indifferent and external to the philosophical act of thought" (Onto-Theology, 23)?

Developing this line of questioning in the second session, Derrida speaks of the disturbing "aporia" that the political condemnation of nationalism—the kind of condemnation that he is seeking to complicate with his presentation of "philosophical nationality"—seems to entail a denunciation of idiom. The philosophy of language allied with such a condemnation ascribes to human beings a complete mastery over language; according to this sort of "linguistic technologism," human subjects form and employ language according to their needs, rather than being constituted and formed through language. And such a view, Derrida points out, can in its turn have objectionable political consequences, including other forms of nationalism. Here one might think of forms of cultural or linguistic imperialism, such as any number of efforts throughout history to limit the speaking of a language in order to promote a single "national" or otherwise dominant language. (Indeed, Derrida elsewhere writes about the specific forms of cultural-linguistic imperialism he encountered growing up in Algeria—what he calls the "interdict" [*l'interdite*] against Arabic or Berber languages—but also, more subtly, "interdicts" against French as the language identified with metropolitan France and against Jewish heritage or origin as something that could be directly expressed or appealed to.)[28] In this context, Derrida also recalls the dimension of linguistic particularity that we discussed in the preceding chapter: idiomaticity as the medium of literary or poetic language, the poetic text as the site of the trace and of alterity.[29]

Thus, one is caught between two opposing views of language that, in their most extreme forms, can lead to nationalism of the most pernicious kind. The aim of the "philosophical nationality" seminars is thus to ask whether there is "a thought of the idiom that escapes this alternative" (Onto-Theology, 23). While Derrida does not definitively resolve this question, these seminars open up two important paths for confronting it. The first—to be elaborated in the remainder of this chapter—concerns the ethical responsibility that arises from the paradoxes of exemplarism. The second, which will be the topic of the next chapter, concerns questions of language and translation as an arena where these paradoxes are negotiated.

Paradoxes of Exemplarity and Election as Ethical Responsibility

Adorno's reflections "On the Question: 'What Is German?'" close with an injunction, a lesson to be drawn from the suffering inflicted in the name of German tradition: If there is still a meaning to the concept "German," Adorno suggests, it likely lies not in "hopeless attempts to determine just what the German is," but "in faithfulness to the idea that how things are is not the last word." The meaning of "German," Adorno concludes, lies "in the transition/passage [*Übergang*] to humanity."[30] As Derrida points out regarding this conclusion, here a critique of the idea of nationalism is being offered in the name of a different kind of nationalism—one allied with humanist ideals. A "bad nationalism" is challenged in the name of a "good nationalism"—a "national humanism," as Derrida calls it.[31] (We may recall that the title Derrida gave the published English-language version of the first seminar session was "Onto-Theology of National-Humanism.") Adorno's injunction here is thus: Be true to the (humanistically) German in abandoning the (nationalistically) German. Or, in other words: Be most German in the "transition," in the "passage," to humanity.

In a sense, this injunction, like Fichte's talk of a philosophical nation that is called upon to "become what it is" is of course paradoxical. For it means that the nation's particular vocation is to become universal—to realize its true self by becoming less like itself. Derrida describes a similar tension or "double bind" in his essay on the meaning of "Europe," titled "The Other Heading" (published in his book of that title). In a passage that resonates strongly with his treatment of the Husserlian constitution of geometry and of Husserl's view of Europe as a spiritual form (discussed in Chapter 2), Derrida writes:

> Europe is not only a geographical headland or heading that has always given itself the representation or figure of a spiritual heading, at once a project, task, or infinite—that is to say universal—idea . . . . Europe has also confused its image, its face, its figure, and its very place, its taking-place, with that of an advanced point, . . . and thus, once again, with a heading for world civilization or human culture in general. The idea of an advanced point of *exemplarity* is the *idea of the* European *idea*, its *eidos*, at once as *arché* . . . and as *telos*.[32]

Like "Babel," the proper name "Europe" marks a "confusion"—the paradox of all exemplarism: that in order to be most itself, Europe must open itself up to its other, to humanity in general. Europe as a cultural project represents the striving to universalize its particular heritage. This is paradoxical because it consists in equating the European project with the project of denying its very particularity. But Derrida also wants to claim that what follows from this paradox is an ethical responsibility: "It is necessary," Derrida writes,

> to make ourselves the guardians of an idea of Europe, of a difference of Europe, *but* of a Europe that consists precisely in not closing itself off in its own identity and in advancing itself in an exemplary way toward what it is not.[33]

Thus the tension between universality and particularity that inheres in a cultural entity such as Europe is what makes it possible and necessary for it to overcome its tendency toward exclusivity.

How an ethical responsibility can issue from the paradox of exemplarity is something we can make sense of by recalling the view of ethics that Derrida engages whenever he speaks of responsibility—that of Emmanuel Levinas—as well as, by extension, what that view owes to Rosenzweig's concept of election. Levinas's heteronomous ethics of obligation—according to which the possibility of morality rests on a human condition of being absolutely commanded by the "Other"—builds on Rosenzweig's understanding of the "metaethical" self, a self that, we may recall from our discussion in Chapter 1, is absolutely singular. While Rosenzweig does not himself explicitly pursue a project of understanding morality, Levinas's understanding of ethics builds on Rosenzweig's characterization of the divine-human relationship, the relationship of revelation as the human obligation to respond to God. The two thinkers thus share a view of the self as obligated or responsible by virtue of an intertwining of particularity—the absolute singularity involved in the relationship of obligation—and universality—obligation as a universal human condition.

Let us look at the roots of this view more closely in Rosenzweig, and then comment on how it is extended by Levinas.

In Chapter 1, I presented Rosenzweig's theory of the singularization of the self and of the individuation or "remaindering" of the Jewish people. Part 2 of *The Star of Redemption*—which in a sense represents its phenomenological core[34]—elaborates this election as constitutive of the individual's relation to God and to other people. Since we are here interested in the ethical dimension of human election, it is useful to see the model of interaction developed by Rosenzweig in contrast to the core principles of Kantian ethics: that moral action is made possible by a universal human reason; that the categorical imperative is formulated in terms of universal law, to apply equally to each and every case; and, in consequence of this, that the individual human being who is the subject or object of this morality is considered only by virtue of his or her membership in humanity as a whole. Persons are subject to "respect" (*Achtung*) because they are instances of humanity, and not based on any particular facts about them.[35]

By contrast, as we have seen, Rosenzweig's fundamental move in the *Star* is to challenge a philosophical tradition that he sees as subsuming the individual to totalities of various kinds. It follows that any conception of human-divine or interhuman interaction will involve a conception of the human subject as singular—this was the force of conceiving the self as metaethical, as exceeding the universalizable human subject of Kantian ethics. Having in part 1 established God, man, and world as basic elements irreducible to one another, Rosenzweig in part 2 describes how these three elements come to interact. Central to human constitution is the event of revelation, which is described as the experience of God's love. It is crucial to Rosenzweig's understanding of revelation that man is first of all the object or addressee of God's love. The human being is "called" by God, "called" in his/her singularity. Given what we have said about proper names as articulations of singularity, it is significant that Rosenzweig, reading Genesis 3, stresses that the effect of God's call (*Anruf*) is that the generic, universal terms "man" and "woman" are relinquished in favor of the proper names Adam and Eve. This is part of the process that allows for the emergence of an "I" in response to God's call, and thus for a "genuine dialogue" between God and man (S, 195–96/175–76; cf. 207–8/185–86).[36] Rosenzweig views as a culmination of this process Abraham's response to God's calling him (again, as Rosenzweig stresses, by name): "Here I am."[37]

God's call takes the form of an immediate commandment (*Gebot*). And the human being, as individual with a proper name, is immediately receptive to this commandment—he is "all ears" and "pure obedience."[38] The commandment that is issued is "the commandment of all commandments," the "meaning and essence" of all of God's commandments: "You shall love the Lord your God" (Deut. 6:5). God's revelation consists in his love, and his love consists in the imperative that man love him (S, 196/176). The idea that love can be commanded or demanded, notes Rosenzweig, seems counterintuitive. But it captures the singularity of the relation thus constituted, the immediate, momentary presentness of the lover's love. (Rosenzweig contrasts this presence with the temporality of the love declaration, which can come only after the fact of love. He also contrasts the temporality of the commandment with that of law (*Gesetz*): Laws make provisions for the future, they are based on temporal calculations, whereas the commandment "knows only the moment" [S 197/177].)

> Yes of course, love cannot be commanded. No third party can command it or compel it. No third party can, but the One can. The commandment to love can come only from the mouth of the lover. . . . In his mouth the commandment to love is not an alien commandment; rather it is none other than the voice of love itself. (S, 196–97/176)

To understand this immediacy and instantaneity of the command, let us turn to Levinas's familiar extension of Rosenzweig's account into an explicit theory of the ethical. For Levinas, ethical action is grounded in a primordial "ethical relationship" between myself and an Other (*autrui*). If we compare Levinas's face-to-face encounter with Rosenzweig's description of revelation, we find many aspects that may have been inspired by Rosenzweig, but that are more systematically worked out by Levinas: Thus, for instance, Rosenzweig's ambiguous talk of the "one" who can command (love), who is both "the One," God, and "the lover" in general, is preserved in Levinas, who expresses this ambiguity in his interchangeable use of the terms *autrui* and *l'Autre* (the other person, the Other). Levinas develops the idea of the intervention of this Other in a way to ensure that the Other not be understood as a thematizable human other. The Other in Levinas cannot be a priori human, since the command comes before any recognizability of the human as human, and Levinas's description of the ethical relation as "command" and "revelation" suggests that the Other is in some sense related to God.[39] Where election only implicitly figures in the structure of revelation-as-love laid out by Rosenzweig—he stresses, for instance, that love is not a generalized "radiating" "in all directions," but can be directed only at "individuals—men, peoples, epochs, things"—Levinas makes explicit use of this concept in his description of the ethical relation. "Election" is a way for him to underscore that I am commanded in a singular way, and before I myself am in a position to choose anything:

> In responsibility as one assigned or elected from the outside, assigned as irreplaceable, the subject is accused in its skin . . . . [40]

> Has not the Good chosen the subject with an election recognizable in the responsibility of being hostage . . . ? This antecedence of responsibility to freedom would signify the Goodness of the Good: the necessity that the Good choose me first before I can be in a position to choose, that is, welcome its choice.[41]

Along with this elaboration of responsibility in terms of election and assignation, there is thus a shift from the instantaneity that characterizes revelation for Rosenzweig to a more complex temporal structure of antecedence. Elaborating the "before" of responsibility leads Levinas to reflect more fully than Rosenzweig on the temporality of the command, to introduce the idea that the "diachrony" of the ethical relation consists in being commanded from an "immemorial past" or a "pure future."[42] This is a sort of temporalization of the paradox of the ethical relation: how can I be commanded before knowing what commands me, indeed by something of an entirely different order than myself?

If we consider Derrida's pronouncement that the responsibility of Europe is "to make ourselves the guardians of an idea of Europe, of a difference of Europe, *but* of a Europe that consists precisely in not closing itself off in its own identity and in advancing itself in an exemplary way toward what it is not," then we see that there is at work there a similar sort of temporalization of the paradoxical idea that Europe is characterized by a non-self-identity.[43] In "not closing itself off in its own identity," Europe would be responding to a call to responsibility from its other, from that which it is not. In this sense, we may see Derrida mobilizing a Levinasian understanding of ethical responsibility as election—which, as I have indicated, is very much in line with Rosenzweig's understanding of election—to capture the ethical injunction that follows from exemplarism.

5

Nationality, Judaism, and the Sacredness of Language

In 1928, in an open letter to the editor of the German Zionist newspaper *Jüdische Rundschau* on the subject of “Liberalism and Zionism,” Franz Rosenzweig tells the following anecdote to illustrate the situation of the Jewish people:

> As regards the concept of a Jewish *Volk*, we . . . find ourselves in the confounded but very Jewish situation of the *chazan* [cantor] who, having been asked before a court what a shofar is, finally, after much beating around the bush [*Drumherumgerede*], explains that it is a trumpet, and, being reprimanded by the indignant judge for not having said so to begin with, answers: is es denn e Trompet? [“So is it a trumpet?”][1]

The cantor’s wavering is meant to be analogous to the ambivalence with which the Jews must confront the question of whether they are a *Volk*, a question that, in Rosenzweig’s time, has taken on particular urgency in the face of Zionist efforts to define the Jewish situation as a national one. As Rosenzweig writes in his letter,

> That we are a *Volk* is not to us what it is for Herzl . . . the end of the theoretical problematic and the liberating breakthrough into the realm of the practical. No, on the contrary, it is here that the theoretical problem first begins for us. We are a *Volk*—this does not mean to us what it does to the Zionists: because or insofar as we are not a religion [*Konfession*], but precisely insofar as we are a religion. We are not a *Volk*—this does not mean to us what it does to our aged party elders, because we are a religion; but precisely because we are not really one (but more, and therefore less). This is why we are—in reality—also not a *Volk* (but less, and therefore more).

Read against this dense explication, the anecdote seems to fall short of its function as a simple analogy: the tongue-in-cheek account of an indecisive cantor hardly serves as an elucidation of the "confounded" stance of the Jews toward their national identity. It seems, rather, to confound the situation even further. The reader is left not only with the already familiar questions the letter raises about the Jewish *Volk*—about the relation between religious Judaism and the movement toward the formation of a Jewish identity based on a nineteenth-century national model—but also with the additional questions raised by the anecdote: Why is the role of religion reduced to a question of translatability? Why is the issue of Jewish identity to be settled in a non-Jewish court, before a non-comprehending, secular law? The act of translating the name of the cult object, the shofar, into the everyday, secular language of the non-Jews (the "host *Volk*," as Rosenzweig, like others of his day, sometimes calls them) appears to be more than just an illustration of an internal debate among Jews about their national status. Rather, as we shall see, it grows out of Rosenzweig's analysis of the Jewish situation as one for which translation is essential.

The dual aim of this chapter is (1) to trace the interconnections between questions of nation/*Volk*, language, and translation in Rosenzweig's analyses—that is, to explore the sense in which, for Rosenzweig, the Jews both are and are not a people, as well as to suggest how focusing on Rosenzweig's notions of language and translation can help us make sense of his view of Judaism; and (2) to look at the role of German, Jewish, and German-Jewish exemplarity in Derrida's "philosophical nationality" project. We will see that Derrida implicitly takes up Rosenzweig's views on Jewish existence, as well as Hermann Cohen's views on German Judaism, in order to pursue the question of (Jewish) identity or belonging through the optic of exemplarity. This also leads him to intervene in a famous debate between Rosenzweig and Gershom Scholem on translation and sacred language, in a way that builds on his earlier considerations of the role of language and translation in exemplarism, discussed in previous chapters.

Rosenzweig on the Jews as the "One People": A Definition in Retreat

In my discussion of Rosenzweig and Cohen in Chapter 1, I presented the notion of the "remnant" as an articulation of human individuality with the category of the Jewish people, and ultimately with messianic universality. I now wish to look again at the discussion of Jewish existence in *The Star of Redemption* in order to make sense of Rosenzweig's remarks on Judaism and peoplehood. Fundamental to Rosenzweig's discussion of the Jewish people in the *Star* is that they are not a "people among peoples" (*Volk unter Völkern*): Along with Christianity, Judaism serves as a link between historical time and redemption. Furthermore, the Jews fulfill this role uniquely: as God's chosen people, they signify the "beginning" of the messianic age in the present (S, 341/307). If eternity is understood not as "[a] very long [time]" but as "even today," it must be present in daily life by a structure of "preemption"/"anticipation" (*Vorwegnahme*).[2] The Jews as the "eternal people" stand at the crossroads between eternity and today, between redemption and historical time—indeed they stand entirely outside historical time.[3]

In Chapter 2, I suggested that it is useful to see Rosenzweig as an "existential" thinker. We must keep in mind that his accounts of Judaism presuppose his analyses of human individuality or facticity. Thus, much of the force of Rosenzweig's accounts of Judaism lies in his commitment to producing them as accounts of Jewish existence—to make theological truth accord with what he regards as Jewish experience or actuality (*Wirklichkeit*).[4] In his description in the *Star* of the Jews' situation, Rosenzweig emphasizes that they not only stand outside historical time, but that they are oblivious to it, that they need not be conscious of their unique role vis-à-vis humanity in order to fulfill it. He also describes Jewish faith in God as a matter of simple sentiment ("ein ganz einfaches Gefühl," S, 448/403) and the consciousness of being an eternal people as "immediate" and "naive," as not entailing an awareness of their role in human history:[5]

> The whole narrowness of immediate, naive Jewish consciousness lies in this ability to forget that there is anything else in the world, indeed that there is any world besides the Jewish world and the Jews. (S, 449/403)

A similar naiveté or lack of self-consciousness is evoked in the 1923 essay "Apologetic Thinking" ("Apologetisches Denken"). That Jewish self-consciousness is based more on sentiment than on dogma, that Judaism is peculiar (*eigenartig*) in lacking any consciousness of itself, is due to the fact that any attempt to base it purely on a line-up of citations from Jewish textual sources results in a "tragicomic caricature/distortion" (*Zerrbild*).

> It is essentially impossible to make a Talmudic passage comprehensible to some-

> one who doesn't already understand it. In a sense, one would have each time to open up an entire picture atlas of Jewish history, Jewish faces, Jewish life to go along with it—a thing which, of course, cannot possibly exist. (AD 680–81/267–68; PTW 100)

This paradoxical formulation—that Judaism must be known all at once, or rather, that it is always already known—echoes the above-mentioned structure of preemption by which eternity enters the today. What is meant by this formulation can be clarified if we look at the way Judaism is defined in part 3 of the *Star*. To begin with, Rosenzweig introduces a distinction between the "natural" or "blood" community (*Blutgemeinschaft*)—also called *Volk* —and the "spiritual" community (*Gemeinschaft des Geistes*) (S, 331–32/298–300). For those *Gemeinschaften* that are *Völker*, their common blood is today's warrant/guarantee (*Gewähr*) for their common future, their place in eternity: "the blood community [*Blutgemeinschaft*] feels the guarantee of its eternity flowing warm in its veins even today" (S, 332/299). The future is not alien to the *Volk*, but something of its own, "something it carries in its womb and to which it might give birth any day." This means that the *Volk* need make no arrangements to transmit its heritage; unlike the spiritual community, it needs no tradition, no culture, but only reproduction to perpetuate itself.

The Jews are such a *Volk*, in fact they are the *Volk* par excellence ("in ganz besonderer Weise"), for they are unique in placing their trust entirely in the guarantee offered by blood. The other *Völker*, the "peoples of the world," by contrast,

> cannot content themselves with the *Gemeinschaft* of blood. They sink their roots into the night of earth, which is itself dead, though it gives life, and from the duration/permanence [*Dauer*] of earth they derive their own duration. Their will to eternity fastens onto the soil [*Boden*] and its domination—that is, onto territory [*Gebiet*].

This amounts to squandering the blood that was to be their security:

> The blood of their sons flows around the earth of their homeland, for they do not trust in the living *Gemeinschaft* of blood, which would not be anchored in the firm ground of the earth. (S 332/299)

Though blood, here, is aligned with life, and land on the other hand is "dead soil," we should be cautious about reading Rosenzweig's talk of blood and *Volk* in an organicist way. At the very beginning of part 3, Rosenzweig explains the eternal people's relation to past, present, and future. Being outside historical time, it must generate (*erzeugen*) its own time. It does so in the present by reproducing itself over and over eternally (*sich selbst ewig fortzeugen*). Its succession of generations serves to "eternalize its life." But Rosenzweig's understanding of eternity prevents this from being simply a matter of biological reproduction:[6] Just as eternity is not "a very long time" that extends into the future, the temporality of *Zeugen* is not the unidirectional, "vulgar" temporality of an organic process. Just as eternity is a "Tomorrow that could just as well be Today[,] . . . a future that, without ceasing to be future is nevertheless present [*gegenwärtig*]" (S, 250/224), the present generation (*Erzeugen*) of the future can take place only by recourse to the future bearing-witness to the past: "The son is conceived [*gezeugt*] so that he may bear witness [*damit er zeuge*] to the deceased father of his begetter [his *Erzeuger*]" ("der Sohn wird gezeugt, damit er vom hingegangen Vater seines Erzeugers zeuge"), and "each generation bears witness in its turn to its progenitors." *Erzeugen* and *Bezeugen* are two meanings of the single act of *Zeugen*—which in German means both witnessing and generation.[7]

Viewed in this light, it becomes clear that blood for Rosenzweig just is the assurance of this necessary continuous event of *Zeugen*.

If the Jews are a *Volk* uniquely, if they are the one *Volk*, one might ask whether they belong to the category of *Volk* at all. Further, if what distinguishes them among the *Völker*, and from the *Völker*, is their trust in the blood that binds them, then that would seem to call into question whether their community is really based purely on "blood," on a "natural" bond. That the distinguishing feature of the Jews should be trust suggests, rather, a *geistig*/spiritual component to their identity.

This is confirmed by the passages in "Apologetic Thinking" on the lack of Jewish self-consciousness, exemplified by the Jews' silence on the doctrine at the root of all Jewish life: No traditional Jewish text, Rosenzweig points out, mentions "the idea of Israel's chosenness,"

> this truly central idea of Judaism, which, for instance, a Christian researcher, coming from Christology, would expect to find in first place in a Jewish dogmatics, or at least in second place, immediately after the doctrine of God. (AD 677/265; PTW 96)

The reason for this silence, for this lack of a Jewish counterpart to Christian dogmatics, lies in the tension produced by the Jews' being both a spiritual community (*geistige Gemeinschaft*) and a natural one, a *Volk*. Unlike the *Star*, in which the Jews emerge as a special case within the category of the *Volk*, and in which the spiritual community is a category reserved for Christianity and other religions, here the Jews appear first as a spiritual community, whose exceptional status lies in its being also a *Volk*. Rosenzweig adds that Judaism's desire to cling to its "reality" as a *Volk* causes it to withdraw (*entziehen*) its spiritual "innermost essence" from view, to force consciousness away (*Abdrängung*—akin to *Verdrängung*, repression) from "the secret source of [its] life" (AD 678/265–66; PTW 96).

Thus, though Rosenzweig presents us with a Judaism that is part blood and part spirit, part *Volk* and part religion, a Judaism that exemplifies both of these opposing notions, his oblique presentations, with their changing inflections of the elements blood and spirit, *Volk* and religion, suggest not a harmonious blending of blood-based reality with spiritual ideality, but rather that both exist only in a mode of withdrawal (*Entzug*), that Judaism can only be defined in its withdrawal from these categories.[8] This must not be thought of as a withdrawal away from both categories to some "middle ground" between being a *Volk* and being a religion: as Rosenzweig writes in his letter to the *Jüdische Rundschau*, the Jews are a *Volk* precisely to the extent that they are a religion. Nor is this a withdrawal to a "higher ground" of being neither a *Volk* nor a religion, for, though the Jews are not a *Volk* to the extent that they are not a religion, Rosenzweig adds that "not being a religion" should be understood as being "more than one, and therefore less." Likewise, if he then concludes from this that the Jews are not a *Volk*, he is forced to add: "but less, and therefore more."

It is this infinite series of withdrawals and retreats that the anecdote about the cantor serves to illustrate—indeed Rosenzweig's own recourse to the anecdotal form itself performs a retreat from any attempt at definition: When the cantor gives and then withdraws his testimony as to the identity of the shofar, the fact that he does so not definitively, but by turning it into a question, suggests that this is neither a retreat to an alternative position, nor a complete rejection of the initial hypothesis. If the testimony makes clear that no attempt to identify what the shofar actually is will be more stable or precise than was the initial venture, it also proposes that this initial venture be allowed a place—in retreat.

German and Jewish Exemplarity in Derrida's "Philosophical Nationality" Seminars

The passages I have cited from part 3 of Rosenzweig's *Star* are among the core texts Derrida reads in the "philosophical nationality" seminars in order to get a handle on the "exemplary universalism" of national affirmation—and to do so particularly with reference to Jewish identity, especially as it is asserted in German-Jewish contexts. We already encountered some German and German-Jewish examples discussed by Derrida in the "philosophical nationality" seminars in the preceding chapter. My interest in the present chapter is to ask: What are we to make of the exemplary status of the German and the Jewish in the "philosophical nationality" project?

Let us recall the general problematic from which Derrida begins the seminar cycle: Its aim was to reflect on categories such as nationality, idiomaticity, and exemplarity as metaphysico-philosophical structures, independently of their empirical genealogies as concepts, and in a way that transcends particular cultural contexts. Yet, because the "philosophical nationality" project is conceived not merely as being concerned with giving a philosophical account of *nationality*, but also with reflecting on how *philosophy* deals with cultural particularity in view of its claim to universality (a line of reflection I have traced back to Derrida's early considerations of historicism and relativism), its procedure cannot be simply to theorize about expressions or instances of such cultural particularity *in general*. That is, it cannot only be a matter of establishing a general category such as idiomaticity or cultural particularity and then to point to examples to illustrate this general category. Since the basic interest in the category of exemplarity comes from the insight that universals are articulated in an exemplary way through particulars, the method of illustrating this insight must proceed through readings of texts that serve not as purported examples among others for the phenomenon to be described, but that are themselves exemplary in their particular ways of articulating this phenomenon. In Derrida's "philosophical nationality" project, then—as, I would maintain, in his oeuvre as a whole—such texts function as both more and less than examples.

It is with this structure in mind that I would like now to approach Derrida's special attention to both German expressions of the idea of "philosophical nationality" and German-Jewish grapplings with German and Jewish exemplarity. The emphasis on discourses of German nationality is evident from the very first session of the 1984–85 seminar, with its lengthy discussion of Fichte's Addresses and additional mentions of the "Germanness" articulated by Marx, Karl Grün (one of Marx's targets in *The German Ideology*), and Adorno. Significantly, the second session of the seminar opens with a response by Derrida to the discomfort he has been made aware of by some

Germans in his audience at what they perceive is an attack on German "national-philosophism." The structure of his response is threefold:

1. Derrida begins by pointing out that the texts he has cited serve only as examples, and that others will be cited from outside Germany, including examples from France.
2. He then recalls one of the basic premises of the first session: nationalist or national-humanist discourses had been chosen as an object of study not simply in order to denounce them, but in order to move past such denunciations. In particular, as we saw in the last chapter, Derrida in that first session emphasized the ways in which the national-humanist argument of someone like Fichte escapes or resists the pitfalls of nationalism—some of which he recalls in the second session.
3. And yet, Derrida continues—at the risk, as he emphasizes, of failing to reassure the German listeners—the German examples he has begun with are not merely examples among others, given the incomparable, irreplaceable impact of German nationalism from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. German nationalist phenomena have marked our very notion of the national. Drawing on the Husserlian vocabulary of eidetic variation that we encountered in Chapter 2 as a way of describing what it means for something to be exemplary, beyond being an example among others, Derrida stresses that the German is an example that cannot be varied according to the phenomenological technique of eidetic variation in order to arrive at the qualities of a given essence. (This remark, of course, powerfully echoes Derrida's analyses of Husserl's notion of the European *eidos* as resistant to eidetic variation, which I discussed in Chapter 1.)

Points 1 and 3, taken together, mean that in looking at the German examples, we are not looking at something like "instances" of the national—*even as* we might also recognize that an examination of other-than-German examples would *also* have to follow a singular, exemplaristic hermeneutic. About the exemplarity of the German, Derrida hypothesizes that the very problem of national-philosophism that the seminars are trying to approach has been constituted in some irreducible sense by way of the German and by way of German philosophy.[9]

How now does this sort of exemplarist hermeneutic get deployed by Derrida for the Jewish and the German-Jewish figures that are also a main focal point of the "philosophical nationality" seminars and of related works on Jewish themes? Here, I would suggest, we can view Rosenzweig's approach to Judaism as in a sense leading the way for Derrida. Thus, like Rosenzweig, Derrida is in the "philosophical nationality" project engaged in a retrieval of the ideas of election and covenant. Repeatedly, when he reflects on the overall shape of the project, he recalls that approaching the axiomatic of national affirmations requires paying special attention to concepts such as promise, mission, vocation, covenant, and election, and thus to a conceptual field that, though it is characteristic of many discourses of national affirmation, also makes reference to the biblical story of the people of Israel and its God. Derrida thus parallels Rosenzweig in trying to seize the meanings of these concepts—meanings that post-Enlightenment thinking about Judaism, or about religion and theology, has tended to obscure and relativize. While Rosenzweig was engaged in retrieving the concept of election in an age in which Jewish "atheistic theologies" have reduced its significance,[10] for Derrida such a retrieval becomes a way to highlight the pervasiveness of nationalist thinking in an age that is supposed to have transcended national particularisms.

Further, similarly to Rosenzweig, Derrida interprets the concept of election in the light of universality, in its exemplary structure. Thus, in the opening session of the 1986–87 seminar (most of which takes place under the title "The Theologico-Political"), Derrida defines election as a general structure by virtue of which a singular people or particular nation claims itself to be invested with a mission or a responsibility that it regards as universal.[11]

But Derrida's retrieval of election differs from that of Rosenzweig in an important respect: Going back to the exemplaristic hermeneutic we encountered in relation to Derrida's treatment of the German "example," Derrida is, in a way that sharpens the implications of what I have called Rosenzweig's definition of Judaism "in retreat," interested in asking whether the culturally determinate ways in which a notion such as "election" has been passed down to us—its biblical context—have consequences for its utility as a philosophical concept. As in the case of the German, which, we saw, functions as *more* than an example among others in the discourses of national affirmation, the biblical story of Israel's being chosen by God—and, by extension, the importance of the notion of chosenness for understanding Jewish existence—does not serve merely as an example or literary illustration of what constitutes nationhood or peoplehood. Derrida emphasizes this when, in introducing the German-Jewish situation between the wars as being symptomatic of the phenomenon he wishes to study, he immediately adds that the full justification for this choice will only be deployed in and as the seminar itself—that is, in the work to be done on the texts that have been chosen.[12] The circularity here is, I think, crucial to understanding the hermeneutic of exemplarity that is not only a method being proposed for handling discourses of national affirmation, but is itself a thematization of the exemplarity that is the focus of the seminars.

In this sense, the two "exemplarities," the Jewish and the German, parallel each other in structuring Derrida's consideration of "philosophical nationality": Derrida especially emphasizes the shared "modernity" of the German, Jewish, and German-Jewish texts under discussion, evidenced by the fact that they yield an understanding of the "nation" that is essentially "philosophical" (in the sense we have seen him elaborate, that is, comprising a universalism and a cosmopolitanism). Derrida here forges a link between the privileged status of the German and the Jewish, respectively: the German as a site of a universalist elaboration of nationalism and the Jewish in the experience of election—conceptual formations that he proposes to read in light of the historical and political situation of German national life and of the importance of the Zionist (national) movement for Jewish life in the period between the two world wars.[13] This link between the Jewish and the German does not consist merely of parallels between the two "cases" of exemplarity. Derrida's approach to this pair—which of course has as its implicit background a long history of discourse concerning the history and nature of the German-Jewish cultural relationship[14]—also serves to sharpen the "paradox of exemplarity" that we discussed in the preceding chapter: that an entity is exemplary not only in its identity, but also in its difference from itself.

Thus, in the first eight sessions of the 1987–88 seminar, which were later presented as the stand-alone lecture and article entitled "Interpretations at War: Kant, the Jew, the German," Derrida treats a thinker, Hermann Cohen, who was famous for his conviction that the German "spirit" (epitomized by Kant) is continuous with the biblical "sources" of Judaism, and that both represent the highest ambition of philosophy. Indeed, according to his famous treatise on "Germanism and Judaism" (*Deutschtum und Judentum*)—one of several texts by Cohen published during the early years of World War I for the purpose of justifying and encouraging worldwide Jewish sympathy for Germany in that war—even the Jews outside Germany are, in a sense, and whether they know it or not, Germans.[15]

While many see Cohen as having succumbed to a crude form of German patriotism that he then unreflectingly allowed to determine his philosophical positions,[16] Derrida's analysis brings into focus Cohen's powerful move beyond a simple dichotomy of assimilation versus dissimilation that discourses of cultural self-affirmation—among the Jews of Cohen's time and as a general phenomenon in our own time—have tended to operate with. For Cohen, it is no longer a question of whether to inhabit the inside or the outside of an authentic Judaism, but of the need to "remain Jews as Germans, and Germans as Jews," the fact that, as Cohen writes, it is "also Germanism [*Deutschtum*] [that] demands genuine Jewish religiosity of the German Jew."[17] Derrida frames his reading of *Deutschtum und Judentum* by thematizing this reciprocal identification between the German and the Jewish as a double exemplarism: "What happens," he asks,

> when a "people" presents itself as "exemplary"? Or when a "nation" declares itself to be charged with a mission, by virtue of its very singularity? . . .
>
> In what sense and how have the Jewish and German "peoples"—or those who have called themselves thus—been able to declare themselves exemplary of this "exemplarity"? In what sense and how, since the *Aufklärung* . . . has . . . the Jewish-German pair, been doubly exemplary of this exemplarity? (IAW, 250n1/93n1)

Derrida's focus on Cohen in "Interpretations at War" thus brings the strategy of his own double privileging of the German and the Jewish to a head. For the double exemplarity of the German and the Jewish here has nothing to do with descriptions of symbiosis, affinity, or harmony—the terms used above all in the post-Holocaust era to describe the supposed delusion of the assimilated Jews of prewar Germany. It is not a matter of two separate entities entering into a relationship of reciprocal desire or need, regardless of whether one thinks that this relationship was ever fulfilled. In a 1991 interview, Derrida says that in studying the German-Jewish tradition one finds oneself dealing "at once with two things and with one." Evoking the figure of the *psyché*—the pivoting two-sided mirror through which Germans and Jews fail to see one another, he says:

> This is the paradox of an image in which both identities are captive and fascinate each other and in which, at the same time, the transcendence and "foreignness,"

> their heterogeneity to each other remain in tact. The German Jew is fascinated by the German, and the German is fascinated by the Jew—this is a terrifying pair; but at the same time no identification is possible.[18]

What is crucial here is that the logic of exemplarity, the logic that allows Cohen to equate Germanism and Judaism with universal philosophy, also calls into question the self-identity of the German and the Jew. That is, Cohen's conception not only of a Jewish exemplarity but of a double, reciprocal exemplarity of Germanism and Judaism requires both Germanism and Judaism to be essentially open-ended idealities and thereby disrupts the logic of assimilation versus separation. If to be most Jewish is to be most German, and if the German realizes its highest potential by way of the Jewish, this serves to undo the idea of two ready-made cultural entities whose separateness or commonality could be in question.

Derrida on the Heteronomy of Belonging

Just as Rosenzweig had discerned the importance of election not, or not merely, as a central theoretical concept for something like a Jewish doctrine—since, after all, Rosenzweig does not approach Judaism as a doctrine or as a theological teaching—but through an interpretation of Jewish existence, so too Derrida is interested in what one might call a phenomenology of election, of what it means to belong to, or to be claimed by, a community or an identity. This concern permeates many of Derrida's writings from the early 1990s that grow out of, or are closely tied to, the insights developed in the "philosophical nationality" seminars. (It is also present in his earliest essay on Levinas, "Violence and Metaphysics," as well as in his essays on Edmond Jabès and Paul Celan.) In these writings, we see Derrida grappling with what he calls an "unease" with the implications of an identity that is imposed absolutely from outside, or from beyond. As we shall see by looking at three examples, the idea of (Jewish) chosenness, like that of exemplarity, is for Derrida both a chance to confront the troubling nature of all-too-ready-made identifications and a chance to call into question monolithic notions of identity.

Saying "We"

Thus, Derrida's reading of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi's book *Freud's Moses*, delivered as a lecture at the Freud House in London in 1994 and later published as the book *Archive Fever*, contains some powerful statements on the unease of Jewish election or Jewish belonging, particularly in the discussion of the final chapter of Yerushalmi's book, entitled "Monologue with Freud." In his book, Yerushalmi proposes to interpret Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* in the context of a reexamination of Freud's ties to Judaism, or to its secular counterpart, which Yerushalmi calls "Jewishness." Yerushalmi finds correspondence and other documentary sources that help him shed new light on what being Jewish meant to Freud and what the *Moses* book in particular conveys about his Jewish identity. The final chapter breaks with the rhetorical character of a scholarly book, in that, beginning with the salutation "Dear and most highly esteemed Professor Freud," it is written in the form of a letter. Yerushalmi employs this form in order to debate with Freud, face to face, as it were, and in what he describes as a Talmudic spirit, his interpretation of the Moses legend and the origins of Judaism, as well as the question of his Jewish allegiances. This "Monologue" is thus the fullest expression of Yerushalmi's personal investment in these questions, and it is acknowledged as such by Derrida, who elsewhere in *Archive Fever* conveys—or performs, as it were—his "own" investment in these questions.[19]

Derrida interprets Yerushalmi's letter to Freud as one of a couple of forceful gestures in *Freud's Moses* that serve in a sense to call Freud back to the covenant, to figurally recircumcise him. In discussing the "Monologue," Derrida calls attention to one sentence in particular: Explaining his decision to address Freud directly and to even "occasionally invite him to respond," Yerushalmi writes:

> In what is at issue here, indeed has been so all along, we both have, as Jews, an equal stake. Therefore in speaking of the Jews I shall not say "they." *I shall say "we."* The distinction is familiar to you.[20]

What Derrida wants to highlight in this "I shall say 'we'" and in similar gestures in Freud's Moses is what he calls "the dissymmetry and absolute heteronomy," even the "violence," involved in imposing an allegiance or a covenant on one who cannot answer.

> By definition, because he is dead and thus incapable of responding, Freud can only acquiesce. He cannot refuse this community at once proposed and imposed. He cannot but say "yes" to this covenant into which he must enter *one more time.* For he will have had to enter it, already, seven or eight days after his birth. *Muta-*

> *tis mutandis*, this is the situation of dissymmetry and absolute heteronomy in which a son finds himself on being circumcised after the seventh day and on being made to enter into a covenant at a moment when it is out of the question that he respond, sign, or countersign. (Archive 67–68/41)

And while Derrida takes circumcision to be paradigmatic for such a call, he also recognizes that to some extent, saying "we" to someone in the way that Yerushalmi here says "I shall say 'we'" to Freud is always also an imposition:

> The violence of this dissymmetry of *community* remains at once extraordinary and, precisely, most *common*. It is the origin of the *common*, happening each time we address someone, each time we call them while *supposing*, that is to say while *imposing* a "we." (Archive 68/41)

I shall have occasion in Chapter 7 to return to Derrida's discussion of Yerushalmi's treatment of Jewishness in *Freud's Moses* and in particular to the fact that in the face of this violent election, Derrida, more than (or less than) mobilizing something that could be called a critique, portrays himself as "trembling." By repeatedly noting his unease, Derrida suggests that there is something in this structure of election—in the heteronomous structure of saying "we"—that cannot simply be eliminated. Responding to Yerushalmi's identification, in his earlier book *Zakhor*, of remembrance with a Jewish tradition, and to his question in that book whether "the antonym of 'forgetting' is not 'remembering,' but justice," Derrida analyzes the unavoidable exemplarist "origin of the common" in terms of the "form of uniqueness" that is "never without violence":

> When I say that *I* tremble, I mean that *one* trembles, the "one" or the "*on*" trembles, whoever it is trembles: because the injustice of this justice can concentrate its violence in the very constitution of the *One* and of the *Unique*.

In Yerushalmi's line about "remembering" and "justice," Derrida continues,

> the words which make (me) tremble are only those which say the one, the difference of the One in the form of uniqueness . . . . The gathering into itself of the One is never without violence, nor is the self-affirmation of the Unique, the law of the archontic, the law of *consignation* . . . .

But, consistently with the analysis of the paradoxes of exemplarity in the "philosophical nationality" seminars and in *The Other Heading* (as discussed in the preceding chapter), Derrida views this One as comprising also an element of self-difference:

> As soon as there is the One, there is murder, wounding, traumatism. *L'Un se garde de l'autre*. The One guards against/keeps some of the other. It protects *itself* from the other, but, in the movement of this jealous violence, it comprises in itself, thus guarding it, the self-otherness or self-difference (the difference from within oneself) which makes it One. The "One differing, deferring from itself." The One as the Other. (Archive, 123–25/77–78)

Thus, the assertion of an identity of singularity comprises a violence that guards its singularity both against the outside and against its internal difference from itself. There can be no identity without this self-difference, and thus no identity without the violence that both acknowledges and opposes an internal otherness.[21]

The "Figure" of Judaism

The unease or violence of belonging is also explored in Derrida's 1991 interview with Elisabeth Weber on the question of Jewishness, "A Testimony Given . . . " This interview takes as its point of departure Derrida's successive engagements with Jewish themes, particularly that of circumcision. As Weber recalls in her opening question, in *Shibboleth* (1980), *The Post Card* (1976), and "Circumfession" (1989–90), Derrida had pursued circumcision both as a general figure of a "wound in writing" and as a "unique experience." (To this list one could of course add *Archive Fever* [which, in its lecture form, postdates this interview by three years], since part of it is a reading of Yerushalmi's "recircumcision" of Freud by way, in turn, of his reading of a dedication to Freud from his father that evokes the event of the son's circumcision.) This theme of circumcision (which I will not pursue here in depth) can thus be seen as running parallel to that of the singularity/universality of naming, signature, and translation that I analyzed in Chapter 3 as part of the elaboration of exemplarity in Derrida's work. In the interview with Weber, Derrida explicitly links circumcision to the exemplarity that he has been discussing in the "philosophical nationality" seminars—and he does so with reference to his own experience:

> This impossible undertaking [*gageure*, i.e., that of "circling around" the figure of circumcision] . . . perhaps engages precisely what happens, or in any case what describes the figure, very difficult to represent, and first of all for myself, of *my* experience or of the experience of my relation to . . . —I don't dare say to Judaism—let us say: to circumcision

—circumcision understood here as the sort of conjunction of singularity and universality that has been the interest of the "philosophical nationality" seminars, and in particular with reference to Jewish election or exemplarity:

> "Circumcision" for me could on the one hand signify the singular covenant of the Jewish people with its God, but just as much, on the other hand, could figure a sort of universal mark that one finds not only on man [*chez l'homme*], but also on [*chez*] woman and in [*dans*] all the peoples of the world, whether or not they have considered themselves to be elected, singular. (Weber, 73–75/40)

Having called his own "experience" of a relation to Judaism/circumcision, as well as circumcision itself, a "figure," Derrida wants to understand this "figurality" as something beyond a rhetorical troping or allegorization of Judaism.[22] To be confronted with the question of what circumcision/Judaism is as a "figure" is to be confronted with the problem of figurality as such:

> However I interpret or one interprets the fact that, as I'm told, I was born Jewish or am circumcised, I always find, I always find *myself* before a problem of figure, a *cas de figure*, as we say in French. It is not only a problem of rhetoric, a *cas de figure*, if Judaism is at once an absolutely singular trait not shared by all men and all women, but represents itself, as Judaism, as the figure of the human universal. (Weber, 75/40)

But this exemplarity of, or within, Judaism is also itself reproduced on a universal scale ("This exemplarist 'logic' is valid from people to people, from sex to sex, from nation to nation, etc." [Weber, 76/40]), and thus again each time in an exemplary way.

The exemplarist paradox that we encountered in the last chapter—as elaborated with respect to Fichte's Addresses and the idea of Europe—is now presented by Derrida as something he has always "struggled with" (*je me suis toujours débattu*) in particular by "battling" (*je me suis aussi battu*) against the way in which "certain groups, particularly Jews, but not only Jews, have been able to abuse this figure of exemplarity" (Weber, 76/40–41). Here this by now familiar paradox rests on the same purported universality of election that also informs Rosenzweig's understanding of election (as well as Levinas's and Cohen's): If to be Jewish is to "testify to the humanity of the human, to universality, to the responsibility for universality," if

> "we are the chosen people" means: we are witnesses par excellence and exemplarily to what a people can be, we are not only parties to the covenant with [*les alliés de*] God, the elected of God, but also God's witnesses, etc.,

then this logic of exemplarity leads to a radical instability of Jewish identity:

> If the self-identity of the Jew or of Judaism *were* to consist in this exemplarity, that is, in a certain non–self-identity—"I am this" meaning "I am this and the universal"—well then, the more one dislodges self-identity, the more one says "my own identity consists in not being identical to myself, in being foreign, non-coincident with myself," etc. the more one is Jewish! And at that moment, the word, the attribute "Jewish," the quality of "Jewish" and of "Judaism" are engaged in a bidding war without end [*surenchère sans fond*]. It makes it possible to say that the less one is what one is, the more one is Jewish, and, consequently, the less one is Jewish, the more one is Jewish . . . The logical proposition "I am Jewish" thus loses all assurance, it is swept up [*emportée*] in an ambition, a claim, an outbidding [*surenchère*] without end! (Weber, 76/41)

This would make it impossible to determine who in "fact" could "speak in the name of Judaism" (Weber, 77/41).

This accords with what Derrida describes as his experience of having "found himself" (in the sense, as he underlines in Heideggerian terms, of being, or finding oneself, "thrown") in a *malaise*. This *malaise*, he explains, stems not just from the instability of identity that he has just evoked, but "consists in . . . trying to think, without being able to dominate it, this paradoxical logic. But in trying, yes, to think it! To endure the experience of this logic" of exemplarity (Weber, 77/41). It is in the light of this *malaise* that Derrida proffers a self-interpretation of the textual corpus that Elisabeth Weber circumscribed at the interview's opening: These texts, he says, comprise both an affirmation and a denial of Jewishness—an attempt to give expression to a wariness and suspicion toward "those who accommodate themselves too easily to that logic [of exemplarity] and who sometimes abuse it" (Weber, 77/41).[23] What Derrida calls our attention to, then, in the interview with Weber, is that the heteronomy or violence of belonging that is the subject of his discussion of Yerushalmi's book on Freud in *Archive Fever* is of existential importance for the constitution or experience of identity.

Divided Identity

The complexities of identity and identification are also the subject of Derrida's book *Monolingualism of the Other, or The Prosthesis of Origin*. This text was first presented as a lecture in 1992, one year after the interview with Weber, at a conference in the United States that dealt with Francophone culture and politics. Derrida takes the occasion of this conference to speak about his own experience growing up as a Jew in Algeria, including the experience of anti-Jewish persecution during the war (a persecution that, as he also emphasizes in the interview with Weber, was undertaken by the French authorities in Algeria, rather than in accordance with German or Vichy policies[24]). Consistently with the *malaise* he had evoked in the interview with Weber, exemplarity is here presented not only as a concept but as a traumatic experience:

> For there are situations, experiences, and subjects that are, precisely, in a *position/situation* [*en* situation *de*] (but what does *to situate* mean in this case?) to testify exemplarily to [the reality of political and historical terror]. This exemplarity is no longer reducible to that of an example in a series. Rather, it would be the exemplarity—remarkable and remarking—that makes it possible to read in a more dazzling, intense, or even *traumatic* manner the truth of a universal necessity. The structure appears in the experience of wounding [*blessure*], of offense, of vengeance, and of the lesion. Of terror. . . .
>
> What status to assign to this exemplarity of re-mark? How to interpret the history of an example that allows the re-inscription of the universal structure of a law upon the body of an irreplaceable singularity in order thereby to render it remarkable? (Mono, 48–49/26)

Derrida's talk here of the "remarkable" and the "re-mark" recalls the singularity and universality of the mark or figure of circumcision. As in the discussion of Yerushalmi, Derrida here wants to see the "unique" mark against the background of a prior "antinomical duplicity." Since the main theme of *Monolingualism* is the unicity of language, this duplicity is articulated by means of two apparently antinomical propositions about the possibility of speaking only one language:

> 1. We only ever speak one language.
> 2. We never speak only one language. (Mono, 21/7, 23/8)

These propositions are paired by Derrida in order to express a primary or constitutive self-difference at the heart of any purported unity of language, idiom, or identity. Similarly to the *l'Un se garde de l'autre* that was a focal point in the discussion of Yerushalmi, these sentences are meant to point to a duplicity that precedes and constitutes the unity of identity. Commenting upon Abdelkebir Khatibi's portrayal of language as always already bilingual, or bi-language (*bi-langue*), and "divided,"[25] Derrida writes that this "division" (*division*)

> is why one writes and how one dreams of writing, perhaps. And that is why, two motivations instead of one, a single reason but a reason wrought by the said "division," that is why in always doing so one recollects, one troubles oneself/becomes uneasy [*on s'inquiète*], one goes in search of [*en quête de*] history and filiation. In this place of jealousy, in this place that is divided/shared [*partagé*] by vengeance and resentment [*ressentiment*], in this body impassioned by its own "division," before any other memory, writing destines itself, as if of its own accord, to anamnesis. (Mono, 22/8)

The "unease" of belonging that we first encountered in *Archive Fever* and in the Weber interview thus becomes an affirmation of history and filiation as possible only thanks to an identity that comprises self-difference. That we are here dealing with a paradoxical exemplarism is demonstrated by Derrida with the following enigmatic utterance:

> I am the only Franco-Maghrebian. (Mono, 29ff./12ff.)

On one level, it appears that Derrida's point in making this pronouncement is to signal what separates, empirically, his cultural situation or heritage from that of the other participants at the conference on Francophonie at which the text is presented. (I will not go into the differentiations Derrida proposes in order to describe his unique situation vis-à-vis the other participants; for details, see Mono, 29–31/12–13.) On another level, Derrida wishes to signal the situation—unique among the conference participants—of having had his French citizenship, as a Jew in Algeria, revoked and then reinstated during the war (Mono, 32–37/14–18). His line is thus meant to "present myself . . . , in parody, as the exemplary Franco-Maghrebian," by means of his testimony to this experience. Testimony, or attestation, is here understood in terms of exemplarity, as it places a singular story in the service of a generic label or general situation—in this case, the "Franco-Maghrebian":

> As regards so enigmatic a value as that of attestation, or even of exemplarity in testimony, . . . What happens when someone resorts to describing a "situation" that is claimed to be singular—mine, for example—to describing it and testifying to it in terms that go beyond it, in a language whose generality takes on a value that is in some sense structural, universal, transcendental, or ontological? (Mono 39–40/19–20)

The exemplarity involved in attestation consists in the fact that "just anybody" (*le premier-venu*) may take the attestation to mean that "What holds for me [the one who testifies], irreplaceably, also applies to all." That is, the testimony is, as testimony, always unique, but it also, as testimony, demands to be applied to a limitless number of "similar" examples.[26] This is the combined unicity/monolingualism and duality/bilingualism that Derrida seeks to get across in *Monolingualism*—an exemplarity of identity that at the same time points to a self-difference or division that underlies all identification.

In a turn that brings us back to the ethical implications of this difference-to-self and of the "exemplarist" interpretation of cultural identity that Derrida is here proposing (the ethical aspect of exemplarity/election that we highlighted at the end of Chapter 4), Derrida also describes this unicity/duality using the Levinasian terms "substitution" and "hostage":

> Anybody who happens by [*le premier-venu*] infers the following: "What holds for me, irreplaceably, also applies to all. Substitution is in progress; it has already taken effect. Everyone can say the same thing for themselves and of themselves. It suffices to hear me; I am the universal hostage." (Mono, 40/20)

This language of the hostage reminds us that belonging is a heteronomous affair.[27] But the conjunction of identity and difference in mono/bilingualism also comprises, Derrida insists, an element of *autonomy*. On the politics of language that held sway in the Algeria of his youth that he sums up under the heading "the interdict" (briefly, this was the devalorization of Arabic or Berber languages in favor of the French, which nevertheless represented a distant European culture or "pole" [Mono, chap. 6 and 91/55], and the lack of recourse to any Jewish language or "at-home-ness"/"own-ness" [*chez-soi*] [Mono, 90–91/54–55]), he writes:

> All culture is originarily colonial. . . . Every culture institutes itself through the unilateral imposition of some "politics" of language. . . . This sovereign establishment . . . always follows or precedes culture like its shadow. . . .
>
> The monolingualism of the other would be *first of all* that sovereignty, that law originating from elsewhere, certainly,

—and thus heteronomous, like an identity or citizenship or language that is imposed from without—

> but also primarily the very language of the Law. And the Law as Language. Its experience would be ostensibly *autonomous*, because I have to speak this law and appropriate it in order to understand it

—in accordance with the classic Kantian definition of autonomy:

> *as if* I was giving it to myself. (Mono, 68–69/39)

Just as identity in the sense that Derrida is exploring is both single/singular and divided/self-different, the condition he is here describing of both receiving and carrying forward an identity or a tradition is one of "auto-heteronomy":

> The madness of the law places its possibility abidingly [à *demeure*] inside the dwelling [*foyer*] of this auto-heteronomy. (Mono 69/39)[28]

Rosenzweig and Derrida on Testimony, Blood, Language

The self-difference at the heart of identity and language is expressed in one further enigmatic line thought up by Derrida:

> I have only one language and it is not mine. (Mono, 47/25, cf. 44–45/23)

Just as there is a colonialism of all culture, so too everyone should be able to say this of him- or herself (to "declare [it] under oath," as Derrida writes):

> My "own" language is to me an unassimilable language. My language, the only one I hear myself speak [or: take myself to be speaking, *m'entende parler*] and agree to speak [*m'entende à parler*] is the language of the other.[29]

Monolingualism of the Other, as I have mentioned, was first presented as a lecture in 1992; it thus forms what we might call the tail end of Derrida's work surrounding "philosophical nationality." However, the expanded book version was published only in 1996. In the book, in connection with the third of the three politico-linguistic "interdicts"—the unavailability of any Jewish "ownness"—Derrida takes the opportunity, in a long footnote (Mono, 91–114n/78–93n8), to import from his work in the "philosophical nationality" seminar cycle and associated public lectures some reflections on language and alienation. In order to lay out a sort of preliminary "topography," "taxonomy," or "typology" for what Derrida envisions might be a "general study to come" entitled "The Monolingualism of the Host: Jews of the Twentieth Century, the Mother Tongue, and the Language of the Other, on/from Both Sides of the Mediterranean," the primary resource Derrida cites is what Franz Rosenzweig proposed in the way of "a *general* putting-in-perspective [*mise en perspective*] of our problem." Rosenzweig, Derrida continues,

> unfolded the question of the Jews and of "their" foreign language, if I may say so. He did this in a more "theoretical" and formalized manner. Whether or not one

subscribes to his interpretations, they offer a sort of systematic topography and one which is all the more precious. (Mono, 92n/79n8)

On this and other occasions when Derrida discusses Rosenzweig's theory of Judaism and language, his focus is on the opening pages of part 3 book 1 of the *Star* (which I also drew on in my opening discussion of Rosenzweig in this chapter). In view of his emphasis on the originary alienation/dividedness of cultural identity, it is not surprising that Derrida highlights what Rosenzweig has to say about the "holy land": the fact that for Rosenzweig the "'eternal people,' unlike all the others, 'do not begin with autochthony'" (S, 333/300, quoted in Mono, 92n/79n8). Similarly, the emphasis in *Monolingualism* on the role of testimony in communicating or constituting identity finds its echo in Derrida's careful reading of *Zeugen-Bezeugen-Erzeugen* in those pages of the *Star*. He points out that the self-generation or self-engendering (*Erzeugen*) of the people as eternal is described both in physical terms (fire and blood) and as a bearing-witness, a *Zeugnis*. The continuity, or eternity, of the "generations" (*Geschlechter*; S, 331/298) is assured by this testimony.[30] With this reading, Derrida wants to stress what we have already highlighted: that the equivalences between *Erzeugen*, *Zeugen*, and *Bezeugen* should prevent us from taking Rosenzweig's talk of blood in this passage to be simply organicist or racist, even if we cannot deny that it has such connotations.

In order to make this point, Derrida explicitly contrasts his interpretation of this passage with that of Stéphane Mosès in his book-length commentary on Rosenzweig's *Star*.[31] Mosès's interpretation is problematic in that it presents Rosenzweig as arriving at the concept of "the one people" by way of two oppositions rather than only one: he discusses the opposition between blood community and spiritual community that is laid out in the section "Blood and Spirit" (S, 331–32/298–99) as if it were completely separate from the opposition between the Jews and the peoples of the world that is the focus of the very next section entitled "The Peoples and the Land of Their Home [*Heimat*]" (S, 332–33/299–300). Derrida's discussion rightly presupposes, I believe (though he does not state this explicitly), that this must be seen as one and the same opposition: the peoples of the world who are rooted in history, territory, and so on, are also the communities founded on spiritual values rather than on "blood." What prompts Mosès to treat these two distinctions—blood/spirit and historical peoples / eternal people—which follow on each other so closely that there scarcely seems to be a break between them, separately? Derrida speculates whether Mosès may have been motivated by the wish to shield Rosenzweig's talk of blood and generation from any suspicion of geneticism or racism. For treating the blood/spirit distinction separately from the history/eternity distinction enables Mosès to say of the former that it does not serve to differentiate the Jews *uniquely*, without denying the obvious fact that Rosenzweig speaks of only *one* people that is eternal, as opposed to the historical peoples of the world. Regarding the blood-based-ness of community as something generic and generalizable to any community —and indeed Mosès goes so far as to "translate" Rosenzweig's "blood community" into the contemporary term "ethnic community" and to say of "blood community" that it represents "a poor choice of words" on Rosenzweig's part—allows Mosès to reduce Rosenzweig's talk of blood, and thus his enigmatic conception of "the one people," to a standard category that could be applied to given empirical "examples" of community.[32]

Of course, Derrida is no more eager to embrace an organicist discourse than Mosès is. But his understanding of what sets off Rosenzweig's discussion from organicism is more persuasive, in that it imposes a caution about conflating Rosenzweig's talk of blood and generation with *Blut-und-Boden* (blood-and-soil) ideologies, especially in view of the peculiar Jewish relation described by Rosenzweig (and discussed above) to a holy land that is not a territory.

But what is more crucially at stake in Derrida's critical response to Mosès is that, rather than trying to fit it into contemporary empirical categories such as the "ethnic," he takes seriously Rosenzweig's characterization of the Jews as unique and exemplary. The rest of Derrida's discussion of part 3 book 1 is oriented toward making sense of this exemplarity. This is done, first, by way of a lengthy discussion of Rosenzweig's understanding of Jewish non-territoriality and non-autochthony, which for Derrida again reflects an originary alienation in identity, an originary distance in being *chez-soi*. Derrida especially stresses what he calls "nostalgia"[33]—the *Sehnsucht*/yearning that for Rosenzweig describes the sense in which the Jewish people "have" a (holy) land (S, 333/300)—as constitutive of peoplehood. On one level, Derrida sees this nostalgia as typifying all national affirmation, which, he says with reference to past analyses pursued in the "philosophical nationality" seminars, essentially involves a desire or a movement for a return of some kind. In this respect, there is no sense of home without a sense of having left home; and rootedness must not be thought of as the opposite of the condition of being uprooted. But if the Jewish people is exemplary, he adds, its situation of longing must also be exemplary for all longing, it testifies "better than anyone" to this longing. This sort of exemplarity is hard to grasp: what does it mean to say of an example or a testimony, which is supposed to represent a general experience or state of affairs, that it exemplifies or testifies "better"? This is the challenge of what Rosenzweig's account—which cannot be recuperated as a view of numerous analogous versions of (up)rootedness—gives us to think. As Derrida puts it, it might not be doing this account justice to make it stand, as one example among others, for a general profound insight into the experience of belonging.

Derrida follows his discussion of the blood community and the idea of the "holy land" with a look at Rosenzweig's understanding of the Jewish linguistic situation in terms of "holy language." (We may recall that the reason Derrida imports part of his early reflections on Rosenzweig into the long footnote in *Monolingualism* is that Rosenzweig's understanding of this linguistic situation appears to him to provide a useful framework for reflecting on the linguistic situation of the Jews in Algeria at the time of his youth.) In the next section, I will not follow Derrida's presentation of Rosenzweig's theory, but will present the latter on its own (though in a way that I believe is compatible with Derrida's understanding of it). I will then turn to Derrida's treatment of Rosenzweig's notion of "holy language" and its implications by looking at his discussion of the famous exchange on this subject between Rosenzweig and Gershom Scholem.

"Guests at Our Own Table": Rosenzweig on Judaism as Translation

That Rosenzweig's talk of blood/life versus soil/death is not simply organicist becomes especially clear when he moves to what distinguishes the Jews linguistically from the other peoples. While the Jews are aligned with life in placing their trust in blood and in foregoing an attachment to lifeless land, in the arena of language it seems that it is the other *Völker* who are on the side of life: a language "may be called the most vital [aspect] of the *Volk*, indeed, its very life" (S, 334/301). While the fact that eternity is guaranteed by blood is aligned with its vitality, the eternity of the language of the Jews is due to the fact that that language is not alive. Yet, this language is not dead either; only the languages of the world, so-called living languages, are capable of dying (as are the peoples to whose fates they are bound).[34] Rather, this language, which is the only language proper to the Jews, is "holy," reserved for prayer—for speaking with God. It is excluded from the realm of human communication. The Jews thus do not speak a language in any ordinary sense. To "his brother," the Jew

> cannot speak at all. With him, the glance communicates better than the word, and nothing is Jewish in a deeper sense than a profound distrust of the power of the word and a fervent belief in the power of silence. (S, 335/302)

On the other hand, the eternal people does speak, in a sense, the language of its "external fates," which is either "the language of the people whose guest it happens to be" or "the language of the people from whose country it emigrated and from whom it received the strength to settle, which it never has in its own right, . . . but only as having come from someplace else [only as *Zugewanderte*]," the prime examples of such languages being Yiddish and Judeo-Spanish (S, 334/301). Just as the Jews do not have a homeland, just as the legend of their founding is of the patriarch who came from the outside (*zugewandert*), "with God's command to leave the land of his birth and go to a land that God will show him," just as this people becomes a people only in exile (both Egyptian and Babylonian) (S, 333/300), so it speaks, if it speaks at all, always in foreign languages. It never "becomes one" with the languages it speaks:

> Even when it speaks the language of its host people, a vocabulary of its own [*ein eigener Wortschatz*] or at least its own choices from the general vocabulary, its own word order, its own feeling for linguistic beauty and ugliness, betray the fact that the language—is not its own [*daß die Sprache—nicht die eigene ist*]. (S, 335/301)

The Jews are thus strangers in a double sense: on the one hand, they are strangers to the land they inhabit and to the languages they speak. On the other, they are strangers to what is most proper to them: the holy land is given to them only as an object of yearning (*Sehnsucht*), belonging, as holy land, only to God; and the holy language is one they have no access to in everyday life, but makes itself felt only indirectly in their "own" speech of the "host languages," in their communal silence,[35] and in the silent written signs of Scripture.[36] Thus, the Jew's "linguistic life always feels itself to be in a strange land [*Sein Sprachleben fühlt sich stets in der Fremde*]" (S, 335–36/302).

If the Jewish situation thus involves a constant negotiation between two kinds of foreignness, two *Fremdheiten*, one can say that it is a situation of translation or *Übersetzung* in the very sense elaborated by Rosenzweig in his writings on this subject—a sense that bears a close relationship, in various degrees, to what one might call the "critical" theories of translation advanced by Benjamin, Heidegger, and Derrida.[37] Rosenzweig shares with these authors the view that translation is not simply an instrument of mediation between particular languages, but an originary or constitutive linguistic and philosophical operation.[38]

It has been remarked that Rosenzweig was addicted to succinct formulas.[39] Perhaps no formulation in his writings on translation is more succinct (or more addictive) than the one that opens the 1926 essay entitled "Scripture and Luther":

> To translate means to serve two masters. Which is why no one can do it. Which is why it is, like all things no one is able to do in theory, everyone's task in practice. Everyone must translate, and everyone does. (SL, 749/47)

This view of the necessity of translation is linked to Rosenzweig's conception of "the one language": a single "language" or linguisticity that is both the basis and the vanishing point of the translation process. "There is only One Language," writes Rosenzweig in the "Afterword" to his book of translations of Jehuda Halevi's poetry: "All human speech, all foreign languages that are ever spoken and will ever be spoken are contained, at least germinally [*keimhaft*], in it." Which is to say that "there is no particular feature to a given language [no *Spracheigentümlichkeit*]—be it in dialects, in nurseries, or in class specificities—that cannot be detected at least as a trace [*keimhaft*] in any other." This "essential unity of all language" goes hand in hand with the "commandment of universal human communication" (*Gebot der allmenschlichen Verständigung*) that founds both the possibility and the task or imperative of translation. It is imperative to translate, "so that the day of the harmony [*Eintracht*] of languages may come" (Nachwort, 3/171). Thus, the most momentous translations—the exemplary case for Rosenzweig being Luther's translation of the Bible—constitute a "colossal step in the unification of the peoples' Babel" (SL, 756/54).

Just as harmony, *Eintracht*, requires a plurality of languages, the anti-Babelian event is not the simple erasure of linguistic difference. It cannot occur "between languages" but only "in every individual language" (Nachwort, 4/171). What this means can be clarified by looking at Rosenzweig's characterization of translation. He proceeds from a distinction proposed by Schleiermacher between those translations that "[leave] the author in peace as far as possible, and [move] the reader toward him" and those that "[leave] the reader in peace as far as possible, and [move] the author toward him."[40] But while Schleiermacher sees these two methods as being at odds with each other, Rosenzweig recognizes that each is involved to some degree in any given translation. He cites the "rule" Luther gave for his translation of the Bible: that it be strictly literal at times (literally that it "keep the words stiff," *die Worte steif zu behalten*), but that it "give only their meaning [*Sinn*]" at others. In the former cases, Luther sees fit to demand of the reader to "allow room for the Hebrew language [*der hebräischen Sprache Raum zu lassen*]," because "it does a better job than our German can." (Luther speaks of "solche Worte behalten, gewohnen"—*behalten*: to keep or hold such words, and *gewohnen*: to accustom them, that is, to become ourselves accustomed to them by accustoming them to the language, by allowing them to dwell [*wohnen*] in it; today, we might say: to "customize" the language.) But while Luther seems to unify Schleiermacher's two methods into a single rule, Rosenzweig represents their duality by speaking of the rule on the one hand—according to which only the meaning is given—and the exception (*Ausnahme*) on the other—the cases in which the words are kept "stiff." Despite his earlier rejection of Schleiermacher's artificial antithesis between the two methods, he takes the exception (*Ausnahme*) out (*ausnehmen*); and despite his equivocal pronouncement that exceptions warrant attention simply because they are "more instructive and more interesting" than rules, he proceeds to demonstrate that exception is a necessary condition for any translation (SL, 751–52/50).

First, Rosenzweig emphasizes that Luther's criterion for deciding when an exception should be made is a question of faith. It is above all "God's living word" that calls for the stiff, literal translation. (To Luther, of course, this is an exceptional occurrence in the Hebrew Bible.) Since the essay "Scripture and Luther" was written while Rosenzweig was already working with Martin Buber on a new German translation of the Bible, and since Rosenzweig elsewhere makes clear that the form to which Bible translation must strive is one that takes account of the Bible's function as a substitute for hearing God's word "directly,"[41] it is clear that the measure of Luther's success, and of Rosenzweig's own, is the extent to which their translations are exceptional in making exceptions.

Further, Rosenzweig goes on to argue that "free adaptations or imitations [*Nachdichtungen*] that seek somehow to convey/carry [*herantragen*] the meaning of the original (or what they take to be its meaning) to the reader"—or, in other words, that fail to make exceptions—are not to be equated with translations, but are simply new originals (SL, 749/48, 755/53).

(Rosenzweig jokes that accepting imitations as translations would effectively mean accepting Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* as a "translation" of Plato [SL, 750/48].)

In Rosenzweig's "Afterword" to his translation of Jehuda Halevi's poetry, this distinction is even clearer. There, the imitation or *Nachdichtung* is termed *Eindeutschung des Fremden*, meaning "Germanization of the foreign," the appropriation of the foreign by the German. The task of the translator, by contrast, is to "replicate the foreign tone in its foreignness," that is, *das Deutsche umzufremden*—meaning, roughly, to transform the German by way of the foreign. While *Eindeutschung* amounts to translating into the German that preexists, *Umfremdung* is a creative linguistic activity that leaves the language in a changed state. In this sense, translation is constitutive of all speech, all *Sprache*, all linguistic activity: "The creative achievement of translation must coincide with none other than the creative achievement of speaking [*Sprechen*] itself" (Nachwort, 3/170).[42]

But though a translation must leave the language changed—or rather, for this very reason—it must also contend with the language as it has been changed by past translations. The foreignness that is "allowed room" in the language must be accommodated or brought in using that language, otherwise there will be no translation. Rosenzweig writes that Luther's translation, as a singular event in German linguistic history, poses an obstacle to any new attempt to translate the Bible into German. This obstacle cannot and may not be ignored or circumvented; it is both possible and imperative that it be "leaped over" (*übersprungen*) (SL, 758/56).

This stance is reflected in Buber and Rosenzweig's translation practice, in particular in a procedure that Rosenzweig, in a conversation reported by Rudolf Stahl, describes as being neither the complete invention nor the true discovery of German equivalents for Hebrew words: "We were wary of neologisms and used them only where they were absolutely necessary. We *found* a word and then, as evidence, leafed so long in the Grimm [dictionary] or wherever, until we had found the word formations. Thus, we introduced nothing new into the German language, but only included the old" (emphasis added). Thus, when Stahl points out a verb in German that occurs only as an intransitive but that in the translation appears as a transitive, Rosenzweig responds with a single literary citation containing the usage, adding, "This use of the word is not new. It appears just like this in Tieck's Oktavian. It follows that it is not grammatically incorrect."

But the conversation with Stahl also reminds us that *Umfremdung* is always a two-way street: If the German ear is strained by an unfamiliar use of a verb, the Jewish reader is taken aback by what today might be termed the "violent" content of the Buber-Rosenzweig translation. When Stahl complains that the explicit language regarding sacrifice makes the book of Leviticus seem foreign, Rosenzweig responds that this is precisely the aim of the translation: "You should be repulsed. You should be horrified. Only then do you approach the originary text [*Urtext*]" (GS I.2, 1164).

Let me return now to my suggestion that the Jewish situation according to Rosenzweig is a situation of translation by considering a letter that Rosenzweig wrote to Gershom Scholem in January 1921 on the subject of translation. Rosenzweig had recently begun translating liturgical texts for home use; and he had sent Scholem (whom he knew only indirectly, and who had polemicized on translations in the past) a copy of his published translation of the "Thanksgiving after the Meal" ("Tischdank").[43] Scholem responded critically to what he perceived as the lacking Jewish elements in the translation, its recourse to a "church language" (*kirchliche Sprache*), its "residual" "Lutheran language" (*Luthersprache*).[44] In his next letter to Scholem, Rosenzweig explains the "foreignness" detected by Scholem, in particular the "Christian" sound of the prayer:

> Whoever translates into the German, must to some extent translate into the Christian. . . . Any arbitrary, or any conscious evasion of this would be utterly impossible.[45]

Explaining that his purpose in translating the prayer is to allow Jews and non-Jews who do not read Hebrew to be guests in his home, Rosenzweig recasts this task as one that is paradigmatic for Judaism:

> This is our troublesome/perilous situation [*Notlage*]. But indeed we are in it. Thus, for example, we are guests even at our own table [*Gäste selbst an unserm eigenen Tisch*], we ourselves, I myself. For as long as we speak German (and even when we speak Hebrew, modern Hebrew, the Hebrew of "1921"!!), we cannot get around this path that only ever leads us to what is our own [*unser Eigenes*] from out of the foreign [*aus dem Fremden*]. (GS I.2, 699–700)

The task of translation—to renew what is one's own by way of the foreign (Nachwort, 3/170)—is here construed as an existentially necessary task for the Jews, who can only access what is their own by way of the foreign, by performing the necessary *Umfremdung* of the foreign. The existential dangers of not translating are twofold: On the one hand, there is the danger of *Nachdichten*, imitation, generating a "new original." In the case of a dialogue between a "speaking Volk" and a "hearing Volk," this would render the "speaking Volk" obsolete. *Nachdichten* thus corresponds to the danger of total assimilation—which translation as *Umfremdung* resists by altering the so-called target language.

On the other hand, there is the danger of leaving the original untranslated, which results in the superfluousness of the "hearing Volk." Like total assimilation, such a result is desirable only out of "an egotism that believes it can fulfill itself only in its own, personal or national, existence," and that wishes to pervert the world into a desert (SL, 49–50/48).

Above all, however, the Jews cannot not translate, because they are always in a state of *Zuwanderung*—of coming over from elsewhere. Since they have no ground to stand on, and can speak no language of their own, translation is the necessary condition of their existence.

But just as the Jews never come over from a particular origin, Judaism as translation has no source language; it is translation without a source. If translation, *Übersetzung*, always takes place over a spatial and temporal "abyss," as Rosenzweig writes in his "Afterword" (Nachwort, 3/171), Judaism as translation remains in suspension over that abyss. If Judaism as *Umfremdung* consists in "allowing room" for itself in the "host" language, this room can be nothing like a territory or a dominion within that language, since the Jews' existence depends on their being without a territory. Rather, Judaism would introduce its own groundlessness, its abyss, into the "host" language.

Likewise, *Umfremdung* is not a matter of "carrying" the Jewish "over" into the foreign. Like the cantor in the anecdote with which we opened this chapter, who, in translating the shofar, can do no more (and no less) than put its meaning in suspension, *Umfremdung* is a perpetual suspension of meaning in translation. The Jews and their language exist only in translation, in and as the *Umfremdung* that constitutes translation, in and as the exception that makes translation possible.

Derrida and the Scholem-Rosenzweig Debate on Sacred Language and Translation

The exchange between Rosenzweig and Scholem, in which Rosenzweig articulates so clearly the implications of viewing Judaism in terms of translation, has a fascinating postscript in the "Confession on Our Language" ("Bekenntnis über unsere Sprache") that Scholem addressed to Rosenzweig on the occasion of the latter's fortieth birthday on December 26, 1926.[46] As we have seen, in the 1921 exchange on translation, Rosenzweig was critical of Scholem for implicitly operating with a too-simple division between a Jewish and a Christian idiom. Such a division conflicted with Rosenzweig's sense that no direct access is possible to something like a Jewish language—in accordance with his reflections on Hebrew as a holy language that is not available as a straightforward medium of communication. Scholem's open letter may perhaps indeed be read as a "confession," or perhaps even as a concession, that the movement toward a new Hebrew, a *Neuhebräisch* (to recall the title of Rosenzweig's essay on this subject) suitable for everyday use, could not belie its rootedness in a holy language in the sense that Rosenzweig had elaborated. This "confession" thus of course also concerns Scholem's and Rosenzweig's divergence of attitudes toward the Zionist return to Palestine, which, along with their exchanges on translation, had also determined their earlier relationship.[47]

Indeed, Rosenzweig intimates in his above-mentioned letter to Scholem on the "Tischdank" translation that what is at stake in their disagreement on liturgical translation is not limited to questions of "philology or literature," but is connected to the fact that "for you [Scholem] it is a central dogma that Judaism is clinically dead [*scheintot*] and will only return to live 'over there' ['*drüben*']" (GS I.2, 741). In an essay written to introduce the French- and English-language publications of Scholem's "Confession," Stéphane Mosès situates it as "reveal[ing] [Scholem's] profound disheartenment with Zionism, at least in its concrete manifestation, and an almost apocalyptic despair at the process of secularization of Judaism taking place before his eyes."[48] Whether or not Scholem's views at this time were indeed so despairing,[49] his description of the danger harbored by the use of Hebrew in the everyday certainly is dramatic: The renewal or "actualization" of Hebrew represents an "abyss of a holy language" that has been "plunged into our children" and that surely will "break open again" one day. "We live in this language above an abyss, almost all of us with the sureness of the blind, but will we not—we, or those who come after us—fall in, once we see?" "In a language where he is invoked back a 1000-fold into our life, God will not remain silent."[50]

This final exchange of sorts between Scholem and Rosenzweig is the focus of a large section of Derrida's seminar during 1986–87—a section that he also partly reworked into a series of stand-alone lectures.[51] Derrida frames his discussion of Scholem's "Confession" within the problematic of "sacred" versus "secular" language. The separate title given to the seminar of 1986–87, "The Theologico-Political," reflects Derrida's intention to focus specifically on problems of philosophical nationality and exemplarism as they become articulated in texts with a theological dimension—such as, as we saw above, Rosenzweig's treatment of Jewish and Christian existence. But in the discussion of sacred versus secular language, there are obvious continuities with Derrida's treatment of the role of language in exemplarity elsewhere in the "philosophical nationality" cycle. As we discussed in the last chapter, a central interest of Derrida's in that context is to understand the debate about nationalism as a dilemma between two opposing views of language. The ordinary "political" critique of nationalism is generally allied with a view of language as an exchangeable instrument of communication—this is the view Derrida sometimes calls "linguistic technologism." To this he juxtaposes the insight that concept is not divorceable from form, the view, famously advanced by Benjamin, that there is something essential about language that exceeds its instrumental function. But the latter essentialization of language can also be appropriated for particularist ends. The dilemma between these views, as we saw, is: Can there be a thought of the idiom—of non-instrumental language that takes account of particularity—that escapes this alternative?

In the seminar on the "Theologico-Political," the analogous juxtaposition is between Spinoza and Scholem on the question of sacred language—a question, however, that is inseparable from how each of these thinkers understands Jewish historico-political existence. Thus, Derrida discusses Spinoza's position in the *Theologico-Political Treatise* that the sacredness of Scripture is not to be found in the words themselves, but relates only to the things spoken about.[52] But Derrida finds that, rather than authorizing a phenomenology of sacred things, Spinoza goes on to deny sacredness even to the "things themselves" and imputes it instead to the use that is made of them, or to the experiential relation that one has with them. Thus, for Spinoza, just as "a thing is called sacred and Divine when it is designed for promoting piety, and continues [to be] sacred so long as it is religiously used," so too

> Words gain their meaning solely from their usage, and if they are arranged . . . so as to move those who read them to devotion, they will become sacred, and the book so written will be sacred also. But if their usage afterwards dies out so that the words have no meaning . . . then the words and the book will lose both their use and their sanctity.[53]

Derrida emphasizes the "universalism" of Spinoza's position here, along with its linguistic relativism—no particular thing is sacred; sacredness can attach to any given thing—and he also links it to Spinoza's interpretation of Jewish election as nonessential to Jewish existence (a matter Derrida had discussed earlier in the seminar).[54] Spinoza thus stands for the critical vigilance that is conventionally brought to bear on nationalism, chauvinism, and election understood as mere particularism.

If Spinoza's position is thus analogous to the "linguistic technologism" Derrida discusses earlier, then Scholem's letter is an extreme form of the opposing view that language has an essence that exceeds its instrumentality. What Derrida stresses, then, about this letter is Scholem's perception of Zionism's degradation of Hebrew to a means of communication as "an inner evil, an evil that is anything but accidental."[55] Derrida links this view explicitly to Benjamin—the thinker who, in the earlier discussion, stands for the critique of linguistic technologism, and who of course was Scholem's most important early interlocutor:

> This linguistic evil . . . does not only affect a means of communication. For it precisely degrades into a means of communication a language originarily or essentially destined for something entirely other than information. One transforms a language and, first of all, names (all this, as we will see, is supported by a very Benjaminian interpretation of the essence of language as nomination) into an informative medium.[56]

As Derrida points out, in speaking of such a degradation of language in a "confession" to Rosenzweig Scholem grants a certain legitimacy to Rosenzweig's interpretation of holy language. Scholem's letter is written in the first person plural, from the point of view of the "Zionist undertaking" in Palestine. Scholem describes this "undertaking" as facing a situation in which "there is talk of many things that could make us fail; there is talk more than ever today about the Arabs," but there is also a failure to recognize the "other threat that confronts us," that of the "'actualization' of Hebrew."[57] Derrida's reading calls attention to how these lines introduce or reflect a division between two different kinds of danger as well as between the discourses about these dangers—the political-pragmatic sphere in which one "speaks about the Arabs" and the sphere in which the sacredness of language can be recognized. The sphere of the everyday, of politics, is the one in which, in Scholem's words, "one believes that language has been secularized [*verweltlicht*], that one has removed from it its apocalyptic thorn [*ihr den apokalyptischen Stachel ausgezogen zu haben*]."[58] This vision of separate spheres—secular and sacred/holy—accords with Rosenzweig's division between the historico-political life of peoples and the Jewish existence that is characterized by holy language/land/law.[59] Scholem's recognition of the "evil" of the secularization of Hebrew is a fear that the political sphere will take over language, or will become "total":

> The linguistic evil is total, it has no limit, first of all because it is entirely political. The evil stems from the fact that the Zionists—those who believe themselves Zionists and who are, in fact, as the holders of this power, nothing other than falsifiers of Zionism—do not understand the essence of language. They treat this abyssal mystery as a problem—worse, as a local, specific, circumscribed, technolinguistic or technopolitical problem.[60]

Again, this analysis is in line with the alliance Derrida identifies between political critiques or understandings of nationality and the denial that language has an essence beyond its instrumentality.

So far we have been reading Scholem's letter as an acknowledgment of his closeness to Rosenzweig's understanding of holy language. But the letter also has consequences for an understanding of Judaism as translation such as the one we saw Rosenzweig developing in his essays and correspondence on translation.

The question of translatability enters into Derrida's reading of Scholem's "Confession" in a way that is reminiscent of his work on translation that we discussed in the final section of Chapter 3. In "Des Tours de Babel," Derrida saw the "Babelian performance" as the imposition not simply of a universal translatability, but of a "translatable-untranslatable name" that both "delivers a universal reason" and "simultaneously limits its universality" (Babel 218/174–75). Regarding Scholem's "Confession," Derrida asks whether there is something like a meta-language—the German of the letter, for instance—or a neutral medium that enables Scholem to thematize the sacredness of the Hebrew language. After all, German is the language that Scholem and Rosenzweig have in common, while Hebrew "is a language in the name of which, in view of which, out of which [*depuis laquelle*] they speak together" and is thus "the *subject of the letter*." However, Derrida wants to emphasize that the logic at work in Scholem's letter does not entitle us to envision a "third," neutral language, a "medium" which would "[permit] the passage" between sacred and profane language "and to say one and the other [*dire l'un et l'autre*], translating one into the other, appealing from one to the other."[61] Within the logic of Scholem's letter, to insist on the absence of such a neutral medium means to call into question the distinction between sacred and secular language, to question the very notion of secularization, as Scholem does:

> One believes that language has been secularized [*verweltlicht*], that one has removed from it its apocalyptic thorn. But this is surely not true; the secularization [*Verweltlichung*] of language is only a *façon de parler*, a ready-made phrase [*eine Phrase*]. It is absolutely impossible to empty out the words that are filled to bursting, unless one does so at the expense of language itself. The ghostly Volapük that we speak here on the street [*auf der Gasse*] points precisely to that expressionless linguistic world [*Sprachwelt*] in which the "secularization" [*"Säkularisierung"*] of language is possible, could alone be possible.[62]

Derrida ties together these questions of language as a neutral, "expressionless," medium and of the emptiness of "secularization" by asking:

> What if, in fact, *there were no* third language, no language in general, no neutral language within which were possible, in order to take place within it, the contamination of the sacred by the profane, the corruption of names (Spinoza), the opposition of the holy and the secular? . . . What if this neutralization by recourse to the third, already to a kind of metalinguistic arbiter, were also a positivist naturalization of the supernatural?[63]

Going back to Rosenzweig's theory of translation and his exchange with Scholem on translation, we can say that it is this insight into the absence of a third, neutral linguistic medium that leads to an understanding of translation as *Umfremdung*, as an estranging-altering linguistic confrontation. Scholem's calling into question of the sacred/secular distinction can be extended to his disagreement with Rosenzweig about how to bring Hebrew into German: it can be read as a recognition that no pure access to the holy language is possible, and that to claim the holy language as holy is a treacherous undertaking.

It is no accident that the theory of language Scholem is operating with here, and that Derrida is meditating on, is one of language as "name"—the context of Scholem's theory, drawn from his studies of the Kabbalah, is illuminated by Mosès in his accompanying article.[64] For our purposes, we can recall our earlier discussion of Derrida's work on translatable-untranslatable names, names that resist inclusion into any language, as a way to understand how singularity can be preserved in and despite language-as-generalization.

What is special about the “Confession” is that in it Scholem points up the perilousness of a language of names—in a way that is perhaps reminiscent of the passage by Blanchot that Derrida cites in the “Introduction” to “The Origin of Geometry,” in which Blanchot explores the idea of language (the name) as the “annihilation” of the thing.[65]

The high stakes of thinking a language of names are made clear in Scholem’s suggestion that beneath each linguistic utterance/“name” lurks an “abyss”:

> Language is Name [*Sprache ist Namen*]. The power of language is enclosed/decided [*beschlossen*] in the name, the abyss of language is sealed within it. It is no longer possible for us to invoke the ancient names day after day without awakening/unleashing their powers [*ihre Potenzen wachzurufen*]. They will appear, for we have after all summoned them with terrible violence.[66]

If “secularization” is for Scholem an “empty phrase,” then this means, as Derrida writes, that language is in its essence abyssal:

> Language is one, it suffers no opposition and, at least in the case of Hebrew, which is not one case in a series [i.e., which is exemplary—D. H.], there is only sacred language. It is born sacred and does not let itself be desacralized without ceasing to be what it is. . . .
>
> There is no effective secularization, is what this strange confession suggests, in sum. What one calls lightly “secularization” does not take place. This surface effect does not affect language itself, which remains sacred in its abyssal interior. Epiphenomenality is characteristic of this manner of moving along the surface of language. This is also the epiphenomenality of a *manner of speaking of language*, our metalanguage, our manner of speaking of language. The secularized language would thus be only a metalinguistic epiphenomenon, a rhetoric, a “façon de parler,” a rhetorical effect of metalanguage. We must not try to hide this from ourselves; this effect is massive enough to concern, in principle, the totality of the language called technical, objective, scientific, and even philosophical.[67]

But if Scholem’s letter can be read as an acknowledgment of Rosenzweig’s theory of holy language, and thus also of Rosenzweig’s theory of Jewish messianic existence—including his reservations about the Zionist enterprise—Derrida is nevertheless right to caution us against reading this “Confession” as a “concession.” To make a confession, he points out, is to engage in a double strategy of accusing oneself of a shortcoming while not declaring a complete renunciation of that shortcoming—to avow the inadequacy of one’s stance while at the same time persisting in that stance. In the case of

Scholem, the shortcoming he recognizes in himself would be a "blindness" in regard to Zionism, and Derrida analyzes this recognition of blindness as integral to the act of confession:

> One must speak, therefore, to the blind. That is the act of this confession. But in a confession, the one who announces, cautions, warns, and even accuses, does not exclude himself from the whole [*ensemble*] of his addressees. He accuses himself as well, and he avows his having been blind to this Zionist blindness that he does not, however, renounce. He only opposes an essential Zionism or a Zionism to come to actual Zionism [*au sionisme de fait*], to that Zionism that blindly practices an "actualization" of the sacred language without seeing the abyss.[68]

As a result, the author of the confession, in addition to generalizing his self-accusation of blindness to encompass others like him, also singularizes himself as both the subject and object of that self-accusation—a singularization that is also essential to the act of confessing:

> Scholem figures as a kind of singular, solitary Zionist: not only alone but the only Zionist; one could almost say that he is preaching in the desert. Or, rather: he insists simply on the verge of the abyss—this is his desert, his place without place [*son lieu sans lieu*]—he insists and sojourns at this improbable border.[69]

In calling Scholem "the only Zionist," "preaching in the desert," Derrida envisions Scholem's Zionism, and thus his Judaism, in terms that evoke Derrida's own self-descriptions as the "last Jew"—which, as we saw, self-consciously echoed Rosenzweig's "Ich bleibe also Jude"—and as "the only Franco-Maghrebian." Based on this analysis of Scholem's self-location, Derrida proposes as a "guiding question" for reading Scholem's letter—a question that "for essential reasons . . . will also remain unanswered"—to what extent Scholem envisions renouncing the blindness he describes:

> whether at this limit where no settlement is possible Scholem asks for a *shibboleth* in order to get out of the abyss or, finally, in order to rush into it and be engulfed by it [*pour s'y engouffrer*]. There will be some difficulty in identifying his desire here.[70]

I would add that by the same token, by addressing his "Confession" to Rosenzweig, Scholem also draws Rosenzweig into the horizon of that desire. We can get a sense of what Scholem might have seen as Rosenzweig's receptivity to such a gesture by recalling the latter's highly ambivalent lines to Scholem in the letter of January 1922, beginning from the above-cited observation that "for you [Scholem] it is a central dogma that

Judaism is clinically dead [*scheintot*] and will only return to live 'over there' ['*drüben*']." Rosenzweig continues:

> I honor this conviction [*Gesinnung*] in you, because it is (in your case) not a mere cowardly evasion [*Ausflucht*], but a genuine conviction, to which you bring yourself as a sacrifice. . . . I honor your sacrifice. Perhaps it has been brought for all of us. But it would be the real end were you to find followers. Then you would be vindicated with regard to the negative part of your dogmas, and the positive part would also remain unfulfilled. (GS I.2, 741)[71]

The dual aspect of confession that is highlighted by Derrida—the fact that it is a singularizing self-accusation while it also draws others into its horizon—including, as is also proleptically highlighted by Rosenzweig, the horizon of a "Zionism to come"—means that Scholem's letter is also a "call to responsibility" in the sense that we have explored in this chapter and the preceding one. The high stakes of the responsibility for and in secularization are expressed by Scholem as a logic of sacrifice:

> We live after all in this language above an abyss, almost all of us with the sureness of the blind, but will we not—we, or those who come after us—fall in, once we see? And no one knows whether the sacrifice of individuals who will perish in this abyss will suffice to close it.[72]

More importantly, as Derrida notes, this responsibility is itself a direct function of the act of puncturing, or of recognizing the puncture in the border between the sacred and the secular:

> It is a matter here of responding to the call of a sacred language, a call which, according to Scholem, has in any case taken place. It has *already* resonated, or we would not even be speaking, and above all not of secularization. By responding in a responsible way to this language, to the call of the name, by guarding this language against the non-language that threatens it, we will decide and assume the historical singularity which is that of our generation.[73]

PART IV

MESSIANICITY

6

Time and History in Rosenzweig

FROM TEMPORAL EXISTENCE TO ETERNITY

The preceding chapters have in part sought to show that Derrida was able to theorize exemplarity by way of a critical confrontation with historicizing and relativizing receptions and appropriations of Husserl, that it is by taking seriously "history in an uncommon sense" that we can follow Derrida in his rethinking of the relationship between particularity and universality. As I shall seek to make clear in the present chapter, Rosenzweig's theory of individuality—both the singularity of the concrete human being and that of the "one people"—also took shape in conjunction with a radical rethinking of time and history.

My look at the development of Rosenzweig's understanding of history will in part be informed by the very important initiatives to situate his thought in the context of the so-called German crisis of historicism. However, quite apart from the difficulties one encounters in trying to pin down the intellectual-historical phenomena that "crisis of historicism" and "historicism" can usefully refer to, given that these terms have served rather different purposes in various contexts,[1] the historiography of (anti-) historicism is a framework of only partial value for understanding Rosenzweig's philosophical contribution. My interest in this chapter will be to foreground the originality of that contribution, which, I believe, consists not of somehow abandoning history, or adopting an "ahistorical" point of view, but of understanding historical and temporal existence in a new way that is based on an analysis of both ordinary lived time and of the time of

Judaism and Christianity, and from the point of view of a "messianic epistemology."

The Human Individual and Time

Earlier, I pointed out the ways in which Rosenzweig's philosophy can be (and has been) seen in the context of intellectual movements of his day, such as the "philosophy of existence." One of the marks of any philosophy that aims to produce an account of concrete human existence is that it pays attention to the temporality of lived experience. In the 1925 essay "The New Thinking," which is billed as "a few supplementary remarks on the *Star of Redemption*," Rosenzweig identifies the attention to temporality as one of the central contributions of the philosophy of the *Star*. Calling the "method" of part 2 of the *Star* a "narrative" method (a notion he associates with Schelling's idea of a "narrative philosophy" in *The Ages of the World*), he insists on narrativity and its "interest" in the verb, for which he employs the German term *Zeitwort* (literally "time word"),[2] as constituting the departure from traditional philosophy that the *Star* sought to accomplish (ND, 148/82; PTW, 122). Whereas what characterizes the "old thinking" according to this essay is its insistence on things being "actually" (*eigentlich*) "other" (*anders*) than they appear to be (this is, according to Rosenzweig, what inquiries into the "essence" of something amount to)[3] and its reliance on "is" sentences (ND, 143–44/75–76; PTW 117), "the narrator never wants to show that things actually were entirely different [*ganz anders*]."[4] The narrator's real aim, which Rosenzweig likens to a historian's conveying how things "actually occurred," is to conjure up a certain "actuality" or "reality" (*Wirklichkeit*) (ND, 148/81–82; PTW, 121–22).[5]

Whether or not Rosenzweig's distinction between the supposedly traditional philosophical activity of showing that something is essentially other than itself and what he calls narration is really viable, what is important for our present purposes is his use of the concept of narration to introduce the idea of a time that becomes "entirely real to [the narrator]." Rosenzweig brings up the modern idea of history-writing[6] in order to make clear that narration is not the conjuring-up of a past time as "real," but time itself being made real. "It is not in [time] that what happens happens; rather [time], [time] itself is what happens." In part 2 of the *Star* the sequence of the books on creation, revelation, and redemption is crucial, not only to explaining, for example, the sequence of God's transformation from distant to near and from near to distant, but because sequence is itself the "important matter that is to be communicated" in this phase of the new thinking. And lest we think that the importance of temporality becomes clear only by virtue of a theological concern with the God-man-world relation, Rosenzweig is quick to point out that the importance of this "method" is readily apparent in the most mundane activities of thought. The "new thinking" follows the "age-old thinking of common sense" in knowing that "it cannot know independently of time" (ND, 148–49/82–83; PTW, 122–23).

The notion of a "healthy common sense" (*gesunder Menschenverstand*) that precedes and ultimately prevails over "philosophy" is an ongoing theme in Rosenzweig's writings.[7] His 1921 *Little Book of Healthy and Sick Common Sense* (*Büchlein vom gesunden und kranken Menschenverstand*, translated into English as *Understanding the Sick and Healthy*), like the essay "The New Thinking" a few years later, was meant to bridge the gap between the difficult style of the *Star* and a readership that was eager to receive its message—Rosenzweig calls it a "Prolegomena" to the *Star*.[8] It reads quite differently not only from the *Star* but also from Rosenzweig's later essays: Written in the form of an address "to the reader," the literary devices it employs are clearly designed to engage this reader (explicitly figured as someone other than a philosophical "expert" [*Kenner*]) on a most basic, familiar level.[9] The book casts its reader as a patient undergoing a life crisis or "illness"; the "cure" takes place in a series of reflections on questions of life, love, and death designed to debunk "philosophical" tactics and replace them with "healthy common sense" insights. Like "The New Thinking," the *Büchlein* characterizes traditional philosophy as answering questions of the form "What is x?" by appealing to the "actual" (*eigentlich*) "essence" (*Wesen*) of x, and common sense, instead, as aiming at what is *wirklich* (real), a notion that is aligned with "life" (B, 31–33/41–42).[10] And here too, the superiority of common-sense thinking lies also in the fact that it accounts for time: Rosenzweig calls the "What is that?" of the philosopher "detemporalizing" (*entzeitlichend*) (B, 31/41). Whereas human beings are disposed to wonder (*Staunen*), the philosopher's question brings this wonder to a "standstill" and puts the questioner outside the "flow" of his or her own "life" (B, 29/39–40).[11] The philosopher does not "take the time to wait" for the answer; he wants it "today" (B, 29–30/40). Instead of the horizontal axis of the life-time it takes to find the answer, the philosopher probes "in depth," vertically, as it were, to find what lies below the object—and finds it in "sub-stance," the "essence" or "actual/essential being" of the object (B, 30–31/41), which is indeed immediately available, independently of the passage of time. But this timelessness of the "What is?" is "artificial." Its artificiality lies in its leaving out the life or experiences of the individual person doing the asking.

> Only within the flow of life does every thing receive a character of its own. Isolate it, skewer it with the pin of the detemporalizing question "what is this?" and it will quickly sink past the intermediary stage of its universal concept down into the one, most universal, greyness of the thing as such. Substance becomes one, the one substance. (B, 31/41)

This role of time in knowledge has consequences for how the "new thinking" approaches traditional philosophical problems. Thus, in place of traditional conceptions of God as immanent or transcendent, the new ("narrative") thinking traces "how and when [God] turns from the distant to the near God and again from the near to the distant one" (ND, 148/82; PTW, 122). And instead of inquiring whether human beings are free or determined, the new thinking traces the "path [*Weg*] of the deed" "from" the particular character of the doer and the various motives "tugging" at him/her, "through" the event of a "grace-filled moment" of choice "to" a "Must that is beyond any freedom" (ND, 148–49/82–83; PTW, 122). Rosenzweig thus conceives this new kind of knowing as the exploration of a dynamic sequence of events that avoids getting mired in thinking about the static constitution of the entities under consideration. This is consistent with the model Rosenzweig pursues in the *Star*, in which the three "elements" God, world, and man are studied by exploring the "paths" or "courses" (*Bahnen*) they take with respect to each other—which are then named "creation," "revelation," and "redemption." We can now understand why Rosenzweig views part 2 of the *Star*, which is entitled "The Course, or The Ever-Renewed World" and which explores creation, revelation, and redemption, as the locus of what he calls the "narrative" method.

The "method" of common sense knows how to "wait" for insight, how to "go on living" without holding fast to an "idée fixe." It knows that "(only) time will tell" (*kommt Zeit, kommt Rat*) (ND, 149/83; PTW, 123). That it is impossible "to know independently of time" is illustrated by Rosenzweig in a series of analogies from ordinary life:

> As little as one could just as well begin a conversation from the end, or a war by making peace (which of course the pacifists would like), or life with death, but

> must learn rather for better or for worse, actively or passively, to wait until the moment is ready, and not skip any moment, so too cognition/knowledge is at every moment bound to that very moment and cannot make its past not past, its future not in the future. This is true of everyday matters, and everyone grants that. Everyone knows that for an attending physician, for instance, the treatment is present, the getting sick past, and the determination of death future, and that it would make no sense if out of the fancy of timeless knowledge he wanted to eliminate learning and experience in the diagnosis, cleverness and stubbornness in his therapy, and fear and hope in his prognosis. In the same way, no one who makes a purchase seriously believes that he can see the merchandise in the delirium of its purchase in the same way as afterwards, in the throes of regret.

And so it is the case with the "last and highest things" that philosophy has claimed to "know timelessly" and that are the topic of part 2 of the *Star*—God, man, and world:

> What God has done, what he does, what he will do, what has happened to the world, what will happen to it, what happens to man, what he will do—all this cannot be severed from its temporality, so that one could, for instance, discern the coming kingdom of God as one can discern the created creation or could be permitted to look upon creation as one is permitted to look upon the kingdom of the future . . . .
>
> To cognize God, the world, man, is to cognize what they do or what happens to them in [the] tenses/times [*Zeiten*] of reality [*Wirklichkeit*] [i.e., past, present, and future]. (ND, 149–50/83–84; PTW, 124)

From this it follows that "only in their relationships, only in creation, revelation, redemption do [God, the world, and man] open up" or reveal themselves (ND, 150/85; PTW, 125). This, then, is how the "temporality" of the new thinking gives rise to its "new method" (ND, 151/86; PTW, 125).[12]

The quest to rethink the temporality of human experience and knowledge, we have suggested, typifies the tradition of "philosophies of existence" in which, as we discussed in our opening chapter, Rosenzweig has a share. Thus, as Karl Löwith points out in his famous 1942–43 discussion of Rosenzweig as Heidegger's only "contemporary" in more than a "chronological" sense, there are striking parallels in the ways the two thinkers "take time seriously."[13] (Löwith indeed singles out the problem of time as the best rubric for a confrontation of *The Star of Redemption* and *Being and Time*.)[14] A good example of this pointed out by Löwith is the two thinkers' emphasis on the "already" as structuring temporal experience: “What Rosenzweig says about the ‘already,’ one might just as easily find in Heidegger’s *Being and Time*.”[15] Löwith is here referring to the section on the “logic of creation” in the *Star*, in which Rosenzweig writes that “what we learn here is that the world is, above all, there [or: that the world is there before everything]. Simply there. This being of the world is its already-being-there” (“Die Welt ist vor allem, so lernen wir hier, da. Einfach da. Dies Sein der Welt ist ihr Schon-da-sein”; S, 146/131); the “logic of creation” is then much like the logic of an originary “being-thrown” laid out in *Being and Time*. Similarly, reading pronouncements from “The New Thinking” such as the one cited above that “time itself is what happens,” one cannot help but be reminded of Heidegger’s focus on temporality as constitutive of human being in *Being and Time*.

However, as Löwith also recognizes, there are aspects to Rosenzweig’s thinking about time that cannot easily be related to the tradition of philosophies of existence. When Rosenzweig writes about “already-being-there” it is in order to elucidate God’s creation and the “creatureliness” (*Kreatürlichkeit*) of his creation: if the world is “already” “there,” it is only because “God has already created it thanks to his eternal creative power” (S, 146/132). As Löwith is quick to point out, the parallel between Heidegger’s and Rosenzweig’s uses of the “already” can be made only by momentarily disregarding the fact “that Rosenzweig, in his analysis of the ‘already,’ had in mind not a godless *Geworfenheit* [thrownness], but *Geschöpflichkeit*,” the fact of being a creature, created.[16] This theological dimension is decisive also in the discussion in “The New Thinking” of what it means for knowledge to be time bound: Rosenzweig winds up calling this account a “messianic theory of knowledge.” That truth “must be for someone,” that it has its time and place, does not make it finally relative. Rosenzweig characterizes truth as *bewährt*—a term that can concisely be translated as “verified”[17] but that has nothing to do with what we ordinarily call “verification.” *Bewährung* is not the result of studying whether a notion conforms to a given reality; it refers rather to whether the notion “holds up” to the truth in what Rosenzweig describes as a “dynamic” sense, by “standing the test of time.” It may thus be understood as a “standing up” or “holding out.” This means that *Bewährung* is a temporal or historical process, a sequence of events that reveals whether something is true; truth cannot be established by means of static comparisons, but must be achieved in time:

> Truth in this way ceases to be what "is" true, and becomes that which, as true,—demands to be verified [*bewährt*]. The concept of the verification [*Bewährung*] of the truth becomes the basic concept of this new theory of knowledge that replaces the old one's theories of non-contradiction and of objects and introduces in place of the static concept of objectivity of those theories, a dynamic one. (ND, 158/98; PTW, 135)

For this theory to make sense, Rosenzweig must have in mind a process of knowing that is temporal not only in the sense of being contingent on a certain time, on having its time, but that inhabits a time with a direction to it—a time that is oriented toward a future.

This is a "messianic theory of knowledge" because the thing to be known waits to be confirmed, or redeemed, by means of a sacred history. We will have occasion to explore further the messianicity of what Rosenzweig calls *Bewährung*, but for the moment let us note one important facet of the "messianic theory of knowledge" underlined by the essay "The New Thinking": that it "evaluates truths according to the price for their verification" (ND, 159/99; PTW, 136). *Bewährung* has a price, it takes casualties, has murderous consequences: Rosenzweig speaks of a hierarchy of truths: the "least important truths" are "of the type 'two times two is four,'" and on those "people easily agree, without using up more than a little brain grease"; the higher truths are those "that have cost man something"; and the highest ones are those "that he cannot verify except with the sacrifice of his life" and "those whose truth can be verified only by the commitment of the lives of all generations"—that is, only eternally.

Karl Löwith rightly points out that the decisive question to be posed in a confrontation between *The Star of Redemption* and Heidegger's *Being and Time* is "the question concerning *eternity* as opposed to the *temporality* of time."[18] How does Rosenzweig's philosophy, which begins, as Heidegger's does, from facticity, from the concrete individual in the here and now, wind up appealing to a messianic dimension in history? How does Rosenzweig's theory of time go beyond the privileging of the future that is familiar from Heidegger and arrive at a notion of eternity? What sort of eternity is involved in a truth that "can be verified only by the commitment of the lives of all generations"?

In order to explore this thinking of eternity in Rosenzweig, in order to establish his rationale for turning to a messianic theory of knowledge, it is useful to look at the development of his thinking in the years leading up to the writing of the *Star*, during which he gained insights into the nature of truth and history that would prove decisive for his later writings.

History and Truth

The most decisive event of Rosenzweig's early intellectual development was undoubtedly his famous "nighttime conversation" of July 1913 with Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy and the consequences he drew from it. No record exists of this conversation, but both Rosenzweig's correspondence and the recollections of his associates attest to its role as a turning point in his thinking and his life. The most dramatic and best-known consequence of this conversation (and Rosenzweig's celebrity as a Jewish thinker is surely in part due to the dramatic force of what has been recounted about this experience) was Rosenzweig's decision to abandon his plans to convert to Christianity and "remain a Jew."[19] But Rosenzweig's correspondence shows that the transformation he underwent in 1913, besides being a turn toward Judaism, was also a changed stance regarding the nature and meaning of history and its relation to truth.

In his letter to Ehrenberg, which he frames as an "attempt to lay out the reasons" for his decision to "remain a Jew," Rosenzweig writes that in the "nighttime conversation" with Rosenstock-Huessy, the latter had "pushed me, step by step, out of the last relativistic positions that I still held and forced me to take an unrelativistic position. . . . Any kind of relativism of *Weltanschauung* is now forbidden to me."[20] In this letter, Rosenzweig frames the "unrelativistic position" he has now taken in terms of an opposition between Judaism and Christianity: Previously, he writes, he had not really distinguished being Jewish from being Christian and had "shared the community of faith with you [this plural "you" refers to Rudolf Ehrenberg and Rosenstock-Huessy, and probably to Hans Ehrenberg as well], or at least thought I shared it."[21] Rosenzweig says that he earlier regarded himself as subscribing to a "conceptual Christianization" of Judaism. What he claims to realize now is that "on the contrary, I had Judaized Christianity." Previously, he had seen 313, the year of the Edict of Milan, which granted freedom to practice and preach Christianity, as the "decline" of "true" Christianity. This possibility that was opened up for Christianity in 313 is, in Rosenzweig's view, precisely the possibility that was closed off to Judaism with the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE.[22] Now Rosenzweig realizes that in their stance toward the world—in their missionary aspirations—Judaism and Christianity are essentially different. That is, he recognizes that it is no longer necessary to "begrudge the church its scepter," its claim to universal sovereignty, and to regard such a claim as tainting a supposedly authentic Christianity (which could be likened to an authentic "first-century Judaism").[23]

Similarly, he now comes to regard it as mistaken to view the synagogue as having a "bent scepter" or as having "no place in this world." Rather, the destruction of the temple "opened up a path" for Judaism, just as it did for Christianity. But the two paths are diametrically opposed: While the Christian path leads "through the world" and consists of a universal Christian mission, the Jewish path "negates" the world and shuns any mission.[24] Thus, if Rosenzweig came to see his previous view as a "relativistic position" to be abandoned, it was because he had understood Judaism and Christianity in terms of their stature in the world, as political and historical forces, and had understood both on a single model of worldly sovereignty. What he realizes now is that Judaism and Christianity differ fundamentally in their political-historical significance. In his letter Rosenzweig expresses this difference in temporal terms: What Jesus says in John 14:6 about the redemption of the world, "No one comes to the Father except through me,"[25] is amended by Rosenzweig as follows:

> No one *comes* to the father [except through the son]—but it is otherwise if someone no longer needs to come to the father because he *is* already with him. And this is the case for the people of Israel . . . . [26]

"Already-being-with" thus characterizes the Jewish relationship to God, its condition of being "elected." It is the same temporal mode of "eternity" that Rosenzweig, as we will see, associates with the existence of the Jewish people in the *Star*, which is there portrayed as the

> only [community] . . . that cannot utter the "we" of its unity without hearing deep within a voice that adds: "are eternal." . . . What for other communities is the future and is thus something that still lies beyond the present—for this community alone it is already present; for it alone the future is nothing alien [*nichts Fremdes*], but something proper to itself [*ein Eigenes*]. (S, 331–32/298–99)

The eternity of the Jews is not understood by Rosenzweig as "a very long time" (S, 250/224); the one "eternal people" lives not "in between" the beginning and the end of time, but "outside" time and history. "Its eternal life constantly anticipates [*nimmt vorweg*] the end" (S, 467/420). This notion of

Vorwegnahme—which is no mere intellectual "anticipation" but actually a "foreclosure" or "preempting" of the end, a "bringing to an end before the end"—shows up already in the 1913 letter we have been focusing on: Until the end of the world, "Israel's life" consists in "anticipating/foreclosing/preempting [*vorwegnehmen*] this day in its avowals [*Bekenntnis*, in the sense of religious confession or creed] and actions, to stand as a preliminary sign [or prefix, *Vorzeichen*] of this day."

"Not having to go through the son" in order to reach the end of days amounts to "not having to go through worldly history," as Rosenzweig underlines in this early characterization of Jewish election:

> The people of Israel, chosen by its father, fixes its gaze [*blickt starr*] over and past the world and history at that last and most distant point, at which [God] its father, this same one, the one and unique one, will be "all in all."

This last reference is to the characterization of Christ's resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, according to which Christ reigns until the end of days, upon which he himself becomes subject to God as the father, who then becomes "all in all." "The world and history," which the Jewish people can look across and beyond, and thus disregard, is the purview of Christians, who "must go through the son," and thus through history, in order to finally reach God. It is thus no longer necessary to "begrudge" the church its sovereignty, as Rosenzweig puts it regarding his earlier view:[27] The synagogue may indeed have "a broken staff/scepter," it may be "blindfolded" in that it "must itself give up any worldly labor," but it is "immortal," and in its efforts to "keep itself alive and purified of life," it participates in the same "hope for the end" and the same project of universal salvation as does the church. "Thus the church and the synagogue are dependent upon one another." (This dual necessity of Judaism and Christianity for the salvation of the world will be another crucial component of the philosophy of history of the *Star*.)

In what sense, then, is the position that Rosenzweig abandoned in the wake of the "nighttime conversation" a "relativistic" one? If we look at his distinction between Christian history and Jewish eternity, we see that he has broken with the idea that everything can be explained as a historical process. Alongside the truth that is revealed in history (the truth of Christianity), there is the truth of a revelation that comes from outside history (to which "the life of Israel" attests). Recalling Rosenzweig's reference to his "dualism of revelation and world," we can now say that he has found a way to conceive of a "revelation" that is not of this "world." This insight will be decisive for his critique of philosophies in which the paths of God and world coincide, a critique that he undertakes by conceiving of God and world (and man) as distinct elements irreducible to one another.

That Rosenzweig's critique of totality develops in part out of a changed view of history is also evidenced by a much earlier letter to Hans Ehrenberg, dated September 26, 1910 (GS I.1, 111–13), which contains a thumbnail sketch of the history of the concepts of religion and history since the eighteenth century. Whereas Hegel, according to this letter, regarded history as a whole as "divine" and the actions of individuals as "ungodly," Rosenzweig proposes to his friend that a contemporary view of history must stress the ethical value of individual actions. God cannot be found in the "finished whole" of history—for this would "dispense with God" insofar as he would then become indistinguishable from history—or, in the terminology of the *Star*, from the world. Not distinguishing God and history would automatically justify all actions and is thus ethically indefensible. Rather, writes Rosenzweig, "we see God in every ethical occurrence" (or act), in the "process" or "becoming" of history.

As is well known, these developments in Rosenzweig's thinking about history coincided with a marked change in his academic-professional life. The above-cited letters of 1910 and 1913 were written during the period when Rosenzweig was fully engaged in historical studies. His mentor, Friedrich Meinecke, is considered one of the primary exponents of "historicist" history-writing, and Meinecke's manner of blending intellectual history with the history of events in his 1907 study *Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat* so inspired Rosenzweig that he based the program of his dissertation, *Hegel und der Staat* (*Hegel and the State*), on the Hegel chapter in Meinecke's book.[28] (A footnote to the Hegel chapter in later editions of Meinecke's book duly acknowledges Rosenzweig as having gone on to investigate Hegel's notion of the "Machtstaat" more fully than was possible in Meinecke's own study, and *Hegel und der Staat* is to this day acknowledged as one of the most significant studies to have been written by a student of Meinecke.) The change that took place in Rosenzweig's intellectual commitments after passing his doctoral exams with a part of the dissertation in summer 1912 and "substantially finishing" the dissertation before the outbreak of World War I[29] went hand in hand with a new preference for philosophy over history. To Hans Ehrenberg, he writes of his impatience with the "philosophical naiveté of average historians";[30] and years later, in a letter to Friedrich Meinecke that recalls the changes that led to his rejection of an academic career in history, he writes:

> In 1913 something happened to me for which collapse is the only fitting name. . . .
>
> I had turned from a (perfectly tenurable [*habilitierbar*]) historian into a (utterly untenurable) philosopher, assuming I were to capture what happened with these not very apt concepts.

Rosenzweig makes clear that this change is not to be seen in isolation, but as growing out of his changing attitude to science or scholarship (*Wissenschaft*) in general and the fact "that my life has fallen under the rule of a 'dark pressure' to which, however, I'm aware that I am merely giving a name by calling it 'my Judaism.'" To which he adds:

> The scholarly aspect of this whole process—the transformation of the historian into the philosopher—is only a byproduct . . . . [31]

Thus, what emerges from the few letters we have by Rosenzweig dating from 1910 to 1913 and from his later account to Meinecke of what moved him during that year is a complex of changes in attitude that cannot easily be reconstructed, or reduced to a reflection of larger intellectual-historical trends such as the "crisis of historicism," as illuminating as it can be to discover commonalities between Rosenzweig and his contemporaries in this regard.[32]

History and Revelation: "Atheistic Theology"

However, one area where Rosenzweig's objections to a version of historicism is very clearly made productive for his thought is theology. His 1914 essay "Atheistic Theology" (his first "philosophical" text written for publication) is a sustained critique of historicizing and other tendencies in Protestant and Jewish religious thought that served to diminish the significance of revelation.[33] For Christianity, the obvious locus of the "atheistic theology" Rosenzweig has in mind is "Life-of-Jesus theology"—those efforts, beginning in the eighteenth century, to refound Christian doctrine upon scientifically sound historical accounts of the historical Jesus's life. Once Rosenzweig has established the inner logic of Life-of-Jesus theology in its various phases, he uses it as a model for understanding "atheistic-theological" tendencies in

Judaism, which he sees as having developed a changed understanding of the significance of the people of Israel in much the same way as Christian atheistic theology has focused on the significance of the life of Jesus.

Rosenzweig discerns two phases in the development of Life-of-Jesus theology, which he describes as a "softening up" (*Erweichung*) of the idea of Christ as a God incarnate/God-man (*Gottmensch*).

*1. Jesus as ideal human being (*idealer Mensch*) and teacher.* Rosenzweig locates this first phase in the eighteenth century; it is in this phase that the Enlightenment "makes its peace" with Christianity, as "the strongest intellectual power [*Geistesmacht*] of the past" (AT, 687/12). To this end, the figure of Christ is reformulated as an "ideal human being" and a "teacher." Christian doctrine is thus transformed from being an article of faith to being available for "enlightened" acceptance as Jesus's "teaching." "Instead of believing in the *God-man*, the point was to let oneself be taught by the teacher" (AT, 688/12). Thus the divinity of Christ is "blurred" (*verwischt*) (AT, 690/16).

2. Jesus as personality. This second phase is made necessary by the nineteenth-century Romantic notion that "teachings" are by themselves not sufficiently powerful for the "calling" to "rule the world" (AT, 688/12). Attempting to account for revelation as a historical force, figures such as Schleiermacher came up with the concept of a "living individual" or "personality" to denote "the human essence of Jesus from which Christianity emerged" and is still capable of emerging (AT, 688/12). (Rosenzweig suggests here that the Romantic "personality" par excellence was the figure of Goethe, and that "the life of Goethe was the secret presupposition of this life of Jesus" [AT, 689/14].)[34]

While the first phase of Life-of-Jesus theology thus served to make Christianity into something other than church dogma, to make it available to autonomous rational thought, the second phase accounted for Christianity as a historical phenomenon, in a manner that was consistent with historical science. The proponents of Life-of-Jesus theology exhibited a "confidence" that one could "erect the result of critical historical science [*Geschichtswissenschaft*] within faith's holiest of holies [*in dem Allerheiligsten des Glaubens*]" (AT, 688/14). Thus, the Life-of-Jesus theologies are the combined result of a philosophical demand for autonomy of belief and a scientific demand for a historical contextualization of divine revelation. Both of these served to reduce the divine to a human scale. Rosenzweig cites the breakthrough formula (*das lösende Wort*) arrived at by Schleiermacher, according to which "'the emergence of a revelation in a single person' should be regarded as 'prepared in human nature and as the highest development of its spiritual force'" (AT, 688/12).

The analogous developments in Jewish thought come about, according to Rosenzweig, a good deal later than the Christian innovations that serve in part as their inspiration. If Christianity (German Protestantism) in the eighteenth century is under pressure to make its doctrines available to enlightened minds, nineteenth-century (post-Emancipation) German Judaism, in particular the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* movements that Rosenzweig alludes to with the phrase "our science/scholarship" (*unsre Wissenschaft*), "escapes" into detailed (or micro-) "historical research" (*geschichtliche Einzelforschung*) whose agenda is set for the most part by its "apologetic" aims. Again, he distinguishes two phases:

*1. The Jewish people as ideal community of humankind (*ideale Menschheitsgemeinde*).* Just as in the first phase of Life-of-Jesus theology, it was philosophical resources that led to the humanization of the God-man, so too in this phase, philosophical devices are employed to "make unobjectionable" (*unbedenklich zu machen*) the idea of the "chosen people" as the "recipient" of divine revelation (AT, 690/15). In particular, Hermann Cohen's "attempts to reinterpret the concept of revelation in a strictly rationalistic manner" (which Rosenzweig calls "the most significant example of the 'reemergence of philosophy' in our midst") make it possible to see the people who receive the revelation as representing not merely "God's people" but an "ideal community of humankind" (*ideale Menschheitsgemeinde*). As with Christianity, the content of the religion is reduced to a teaching that happens to be conveyed to humankind by a particular people. But the Jews become a merely "contingent bearer of an idea that is not bound to its own existence" as a people (AT, 690–91/16). Here, too, the divine is "softened up": "The hard feature of the divine having actually entered into history and being distinct from all other actuality was blurred" (AT, 690/16).

2. The Jewish people as "essence." As with Christianity, a second phase of Jewish-People theology is made necessary by the shortcomings of the first. If the Jewish people's existence is made expendable by reassigning the revelation to all of humankind, what is needed is a more sophisticated notion of peoplehood that allows for the recuperation of the Jews' right to exist. The notions of peoplehood that were dominant during the early to mid-nineteenth century (and that were most influential for the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*) were those of Fichte and Hegel. In Hegel's philosophy of history, each people that has a role to play in world history "dies off" after it has fulfilled that role (AT, 691/16). Its existence has no intrinsic value beyond what it contributes to the course of human history. Just as Protestant theology found the idea of "teachings" that are detachable from the life of the teacher unsatisfactory and came up with the notion of "personality" to account for the historical force of that life, Jewish thought was, according to Rosenzweig, in need of a notion of peoplehood that would have some intrinsic historical force or necessity, an "analogue for the Romantic idea of personality" (AT, 691/16).

> A Jewish science, for which Judaism was an eternally existing entity, had no use for this [the Hegelian] notion of the relation between peoplehood and humankind. Such a science would have required a theory that would enable it to understand the pure existence of a people, and not only its achievements, as an eternal necessity of humanity. (AT, 691/16)

What made such a new view of peoplehood possible, Rosenzweig writes, was the *völkisch*, racialist rhetoric that had come up in "recent decades" about the "essence" or "nature" of particular peoples. Rosenzweig encourages his reader to abstract from the "pseudonaturalistic trappings" of these theories in order to see their original motivation: "the attempt to transform the notion of peoplehood so that it finds, simply in its existence and independently of objective achievements, the right to exist" (AT, 691/17). Here, the "eternity of existence" (*Daseinsewigkeit*) of a people was not based, as it was for Hegel, on its contributions to world civilization. The Romantic theory of "personality" had stressed that "immanent in a human life, notwithstanding its achievements, there is a being [*ein Sein*] that eludes the killing force of history" (AT, 688/13). This is the same "killing force of history" that makes a people expendable according to the Hegelian schema. Outside this force of history, a people is granted the right to exist by virtue of its "essence" (*Wesen*, which Rosenzweig consistently puts in quotes).

> And on the basis of this concept of "the essence of a people" [*"völkisches Wesen"*] it becomes possible to evaluate the real [*real*] existence of the historical people, similar to the one that emerged for the historical human being through the concept of "personality." (AT, 692/17)

This development toward an ahistorical view of a people's existence is what makes possible a Jewish "atheistic theology" (AT, 692/17), which is the tendency Rosenzweig discerns "in our midst" in 1914. "Atheistic theology" sets itself off from both the "eternity" of philosophical concepts (such as the concept of God incarnate or the idea of the chosen people, both of which amount to "showing the human under the power of the divine") and the "temporal nature" (*Zeitlichkeit*) of the "historical process" (for example, the idea that Christ's teachings are detachable from his personality, or that the Jewish people are the merely contingent recipients of divine revelation). It does so by "understanding the divine as a human self-projection onto the heavens of myth" (AT, 692/17). Mythology takes the place of revelation and makes it possible to "explain" faith in "human" terms (AT, 693/18). The Romantic concept of myth, according to Rosenzweig, allows it to be ascribed to historical phenomena with an extraordinary capacity for becoming objects of faith. These objects of faith thus no longer require the "glory of any Lord" (*bedarf keiner Herrlichkeit keines Herrn*) in order to "shine forth" (*daß ihr Angesicht leuchte*); they "emanate" their own "light" (AT, 693/19).[35]

The essay "Atheistic Theology" thus yields an important insight into the place of history in religious thought: The very distinction between God and man is jeopardized (and with it the essence of both Judaism and Christianity) as soon as sacred history is detached from any concept of revelation. Since Jewish sacred history consists of a revelation to a people, preserving the divine in Judaism will not be possible without a notion of peoplehood that transcends the people's historical existence.

Paradoxically, in thus recommending a retrieval of the idea of the Jews as chosen, Rosenzweig suggests building on an aspect of the very "atheistic theology" that is the object of his critique. For Rosenzweig is not advocating a return to pre-Enlightenment Christian or Jewish doctrine. He explicitly notes that the various phases of "atheistic theology," despite their conscious breaks with aspects of traditional theology, would not have been possible if they did not also tap into and make productive other (equally "legitimate"[36]) aspects of Jewish and Christian religious traditions (AT, 695–96/21). Thus, the first phase of Jewish "atheistic theology," which interpreted the Jewish people as an "ideal community of humankind" because this people is the recipient of a message destined for all peoples, can be affirmed as an effort to "[understand] the Jewish people as the core [or heart, *Herzstück*] of [its] faith" (AT, 697/24). But to draw the consequences of this centrality of peoplehood can only be accomplished, for Rosenzweig, by understanding the Jewish people in a non-historicizing way. At the end of his essay, Rosenzweig thus acknowledges, on the one hand, that the "making this-worldly" (*Verdiesseiti-*

gung) of peoplehood has a certain legitimacy, and, on the other hand, that there is a gap between the people and humanity that is not subsumable into a universal human history.

> That God and man must be inseparably thought together is a certainty that stands at the entrance of every knowledge of [i.e., insight into] our faith, even a knowledge [i.e., an insight] that allows God to be absorbed into man. But the unfillable rift between man as thought by both mysticism and rationalism, and man as receiver of revelation and, as such, an object of faith, this unfillable rift, which persists despite all the possibilities that conform with the present age [*gegenwartsgemäße*] of intertwining the concepts of peoplehood and humanity—in our case [the rift] between man and Jew—must confound anyone who might attempt to cover the whole of the religious world with [only one] half of the concept-pair that founds it [*ihres Grundbegriffpaares*]

—that is, with only the "human" half of the concept-pair "man and God." The tension that persists between these two positions that must nevertheless be thought together (that is, Jewish peoplehood must be thought both as this-worldly and as requiring the reference to God or sacred history) is analyzed by Rosenzweig on two levels: he sees it both as a rift within the individual human being, as self-different (or non-self-identical) and unredeemed, and as a rift or gulf between the people and messianic humanity. Rosenzweig continues:

> If this half [of the fundamental concept-pair "man-God"], namely man, were in himself/itself simple and without inner contradiction, then the thinker, as well as, thereupon, the man of action, could dispense with God. But since he finds man under the curse of historicity, divided in himself between first receiver and last fulfiller of the Word, between the people that stands at Sinai and messianic humanity, he will therefore be unable to eliminate the God to whom, by virtue of His historical deed, the historicity of history is subject. Precisely in order to understand the Jewish people as the heart of faith, he must think the God who builds the bridge between people and humanity. (AT, 697/24)

That is, he must think the idea of revelation.

To recognize the human being as the receiver of revelation is thus first of all to recognize the human being as different from itself, as harboring a contradiction within itself, and thus as unredeemed. If a central impetus behind Rosenzweig's writing leading up to the *Star* is a need to understand historicity in an other-than-historicist sense, then we can see that in this closing passage of "Atheistic Theology," Rosenzweig is also arguing for a notion of the human being as "historical" not in the sense of being subject to empirical historical contingencies, but as necessarily inhabiting an interval between revelation and redemption. In reconceiving the human situation as "divided in itself," Rosenzweig is thus also reconceiving what history is.

Further, what this closing passage makes clear is that the interval between revelation and redemption is also inhabited by the people, again, not as a contingent bearer of a historical meaning, but as a necessary link between the originary Sinai event and a messianic end. Let us now look more closely at the elaboration of this view of Jewish existence in the *Star*.[37]

Eternity

Throughout this chapter, I have been insisting on the dimensions of the messianic and the eternal in Rosenzweig's thinking about history. With his initial (1913) definition of Judaism in terms of eternity (the Jews' "already-being-with" God) and his fuller elaboration of the ahistoricality of revelation in "Atheistic Theology," Rosenzweig was developing a new conception of the Jewish people. Here the idea of chosenness converges with a messianic view of history: the Jews are chosen in the sense of having a unique role to fulfill in world history. Their existence testifies to a messianic history, because unlike the Christians, whose path to redemption leads through history, the Jews are always "already with God"; their relationship with redemption is an immediate one. As Rosenzweig will argue in *The Star of Redemption*, the Jewish people is in this sense "outside history."

There has been a strong temptation to take Rosenzweig here as putting forward a so-called ahistorical view of Judaism, and those who have argued thus are often motivated by a concern that Rosenzweig's theory of Judaism fails to ground a viable contemporary Jewish political existence.[38] But such characterizations miss the mark, in my view, because in positing an "outside" of history, a "messianic" dimension, Rosenzweig's account suggests a new concept of history, in which it is no longer possible to speak of historical agency as opposed to the ahistorical or the apolitical. Rosenzweig's approach is "historical" in that it entails and relies upon a new understanding of temporality and history.[39] This concept of history, in which history's "end" is the decisive point of reference, relies on a distinction between two "worlds," two concurrent temporalities or ways of "telling time," which Rosenzweig calls the "Jewish" and the "Christian."

Rosenzweig's early characterization of Jewish existence as an "already-being-with" God is linked to his depiction of Judaism in the *Star* in terms of its "eternity": its inhabiting a realm outside history, and its life as anticipation/foreclosure (*Vorwegnahme*) of the end. This characterization, as well as the complementary characterization of the Christian obligation to "go through the Son," to go through history, in order to attain redemption, appears in the *Star* as the extended answer to a central question: What kind of theory of history can take account of both the dimension of time and the dimension of eternity? How can a direction or telos of history, and with it the notion of redemption as the horizon of human activity, be envisioned without sacrificing the idea of worldly history? Keeping in mind that Rosenzweig's conception in the *Star* is that none of the three "elements"—God, the world, or man—has dominance or precedence over the others, it is clear that, in developing a theory of history, he must avoid any notion of divine control of history, but must rather aim for a balance between human history and the divine sphere of eternity.

Rosenzweig deals with this, first, by positing two worlds: this present world, which is "unfinished" and in a constant state of "becoming" (S, 243–44/218–22), and the world to come, or "the Kingdom," which is the result of the world's completion through redemption. This duality of worlds is also described in temporal terms: The time we inhabit is stretched between the "beginning" and the "end" of time, both of which are themselves atemporal. This is consistent with Rosenzweig's critique of totality, his concern not to presuppose the "all" (S, 287/258), but rather to conceive this "all" as an ultimate result (*letztes Ergebnis*) that "lies just so far beyond the 'course' [i.e., beyond the course of world/human history] as its divine origin lies beyond its beginning" (S, 287/258).[40] The process of arriving at this redemptive telos is what Rosenzweig calls *Bewährung*—the same verification-with-a-price that he discusses in "The New Thinking." In the *Star* Rosenzweig associates the "eschatology" of *Bewährung* with attaining truth—or rather, with attaining God as truth (S, 429ff./385ff.). In this sense, "the truth only ever appears at the end. The end is its locus/place [*Ort*]. We do not regard it as given [*gegeben*; i.e., as traditional philosophy did], we regard it as result [*Ergebnis*, from the German "sich ergeben," meaning "to ensue" or "to come about"]." Only from a divine perspective, only for God, is truth a given, namely "given by him, a gift [*Gabe*]" (S, 443/398).

Second, Rosenzweig envisions Judaism and Christianity as embodying two different but complementary ways of living in the space between the unfinished world and the Kingdom, in the conjunction of time and eternity. Judaism stands at the intersection or "side-by-side" (*Beieinander*) of the two worlds (S, 341/307–8). This is the essence of the Jews' election: their claim to being at once individual (*Einzelnes*) and universal ("all," *Alles*)—indeed, being universal *by virtue of* being absolutely singular (S, 339/305). Their existence in this world as a single, unique people indicates the universal redemption to come; and their being "God's favorite" is to be understood as the "beginning" of this redemption (S, 341/307).

Christianity or Christendom—which also denotes the "peoples of the world"—shares with Judaism the reference to, or orientation toward, this redemptive future, though it must achieve this future by treading the "path" of history or time, rather than by "already" inhabiting the future, or creating "its own time," in the way that Judaism does (S, 331/298, 374/337). Part 3 book 1 of the *Star* ("The Fire, or Eternal Life") develops this contrast by focusing on the historical "manifestations" that I have discussed in Chapter 5: Jewish "eternity" is guaranteed by means of *Zeugen-Erzeugen-Bezeugen*—a continuity of "generation" or "blood" that is at the same time a "bearing witness." It is manifested in the Jewish people's having a "holy land" but no territorial home; a "holy language," but no language that they actually speak; and a "holy law" that does not change with the times (S, 331–38/298–304). By contrast, "the peoples of the world" engage in what Rosenzweig calls "messianic politics"; they seek to expand and grow, to advance their mission in "world history." To this end, they engage in "holy war" (*Glaubenskrieg*—literally, a "war of faith") through wars of conquest, and in other forms of "violence" directed at furthering the state (such as revolution and the imposition of law [*Recht*]) (S, 364–70/328–33), while the Jews remain strangers to the state and to world history (S, 371/334).

Thus, if Judaism negotiates the tension between time and eternity by attesting to the sphere of eternity and by remaining essentially untouched by those who live within time, the "eternal way" of Christianity must consist neither in "denying time," nor in "succumbing to time" (for the Christian "way" must lead to eternity), nor in "creating its own time" (as, Rosenzweig, writes, the Jews do) (S, 374/337–38). Rather, it must "master" time, or attain eternity by going through time. "Ep-och" is the name Rosenzweig gives to the Christian "calculus of time" or "Christian era" (*christliche Zeitrechnung*). He distinguishes the time of epochs, eras, and great events—time that, because it has been parsed (*abgeteilt*), can itself have substance or meaning (the kind of meaning we assign to eras or historical periods)—from living, punctual, instantaneous, or fleeting time. (An epoch, he notes, does not just pass by before I know it, it becomes a "thing" for me.) Christendom's mastery of time consists in its having made the present into an epoch, a "between." Its past is a "before" ("B.C."); its beginning and end are beyond time (S, 374–76/337–39; see also 371/334). One might add that insofar as we call parsed, meaningful time "history," what Rosenzweig here calls Christian temporality is equivalent to historical time, understood teleologically. Thus, if the Jew is "already" at the end, the Christian is always in "the middle" (S, 376/339, 377/340), between a beginning and an end that remain unknown.

It is important to stress that for Rosenzweig, Judaism, as "eternal life," and Christianity, as the "eternal way," have a common reference to, or orientation toward, the future as such. For Rosenzweig, it is only by taking account of eternity that a theory of history can truly include and embrace any notion of the future. His notion of eternity stands for an opening of the present to the future, to the possibility that "the Kingdom" is imminent "today" and that this openness to the future is an essential quality of the present world:

> Yes, the world is created, in the beginning, as unfinished, but [also] as something that is destined to be completed. The future of its completion is created along with it, as future. . . . The Kingdom, the bringing-to-life of existence, comes from the beginning on, it is always coming . . . . It is always to come [*zukünftig*, futural], but in the future it will be always [*Es ist immer zukünftig, aber zukünftig ist es immer*]. It is always just as much already there as it is still to come. It is once and for all not yet there. It is eternally coming [or: it comes in eternity; *es kommt ewig*]. Eternity is not a very long time; it is a Tomorrow that could just as well be Today. Eternity is a future that, without ceasing to be future, is nonetheless present. Eternity is a Today that is, however, conscious of being more than Today. (S, 250/224)

But this also means that the future is not the endpoint of a temporal-historical process.[41] A truly "open" future must be one that can interrupt at any time, that does not belong to the temporal order:

> And if the Kingdom is thus eternally coming, this means that . . . [its] growth has no relationship at all to time. (S, 250/224)

> What belongs to the future is, above all, anticipation [*das Vorwegnehmen*, foreclosure], that is, the end must be expected at every moment. Only thus does the future become the time of eternity. (S, 252/226)[42]

The fact that "each moment could be the last" is what grants eternity to "the present moment" and thus what makes future possible (S, 252–53/226).[43] Judaism and Christianity are thus of interest to Rosenzweig in that each in its way is engaged in "wrest[ing] [its] eternity from time" (ND, 156/94; PTW, 132).

Rosenzweig's theory of time and eternity in the *Star* may be seen as a continuation of his earlier critique of historicism. He makes clear that to "have a future" in the way that Judaism and Christianity do is to escape the pitfalls of modern historiography, which conceives history in terms of progress. As he does at several crucial points in the *Star*, Rosenzweig in this connection opposes Judaism and Christianity to Islam, which, he claims, has no real concept of the future, and which he conflates with the "'modern' understanding of 'progress' in history" (S, 251–52/225–26).[44] What is missing from the "modern concept of the era" is the idea that future and present could be one, that the Kingdom could be "among you" "today" (S, 253/226). The historian whose name like no other stands for historicism, Leopold Ranke, was able to say "that every era is equally immediate to God," because modern-day history has been degraded into mere knowledge of what is past, without any true opening to what is to come. The very phrase "eternal progress" is meaningless, since the notion of "progress" presupposes a determinate trajectory of future events (S, 253/227) and is thus incompatible with Rosenzweig's understanding of eternity. This is consistent with Rosenzweig's depictions of the Christian "eternal way" as an indeterminate "Between," a "middle point" utterly indifferent to its proximity or distance to the beginning or end of time (S, 376/339), and of Jewish "eternal life" as utterly indifferent to chronological, historical time. (For the latter, Rosenzweig gives the classic example of the teaching that "every individual must regard the exodus from Egypt as if he himself had been one of those to go." He calls this an "eternally present memory," as opposed to "historical memory," which pertains to the past as past.)[45]

The "Not Yet" of Revelation

I had signaled that the closing passage of "Atheistic Theology" prepares the *Star*'s account of the "one people": the image of the people "divided in itself" becomes in the *Star* the people whose existence refers always to the end, to redemption. At the same time, this passage in "Atheistic Theology" portrays the human individual "divided in itself," inhabiting an interval between revelation and redemption. This parallel, too, is further developed in the *Star*'s account of God's revelation to man as an election of (or to) love that is an opening to redemption.

While Jewish election as it is described in part 3 of the *Star* is understood by means of the temporal structure of already-being-with, of foreclosure, God's election of the human individual in part 2 has, as Martin Kavka has highlighted,[46] a temporal structure of "not-yet." Because the description of revelation in the book of that title (part 2 book 2, which Rosenzweig famously called the "Herzbuch," literally the "heart," of the *Star*) is such an evocative narration of God as a "lover" "declaring" his "love" to man as the "beloved one," it is easy to overlook the fact that the full account of this love scene takes place across both book 2 ("Revelation") and book 3 ("Redemption") and that this account gradually emerges as the answer to the question posed in "Atheistic Theology" by the human being that is "divided within himself" and unredeemed. Book 2 is already punctuated with hints that the love scene of revelation looks ahead to redemption, to eternity. Thus, Rosenzweig, in order to explain why the idea that God initiates or declares his love toward man does not entail that God is "wanting" or lacking something, distinguishes love as a state conditioned or engendered by the properties of "want" or need from love as an "event." "'God loves' does not mean that love belongs to him [*ihm eignet*] as a property [*Eigenschaft*]." Rosenzweig contrasts this non-property "love" with the divine properties of omnipotence and omniscience. In doing so, he not only makes clear that love is a fleeting event (*Ereignis*) rather than a stable property, but also that God loves arbitrarily only the singular thing he happens to love. That is, God is not all-loving—at least "not yet." Thus, just as the electedness of Israel in part 3 refers to the redemptive eternity of humanity, so here the present event of love refers already to the eternity of God loving "all": "It is only not yet that God loves all besides that which he already loves" (S, 183/164).

The line of thinking indicated by this "not yet" is continued by the suspense in which Rosenzweig leaves his reader as the book devoted to "revelation" draws to a provisional conclusion about the beloved human being's response to God's love. In a complicated sequence based in part on biblical scenes—including the "dialogue" between God and Adam in Genesis 3 and Abraham's response to God's call ("Here I am!") in Genesis 22, a sequence that passes through moments of stubbornness, pride, humility, and awe—God's love, which, paradoxically, is (as articulated in Deuteronomy 5) really a commandment, an imperative, to "love me!" is ultimately reciprocated or "answered" by man as the "other pole of revelation." It is answered by a soul that is utterly ready and receptive of God's command, but that at the same time finds itself ashamed and aware of having sinned. The sinfulness of the beloved one is not thereupon atoned and divinely forgiven; rather it engenders prayer on the part of the soul, or self, prayer for the "coming of the Kingdom," and thus an "unfulfilled wish," the "cry of an open question" that is directed toward "futurity" (S, 206/185) and whose "fulfillment" is treated only in the following book, book 3, "Redemption." The focus of book 3 is on the "making-public" of the love scene beyond the individual beloved, and toward love-of-the-neighbor (S, 228–29/204–5). But this is by no means a movement of quasi-automatic reproduction, replication, or generalization of God's love of the singular human being into a social ethics. Rather, it is again a moment of bringing eternity into time, as Rosenzweig's analysis reveals the "neighbor," *der Nächste* or "the next one," as representing the same "foreclosure" of the end that the Jewish situation represents in part 3. Here, in the analysis of neighbor-love, is where "already-being-with" and the "not yet" of election merge most clearly: the neighbor or "next one," *der Nächste* (meaning both the one whom I *happen* to come upon "next" and the "very/most next one"), is essentially *zunächst* (S, 261–62/234–35), meaning preliminary and provisional.

Yet, while the "dual" relation between self and other is taken as a preliminary form of the "plural" of sociality, this is not a movement of generalization or universalization. Instead, in that it emerges necessarily from duality, sociality "everywhere" retains "traces" of the singularity of the soul that begins as the object of a singular divine revelation. From the "anyone" of the neighbor emerges the "world" of a "we" and of eternity, but one whose universality is not produced out of a subsumption of particularities. The book of "redemption" ends by looking back at the account that it has given, in which eternity has been brought into time by being brought into "the moment," the *Augenblick*.

Rosenzweig's parallel theories of Jewish election and the electedness of the human individual, in their temporal-messianic dimensions, have the force of calling into question traditional hierarchies of dependence according to which the particular (whether the Jews, or the individual) is the special case of the general (humanity or sociality), and the universal is produced or defined by means of a synthesis or subsumption over particulars. The importance of Rosenzweig's philosophy of election lies, I believe, in its potential to understand the particular as in some sense "being-already-with" the universal, in accordance with the "messianic epistemology" of *Bewährung*, of standing-up-to/holding-out-for the truth. By means of the temporal mode of "foreclosure," Rosenzweig is able to understand the Jewish people not as the contingent bearers of a property, "electedness," but as a name for the necessary presence of particularity (or, to take up the formulation from "Atheistic Theology," the presence of self-contradiction or self-division) within universality, before any universalization or totalization over particulars.

In the following chapter, which will discuss attempts by Derrida to account for history's radical "openness" to the future, we will have occasion to touch on a later text by Rosenzweig that will help bring out more clearly what Derrida comes to call the "messianic."

7

Specters of Messiah

"Violence and Metaphysics," Jacques Derrida's famous critical essay on the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, opens with an excursus into the question of whether "philosophy died yesterday," a question Derrida sees as characteristic of philosophy throughout its history. Whether we understand this question in terms of the age-old preoccupation with how philosophy might be delimited from other intellectual pursuits, or whether we recall its historical role as a favorite rhetorical device for wiping the slate clean in order to launch fresh philosophical initiatives, questions concerning the end or limit of philosophy should be, according to Derrida, "the only questions today capable of founding the community . . . of those who are still called philosophers." Noting that the philosophical innovations of Husserl and Heidegger (the two figures whose thought is crucial to understanding Derrida's and Levinas's common philosophical frame of reference) are coupled with appeals to a philosophical tradition that is predominantly Greek, Derrida focuses attention on Levinas's evocation of a tradition which claims to lie outside the Greek, a tradition of "prophetic speech" that is linked to a "messianic eschatology" (ED, 117ff./79ff.).

Now, as we pointed out in our earlier discussion of "Violence and Metaphysics" (see Chapter 2), Derrida is well aware of the dissociation that Levinas, years later, will describe as the distinction between his philosophical and his "confessional" (or religious) texts. Though Levinas recognizes, according to Derrida, that this "messianic eschatology" falls outside the order of "philosophical evidence," it would also be out of the question for Levinas to base his philosophical claims on the authority of "Hebraic theses or texts." In emphasizing that Levinas's thought is "developed in its discourse neither as a theology nor as a Jewish mysticism" and can indeed "even be understood as the trial of theology and mysticism," Derrida echoes Levinas's dismissal, in the preface to *Totality and Infinity*, of eschatological theologies that seek to make up for philosophy's insufficiencies with "oracles" or visions of peace. If the "prophetic" "eschatology of messianic peace" is to have any significance for philosophy, it must, Levinas writes, "institute a relation with being beyond totality or history."[1] Derrida interprets this "beyond" of totality and history as an opening to be found *within* experience itself, an opening to those figures of otherness that cannot, according to Levinas, be understood within traditional philosophy and that constitute for him the source of ethics.

I have briefly returned to "Violence and Metaphysics" in order to signal that while in that early work Derrida picks up on Levinas's peculiar use of the notion of "messianic eschatology" and uses it to examine whether Levinas is justified in envisioning a philosophy that goes beyond the so-called Greek tradition, the notion of the messianic does not reappear in Derrida's writings for thirty years after its publication in 1964. With the publication of the book *Specters of Marx* in 1993, however, "the messianic" emerges in Derrida's vocabulary as a systematic term; and it reappears in several of Derrida's works following *Specters of Marx* as an important critical concept. In tracing the emergence of this term in this chapter, I am taking up again my earlier discussion of Derrida's philosophy as concerned in an ongoing way with the question of history. This time, however, my interest is in showing how Derrida's new confrontation with the issue of alterity in time extends his reflections on exemplarity. Connecting Derrida's elaboration of the messianic to an important messianic text by Rosenzweig will reveal a kinship between the two thinkers' attempts to think the messianic as founding a radical futurity.

In *Specters of Marx*, the "messianic" is first introduced as a way of taking account of a certain class of experiences of time or history, in particular experiences or fantasies of an "end of history" or evocations of an "end of philosophy" similar to the one with which Derrida frames his discussion of Levinas in "Violence and Metaphysics."

Second, the "messianic" is used in *Specters of Marx* in the context of

Derrida's ongoing inquiry into what one might call the ethical dimension of deconstruction, or rather, into deconstruction *as* a pursuit of the ethical, or of justice—which in this work he links to what he calls "the spirit of Marxist criticism."

A Messianic Temporality

Of the historical scenarios that Derrida brings to mind in *Specters of Marx*, one of the most compelling is one that he touches upon only briefly:

> In 1981, while I was imprisoned in Prague by those then in power, I said to myself with a naive sense of near certainty: "This barbarism could last for centuries . . . " (SM, 119/69–70)

Despite the extraordinary nature of the experience of being imprisoned, and of being persecuted for one's intellectual activities, the historical or temporal experience that Derrida evokes here is most ordinary. We have all been struck by what Derrida here calls an "anachronistic complication," the overwhelming nature of the event of the collapse of Soviet domination in Eastern Europe and the fact that "it was not possible to deduce, and still less to date" this event or "series of events in progress . . . that no one in the world could calculate in advance, not even a few months before" (SM, 118–19/69).

Derrida recalls this experience—which I take to be a general and ongoing experience—in the context of his discussion of Francis Fukuyama's evocation of an end of history. Though he finds Fukuyama's argument fraught with faulty reasoning and inaccurate philosophical history, and views it as politically questionable, Derrida proposes that it is nevertheless worth studying as a reflection of a historical situation. He sets himself the task of reading "[the] very incoherence and sometimes distressing primitivity" of "such works" as Fukuyama's as "a symptomatic signal which one must account for as well as possible" (SM, 118/69, see also 115–16/68). If Fukuyama proclaims that "the good news has come," and if his book receives a disproportionate amount of media attention, his claims should be treated "as an *artifact*, a symptomatic montage that responds to a demand, in order to reassure it." The "demand" Derrida has in mind comes from "those who celebrate the triumph of liberal capitalism and its predestined alliance with liberal democracy only in order to hide . . . the fact that this triumph has never been so critical, fragile, threatened, even in certain regards catastrophic, and in sum bereaved" (SM, 115–16/68). The need to pinpoint or stabilize the historical moment only serves to highlight the precariousness that typifies the experience of the incalculability of the event.

Derrida's reading of this artifact is thus directed at getting a better understanding of what constitutes an event in some sort of emphatic sense. The chief problem with Fukuyama's thesis, he writes, is that it insists on the pure ideality of the criterion for liberal democracy, while at the same time relying on selective empirical facts as evidence for its advent. At times, Derrida observes, Fukuyama takes actual historical events as the basis of his thesis. Thus, he relies on Kojève's observation that in the postwar era, America and the members of the European Community "constituted the embodiment of Hegel's state of universal recognition" (SM, 107/62). On the other hand, in arguing that the "history of humanity" is progressing toward liberal democracy, Fukuyama dismisses historical facts that might serve as evidence to the contrary as irrelevant to the point he is making, which is about an *ideal* telos or orientation of history (SM, 99/57). Empirical setbacks in the progression toward democracy or freedom do not change for Fukuyama the fact that "liberal democracy," accompanied by a free market economy, "remains the only coherent political aspiration that spans different regions and cultures around the globe" (SM, 100/57).

For Derrida, there is something essential in this "indecision" (SM 98/56) between conceiving a telos or inner logic of history and measuring historical progress only in terms of actual developments. For while we cannot anticipate the end of history as a regulative ideal or determinate telos, we are also acutely aware of the precariousness of the historical-temporal situation, of what it might mean to be a political prisoner one day and an officially heralded hero or head of state the next; or to take a peaceful walk in a park that was until recently dotted with guard towers and fortifications. A theory of history must take account of the unease with which, for example, one looks back to a recent time when it seemed politically unreasonable or even dangerous to question the permanence of the division of Europe.

Of course such "anachronistic complications," which Derrida repeatedly links to Hamlet's famous line "the time is out of joint," are not specific to the collapse of the Soviet bloc, but point to a general truth about our experience of history and of time, of what Derrida calls simply "the event" (or eventness, *événementialité*). It is such a general account that Derrida hopes to get at.

Not surprisingly, he develops this account by building on Heidegger's understanding of authentic temporality. Our experience of history is not exhausted by the concept of the actual or effective present, by the notion of time as a succession of identical nows (SM, 119/70). Indeed, "the simple opposition of the real presence of the real present or the living present to its ghostly simulacrum, the opposition of the effective or actual [*wirklich*] to the non-effective, inactual" no longer holds (SM, 119/70). Derrida insists here on a "spectral logic," which is illustrated in a compelling manner by the opening lines of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* in which Communism exists only as a ghost that haunts Europe. As a ghost of something to come posing as a ghost of something that has already been, this figure gathers the legacy or heritage of Communism into the very moment of its inception. As Derrida writes, "one can never distinguish between the future-to-come [*l'à-venir*] and the return/coming-back [*revenir*] of a specter" (SM, 69/38, see also 22/4). Here, as with Fukuyama's argument, it is a matter of asking whether "to announce oneself" is "not already to be there in some way" (SM, 68/36), or even already to have been there. Thus, Derrida uses the notion of the specter to extend the Heideggerian critique of vulgar temporality:

> If there is something like spectrality, there are reasons to doubt this reassuring order of presents and especially the border between the present, the actual or present reality of the present, and everything that can be opposed to it: absence, non-presence, . . . etc. There is first of all the doubtful contemporaneity of the present to itself. Before knowing whether one can differentiate between the specter of the past and the specter of the future, of the past present and the future present, one must perhaps ask oneself whether the *spectrality effect* does not consist in undoing this opposition . . . between actual, effective presence and its other. (SM, 72/40)

And this opposition, Derrida adds, is one that both Marxism and anti-Marxism have traditionally presupposed (SM, 72/40, see also 147/89–90).

It is here that Derrida finds it useful to introduce the notion of the messianic. Unlike the end as telos or as regulative ideal, such as it is posited by Fukuyama or presumed by at least a popular understanding of Marxist or Hegelian historiography, "the future-to-come can announce itself as such and in its purity only on the basis of a *past end*: beyond, *if that's possible*, the last extremity" (SM, 68/37). In order to take account of the fact that a true event cannot be calculated or dated in advance, but nevertheless to maintain the possibility "that there is future" (a possibility that by definition cannot be foreclosed), in order to acknowledge that not knowing in advance the date of the event is not a privation of knowledge (not a lacuna) (SM, 68/36–37, see also 41/17), it is necessary to draw a distinction here between teleology on the one hand, and messianism or eschatology on the other:

> Is there not a messianic extremity, an *eskhaton* whose ultimate event (immediate rupture, unheard-of interruption, untimeliness of the infinite surprise, heterogeneity without accomplishment) can exceed, *at any instant*, the final term of a *phusis*, such as the work, the production, and the *telos* of any history? (SM, 68–69/37)

Derrida mentions Walter Benjamin only briefly in this book, but this formulation clearly recalls Benjamin's understanding of the messianic, for instance in his early "Theologico-Political Fragment," in which he distinguishes the messianic moment from history as a progression. Though the Messiah completes and redeems all that happens in history, and even "creates" it, history by itself cannot refer to anything messianic. "The Kingdom of God is not the telos of the historical dynamic; it cannot be set as a goal [*Ziel*]. Viewed historically [or: from the point of view of history] it is not a goal, but an end [or: the end, or simply: it is end] [*Historisch gesehen ist es nicht Ziel, sondern Ende*]."[2]

Benjamin's terminology differs from Derrida's, in that he aligns the historical with the teleological, opposing both to the messianic, whereas Derrida is seeking to elaborate a non-teleological understanding of history in terms of the messianic. But the fundamental idea about messianism is the same: though the course of history—which Benjamin also calls the "order of the profane"—may help to bring about the advent of the messianic kingdom, it cannot direct itself to it as to a goal.[3]

We might be reminded of Franz Rosenzweig's conception of a messianic future that cannot be captured by historical, chronological time. Rosenzweig's thinking about messianism complements both Derrida's and Benjamin's (his *Star of Redemption* was an important resource for Benjamin). He shares Derrida's view of a present that is prone to messianic interruption "at any instant."[4] In the preceding chapter, I tried to show how Rosenzweig develops his particular understanding of the messianic dimension of "eternity," from his early letters to his main philosophical works. But his understanding of the messianic future as something that intervenes in the present is clearest in a short text, an interpretative note he added to one of his translations of Jehuda Halevi's poems. The poem is entitled "The Joyous Message" or "Joyous Tidings" ("Die frohe Botschaft"), and Rosenzweig reads it as a believer's testimony to the appearance of a figure who turns out to be a so-called false messiah—indeed, he claims that this testimony must be Jehuda Halevi's own. Rosenzweig regards the narrator-author's misplaced faith and his ensuing disappointment as a necessary component of faith. Let me cite the decisive passage of his interpretative note:

> The anticipation of the Messiah, which Judaism lives on and lives for, would be an empty theologoumenon, a mere "idea," chatter,—were it not continually realized and unrealized, were it not constantly taken in and disappointed by the figure of the "false Messiah." The false Messiah is as old as hope for the true one. He is the changing form of this unchanging hope. Every Jewish generation is divided by him into those who have the strength of faith to allow themselves to be deluded and those whose have the strength of hope to resist delusion. The former are better, the latter are stronger. The former bleed as sacrifices on the altar of the eternity of the people, the latter serve as priests before this altar. Until that time when it will be the other way around and the faith of the faithful will become truth, while the hope of the hopeful becomes a lie. Then—and no one knows whether this "Then" will not happen even today [*noch heute*]—then the task of the hopeful will have come to an end, and whoever then, on the morrow of this Today, still belongs to the hopeful and not to the faithful, risks being rejected [*verworfen*, which has the additional connotation of "morally corrupt"]. This danger looms over the seemingly less dangerous life of the hopeful.[5]

I introduce this text into my discussion of *Specters of Marx* because I think Rosenzweig's account of messianism here gets at something that is very important to Derrida as well. For messianism to be messianism, it may not be restricted to mere hope in the future. The hopeful do not expose themselves to the danger of being deluded, and so perhaps they do not even hope. (We may be reminded here of Rosenzweig's "messianic theory of knowledge," according to which truth is obtained at a price, and ultimate truths are a matter of life and death.) When Derrida speaks of the messianic as an opening to the future-to-come, I think he means an opening to something beyond what can be hoped for (beyond, as he repeatedly notes, a telos or a regulative ideal), and thus an opening that also risks utter disappointment and failure. Derrida speaks of "a certain emancipatory and messianic affirmation, a certain experience of the promise" (SM, 147/89):

> an experience open to the absolute future of what is coming, that is to say, a necessarily indeterminate, abstract, desert-like experience that is confided, exposed, given up to its waiting for the other and for the event. (SM, 148/90)

A certain notion of "abstraction" bears a particular burden in pinpointing the nature of this promise. On the one hand, this promise must stay clear of any "dogmatic" teleology; it must abstract from the determinate objects or "horizons" (FL, 966/967) of anticipation. On the other hand, in order to "produce events," this promise must also "promise to be kept, that is, not to remain 'spiritual' or 'abstract'" (SM, 147/89). As Rosenzweig writes, a danger looms over those who merely hope.

This danger is also something that Benjamin was keenly aware of: Where for Rosenzweig the non-messianic element is represented by "those who [merely] hope," Benjamin associates history, the realm of the profane, with the pursuit of happiness or good fortune (*Glück*). By searching for happiness "all that is earthly [or: of this world] seeks its downfall," Benjamin writes. The individual who takes "the immediate messianic intensity" to heart experiences it as "misfortune in the sense of suffering."[6]

But the violent, destructive connotation of *Untergang*/downfall also marks the point at which Derrida would part company with Benjamin. Though for Derrida the event is determined by a posture of openness and exposure, and though he acknowledges that this is also an exposure to danger, he avoids Benjamin's language of downfall, destruction, and suffering. This difference can be traced back to Derrida's discussion on another occasion of Benjamin's "On the Critique of Violence" (an essay that dates from the same period as the "Theologico-Political Fragment"). There, Derrida expresses his reservations about Benjamin's notion of a divine violence that comes to interrupt the dialectic of revolution and status quo. He writes,

> I believe this uneasy, enigmatic, terribly equivocal text is, as it were, haunted in advance . . . by the theme of radical destruction, extermination, total annihilation, beginning with the annihilation of the law and of right, if not of justice, and, among those rights, human rights . . . . [7]

Derrida's unease about the connotation of annihilation here contrasts sharply with the conclusion Benjamin draws in his "Theologico-Political Fragment" that the "method" of "world politics" "must be called nihilism." And in *Specters of Marx*, this same unease translates into a concern to differentiate the risk entailed by a messianic posture from what Derrida terms "the worst." Thus, Derrida writes of the "disjointedness" of time, of the anachronisms that make history possible:

> To be "out of joint," . . . can do harm and do evil, it is no doubt the very possibility of evil. But without the opening of this possibility, all that remains, perhaps, beyond good and evil, is the necessity of the worst. (SM, 57/29)

A Messianic Ethics

This brings us to the second way the messianic enters into the discourse of *Specters of Marx*. Beginning with his reflections on Hamlet's utterance "The time is out of joint," which means, among other things, "without honor" or "corrupt," Derrida links the "disjointedness" or non-contemporaneity of time with the realm of ethics and politics. Indeed, in this book, "disjointedness" and non-contemporaneity function as the very condition of justice (SM, 44/19). How does Derrida come to link what is on the one hand an observation about the structure of the event, about the human experience of time and history, with "the possibility of justice"—a theme he pursued under various headings for a number of years?

Derrida draws on two philosophical sources in order to develop this view. First, he discusses Heidegger's essay on "The Anaximander Fragment,"[8] in particular Heidegger's interpretation of the Greek *dikē* (normally translated as justice) as jointure (*Fuge*), and *adikia*, the absence of justice, as being "out of joint." The fragment, which is about the becoming and the waning of beings, reads as follows:

> And the source of coming-to-be for existing things is that into which destruction, too, happens "according to necessity; for they pay penalty [*dikē*] and retribution to each other for their injustice [*adikia*] according to the assessment of time."[9]

Heidegger is interested in the fact that Anaximander does not oppose absence to Being, but sees them as linked by virtue of *dikē*/*Fuge*/jointure. In accordance with the usual understanding of the word *dikē* as "justice," the Anaximander fragment has commonly been interpreted as presenting a cosmological thesis using a political-juridical metaphor, that is, as not being about justice per se. By focusing attention on *dikē* and by translating it as "jointure" in order to make his point about Being, Heidegger must thus in his turn downplay the possibility that the fragment has any political-ethical significance.

But Derrida brings the ethical connotation of *dikē* back into the discussion: He points out that Heidegger's exploration into the proper meaning of *dikē* as "jointure" leads him to conceive the relationship of presence and absence as harmonious, and to overlook the fact that the fragment also invokes *adikia*, the disjointure/being-out-of-joint of time. As a consequence, we might see justice itself as primarily a matter of alignment and accord:

> Has not Heidegger, as he always does, skewed the asymmetry *in favor* of what he in effect interprets as the possibility of *favor* itself, of the accorded favor, namely of the accord that gathers or collects while harmonizing (*Versammlung, Fug*) . . . ?

Where Heidegger interprets Fuge/jointure as something that is "given," Derrida is compelled to add that what is given here is something that the giver does not have, but that must instead come from an other (SM, 55/27). If justice is to be understood, in Levinasian terms, as the relation to the other (SM, 48–49/23), then, Derrida argues, it must "presume the irreducible excess of a disjointure or of an anachrony, some *Un-Fuge*, some 'out of joint' dislocation in Being and in time itself" (SM, 55/27).

This brings us, then, to the second, and more important, philosophical source of Derrida's combined claim about temporality and justice. For the insistence on the conjunction of "time and the other" can be found throughout the work of Emmanuel Levinas. Thus, in one of his earliest works, *Existence and Existents*, Levinas argues that alterity, the ethical relation between self and other, is a precondition even of time itself. In an extension of Heidegger's rejection of linear time, Levinas writes, "Time is not a succession of instants filing by before an I." While Heidegger (or Levinas's Heidegger) regarded time as "entirely contained in a solitary subject," for Levinas "the dialectic of time is the very dialectic of the relationship with the other." Thus, for Levinas, the insufficiency of Heidegger's account of temporality goes hand in hand with his unsatisfactory account of Being-with.[10]

Derrida's conjunction of noncontemporaneity and justice seems to stem from this insight into what Levinas later called the diachrony of the ethical relation.[11] His observation about what I have called the precariousness of the present resonates with Levinas's remark in the conclusion of *Existence and Existents* about "the paradox of the present," the fact that we "have a time and a history . . . , a future and a past," but that "we do not have a present; it slips between our fingers." "Yet," Levinas adds, "it is in the present that we are and can have a past and a future."[12]

It is interesting to note that Levinas in one of his later works, "Diachrony and Representation," himself mentions Heidegger's essay on "The

Anaximander Fragment," the same essay that in *Specters of Marx* serves as a starting point for Derrida's reflections on disjointed time and justice. Levinas's essay is concerned with our topic, with the way my responsibility for another corresponds to a temporality in which the primacy of the present is disrupted.[13] The asymmetry between the self and an other who is not simply present calls into question the persistence and insistence of this self (as on many other occasions, Levinas here invokes Spinoza's notion of the *conatus*). Levinas writes,

> Here is the indiscreet—or "unjust"—presence which is perhaps already at issue in "The Anaximander Fragment" as interpreted by Heidegger . . . : the calling-into-question of the "positivity" of the *esse* in its *presence* . . . . Did not Heidegger —despite all he intends to teach about the priority of the "thought of Being"—here run up against the original significance of ethics?[14]

The difference between Levinas's and Derrida's interpretative stances toward Heidegger is not a topic I can pursue here. Let us return then to Derrida's own presentation of the messianic as a matter of justice.

One of the recurrent themes of *Specters of Marx* is Derrida's positing of something like a "spirit of Marxism" or a "spirit of Marxist critique," a legacy to which we are responsible as critical thinkers. But the "spirit of Marxism" that Derrida envisions differs significantly from Marxism as such precisely in that it "carries with it and must carry with it, necessarily, . . . a messianic eschatology" (SM, 102/59). Taking frequent recourse to a Levinasian vocabulary, but also to terms that have oriented his own reflections over the years on the ethical dimension of deconstruction, Derrida describes this "messianic in general," this "formality of a structural messianism," as "a certain experience of the emancipatory promise" (SM, 102/59), as an infinite promise of a democracy to come (SM, 110–111/64–65), as an "eschatological relation to the to-come [*à-venir*] of an event *and* of a singularity, of an alterity that cannot be anticipated," and as an opening or "hospitality" to the "event as the foreigner itself" (SM, 111/65). In a formulation familiar to readers of Derrida's works, he characterizes this "hospitality without reserve" at once as the "condition of possibility" of the event or of history and as its "condition of impossibility." "Without this experience of the impossible," he writes, "one might as well give up on both justice and the event" (SM, 112/65). Which is also to say that the task of understanding time and history in their "eventness" (*événementialité*) is also an ethical project, that the messianic interruption of history corresponds to the demand or command of the other.

A “Messianic without Messianism”

In 1989, four years before writing *Specters of Marx*, Derrida gave a lecture, also in the United States, at a conference on “Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice.” This lecture, entitled “Force of Law,” is in part an attempt to understand justice as something beyond right or law, and it anticipates many of the key formulations in *Specters of Marx*. It is here that we find what is to my knowledge the first mention by Derrida of a possible messianic moment in such a notion of justice.

Derrida’s use of the term “messianic” is motivated in similar ways in “Force of Law” as it is in *Specters of Marx*: Again drawing on the Levinasian lexicon, Derrida speaks in “Force of Law” of an “infinite,” “irreducible” idea of justice whose irreducibility is “owed to / due to the other [*due à l’autre*] . . . before any contract.” (Derrida speaks here also, as he does in other texts, of a “gift without exchange.”) The coming or advent of justice is “the other’s coming as the singularity that is always other.” Having thus characterized justice, Derrida adds:

> I would hesitate to assimilate too quickly this “idea of justice” to a regulative idea (in the Kantian sense), to a messianic promise or to other horizons *of the same type*. (FL, 964/965)

Why does Derrida “hesitate” here? First, because at this stage, he seems to conceive of the messianic infinite as an infinite waiting. (In this, he seems to have left behind for a moment the Levinasian sense of infinity associated with the command of the other, which is certainly not something I can wait for or even conceive of in advance, but an originary experience and a condition of all knowledge.) This infinite waiting Derrida contrasts with justice, which cannot wait; “the moment of *decision* . . . always remains a finite moment of urgency and precipitation” (FL, 966/967). In *Specters of Marx*, by contrast, justice is associated with openness to the future; and the openness and non-knowledge that are necessary to messianism are not regarded, as we have seen, as lacunae. Derrida’s characterization of messianic openness in *Specters of Marx* emphasizes rather that it not be a waiting *for something*. Whereas in “Force of Law,” Derrida associates the regulative ideal with messianic expectation, in *Specters of Marx* these two concepts are wholly distinct: the messianic is that which does not envisage an ideal or a telos. “It must not be the consequence or the effect of . . . theoretical or historical knowledge,” as Derrida writes in “Force of Law” of the moment of the just decision, which has no "horizon," whether regulative or messianic. In sum, in "Force of Law," Derrida does not yet consider the messianic in terms of imminence, as something that comports also a moment or element of urgency, of not-being-able-to-wait. (This is also the point that Rosenzweig's text makes so powerfully: that messianism is not reducible to hope.)

But apart from this terminological shift, Derrida has a further hesitation about the term "messianic," one that persists in *Specters of Marx*: If the regulative idea and the messianic promise are "horizons of the same type," of which there could be "numerous competing versions," each of these types or versions "claim[s] an absolute privilege and irreducible singularity." He adds:

> The singularity of the historical place—perhaps our own, which in any case is the one I'm obscurely referring to here—allows us a glimpse of the type itself, as the origin, condition, possibility or promise of all its exemplifications (messianism of the Jewish, Christian or Islamic type, idea in the Kantian sense, eschato-teleology of the neo-Hegelian, Marxist or post-Marxist type, etc.). (FL, 966/967)

That is, each of us, by virtue of our cultural or philosophical vantage point, has some access to the notion of, say, a messianic promise, because (or if) it has found its expression in that idiom. A particular messianic figure in a particular culture would thus be the reflection of a more originary messianicity that makes it and so many other figures like it possible. And these particular points of reference threaten the usefulness or accessibility of the general concept of messianic promise, which we can only "glimpse" (*entrevoir*). Though we can "perceive and conceive the law of irreducible competition" between the various manifestations, we do so "from a brink where vertigo threatens to seize us the moment we see nothing but examples." The result is that "some of us no longer feel engaged" in that competition (FL 966/967). Derrida's prose here is confusing, but his point about messianism seems to be that our more or less immediate acquaintance with particular Messiahs (including false Messiahs) in particular traditions, while it can enable us to appreciate the power of a general concept of messianic promise, might also make it easy for us to disqualify it as culturally contingent.

Derrida's concern about the cultural specificity of the messianic persists in *Specters of Marx*. He speaks of "two messianic spaces": the messianic as a universal structure, as a name for "the historical opening to the future" and the messianic figures in the Abrahamic religions. How, asks Derrida, can we relate these two spaces to each other; how can we account for our calling them by the same name? Is Abrahamic messianism "an exemplary prefiguration" of the messianic in general, or do particular religious messianisms arise only against the background of a formal, atheological messianism? Is messianism in general "the abstract desertification" or "the originary condition" of Abrahamic messianism? Can we conceive of an atheological messianic tradition or heritage (SM, 266/167)?

This line of questioning is of course continuous with the trajectory in Derrida's work that we have been trying to highlight in our study—his concern, from his earliest works, with the tension between the universality of philosophical concepts and the cultural or idiomatic particularity of philosophical texts. Just as, following Heidegger, Derrida sought to account for how it is that the linguistic specificity of philosophical concepts is not a grounds for linguistic relativism; just as in the work on "philosophical nationality" he explores the paradoxes of what he calls exemplarism—that assertions of particular national identities occur in the name of a universal value or principle, and thus have a philosophical dimension; while, conversely, philosophy is bound up with the particular idioms in which it is expressed—here, in envisioning a "messianic without messianism" and insisting on its formality and abstraction from all "metaphysical" and "religious" determinations,[15] Derrida is seeking to free the notion from its culturally specific connotations.

But it is important to realize what distinguishes Derrida's approach from a utopian messianism in the manner of Ernst Bloch, for example, who claims to extract from biblical sources a universal idea of messianic hope and then posits that idea as preceding the concrete historical "faith in the Messiah."[16] Derrida's strategy for detaching the "messianic" from "messianism" is a different one. Its clearest articulation can be found in his 1994 lecture on religion, "Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of 'Religion' within the Limits of Reason Alone." There he cites the notion of the messianic as one in a series of concepts that may have their counterparts in a religious discourse, but whose philosophical significance must be "independent of all religion." These include the Heideggerian use of *Offenbarkeit* to mean a revealedness that is more originary than revelation (*Offenbarung*) (FS, 26/16). Just as Derrida wants to propose that *Offenbarkeit* is a more originary experience than the event of revelation that is the source of faith, so he writes of messianicity:

> This messianic dimension does not depend upon any messianism; it follows no determinate revelation, it belongs properly to no Abrahamic religion . . .

to which he adds the following parenthetical caveat:

> . . . (even if I must here continue, "between you and me" [*entre nous*], for essential reasons of language and place, of culture [Derrida is speaking here to a group of European philosophers on the island of Capri], reasons of provisional rhetoric and of historical strategy . . . to give it [this messianic dimension] names that are marked by the Abrahamic religions.) (FS, 28/18)

Read as a merely strategic justification for maintaining the name of messianicity, this remark does not suffice to motivate its use. But it points to the analyses that Derrida has given elsewhere, and that he hints at in *Specters of Marx*, of philosophy's simultaneous claim to universality and dependence on particular names.

Derrida's treatment of messianicity in "Faith and Knowledge," which particularly stresses the aspect of waiting without anticipation, has an interesting parallel, for instance, in his reading of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi's book on Freud in *Archive Fever*. As we noted in Chapter 5, Derrida there writes repeatedly of his unease at Yerushalmi's implicit call to Freud to acknowledge the Jewishness of psychoanalysis, and at the violence of saying "we" (that is, what amounts to Yerushalmi's performative injunction to Freud: "I shall say 'we'": "In what is at issue here, indeed has been so all along, we both have, as Jews, an equal stake. Therefore in speaking of the Jews I shall not say 'they.' *I shall say 'we'*"[17]). Derrida dwells for a while on another of Yerushalmi's remarks to Freud, in which Yerushalmi implies that Freud's thinking lacks "the anticipation of a specific hope for the future." "It is on this question of hope or hopelessness," Yerushalmi adds, "that your teaching may be at its most un-Jewish."[18]

Derrida draws a parallel between this claim and one Yerushalmi made in his earlier book, *Zakhor*, that "only in Israel and nowhere else is the injunction to remember felt as a religious imperative to an entire people."[19] About this statement Derrida writes, "I would have liked to spend hours, in truth an eternity, meditating and trembling before this sentence" (Archive, 121/76). On the one hand, this "trembling" represents a critique of the "exclusivity" of these claims, the "absolute privilege of election" that they describe (Archive, 120/75):

> How can one not tremble before this sentence?

> I wonder if it is true, if it is fair, if it is just [*juste*] . . . . I wonder, while trembling, if they are just, the sentences which reserve for Israel *both* the future *and* the past *as such*, *both* hope . . . *and* the duty of memory, ...
>
> Unless, in the logic of this election, one were to call by the *unique* name of Israel all the places and all the peoples who would be ready to recognize themselves in this anticipation and in this injunction . . . . Because if it is just to remember the future and the injunction to remember, . . . it is no less just to remember the others, the other others and the others in oneself, and that the other peoples could say the same thing—in another way. (Archive, 122–23/76–77)

On the other hand, by representing himself not only as critiquing but as "trembling," by recording again and again his unease, Derrida suggests that there is something in this structure of election that cannot simply be eliminated. Even if we see clearly the danger of universalizing a particular, our attempts to express universal truths always also depend on particulars—particular languages, experiences, or names. This is what Derrida means when he speaks of calling "by the *unique* name of Israel all the places and all the peoples who would be ready to recognize themselves in this anticipation and in this injunction": Even if one can recognize hope and the injunction to remember as universal values, even if one acknowledges that "it is" *universally* "just to remember the future and the injunction to remember," one will always find oneself giving particular, irreducible names ("the *unique* name of Israel") to this recognition. Even if "it is no less just to remember the others, . . . and that the other peoples could say the same thing," they could necessarily say them only "in *another* way."

I believe that there are similar reasons behind Derrida's hesitant use of the name "messianic" in *Specters of Marx* and the series of "withouts" he attaches to it, though he does not formulate this as sharply here as he does in *Archive Fever*.

Nor is Derrida's "abstraction" from messianism in *Specters of Marx* the only place in that book that makes more sense in view of his analysis of exemplarity elsewhere. For instance, in drawing as heavily as he does on Levinas's ethical schema, Derrida also inherits Levinas's own "abstraction" from portrayals of the relation between God and man that draw on biblical and other sacred texts. In characterizing the ethical relation as the command that comes from the unthematizable Other, Levinas explicitly draws a parallel with the divine command, and with the election of the Jewish people.[20] (In this, Levinas himself is drawing on the insights of Franz Rosenzweig that we have been exploring in this book.) Derrida's reliance on the Levinasian ethical relation thus presupposes his analysis of exemplarism, and in particular his own considerations of Jewish election.

It is also by virtue of such an exemplarism that one of Derrida's names for the very operation of abstraction that he performs with respect to messianism is "desert." He speaks repeatedly—not only in *Specters of Marx*, but also in "Faith and Knowledge"—of abstraction in terms of a "desert" or a "desertification" (FS, 26ff./16ff.). The "messianic without messianism," "without content and without identifiable Messiah" is also called a "desertlike messianism" (*messianisme désertique*) (SM, 56/28). We cannot fail to associate this reference with the topology of the sacred texts of the Abrahamic religions. Like "messianicity" and Heidegger's "Offenbarkeit," the "desert"—or what Derrida calls "a desert *within* the desert"[21]—stands for an abstraction that is no mere absence of particular content, but that also makes possible or "gives place to" what it has abstracted or subtracted (FS, 27/17).

Here again, Derrida differs from Bloch and others who have claimed to be able to discern a messianic moment that is completely free of culturally specific meanings. And yet, lest we be misled into reducing the messianic to some cultural specificity, Derrida reminds us that "the quasi-atheistic dryness of the messianic," though it refers to "the condition of the religions" or peoples "of the Book," does so by referring to "a desert that was not even theirs" (SM, 267/168).[22] We may be reminded here of Derrida's concern, in the "philosophical nationality" texts, with the violence inherent in the "we" and in belonging, as well as of Rosenzweig's treatment of the Jews as non-autochthonous, as "guests at our own table."[23] The peculiar metaphoricity that links "abstraction" to "desert" reinforces Derrida's point about the ambiguity of concepts like revelation and messianism: The transformation of such mystical notions as a personal Messiah into universal philosophical categories can be seen as a drying out, a subtraction of the mythical, "concrete" elements. But Derrida's use of "desertification" reminds us that the term "abstraction," like any supposedly abstract philosophical concept, itself comprises an element of metaphoricity, thus underscoring his point that no abstraction from "mythological," culturally particular messianism or revelation can be complete. By using the "desert" in this way as a quasi-metaphor for "abstraction"—reaching, that is, beyond the notion of abstraction to describe what the term "messianism" must undergo if it is to convey what he wants it to—Derrida thus engages the broader question of how to negotiate the interdependence between the particular idiom and philosophy as a universal discourse.

As Derrida writes in "Faith and Knowledge," a messianic hope beyond any messianism must be a hope for "a universalizable culture of singularities, a culture in which the abstract possibility of the impossible translation could nevertheless announce itself" (FS, 28/18).

REFERENCE MATTER

Appendix: Jacques Derrida's Seminar Cycle "Nationalité et nationalisme philosophiques"

Year	Title of seminar	Lectures or publications that developed out of the seminar	Location in Jacques Derrida Archive, UC Irvine (MS–C1)
1984–85	"Nationalité et nationalisme philosophiques" (10 sessions?)	Session 1 published as "Onto-Theology of National-Humanism" (Onto-Theology) Sessions 6–? correspond to "La main de Heidegger (Geschlecht II)" (published in Psyché)	Box A.16, Folders S64, S65, S66
1985–86	[no material found]		
1986–87	"Théologico-Politique" (9 sessions)	Parts of sessions 1–5 correspond to sequence of public lectures entitled: 1. "Signatures de la vengeance" 2. "La Corruption des signes: plus de jalousie, plus de vengeance, plus d'élus" 3. "Les Yeux de la langue: l'abîme et le volcan" (referenced in Mono, 94–96n/80–82n)* 4. "Séculariser la langue: le volcan, le feu, les Lumières"*	Box A.15, Folders S59, S60, S61
1987–88	"Nationalité et nationalisme philosophiques"	Sessions 1–8 correspond to "Interpretations at War. Kant, le juif, l'allemand" (IAW)	Box A.16, Folder S67

*These lectures have been combined and published in English translation as "The Eyes of Language: The Abyss and the Volcano," trans. Gil Anidjar, in AR; and in French as "Les Yeux de la langue" in *Cahier de L'Herne* no. 83 (2004): *Jacques Derrida*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet and Ginette Michaud.

Notes

CHAPTER I

1. See, for example, Else Freund, *Die Existenzphilosophie Franz Rosenzweigs. Ein Beitrag zur Analyse seines Werkes "Der Stern der Erlösung,"* 2nd ed. (Hamburg: Meiner, 1959), trans. Stephen Weinstein and Robert Israel as *Franz Rosenzweig's Philosophy of Existence* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1979); Joseph Tewes, *Zum Existenzbegriff Franz Rosenzweigs* (Meisenheim am Glan: A. Hain, 1970); Eva Birkenstock, *Heißt Philosophieren sterben lernen? Antworten der Existenzphilosophie: Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre, Rosenzweig* (Freiburg: Alber, 1997). Though he does not name the philosophy of existence as a guiding theme, Alexander García Düttman in his *La Parole donnée: mémoire et promesse* (Paris: Galilée, 1989) also places the philosophies of Rosenzweig and Heidegger in a common context: that of theories of language (trans. Arline Lyons as *The Gift of Language: Memory and Promise in Adorno, Benjamin, Heidegger, and Rosenzweig* [Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000]).

2. See, for example, Ze'ev Levy, *Mevaser ekzistentsializm yehudi. Mishnato shel Franz Rosenzweig ve-yeḥasa le-shitat Hegel* (A Precursor of Jewish Existentialism: The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig and Its Relation to Hegel's System) (Merḥavyah: Sifriyat po'alim, 1969). More recently, Rosenzweig is discussed together with Buber and Soloveitchik under the heading of "Jewish existentialism" by Oliver Leaman in Oliver Leaman and Daniel H. Frank (eds.), *History of Jewish Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1997), 799–819.

3. See, for example, Michael Theunissen, *Der Andere. Studien zur Sozialontologie der Gegenwart* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1965), 242ff. (Partial English translation: *The Other: Studies in the Social Ontology of Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, and Buber*, trans. Christopher Macann [Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984], 257–58); Bernhard Casper, *Das dialogische Denken. Eine Untersuchung der religionsphilosophischen Bedeutung Franz Rosenzweigs, Ferdinand Ebners und Martin Bubers* (Freiburg: Herder, 1967).

4. Theunissen, 244–45/259–61, and Karl Löwith take up the title of Rosenzweig's programmatic essay—which also inspired the title of a 1928 book by Hermann Herrigel—as a description of the thought that was common to Rosenzweig and Heidegger. Karl Löwith, "M. Heidegger und F. Rosenzweig. Ein Nachtrag

zu *Sein und Zeit*" (1942–43), *Heidegger – Denker in dürftiger Zeit. Zur Stellung der Philosophie im 20. Jahrhundert* (*Sämtliche Schriften*, vol. 8) (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1984). "M. Heidegger and F. Rosenzweig: A Postscript to *Being and Time*," *Nature, History, and Existentialism*, trans. Arnold Levison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966). See also Peter Eli Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger: Between Judaism and German Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 290–91. It was on the basis of Herrigel's newspaper report on the Heidegger-Cassirer confrontation at Davos that Rosenzweig wrote about the "battlefront reversal," the "Vertauschung der Fronten," between Cohen and Heidegger (discussed below).

Recently, Gordon has suggested the intellectual-historical category "philosophical expressionism" as a way of capturing commonalities between Rosenzweig's "new thinking" and the philosophy of Martin Heidegger within the "Weimar modernist context." He describes this phenomenon as a response to a perceived "crisis" of traditional philosophy, one that developed a new understanding of the relation between philosophy and religion in order to better capture human individuality and lived experience as irreducible to conceptualization. *Rosenzweig and Heidegger*, xxvii–xxviii, 26, 28.

5. Theunissen, 244/258, and 245/258–59.

6. Letter of September 14, 1928. GS I.2, 1198.

7. On Cohen's having provided a "system," and on his having been "driven beyond the system," see also Rosenzweig, "Ein Gedenkblatt" (1918), GS III, 240.

8. Hermann Herrigel, "Denker dieser Zeit. Fakultäten und Nationen treffen sich in Davos," *Frankfurter Zeitung* (April 22, 1929). See also note 4 above.

9. Rosenzweig, "Vertauschte Fronten" (1929), GS III, 235–37, translated as "Transposed Fronts," PTW, 149–51. For a full discussion of the Cassirer-Heidegger confrontation and its perceived significance, see Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger*, 275–89. Also see the recent reading of "Vertauschte Fronten" by Reiner Wiehl, who shows it to be an invaluable resource for calling into question the standard understanding of what happened at Davos, as well as—importantly for my discussion here—for retrieving the significance of Hermann Cohen's philosophical legacy, not only for Rosenzweig himself, but for our time. "'Vertauschte Fronten'. Franz Rosenzweigs Stellungnahme zur Davoser Disputation," in Dominic Kaegi and Enno Rudolph (eds.), *Cassirer-Heidegger: 70 Jahre Davoser Disputation* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2002), 207–14.

10. Cf. RV, 206/176–77; BR, 124.

11. RV, 13–23/11–20. In *The Concept of Religion*, Cohen reflects explicitly on the significance of his staking out a realm for religion apart from ethics in view of Kant's "dissolution" of religion into ethics, a "consequence" that Cohen himself had not "shied away from" in his earlier *Ethik des reinen Willens* (ERW). BR, 41–42.

12. RV, 23–25/21–22; ERW, 88.

13. Cohen-Einleitung, xlv–xlvi. Cf. RV, 225–26/193–94, 244/209.

14. In their recent detailed study of how Cohen's influence makes itself felt in Rosenzweig's *Star*, Pierfrancesco Fiorato and Hartwig Wiedebach also highlight the theme of correlation as one that is central to Rosenzweig's Cohen reception. "Hermann Cohen im *Stern der Erlösung*," in Martin Brasser (ed.), *Franz Rosenzweig als Leser. Kontextuelle Kommentare zum "Stern der Erlösung,"* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2004), 305–55, 335ff. See also Fiorato and Wiedebach, "Rosenzweig's Readings of Hermann Cohen's *Logic of Pure Cognition*," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy*, vol. 12, no. 2 (August 2003), 139–46.

15. Cf. RV, 102–3/87–88.

16. Most notably Löwith, "M. Heidegger und F. Rosenzweig." In more recent years, this convergence has been taken up by Alan Udoff, "Rosenzweig's Heidegger Reception and the Re-Origination of Jewish Thinking," in W. Schmied-Kowarzik (ed.), *Der Philosoph Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929)* (Freiburg: Alber, 1988); Christoph von Wolzogen, "'Vertauschte Fronten'. Heidegger und Rosenzweig," *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*, vol. 46, no. 2 (1994), 109–25; Bernhard Casper, "'Ereignis'. Bemerkungen zu Franz Rosenzweig und Martin Heidegger," in Jens Mattern, Gabriel Motzkin, and Shimon Sandbank (eds.), *Jüdisches Denken in einer Welt ohne Gott. Festschrift für Stéphane Mosès* (Berlin: Vorwerk 8, 2000), 67–77; and Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger*.

Note, however, Reiner Wiehl's rereading of "Reversed Battlefronts" ("Vertauschte Fronten"), which is in part geared toward undoing the by now commonplace view that its primary importance lies in its expression of Rosenzweig's alignment with Heidegger and against Cassirer, and thus in his having sided, so to speak, with the "winner" of the disputation. (See note 9 above.)

17. For example, Freund, Tewes, Levy (see notes 1 and 2 above).

18. Two examples are: Ernst Simon, "Zu Hermann Cohens Spinoza-Auffassung," in *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 79 (1935), Heft 2, 181–94, 189 (note that the corresponding passage in the reprinted version of this essay ["Zu Hermann Cohens Spinoza-Auffassung," *Brücken. Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider, 1965), 205–14, 211] formulates this break somewhat less sharply); and Samuel Hugo Bergmann, "Hermann Cohen," in *Faith and Reason: An Introduction to Modern Jewish Thought* (New York: Schocken, 1961).

19. Alexander Altmann, "Hermann Cohens Begriff der Korrelation," in Hans Tramer (ed.), *In Zwei Welten. Siegfried Moses zum fünfundziebzigsten Geburtstag* (Tel-Aviv: Bitaon, 1962) (reprinted in Helmut Holzhey, *Hermann Cohen* [New York: Peter Lang, 1994]). Altmann's interpretation was subsequently endorsed by Emil Fackenheim in "Hermann Cohen—After Fifty Years," *Leo Baeck Memorial Lecture 12* (New York: Leo Baeck Institute, 1969).

20. Hermann Cohen, "Platons Ideenlehre und die Mathematik" (1878), *Schriften zur Philosophie und Zeitgeschichte* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1928), vol. 1. Cf. BR, 30.

21. For a detailed discussion of Cohen's "critical idealism," see Andrea Poma,

The Critical Philosophy of Hermann Cohen (1988), trans. John Denton (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997), 55ff.

22. This basic continuity thesis has been at the heart of much of the recent and contemporary research into Cohen's philosophy, including works by Almut Sh. Bruckstein, Pierfrancesco Fiorato, Robert Gibbs, Helmut Holzhey, Martin Kavka, Andrea Poma, Christoph Schulte, Hartwig Wiedebach, and Michael Zank. Steven S. Schwarzschild also did a great deal to challenge Rosenzweig's division of Cohen's works into philosophical system and proto-existentialist works on religion. See, for example, his introduction to the 1981 *Werke* edition of *Ethik des reinen Willens* (ERW), vii–xxxv, xxii.

23. As is also shown by John Pizer, "Theism, Temporality, and Origin: Franz Rosenzweig," chap. 4 of *Toward a Theory of Radical Origin: Essays on Modern German Thought* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995).

24. Cf. Helmut Holzhey, "Heidegger und Cohen. Negativität im Denken des Ursprungs," in G. Hauff et al. (eds.), *In Erscheinung treten. Heinrich Barths Philosophie des Ästhetischen* (Basel: Schwabe, 1990), 109.

25. For a helpful account of the mobilization of Cohen's "logic of origin" in the introduction to the *Star*, see Fiorato and Wiedebach, "Hermann Cohen im *Stern der Erlösung*," 317ff. However, these authors point out that the impetus for trying to conceive of a "nothing" that is an origin "before any beginning" (S, 28/26) probably derives from Rosenzweig's reception of Schelling's *The Ages of the World* (*Die Weltalter*) and that Cohen's logic of origin supplies the *method* for elaborating this generation in a way that avoids "physical-local predicates" more than Schelling himself did (318). Robert Gibbs also illuminates the role of Cohen's "logic of origin," somewhat in conjunction with the role of Schelling's *Weltalter*, in part 1 of the *Star*, in *Correlations in Rosenzweig and Levinas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 46–56.

26. For a study of the philosophy of the *Star* centered on the question of death, see Eva Birkenstock, "Der Weg vom Tod zum Leben in Rosenzweigs *Stern der Erlösung*," chap. 4 of *Heißt Philosophieren sterben lernen?* (Freiburg: Alber, 1995), 217–80.

27. This aspect of the *Star* is the topic of Chapter 6.

28. For a helpful discussion of Cohen's *The Concept of Religion* as going beyond the two alternative understandings of religion put forward by Schleiermacher and Hegel, see Dietrich Korsch, "Individualität als Gesetz. Der Begriff der Religion im System der Philosophie Hermann Cohens," in Ulrich Barth and Wilhelm Gräb, *Gott im Selbstbewusstsein der Moderne. Zum neuzeitlichen Begriff der Religion* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1993), 91–110.

29. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie III*, *Werke*, vol. 20 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971), 194–95.

30. "Vertauschte Fronten," GS III, 237 / PTW, 150.

31. See "Davoser Disputation zwischen Ernst Cassirer und Martin Heideg-

ger," as documented in Heidegger, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, 5th ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1991), 276–79.

32. ERW, 410–11; BR, 80. For more on the role of the "task" in Cohen's theory of time, history, and eternity, see Pierfrancesco Fiorato, *Geschichtliche Ewigkeit. Ursprung und Zeitlichkeit in der Philosophie Hermann Cohens* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann), 88ff.

33. This use of the "Greek" example contrasts with its use in Cohen's *Religion of Reason*, in which the Greeks are also defined as those who lack a concept of "individual peoplehood" in that "the barbarians do not enter into the horizon of the Hellene" (RV, 279/238). This is in explicit contrast to prophetic monotheism, which is supposed to have yielded the concept of humanity as a multiplicity of peoples that tends toward a cosmopolitan universality. The monotheistic innovation is thus represented as the ability, as it were, to count past one, that is, to perceive peoples as individuals (RV, 283ff./242ff.).

34. Note that Barbara E. Galli's recent translation skips a couple of sentences in this passage and also mistranslates *einzeln*, which I have here rendered as "single" (in the sense of "individual" that I have been discussing), as "singular," which is closer in meaning to *einzig*, unique. Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 325.

35. Also significant in the passage just quoted is the internal self-difference of "the one people" that has taken the border that would otherwise enclose it as individual and has enclosed it into itself. In Chapter 5, I explore further Rosenzweig's view of Jewish "identity" as self-difference, in conjunction with Derrida's reflections on "philosophical nationality" and Jewishness.

36. For more on the attitude to Cohen reflected in "Atheistic Theology," see Chapter 6.

37. "Such an infiltration on the part of the contested principle would be impossible, were it not that the entire atheistic theology has its own legitimacy even against the theology that it attacked, indeed, especially within the latter." Rosenzweig follows this with three examples from traditional—as he points out later, rationalist and mystical—Jewish sources that can be read as bolstering the atheistic-theological tendencies he has pointed out: For example, he cites Bahya ibn Pakuda's reception of the mystical idea of unity as representative of the "age-old" tendency "among us" to "carry [this idea] from the dogmatic over into the ethical." (For an appreciative note by Hermann Cohen on Bahya's thinking in terms of "unity," see RV, 520/450.) AT, 695–96/21–22.

38. AT, 697/24. I give a fuller account of Rosenzweig's "Atheistic Theology" in view of the problems of time and history in Chapter 6.

39. It is not possible here to examine the differences between Cohen and Rosenzweig on the nature of messianic universal history. Let me just note that, as will become clear in Chapter 6, Rosenzweig extends the transcendence of divine revelation into a theory of time and history according to which the Jews, as

elected, are eternal in the sense of being outside time and history. Cohen, by contrast, tends to portray messianic ideals as being realizable within history—which is why he can point to tendencies such as the movement toward a league of nations as signs of the coming achievement of cosmopolitical justice.

40. For further discussion of the theory of Judaism advanced by Rosenzweig in part 3 book 1—including the motif of naiveté and that of being "already at the end"—see Chapters 5 and 6.

41. AD, 680–81 / PTW, 100; S, 335/302—passages I will return to in Chapter 5.

42. The idea of contraction appears to be informed by the Kabbalistic notion of *tsimtsum*. Rosenzweig invokes this notion a couple of sections later when he draws explicitly on Jewish mysticism to construct a "bridge" between the people as remnant and God as Shekhina, as "God's descent upon men and his dwelling among them." The Shekhina is a division, parting, or separation (*Scheidung*) that "takes place in God himself": "God himself separates/divides/parts [*scheidet*] himself from himself." This divine movement is parallel to the movement of the remnant, which is a "constant requirement of self-separation/parting and self-exclusion/departing/expulsion [*das ständige Sichscheiden und Selbstausscheidenmüssen*]." In this movement of parting and departing, the remnant is a "suffering for God's sake" (S, 455–56/409–10). Moshe Idel has highlighted some of the ways Rosenzweig draws on the Kabbalah in "Franz Rosenzweig and the Kabbalah," in Paul Mendes-Flohr (ed.), *The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig* (Hanover, N.H.: Brandeis University Press / University Press of New England, 1988), esp. 165–68.

43. Werner E. Müller, *Die Vorstellung vom Rest im Alten Testament* (1939), posthumously rev. ed. by Horst Dietrich Preuß (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1973), e.g., 26.

44. See, for example, Norman K. Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-Literary Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 379.

45. Robert Gibbs, "Why Remember?" chap. 17 of *Why Ethics?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 375–76.

46. In this connection, it is perhaps fitting to recall the words with which Rosenzweig announced to Rudolf Ehrenberg that he had changed his mind about converting to Christianity: "Ich bleibe also Jude"; "I (shall) thus remain a Jew." Letter of October 31, 1913, GS I.2, 133.

47. Geert Edel, *Von der Vernunftskritik zur Erkenntnislogik. Die Entwicklung der theoretischen Philosophie Hermann Cohens* (Freiburg: Alber, 1988), chap. 4.

48. Cf. the new translation by Barbara E. Galli, which renders "ein Übriggebliebener" as "one who remains." Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 427.

49. An important motif in connection with the *Star*'s treatment of the remnant, which is rooted in Rosenzweig's early search for a justification for Jewish existence, is that of "pride"—what Rosenzweig in his exchange of letters with Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy on "Judaism and Christianity" describes as the difficult-to-convey experience of *Judenstolz* (see my remarks on this exchange in Chapter 5, note 5) and

what here appears as the "pride of the 'remnant of Israel,'" which Rosenzweig here understands as a "suffering for the sake of God" (S, 455–56/409–10). This again may be read in conjunction with Rosenzweig's analysis of the singular human self in terms of stubbornness (*Trotz*) and pride in part 1 book 3, and the related drama of man as a recipient of revelation passing through stages of stubbornness, pride, and so on in part 2 book 2 ("Revelation, or the Ever-Renewed Birth of the Soul"). I discuss the role of the "Revelation" book in Rosenzweig's theory of Judaism in Chapter 6 and in my essay "The Significance of Franz Rosenzweig's Retrieval of Chosenness" (forthcoming in *Jewish Studies Quarterly*).

CHAPTER 2

1. Geoffrey Bennington, "Derridabase," in Bennington and Derrida, *Jacques Derrida* (1991; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 27. Cf. 50, 63, 98ff.

2. The importance of Derrida's works for thinking tradition has been explored in an illuminating fashion by Michael Naas in *Taking on the Tradition: Jacques Derrida and the Legacies of Deconstruction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

Of the two major studies of Derrida's early work on Husserl, Leonard Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl: The Basic Problem of Phenomenology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), and Paola Marrati, *Genesis and Trace: Derrida Reading Husserl and Heidegger*, trans. Simon Sparks (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005) (originally published as *La Genèse et la trace. Derrida lecteur de Husserl et Heidegger* [Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1998]), Marrati's book, which takes as a focal point the problem of "genesis" articulated in Derrida's 1953–54 master's thesis of that title (PGH), is the one to focus more decisively on the problematic of history that is my interest here (e.g., 33, 43, 48, 109, 178). However, in focusing on how the problem of genesis is succeeded—that is, continued in an altered way—by that of the "trace" and of "writing" (44, 124, 231n35), even though "writing" is understood by Marrati in the broadest sense as a heading that encompasses multiple philosophical questions (196), I believe that this study leaves room for an alternative reading in which language and writing are further decentered in favor of history and exemplarity (as I am attempting here), or other philosophical questions/categories. Lawlor's book, while it calls attention to the treatment of tradition and history in the "Introduction," is geared toward making evident a "linguistic turn" in Derrida's early work and toward tracing Derrida's key discoveries concerning language in the works following the "Introduction" as a way of accounting for "the deconstruction of metaphysics" (e.g., 88, 146, 212, 227, 228). Both studies are groundbreaking, however, in their attempts to provide accounts of Derrida's ongoing philosophical project, in that they demonstrate how that project is rooted in his early readings of Husserl, and in following that project up to the so-called ethico-political writings.

Another recent study of Derrida's philosophy for which his early considerations of Husserl and history are a constant reference point is Marian Hobson, *Jacques Derrida: Opening Lines* (London: Routledge, 1998). See also Tilottama Rajan, *Deconstruction and the Remainders of Phenomenology: Sartre, Derrida, Foucault, Baudrillard* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), which presents Derrida's work in conjunction with some of his French contemporaries as a "turning" of phenomenology toward deconstruction.

3. See Derrida's "Avertissement" in the French edition of Husserl, *L'Origine de la géometrie* (Intro., 2/25n1).

4. PSW, 326/126. Cited in Intro., 26–27/43.

5. Derrida's concern to point out this prevalent misinterpretation of Husserl dates back to his 1953–54 master's thesis, "The Problem of Genesis in Husserl's Philosophy" (PGH, 249n1/210n1). But it is in the "Introduction" that he develops his full argument as to why this is so.

6. See, for example, Intro., 30–32, 41ff., 55, 66–69, 155–56.

7. "'Genèse et structure' et la phénoménologie" (1965) / "'Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology," in ED, 231/156.

8. See "Sur la phénoménologie du langage" (1952) in *Signes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), 105–6 ("On the Phenomenology of Language," in *Signs*, trans. R. C. McCleary [Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964], 84–85); "Le Philosophe et la sociologie" (1951) in *Signes*, 132 ("The Philosopher and Sociology," *Signs*, 105); "Les Sciences de l'homme et la phénoménologie," 1958; Paris: Centre de documentation universitaire, 1961), 44 ("Phenomenology and the Sciences of Man," trans. John Wild in *The Primacy of Perception* [Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964], 83–84); and "Husserl aux limites de la phénoménologie" (1959–60) in *Résumés de cours: Collège de France, 1952–1960* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), 161ff. ("Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology," trans. John O'Neill in *In Praise of Philosophy and Other Essays* [Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988], 182ff.). All but the last of these texts are cited by Derrida in his "Introduction." Note that the version of Husserl's "The Origin of Geometry" that Merleau-Ponty cites is Fink's 1939 version, which differs significantly from the Husserliana version that serves as the basis for Derrida's translation (though Derrida does explicitly cite Fink's version when he finds Fink's elaboration of Husserl's text helpful—indeed, he winds up citing the very same lines that figure in Merleau-Ponty's presentation about Husserl's reconsideration of the problems of language [Intro., 86/89]).

9. See Merleau-Ponty, "Les Sciences de l'homme et la phénoménologie," 43ff./88ff.

10. This letter, which was apparently so widely known among Husserl readers that it is qualified as "famous" by Derrida (Intro., 115/111), has since been published in Husserl, *Briefwechsel* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1994), vol. 7, 161–64. Whether it actually ever reached its addressee has been the subject of speculation. See Alexandre Métraux's note to his German translation of "Les Sciences de l'homme et la phénoménologie" in Merleau-Ponty, *Vorlesungen I* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1973), 380n235. Métraux also reports that Merleau-Ponty was able to consult the letter

at the Husserl Archives in Paris and that a copy of it written in Merleau-Ponty's own hand was found among his papers.

11. Husserl, *Erfahrung und Urteil. Untersuchungen zur Genealogie der Logik* (1939; Hamburg: Meiner, 1972), §87a, 410–11. *Experience and Judgment*, trans. James S. Churchill and Karl Ameriks (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 340. Cf. UG, 383/177.

12. Merleau-Ponty, "Les Sciences de l'homme et la phénoménologie," 51/90.

13. Husserl's letter to Lévy-Bruhl, as cited in ibid., 51/90. Cf. Husserl, *Briefwechsel* 7:162.

14. Merleau-Ponty, "Les Sciences de l'homme et la phénoménologie," 52/91. Cf. Husserl, *Briefwechsel* 7:163.

15. It is not the only such impulse, of course. Another is furnished by Trân-Dúc-Tháo's *Phénoménologie et matérialisme dialectique*, which Derrida also cites as a misunderstanding of the status of the factical. Intro., 30, 55. Cf. Derrida, "The Time of a Thesis" (1980), trans. Kathleen McLaughlin, in Alan Montefiore (ed.), *Philosophy in France Today* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 38.

16. Husserl, *Experience and Judgment*, §87a, 411/341.

17. A notable exception is André de Muralt's *L'Idée de la phénoménologie*, which is subtitled "l'exemplarisme husserlien" (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1958). *The Idea of Phenomenology*, trans. Garry L. Breckon (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974). Derrida does cite de Muralt on one occasion in his "Introduction," in a different connection than the one I am discussing here.

18. M. Gandillac, L. Goldmann, and J. Piaget (eds.), *Entretiens sur les notions de genèse et de structure* (Paris: Mouton, 1965), 265.

19. Husserl, "Die Krisis des europäischen Menschentums und die Philosophie," Hua VI, 319. "Philosophy and the Crisis of European Humanity," trans. David Carr in *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 274. Cf. Husserl, "Krisis," §6.

20. Intro., 121/115.

21. "Violence et métaphysique" / "Violence and Metaphysics," in ED, 120, 120n2/81, 311–12n4.

22. Ibid., 120n2/311–12n4. The citations are from Husserl's Vienna lecture, Hua VI, 318.

23. In his master's thesis, "The Problem of Genesis in Husserl's Philosophy," Derrida had already begun to look at Husserl's notion, articulated in the Vienna lecture, of Europe as *eidos*, in order to show how the transcendental-empirical distinction breaks down in a way that could be made productive for a "new ontology" beyond eidetic phenomenology. In that context, the idea of exemplarity does not come up, and perhaps it is for this reason that Derrida seems less certain in the earlier work than he is in the "Introduction" about whether Husserl's account of Europe is sufficiently non-empiricist. PGH, 249–57/154–60. For a detailed treatment, see Marrati, *Genesis and Trace*, 29–37/19–26.

24. Emile Benveniste, "Categories of Thought and Language," *Problems in General Linguistics*, trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek (Coral Gables, Fla.: University of Miami Press, 1971), 56. (Original: "Catégories de pensée et catégories de langue," in *Problèmes de linguistique générale* [Paris: Gallimard, 1966].)

25. Ibid., 57.

26. Ibid., 56.

27. Ibid., 58.

28. Jules Vuillemin, *De la logique à la théologie, cinq études sur Aristote* (Paris: Flammarion, 1967), cited in MP, 231–32n20/193–94n24.

29. See my discussion in Chapter 3.

30. While Benveniste argues for an "unconscious" projection from language, F. A. Trendelenburg in 1846 (*Geschichte der Kategorienlehre*, Berlin) suggested that Aristotle consciously drew on existing grammatical distinctions in creating the table of categories. Long before Benveniste's interpretation of the *Categories*, Trendelenburg's "grammatical interpretation" was intensely debated in the literature on Aristotle. See Hermann Bonitz, *Über die Kategorien des Aristoteles* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967; rpt. of 1853 edition); and Franz Brentano, *Von der mannigfachen Bedeutung des Seienden nach Aristoteles* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1960; rpt. of 1862 edition). Cf. MP, 224/187.

31. Bonitz, *Über die Kategorien*, 35–37.

32. Charles H. Kahn, "Questions and Categories: Aristotle's Doctrine of Categories in the Light of Modern Research," in Henry Hiz (ed.), *Questions* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1978), 258–59.

33. Pierre Aubenque, *Le Problème d'être chez Aristote*, 4th ed. (Paris: PUF, 1977), 173; and "Préface," *Concepts et catégories dans la pensée antique* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1980), xi.

34. Benveniste, "Categories of Thought and Language," 61.

35. Ibid., 61–62.

36. See note 30 above.

37. See Derrida's discussion of Vuillemin at MP, 231–32n20/193–94n24.

38. Benveniste, "Categories of Thought and Language," 63.

39. Martin Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1958), 62. *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 82, cited at MP 238/199.

40. Benveniste, "The Linguistic Functions of 'To Be' and 'To Have,'" *Problems in General Linguistics*, 164.

41. Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, 68/89.

42. Derrida notes that this "temptation" is also suggested by Benveniste's discussion of the nominal sentence. See MP, 245–46/205.

43. Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, 56/74. Cited at MP, 243/204.

44. This is in line with Derrida's elaboration in *Of Grammatology*, made with specific reference to Heidegger's thought of "Being," of the trace as an alternative account to signification:

> This notion signifies, sometimes beyond Heideggerian discourse, the undermining of an ontology which, in its innermost course, has determined the meaning of being as presence and the meaning of language as the full continuity of speech. To make enigmatic what one thinks one understands by the words "proximity," "immediacy," "presence" . . . is the final intention of this book [*essai*]. (G, 103/70)

Like the argument of "The Supplement of Copula," these lines make evident the interconnectedness of a metaphysics of presence in classic philosophy and in such linguistic models as those advanced by Benveniste.

45. See, for example, G, 11/3, 82/56. My discussion of the place of the critique of ethnocentrism in Derrida's philosophy could of course be extended into a reading of *Of Grammatology*. Similarly, my discussion of his treatment of philosophy and language in Heidegger could be extended to Derrida's later work on Heidegger's privileging of the Greek and the German, much of which is contemporaneous with and closely related to the work on "philosophical nationality." See, for instance, *De l'esprit* (Paris: Galilée, 1987), 109ff. / *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. G. Bennington and R. Bowlby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 68ff.

46. See Roger Burggraeve, *Emmanuel Levinas: une bibliographie primaire et secondaire*, 2nd ed. (Leuven: Peeters, 1990), 33–34.

47. The original article appeared in two parts in the *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* (1964; VM1). A revised and slightly expanded version was published in 1967 in ED. For an interpretation of the differences between the two versions, see Robert Bernasconi, "The Trace of Levinas in Derrida," in Robert Bernasconi and David Wood (eds.), *Derrida and Différance* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988).

48. Husserl talks of the task of science as an intergenerational responsibility, for instance, in this passage in *The Crisis of European Sciences*:

> We have also become aware in the most general way [through the foregoing reflections] that human philosophizing and its results in the whole of human existence mean anything but merely private or otherwise limited cultural goals. In *our* philosophizing, then—how can we avoid it?—we are *functionaries of humanity*. The quite personal responsibility of our own true being as philosophers, our inner personal vocation, bears within itself at the same time the responsibility for the true being of humanity. (Krisis, §7)

In this connection, it is worth recalling that in addition to remarking on the frame of reference and attitude to the philosophical tradition shared by the "community" of philosophers that includes Husserl, Heidegger, and Levinas, Derrida also mentions as a point of commonality their break with the view of ethics as a *domain* of philosophy. To this end, for instance, he also cites a text by Husserl, a fragment from the *Crisis* complex entitled "Philosophy as the Self-Reflection [*Selbstbesinnung*] of Humanity" (§73 in the Husserliana edition and appendix 4 in Carr's translation): here too, Husserl links reason as an infinite process of discovery with the notion of human—both collective and individual—responsibility. See Hua VI, 269–76, esp. 275–76, cited in ED, 121n1/312n5. Of course, the objection here attributed to Husserl and Heidegger against carving up philosophy into theoretical and practical spheres is taken a step further by Levinas, who transforms the ethical into a ground for all of philosophy—and thereby makes it into something radically different from "ethics" as it is usually understood.

49. "The liberty *of the question* (double genitive) must be said and protected. A founded dwelling, a realized tradition of the question remaining a question. If this commandment has an ethical meaning, it is not in that it belongs to the *domain* of the ethical, but in that it authorizes—ultimately—every ethical law in general" (ED, 119/80)—this being the structure of Levinas's understanding of the ethical. For a sensitive discussion of how the "community of the question" evoked at the opening of "Violence and Metaphysics" engages the issue of hospitality, see Naas, "The Phenomenon in Question: Violence, Metaphysics, and the Levinasian Third," chap. 6 of *Taking on the Tradition*.

50. *Wiederholung* was previously specified by Heidegger as the authentic mode of the ecstatic temporality of being-past (SZ, §68a). Consistently with the primacy of the future in the ecstatic temporality elaborated by Heidegger,

> this ecstasis [that of being past] makes it possible for Dasein to be able to take over resolutely the being that it already is. In anticipation [literally "running ahead"] Dasein *retrieves* itself *again* into its ownmost potentiality-for-being. ["Im Vorlaufen *holt* sich das Dasein *wieder* in das eigenste Seinkönnen *vor*"]. (SZ, 339)

51. ED, 120n2/311–12n4. Derrida here cites from Husserl's Vienna lecture (Hua VI, 318), which, as we saw, was also one of the primary reference points for the "Introduction" to "The Origin of Geometry."

52. Martin Heidegger, *Was ist das – die Philosophie?* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1956), 12. *What Is Philosophy?* trans. William Kluback and Jean T. Wilde (New York: Twayne, 1958), 29. This was first presented as a lecture in Cerisy-la-Salle in 1955 and would thus have been one of the more accessible texts by Heidegger in France at the time Derrida is writing.

53. Ibid., 12–13/29–31. Cited in the English translation of "Violence and Metaphysics." ED, 120n2/311–12n4.

54. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalité et infini* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1961), 10. *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 40.

55. Ibid., 23/52.

56. Emmanuel Levinas, *Le Temps et l'autre*, 4th ed. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1991), 68–69. *Time and the Other*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987), 79.

57. For a continuation of Derrida's critique of Levinas's treatment of history, see also ED, 180/122–23 and 220/148.

58. See, for example, Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethique et infini. Dialogues avec Philippe Nemo* (Paris: Fayard / France Culture, 1982), 19–20, 124–27 / *Ethics and Infinity*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985), 24–25, 115–18; and the "Dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas" conducted by Richard Kearney (1984), in Richard A. Cohen (ed.), *Face to Face with Levinas* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1986), 18–21.

59. "Dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas," 18.

60. Two texts Derrida cites from at the end of "Violence and Metaphysics" are "Pièces d'identité" ("Means of Identification"), which first appeared in a 1963 publication of the World Jewish Congress, and "Israel and Universalism." The latter, dated 1957, was Levinas's contribution, as Derrida notes, to a Jewish-Christian "encounter": it is a critical response to a presentation by Jean Daniélou on the "common foundations of a Mediterranean civilization." *Difficile liberté*, 3rd rev. ed. (Paris: Albin Michel, 1976). *Difficult Freedom*, trans. Sean Hand (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990). ED, 226–27/152–53; and VM1, 471–72. Note that almost all the page references to Levinas's works that appear in the first version of "Violence et métaphysique" were for some reason omitted from the version published in ED. (See note 47 above.)

61. "Dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas," 21.

62. Derrida adds in a parenthesis that this messianic eschatology "may even be understood as the trial of theology and mysticism" (ED, 123/83).

63. The words "Hebraism and Hellenism" are missing in the English translation of this sentence.

64. Emmanuel Levinas, "'Entre deux mondes' (La voie de Franz Rosenzweig)," *Difficile liberté*, 261–62/187. The French phrase (misleadingly rendered in the English translation) reads: "une notion de religion . . . qui d'emblée est posée comme surgissant, dans l'économie de l'être, au niveau même où y surgit la pensée philosophique." In the context of his address to the Colloque, part of what is at stake for Levinas is that by refusing to see Judaism and Christianity as particularisms and by situating them instead at the level of "philosophical thought," Rosenzweig opened the way for "a notion of religion that is totally different from the one that secularism combats."

Of course, for a full reading of "Violence and Metaphysics," which I am not attempting here, the more important aspect of Derrida's reference to Levinas's address on Rosenzweig lies in the fact that it is in part by citing Levinas's appreciative mention of Rosenzweig's talk of "empiricism" in "The New Thinking" (an empiricism beyond positivism, as Levinas stresses) that Derrida sets up his concluding remarks about the place of experience and empiricism in Levinas's thought, and their place in philosophy in general. Ibid., 262–63/188; ED, 225–26/151–52.

65. Cf. the formulation: "If one calls this experience of the infinitely other Ju-

daism (which is only a hypothesis for us) . . . ” (ED, 226/152). Derrida's later book on Levinas, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, illustrates the persistence of his interest in this aspect of Levinas's thought. In part 3 of that book, which focuses on Levinas's "Jewish writings," Derrida again demonstrates the force of the notion of exemplarity for understanding the relationship between the universal and the particular.

66. See Rudolf Bernet's preface to the German translation of the "Introduction" in Derrida, *Husserls Weg in die Geschichte am Leitfaden der Geometrie* (Munich: Fink, 1987); translated as: "On Derrida's 'Introduction' to Husserl's *Origin of Geometry*," in Hugh J. Silverman (ed.), *Derrida and Deconstruction* (New York: Routledge, 1989); and also János Békési, *"Denken" der Geschichte. Zum Wandel des Geschichtsbegriffs bei Jacques Derrida* (Munich: Fink, 1995), 155.

67. Positions, 77/56. See also Marrati, *Genesis and Trace*, 231–32n35, for a brief recollection of some of what one might call the "metaphysical baggage" that was attached to history in the milieu in which Derrida's early works were written, which for her amounts to an important motivation of the shift in emphasis in Derrida's writings from "genesis"/"origin" to "trace"/"writing."

An interesting document of the Derrida reception in this regard is the essay collection by Geoffrey Bennington and others, *Post-Structuralism and the Question of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), which was compiled as a response to the accusation of a lack of attention to history in the works of Derrida and other "post-structuralist" authors. See also Peter Fenves, "Derrida and History: Some Questions Derrida Pursues in His Early Writings," in Tom Cohen (ed.), *Jacques Derrida and the Humanities: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

68. Another example of a claim about history that might be similarly misunderstood is the following observation in the essay "Différance" about language consisting of "differences":

> On the other hand, these differences are themselves *effects*. They have not fallen from the sky fully formed, and are no more inscribed in a *topos noetos* than they are prescribed in the gray matter of the brain. If the word "history" did not in and of itself convey the motif of a final repression of difference, one could say that only differences can be "historical" from the outset and in each of their aspects. (MP, 12/11)

69. The term "origin" is also central to the discussion of the "community of the question" in "Violence and Metaphysics" (ED, 118/80).

CHAPTER 3

1. Leonard Lawlor describes this aspect of the "Introduction" as follows: "Here Derrida poses for the first time the question of *language*; he starts to transform the problem of genesis into the problem of the sign." *Derrida and Husserl: The Basic Problem of Phenomenology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 227.

2. I am following Lawlor's practice of referring to *La Voix et le phénomène* by this title, which is closer to the French than the title under which it was published in English, *Speech and Phenomena*. Ibid., xii.

3. Here, as in the discussion of history, Derrida's polemical target is Merleau-Ponty.

4. "Speech [*La parole*], then, is nothing but the practice of an immediate eidetics" (Intro., 58/67).

5. The proceedings of this colloquium, which brought together some of the most prominent Husserl scholars of the time, were published in 1959 as *Husserl. Cahiers de Royaumont. Philosophie No. III* (Paris: Minuit). Derrida has confirmed in a personal communication that he was very familiar with the individual contributions—that indeed they became widely known in Paris philosophical circles as soon as they were published. In addition to the references to Fink's lecture, the notes in Derrida's "Introduction" refer to several other contributions to this colloquium.

6. Eugen Fink, "Operative Begriffe in Husserl's Phänomenologie" (1957) in *Nähe und Distanz* (Freiburg: Alber, 1976), 180–204, here 202. "Operative Concepts in Husserl's Phenomenology," trans. William McKenna, in McKenna et al. (eds.), *Apriori and World: European Contributions to Husserlian Phenomenology* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1981), 56–70, here 68. The last sentence is cited by Derrida in "Introduction," 60n1/69n66.

7. Fink, 180–86/56–59.

8. Ibid., 186/59.

9. Ibid., 189–90/61.

10. Ibid., 198/66.

11. Ibid., 202/68. Here again there is a strong connection between Fink's point, including his talk of "thematization," and those passages in Husserl's "The Origin of Geometry" that concern language. Husserl appears aware of the need to distinguish a linguistic realm from that of other idealities and of the problems in doing so: Having distinguished the ideality of geometric expressions as linguistic expressions from the ideality of what is uttered—insofar as we are interested in its validity and truth—he formulates the general principle that "wherever something is asserted, one can distinguish what is thematic, that about which it is said (its meaning), from the assertion, which itself, during the asserting, is never and can never be thematic." It seems as though the next question ought to be how one would thematize language itself. But Husserl now veers back to the main line of his questioning: "And here the theme is precisely ideal objectivities, and quite different ones from those coming under the concept of language. It is just those ideal objectivities that are thematic in geometry that our problem now concerns" (UG, 368/161).

12. Esp. at 60n1/69n66, and 154–55/140–41, where Derrida also explicitly credits Fink with proposing "this very enlightening distinction" (155n1/141n168). In his use of this contrast, Derrida also often takes up Fink's metaphor of the operative as a "shadow." See for example, 135/125, and 135n1/125n141, 150/137.

13. Derrida's first major publication, which began as a conference presentation in 1959, the same year that the proceedings of the 1957 Husserl conference, including Fink's "Operative Concepts," were published and thus available to him (see note 5 above).

For a discussion of the role of "operativity" in "Genesis and Structure," see Jean-Claude Höfliger, *Jacques Derridas Husserl-Lektüren* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1995), 20ff. This notion also shows up in later writings. See, for example, *Of Grammatology*, where the idea of the "trace" is described as "operative" (G, 20/10).

14. Cf. Höfliger, *Jacques Derridas Husserl-Lektüren*, 28ff.

15. Höfliger credits his doctoral advisor, Jean-Pierre Schobinger, with having recognized the importance of Fink's article: Jean-Pierre Schobinger, "Operationale Aufmerksamkeit in der textimmanenten Auslegung," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie*, vol. 39, no. 1–2 (1992), 5–38, 19, cited in Höfliger, *Jacques Derridas Husserl-Lektüren*, 15n10. Höfliger goes so far as to view Fink's notion of the "operative concept" as being an indispensable resource for what he calls Derrida's *Lektürehinsicht*, which translates roughly as "mode of reading," or the "viewpoint from which one reads" (3).

Rüdiger Hentschel has also suggested that Derrida be seen as taking up the "operative constraint which," according to Fink, "great thinkers labor under" (203/69) and making it into "the foundation of his program of critiquing metaphysics." *Sache selbst und Nichtdenkungsgedanke. Husserls phänomenologische Region bei Schreber, Adorno und Derrida* (Vienna: Turia & Kant, 1992), 142.

I am indebted to Arnd Wedemeyer for having first called my attention to Derrida's reception of Fink's "Operative Concepts."

16. Fink, 203/69.

17. The full title of the work in question is *Verstand und Erfahrung. Eine Metakritik zur Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Leipzig: J. F. Hartknecht, 1799; rpt. Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1969). Derrida's discussion of Herder's critique of Kant is at Intro. 61n/70n66.

18. See Ulrich Gaier, *Herders Sprachphilosophie und Erkenntniskritik* (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1988), 196–201.

19. Hegel, cited by Maurice Blanchot, "La Littérature et le droit à la mort," in *La Part du feu* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), 312, cited in "Introduction," 58n1/67n62 (note that the page reference given by Derrida here is incorrect). "Literature and the Right to Death," *The Work of Fire*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 322–23. Blanchot in his turn refers the reader to Kojève's "demonstration" in *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* of "how for Hegel comprehension was equivalent to murder" (312n1/323n).

20. Ibid., 311–12/322.

21. UG, 372 lines 37ff./165ff.

22. Husserl, First Logical Investigation (in Hua XIX/1), chap. 3 (which is

also cited by Derrida in his discussion of equivocity, "Intro.," 101ff./100ff.), esp. §29. *Logical Investigations*, trans. J. N. Findlay (London: Routledge, 1970).

23. Finally, there is the threat posed to the ideality and stability of concepts by linguistic and cultural facticity—the threat of linguistic relativism, which I touched on in the discussion of "The Supplement of Copula" in the preceding chapter.

24. See G, 45/29, where Derrida discusses the "phonological" foundations of traditional structural linguistics.

25. See G, 88–89/60. Here I have benefited from what is to my mind the clearest presentation of Derrida's treatment of language and writing—that of Geoffrey Bennington in his brilliant exposition of Derrida's thought, entitled "Derridabase," in Bennington and Derrida, *Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 49–50, see also 60. (Originally published in French under the same title [Paris: Seuil, 1991].)

26. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, trans. John H. Moran, in *On the Origin of Language* (New York: Ungar, 1966), 21–22. The key sentence here, which serves as the epigraph to the section of *Of Grammatology* titled "The Battle of Proper Names" (G, 157/107) is: "But how is one to distinguish, in writing, between a man one mentions and a man one addresses? There really is an equivocation which would be eliminated by a vocative mark."

27. "Roundtable on Translation" (1979), in EO, 93–161; here 106–7. Derrida is here also referring to his essay on Francis Ponge, entitled "Signéponge," which is one of his key texts on the theme of singularity and idiomaticity—particularly in connection with the signature, the proper name, and the literary text. Portions of this work began as a lecture at the 1975 Cerisy colloquium on Ponge; the complete essay appears in a bilingual edition: *Signéponge/Signsponge*, trans. Richard Rand (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984). The occasion for this reference at the Montreal "roundtables" is that Derrida was there asked to comment on the "dissemination of the proper name" of the kind that he introduces into texts such as *Glas* and analyzes with respect to Ponge in "Signéponge." EO, 71ff.

28. Indeed, the central Babelian theme of "Des Tours de Babel," which was written in 1980, is previously discussed in similar terms at the 1979 "Roundtable." See EO, 100–104.

29. Cf. "S'il y a lieu de traduire" (1984; "If There Is Cause to Translate") and "Théologie de la traduction" (1984; "Theology of Translation"), both in DP / *Eyes of the University: Right to Philosophy 2*, trans. Jan Plug et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).

30. Walter Benjamin, "Über Sprache überhaupt und über die Sprache des Menschen" in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. II.1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 140–57. "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man," trans. Edmund Jephcott in Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, vol. 1: *1913–1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Belknap / Harvard University Press, 1996), 62–74. Walter Benjamin, "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers," in *Gesammelte Schriften*,

vol. IV.1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972), 9–21. "The Task of the Translator," trans. Harry Zohn, in Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, vol. 1, 253–63.

31. "Man is the one who names; by this we recognize that out of him pure language speaks. All nature, insofar as it communicates itself, communicates itself in language, and thus ultimately in man. This is why he is the lord of nature and is able to give names to things. . . . God's creation is completed when things receive their names from man, out of whom, in the name, language speaks." Benjamin, "On Language," 144/65.

For a concise introduction to Benjamin's "On Language" and "The Task of the Translator" as readings of Genesis, see Stéphane Mosès, "Benjamin's Metaphors of Origin: Names, Ideas, Stars," trans. Timothy Bahti, in Bahti and Marilyn Sibley Fries (eds.), *Jewish Writers, German Literature: The Uneasy Examples of Nelly Sachs and Walter Benjamin* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 139–54; here 140–42.

32. Benjamin, "On Language," 150/69.

33. Benjamin, "Task of the Translator," 17/260.

34. Ibid., 14/257.

35. Benjamin, "On Language," 144/65.

36. Ibid., 152–53/70–71.

37. As is emphasized by Mosès in "Benjamin's Metaphors of Origin," 141.

38. Gen. 11:6–9, cited from Everett Fox, *The Five Books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. The Schocken Bible: Volume 1* (New York: Schocken, 1995).

39. *La Bible. Traduite et présentée par André Chouraqui*, vol. 1: *Entête* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1974), cited in Babel, 212ff. Chouraqui appears to be the only translator to take the phrase על כן קרא שמה בבל to mean: "over which he [YHWH] proclaims his name . . . ," instead of "therefore its [the city's] name was called . . . " Derrida does not remark on this interpretative difference.

40. Babel, 216/172. *Die Schrift. Verdeutscht von Martin Buber gemeinsam mit Franz Rosenzweig*, vol. 1: *Die fünf Bücher der Weisung*, 2nd ed. (1954; Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider, 1987). Fox's above-cited translation, *The Five Books of Moses*, is heavily inspired by his studies of the Buber-Rosenzweig translation.

41. In "Des Tours de Babel," as well as in the closely related remarks at the "Roundtable on Translation," Derrida considers Joyce and Borges as authors whose texts defy translation because they play on a multiplicity of languages. The locution Derrida cites repeatedly from *Finnegans Wake*, "And he war" (which also serves as the title of one of Derrida's articles on Joyce), is drawn from an episode in *Finnegans Wake* that reworks the Babelian motif. See EO, 98; and Babel, 214/170–71. Derrida's central point is that "even if by some miracle one could translate all of the virtual impulses at work in [an utterance such as "and he war"], one thing remains that could never be translated: the fact that there are two tongues here, or at least more than one." Translation is thus always an affir-

mation of the unity of a single language; it cannot make visible, and must even deny, that there is a plurality of languages or of linguistic influences. EO, 99.

42. The story of Babel comes on the heels of the genealogy of the descendants of Noah (Gen. 10). It appears (Gen. 10:31ff.) that the people building the city and the tower called Babel are, as Derrida writes, the descendants of Shem (which, as Derrida points out, literally means "name"), or S(h)emites. Yet the status of this information is unclear, since, after the story of the numerous geographical dispersals of the descendants of Noah in Gen. 10, Gen. 11 begins with "Now all the earth was of one language . . . ," and since the people undertake to "make themselves a name" "lest we be scattered over the face of all the earth" (Gen. 11:4). Are we to imagine linguistic unity despite geographic dispersal? Is the geographic dispersal described in Gen. 10 insignificant compared to the possible "scattering over the face of all the earth" that is imagined in Gen. 11?

43. "Roundtable on Translation," EO, 101. "Lip" is, as Derrida notes, the literal meaning of the word שפה, "language" (akin to the Latin *lingua* and words for "tongue" in other languages).

44. Ibid.

45. That the relationship between universality and the "particular nation" in the biblical tradition is more complicated than is suggested by this parenthesis is something that Derrida addresses, as we will see, in the "philosophical nationality" seminars.

46. Benjamin, "Task of the Translator," 14/254. Cf. Babel, 219–20/175–76, 230–31/186–87.

CHAPTER 4

1. See the Appendix for an overview of these. In addition to the lectures and essays that emerged directly from the seminar, there are some others, notably the essays published in *The Other Heading* (*L'Autre Cap*), that also belong to what I am treating as a broader "philosophical nationality" corpus.

2. Onto-Theology, 3.

3. The first session of the 1984–85 course was later published in English as "Onto-Theology of National Humanism (Prolegomena to a Hypothesis)," *Oxford Literary Review*, vol. 14, no. 1–2 (1992), 3–23. For Derrida's remarks on this being the first seminar in the new institutional setting, see 8–9.

4. At the EHESS, Derrida also regularly held, in addition to his regular seminar, a seminar for a select group of researchers under the heading "philosophie et sciences sociales."

5. In this connection, it is worth mentioning that Derrida's appointment to the EHESS came on the heels of his participation in a movement to transform philosophical education in French schools and universities, which culminated in the Estates General of Philosophy held at the Sorbonne in 1979 and in the foundation of

the Collège International de Philosophie in 1982. These activities are documented in GREPH (Groupe de Recherches sur l'Enseignement Philosophique), *Qui a peur de la philosophie?* (Paris: Flammarion, 1977), and in DP. In his introduction to the latter, Derrida recalls that "Du droit à la philosophie" was the title of the seminar that immediately preceded his move from the École Normale Supérieure to the EHESS—a seminar devoted to understanding the "institutions" of philosophy. DP, 9–11n. *Who's Afraid of Philosophy?* trans. Jan Plug (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 193n1.

6. "Covenant" here translates Fichte's word *Bund*. Derrida uses the French equivalent, *alliance*, which in the English translation of Fichte's Addresses is somewhat misleadingly rendered as "alliance." Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Seventh Address, *Reden an die deutsche Nation*, *Fichtes Werke*, ed. I. H. Fichte (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971), vol. 7, 375. *Addresses to the German Nation*, ed. G. A. Kelley, trans. R. F. Jones and G. H. Turnbull (New York: Harper and Row, 1968). Cited in Onto-Theology, 11. French original in Box A.16, Folder S64.

7. Fichte, Seventh Address, 375. Cited in Onto-Theology, 13.

8. Derrida says:

> I shall say simply of this word "idiom" . . . that for the moment I am not restricting it to its linguistic, discursive circumscription . . . . For the moment, while keeping my eye fixed especially on this linguistic determination which is not all there is to idiom, but which is not just one determination of it among others, I shall be taking "idiom" in a much more indeterminate sense, that of propriety/property [*propriété*], of a singular trait that is in principle inimitable and inexpropriable. The *idion* is the proper. (Onto-Theology, 4)

9. Fichte, Seventh Address, 375. Onto-Theology, 14.

10. "Adonis, l'exilé universel," interview by André Velter in *Le Monde des livres* (November 30, 1984), 30. Derrida's discussion of this interview takes place in session 5 of the 1984–85 seminar, Box A.16, Folder S64.

11. As pointed out in the preceding chapter, Derrida discusses the role of the "signature" and the idiom in poetic writing in *Signéponge*. Parts of this essay are quite relevant to the "philosophical nationality" material, such as the discussion of Ponge's suggested opposition between idiomatic, literary writing and the writing of philosophers, which supposedly effaces any reference to cultural particularity—to "the proper" (Sig, 30–34). The "refusal" Derrida speaks of here "to be the philosopher that, in the light of some appearances, I am thought to be," his intention to "have it out with the signature" (Sig, 32/33) recalls, of course, the famous signatory act with which he concludes "Signature Event Context" (MP, 391–92/328, 393/330).

12. This is emphasized by Adonis in a part of the interview not cited by Derrida. The interviewer cites a line Adonis has written, "Je brûle mon héritage," and Adonis specifies that what he is referring to is that heritage that "impose une lecture figée de la tradition, surtout dans ses aspects religieux, politiques, institutionnels."

13. Derrida mentions "pure language" in a brief discussion of the evocation of a "language within language" (*Sprache in der Sprache*) in Friedrich Schlegel's letter to Dorothea, "Über Philosophie," which we cannot go into here.

14. The text, "Auf die Frage: Was ist deutsch?" was published in a posthumous collection of Adorno's essays, *Stichworte. Kritische Modelle 2* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1969), 102–12. "On the Question: 'What Is German?'" *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 205–14. For a helpful introduction to this text and its place in Adorno's oeuvre, see Thomas Y. Levin, "Nationalities of Language: Adorno's *Fremdwörter*: An Introduction to 'On the Question: What Is German?'" *New German Critique* 36 (Fall 1985), 111–19.

15. "Therefore, it is perhaps better if I somewhat reduce the question of what is German and formulate it more modestly: what motivated me, as an emigrant, someone who had been driven out in disgrace, and after what had been perpetrated by the Germans on millions of innocent people, nonetheless to come back" (Adorno, 106/209).

16. Ibid., 103–6/206–9.

17. Ibid., 102/205, 107/209–10. Derrida discusses Adorno's "On the Question: 'What Is German?'" in sessions 2 and 3 of the 1984–85 seminar, Box A.16, Folder S64. He briefly announces his intention to discuss this text in session 1 (Onto-Theology, 22–23).

18. Adorno, 103/206.

19. As Derrida points out, one of the ways Adorno casts this opposition is by dissociating nationalism from territory: Adorno writes that according to his own "experience," those who are inclined to be nationalistic—that is, to "conform"—will do so regardless of where they find themselves, and will thus be quick to adopt a new homeland once they emigrate. "Here a nationalist, there a nationalist" (Adorno, 107/209).

20. Ibid., 103/207.

21. Derrida also suggests that there might be a problem with Adorno's valorization, in keeping with standard interpretations, of Kant as the thinker of a universal rationality, by proposing an alternative reading of Kant based on his remarks on peoplehood and nationhood in the *Anthropology From a Pragmatic Point of View*.

22. Adorno, 106–110/209–11.

23. Ibid., 110/212.

24. Ibid., 111/213. It was against the "belief that the metaphysical excess of the German language by itself guarantees the truth of the metaphysics that it suggests, or of metaphysics in general," Adorno "confesses" here, that he wrote his critique of Heidegger, *Jargon of Authenticity*. Ibid., 111–12/213.

25. For this and the remaining quotes in this section, unless otherwise noted: ibid., 111/212–13.

26. It is of course noteworthy, and consistent with Derrida's thesis as it pertains to particularity and universality in philosophical language, that Adorno here

chooses a word of Latin origin as being distinctive of German philosophical language. It would have made more sense, from an empirical-language standpoint, for Adorno to have chosen *Aufhebung*, a word that philosophers manage to translate only with several words (e.g., sublation, supersession, suspension, preservation) and whose German-ness Hegel himself insisted on (see Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* I, §96). The word *Moment*, however, does belong to the language of *Aufhebung*. Hegel uses it to explain the "unification," through the process of *Aufhebung*, of an opposition: Insofar as terms or entities that are opposed become unified/*aufgehoben*, they are "moments." See the end of chap. 1 ("Sein" ["Being"]) of part 1 book 1 of *Wissenschaft der Logik* (*Science of Logic*), in *Werke* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969), vol. 5, 114–15. In this connection, too, Hegel comments on the relative utility for philosophical language of using Latin/"foreign-language" expressions such as *Moment*, as opposed to "native-language" expressions such as *Aufhebung*: the merit of the former, he writes, lies in their being "reflected"—or rather, in "recalling reflectedness"—whereas the latter "recall immediacy."

27. Adorno, 111/212: "that for philosophy, in contrast to the individual disciplines [*Einzelwissenschaften*], presentation [*Darstellung*] is essential." Derrida notes the similarity of this observation to the thesis pursued by Schelling in his "Vorlesungen über die Methode des wissenschaftlichen Studiums" that philosophical progress is also progress with respect to *form* and that one cannot separate form from concept. As part of his project on "Language and the Institutions of Philosophy," which immediately preceded the "philosophical nationality" project, Derrida had discussed this view of Schelling's. He did so in a lecture he gave during the summer immediately preceding the first "philosophical nationality" seminar (in June 1984), later published under the title "Théologie de la traduction." With this title, and with the mention at the outset of Benjamin's "Task of the Translator" as a relevant text, Derrida makes the connection between the emphasis on form and "pure" language and the idea of a sacred or mystical language—a connection that we signaled in the last chapter and that continues to be relevant throughout the "philosophical nationality" seminars. "Théologie de la traduction," in DP, 371–94. *Eyes of the University: Right to Philosophy 2*, 64–80; and in *Qu'est-ce que Dieu? Philosophie/Théologie. Hommage à l'abbé Daniel Coppieters de Gibson* (Brussels: Facultés universitaires Saint-Louis, 1985), 165–84, esp. 171–72.

28. In *Le Monolinguisme de l'autre, ou la prothèse de l'origine* (Paris: Galilée, 1996). *Monolingualism of the Other, or The Prosthesis of Origin*, trans. Patrick Mensah (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

29. Session 2 of the 1984–85 seminar, Box A.16, Folder S64.

30. Adorno, 112/213–14.

31. Session 3 of the 1984–85 seminar, Box A.16, Folder S64.

32. AC, 28–29/24. The link between the discussion of exemplarity in *The Other Heading* and the "logic of the example" elaborated in Derrida's early texts on Husserl was first made by Michael Naas in his introduction to the English-

language edition of the book. I fully agree with Naas's suggestion that *The Other Heading*, and indeed the entire "philosophical nationality" corpus, is "consistent . . . with Derrida's constant coupling of politics and the example, with his persistent questioning of the relationship between . . . national or supranational identity and the logic of identity itself." Naas, "Introduction: For Example," in Derrida, *The Other Heading*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), xvi–xx.

33. AC, 28/29. On the "paradox of universality," see also 70/71.

34. Rosenzweig himself called part 2 book 2 of the *Star*, the book on "revelation," which is the focus of what follows, the "heart" (*Herzbuch*) of the work as a whole. ND, 151/86; PTW, 125.

35. In situating Rosenzweig's depiction of revelation against the background of Kantian ethics, I have benefited from the discussion by Jörg Disse, "Individualität und Offenbarung. Franz Rosenzweigs 'Stern der Erlösung' als Alternative zur Ethik Kants," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 106, no. 2 (1999), 441–54.

36. For a fuller account of the "grammar" of revelation in the *Star*, see Robert Gibbs, *Correlations in Rosenzweig and Levinas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), chap. 3.

37. Gen. 22:1, cited in S, 196/176.

38. Rosenzweig here plays on the etymological link between hearing (*Hören*) and obedience (*Gehorsam*). He describes the human individual as utterly "receptive," "all ears," "pure obedience" (S, 196/176).

39. For a sensitive reading of how God is implicated in the face-to-face, see Oona Ajzenstat (Eisenstadt), *Driven Back to the Text: The Premodern Sources of Levinas's Postmodernism* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2001), chap. 2.

40. Emmanuel Levinas, *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1974), 134. *Otherwise Than Being, or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1981), 106.

41. Ibid., 157/122.

42. Ibid., 157/122; and Emmanuel Levinas, "Diachronie et representation" (1985), in *Entre nous. Essais sur le penser-à-l'autre* (Paris: Grasset, 1991). "Diachrony and Representation," trans. Richard Cohen, in *Time and the Other* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987).

43. This temporality of "advancing toward" is also reminiscent, of course, of the idea of responsibility that Derrida had discerned in Husserl's "The Origin of Geometry."

CHAPTER 5

1. "Liberalismus und Zionismus. Ein offener Brief an die Jüdische Rundschau," GS III, 557.

2. S, 250/224, 261/234, 322/289, 364/328, 467/420.

3. I offer a more sustained discussion of Rosenzweig's view of the temporality and historicity of Jewish existence in Chapter 6.

4. For similar reasons, I believe we may be justified in calling what Rosenzweig is doing (or this aspect of what he is doing) a "phenomenology," as David Novak does in his discussion of "Rosenzweig's phenomenology of revelation as election." *The Election of Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 101.

5. The Jews cannot even "utter the 'we' of [their] unity without at the same time detecting within themselves the complementary: 'are eternal'" (S, 331/298).

Affirmations of naive and immediate sentiment as forming the ground of Jewish existence abound in Rosenzweig's writings. Among his early (pre-*Star*) writings, it is his 1916 exchange of letters on Judaism and Christianity with Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy that most clearly exhibits the attempt to combine a theological, philosophico-historical argument with one that accords with Jewish phenomenological actuality.

A core concept in this exchange is the Christian dogma of Jewish *Verstocktheit*—the "stiffneckedness" or stubbornness of Jewish resistance to Christianization: a state of mind, attitude, or consciousness that becomes a theological principle or dogma. Rosenstock-Huessy asks Rosenzweig whether this dogma can also become a Jewish dogma (Letter of October 4, 1916, GS I.2, 245). At stake in this question, as Rosenzweig points out, is whether "to the church dogma about its relation to Judaism must correspond a Jewish dogma of its relation to the church." For Rosenzweig, this question must go beyond the theological principles underlying Liberal Judaism, or even their "classical" foundations in medieval Jewish thought or the Talmudic period, according to which Christianity is for Judaism a "daughter-religion" and a "world-fulfilling power" with respect to Judaism, and "The Messiah is already born at the very moment when the Temple was destroyed, and no sooner was he born, than the winds blew him forth from his mother's bosom. And now he wanders unknown among the peoples, and only when he has wandered through them all, then the time of our redemption will have come." Rosenzweig's question, beyond such matters of "dogma," is "But what does that mean for me? apart from the fact that I *know* it. What does this Jewish dogma *mean* for the *Jew*?"

For even if this dogma or "theolegoumenon" does not emerge from "an analysis of pious consciousness," it still "must mean something to" such a consciousness. Rosenzweig's answer proceeds by analogy with "Jew-hatred" (*Judenhaß*) as the "practical" significance or actualization of the theologoumenon of Jewish stubbornness/*Verstocktheit.* For Jews, the corresponding state of mind is *Judenstolz.* As he does later in "Apologetic Thinking" and in the *Star*, Rosenzweig describes this "Jew-pride" in experiential, not merely theological, terms, and stresses that the experience is inaccessible to the outsider (just as, Rosenzweig adds, antisemitism is difficult for the Jew to understand): "This [*Judenstolz*] is hard to describe to a stranger [*einem Fremden*]. What you [*Sie*—here Rosenzweig is addressing Rosenstock-Huessy as just such a Christian "stranger"] see of it appears to you silly and petty (just as for the Jew it is hardly possible to regard and judge antisemitism otherwise than by its vulgar and stupid utterances/expressions [*Äußerungen*])." To this vulgar expression of Jew-pride Rosenzweig juxtaposes "its metaphysical ground"—a parenthesis he interposes here: "here I say again: you've got to believe *me*!" ("ich muß wieder sagen, glauben Sie *mir*!") serves to emphasize what he regards as the central significance of Jewish actuality or experience: From an "educated" perspective this experience consists of the belief "that we have the truth" and "are at the goal"; the "uneducated" sentiment behind it (which Rosenzweig forces into a somewhat lopsided analogy to the popular Christian sentiment that the Jews crucified Christ) is that

> any and every Jew feels in the depths of his soul that the Christian relation to God—and thus religion properly speaking—is particularly and extremely pitiful, poverty-stricken, and ceremonious: namely, that one has to learn from someone else, whoever he may be, to call God "our Father." To the Jew, that God is our Father is the first and most self-evident fact—what need is there for a third one between me and my father in Heaven?

Stressing once more the immediacy-naiveté of this attitude, Rosenzweig sums up: "This is no invention of modern apologetics, but simple Jewish instinct, a mixture of finding-inconceivable [*Unbegreiflich-finden*] and pitying contempt" (Letter of October 1916, GS I.2, 250–52 / JDC, 112–13). (See the subsequent passages of this letter for more about how Rosenzweig conceives of the relationship between theological theorizing and the sort of immediacy that he is privileging in his account of religious life.)

For more on the significance of Rosenzweig's relationship to Rosenstock-Huessy, see Chapter 6.

6. As has also been pointed out, on somewhat different grounds, by Leora Batnitzky—though her use of the term "carnal" to describe Jewish chosenness as theorized by Rosenzweig might also threaten this distinction. *Idolatry and Representation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), e.g., 12, 76, 79, 173–74.

7. William Hallo's translation here, though it departs from the literal meaning of the word *Erzeugen*, is in another sense truer to Rosenzweig's meaning than mine: He translates "Das Bezeugen geschieht im Erzeugen" with "Bearing witness takes place in bearing" (S, 331/398).

8. Rosenzweig's 1915 text "Deutschtum und Judentum," written in response to Hermann Cohen's pamphlet of the same title, contains yet another inflection of the ideality versus reality of Jewish life: Here, it is Germany that appears as a true flesh-and-blood *Volk*, on the side of reality, while Judaism exists solely on the level of the idea or in terms of spirit. Rosenzweig's view is that, based on this fundamental difference, Cohen has committed a kind of category mistake in even attempting a comparison of Germanism and Judaism (GS III, 169–74).

9. Session 2 of the 1984–85 seminar, Box A.16, Folder S64.

10. See Chapters 1 and 6.

11. Session 1 of the 1986–87 seminar, Box A.15, Folder S59.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.; and "Signatures de la vengeance," Folder S61, the first of four public lectures that draw on the first five sessions of the 1986–87 seminar (see Appendix).

14. Admirably discussed by Christoph Schulte in his introduction to the sourcebook he compiled on the phenomenon or problematic of what, for lack of a proper English equivalent to the German phrase "Deutschtum und Judentum," one might simply call "German Judaism." Schulte, "Nicht nur zur Einleitung. Deutschtum und Judentum. Ein Disput unter Juden aus Deutschland," *Deutschtum und Judentum. Ein Disput unter Juden aus Deutschland* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1993).

15. The critical edition of *Deutschtum und Judentum* can be found in Hermann Cohen, *Werke*, vol. 16 (Hildesheim: Olms, 1997), 465–560. A closely related text is Cohen's "appeal to the Jews of America" to oppose the United States' entry into the war: "'Du sollst nicht einhergehen als ein Verläumder.' Ein Appell an die Juden Amerikas," first published in the *New Yorker Staatszeitung* in 1914–15, in *Werke* 16: 299–310. For the general context of Cohen's so-called *Kriegsschriften* and their connection to his thinking about nationality, see Hartwig Wiedebach, *Die Bedeutung der Nationalität für Hermann Cohen* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1997), esp. 18–22. It is not certain that it is technically true, as Derrida and Marc B. de Launay (see note 16 below) write, that *Deutschtum und Judentum* itself "is addressed primarily to American Jews" in order to convince them "to exercise the strongest pressure in order to prevent the United States from entering the war" on the Allies' side (IAW, 224/47–48; and *Pardès* no. 5 [1987], 8). In any case, it is clear that *Deutschtum und Judentum* must be understood in this polemical context. See Cohen's October–November 1914 letters to Paul Natorp, and editorial notes by Helmut Holzhey. Helmut Holzhey, *Cohen und Natorp*, vol 2: *Der Marburger Neukantianismus in Quellen* (Basel: Schwabe, 1986), 432–35.

16. For example, Micha Brumlik, "1915: In *Deutschtum und Judentum* Hermann Cohen Applies Neo-Kantian Philosophy to the German Jewish Question," trans. H. Herzog and T. Herzog, in Sander Gilman and Jack Zipes (eds.), *Yale Companion to Jewish Writing and Thought in German Culture, 1096–1996* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 336–42. German original: "Patriotismus und ethischer Unsterblichkeitsglaube: Hermann Cohen," in Eveline Goodman-Thau (ed.), *Vom Jenseits. Jüdisches Denken in der europäischen Geistesgeschichte* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997), 129–42.

This position has a long history, dating back to many of Cohen's contemporaries who were striving for Jewish cultural-spiritual renewal (whether in conjunction with Zionist aims or not) and who tended to see in his *Deutschtum und Judentum* a simple description and defense of assimilation. I have situated Cohen's text within this German-Jewish context in "Buber, Cohen, Rosenzweig, and the Politics of

Cultural Affirmation," *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, vol. 13, no. 1 (March 2006). German version: "Buber, Cohen, Rosenzweig und die Politik kultureller Affirmation," trans. Karen Barkemeyer and Arnd Wedemeyer, in *Transversal. Zeitschrift für jüdische Studien*, vol. 6, no. 1 (2005). Special Issue: "Konstellationen Jüdischer Philosophie," ed. Daniel Wildmann and Ulrich Wyrwa.

An effective attempt to counter this prevailing interpretation was made by Steven S. Schwarzschild: "'Germanism and Judaism': Hermann Cohen's Normative Paradigm of the German-Jewish Symbiosis," in David Bronsen (ed.), *Jews and Germans from 1860 to 1933: The Problematic Symbiosis* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1979), 129–72.

Derrida himself is prompted to read *Deutschtum und Judentum* by the 1987 publication of this text in the French-Jewish journal *Pardès* (no. 5, pp. 13–48) and its presentation by Marc B. de Launay (ibid., 7–12) as a *texte maudit*, an "accursed text"—a label Derrida explicitly responds to in "Interpretations at War."

17. Cohen, "Religion und Zionismus" (1916), *Jüdische Schriften* (Berlin: C. A. Schwetschke, 1924), vol. 2, 326.

18. Weber, 84/46. Derrida's discussion of the *psyché* with respect to Cohen occurs at IAW, 262–63/51.

19. The present discussion is augmented in my paper "Is Deconstruction a Jewish Science? Reflections On 'Jewish Philosophy' in Light of Jacques Derrida's *Judéïtés*," *Philosophy Today*, vol. 50, no. 1 (Spring 2006), special issue on "Jewish Philosophy Today," ed. Claire Elise Katz.

20. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 81, emphasis added.

21. For an analysis of Derrida's treatments of Jewishness that is complementary to my own in this chapter, see Elisabeth Weber, "Gedächtnisspuren. Jacques Derrida und die jüdische Tradition" in Werner Stegmaier (ed.), *Die philosophische Aktualität der jüdischen Tradition* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000).

22. I would therefore argue that the project pursued in these texts cannot be understood along the lines proposed by Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin, who criticize "European discourse down to the present"—including that produced by two contemporary French philosophers they cite, Jean-Luc Nancy and Jean-François Lyotard—for engaging in an "allegorization of *Jew*" that is "problematic in the extreme for the way that it deprives those who have historically grounded identities in those material signifiers of the power to speak for themselves and remain different." Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin, "Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity," *Critical Inquiry* 19 (Summer 1993), 693–725, here 697.

This argument is taken up and repeated by Jonathan Boyarin in a later critical discussion of Derrida's conceptualization of exemplarism in the "philosophical nationality" project, in which he finds in Derrida an inadmissible identification of the Jewish and the European through the very concept of exemplarity. This identification, Boyarin suggests, is complicit with the kind of casting of the Jews "as the paradigmatic Other" that the co-authored 1993 article was also directed against. (Jonathan Boyarin, "From Derrida to Fichte? The New Europe, the Same Europe, and the Place of the Jews," chap. 5 of *Thinking in Jewish* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996], 127, 114. The works by Derrida that Boyarin discusses are *The Other Heading* and "Interpretations at War," but the arguments apply to the entire "philosophical nationality" project.) Even though Boyarin does recognize, and even "endorses," Derrida's attempt "to acknowledge the Other without pretending to abandon the universalist and modern values, the European identity, which we never fail to employ despite ourselves" (129n8), he nevertheless regards Derrida's approach as insufficiently historicizing and anthropologizing. By framing Derrida's "philosophical nationality" project as one that presupposes both a differentiation of the study of empirical facts from philosophical reflection on concepts such as nationality, and a constant re-interrogation of the relationship between these two levels of discourse (from the early study of Husserl onwards), I hope to have shown why Boyarin's critique, to the extent that it is one, falls short.

23. This guardedness regarding the potential "abuses" of exemplarity is also expressed by Derrida in an exchange with Daniel Libeskind on Libeskind's proposal for the Jewish Museum in Berlin. This exchange took place at DePaul University in April 1991. Like the interview with Elisabeth Weber, then, it immediately follows and explicitly draws on the work of the "philosophical nationality" course. Derrida recalls that Gershom Scholem (the author of what has become known as the classic postwar denial of the existence of a prewar German-Jewish "dialogue"), in his 1961 tribute to Buber and Rosenzweig's Bible translation (delivered in Jerusalem in the presence of Buber, who had just completed the project begun with Rosenzweig in the 1920s), called this translation a *Gastgeschenk*, a gift of the guest, but one that came too late, or came to mark the fact that "there had never been anything like a German Jewishness or a Jewish Germanness. This is a myth, a legend, said Scholem; and now nobody in Germany will ever read such a Bible." What would have been Scholem's response, asks Derrida, to Libeskind's museum as a "'gift' . . . to Germany, to West Germany, to Free Berlin, and now to Germany as a whole" (91)?

Derrida responds with "anxiety" to Libeskind's situation of his project according to what Derrida identifies as an "exemplarist logic," for example, Libeskind's remark that

> Berlin is not only a physical place, but also something in the mind, something belonging to a past which never was present. A spiritual reality that makes itself immediately comprehensible to everyone in the world . . . (82)

as well as Libeskind's conception of his project with respect to "Jews, Germans, all Berliners, people who formed the culture we know as 'Berlin,'" a project of "[making] a connection between those who were the carriers of the spiritual entity of Berlin as an emblem" (83). Though he does not develop the point as fully as in the interview with Weber or in the seminar, Derrida here recalls the example of Hermann Cohen's *Deutschtum und Judentum* as an instance of the risky enterprise of asserting a culture as exemplary for the human. As he had in the case of Fichte in the seminar, he here suggests that assurances that such assertions are made about the culture in a figural sense, and not about an empirical entity, may not suffice to guard against this risk. He responds to Libeskind:

> When you said that Jewish culture was the avant-garde, you immediately afterward said that, of course, you were speaking metaphorically or metonymically, for it is not as an empirical group that we can use Jewish culture as an example. My anxiety has something to do with this exemplarist logic. (92)

Daniel Libeskind, "Between the Lines: The Jewish Museum, Berlin"; and Derrida, "Response to Daniel Libeskind," *Research in Phenomenology* 22 (1992), 82–87; 88–94. The place and time of this discussion is not indicated in the published version, but is noted in a transcript of it (entitled "Das Unheimliche: Philosophy, Architecture, the City," from "a symposium held at DePaul University, April 26–27, 1991") located in the Derrida Archive, Box C.34, Folder 15. Derrida discusses Scholem's 1961 tribute to the Buber-Rosenzweig translation ("An einem denkwürdigen Tage," in *Judaica* [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1963]) in session 7 of the 1986–87 seminar, Box A.15, Folder S61.

24. Weber, 99–100/55–56. Weber's question on this topic is based on Derrida's remarks on his 1942 expulsion from the French school in *The Post Card* and in "Circumfession." Derrida also refers here to the historical facts that Geoffrey Bennington draws on in his biographical overview of Derrida's life, "Curriculum Vitae," in Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, *Jacques Derrida* (Paris: Seuil, 1991).

25. The work by Abdelkebir Khatibi referred to is *Du bilinguisme* (Paris: Denoël, 1985).

26. Readers of Derrida's texts concerning his early autobiography will readily link the line "I am the only Franco-Maghrebian" with his explorations around the assertion in "Circumfession" that

> I am the last Jew. (e.g., Circumfession, §§24, 30, 36)

Importantly from the point of view of my concern in this chapter to show how Derrida's treatments of Jewishness build on Rosenzweig's phenomenology of Judaism, one of the versions of this assertion contains a reference to Rosenzweig's liminal experience with respect to Judaism, namely to the "Ich bleibe also Jude" ("I [shall] thus remain a Jew") with which Rosenzweig announced to Rudolf Ehrenberg his decision not to convert, and which Derrida interprets with an emphasis on the *bleiben*, on the rest or remainder (a concept that is also key to Rosenzweig's theory of Judaism, as we have seen):

> For I am perhaps not what remains of Judaism, and I would have no trouble agreeing with that, . . . for after all but after all what else am I in truth, who am I if I am not what I inhabit and where I take place, *Ich bleibe also Jude*, that is to say, today in what remains of Judaism to this world. . . . (Circumfession, §57)

(This convergence between Derrida and Rosenzweig on the remnant has also been pointed out by Gérard Bensussan, whose understanding of the remnant in Rosenzweig is also in line with the analysis I have given in Chapter 1. "Le dernier, le reste... Derrida et Rosenzweig," in *Judéïtés. Questions pour Jacques Derrida*, ed. Joseph Cohen and Raphael Zagury-Orly [Paris: Galilée, 2003].)

In "Circumfession," too, Derrida underlines the exemplarity of attestation. He cites the following entry dated December 20, 1976, from a notebook he kept at that time on the topic of circumcision:

> I am and always will be, me and not another, circumcised, and there's a region that is no longer that of an example, that's the one that interests me and tells me not how I am a case but where I am no longer a case. (Circumfession, §14)

I have not been able to take into account, in the present discussion, Derrida's two latest publications on the topic of Jewishness: "Avouer—l'impossible: 'retours,' repentir et reconciliation" / "Leçon de Jacques Derrida," in Colloque des intellectuels juifs, *Comment vivre ensemble? Actes du XXXVII^e Colloque des intellectuels juifs de langue française* (1998), ed. Jean Halpérin and Nelly Hansson (Paris: Albin Michel, 2001); and "Abraham, l'autre" (2000) in Cohen and Zagury-Orly (eds.), *Judéïtés.*

27. Derrida also describes his cultural position as a Jew subject to the revocation of French citizenship as one of being "held hostage" by the French, because the lost citizenship was not replaced by another and because the citizenship was subsequently restored to him without his asking for it (Mono, 36/17).

28. This discussion of auto-heteronomy could certainly be pursued further in light of Derrida's reception of Levinas's ethics of heteronomy in "Violence and Metaphysics" and in *Adieu*.

I am indebted to Sara Russell for suggesting "abidingly" as an alternative translation for *à demeure* that preserves both meanings—"lasting" (the published translation of *Monolingualism* uses "lastingly" here) and "abode"—of that expression.

29. In view of the importance of "hearing oneself speak" in Derrida's analysis of Husserl's phenomenology in *Voice and Phenomenon*—his presentation of Husserl's privileging of the living present in both his theory of language and his theory of consciousness—it would be interesting to meditate further on the parallel suggested here between alienation or foreignness/difference-to-self and, to use a term of Levinas's, the "diachrony" or rupture that informs our temporal experience. Could one speak, then, of a "diachrony of belonging"?

30. Session 6 of the 1986–87 seminar, Box A.15, Folder S61. In the seminar

Derrida taught in 1994–95 at the EHESS, the final year of a cycle on "testimony," he again studied these pages of the *Star* for what they have to say on this topic. (Seminar session of March 1, 1995.)

31. Stéphane Mosès, *Système et révélation. La philosophie de Franz Rosenzweig* (Paris: Seuil, 1982), 183–84. *System and Revelation: The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig*, trans. Catherine Tihanyi (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 176–78. Cited in session 6 of the 1986–87 seminar.

32. Ibid., 183–84/177: "Whatever the cause may be, what defines a people in contrast to this ['spiritual'] type of community is its ethnic character. Rosenzweig uses in this regard the word 'blood community,' a poor choice of words because of its racist connotations, completely alien to his thought. . . . Rosenzweig calls 'blood' this natural factor of the continuity of peoples. To the extent that what is thus transmitted from parent to child is a complex set of characteristics that are both genetic (innate) and cultural (acquired), it seems to us that the term 'blood community' must be understood to mean what we would now call an ethnic community." The last sentence in particular resorts to a sociological idiom that is in my view not compatible with Rosenzweig's mode of argumentation.

33. In accordance with the French translation of the *Star*, which uses *nostalgie* for *Sehnsucht*.

34. Cf. the 1925 essay "Modern Hebrew?" ("Neuhebräisch?" GS III, 723–29). The Hebrew language "grows not like an organism but like a hoard/cache [*Hort*]," because it is incapable of losing anything it has ever contained. The Hebrew language is the "inability to die" (*Nichtsterbenkönnen*) (ibid., 726).

35. See S, 328–29/295–96.

36. See also Rosenzweig's characterization of the role of language in Jewish liturgy:

> In Jewish worship, the word [signifies] more the common flag than the power which first establishes the community. The fact that Scripture is read to a conspicuous lack of attention on the part of those not immediately involved, and that for centuries the sermon has been repressed [*Zurückdrängung*], shows that . . . the reading of Scripture, though it certainly retains its central position in the service, is more a mere symbol of a community already established, of "eternal life" already planted. (S, 397–98/358)

37. Regarding Derrida on translation, see my discussion in Chapter 3.

38. For a discussion of the parallels between Rosenzweig and Heidegger on translation, see Peter Eli Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger: Between Judaism and German Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 267–74. Gordon rightly points out that the two thinkers share a view of language as originarily constituted by translation (273). As will become clear in what follows, however, I do not agree with his view that Rosenzweig "sustain[ed] the fantasy that there exists an

original 'untranslated'" Hebrew—in parallel with Heidegger's attitude to the Greek (a topic that of course lies beyond my interest here) (273).

39. Amos Funkenstein, "An Escape from History: Rosenzweig on the Destiny of Judaism," *History and Memory* 2 (Winter 1990), 117.

40. Friedrich Schleiermacher, "Über die verschiedenen Methoden des Übersetzens" (1813), reprinted in Hans Joachim Störig, *Das Problem des Übersetzens* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963), 47. Translation based on André Lefevere, *Translating Literature: The German Tradition from Luther to Rosenzweig* (Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1977), 74. Cited by Rosenzweig in SL, 750/48.

41. "'Der Ewige.' Mendelssohn und der Gottesname" (1929), GS III, 806 / "'The Eternal': Mendelssohn and the Name of God," ST. See also the remarks in "Die Schrift und das Wort" (1925), GS III, 777–83 / "Scripture and Word," ST, 40–46, on the singular position of the Bible with respect to speech and writing (*Schrift*, which also means "Scripture"): The Bible is not a medium that conveys God's word after it has been spoken. Rather, God speaks immediately in Scripture, in writing. Thus, his word depends on *Schrift*, and on its subsequent reproduction as human speech (GS III, 778–79 / ST, 41–42).

42. "Die schöpferische Leistung des Übersetzens kann nirgends anders liegen als da, wo die schöpferische Leistung des Sprechens selber liegt."

43. Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Tischdank* (Berlin: Fritz Gurlitt, 1920), reprinted in the appendix to Hans-Christoph Askani, *Das Problem der Übersetzung—dargestellt an Franz Rosenzweig* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1997), 337–45. For a general historical account of the discussions between Rosenzweig and Scholem, see Michael Brocke, "Franz Rosenzweig and Gerhard Gershom Scholem," in Walter Grab and Julius H. Schoeps, eds., *Juden in der Weimarer Republik*, *Jahrbuch des Instituts für deutsche Geschichte*, Beiheft 9 (1986), 127–52; and Dafna Mach, "Franz Rosenzweig als Übersetzer jüdischer Texte. Seine Auseinandersetzung mit Gershom Scholem," *Der Philosoph Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929)* (Freiburg: Alber, 1988), vol. 1, 251–71. Askani's book provides the most authoritative discussion to date of the Scholem-Rosenzweig exchanges on translation in the context of Rosenzweig's (and Buber's) translation work—also because it takes account of Scholem's correspondence, none of which had been published when the two earlier articles were written. See esp. 46ff. on the exchange regarding the "Tischdank" (as well as on Scholem's and Rosenzweig's respective translations of the "Hamavdil" during the same period) and 205ff. on Scholem's critical response to Buber and Rosenzweig's Bible translation.

44. This letter dated March 7, 1921, addressed "To Franz Rosenzweig, on the translation of the 'Tischdank'" was found among Scholem's papers after his death and is, according to the editor of his correspondence, "presumably a copy of Scholem's letter to Rosenzweig" upon receipt of the translation. Gershom Scholem, *Briefe I 1914–1947*, ed. Itta Shedletzky (Munich: Beck, 1994), 214–15, 396–97. Partial

English translation in Scholem, *A Life in Letters, 1914–1982*, trans. and ed. Anthony David Skinner (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 117–18. For a detailed interpretation of this letter, see Askani, *Das Problem der Übersetzung*, 46ff. Cf. also Mach, "Franz Rosenzweig als Übersetzer jüdischer Texte," 254.

45. Letter to Scholem dated March 10, 1921, GS I.2, 699. (Excerpt translated in Scholem, *A Life in Letters*, 118.) Askani rightly remarks that "what becomes clear, indeed, really jumps out at you [in Rosenzweig's response to Scholem] is the fact that Rosenzweig doesn't contradict Scholem's reservations in detail, but rather" confronts them as framed by a "more fundamental question" (Askani, *Das Problem der Übersetzung*, 48). However, Scholem's letter to Rosenzweig already invited an engagement on this general level, for instance in this remark toward the end: "And of course I am not able to say, based on such a limited, indeed, almost only aggadic, acquaintance with you . . . whether this elimination [the elimination of *Luthersprache* that Scholem is calling for] would not place demands on you that are more ones of principle than I can currently apprehend."

The phrase "aggadic acquaintance" refers to Scholem's having heard stories about Rosenzweig through their mutual friend Rudolf Hallo. Rosenzweig's correspondence with Hallo surrounding Scholem—both before and after his own personal meeting with Scholem—suggests a scenario in which the two were pitted against each other as advisors in matters Jewish to this relative novice in that area. (See GS I, 694, 704, 761–68.) The importance of Hallo during the phase when Rosenzweig and Scholem were first sizing each other up is underscored by another sentence in Scholem's letter:

> What in your translation has appeared as fundamentally problematic, as well as being the downright puzzling thing that later appeared as absolutely related in the language of M[r.] Hallo, however, is a highly systematic tendency toward the church [*zum Kirchlichen*] and its terminology. (Scholem, *Briefe* I: 214/*A Life in Letters*, 117)

46. "Bekenntnis über unsere Sprache" is the title of Scholem's contribution to a portfolio (*Mappe*) of short handwritten texts and images presented to Rosenzweig on this occasion. A facsimile edition of this portfolio, along with transcriptions and English translations of the contributions, has been published under the title *Franz Rosenzweig zum 26. Dezember 1926*, ed. Martin Goldner (New York: Leo Baeck Institute, 1987). After Scholem's death in 1982, a personal handwritten copy of this letter was found among his papers and published by Stéphane Mosès, along with an introduction, in French (*Archives des sciences sociales des religions*, vol. 60, no. 1 [July–September 1985]) and then in English (trans. Ora Wiskind, *History and Memory*, vol. 2, no. 2 [Winter 1990]). Both the French and the English translations of Scholem's "Confession" were accompanied by an introduction by Mosès, which Derrida also draws on in the seminar sessions devoted to Scholem's text: "Langage et secularisation chez Gershom Scholem," 85–96/"Scholem and Rosenzweig: The

Dialectics of History," trans. Ora Wiskind, 100–116. See also the translation of Scholem's "Confession" by Gil Anidjar in AR, 226.

47. In his memoir *From Berlin to Jerusalem*, Scholem writes that on the occasion of his second visit with Rosenzweig in the early 1920s, the two talked at length about "the very *Deutschjudentum* [German-Judaism] which I rejected," a conversation that led to a complete break (*Zerwürfnis*) between them. *Von Berlin nach Jerusalem: Jugenderinnerungen*, 1st ed. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977), 178.

48. Stéphane Mosès, "Scholem and Rosenzweig," 100. On Scholem's contribution of the "Confession" to the *Mappe*, Mosès writes: "We may assume that Scholem's agreement to contribute to the collection and, even more, his choice to confide to Rosenzweig, three years after his arrival in Palestine, his doubts and apprehensions about the future of a Zionism tending more and more to sever itself from the roots of traditional Judaism—this gesture was motivated, among other reasons, by a desire to make amends for the violence of his remarks of 1922 and to admit . . . that, on coming into contact with the reality of Palestine, his own conceptions had become much closer to those of Rosenzweig" (103–4).

49. An earlier articulation of these views in terms similar to those of the "Confession" can be found in a letter by Scholem to Werner Kraft dated December 17, 1924:

> About [my] internal state with reference to the country/land, I don't have much to say. I am unconditionally committed to the sect holding apocalyptic views concerning what the fate of the Zionist movement is going to be here. You can't possibly imagine the sorts of worlds that touch each other here: Life here is an open invitation to thinking minds to go overboard, and in any case however you look at it a theological background is ineluctably necessary for even the most ridiculous form of life, if one doesn't actually want to make some kind of "public appearance," which here is done now as a messiah, now a labor leader, now in still more uncanny costumes. . . . Personally, I suffer in the most catastrophic fashion from the language-conditions, about which I suppose it is not possible to write reasonably. Should I write a study about this someday, you'll be the first to know. (Scholem, *Briefe* I: 222/*A Life in Letters*, 137)

50. Scholem, "Bekenntnis über unsere Sprache."

51. For the individual titles of these, see the Appendix. The third and fourth lectures have been combined and published in English translation as "The Eyes of Language: The Abyss and the Volcano," trans. Gil Anidjar, in AR, 191–226, and, more recently, in the original French as "Les Yeux de la langue" in *Cahier de L'Herne*, no. 83 (2004): *Jacques Derrida*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet and Ginette Michaud, 473–93 (hereafter referred to as "L'Herne").

52. See Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise*, trans. R. H. M. Elwes (New York: Dover, 1951), chap. 10, 150. Derrida's discussion is in session 3 of the 1986–87 seminar, Box A.15, Folder S61.

53. Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise*, chap. 12, 167.

54. Session 1 of 1986–87 seminar, Box A.15, Folder S59, which corresponds in part to the lecture "Signatures de la vengeance," Folder S61. In this connection, Derrida had already brought in an excerpt from Scholem's letter to Rosenzweig that he contrasted with a passage from Spinoza's *Treatise* on vengeance.

55. Sessions 3 and 4 of 1986–87 seminar, Folder S61, and "Les Yeux de la langue. L'abîme et le volcan," Folder S61. AR, 194. L'Herne, 476.

56. "Les Yeux de la langue" / AR, 194–95. L'Herne, 476.

57. Scholem, "Bekenntnis über unsere Sprache."

58. Ibid.

59. A small point, however, about the characterization of Rosenzweig's position that is here taken over by Derrida from Stéphane Mosès's introduction to the letter: Derrida writes,

> According to Rosenzweig, Zionism is a "secular form of Messianism" which itself attempts to "normalize," and thus also to secularize, Judaism . . . . On the one hand, Rosenzweig reproaches Zionism . . . as a secularization of Jewish Messianism, a secularization and a historical, if not a historicist integration, not to say a profanation, of messianic sacredness. ("Les Yeux de la langue" / AR, 193–94. L'Herne, 475)

The phrases in quotes are from Mosès's introductory essay, where they appear as citations from Rosenzweig's correspondence:

> In [Rosenzweig's] eyes . . . Zionism, as a "secularized form of messianism," threatened to rob Judaism of its religious identity by seeking to "normalize" it at any price. (Mosès, "Scholem and Rosenzweig," 103)

Since the present study is in part concerned with giving a fuller account of Rosenzweig's philosophy than is provided by Derrida in the "philosophical nationality" seminars, it is worth noting that Mosès draws these phrases from letters written well before Rosenzweig drafted the schema of the *Star*, and that the term Rosenzweig uses is not "secularized," but "emancipated": The letter Mosès is quoting from in the first instance makes up part of the famous exchange with Rosenstock-Huessy on Judaism and Christianity. (The term "normalize" is drawn from Rosenzweig's letter to Gertrud Oppenheim of February 5, 1917, whose context I will not go into here.) Its topic is the obsolescence of the Jews after 1789—indeed, Jewish "emancipation" is here read by Rosenzweig as a form of making obsolete, and he explains that this is

> Because Christendom/Christianity precisely at this time *needed* the emancipated ("naked") Jew, the Jew of the Jewish Question. And this is why Judaism too could now bring forth the emancipated form of the messianic movement, Zionism.
>
> Which certainly you [Rosenstock-Huessy] overestimate in its impor-

> tance. It certainly is part of the succession of messianic movements, which have continuously existed in Judaism, more or less grand self-delusions, attempts to ravage the heavenly kingdom, "soon, in our days,". . . (Letter of November 30, 1916, GS I.1, 304 / JDC, 159)

Rosenzweig thus does not envision Zionism as a "secularized" messianism; indeed, in this passage—as, I would maintain, for his thinking about Judaism and Christianity in general—the distinction secular/holy does not hold. The decisive distinction, for instance, for understanding what "holy language" means in Rosenzweig's theory of Judaism is not between "holy language" and "secular language"—as if the "holy" and the "secular" were attributes that could either attach or not attach to a given language—but between two different linguistic situations, or relations to language as such—that of the "one people" and that of the "peoples of the world." This, of course, is what makes Scholem's letter—with its denial that linguistic secularization is possible—a document that demonstrates his proximity to some of Rosenzweig's key insights.

Stéphane Mosès of course is not an occasional reader of Rosenzweig, but one of his foremost interpreters. His introduction of the word "secularized" into this quote thus allows me to point out a general tendency he shares with other interpreters to overly rely on the explanatory power of predicates such as "religious" in understanding Rosenzweig's theory of Judaism. Hence Mosès's line in the sentence quoted above about Rosenzweig's view that Zionism "threatened to rob Judaism of its religious identity." This is a coherent statement only if one sees Judaism as something to which predicates such as "religious" or "secular" could attach, whereas for Rosenzweig it would make no sense to speak of Judaism as "religious" or "secular."

60. "Les Yeux de la langue" / AR, 195. L'Herne, 476.

61. "Les Yeux de la langue" / AR, 200. L'Herne, 478.

62. Scholem, "Bekenntnis über unsere Sprache."

63. "Les Yeux de la langue" / AR, 200. L'Herne, 479. Note that the parenthetical insertion "(Spinoza)" does not appear in the *Cahier de L'Herne* version.

64. Mosès, "Scholem and Rosenzweig," 106ff., which refers especially to Scholem's "Der Name Gottes und die Sprachtheorie der Kabbala" ("The Name of God and the Linguistic Theory of the Kabbala") and illuminates the connection between it and Benjamin's "On Language" (discussed in Chapter 3).

65. See Chapter 3.

66. Scholem, "Bekenntnis über unsere Sprache."

67. "Les Yeux de la langue" / AR, 201–2. L'Herne, 479.

68. "Les Yeux de la langue" / AR, 196–97. L'Herne, 477.

69. "Les Yeux de la langue" / AR, 197. L'Herne, 477. Note that the *Cahier de l'Herne* version has "départ" instead of "désert." See my remarks in Chapter 7 on Derrida's evocation of the "desert."

70. "Les Yeux de la langue" / AR, 197. L'Herne, 477.

71. Looking ahead to my closing chapter on the "messianic," these lines are reminiscent of the text I cite there by Rosenzweig on the "false Messiah." Scholem's "Confession" is of course also structured as a messianic text—a feature that Derrida to be sure also pays attention to but that space does not permit me to go into here.

72. Scholem, "Bekenntnis über unsere Sprache."

73. Session 5 of the 1986–87 seminar, Box A.15, Folder S61, and "Séculariser la langue. Le volcan, le feu, les Lumières," Box A.16, Folder S61; AR, 218. L'Herne, 488.

CHAPTER 6

1. Some of the difficulties in pinning down these concepts have been shown in an interesting manner by Annette Wittkau, *Historismus. Zur Geschichte des Begriffs und des Problems* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992).

2. Alexander Altmann traces Rosenzweig's interest in the "narrative philosophy" announced by the *Weltalter* ("Die künftige Philosophie wird bloss erzählend sein") to letters by Rosenzweig to Rudolf Ehrenberg and to Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy dating from 1916–17. "Franz Rosenzweig on History" (1958), in Paul Mendes-Flohr (ed.), *The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig* (Hanover, N.H.: Brandeis University Press / University Press of New England, 1988), 136, 236n83.

3. Another way Rosenzweig describes philosophy's tendency to inquire into the "essence" of things is as a "reduction" or "tracing back" (*Zurückführung*) of one thing to another—and in particular of God, world, and man, which he sees as irreducible elements, to each other (ND, 143/75; PTW, 117).

4. Rosenzweig speaks of the "verandernde Kraft des Wörtchens 'ist,'" the "altering power of the little word 'is'" (ND, 143/75; PTW, 116). *Verandernd* is not a standard word, but a deliberate alteration of the standard present participle of "to change," which would be *verändernd*; the neologism, in incorporating the word for "other," *anders*, thus heightens the "othering" quality of this power.

5. I realize that translating both *eigentlich* and *wirklich*, the terms that Rosenzweig here opposes to each other, as "actually" risks obscuring his opposition. For clarification, see note 10 below.

6. Rosenzweig makes the link to history-writing by alluding to Leopold Ranke's dictum that the historian discovers "how it actually was" ("wie es wirklich gewesen"). Rosenzweig deliberately misquotes this dictum, substituting "eigentlich" for "wirklich," in order to maintain consistency with his own *eigentlich-wirklich* distinction and adds, "Even when the great German historian in his well-known definition of his scientific intention uses the former and not the latter word [i.e., *wirklich* rather than *eigentlich*], he means it in this way" (ND, 148/81–82; PTW, 121–22).

7. See S, 67/62; as well as the opening of a draft Rosenzweig prepared for lectures he held at the Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus in 1921 entitled "Anleitung zum jüdischen Denken," GS III, 597–98.

8. B, 24. Rosenzweig wrote the book at the request of the publisher Fromann, but wound up having second thoughts about it and withdrawing it from publication. It is not included in Rosenzweig's collected works, based on the editors' view that Rosenzweig had issued an "explicit prohibition" against publishing it (GS II.2, 717–18). It was, however, published separately as a book by Nahum Glatzer, who justifies his decision in the preface (B, 14). Rosenzweig expressed his doubts about publishing the book in letters to Gertrud Oppenheim and Hans Ehrenberg (GS I.2, 718–24).

9. Note for instance Rosenzweig's invitation to the reader to imagine him, the author, to be an old acquaintance (B, 26–27/37–38). In his correspondence about the *Büchlein*, Rosenzweig calls its style "consciously pedagogical" and reports a friend's admonition, upon reading the book, not to publish it, because "this is how we speak, but we must not write this way" (letters to Gertrud Oppenheim of August 30 and September 30, 1921, GS I.2, 718, 724).

10. Accurately translating the *eigentlich-wirklich* opposition into English poses a problem. *Eigentlich* can be rendered technically as "essential," but is equivalent to "real" or "actual" in a sentence such as: "X is really/actually quite different from its appearance." *Wirklich* can be translated as "real" or "actual"; it is related to *Wirklichkeit*, "reality," as distinguished, for example, from fiction.

11. See also "The New Thinking," where Rosenzweig also opposes "healthy common sense" to philosophy in the sense of "philosophical wonder," to which he adds, "to wonder means to stand still." "Unhealthy common sense" is like philosophy in that it "sinks its teeth into a thing and will not let go until it 'has' it in its entirety" (ND, 149/83; PTW, 123).

12. For Rosenzweig it is crucial that the "temporalizing" method of narration takes place in language, in "speaking," which is "bound to time" and "nourished by time." This is discussed in the passage immediately following the one we have been focusing on in "The New Thinking" (ND, 151–52/86–87; PTW, 125–26) but is not central to our present purposes.

13. Löwith identifies both thinkers with the generation who rejected the "metaphysics of consciousness of German idealism" in favor of "beginning from the 'facticity' of human existence/*Dasein*." Karl Löwith, "M. Heidegger und F. Rosenzweig. Ein Nachtrag zu *Sein und Zeit*" (1942–43), *Heidegger – Denker in dürftiger Zeit. Zur Stellung der Philosophie im 20. Jahrhundert* (*Sämtliche Schriften*, vol. 8) (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1984), 72. "M. Heidegger and F. Rosenzweig: A Postscript to *Being and Time*," *Nature, History, and Existentialism*, trans. Arnold Levison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966), 52. As we discussed in Chapter 1, the generation he has in mind is similar to the one identified by Michael Theunissen in *Der Andere* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1965; *The Other*) and by Bernhard Casper in *Das dialogische Denken. Eine Untersuchung der religionsphilosophischen Bedeutung Franz Rosenzweigs, Ferdinand Ebners und Martin Bubers* (Freiburg: Herder, 1967) under the heading of a philosophy of "dialogue."

14. Löwith, 72–73/52.

15. Ibid., 77/57.

16. Ibid.

17. This is the term generally used in English translations of Rosenzweig.

18. Löwith, 73/52. This question remains a pertinent point of departure for studying the two thinkers alongside each other, notwithstanding Löwith's less convincing interpretations of Heidegger as a "godless Christian theologian" and of the political dimension of "historicity" in *Being and Time*, aspects that are discussed by Peter Eli Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger: Between Judaism and German Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 14–21.

A fresh attempt at articulating Rosenzweig's "new thinking" with the philosophy of *Being and Time* as well as with later works by Heidegger, with special emphasis on temporality, has been undertaken by Wayne Froman in view of the role of the *Augenblick* (moment) in the two bodies of thought. "Rosenzweig and Heidegger on 'the Moment' (*der Augenblick*)," paper delivered at the Internationaler Franz-Rosenzweig-Kongress in Kassel in March–April 2004.

19. "Ich bleibe also Jude" are the famous words Rosenzweig addressed to Rudolf Ehrenberg in the letter of October 31, 1913, in which he reported the results of the "nighttime conversation" (GS I.2, 133). (Ehrenberg later told Bernhard Casper that he was to have served as godfather at Rosenzweig's baptism. Casper, *Das dialogische Denken*, 77n22.)

The importance of Rosenzweig's decision not to convert for the reception of his thought can be seen throughout the Rosenzweig literature, especially that of the immediate postwar period and through the 1960s. To cite two representative examples: Steven S. Schwarzschild, in his 1960 introduction to Rosenzweig's life and work, recommends him to his readers' attention as a "guide for reversioners"—"reversioner" being Schwarzschild's proposed coinage for the Hebrew *ba'al teshuvah*—and one whose path of return to Judaism has particular relevance for contemporary Jews in the Western world. See Schwarzschild, *Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1926): Guide of Reversioners* (London: Education Committee of the Hillel Foundation, 1960), 5–6, 43n5. The other representative example can be found in the texts of Nahum Glatzer. Glatzer had been one of Rosenzweig's associates in Frankfurt, and, to the extent that Rosenzweig's name became familiar at all to a generation of postwar American readers, it is probably principally due to Glatzer's efforts. Glatzer's 1953 introduction to Rosenzweig gives special prominence to Rosenzweig's decision to remain a Jew, which Glatzer portrays as "the secret ground" of his subsequent life. See Glatzer, "Introduction," *Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought*, 2nd ed. (New York: Schocken, 1961), xviii. Glatzer also published an article that frames Rosenzweig's life and work as "the story of a conversion": "Franz Rosenzweig: The Story of a Conversion," *Judaism* 1 (January 1952). In contrast to the October 31 letter to Ehrenberg, which links the decision not to convert to the "nighttime conversation" three months before, Glatzer and subsequent commentators attribute the decision to an experience Rosenzweig had as a result of going to Yom Kippur services in a small Berlin synagogue earlier that month—an account that Glatzer drew from conversations with Rosenzweig's mother (Glatzer, *Franz Rosenzweig*, xviii) but that is disputed by the editors of Rosenzweig's collected works (GS I.1, 126–27). However, Rivka Horwitz gives Glatzer's version further credence when she notes: "Bruno Strauß wrote to me many years ago that Rosenzweig in 1913 spent Yom Kippur at the synagogue at the Potsdamer Brücke [in Berlin]." "Warum ließ Rosenzweig sich nicht taufen?" in W. Schmied-Kowarzik (ed.), *Der Philosoph Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929)* (Freiburg: Alber, 1988), vol. 1 , 88. Schwarzschild, though his account agrees with Glatzer's insofar as he claims that "Rosenzweig worked out the implications of what happened to him on this Day of Atonement virtually throughout the rest of his days" (Schwarzschild, *Franz Rosenzweig*, 10), takes issue with Glatzer's portrayal of Rosenzweig as having had a spiritual "conversionary experience" as a result of the Yom Kippur service and argues instead that Rosenzweig must have come to "[rethink] his position" "under the impact" of this service—that is, that he likely arrived at this position primarily on rational grounds (ibid., 9, 43–44n12). Cf. Glatzer, *Franz Rosenzweig*, xviii:

> He never mentioned this event to his friends and never presented it in his writings. He guarded it as the secret ground of his new life. The very communicative Rosenzweig, who was eager to discuss all issues and to share all his problems with people, did not wish to expose the most subtle moments of his intellectual life to analyses and "interpretations."

20. This and the remaining quotations in this section, unless otherwise indicated, are from Rosenzweig's letter to Rudolf Ehrenberg dated October 31 and November 1, 1913. GS I.1, 132–37.

21. In describing his former position, Rosenzweig refers to a "sermon" by Ehrenberg concerning "the heretic." And indeed his self-description can be correlated to a certain extent with the account in sermon 18 of Rudolf Ehrenberg's book *Ebr. 10,25. Ein Schicksal in Predigten* (Würzburg: Patmos-Verlag, 1920) of a congregation that "casts out" (*verwirft*) someone from its midst. This person is described as "strong in the pride of his certain faith." He "parted from us" because "in faith with us he took and kept his redemption and no longer awaits any miracle and can no longer give his soul's salvation over to the hope of the world" (117). Rudolf Ehrenberg, in his answer to Rosenzweig's letter, writes that if Rosenzweig fails to become one of the "people of Israel," he will have to be considered, from a Christian point of view, "an apostate Christian" and would thus "fall under" "the prayer of my eighteenth sermon." The exact relation between Ehrenberg's depiction of this "heretic" and his exchanges with Rosenzweig appears, however, impossible to reconstruct in full.

22. See also Rosenzweig's retrospective analysis in his letter to Margrit Rosenstock-Huessy dated March 16, 1918 (GB).

A version of the following discussion has been included in my article, "On the

Significance of the Messianic Idea in Rosenzweig," *CrossCurrents*, vol. 53, no. 4 (Winter 2004).

23. Rosenzweig to Ehrenberg: "You made my position between Judaism and Christianity intelligible for yourself, by transposing it back into the time of the emergence of Christianity."

24. Cf. Rosenzweig's letter of October 23, 1913, to his mother regarding a letter she had received from J., a minister friend, which discussed the Christian view of Judaism: "how much *any* Christian utterance is at the same time, of its very own accord, mission, and thus involuntarily confirms . . . that mission is inseparably intertwined with the *essence* of Christianity." This letter precedes by just a week the letter to Rudolf Ehrenberg announcing Rosenzweig's decision to remain a Jew, and it also makes an oblique reference to this decision: "You will have gathered from this letter that I hope to have found the way back about which I had mulled in vain for almost three months [i.e., the period since the "nighttime conversation"]." GS I.1, 131.

25. This verse too likely formed a topic of conversation between Rosenzweig and Rudolf Ehrenberg. See Ehrenberg's discussion of this verse in his thirtieth sermon—like Rosenzweig, he associates it with the formulation in 1 Cor. 15 that God will be "all in all" at the end of days. Ehrenberg, *Ebr. 10,25*, 200.

26. Amos Funkenstein, one of the most astute readers of Rosenzweig, calls this formulation the *Urformel* of the *Star* (in analogy with the letter to Rudolf Ehrenberg that Rosenzweig called the *Urzelle* of the *Star*), since, as we shall see, the essential difference that Rosenzweig here discovers between Judaism and Christianity is one of the core themes of the *Star*. "The Genesis of Rosenzweig's 'Stern der Erlösung': 'Urformell' [sic] and 'Urzelle,'" in *Gegenseitige Einflüsse deutscher und jüdischer Kultur: von der Epoche der Aufkärung bis zur Weimarer Republik*, ed. Walter Grab, *Jahrbuch des Instituts für Deutsche Geschichte*, Beiheft 4, 21 (1982). Incorporated into Amos Funkenstein, "Franz Rosenzweig and the End of German-Jewish Philosophy," chap. 8 of *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 257–305.

As Funkenstein also notes, Rosenzweig makes a similar point in the October 23 letter to his mother regarding the letter from J. (see note 24 above): "The development of Judaism passes by the Jesus to whom the pagans say 'Lord' and through whom they 'come to the father'; it does not go through him" (GS I.1, 129).

27. Alexander Altmann helpfully reconstructs this aspect of Rosenzweig's realizations of 1913, and their importance for the decision not to convert, as follows:

> His discovery of the ahistorical nature of Judaism first produced a serious crisis in his life. The disquieting question it posed was: Was there still any room for Judaism in a world in which Christianity was the motive force? It was this question that lay at the root of his intention to leave Judaism and embrace Christianity.

I share Altmann's interest in how "[Rosenzweig's] affirmation of Judaism" is linked to "a revaluation of history as such"—though unlike him I am not convinced that the former "entails" the latter. I am more inclined to think—and wish to suggest in this chapter—that Rosenzweig's new view of history *enables* an affirmation of Judaism. Altmann, "Franz Rosenzweig on History," 129.

28. In chapter 2 of *Rosenzweig and Heidegger*, Peter Eli Gordon examines the place of *Hegel und der Staat* in Rosenzweig's oeuvre and points out the respects in which it is representative of "historicist" scholarship.

29. *Hegel und der Staat* (Munich: R. Oldenburg, 1920; repr. Aalen: Scientia, 1962), "Vorwort," xii.

30. Letter to Hans Ehrenberg dated mid-July 1913, GS I.1, 126.

31. Letter to Friedrich Meinecke dated August 30, 1920, GS I.2, 680. Cf. Glatzer, *Franz Rosenzweig*, 96.

32. For discussions of Rosenzweig's development in terms of historicism, see for example, Paul Mendes-Flohr, "Franz Rosenzweig and the Crisis of Historicism," in Mendes-Flohr (ed.), *The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig*; Stefan Meineke, "A Life of Contradiction: The Philosopher Franz Rosenzweig and His Relationship to History and Politics," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 36 (1991); Amos Funkenstein, "An Escape From History: Rosenzweig on the Destiny of Judaism," *History and Memory*, vol. 2, no. 2 (Winter 1990). The turn away from the type of intellectual history practiced by Meinecke is also analyzed by Robert Gibbs, *Correlations in Rosenzweig and Levinas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 114ff. David N. Myers has recently stressed that Rosenzweig's response to history, in its theological motivation and orientation, ought to be seen in line with the German Protestant "anti-historicist revolution" and that this theological anti-historicism undergirded his "mission on behalf of a revitalized Judaism." "Franz Rosenzweig and the Rise of Theological Anti-Historicism," chap. 3 of *Resisting History: Historicism and Its Discontents in German-Jewish Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003). Myriam Bienenstock has suggested a shift in emphasis from seeing historicism as the principally relevant intellectual-historical background to Rosenzweig's developing understanding of the role of the past, to reading it as a critique of myth. "Recalling the Past in Rosenzweig's *Star of Redemption*," *Modern Judaism*, vol. 23, no. 3 (2003), 226–42.

33. Rosenzweig submitted "Atheistic Theology" for publication in a volume on Judaism to be edited by Martin Buber (a planned sequel to the original *Vom Judentum* compilation published by the Prague Bar Kochba group in 1911, it never materialized), but it was rejected by the latter. See GS I.1, 422, 643–44.

34. In a another description of this second phase Rosenzweig writes: "Alongside the 'Kantian' concept of the ideal human being entered, in a friendly fashion, the 'Goethean' concept of ideal individuality" (AT, 691/16). Bienenstock illuminates the significance of this reference to Goethe, detecting in it a criticism of Dilthey ("Recalling the Past," 230–32).

35. Bienenstock emphasizes that the critique of myth in "Atheistic Theology" is clearly directed against Martin Buber and his followers ("Recalling the Past," 228–29). Mendes-Flohr, commenting upon the essay's rejection by Buber as a contribution to a sequel to the famous *Vom Judentum* volume, rightly speculates that "the essay may have hit a raw nerve" with Buber, because "at the time Buber—like many of his contemporaries," including, I would add, many other contributors to the original *Vom Judentum*, "—was beholden to a form of romantic mysticism" that "muffled the revelatory voice of a transcendent God." "1914: Franz Rosenzweig Writes the Essay 'Atheistic Theology,' Which Critiques the Theology of His Day," in Sander L. Gilman and Jack Zipes (eds.), *Yale Companion to Jewish Writing and Thought in German Culture, 1096–1996* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997). These are probably the intellectual currents that Rosenzweig has in mind when he speaks of the reduction of sacred history to mythology (AT, 692–93/18–19) and the recourse to mysticism (AT, 696–97/23–24). I discuss the "romantic mysticism" that was characteristic of the early Buber and other contributors to *Vom Judentum* in "Buber, Cohen, Rosenzweig, and the Politics of Cultural Affirmation" (see Chapter 5, note 16).

36. "Such an infiltration on the part of the contested principle would be impossible, were it not that the entire atheistic theology has its own legitimacy even against the theology that it attacked, indeed, especially within the latter" (AT 695/21).

37. The arguments advanced in "Atheistic Theology" are complex; they go beyond the topic of history and eternity that is our focus here and can be most fully grasped from the point of view of the essay's polemical intentions. Besides the above-mentioned critique of Buber, it also contains a polemic against the philosophy of Hermann Cohen: Rosenzweig emphasizes that mysticism is no less to blame for the "humanization" (*Vermenschlichung*) of religion than the rationalism he associates with Cohen (AT, 696–97/24, 690/15), which he views as stressing the content of revelation—a content that can be arrived at by means of human reflection—at the expense of its divine source.

On the other hand, we can also see signs in this essay that at the time of its writing, Rosenzweig had just begun to extend his acquaintance with Cohen's thought from what was generally familiar from Cohen's publications on philosophical and Jewish topics to Cohen's newer attempts to formulate a coherent philosophy of Judaism. Since 1912, Cohen had begun to present this new philosophy of Judaism to students at the Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums, and since the summer of 1913, Rosenzweig had been attending Cohen's lectures and seminars, which deeply impressed him. By February 1914 he was writing to Rudolf Ehrenberg that he had come to take a leading role in discussions in Cohen's courses (GS I.1, 149). Rosenzweig was thus beginning to acquire a more positive, nuanced view of Cohen's Jewish thought, and this, too, is clearly visible in this essay: The critique of "atheistic theology" as an attempt to transform the distinction between God and man into a distinction within man ("the continually regenerated drive to reconcile the most absolute duality with the most absolute unity," AT, 695/20) is fully consistent with Cohen's attacks against all forms of "pantheism" and his discussions of God's oneness and uniqueness (*Einheit*) in his works on Judaism. Rosenzweig uses typically Cohenian formulations when he writes that "traditional Judaism sets for the Jew the task of unity on the basis of the revealed unity of God" and describes the relationship between "man and his God" as a *Wechselbeziehung*—one of Cohen's synonyms for what he famously called the "correlation" of man and God. (See Chapter 1 for a more detailed discussion of Rosenzweig's reception of Cohen.)

In a letter to his parents dated July 10, 1917, Rosenzweig, apparently attempting to fill them in on the original purpose of the manuscript of "Atheistic Theology," writes "So now I have a Buber critique and a Cohen critique among my 'Early Theological Writings'" (GS I.1, 422). Whether he means that both are contained in the same essay, or whether by *Cohenkritik* he means to refer to a different early text is not entirely clear.

38. This view is, of course, widespread. The most prominent example of someone who has developed a reading of Rosenzweig oriented around this point is Emil Fackenheim; see *To Mend the World* (New York: Schocken, 1982), e.g., 8, 33, 89–91, 95.

39. As is also noted by Gibbs, *Correlations*, 154.

40. Alexander Altmann points out that this is an implicit critique in particular of the tendency in German idealism to take over, in a secularized form, "the biblical view of history as a field of divine action and providence." By contrast, "in Rosenzweig this biblical heritage is silent. History ceases to be the manifestations of Divine Providence, of Judgment" (Altmann, "Franz Rosenzweig on History," 136).

41. Altmann puts this well: "In the light of eternity, eschatology itself takes on a new meaning. It is no longer the end of history but the eternity beyond history. And this eternity is presentness and future at the same time." Altmann suggests that we understand this eternity as "a dimension of existence rather than a fixed point to be reached." And he rightly sees that Rosenzweig's concepts of "future, the Kingdom, and eternity" "do not deny and invalidate history," but rather "seek to give meaning to history" (ibid., 134).

42. The "thought of a future" as imminence consists in the realization "that the Kingdom is 'among you,' that it is coming 'today,'" which is an "eternalization of the moment" (S, 253/226). (Rosenzweig is here citing Luke 17:21.) On future as anticipation, *Vorwegnahme* (which is also discussed earlier in this chapter), see also S, 261/234.

43. On the "eternal moment," see also S, 321–22/289.

44. Shlomo Pines and Matthias Lehmann have studied Rosenzweig's criticisms of Islam in the *Star* and have come up with fascinating and compelling explanations as to the sources of, and motivations for his oversimplified account. Pines notes that Rosenzweig in many respects takes over Hegel's characterization of both Islam and Judaism as "religions of the sublime," but that he applies this character-

ization to Islam only. Shlomo Pines, "Der Islam im 'Stern der Erlösung'. Eine Untersuchung zu Tendenzen und Quellen Franz Rosenzweigs" (originially published in Hebrew in 1987–88), *Hebräische Beiträge zur Wissenschaft des Judentums deutsch angezeigt*, vol. 3–5 (1987–89), 138–48, esp. 138–39. Regarding the section on Islam as a "religion of progress," Lehmann comments: "It appears that Rosenzweig, in the final part of his critique of Islam, was thinking primarily of setting up an analogy between modern philosophy and Islam. . . . As has been pointed out, what is for Rosenzweig more important than the actual critique of Islam itself is the analogy with the specifically 'modern' understanding of 'progress' in history . . . . The decisive point is that idealistic philosophy, which had reached its apex and endpoint with Hegel, believed in an eternal progress, or, more precisely, in an endless progress. This faith means a loss of the future." Matthias Lehmann, "Franz Rosenzweigs Kritik des Islam im 'Stern der Erlösung,'" *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, vol. 1 (1993/94), 340–61, here 356–58. Both Pines's and Lehmann's interpretations have recently been reinforced and extended by Yossef Schwartz (see below).

Jacob Taubes, who generally rejects Rosenzweig's understanding of the Jewish and the Christian in the *Star*, is also sharply critical of him for "[treating] Islam, which made its appearance centuries after the advent of Christianity, in exactly the same way as such Protestant scholars of the New Testament era as Schuerer and Weber treated the period of 'late Judaism' in the time of Jews—that is, as an irritating supererogation. A thorough analysis would show that Rosenzweig was a captive of the Protestant vocabulary, the only difference being that where the Protestant scholars say 'rabbinic theology,' he says the Islamic religion. Since Islam hardly counts as a social factor in the West, and there was no group to take up the cudgels on its behalf, Rosenzweig's caricature of Islam could pass." "The Issue Between Judaism and Christianity," *Commentary*, vol. 16, no. 6 (1953), 525–33, here 528.

See also the invaluable compilation of Rosenzweig's texts on Islam by Gesine Palmer and Yossef Schwartz, which includes extensive commentary about the sources of his portrayal of Islam and about the function of Islam in the system of the *Star*. Franz Rosenzweig, *"Innerlich bleibt die Welt eine". Ausgewählte Texte zum Islam*, ed. Gesine Palmer and Yossef Schwartz (Berlin: Philo, 2003).

45. S, 304/337. The teaching comes from Mishnah Pesaḥim 10:5, and also appears in the Passover Haggadah. Rosenzweig cites it frequently in the *Star*, and also links it with the giving of the law at Sinai and God's covenant with Israel, which are similarly "eternally present" moments (S, 352/317, 378/340–41, 406/366, 442/397–98).

46. Martin Kavka, *Jewish Messianism and the History of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 135–57. The following account is indebted to Kavka's attention to the role of the "not-yet" in the scene of revelation, but also diverges from Kavka's assessment that Rosenzweig's view of revelation and love-of-neighbor is ethically deficient.

CHAPTER 7

A version of this chapter will appear in *The Art of Deconstructive Politics: Reading Derrida's* Specters of Marx, ed. Leonard Lawlor and Hugh Silverman (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield).

1. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalité et infini* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1961), x–xi. *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 22.

2. Walter Benjamin, "Theologisch-politisches Fragment," *Gesammelte Schriften* II.1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 203. "Theologico-Political Fragment," trans. Edmund Jephcott, in Peter Demetz (ed.), *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanovich, 1978), 312.

3. The topic of messianism and messianic traditions is complex and wide ranging. I cannot explore here the extent to which the notion of the messianic invoked by Derrida corresponds to various messianic traditions. Let me just note that some of the issues or motifs under discussion here—for instance, the problem of whether the coming of the Messiah is a historical event or is completely extratemporal, and the related tension between a linear view of historical time and the notion of messianic redemption—show up in many expressions of the "messianic idea." See the excellent introduction to this field by Manfred Voigts, *Jüdischer Messianismus und Geschichte. Ein Grundriß* (Berlin: Agora, 1994), esp. 17–22.

4. "'The time is out of joint': such would be the originary corruption of today's day" (SM, 47/22).

5. Franz Rosenzweig, *Jehuda Halevi. Fünfundneunzig Hymnen und Gedichte* (1927), GS IV.1, 202–3. See the translation in Barbara Ellen Galli, *Franz Rosenzweig and Jehuda Halevi: Translating, Translations, and Translators* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1995), 259.

6. "Während freilich die unmittelbare messianische Intensität des Herzens, des innern einzelnen Menschen durch Unglück, im Sinne des Leidens hindurchgeht." Benjamin, "Theologisch-politisches Fragment," 204/313.

7. FL, 973n / *Force de loi. Le "fondement mystique de l'autorité"* (Paris: Galilée, 1994), 67.

8. Martin Heidegger, "Der Spruch des Anaximander," *Holzwege* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1950).

9. Cited according to G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 107.

10. Emmanuel Levinas, *De l'existence à l'existant*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Vrin, 1978), 157–61. *Existence and Existents*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1978), 92–94.

11. See Levinas's "Dialogue" with Richard Kearney in Richard Cohen (ed.), *Face to Face with Levinas* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1986), 23; and "Diachronie et representation" (1985) in *Entre nous. Essais sur le penser-à-l'autre* (Paris: Grasset,

1991) / "Diachrony and Representation," trans. Richard Cohen in Levinas, *Time and the Other* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987).

12. Levinas, *De l'existence à l'existant*, 167/97.

13. Levinas, "Diachronie et représentation," 182/103.

14. Ibid., 187/108–9.

15. SM, 102/59–60, 124/73–74, 146–47/89, 266ff./167–68ff.

16. Ernst Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973), 1459, as cited in Voigts, *Jüdischer Messianismus und Geschichte*, 15. See also Voigts, 62–63. The interpretation of biblical and Rabbinic messianic notions as expressions of the universal ideas of hope and progress toward a better, more just future to be pursued within history is of course itself a long-standing tradition going back to the Enlightenment and further. It often consists of a delimitation of the rational bases of messianism from those aspects perceived as mystical or superstitious outgrowths. See for example Kaufmann Kohler, *Grundriß einer systematischen Theologie des Judentums auf geschichtlicher Grundlage* (Leipzig 1910, repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1979), chap. 48ff. (An English version of this work was published in 1918 under the title *Jewish Theology, Systematically and Historically Considered*.)

Gershom Scholem's well-known efforts to retrieve Jewish mystical messianic traditions whose significance had been obscured by Enlightenment and rationalist tendencies may be seen as a reaction to such reductive views of Jewish intellectual history in terms of a universalist mission. He writes, "It is self-evident and needs no justification that the Messianic idea came into being not only as the revelation of an abstract proposition regarding the hope of mankind for redemption, but rather in very specific historical circumstances." "Zum Verständnis der messianischen Idee im Judentum" (1965), *Über einige Grundbegriffe des Judentums* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 126. "Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea in Judaism," in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* (New York: Schocken, 1971), 4–5.

17. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 81, emphasis added.

18. Ibid., 95.

19. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (New York: Schocken, 1989), 9. Cited in Archive, 121/76.

20. See for example, "La révélation dans la tradition juive" (1977), *L'Au-delà du verset: Lectures et discours talmudiques* (Paris: Minuit, 1982). "Revelation in the Jewish Tradition," *Beyond the Verse: Talmudic Readings and Lectures*, trans. Gary D. Mole (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

21. SM, 56/28; and FS, 26. The English translation of "Foi et savoir" leaves out this phrase (16).

22. Those who know Derrida's early essays on Edmond Jabès will recall the conceptual importance of the desert—as well as other conditions of being "elsewhere" and figures of "non-place"—in Jabès's interpretation of both Jewish experience and

the experience of writing. Derrida's early work on Jabès is among other things also an exploration of the possibility and risks of situating abstract notions such as writing or "the book" within a culturally particular experience—a Jewish experience that is determined by election and heteronomy. See Derrida, "Edmond Jabès and the Question of the Book" (1964), ED, 101–5/66–69; as well as Derrida's contribution to the tribute "Edmond Jabès aujourd'hui" in *Les Nouveaux Cahiers*, no. 31 (Winter 1972–73), 56.

23. See Michael Naas, "Hospitality as an Open Question: Deconstruction's Welcome Politics," chap. 9 of *Taking on the Tradition: Jacques Derrida and the Legacies of Deconstruction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), esp. 167.

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