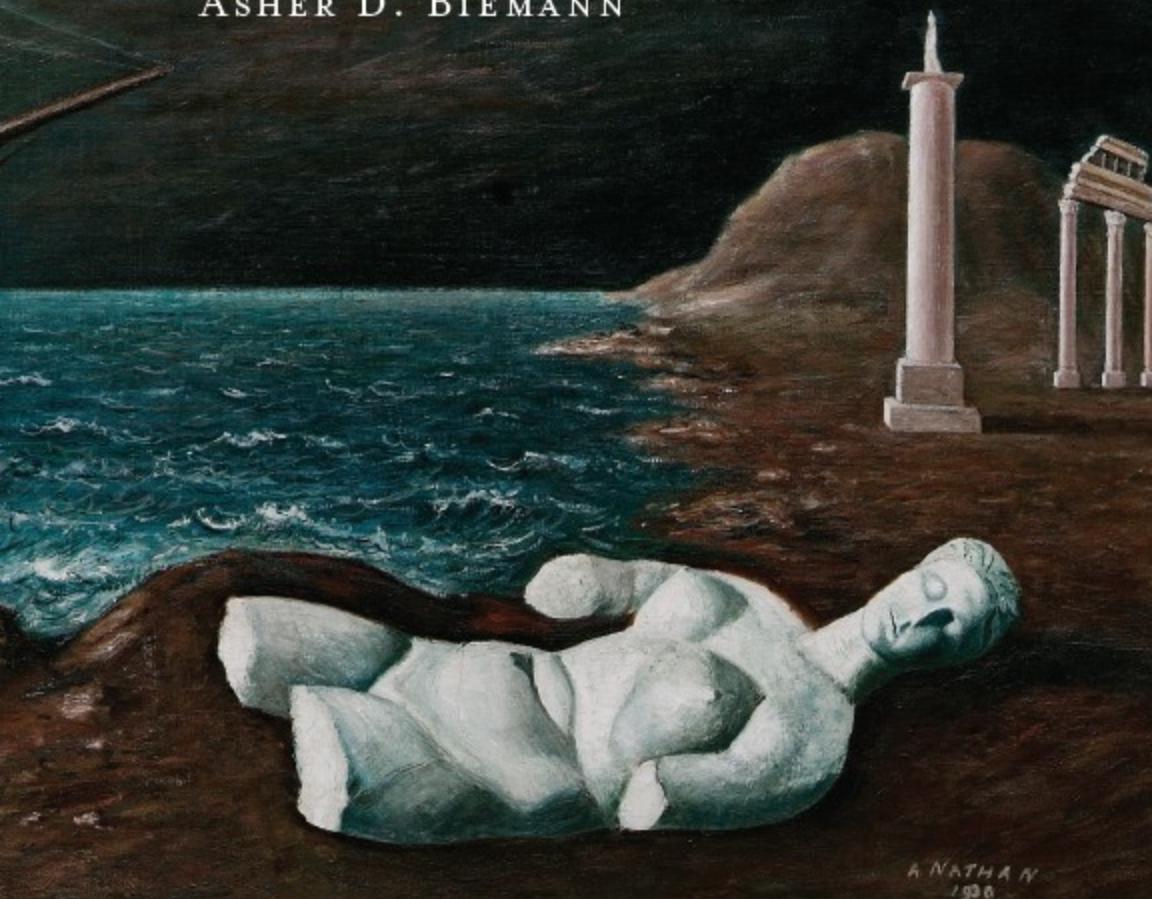


Inventing New Beginnings

*On the Idea of Renaissance
in Modern Judaism*

ASHER D. BIEMANN



Inventing New Beginnings

STANFORD STUDIES IN JEWISH HISTORY AND CULTURE

EDITED BY *Aron Rodrigue and Steven J. Zipperstein*

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To Dalia

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Inventing New Beginnings

Preamble

Ressusciter, naître ou renaître, c'est, je crois, la même chose.

—Jules Michelet, *Lettres inédites à Alfred Dumesnil et Eugène Noël* (1841–1871)

Nur Wiedergeburt heilt einen so Zerrütteten.

—Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Der Turm*

I

What follows is an essay on the idea and use of “renaissance” in modern Jewish thought. Its conceptual presupposition is that “renaissance” acts as a narrative imagination, as a fixed emplotment of the historical experience, and that it both reflects and constitutes a particular way of thinking and writing history. The idea of “renaissance” will thus appear to us as a problem of historical hermeneutics. But as the idea both reflects and constitutes, both represents and postulates, it will appear to us as a *moral* problem as well. The book that is before you began as a critique of “Jewish Renaissance” and “renaissance” itself. It began again by contemplating “renaissance” as a moral and regulative idea.

The immediate historical focus of our study is the German-Jewish experience, including the Habsburg lands, between 1890 and 1938.¹ In the historiography of German Jewry, this extended period has often been characterized as a period of revision, reorientation, and even “reversal” of the overwhelmingly assimilatory trend Enlightenment and Emancipation ushered in only a few generations before.² After two centuries of outward modernization, a process whose inward effects would lead to an ever-growing disjunction between Judaism and its own tradition, there occurred, at the height of Jewish acculturation and assimilation,³ a peculiar movement of “return” to Judaism. To be sure, this “return” had little in common with the homecoming of the “heretic” to Jewish law, and seldom produced a *baal teshuvaḥ* (penitent) in the traditional sense, but it nevertheless adopted for itself a language of “repair,” “retrieval,” “remembering,” and “renewal,” which by the

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turn of the century crystallized in a widely used concept of “Jewish Renaissance.” Introduced, if not coined, by the Jewish thinker Martin Buber in an essay of 1901, the Jewish Renaissance defined itself as a total transformation of the human being, a transformation so radical that it dismissed all prior programs of reform and restoration, calling instead for a veritable “rebirth,” or as Buber wrote in 1903:

We are speaking of the Jewish Renaissance. By this we understand the peculiar and basically inexplicable phenomenon of the progressive rejuvenation of the Jewish people in language, customs, and art. We justifiably call it “renaissance” because it resembles—in the transfer of human fate to national fate—the great period that we call Renaissance above all others, because it is a rebirth, a renewal of the entire human being like this Renaissance, and not a return to old ideas and life forms; [it is] the path from semi-being to being, from vegetation to productivity, from the dialectical petrification of scholasticism to a broad and soulful perception of nature, from mediaeval asceticism to a warm, flowing feeling of life, from the constraints of narrow-minded communities to the freedom of the personality, the way from volcanic, formless cultural potential to a harmonious, beautifully formed cultural product.⁴

Buber’s programmatic description, which reflected the German-Jewish Renaissance in its first phase (the second would be during the Weimar period), claimed to be more than “mere” national revival: It called for a comprehensive self-transformation of Jewish culture and “existence” rooted firmly in romanticist, modernist, and thoroughly aestheticizing sensibilities, but rooted no less in a passionate admiration for the spirit of the Italian Renaissance. Indeed, what Buber expected for the new renaissance of Judaism was akin to what he believed the “old” Renaissance had mastered for its own age: A “return” that meant radical innovation; a spontaneous “rebirth” to a “new life” that promised freedom from decline and inward decay. In this respect, the Jewish Renaissance echoed and expanded the call for “*techiya*” (rebirth) that had come from the Hebrew Renaissance in eastern Europe; and it echoed no less the development of “cultural” or “spiritual” Zionism, as whose cousin—and corrective—it often posed.⁵ But it also echoed a broader longing for a “new renaissance” that was common among European intellectuals at

the fin-de-siècle and during the three remarkable decades to follow. Cut short eventually by the rise of a “renaissance” of another kind, the German-Jewish Renaissance, as the however imaginary German-Jewish “symbiosis” itself,⁶ came to a halt in 1938, after having functioned as a form of intellectual resistance, or denial, since 1933.⁷ If one is tempted to occasionally speak of a “renaissance” of Jewish culture in postwar Europe, East and West, then it only testifies to the perseverance of the pattern of thought we call “renaissance.”

To examine this pattern of thought, this “idea,”⁸ whose essential and paradoxical component is indeed the return to a “new self,” shall be the purpose of the present essay. Historically, we will argue that what emerges as the “Jewish Renaissance” is the expression of a renaissance consciousness that was emblematic of an entire generation of intellectuals and artists, and that would remain emblematic of an entire philosophical tradition marked by an overwhelming sense of “crisis” and unease with “progress.”⁹ The question of “return,” to the mind of the present author, is *the* question of twentieth-century European thought—whether “liberal” or “conservative,” secular or religious, Jewish or Christian—and perhaps the question of every generation perceiving itself to be a generation of crisis and transition. Our ambition is to establish the idea of Jewish Renaissance as *coextensive* with the development of Jewish and German thought and to suggest that, in turn, German and Jewish thought and literature were profoundly shaped by the idea of “renaissance.” But while, in the Germanic jargon, this idea slipped inevitable into the perils of a new Romanticism, the Jewish Renaissance, as I intend to show, was born from a deep sense of “unadulterated” classicism, to which it would ultimately return.

Conceptually, we will argue that the quest for return, for *Umkehr*, *Kehre*, *Wende*, or *teshuvah*, is a quest not for a going-back, nor for an ideal “Once,” but the quest for a *conquest* of the past qua past; that it is the distance renaissances postulate that shapes their encounter with “tradition,” and that it is the autonomy of turning that shapes the ethics of their return. Concerned less with what once was, and expressing little interest in a “golden age” and even less respect for the “contents of tradition,” renaissances may well function as modes of cultural “anamnesis,” but not as mere “recollections” of tradition or revivals of a

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“usable past.” Stephen Watson, who has analyzed with great virtuosity the concept of “tradition,” alerts us to the seeming paradox that renaissances not only do not repeat but, in fact, “defy simple repetition or *mimesis*.¹⁰ Rather than retrieving an ancient lost world, and rather than assimilating themselves to the recovered past, renaissances *institute* a past to be recovered as new and different from the present time. “The Renaissance,” Watson writes, “. . . explicitly relies on the experience of distance and estrangement, and it explicitly affirms the ‘between’ which its *innovationi* invoke in the *renovatio* of the past.”¹¹ This “between” between innovation and renovation, distance and familiarity, will be the locus and, indeed, recurring dislocation of our study on being-in-renaissance. Its affirmation will test both our sense of “tradition” as that which connects us with the past and “renovation” as that which separates us from it. “The discovery of antiquity in the Renaissance,” as Hannah Arendt once put it in a poignant parenthetical statement, “was a first attempt to break the fetters of tradition, and by going to the sources themselves to establish a past over which tradition would have no hold.”¹² To establish a past without the grasp of tradition (which is not the same as a past *without* tradition), to recover an innocence of being first again, or as Arendt writes in another place, “prehistoric innocence of the beginning,”¹³ may be regarded the *Leitmotiv* of all revolutionary consciousness, including that of renaissance. Yet, most revolutions, as Karl Marx famously noted in his *Eighteenth Brumaire*, are also fearful of their innocence and in need of beginnings other than their own: “The tradition of dead generations weighs heavily like a phantom on the minds of the living. And if they seem engaged in turning themselves and all things around, in creating what has not yet been—precisely in these epochs of revolutionary crisis, they begin to anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service.”¹⁴ Thus the “art of foundation,” for Hannah Arendt, lies in the overcoming of the “perplexities inherent in every beginning.” Every foundation tends to be an act of “refoundation,” as every new tends to be an “improved restatement of the old,” not because it honors the past, but because it fears the future and the “abyss of pure spontaneity” that accompanies the desire for new beginnings. The revolutionary “between” of renaissance reflects the “between” of human anxiety: “Man lives in this in-between,” writes Arendt, “and what he calls the present is a

life-long fight against the dead weight of the past, driving him forward with hope, and the fear of a future (whose only certainty is death), driving him backward toward ‘the quiet of the past’ with nostalgia for and remembrance of the only reality he can be sure of.”¹⁵ What is alarming of the modern ego, as Jacques Barzun wrote in 1943, is “that it is walking forward with its head turned back in fear and longing.”¹⁶ Whether alarming or not, to renaissance, repeating the past means difference, and yet also the desire to be “oneself again.” In renaissance, the fear of new beginnings is also a need for authorization, a conscious response to and recalling of the traces—herited or invented—of the past. Renaissance, contrary to Marx’s ideal revolution, that has “stripped off all superstitions regarding the past” in order “to begin with itself,”¹⁷ is a revolution with memory. This, and nothing less, the idea of “renaissance” claims for itself: A return that is also a beginning.

II

The idiom of renaissance relishes the irresistible mystique of resurrection and rebirth. “Rebirth,” as the phenomenologist José Sánchez de Murillo writes, drawing on the “organic” philosophy of Franz von Baader, “is not the transition into a different (being) but the opening up of one’s own, wherein being has to root itself.”¹⁸ Rebirth, or the second beginning, thus becomes, for Sánchez, more than “restoration” and more than “mere” beginning: It becomes the “origination of self-hood” (*Hervorgang der Eigenheit*) and, in fact, that which permits continuity, a permanence, as von Baader imagined, through “continuous renaissance” (*beständige Renascenz*).¹⁹

This desire for “permanence,” one could argue, as well as the imagination of renaissance itself, is of undeniably “romantic,” and therefore, as some may think, “un-Jewish” character.²⁰ But behind this romantic foil, which will, with remarkable obstinacy, inform the ideas of return and renaissance to our day, lies more than a sensation of nostalgia and yearning for what a devout von Baader called religious “*Lichtgeburt*.” The “second birth,” for von Baader, was also the birth as task (*aufgegeben*), the birth that would surpass and *defy* the given (*gegeben*) first.²¹ As

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such, the second, “unnatural,” birth announced a protest against perishability, pastness, and irreversible time, a protest, whose phantasm was eternal life, but whose moral idea gave birth to the idea of atonement.

The conceptual correlation between “atonement” and “rebirth” will meander through the idea of both individual and collective renaissance. Max Scheler, writing immediately after the end of World War I, spoke of an act of *Gesamtreue* (collective repentance), an “atoning change of conscience” (*reuevolle Sinneswandlung*) that would, in a quiet, introspective revolution, but in a revolution nonetheless, invert the orders of political and cultural power, bringing about “national rebirth” as an act of moral regeneration.²² Renaissance, for Scheler, represented the “sociological form” of individual repentance.

Our assessment of renaissance, then, will follow in one regard the notions of “invented traditions,” “reinvention” of the past, or imagination of community, which are commonplace in the scholarship of nationalism and cultural revivals, and which capture well the fictional character of foundations and beginnings—but it will, in another regard, differ from this accepted notion to present the idea of “renaissance” not merely as the (re-)construction of imaginary “authenticity,” nor as a “cult of origins” which, according to Julia Kristeva, must inevitably produce “hatred of those others who do not share my origins,”²³ but also as a philosophical, at times even moral, revision of the collective and individual self. What we mean by “atonement” is an act of reversal that, like memory itself, repeats forward and sideward, and inward and outward, breaking through the cycle of sameness that—allegedly at least—the platonic anamnesis had spun, and breaking, at the same time, through the fixed one-timeness of history. Renaissances repeat precisely in order *not* to be the same with the repeated past, but to complete and “atone” for it: They repeat, as we shall see in Ernst Bloch, in order to “surpass” and “overhaul” (*iiberholen*) and “heal something” (*etwas gutzumachen*).²⁴ Their repetition is a corrective, yet not an abolishment, of historical time.

The question of atoning return, which is inherent in all renaissances, thus becomes a question that puts in question the process of modernity itself. Renaissances, as we will maintain, both modernize and resist modernity. Their call for return is the afterthought to modernity’s self-affirmation. However, we will argue more than that: That renais-

sances, as we understand them, reflect not only the consciousness we call modernity but also modernity's secret *conscience*. Reading the Jewish Renaissance, then, will be the unraveling of a history that is itself thinking and task: The history of a renaissance that paired the rejuvenation of its national self with the regeneration of a new humanism, offering a new conscience to the modernity it so imperturbably and tragically fought to keep alive.

III

What prompted, in the history of modern Judaism, such a movement of return and renaissance? Most historians agree that the principal impulse for this phenomenon came from the rapid swelling of political and cultural anti-Semitism in the great urban centers of Europe, which made it increasingly difficult to maintain confidence in the prospects of integration and assimilation. With their loyalty and “natural” ability to assimilate questioned by their Christian critics, many Jews retreated into a position of “self-defense” and newly discovered pride. But more often than not, this manner of response produced, though outwardly not ineffective, little more than a form of being Jewish in spite of anti-Semitism, a “*Trotzjudentum*” concerned less with cultural innovation than with making a statement of defiance.²⁵ While fully tangible, then, the existence of “cultured” anti-Semitism could not by itself account for the reversal that would become the “Jewish Renaissance.” But it did, nonetheless, evoke a “turning point in Jewish self-perception,” that would contribute to a heightened reflexivity of “Jewishness.”²⁶

This heightened reflexivity, as more recent studies have shown, was profoundly shaped by the visible influx of Jews from eastern Europe, still rooted in the relatively traditional milieus of Russia, Rumania, or Galicia and migrating, from the 1880s on, to the larger cities of the Habsburg and Wilhelmine empires. The infusion of modern metropolitan life with ostensibly “premodern” culture seems to have had a strangely revitalizing effect on German Jews caught between defiance and assimilation. Though by no means universally welcome, but rather shunned by most of their Western coreligionists, Jews from the East

experienced something like a “new appreciation,” as Jack Wertheimer once put it, by Jewish intellectuals in the West, who found in the “old” ways of life an imaginary symbol of self-recognition that could compensate for their own alienation from traditional Judaism.²⁷ In encountering their very own “Other,” many Jews of defiance, themselves secular and uncomfortable with their heritage, were given new tools to forge difference and distinctiveness (*Eigenart*).

Shulamit Volkov, in a now-classic essay, has situated this phenomenon in what she calls the “dynamics of dissimilation.” Paradoxically, as Volkov argues, it was precisely the most “modern,” the most assimilated and most integrated, generation of German Jews that began to revitalize and reassert its Jewishness from the 1890s onward in a search for the old authentic “soul,” which intuitively gravitated toward myth, folklore, and the “backward” East—but Volkov views dissimilation also as a phenomenon already *inherent* in the “inner dynamics,” or perhaps dialectics, of assimilation. Thus, the unique context of the fin-de-siècle provided no more than a stimulus for a reversal that was already given in the process of assimilation and modernization itself. “A generation of Jews,” Volkov writes, “who were relatively free from the anxiety of social climbing was beginning to look inward.”²⁸ Reaching the limits of assimilation, which were primarily, but not only, the outward limits of modern anti-Semitism, German Jews of the intellectual elite found themselves “promptly halting at the brink,” at a point, as Volkov continues, that enabled them to “turn backward and inward, seeking a new definition for one’s identity, and often also a new self-respect.”²⁹ In this turning “backward and inward”—*Umkehr* and *Einkehr*, as the German Jewish literature will frequently put it—the idea of renaissance approaches its moral correlate: radical repentance.

IV

Renaissance begins as a “protest against one’s own time,”³⁰ that is also a protest against one’s place and a protest against oneself. Benjamin

Harshav, in an artful essay on the “modern Jewish revolution,” re-framed this protest in three deictic negations: “Not here, Not like now, Not as we are.”³¹ Revolutions, he maintains, surely negate old forms of existence, but from their negations also emerge corresponding “axes of orientation,” which traverse, in multiple directions, the “inside” and the “outside” of revolutionary consciousness.³² “Renaissance,” one might argue with Harshav, represents one such axis, a negation that is also reorientation, transforming the threefold protest against the present into a reclamation of distance as that which is not present, yet still within reach.

Renaissance is a protest also against history: Its fundamental temporality refuses itself to the modern differentiation, or temporalization, of time. Renaissance resists the openness of future and the closedness of the past. Its protest is one of recovery that empowers—by the sheer act of reclaiming—the recoverer. Immune to the uncertainty of the “not-yet” and freed from the certainty of the “already,” the recoverer can claim a distant “once” in which all temporal horizons are synchronized. Renaissance is the reclamation of a *simultaneity of distant times*. It is the desire for simultaneous access to the otherwise separated planes of time. It is the desire for a New without the terror of newness and the longing for an Old without the pressure of the past.

Renaissance is a desire. Writing on how the French historian Jules Michelet “invented” the Renaissance in 1840, Lucien Febvre describes the romantic historian’s “thirst” for a new life: “He is thirsty, dreadfully thirsty, dying of thirst. And he cries ‘Water!’ just as Rabelais’ heroes do. He is so much in need of rejuvenation, refreshment and renewal!”³³—until, suddenly, the “whole of Italy and its joy in living a beautiful, exciting and disinterested life” is opened up to him, and the word “Renaissance” springs from his lips, “transformed, regenerated,” as a “total renewal of life—well-being, hope.” Thus Michelet invented an historical concept to answer, as Febvre beautifully shows, the “needs of his history,” which were also his religious, deeply mystical and, ultimately, erotic needs, his needs for “rebirth” and true love at last. From his needs a concept was born, an intellectual category that, as Febvre writes, would soon “enslave” its users with the force and “tyranny” of

machines made of steel: “History is a strongbox that is too well guarded, too firmly locked and belted. Once something has been put in it for safe keeping it never gets out.”³⁴

From its romantic inceptions in nineteenth century France to its present-day incarnations the concept of “renaissance,” along with its ideological derivatives of “renewal” and “rebirth,” has been locked and belted in a strongbox that belongs both to history and to what Febvre called our “ateliers cérébraux”—to our mental workshops. Renaissance, as this book will argue, is both a periodic concept and a *figura* of thought, a persistent pattern of thinking, a *Denkweise*, or a mode of consciousness. We cannot think about renaissance without wondering what it means to think *in* renaissance.

V

Thinking in Renaissance, then, will be our first exercise. We must look not only at what is forged in our mental workshops but also at *how* it is forged. Accordingly, we will first meet “renaissance” in the abstract, as an “ideal” construct born from feelings and desires that can seldom be separated from their religious and poetic origins. Renaissance is the most fundamental desire for a new birth and a new life—the desire for immortality neither “after” nor “beyond” historical time, but in a historical time that is transpired by the possibility of repetition. Repetition, whose nonidentity is presupposed, articulates the modern desire to overcome the finality of historical time. Thus, Pico della Mirandola, while honoring the “straight line” as the mode of reaching perfection in accordance with one’s own nature, celebrated “circular motion” as the “most express image of the true felicity, through which a creature returns to the beginning from which it proceeded.”³⁵ And thus Franz Rosenzweig defines redemption as “the end, before which all that has begun sinks back into its beginning.”³⁶

Renaissance is the story that makes possible the immanence of after-life. In our interpretation, this story of desire for immanent rebirth will be stripped to what we propose to be its narrative elements—to its

most simple grammatical rootwords: beginning and beginning-anew. The desire for a rebirth that is—as most renaissances will insist—both rebirth and creating anew, means to us a desire for new beginnings that both reclaim and repudiate beginnings from the past. The new beginning is no mere repetition of the old, but a beginning in itself. Beginning and beginning-again belong to one and the same grammar of beginnings. To the extent that this grammar becomes the ordering principle in a world that must remain anarchic, or unbegun, without thresholds where one thing ends and another begins, beginnings and beginnings-again are the rootwords in a narrative order from which is derived what would be absent otherwise: meaning.

As narrative incisions into the orderless flux of things, beginnings are also middles: It is at the beginning that things turn from old to new, that time turns from one tense to another. Thus, the third rootword in our grammar of beginnings, which is the grammar of the desire we call “renaissance,” will be turning. Turning is the midpoint that disjoins and conjoins ever anew the story of renaissance. Turning introduces ever anew the curvilinear path of mythic time to the “curse” of modern historicity, keeping alive the profound bifurcation of the linear and circular which, for Karl Löwith, animates the modern mind in its insatiable quest for a history that makes sense to us.³⁷

VI

It is in the rootword of turning that the concept of history is pierced by the unhistorical, *counter*-historical, concept of atonement. In atonement is hidden the possibility of “turning return” (*teshuvalah, metanoia*), a repairing going back that defies all temporal order. The penitent, as Adin Steinsaltz put it in his popular book on teshuvah, has the actual ability historians can only fantasize about: to “return . . . to the past, one’s own, or one’s ancestors.”³⁸ What so emerges Steinsaltz calls a “new connectedness,” which is deeper the greater the distance to be traveled by the returnee. Return, in this manner, empowers the penitent with a sense of defiant control over the devouring mouth of time. Return

protests the pastness of the past. Once this return is truly answered by the voice that is pardon, the past ceases indeed to be past: “Active in a stronger sense than forgetting,” Emmanuel Levinas writes about this phenomenon, “pardon acts upon the past, somehow repeats the event, purifying it.”³⁹ The past, in a word, ceases to be past not by its negation or undoing but by its affirmation and purifying redoing. It is neither forgotten, nor remembered, but relived and “redeemed.”

The redemptive quality of distance and memory will accompany us throughout all pages of this study. Our use of “memory” and “history” takes for granted their narrative interdependence, and it is with some reluctance that we take part in a discourse that must reckon with concepts such as “antihistoricism” or “counter-history.” Our simple triad of rootwords cuts through these distinctions with a certain degree of deliberate naiveté. In fact, if there is a recurrent motif to our grammar, then it would be that beginning, beginning-again, and turning are rooted both inside and outside of history: that their simultaneity at once creates and resists historical emplotment, articulating neither historicism nor antihistoricism but an historicism of a particular kind.

VII

Acting in the *mode* of simultaneity, renaissances are seldom concerned with historic specificity or events *in illo tempore*, or the “commemoration of beginnings” in the past.⁴⁰ What renaissances, in our view, commemorate are not “beginnings” but the *act and attitude of beginning* itself: not origins but originating. To renaissance, the past is not enough; it is in the beginning, in beginning as a mode of being and self-awareness, that the temporal horizons of past, present, and future become loose and open ended. Beginnings are powerful tools of synchronization, and renaissances, by beginning-anew the beginning, defy the plot of history in their ability to access events in a simultaneous order or, to speak with Herder, “total view.” Thus renaissances can “act upon the past” without being bound by it. Only here can the repetition take place that is—by the truth of imagination—a “renewal.”

VIII

Creating the possibility for “renewal,” beginning is a narrative strategy that has both reparative effects and moral implications. William McLoughlin has argued that cultural reawakenings are by no means merely pathological but can work, rather, in “therapeutic” and “cathartic” ways.⁴¹ John Hutchinson went further to compare, not unlike Scheler, the phenomenon of cultural reawakenings to forms of “moral regeneration.” Distinguishing political from cultural nationalism, Hutchinson views this moral regeneration as an “integrative” return to the “creative life-principle of the nation.”⁴² As “moral innovators,” Hutchinson’s cultural nationalists are conscious of the regenerative power of conflict, crisis, and profound ambivalence. They admire tradition but reject the narrow boundaries of traditionalism. They admire modernity but disavow the self-effacing course it seems to necessitate. Cultural nationalism thus typically serves as a corrective of both radical ethnocentrism and radical assimilation. If it remains in this corrective in-between, cultural nationalism emerges, for Hutchinson, as the “good” kind of nationalism that enables “backward” cultures, as he puts it, to modernize themselves without relinquishing what they consider to be their collective heritage and destiny.

The historian, of course, will know that the “good” kind of nationalism is exceedingly rare and that the myth of regeneration belongs, more often than not, to totalitarian thought.⁴³ Yet, I would like to suggest, in what follows, that we can think of the idea of renaissance also as a moral possibility; that it conforms to the very ambivalence Hutchinson has attached to cultural nationalism, an ambivalence that is precisely in the simultaneity of tradition and modernity, in the synchronization of old and new, or simply in the conscious old-newness renassances seek to engender. Neither conservative nor liberal by common terms, neither living in tradition nor rejecting it, and favoring neither return nor progress in the simple sense of the word, renassances are the mode of thought for those in “between.” In the imagination of renaissance becomes possible what in the factual world is unthinkable: a new beginning; a second life; a going back into the past as possibility; an atonement that actually seems to repair the world.

IX

In our study, renaissances are treated as powerful social imaginations, whose grammatical rootwords are in truth modulations of the one and same principal ideology we call “beginning.” Hence, the primary path we follow is none other than the path of a *critique of ideology*⁴⁴—but this does not render renaissances mere illusions or expressions of “false consciousness.” Just as in the defiance of factuality atonement emerges as an unprecedented moral force, an imperative that refuses to accept the past, and no less the Self, as a fait accompli while becoming moral precisely on account of its refusal, so renaissances act as collective resistances to the irreversibility of time, resisting what is present, past, and not yet here. It is in the simultaneity of its rootwords, which loosely correspond to the self-images of modernity, tradition, and crisis, that the idea of renaissance opens indeed the possibility of repair, atonement, and beginning anew. The moral possibility of renaissances depends on the simultaneous presence of its triad and on its ability to continuously act as its own corrective. Paradoxically, then, what is the conceptual weakness of renaissances, their completely imaginary character of return, their empty jargon of authenticity, their figment of renewal, their infinity of crisis, their fantasy of resurrection, their conscious counterfactuality, is also the ground of their self-empowerment, self-actualization, and “moral innovation.”

X

The Jewish Renaissance will serve as the historical image of our conceptual mirror. Like the idea of renaissance itself, the Jewish Renaissance will reveal itself only in its ideal traits, without complete justice to its jumble of divergent views. Our simple grammar of rootwords will assist us in reconstructing the Jewish Renaissance as a triad of beginning, beginning-again, and most pertinently, turning—each of them ideological elements that will reappear in the concepts of history, memory, and aesthetics. We will argue that to the Jewish Renaissance, the idea of “return” meant both less and more than a “going-back”; that its

recovery and return were not “territorializations” of the mind effecting “closure,” as Sidra Ezrahi suggested in her fine study on the Jewish imagination of homecoming,⁴⁵ but, to the contrary, openings and affirmations of elsewhere; and finally, that the Jewish Renaissance navigated a truly “triadic” in-between, less by reclaiming a “usable past” than by a “remembering” of tradition that understood itself, as Hans-Georg Gadamer would later put it, as the reentering into a conscious stream of passing-on. Following neither the ideology of anti-modernism nor of modernism, and emulating neither the model of reform nor the model of religious return to Jewish law, the Jewish Renaissance experimented with a retrieval not of specific contents, nor of specific obligations, but of a specific mode of retrieving, a “putting oneself-into” (*er-innern*) tradition from the distance of modernity. Thus the Jewish Renaissance came to justify itself through the reparative role of distance and disjunction, through what Karl Löwith, borrowing from Jakob Burckhardt, termed the “conscious continuity” of Renaissance, and what Martin Buber called the “passion of passing-on.”⁴⁶ In its last analysis, the Jewish Renaissance represented no return to Judaism but an ever-renewed turning toward a Judaism that had to remain without any other imperative than the imperative of return itself.

This notwithstanding, the Jewish Renaissance found itself persistently in pursuit of a classical ideal that was often clouded, even deeply invested, in Nietzschean Atticism,⁴⁷ but which ultimately yearned toward a renaissance of the German classical tradition. Conceiving itself as a “true” heir to the spirit of the Italian Renaissance, the Jewish Renaissance, as I shall argue, continued to hold fast—despite its romantic and not-seldom “völkish” language—to what it imagined as the ideals of enlightenment and humanism. Even at its most “romantic,” and by inversion, most “oriental” self-expression,⁴⁸ the Jewish Renaissance could not, or perhaps refused to, annul its roots in the letters of the *Quattrocento* and the Weimar *Klassik*: It was the renaissance of the last *Humanisten*.⁴⁹

Finally, the Jewish Renaissance was able to ground itself in a view of Jewish history that was deeply infused—even in its modern articulations—by the idea of “resurrection.” Whether an intuitively “Jewish” idea or not,⁵⁰ resurrection, as this study will argue, has

functioned as a recurrent, perhaps even prevalent, narrative trope and form of narrative apperception in the writing of Jewish history from prophetic to present times. It has functioned as its mythic and moral pivot. To be sure, not all Jewish historiography is resurrectionist in its orientation, and it is certainly evident that most scholarly histories of the recent decades have consciously avoided older images of resurrection and rebirth and even struck an all but apocalyptic tone. “[T]he old unity of Jewry,” as the Israeli historian David Vital concluded in 1990, “however fragile, however problematic, essentially a function of the old sense and, yes, the old reality of nationhood, lies shattered today, almost beyond repair.”⁵¹ At the same time, however, Jewish history, not as a scholarly discipline, or at least not necessarily so, but as a collective consciousness, as what German thinkers used to call *Geschichtlichkeit* (historicity), seems to suggest the opposite: that if Jewish history teaches anything to its “waning nation,” then it is that nothing is “beyond repair,” that its people, strangely “ever-dying,” as Simon Rawidowicz put it in a famous essay of 1948,⁵² has also the strange capacity to revitalize itself. As the late Emil Fackenheim put it in 1982: “If the real Jewish people, while often without peace, were rarely without vibrant life, it is because of the ever-renewing, ever-rejuvenating power of Teshuvah.”⁵³ Couched in a language that belongs to the ideology of renaissance, to the sacred fantasy of repenting rebirth, the idea of Jewish history as a history of ever new beginnings has so created what we shall call an historicism of a particular kind, a fixed narrative plot in the semantics of restoration, whose purpose is not only the desire for meaning but, equally so, the postulation of a single imperative: to begin anew.

XI

That the idea of a Jewish Renaissance is rooted already in the concept of a Jewish history, but that it is also rooted in a characteristic *figura* of thought, which we have called “thinking in renaissance,” is the recurrent theme of this study. It establishes a conceptual continuity between

Jewish Renaissance and Jewish history, which takes the form of a correlation. It is this correlation between writing and thinking, the simultaneity of the semantics of restoration and the grammar of beginnings, that also warrants a specific form of text—a form that is itself a correlation of its parts. Because there is no order to writing and thinking other than the order of back and forth, the parts of this book are arranged as two faces of a folio page, front and back, verso and recto, which may, in fact, be interchanged, for each is each other's introduction and conclusion, foreshadowing and afterlife. Hence, the reader, whose interests gravitate toward the "historical," will begin this study at its front and read "Verso," Chapters One–Two–Three, whereas the reader, whose interests lie in the "conceptual" will begin the book from its back and read "Recto," Chapters One–Two–Three. There might be a third reader, the reader who prefers to plunge *in medias res*, and this reader may indeed begin in the middle of it all, at the axis of the book, and read, depending on what interests prevail, "Verso," Chapter One and "Recto," Chapter Three, or vice versa.

To the reader of this study, such simultaneity may at first be disorienting. Still more disorienting might be that we have made an effort to build this book on concepts and ideas rather than the thinkers thinking them. Great names, which commonly give order to our discipline, are treated as mere signposts in a landscape that is shaped not by individuals but by the elusive dwelling places of thought: by the betweens that ideas tend to effortlessly traverse. I am, of course, an insufficient surveyor of this landscape, but I did take the liberty to stretch at times the spaces in between and to suspend, matter-of-factly, the uncanny excitement we often experience when we discover parallels of thought between Jewish thinkers and their French, German, or deeply Christian counterparts. For the purpose of this study, we take such parallels and "elective affinities" for granted, for the idea of renaissance cuts across time and culture, attaching itself in similar ways to individuals of entirely different extraction. I shall leave it to the judgment of the reader, which parallels are exciting and uncanny, and which ones are not—as I leave it to the judgment of the reader, which names belong to individuals of integrity and which ones do not.

XII

In the end, this book remains what it claims to be but cannot call itself because of its immodest associations in the field of Renaissance: an essay; a trying-out of ideas in a specific cultural context, a reading and thinking, a synthesizing of far-apart ends, that is less than a history but, hopefully, more than not a history. Our simple question remains what the term “renaissance” meant to the “Jewish Renaissance”; what it meant for this generation to be *in* renaissance, to “return,” “turn,” and “begin anew.” We merely ask how the related concepts of “rebirth,” “restoration,” or “rejuvenation” traversed and formed the landscapes of German and Jewish thought, whose dried up riverbeds still channel the currents of Jewish thought today.

If there is value to this question, then it cannot be exhausted in the period of time that serves as its historical backcloth, nor in a focus that remains centered on Judaism. To the contrary, what renders renaissances so powerful and so enduring is the recurrence and cultural malleability of their idea. “Don’t take away the Renaissance from us,” Johan Huizinga mocks the romantic dreamers of cultural rebirth. “We cannot live without it. It has become the expression of an attitude of life for us. We want to live in it and from it whenever we feel the urge to do so.”⁵⁴ The desire to live in the idea, and from it, at all times is the ground for the ever-newness of Renaissance. There is no fixed place and no fixed age to its idiom. Renaissances repeat themselves, and frequently refer to each other, in historically very different contexts. From the Italian *rinascimento* to the romantic renaissances of Stendhal and Michelet, to the aesthetic renaissance of late Victorian England, to the Harlem and Irish renaissances of the 1920s,⁵⁵ the idea of renaissance retains its suggestive power of cultural introspection and innovation. When in the year 2000, more than a century after the short-lived German Jewish Renaissance took hold, an American publication championed a new “Jewish Renaissance Agenda,” which would replace the older model of “continuity” with an unscripted process of “rebirth,” a “renewed encounter with Jewish tradition,” a “flowering of an old shoot,” and, ultimately, with a message of *tikkun olam* (repairing of the world);⁵⁶ and when a group of pre-

eminent contemporary Jewish thinkers defines Jewish postmodernism as a “kind of *teshuvah*,” “repair,” and “return,” as a “turning back to tradition,” that resembles the “prophetic call for a moral/spiritual turning,”⁵⁷ then we can appreciate how the fantasy of renaissance and its moment of “halting at the brink” continues to travel from generation to generation as an attitude and mode of consciousness and conscience, as a feeling of truthful, repenting “return” that turns crises into new beginnings.

Part One (Recto)
Thinking in Renaissance or
A Grammar of Beginnings

One Beginnings

Thresholds of Continuity

To begin—to ignore or suspend the undefined density of the past—is the wonder of the present.

—Emmanuel Levinas, *Humanism of the Other*

Mitten hinein versetzt zu werden, ist am besten.

—Ernst Bloch, *Tübinger Einleitung in die Philosophie*

I

Where to Begin

“Where to Begin?” Roland Barthes’ well-known essay of 1970 plants this question into the mind of an imaginary student who, though not unaware of the “divergencies of approach,” feels uncertain how to approach and where to enter the jumble of a “text’s plural.”¹ Unable to find “the” beginning, the student finally despairs, for there simply is no beginning at the beginning but only an arbitrary thread to grasp, a first thread, which then unravels to reveal a system of simultaneous codes, meanings, and themes. What makes this unraveling possible is that texts are not run-proof, that we can pull an end and arrive in the middle of its plenitude. But for Barthes, the “I” approaching the text “is already itself a plurality of other texts, of codes which are infinite or, more precisely, lost (whose origin is lost).”² When the imaginary student pulls a thread, no more than the middle unravels: He is cast “in medias res,” Barthes writes, thrown into the midst of things, into a beginningless flux. He is *verwebt* (interwoven) in history³; *verstrickt* (entangled) in stories.⁴ He is in the midst, but he is unable to begin at the beginning.

To be sure, being in the midst of a difficult flux, without beginnings and without shelter, as John Caputo described “radical hermeneutics” in the 1980s, has become a familiar motif in our time.⁵ When measured

by our day-to-day experience, however, the beginningless, authorless text seems to resist intuition. Our conscious lives rarely are in flux but, instead, saturated with beginnings, beginnings that we begin, and beginnings, which—as it appears to us—begin on their own, like the “beginning” of a new day. Beginnings, as we are likely to experience, exist well apart from any “one” beginning at the beginning. They are, as Catherine Keller aptly wrote, “going on.”⁶ Even Barthes’ imaginary student might experience, while entangled in the middle, a beginning in some sense. Like Dante’s traveler, he begins in medias res, somewhere in the middle of a path—but he still *makes* a beginning.

Ambiguities

The nature of beginnings is no trivial matter and the term itself is ambiguous. A verbal derivative, beginning, always indicates an action or, to paraphrase the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the action of entering upon action.⁷ At the same time, the word beginning functions as a mode of existence, an “entering upon existence,” as the dictionary defines it, or as Aristotle put it in the *Metaphysics*: “the first out of which something exists or comes into being or is recognized.”⁸ This ambiguity of action and existence has rendered the beginning a quasi-creative principle in itself, a *dynamis* and product of the *nous poietikós*.⁹ Conversely, this ambiguity already foreshadows a duality of longing that we attach to beginnings: The nostalgic longing for origins and first beginnings in the past, and the forward-looking desire for beginnings that we can begin to shatter the sameness of the before.

Rudolf Carnap, in his now-classic essay “The Elimination of Metaphysics,” points to this very ambiguity and longing to demonstrate how, in metaphysics, the gerundial “beginning” became *the* beginning, how an empirical (though interpretive) description of actions or events was transformed into the “principium” or *arché*.¹⁰ Metaphysical systems, Carnap argued, rely largely upon the hypostatization of similar derivatives to create words deprived of their day-to-day meaning without, however, being given another meaning of their own. Nothing in our experience can correspond to the beginning as an active first principle, much less to the beginning as a primordial “first.” The meta-

physical arché, the self-generating origin of all things, the hypostatized act of beginnings, for Carnap, is a philosophically meaningless term.

But it is surrounded by an aura. A particularly inconspicuous term of what Adorno called the “jargon of authenticity,” the beginning belongs to both our everyday use of language and to a “higher” plane of being. “Words of jargon,” Adorno writes, “sound as if they said something higher than what they mean.”¹¹ The Italian sociologist Vilfredo Pareto compared this “something higher” to a *musica di vocaboli* resonating in all metaphysical terms to conceal their meaningless contents.¹² But the beginning, unlike other metaphysical terms, impresses primarily through its ordinariness and by the habitual grammar that surrounds it. The music of beginnings is as solemn as it is mundane and often inaudible. The jargon of beginning, to most of us, does not appear to be jargon at all. To the contrary, beginnings seem to firmly belong to our daily, pedestrian vocabulary and, indeed, to the categories of thought by which we order the world around us.

A Desire for Beginnings

Reason, as Kant remarked in his first *Critique*, has a desire (*Bedürfnis*) for beginnings. It is this desire that brings reason also to its first antinomy: the world as begun and un-begun.¹³ But it is the same desire that grants reason—practical reason—its freedom: The freedom for which every beginning of an action becomes a “first beginning.” In Kant’s third antinomy, therefore, it is the ability to begin that removes reason from the causality of the phenomenal world, setting it free from the laws of nature that only know “subaltern beginnings,” beginnings by comparison, but no “first beginning.”¹⁴ To be sure, the antinomies of pure reason must remain antinomies, but the desire for first beginnings, which is a desire for freedom, also becomes a transcendental possibility. The beginning in reason turns antinomy into autonomy.

Hans Blumenberg, writing about Descartes’ method of reductive doubt, speaks of a “self-conception of reason as the Organon of beginning,” likening, in fact, the Cartesian self to the myth of a *creatio ex nihilo*.¹⁵ Reason, as Blumenberg sees it, not only begins before all beginning, before all time and history, but also is conscious of its

beginning a beginning. “The absolute beginning, which inaugurates history,” he writes, “also prohibits itself to have a history—and this means: it is not only a primary thesis (*Urthesis*) but also a response to crisis.”¹⁶ In this self-awareness of reason as the power of beginning, which, in Kant, will become a desire for a beginning that is “unconditioned by time” (*nicht unter Zeitbedingungen*),¹⁷ lies, for Blumenberg, the self-awareness of the modern age as a Now torn from the continuity of aging time: as a beginning in the critical, decisive moment. Modernity is the beginning against history, while historicism, as we shall see later, will interpret itself as a protest against the “absolute beginning” of reason.

We shall view, in this study, beginnings as forms of inner perception that determine the structure of our reason and the logic of our desires. “Beginning,” as Edward Said noted in his 1975 monograph on this subject, “is not only a kind of action; it is also a frame of mind, a kind of work, an attitude, a consciousness.”¹⁸ “Consciousness,” wrote Emmanuel Levinas in 1968, “is a mode of being such that beginning is its *essential*.”¹⁹ In this respect, Said reasoned, beginnings are different from origins, whose meaning always is “passive” (something that, as we will see later, is not necessarily the case). Beginnings, for Said, have intentions, which origins do not. Origins “are,” but beginnings “produce.” They produce difference—difference which, as Said writes, “is the result of combining the already-familiar with the fertile novelty of human work in language.”²⁰ As such, Said’s beginning also creates authority: “it constitutes an authorization for what follows from it.”²¹ It is an authorization that limits and enables. It limits because it requires reference and repetition—and it enables because reference and repetition give authority to both the beginning and the beginner. In the affirmation of the beginning lies the affirmation of the author as creator. Most important for Said, beginnings are acts of transformation: “[T]here must be the desire, the will, and the true freedom to reverse oneself, to accept thereby the risks of rupture and discontinuity; for whether one looks to see where and when he began, or whether he looks in order to begin now, he cannot continue as he is.”²² Thus the act of beginning is accompanied by the necessity of change, even reversal. Beginning, as Maurice Blanchot wrote, is a risk.²³

We have already formulated three fundamental features in our grammar of beginnings: difference, authority, and transformation. As we seek to understand what it means not only to begin but to begin *anew*, to restore beginnings, we must first look at beginnings as actions of consciousness, as creations of the poetic mind, decisions in time more than moments or points of origin that are empirically “at hand.” The great ambivalence of beginnings is that they are acts of undoing and making, acts of tearing apart and putting together. What begins dismembers time. The beginning, Blanchot reminds us, is an act of violence.²⁴ It sets, as Aristotle clearly saw, a limit (*péras*) a limit that subverts continuity and defines selfhood against otherness.²⁵ Our desire for beginning is a desire for caesura, but what begins also creates an order, conjoining, like the limit, two separate realms. The human being, as Georg Simmel once put it, is the “conjoining being” and at the same time the one “that must always separate, for it cannot conjoin without separating”; it is the “liminal being” (*Grenzwesen*) that does not have limits.²⁶ The beginning would thus be like Simmel’s images of “bridge” and “door,” a human way of crossing against the odds of the given and of closing off a “piece of home” from the “uninterrupted unity of natural being.” It would be like the inward-outward swinging door itself, whose threshold is the symbol of human meaning and dignity: the symbol of “the possibility to step at any moment outside the limit into freedom.”²⁷ Therefore, we will regard beginnings as actions and modes of thought, as bridges and doors, that establish and permeate our historical existence and, in fact, our most elementary experience of time.

Beginnings and Counter-Time

“The riddle of time,” as the Dutch theologian Gerardus van der Leeuw wrote, “is the riddle of the beginning. . . . We live out of the fact that we always begin anew: on awakening in the morning, at the beginning of the year, with every task we undertake, with each move from one place to another.”²⁸ Even in absence of one “true” beginning at the beginning, there must be small, microchronic beginnings along the middle: births, mornings, awakenings, that order our temporal existence.

Without beginnings, there would be anarchy, the state of *an-arché*—the un-begun. Beginnings create temporal formations, a sense of before and after, a sense of change and difference, but also a sense of completeness. It is through beginnings that mechanical time becomes poetic time: a time with meaning. “[M]an can by his own providence and magically establish time,” continues van der Leeuw: “He can make a beginning.”²⁹

That beginnings are made and postulated, rather than given and found, shall be our first presupposition. “Mere flux, aimless and meaningless,” John Dewey once wrote, “starts at no definite point and arrives at nothing.”³⁰ In the flux of time, in the concatenation of events, there are no beginnings other than the beginnings we narrate into it. Events happen; but once we begin to reflect upon what happened, once we reconstruct and tell, events will appear to us, however crude, as a sequence of beginnings and ends—as stories. Thus we further presuppose that to speak of a beginning implies the language of a plot, a language Aristotle called myth.³¹ Beginnings make plots, and plots that are whole require beginnings (*archai*), middles (*mésoi*), and ends (*teleutai*).³² The beginning, then, seems inextricably entwined in narrative thinking, a plotting forward that by necessity unfolds toward a temporal horizon. We cannot use the word “beginning” without, at the same time, presupposing the possibility of a plot. “The plot,” as Paul Ricoeur puts it, “places us at the crossing point of temporality and narrativity.”³³ But it also places us, as Aristotle knew, at the crossing point of history (*historia*) and poetry (*poésis*). Poetry, for Aristotle, is “more philosophical and serious than history,” for it is in poetry alone that plots—the mirrors of human action—take form: While history can concern itself only with “singular facts” (*kat'hékaston*), poetry offers the universals (*kathólon*) of human experience that make single facts intelligible.³⁴ Ricoeur takes this to its logical conclusion: that history without poetry remains incomprehensible. “[T]o be historical,” he writes, “an event must be more than a singular occurrence, a unique happening. It receives its definition from its contribution to the development of a plot.”³⁵ For history to be imagined and told, a plot-like structure must be in place. The “emplotment,” as Hayden White put it in his influential book *Metahistory*, “is the way by which a sequence of events fash-

ioned into a story is gradually revealed to be a story of a particular kind.”³⁶ It is the plot that gives meaning to a story beyond its mere “follow-ability.” Such a plot may be simple, a merely episodic or linear succession of events or it could be rendered more complex by an unexpected “turning” (*peripéteia*) or “reversal” (*metábasis*).³⁷ If, as Ricoeur argues, narrativity and temporality are not only “closely related” but even “reciprocal,” then the complexity of the plot must add to the complexity of our conceptions of time and history. What begins must also have a plot, must unfold in what Ricoeur calls “narrative time,” but what begins must also break through time. In every narrative, there lies a “temporal dialectic” for Ricoeur, a dialectic between the chronological succession of episodes and a nonchronological configuration for which scattered events become “significant wholes.”³⁸ The configuration might resist chronology, might resist time, yet, it is through configuration, the dimension of a-chronicity, that plots become whole, that beginnings become centers of meaning. It is precisely this narrative a-chronicity that allows for the plot to gain complexity, to bend time, stretch and compress it, to introduce reversals and the paradox of repetition.

“[I]n every plot,” writes Frank Kermode in *The Sense of an Ending*, “there is an escape from chronicity.”³⁹ The paradox of narrative time is that it dismembers the time it creates, that it rebels against its own temporal reality. All beginnings are both inside and outside of this temporal reality. They establish chronicity, chronological order, but they also subvert this order. Therefore, this will be our third presupposition: That beginnings can both create and correct time, both tell and resist history; that beginnings are neither chronological nor truly a-chronological but, rather, signs of counter-chronology—of counter time.

II

The World Is Narrated

The beginning as a philosophical *aporia* is known to us from Hegel’s *Science of Logic*: “What begins exists already to the same extent as it is

not yet.”⁴⁰ To Hegel, the beginning represented a paradoxical “unity of being and non-being.” “What is beginning,” he writes, “. . . still has to approach being. At the same time, the beginning already contains being, a being, however, that distances itself from non-being. . . .”⁴¹ The beginning, therefore, cannot be “pure nothingness,” nor can it be a mere state of being: “It must be a nothingness from which something emerges.”⁴² In the beginning, Hegel argues, being separates itself from nonbeing, as much as nonbeing yearns to become being. The beginning, in this way, is an act of differentiation, a “mediation of non-being.” It is an action, above all, not being, but an act of becoming, a *making*: the beginning is—literally speaking—what “makes the beginning” (*was den Anfang macht*).⁴³

When Goethe’s Faust reads the opening verse of the Johannine gospel as “in the beginning was the deed,”⁴⁴ he seems to reflect precisely on the point where the beginning becomes *poiesis*, a making through speech. “Everything you make you make through speech (*dicendo facis*),” Augustine had already remarked in the eleventh book of his *Confessions*. The true origin, he continues, is the one “that speaks to us.”⁴⁵ This making through speech, this speaking origin, shall constitute to us a narrative making. Whether there are “true” and “absolute” beginnings or only middles whose beginning and endpoints are convenient fables, the conscious act of beginning is a powerful human narrative in itself, a statement of defiance, perhaps, against a meaningless middle.

In the beginning is the beginning of all narrative venture into a world that has not yet meaning. “As the world is narrated,” writes Wilhelm Dupré, “it loses its fundamental threat of meaninglessness, for it is the *logos* of narration that gives meaning and, by virtue of its own beginning, is recognized as the basis of all that is sayable in this story.”⁴⁶ What is sayable, then, can only be told from the pivot of a violent beginning, and if history claims to relate a sayable world it, too, must begin somewhere—and where it begins, there the problem of history and time itself, becomes again a problem of text and story.

The story so becomes the inalienable form of relating what we call history. “To ask for the significance of an event, in the *historical* sense of the term,” we read in A. C. Danto, “is to ask a question which can be answered only in the context of a *story*,” a story whose beginning and

end “are the end-points of . . . change, and belong equally to the explanandum.”⁴⁷ The story conjoins in meaning beginning and end, but the end in this story does not hold paramount significance, does not determine the actions leading up to it, nor the end of history in toto. Rather than being teleological, the role of narratives is to “set a stage” where change can occur and where beginning and end are merely the termini of change. What happens between these termini constitutes, for Danto, a “temporal whole,” not more, not less.⁴⁸

To make sense, then, of what was or has been, beginning and end must be present at once, at once in a narrative middle. “Men, like poets,” Frank Kermode writes, “rush ‘into the middest,’ *in medias res*, when they are born; they also die *in mediis rebus*, and to make sense of their span they need concords with origins and ends, such as give meaning to lives and to poems.”⁴⁹ All narrative structure, Kermode argues, whether motivated by great ends, mirrors the paradigmatic triad of beginning-middle-end, a triad, where each part is rendered meaningless by the absence of another. It is human existence itself, which feels a need to belong and to relate to beginnings and ends, because it cannot conceive of its momentaneity, of its hicceity other than as a being in a middle, in a “between.” “[I]n ‘making sense’ of the world,” Kermode continues, “we still feel a need . . . to experience that concordance of beginning, middle, and end which is the essence of our explanatory fictions, and especially when they belong to cultural traditions which treat historical time as primarily rectilinear rather than cyclic.”⁵⁰ It seems evident to Kermode that this triad of meaning is all but an imagination of those “in the middest”; that it remains purely fictional, mirrors nothing but itself. On the other hand, how can history, and how can human experience be told and imagined without the invention of beginnings, middles, and ends?

Time Unravels

The turn to narrative is no recent phenomenon.⁵¹ When Johann Gustav Droysen called “[o]ur historical interpretation (*Verstehen*) the same by which we interpret what someone says to us,”⁵² he anticipated both historical narrativism and the problem of beginnings as a problem of

emplotment. History, for Droysen, “speaks,” and it is for the historian to renarrate what he has “heard” and “understood.” “The specific character of all narration,” Droysen writes, “is its tendency to present historical events as a course that passes . . . by the ear of the listener and, as it were, unravels in front of him.”⁵³ But even such a mere unraveling of history requires certain points of beginning. Outlining his historical method in a series of lectures of 1857–1858, Droysen marked the beginnings of history as beginnings somewhere in the middle of diachronic narratives: “We cannot reach beyond relative beginnings, beyond beginnings which we established in relation to what has evolved from them. Only what has become what it is allows us to find, to posit a relative beginning.”⁵⁴ Confronted with “dried up” and “shriveled” materials, the historian infuses them with beginnings, “loosens them up,” until they “become alive again and begin to speak.”⁵⁵ Historical *Verstehen* thus is all but another beginning of beginnings, a reading of the past not as past, but as story-before-the-present, as *Vorgeschichte*. In other words, the historian’s relative beginning is already derived from the middle of the narrative triad. It is a before only in relation to the after. Unlike the past as passed, the remnants of history “stand amidst the present”⁵⁶; their beginnings share the same temporal space as the historian unraveling them. Contrary to the natural sciences where repetition and the possibility for repetition establish the boundaries of knowability, history knows only a “progressive continuity” of arbitrary beginnings, not development, for this would imply one absolute beginning wherein all future is contained, but progression (*Steigerung*), a “restless succession” (*rastloses Nacheinander*), as irreversible and unpredictable as a stream of spoken words. This, for Droysen, is the real foundation of history, its relation to factual “reality.” As such, the restless succession of “real” history is not yet narrative, not yet plot, not yet even continuity. We narrate history as stories only between beginnings and ends. But the restlessness of succession already contains what Paul Ricœur would later call a “pre-narrative structure” that enables us to create new plots at any time, to renarrate succession between beginnings and ends; beginnings and ends that are in truth pivotal points, transitions, and turnings, moments of both separation and concatenation. It is in these moments that the restless succession is spun together

into a fabric of continuity, through the language of plot, that provides us with both chronology and a-chronicity, with the continuous and the discontinuous, and most importantly, with the “capacity for reconfiguring time.”⁵⁷

Thresholds of Continuity

History as a restless narrative whose temporal continuity seems to be embedded, or as Ricœur put it, prefigured (*déjà figure*) in the structure of narration itself, is a motif that rings familiar from Droysen to present-day historical narrativism, challenging the very notion of “event.”⁵⁸ If continuity, as R. G. Collingwood once wrote, is “the objective bond of history,”⁵⁹ then it seems to be in language and narrative that the beginnings and ends of this bond are interwoven—or, to speak with Gadamer: Our continuous existence in language and *Sprachlichkeit* is the means “by which the continuity of history is established beyond distances and discontinuities.”⁶⁰ In language, Gadamer argues, the discontinuous moments of our existence, the immediate experience of transition, epochal events, ruptures, and deaths, are “mediated” (*vermittelt*), shared, and passed on. The experience of a person’s death, for instance, which is the experience of extreme rupture and discontinuity, is transformed into the experience of an end—the end or completion or even fulfillment of a life—through the narrative representation of what Danto called the “temporal whole.” Language, in this sense, ties the “real,” prenarrative, beginnings and ends of our experience to beginnings and ends that our consciousness can manage and control. To the extent that, for Gadamer, the world manifests itself to us in language,⁶¹ the continuity of our existence establishes itself in a continuous dialogue (*Gespräch*) with a discontinuous world. This continuous dialogue is history, not in the sense of chronicles nor in the sense of historicism where continuity seems to lie in the events themselves, but in the sense of an “ongoing vitality” (*fortwirkende Lebendigkeit*) for which memory is not a possession of knowledge, not that which is passed on, but an active act of *passing on*.⁶² Gadamer, therefore, speaks of an historical consciousness that not only is directed toward the past but also seeks to be created and effected (*bewirkt*) by the past (*wirkungsgeschichtliches*

Bewußtsein).⁶³ Hence, the meaning of the past, for Gadamer, resembles the meaning of “tradition,” which he describes as a conscious event of language (*Sprachgeschehen*) that is less concerned with the expansion of the past as something that has passed than with the “possibilities of our future.” Our existential *Sprachlichkeit* is a continuous making present of past times, and our sense of history is informed by our ability to assimilate the most distant, the most isolated past into the present. In the same way that language is *Gespräch*, a speaking that “makes something speak,”⁶⁴ passing from one to another, the past itself is conceived only as that which is passed from one to another. In the same way as, for Gadamer, our language and historical consciousness always happen in the present, the narratives of history are characterized by their presentness, by the dialogical act of passing on that arches over distant times.

Passing on is the human event in which, for Gadamer, time and narrative meet. What is tradition (*Überlieferung*) in the realm of language Gadamer calls transition (*Übergang*) in the realm of time. Our principal experience of time, he maintains, is the experience of time-change (*Zeitenwandel*), the passing from old to new. It is the experience of an epoch, of an incision in continuity. “Time,” writes Gadamer, “. . . is experienced as an epoch, as a coming to a halt that interrupts the continuous flow of passing time. It is obvious that this is the experience of a discontinuity, the experience of a decline of the old. But it is also the experience of a new beginning.”⁶⁵ Like tradition, where language “frees itself from lifeless conventions” to pass on what is a “new beginning,” transition in time establishes both separation and connection, a “becoming free for the new *through* the passing away of the old”: “Transition appears as the real being of time, insofar as everything is contained in it, with past and future dwelling together.”⁶⁶ For Gadamer, each moment that is experienced as such, that becomes a present to us, an epoch, is a moment of transition, a moment that splits and unites “two realities.” The experience of continuity is only possible where time changes: in the experience of epochal time, in the copresence of the old *and* the new. This is the paradoxical nature of continuity: that it can only be experienced as a series transitional discontinuities, a staccato of turning points. Our perception of time itself, as Aleida Assmann noted in her book *Time and Tradition*, is one of “significant thresholds of

time” (*Zeitschwellen*) rather than uniform linearity; thresholds of time “that contain the possibility of renewal and the risk of rupture.”⁶⁷

The Primacy of Presentness

We are in the midst of discontinuous continuities. Beginnings, ruptures, thresholds, turnings, and the mending of time must belong to a grammar whose temporal modalities are manifold, but whose ground words are always rooted in the present. Even if, to the strict narrativist, a history of the present may not be possible,⁶⁸ narrative and temporal continuity are still contingent upon a sense of presentness that seems to stand both within and beyond continuity. Time must be made present to be experienced, but it is not experienced as the present moment; rather, it is experienced as a passing moment in between: as a time-narrative middle—a threshold. This, of course, should not be an unfamiliar thought. The primacy of presentness in our perception of time and history is a motif with deep roots again in Augustine, for whom future and past did “not exist.” If we can speak of “three tenses,” then they would have to be “the presence of what has passed, the presence of what is present, and the presence of what is to come.”⁶⁹ The entire problem of time, for Augustine, becomes a problem of the present where past and future exist only as horizons made present to our “soul,” but where the present cannot exist without its horizons. Ernst Bloch would later speak of a “correlate of ‘present’ that traverses past and future,” an “actuality” that still needs to be actualized (*unerledigte Aktualität*), that still is undecided and must be made present as a space-like “at-once” (*Zugleich*), as a “simultaneous side-by-side.”⁷⁰

The Synchronic Chronist

The present as a simultaneous side-by-side renders problematic the idea of narration as a mere chronicling of past events.⁷¹ Already Droysen acknowledged that history cannot always be narrated, chastising those who read history “like a novel.”⁷² Contrary to the merely narrating chronist, Droysen’s historian seeks not to “produce a past” but to uncover what one might call a latent present, a “something” whose

elements are buried in our time. One is reminded of Benedetto Croce's well-known formula that "all history is contemporary history," a past in now time, whereas annals, the work of the narrating chronist, are a past in the proper sense: a past in the past.⁷³ Hence, Croce ventures to liken chronicles to "dead history" (*storia morta*), whereas history proper he calls "alive" (*storia viva*).⁷⁴ It is alive because of its capacity to revive (*capacità di rivivere*),⁷⁵ to seemingly reverse the course of passing time, to make present what has passed. For the historian, the past lies in the present, the beginning, as it were, in the middle—but where the beginning lies in the middle, the fundamental structure of plot suddenly begins to falter—or is, what begins to falter, only the *diachronic* structure of plot? Is it only the simple story?

Gustav Droysen warned us not to read history "like a novel"; that is as mere narration. When Walter Benjamin, writing about the "narrator," described the novel as the beginning of a "decline" in narration, he seemed to invert this warning, while perhaps only restoring Droysen's narrator to his proper place of origin. For Benjamin, the narrator narrates from the midst of his experience, whereas the romancer writes from the secluded chamber of his solitude. The immediacy and temporal flux of the narration come to a halt in the novel whose inner plot, as Georg Lukács once put it, "is a struggle against the power of time."⁷⁶ The "eternalizing memory" of the romancer enables him to write a story of absolute beginnings and ends. The "short-term memory" of the narrator, on the other hand, always recalls stories that invite us to ask: "And what happens next?"⁷⁷ Benjamin's narrator emerges from Croce's chronist, the "history-teller" (*Geschichts-Erzähler*), who, unlike the historian, does not seek explanations, does not write history with the organon of time at his fingertips, but whose narration moves with the clock face of the world, outside all historical categories, without halt in the *epoché*. Gadamer related this form of storytelling to the original meaning of myth. He defines narrating as "an in and of itself open-unending process, a process that never exhausts itself."⁷⁸ Similarly, Hayden White defines "chronicles" as "strictly speaking, open-ended": "They have no culminations or resolutions; they can go on indefinitely."⁷⁹ Only the historian, White continues, can transform

the chronicle of events into a “hierarchy of significance,” into a “*completed* diachronic process.”⁸⁰ To the historian, the question “What happens next?” is a question that separates one story from another, establishing a sequence. For Benjamin, however, the beginnings and endings of the narrative stream that we might call chronicle are connected in a nonhierarchical memory that “constitutes the web wherein all stories are ultimately tied together.”⁸¹ In this, the narrative memory is different from the eternalizing memory of the romancer/historian that Benjamin calls “inmembering” (*Eingedenken*). While the romancer mindfully remembers one event as complete, the narrator’s ephemeral memory holds many at the same time. Here, the difference between Droysen’s narrator and Benjamin’s (hi)story-teller becomes fully apparent. To Droysen, narration was a fundamentally diachronic process, a continuous succession of stories always pointing beyond their beginnings, always beginning, in fact, and always moving into a direction of which the narrator is unaware, but which the historian can deduce from the raw material of successive narration.⁸² Narration has its own continuity, but it lacks what history claims to possess: progression. Progression and continuity are the single universal, necessary, and “real” elements in Droysen’s *Historik*, surpassing the mere narrator.⁸³ In Benjamin, however, narration appears in both diachronic and synchronic modes, as an intricate web of words and times, in whose directionless midst, narrator and listener meet. The continuity of this narration is not progressive but embedded in the “course of things.”⁸⁴ The narrator narrates from the wells of synchronic continuity, from the immeasurable passing of *Weltzeit*: He is the synchronic chronist, the chronist who is always in the present. He is the open-ended narrator. The historian, on the other hand, as the romancer of time, has relinquished his place in the course of things, has lost the living present which, to him, has become the cadaver, as Croce put it, that history must fill with life. He has dismembered one continuity only to restore another of his own: A continuity which, as Georg Simmel observed already in 1916, has nothing in common with the “continuity of lived experience” but is only an abstraction of the very fragmented, timeless, and discontinuous cosmos historians always shatter and recompose.⁸⁵

III

Continuity as a Chimera

Benjamin's narrator-chronist casts a shadow of irony on the practice of the historian. To the historian, the narrating chronist produces all but dead material, a residue of history (*residuo della storia*), as Croce called it, a dead past, unable to revive itself in the present. But what appears to the historian as a dead past, appears to him as such only because he cannot partake in the present of the narrator, cannot enter the stream of a synchronous, discontinuous continuity. History, or to be more precise, historicism, for Benjamin, is a compensation for the loss of narration and the loss of chronicling continuity. "The thread of historical continuity," Hannah Arendt once remarked, "was the first substitute for tradition."⁸⁶ A substitute, as she continues, that repudiated less the idea of tradition than the "authority of all traditions." Continuity became an *Ersatzreligion*, a mere chimera of the historian, or as Lévi-Strauss put it in the *Savage Mind*, "an illusion sustained by the demands of social life."⁸⁷ The "domesticated" historian, Lévi-Strauss argued, seeks to close the gaps and dissolve the differences of an "original discontinuity," while the timeless savage grasps the world as "both a synchronic and diachronic totality," as a simultaneous multitude of images.⁸⁸ In place of Benjamin's narrator, Lévi-Strauss locates myth as the source of "pure history," a relation between past and present that is both disjoined and conjoined: Disjoined because the ancestors of the past are different from the people of the present; conjoined because no mythical time has passed between the remote ancestors and the contemporary descendants. In myth, diachronic and synchronic time, continuity and discontinuity exist in a paradoxical union; in ritual they are reconciled. For in ritual, the past is reenacted in the present and, by the same token, the present turned into a mythical past.

Myths, so understood, are stories without beginnings and ends, stories that are never fully told because they continue to be the very reality in which the storytellers live. Thus, Ernst Cassirer called on Friedrich Schelling to define mythical, "truly pre-historical time" (*schlechthin vorgeschichtliche Zeit*), as "by nature . . . indivisible, abso-

lutely identical,” a time “which, regardless of the time span we might attribute to it, can only be regarded as a *moment*, that is, as a time wherein the end is like the beginning and the beginning like the end, a kind of eternity, for it is not a sequence of times, but One Time, though it is not a real time—i.e., time sequence—in itself, but a time that only becomes time (namely, a past) in relation to the time that follows it.”⁸⁹ What Cassirer derives from this passage is the notion of an “absolute past,” of an “origin” that lends myth a place of utter remoteness and yet also complete presence: For all times that follow follow only in and as justification of the One Time origin. The paradox of origin, for Cassirer, is that it represents at once an absolute Before and a mythic moment where before and after have not yet been separated; that it is an absolute past without being in the past at all. “All sacredness of mythic being,” he writes, “is ultimately grounded in the sacredness of origin. It does not belong to the contents of what there is, but to its provenance (*Herkunft*); not to its quality and properties, but to its having become what it is (*Gewordensein*).”⁹⁰

The Absolute Beginning

But can origins, whose beginnings and ends are undivided in a “One Time,” relate and constitute beginnings? Not for Michael Landmann, who distinguished between the eternal arché and the unique, singular beginning in the Hebrew Bible. To Plato, he argues, the origin of things is not their absolute beginning, not a beginning at all, but their relation to a permanent idea. Plato’s world of things continuously originates, which is not, as in Aristotle, a continuous progress but, rather, a continuous return.⁹¹ Indeed, the “One,” as it is proposed in *Parmenides* (137c-d), does not have parts, does not change, and is “without beginning, middle, or end.” It is an origin (arché), but its meaning “of a first or original beginning,” as Arnold Ehrhardt observed, “is denied.”⁹² Likewise, the creation of time through a mythical *demiurgos*, as in *Timaios* (37c-39), is merely a metaphor for what remains, as Landmann argues, essentially atemporal in Plato’s metaphysics. Time is only an unsteady image of eternity, its beginning only a symbolic, or poetic “as if.”⁹³

The biblical beginning, on the other hand, Landmann calls a “real beginning”: Its creation is a “total creation which excludes any concept of a medium where it could have occurred, any pre-cosmic time that might already have passed.”⁹⁴ Time itself begins with creation or, put differently, creation creates its own time by virtue of its occurrence. Creation, then, though in itself an origin, bursts through the One Time moment of its pre-Before to establish at once the absoluteness of its past and the relativity of after and before. Simply put, the beginning of creation cannot be a beginning in time, for it is the beginning *of* time.

This very thought corresponds to Augustine’s reflections on the nature of time. “What times could have passed without your creating them?” he asks in his *Confessions*, offering his own answer: “You have made all times. You are before all time, and there was no time before there was time.”⁹⁵ The beginning, in this way, does not fall within any temporal sequence; it is not a beginning in the diachronic sense, for, as Augustine plainly states, “there was no Once before there was time,” or as Philo put it long before him: “For time there was not before there was a world.”⁹⁶ Maimonides, chastising the widespread “ignorance about the nature of time,” makes clear that “[w]e consider time a thing created” and that for this reason, “it cannot be said that God produced the Universe *in the beginning*.⁹⁷ In a similar vein, Landmann writes: “The mythical Once is no Before in measurable time. It holds what establishes and maintains the Today.”⁹⁸ It is “pure presence,” a present unbound, or what Augustine, who thought more akin to Plato than the Bible in this respect, called an “always present eternity” (*semper praesens aeternitas*), eternal but still a Once, not an always; a Today (*hodie*), not an everyday (*cotidie*); a Once whose specificity is safeguarded by its extra-temporal firstness.

Firstness and Synchronicity

Philo, for this reason, regarded creation as a numerical beginning (*protton*) rather than a chronological origin (*arché*). The paradox, however, remained that “even if the Maker made all things simultaneously, order (*táxis*) was nonetheless an attribute of all that came into existence”; and

order, for Philo, meant “a series of things going on before and following after,” a sequence not necessarily apparent in the finished products but inherent in the design.⁹⁹ The biblical beginning, then, would have to be imagined as the simultaneous creation of a sequence, whose before and after preexist side by side in the tectonics of the beginning itself. The firstness of the beginning, on the other hand, remains exempt from this sequence, for it is determined only by what follows, not by what comes before.¹⁰⁰ Thus is established the absoluteness of a beginning that, strictly speaking, neither has a before nor *is* a before; a beginning so removed from diachronic time that it can no longer—or not yet—be a temporal concept. Where everything begins at the same time, the beginning is time itself. When the *Midrash Tanhuma* compares creation to the simultaneous cooking of foods then served successively,¹⁰¹ it accomplishes the same paradoxical synchronic-diachronic unity we have seen expressed in mythical thinking and in the mythical Once.

Beginning as Archetype and Prototype

As myth, the absolute beginning of “creation” is neither an atemporal archetype nor an historical first but a synchronic origin of a present conceived as continuous after and not yet. “What begins,” we learned from Hegel, “exists already to the same extent as it is not yet.” For Hegel, the aporia of beginning was resolved in the dialectic of becoming, which, if viewed from the vantage point of history, is a continuous beginning anew, a progressive “rejuvenation of the spirit.”¹⁰² The absolute, or with Hegel, “abstract” beginning, is not—to borrow a term from Aleida Assmann¹⁰³—a “strong beginning,” compared to which all that follows bears an odor of decay, nor is it a “weak beginning” where all that follows results as progression to a better age; rather, it is a beginning “on the way,” as it were, one that “opens out,” to speak with Catherine Keller, into a space between arché and *eschaton*.¹⁰⁴ This beginning—here Philo and Hegel might have been in agreement—is as much an archetype, referring to an always-present past, as it is a *prototype*, referring to an always-present future.

We encounter a similar duality of beginning in Hermann Cohen’s concept of origin (*Ursprung*). “[T]he origin,” Cohen writes, “does not

only stand for the first beginning—this would be mythological—but must become the founding principle of permanence and (*Fortbestand*) and ongoing preservation (*Forterhaltung*).¹⁰⁵ In Cohen, unlike in Said's meditations, the origin is by no means a “passive” principle but, as John Pizer put it, a “‘leap into being’ without any reference to external categories.”¹⁰⁶ Cohen himself speaks of the origin as a “dynamic principle” (*treibendes Prinzip*) in his *Logic of Pure Cognition*.¹⁰⁷ Pure cognition, for Cohen, is based on a mathematical “thinking of origin” (his well-known use of infinitesimals), which no longer rests on the principle of givenness (*Gegebenes*), but on the principle of generation (*Erzeugung*). The mathematical origin, then, is no longer the mere beginning of a movement; rather, “all continuation [of this movement] must continually originate anew from the same origin.”¹⁰⁸ The origin or, to be precise, the thinking of origin generates being that must itself “originate” (*entspringen*), thus regenerating what is generated in the origin. The beginning, therefore, as Cohen writes, “must be more than a temporal beginning; it must be an eternal origin.”¹⁰⁹

Ethics of Renewal

Against the “abruptness of beginning,” which would be the myth of origin, Cohen invokes the perpetuity of “renewal,” which “idealizes the beginning and makes creation a matter of continuity within which each day is a new beginning.”¹¹⁰ In each day, the “act of beginning” is renewed. Whereas all temporal beginning “lies in the obscurity of myth,” which is a presence eternal at best, the renewal of beginning re-creates the origin at each present moment. The “true beginning” so becomes continuity, and it is the renewal of time that, for Cohen, not only continues but actually *replaces* creation. It is a replacement (*Stellvertretung*) that now acts as creation’s *moral corrective*.¹¹¹

Abraham J. Heschel would later think of time as “perpetual innovation,” a “synonym for continuous creation,” whose moral symbol is the imperative of making a beginning. “A moment is not a terminal,” Heschel writes, “but a flash, a signal of Beginning.”¹¹² Ethically, then, the act of creation is present in each moment; all moments are moments of beginning; each moment is *the* beginning and *a* beginning; in each

instant, a beginning is begun and becomes anew. “The creator now becomes the renewer,” writes Hermann Cohen. From the viewpoint of ethics, “each point in becoming” is recognized as a “new beginning,” as re-creation, as re-beginning.¹¹³ The full duality of Cohen’s origin lies in its ethical imperative to restore the new.

IV

Excursus: Time and Fulfillment

Thus the renewing capacity of Cohen’s origin does not abolish beginnings but only the mythic Once. Neither platonic nor eternally recurrent, Cohen’s origin is *more* than a beginning, but not less. It is not the “unbegun”; but rather, it is an ideal beginning, a beginning that, paradoxically, has at once begun and to begin. As an origin, the beginning merely opens a horizon of beginnings, a sequence of not-yets and agains, in which history seems to pass. But it passes backwards, as it were, for it is, as Landmann writes of biblical time, not “determined by . . . an origin from which all originates but . . . by a goal towards which it gravitates.”¹¹⁴ Their “teleokline” movement renders all events of present and past a synchronic anticipation of the future, of what is not yet. “Time becomes future and only future,” writes Hermann Cohen about history in its ideal form. “Past and present lapse into the time of the future.”¹¹⁵

Karl Löwith, therefore, was not incorrect to state in *Meaning in History* that the biblical past was “reckoned in view of an *eschaton*.¹¹⁶ Biblical, “Old Testament” time, for Löwith, is narrated without a middle, narrated from the truncated plot of a “mere *futurum*,” whereas New Testament time, whose center is the death and resurrection of Christ, moves forward as well as backward, representing a plot that is fully developed. Yet, Löwith’s account of biblical futurity was, as he himself acknowledged, largely informed by an inherently polemical discourse—by the polemics of “fulfilled” time.

Thus, Oscar Cullmann’s 1945 book *Christ and Time* makes clear that it was Christianity that introduced “a new division of time,” a

plot line that begins in the middle and is able to truly connect past and future: “[F]or the first time,” he writes, “on the basis of the fixed orientation to that *mid-point in time*, the line can be clearly drawn from the beginning on, in its unbroken continuity.”¹¹⁷ Only through this “middle” did history, for Cullmann, become history in an actual and factual sense, or as Karl Barth put it in his *Römerbrief*: “Jesus of Nazareth is the point among points [in history] where all other points are grasped as interconnected on a line, as the true red thread in history.”¹¹⁸ Likewise, Paul Tillich noted in an essay of 1930 that “[t]he middle in history is the place where we can perceive the principle that lends history meaning.”¹¹⁹ Even Ernst Cassirer wrote of the “fixed midpoint” in Christian hermeneutics: “All temporal becoming, all natural events and all human action receives from there its light: everything is ordered into a meaningful cosmos, everything appears as a necessary link purposefully integrated into a religious ‘plan of salvation.’”¹²⁰

The “midpoint,” folded into the idea of “*kairos*,” thus synchronizes an otherwise diachronic plot, creating a fixed order of meaning, a center that gives meaning to all other “appointed” or “fulfilled” times. “History,” as John Marsh speculates in *The Fulness of Time*, “does not move forward . . . to some unknown and undisclosed end. It fulfils the pattern which its centre—Incarnation, Death and resurrection—has imposed on it.”¹²¹ Rudolf Bultmann, therefore, does not hesitate to deny Jewish history and “Old Testament” time any meaning outside the midpoint of fulfillment, just as the “end” in Jewish eschatology, for Bultmann, is “not the completion of history but its breaking-off . . . , the death of the world due to its age.”¹²² Jewish time, in this view, begins quite truly at the beginning and focuses on the end, but it never reaches the middle: It cannot continue, much less, be “fulfilled.” Without *kairos*, time remains empty and chronological, merely passing and waiting, a series of unpoetic, disjointed events, whereas by the joining of *karoi*, as Cullmann knows, “the redemptive line arises.”¹²³ Each *kairos*, as Marsh puts it, becomes a “now,” a “watershed,” a “time-with-its-content.”¹²⁴ In each *kairos*, past and future are already contained, though not as memory and expectation, but as a single pattern of fulfillment. “Kairos means ‘fulfilled time,’ writes Tillich, “a concrete his-

torical moment and ‘fulness of time’ in the prophetic sense—the bursting of the eternal into time.”¹²⁵ Kairos, for Tillich, formulates a dialectic of decision and destiny that gives history a prophetic, utopian direction, yet not forward in the revolutionary sense, but “upward” from the middle, synchronic rather than chronological. It is the kairos, as Kermode writes, that “transforms the past, validates Old Testament types and prophecies, [and] establishes concord with origins as well as ends.”¹²⁶ Being in the middle, then, in the midst of kairos, is the being in what Marsh called “realistic time” and what Cullmann celebrated as “real history.” “Real” history, for Marsh, moves only from *parousia* (which he renders—like Tillich and, later, Jürgen Moltmann—as “presence”¹²⁷) to apocalypse, to the uncovering. Rather than being a progression toward the future, it is a progressive *uncovering of the past*, a process of “actualization”—“the ‘actualization’ of a word uttered in the past.”¹²⁸ Only so can it be explained that, as Cullmann insists, “the eyewitnesses of that historical fact of the mid-point can assert that they have seen, heard, and handled the same thing that was *from the very beginning*.”¹²⁹ The “mid-point” Christianity claims for itself means, in other words, a reexperiencing and reconstitution of the “very beginning.” Just as Jesus is dubbed a “second Adam” in the gospels,¹³⁰ so the national experience of the Exodus is repeated in the New Testament: “‘At that time’ in the future,” writes Marsh, “there will be another ‘Exodus’ and Israel will then finally be constituted the people of God.”¹³¹

Let me, then, conclude this excursus on the polemics of time, which is not uncommon even among recent theologians,¹³² with a note on three time strategies that emerged from it. First, there is the distinction between *kairetic* and *chronological* time. Most commonly, chronological time is viewed as a linear, irreversible extension from past to future. It conforms to the diachronic narrative of time for which the past is already “full,” while the future is still “empty.” In chronological time, we experience before and after in a fixed order. Kairetic time, on the other hand, is the time leaping from now to now, as it were, from fullness to fullness. Its pattern is synchronicity, where each kairos is validated by kairoi in past and future, without, however, being fully part of the temporal nexus. Karl Barth, therefore, could speak of the

moment (*Augenblick*) as “something unique (*Eigenes*) over against all Before and After, something Other, Alien; it neither continues into the After, nor is it rooted in the Before. . . .”¹³³ Kairetic time, in this sense, is always in the middle: in a middle that connects Before and After through a bond of plot beyond temporal continuity. The “end” has reached into the middle, enabling the “witnesses” of this fulfillment to live at the same time in the kairos of “real” history and in eternity. Chronological time—and, subsequently, historical time—by contrast, will be considered meaningless, if not “unreal,” without its kairetic infusions.¹³⁴

A second, closely related, strategy emerges from this excursion, and that is the *replacement of beginnings*. The “fulfillment” of time is not mere continuity, nor a mere “filling up.” It cannot be, in fact, continuous because of its kairetic character. The meaning of fulfillment is *qualitative* rather than quantitative: “Fulfilled time” assumes the quality of a synchronic order. The “mid-point” is not merely the middle in the eschatological plot, but itself the *beginning* of this plot. “The New Testament,” writes Marsh, “is therefore not so much the continuation of the story of the Old Israel as the beginning of the story of the New, to whom the promised Messiah has come.”¹³⁵ Fulfilling the past, in other words, is also a *replacing* of the past. The second Adam takes the place of the first. Barth even speaks of the “*Aufhebung* (sublation) of our being in Adam” through Jesus, a dialectical twist in which the first Adam will always remain the “pre-image (*Vorbild*) of the second, coming one, as the shadow that lives on the light of the second.”¹³⁶ Jesus, as Amos Funkenstein once remarked, “was Moses, David, and a new Adam in one.”¹³⁷ In the dialectics of the second Adam, the middle takes the place of the beginning—but it cannot take this place *without* the beginning; rather, it is a replacement through *reduplication*. The second beginning both validates and annihilates the first. “The new creation,” as Jürgen Moltmann put it referring to the raising of the crucified Jesus, “does not emerge out of the restoration of the old creation; it follows from creation’s end.”¹³⁸

Finally, we must touch upon a strategy, which we might call “temporal displacement.” To be displaced in time may not seem to be an intuitive notion. Unlike space, time need not be shared, but it is precisely this

placelessness that makes displacement in time so fluid and appealing. In time, all is permitted. Time allows us, if need be, to relocate entire peoples to the past, to remove our enemies from the present, and to bar others from the future. But it also allows us to relocate ourselves, to freely slip in and out of history. While “the world and its desire are passing away,” as the evangelist notes (1 John 2:15), the faithful are chosen to “live forever.” In Rosenzweig’s inversion of this motif, the nations live in a time of “mere temporality,” whereas “God withdrew the Jew from this life by arching the bridge of his law high above the current of time which henceforth and to all eternity rushes powerless along its arches.”¹³⁹ For Paul Tillich, on the other hand, it was Judaism that in the decisive moment when “time was fulfilled,” made a fateful decision for “space,” barricading its access to kairos.¹⁴⁰ In a lingering crisis of metaphysics, “transcendent time”¹⁴¹ or “transcendent future,” as Moltmann would see it, represents convenient alternatives to a life under the pressures of present and past. “We shall now be free from the damning power of our past,” writes Moltmann in a vein that links together Nietzsche and Ernst Bloch, “because the generative power for a new future will be embedded in our present.”¹⁴² What lies outside or beyond the flux of time offers an invincible refuge of temporal (self-) displacement—and it offers, effortlessly, the possibility of exclusion and conquest through the jargon of anachronism.

Origin and Eschatology

What our excursion should intimate is that notions of time and beginning are not merely philosophical but tend to have powerful social implications. How we think about time and how we *begin* bears upon how we think about ourselves and where in time—or outside of it—we locate others. As we return to the quest for origins, we should propose a correction of Löwith’s view of Jewish eschatology as a “mere *futurum*.” For Löwith’s monolinear interpretation of “Old Testament” time seems to have ignored the duality of origin—as a principle of permanence and preservation—that we have seen in Hermann Cohen and Ernst Cassirer, and that will also resonate in Heidegger’s notion of ar-ché. As Jacob Taubes (whose dissertation on the *Eschatology of the West*

was written at about the same time as Löwith's *Meaning in History*) already observed, the origin is always a point of eschatological yearning, even if projected into the future. Eschatology, in its original gnostic-apocalyptic form, so Taubes, is fulfillment as much as "homecoming" (*Heimkehr*): The lost individual, wandering through the planes of an estranged world, is lost because of his or her "alienation from the origin."¹⁴³ In this respect, Reinhold Niebuhr was quite correct to comment that the "Old Testament" contains "the usual 'story' of a particular people, seeking to comprehend their history in terms of their origin."¹⁴⁴ But Niebuhr was aware that such a reclaiming of origin was precisely not a relapse into cyclical time but, as Taubes put it, a "bending back" (*Zurückbiegung*), an elliptic synthesis, whose foci are creation and redemption.¹⁴⁵ Thus Niebuhr locates a dialectical midpoint from which history can be "interpreted backward to creation and forward to the messianic reign" already in the Sinaitic covenant, which for him, is "the point of remembrance in the history of a nation, which compels the nation . . . to envisage the total panorama of history."¹⁴⁶ From the viewpoint of time, the "second covenant" merely mirrors the first, expanding its panorama of history to all mankind and, as Niebuhr, too, must assert, answering all of its open questions.¹⁴⁷ The ideological framework of a "second beginning" replacing the first remains intact here as well: If the second covenant is not merely an adding on to the first, if it is not merely a continuation, then its temporal structure must have been firmly in place for it to be replaced. One midpoint, as Niebuhr rightly saw it, replaces another, for otherwise it would remain a merely numerical second.

Replacement and Restoration

Eschatology, as we have noted with Taubes, tends to be the elliptic reclamation of an origin. This reclaiming constitutes an act of homecoming, as well as an act of demolition. It is a return that is also a correction and replacement. Inevitably, the new beginning will supplant the old, but it cannot be without a deliberate, suitable origin.

To the extent that traditions invent a "suitable past" of their own to secure collective continuity, they at once reclaim and correct—or, to be

more precise, forge—historical origins.¹⁴⁸ Traditions thus are neither mere depositories nor mere repetitions, but “originate” themselves in the dual extension of origin. They are both original in the modern sense of creativity (as a denial of the past) and “originary” in the sense of reclaiming the origin. Walter Benjamin once described this dual rhythm of origin as, on the one hand, “a process of restoration and re-establishment and, on the other hand, as something thereby incomplete and lacking closure.”¹⁴⁹ Here, too, the restoration of origin is not circular, not repetitious, but an open-ended return, where demolition and redemption dwell side by side. On the stage of eschatology, which Benjamin well shares, the origin—restored and replaced—exists only in relation to a not-yet, to the “still unoriginated originating,” as Ernst Bloch put it in his *Tübinger Einleitung*,¹⁵⁰ which is not mere future, but the origination of a *new* first: In the beginning is prefigured already the possibility of another beginning, another first. “Why with a Bet?” asks a passage in *Genesis Rabbah* about the beginning of creation: “To tell you that there are two ages [this age and the age to come, for the letter Bet bears the numerical value of two].”¹⁵¹ One is tempted to argue that the Midrash anticipated what Schelling would write in his *System der Weltalter*: “The true natural creation begins after the great creation of the word.”¹⁵²

Experience and Expectation

The rhythm of origin escapes the historical past. Incomplete and lacking closure, it cannot be disconnected from the archaic and yet always beginning present. Likewise, Jewish memory, as Franz Rosenzweig noted in his *Star of Redemption*, “is a memory which is really not past at all, but eternally present.”¹⁵³ In such memory, experience and expectation—to paraphrase Reinhardt Koselleck¹⁵⁴—remain undifferentiated. “Concrete history,” Koselleck maintains, can only occur between the space of experience (*Erfahrungsraum*) and the horizon of expectation (*Erwartungshorizont*). Where experience and expectation are essentially one, there can be no historical past. “[T]he present is not apart from the past,” writes Heschel: “Abraham is still standing before God.”¹⁵⁵ Hence, the provocative thesis in Yosef Yerushalmi’s seminal

book *Zakhor* that history as “curiosity about the past” had little appeal to the biblical mind-set.¹⁵⁶ The Jewish past, according to Yerushalmi, is a modern invention.

V

Simultaneity and Synchronization

In the primordial simultaneity of beginnings, there is only a panoramic sense of present time. The past and the future are present only in our “soul,” Augustine observes, the past as memory (*memoria*), the future as expectation (*expectatio*), and the present itself as “contuition” (*contuitus*), as a viewing together.¹⁵⁷ This calls to mind Niklas Luhmann’s thesis that “simultaneity is an elementary fact given before all temporality.”¹⁵⁸ Only to the observer, argues Luhmann, does time appear as differentiation between before and after, whereas in a pre-objective manner of speaking, “all that happens happens simultaneously,” or, as Gadamer once put it: “Our daily life is a continuous traversing of the simultaneity of past and future.”¹⁵⁹ The conscious observer separates what is present and what is not, but the paradox of time is that before and after must happen at the same time; must be present to be observable by the observer. “Being complementary horizons of time,” Luhmann writes, “past and future can only be given simultaneously. They are always horizons of the present, a present past and a present future, with the present being all but a line of demarcation, a border constituting the difference between past and future.”¹⁶⁰ The observer, be it the historian, Benjamin’s romancer, or modern society at large, differentiates time and tenses: To the observer, time appears in episodes and periods “whose beginnings and ends are intended to be conjonable,” able to connect with other beginnings and ends.¹⁶¹ In differentiation, time is “linearized,” spread before us along certain operative forms of our social mind, such as “near” and “far,” or “absent” and “present.” What is absent, or far away, cannot be experienced at the same time. Absence implies a rupture in simultaneity—yet, paradoxically, the absent can only be communicated as if it were present. In fact, it cannot be thought

other than as presence. The absent, the far, must be synchronized, must be incorporated under the horizon of present time, to be perceived as absent and far. “What moves in time,” Luhmann writes in another place, “is past/present/future *together*—in other words, the present along with its future and past horizons.”¹⁶² But synchronization, for Luhmann, is not a mere reinstitution of simultaneity. It is, rather, an activity creating a system of relevance and meaning between what is actual, or “present,” and what is presently inactual. Synchronization is as much a restoration of primordial simultaneity as it is an act of radical differentiation. Synchronization is a “constant fine tuning in time,” an adjustment of the tenses that enables us to act, plan for the future, and, if necessary, correct the past.¹⁶³

Therapeutic Time

Correcting the past is the prerogative of a time that can offer simultaneous access to its tenses, that can “heal” and “make anew.” Already Mircea Eliade stressed the therapeutic role of mythic time, allowing societies to regenerate themselves in the return to their origins. The return, Eliade holds, is precisely an inversion of the order of time, enabling the ritual practitioner to reactivate a primordial event in the present—to turn the present into the beginning: “What is involved is, in short, a return to the original time, the *therapeutic purpose* of which is to begin life once again, a symbolic rebirth.”¹⁶⁴ Sacred time, then, which Eliade defines as “a primordial mythic time made present” or, in a word, as a specific form of synchronization, becomes the archaic medicine of the origin. To begin so means to *recover*.

The therapeutic effect of synchronization as a corrective of time is a further premise we must add to our inventory of beginnings. Where time requires correction, a society is in need of therapy. The correction of time, as Aleida Assmann suggested, moves between two cultural strategies, between “presentifying” and “pastifying.” “Presentifying,” she writes, “is a time strategy that makes available to the present and to the possibility of change what was thought to be inaccessible. ‘Pastifying’ does the reverse, for it relegates something to the past in order to remove it from the realm of change and revaluation.”¹⁶⁵ Between these

two strategies and constructions of time, which, as Assmann points out, are also horizons of meaning, cultures operate. As horizons of meaning, both strategies have certain therapeutic effects, one perhaps “passive,” the other “active”: The therapy of a continuous reference to a remote, unavailable beginning in “pastifying” cultures—which is the therapy of tradition; and the therapy of a scrambling of time in “presentifying” cultures—which is the therapy of temporal liberation. Both are conscious controls of time. In both, meaning is constructed through the mastery of temporal horizons. In both, time is at once synchronized and differentiated.

Differentiation and Freedom

It is the differentiation and expansion of its temporal horizons that, in Luhmann’s model, determines the complexity of a society. The more complex a society, the richer are its choices of temporality and the range of its selections in experience and action.¹⁶⁶ Making selections in time becomes one of the principal characteristics of high cultures. Where societies with a narrow temporal horizon remain oriented toward a present in which all that happens happens in near simultaneity, complex societies sequentialize and structure time to create histories which, in turn, might then be neutralized, selectively illuminated, or even discarded altogether.¹⁶⁷ In other words, the differentiation and multiplication of temporal horizons allow not only for time to pass and come, but also for conscious choices beneath and beyond the horizons of time, choices of remembering, forgetting, and expectation. With these choices, history detaches itself from mythic time to enter what one might consider, with Peter Berger, modern times.¹⁶⁸ Modern “historicism,” for Berger, is rooted in an “unfreezing” of tradition, in a clash between ritualized memory and linearized experience, a clash that is “existential” rather than theoretical.¹⁶⁹ History emerges where an individual or a society is no longer at ease with its “frozen” memories, no longer lives the law and rhythm of mythic time. History wrenches time from the cycle of nature. It defatalizes the law of recurrence, disenchants time by virtue of its beginnings and ends. Beginnings thus become revolts against fate. Harvey Cox, therefore, striking a strong

Weberian note, calls creation the “disenchantment of nature,” precisely because its bold beginning shatters the cycle of myth to establish the autonomy of historical time.¹⁷⁰ Likewise, in Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s commentary on the book of Genesis, beginning is presented as a rupture in our inescapable, desperate cycle of thought: “Where the beginning begins our thinking stops.”¹⁷¹ We cannot but begin in an “anxious middle” (*ängstende Mitte*), Bonhoeffer writes, for we have no access to the absolute beginning, whose before lies before our beginning. “Man,” as Bonhoeffer puts it, “no longer lives in the beginning—he has lost the beginning. Now he finds he is in the middle, knowing neither the end nor the beginning, and yet knowing that he is in the middle, coming from the beginning and going towards the end.”¹⁷² Thus, our beginnings-in-the-middle also point to a beginning *beyond* the “anxious middle” we cannot leave. Whenever we begin, we begin at another beginning. What makes this beginning “unique” in a qualitative (not quantitative) sense is that it lies outside the middle of time, beyond time’s reach, as that “which simply cannot be repeated, which is completely free.” “Beginning,” as Bonhoeffer sums it up, “is freedom.”¹⁷³

VI

The Liberation from History

But the beginning bears a dual countenance. It is freedom where the course of history detaches itself from the language of myth, space, and recurrence, and it becomes bondage where myth—in the guise of regeneration—rises against what Eliade termed the “terror of history.”¹⁷⁴ If history is defined by its beginnings, then the rebellion against history is likely to be a rebellion against the beginnings of history, a taking refuge in the eternal return or, for that matter, in the eternal instant. Eliade’s rejection of history, historicism, and even memory, as Steven Wasserstrom has so eloquently shown, came from a remystification of nature and cosmic time that had its roots in Franz von Baader’s “organic time” and Schelling’s mythic Once.¹⁷⁵ Still, this attempt at reuniting time and nature was far from reinstating a mere

recurrence of the same—if such recurrence ever existed in mythic consciousness.¹⁷⁶ Rather, the “re-naturalization” of time, which would inform many an antihistoricist critique, frequently combined concepts of “organic time” with nostalgic primevalism, the existential *Augenblick*, and sophisticated models of dialectical theology. The phenomenon of antihistoricism, to which we will return later, was predicated upon a distinction of quantitative (chronological) and qualitative (kairetic) time that would prove instrumental to a generation of theologians and thinkers, disenchanted with both historicism and post-Enlightenment progressivism; a generation which, as Charles Bambach has so well demonstrated, was intoxicated by a consciousness of all-pervasive crisis, in particular the crisis of historicism.¹⁷⁷ Its sources lay not only in mythic time, but also in the philosophical analyses of Edmund Husserl and Henri Bergson, whose resistance against the “tyranny of spatial apperception” enabled him to postulate a purely “organic” time where the “I submits itself to life,” and “refrains from making a distinction between what is present and what was before.”¹⁷⁸ Paul Tillich’s elaborate rejections of both the “tyranny of space” and the “irresponsibility” of any historicism under the spell of chronological time¹⁷⁹ belong to this very tradition, as does Barth’s dialectical desire to overcome our historical existence: “Adam, that is, the physical, the earthly, the historical man, is that which must be sublated.”¹⁸⁰ One might think also of Nicolai Berdyaev, whose attack against the “lure and slavery of history” sought to collapse historical, “false” time and cosmic, “divine” time in “one moment of existential time,” which would be “an emergence into eternity.”¹⁸¹ “True time,” for Berdyaev, was the moment “in which everything occurs, and in which neither past nor future but only the true present exists.”¹⁸² Similarly, Tillich speaks of the present as becoming “real” only “because eternity breaks into time”: “In every moment that we say ‘now,’ something temporal and something eternal are united. Whenever a human being says, ‘Now I am living; now I am really present,’ resisting the stream which drives the future into the past, eternity *is.*”¹⁸³

If beginnings seemed to liberate from the alleged fixity of mythic recurrence, then “true” and “authentic” time set out against a history that had robbed time of its stability and meaning, resulting, as Bult-

mann contemplated in 1955, in a “consistent relativism,” where “man is nothing but history,” a process without “true existence,” whose “end, it seems, is *nihilism*.¹⁸⁴ But this should not mislead us to think that the religious rejection of history, that the passionate revolt against pastness and chronological time, did indeed present itself as a-historical. To the contrary, from a modern theological viewpoint, a-historicity remained a flaw of “paganism,” or as Tillich put it: “Christianity is historical in essence, whereas paganism is essentially unhistorical.”¹⁸⁵ To Tillich, who is representative of a recurrent trope, the pangs of “fulfillment” have to work themselves out *in* history whereas fulfillment itself—the “final victory of God’s kingdom”—transcends history, not, however, in a utopian future, but as a “metahistorical event.”¹⁸⁶

What characterizes, then, the theological or existential liberation from history is not the separation from but precisely the *intrusion* of “metahistory,” “hierohistory,” or “counter-history” into the histories of the world. For Berdyaev, it was the breaking through of metahistory into history that lent history its ultimate significance. Without metahistory, history remained all but a great fiction, an “illusion of the conservative,” seeking redemption in the past, and an “illusion of progress,” seeking redemption in the future. True “liberation from history” could only occur in the nondiachronic moment of “existential time,” compared to which all successive moments were a “less profound reality.”¹⁸⁷ “The metahistorical,” Berdyaev wrote in 1941, “arrives out of the world of the noumenal into this objective world and revolutionizes it.”¹⁸⁸ Rather than negating history, “existential time” bestows meaning on meaningless events: Out of its depths, it “speaks about historical time.”¹⁸⁹

We may conclude, then, that rather than being a-historical, “existential” time tends to be conceived as “truly” historical, as historical in a paramount sense of meaning and, ultimately, redemption. Berdyaev’s “existential time” thus converges with Benjamin’s conception of *Jetztzeit* (now-time), which “as a model of messianic time, embraces the entire history of mankind in one magnificent abbreviation.”¹⁹⁰ Now-time, in short, is history *in nuce*, but it is not “historical” history. It has not part in its diachronic succession. What removes existential time from the direction of history, and perhaps its “cunning reason,” is

that its messianism points, paradoxically, in no certain direction at all, that it is synchronic rather than focused on a temporal telos; that it is structural rather than systematic. In Benjamin's *Jetztzeit*, envisioned as a moment forcefully extracted from the homogeneous continuity of history, "the fragments of the messianic are interspersed."¹⁹¹ They are fragments of "fulfilled" time illuminating the empty fabric of history, fulfilling, in fact, an unfulfilled past.¹⁹² Where an unfulfilled past, however, is fulfilled, the synchronicity of messianic time aligns itself with the diachronic succession of before and after. Only that, for Benjamin, the after comes before.

Messianic Synchronicity

This inversion of time is essential also to Scholem's interpretation of messianism which, as is well known, thoroughly informed political utopianism during the Weimar period, contributing to its peculiar dialectics of revolution and redemption.¹⁹³ To Scholem, messianism constituted a radical break with Jewish historical time and with the rationalization of Jewish history, representing thus what David Biale called a counter-history, or "the belief that the true history lies in a subterranean tradition that must be brought to light. . . ."¹⁹⁴ "Counter-history," Biale continues, "is a type of revisionist historiography, but where the revisionist proposes a new theory or finds new facts, the counter-historian transvalues old ones." "True" history, to the counter-historian, lies in a continuous past that yearns to be resumed. Hence, for Scholem, the history of messianism was not only a counter-history of Judaism, but also a form of counter-modernity, setting Judaism back to its, as it were, unpurified mythical and mystical origins. There occurred, Scholem argues, an anarchic rupture without return that would define Jewish modernity from the Sabbatian movement to the Reformers of the nineteenth century.¹⁹⁵ But this rupture was precisely not a total break with the past. To the contrary, it became a dramatic "intrusion" into the historical continuum, a moment of restoration and redemption. Torn between conservation and revolution, the messianic claims "the return to a primeval period," as Scholem writes, "to a state of things which in the course of history, or perhaps

even from the very beginning, became decadent and corrupt and which needs restoration, reconstitution, or reintegration.”¹⁹⁶ It claims, at the same time, to usher in a “new age,” an age that has never before existed, and “in which something totally new is unmistakably expressed.”¹⁹⁷ In this dialectic of messianic time, history experiences its redemptive interruption, the correction of its “false” course. Messianism, as Scholem clearly saw, is a break not with the past but with the present. It resynchronizes distant times from the far horizon of expectation, entering a constant tremble between tradition and anarchy, between beginning and un-begun. The past to be restored is in truth utopian, a not-yet of the no-longer, while the “totally new” to emerge cannot be totally new, cannot be totally absent, because it still must be recognizable as new against the old.

VII

History and Counter-History as Correctives of Time

What Scholem’s view on messianism illustrates for us is the very paradox of a synchronic-diachronic unity that characterized the counter-temporality of narrative time. The “utopian return” requires a disruption of the continuous narrative of history, a stepping out and leaping over its temporal horizons. Unlike ecstatic mysticism, however, messianism is not a flight from time, but a *corrective* of time. In messianic synchronicity, expectation faces the past, whereas experience encroaches upon the future. In synchronic time, continuity, whether progressive, teleological, or merely continuous, is broken apart. Still, its fragments do not remain fragmentary: They are rearranged and recomposed until new continuities emerge, discontinuous perhaps, leaping rather than progressing, kairotic rather than chronic, but still placed into a meaningful order. The “logos of narration” collects the fragments counter-history has left behind. It is the same logos that linearizes time and differentiates simultaneity into a diachronic structure of meaning. “As the world is narrated,” as noted with Wilhelm Dupré, “it loses its fundamental threat of meaninglessness.” The world becomes

“sayable” by virtue of beginnings—arbitrary or absolute—that lend history its narrativity. This is, ironically, the pattern both history and counter-history, or in Benjamin’s now-often quoted formulation, the brushing of history “against its grain,”¹⁹⁸ intimately share: They are rebellions against the meaninglessness of “empty” time, one against the cosmic time of recurrence, the other against the historical time of singularity. To both, time must be thrown off its current course; to both, time must suspend quantitative continuity to become qualitative; both appear as correctives of each other; both intend to liberate from the slavery of each other’s temporality. All history, in this respect, is a construction of counter-time.

History, Historicism, Antihistoricism

Counter-time, as was noted at the beginning of this chapter, is the time of beginnings. Beginnings both create and correct time; both tell and resist history. In beginnings, we step both inside and beyond history, inside and outside historicism. Herein lies what David Myers described as the “paradoxical coexistence of historicism and anti-historicism” that characterized the crisis of historicism, and especially its German-Jewish response.¹⁹⁹ It is a paradox that penetrates, in fact, the entire realm of history, for antihistoricism, as Myers well recognized (though perhaps understated), is in itself a form of historicism—or as Nietzsche put it already in his *Untimely Reflections*, the memory of history “fortunately also remembers the great rebels against history.”²⁰⁰

We are too hasty to measure historicism by the accounts of its opponents. The enormous influence of Nietzsche’s passionate call for liberation from history should not obscure the self-perception of historicism as a liberation movement in its own right. In historicism, as Friedrich Meinecke wrote, “the historical world was set free from the rigidity into which it had fallen through Natural Law.”²⁰¹ In historicism, Meinecke believed, the pendulum swung back from the “exaggerated heights” of Enlightenment intellectualism to the “depths of the soul”; from “frigid civilization” to a humanity “with greater warmth and feeling”; from static totality to creative individuality. History, for Meinecke, liberates.

But, to many, this liberation signified profound ambivalence. A decade before Meinecke, the German theologian Ernst Troeltsch wrote about the “reawakening of historical philosophy” as “the great counter-movement against all rationalism and wooden apologetics of miracles,” which had since degenerated, however, into “extreme” historicism and “relativist skepticism,” bereft of a sense for the “absolute.”²⁰² To Troeltsch, the problem of his time was a “collision of historical thought with the normative constitution of truths and values,” for in its last analysis, history could be ethical but had, in fact, subsumed ethics under its “raging stream of life,” answering to the “almighty urge of the moderns for simplification”²⁰³—yet, the task of the theologian must *not* be to abandon the stage of history. Instead, the theologian must try to confine the “stream of historical life once and for all through timeless, supra-historical morality.”²⁰⁴ This task, Troeltsch concludes, is destined to be nothing less than an “eternal struggle,” a struggle that historicist relativism all but ignores, but that Christianity enters, precisely by leaping above history.

It is not difficult to see that Troeltsch’s “overcoming” of historicism freely incorporates philosophical traits of his declared foe and “breaker with all traditions,” Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche already perceived historicism as a form of escape, a “turning away from life and deed,” whereas the “unhistorical,” “antihistorical” (*widerhistorisch*) state of mind he described as a “leap outside the cycle,” a leap into action. The unhistorical, too, is a form of escape, as Nietzsche readily acknowledged: It is a liberation from the “burden of the past,” an artful forgetting that, in turn, enables a culture, or a people, “to heal wounds, to replace what is lost, and to re-shape form from within its shattered forms.”²⁰⁵ Forgetting gives back action to those infected by “historical fever”; it restores the future that the historical sense has “uprooted,” but forgetting, though it escapes the pressure of historicism, cannot be a flight from history. “History must resolve the problem of history by itself,” says Nietzsche of the “imperative of the new spirit.”²⁰⁶ The unhistorical, the antihistorical, is in truth a return to history, a repair and restoration, a recovery of “real,” “effective” history, which, as Foucault wrote in his interpretation of Nietzsche, “introduces discontinuity into our very being.”²⁰⁷

Beginnings and “Proper Historicity”

Beginnings create discontinuity. Their resistance to an historical continuum is a resistance against historicism in both Nietzsche's sense of a total, antiquarian past, and Troeltsch's understanding as a total, chaotic relativism. Beginnings are the fruits of forgetting, the annulment of a past, the rerooting of an uprooted future. They are always “absolutes” in an anarchy of relatives—but they are not completely absolved from time and history. The paradox of beginning is the very paradox of thresholds; thresholds of time and continuity. Its ability to bind and to dissolve, to conjoin and disjoin, to be bridge and door, enables the beginning to turn time into and against history, to fabricate continuity and to tear it apart. Herein lies the “temporal dialectic” Paul Ricoeur had attached to narrative time. In the beginning, time becomes plot, history becomes narrative, but the beginning can begin only in a synchronic present, in the presence of a “fullness” of time. The beginning must be conscious of a temporal whole; it must be conscious of its place in a middle where the termini of plot are present as thresholds of time, as open transitions.

This, perhaps, is the meaning of Heidegger's rushed dismissal of the beginning in favor of the origin (*arché*): “The beginning is there just to be abandoned and passed over,” he writes in *Grundbegriffe*. “The beginning is always surpassed and left behind in the haste of going further.”²⁰⁸ If we thought of the origin as a mere beginning, the origin, too, would be “left behind in progression (*Fortgang*).” But the origin, not unlike in Cohen, is both a release of emergence (*Hervorgehen*) and a retaining of what emerges; it is what Heidegger calls an “enjoining egress” (*verfügender Ausgang*), a joining together of beginning and end, a “way-making” (*Bahnung*) where “that from whence there is emergence is the same as that back toward which evasion (*Entgehen*) returns.”²⁰⁹ The origin, for Heidegger, disposes precisely of the middle that conjoins and disjoins emerging and evading: It “pervades transition.” This, the beginning left behind, cannot do, but *beginning* as a conscious act in the present, as a decisive now between already and not-yet, does just that. In its own consciousness, beginning functions like an origin, as the very “way-making” that retains what evades.

Rather than being “abandoned and passed over” by what follows, beginning chooses and passes on. Gadamer’s profound but simple insight that the past not only passes but *passes on*, and that our experience of time is one of change and transition (*Zeitenwandel*) where old and new are always given simultaneously, an experience of thresholds, *Zeitschwellen*, as Assmann nicely put it, corresponds with Heidegger’s preference for “proper historicity” (*eigentliche Geschichtlichkeit*) over mere “historiology” (*Historie*). Reverberating the usual attacks against historicism, Heidegger gave history only the “past” (*das Vergangene*) to recover: “All historiography deals with beings that are no longer,” he writes, stating the obvious that “no historiographical presentation (*Vergangenwärtigung*) is ever capable of making a former being into the being it was. Everything past is something that has passed away”²¹⁰; every passing-away occurs itself “in the essential realm of being.” The truly historical, for Heidegger, is what lies between what has been at the beginning (*das anfänglich Gewesene*) and the incipient being-again (*das anfänglich wieder Wesende*).²¹¹ This is what “historiology” cannot remember, because the historian mistakes the “incipient” for a mere beginning; as that which is passed over rather than passing on. To the historian, the beginning is in a distant, unattainable past—it is “pastified,” to speak with Assmann. To our own historicity, however, the beginning is the presence of the incipient: “Remembrance of the inception is not concerned with beings and what is past, but with what has been (*Gewesenes*), and that means with what still presences, with being.”²¹² The beginning as the incipient seems so far away to us, so concealed and unattainable only because it is so “overly close.” True and “proper” historicity, then, is a thinking back into the inception “as what has been and still presences,” a remembering “into” the beginning beginning as that which alone “has yet to come” and which opens the “ground”—which is “being itself,” and this, Heidegger writes, “is the inception” (*der Anfang*).

Transition

Heidegger’s “inception” leads us back to the beginning as a conscious act, as a decision in time—against time. The great divide between history

as an accumulation of the past and “historicity” as a being toward the future is a common trope that unites most “counter-historical” minds. Their resistance against history is not only a resistance against an anti-quarian storage of the past, but against the past itself as that which has irretrievably passed—against what has passed away. Their resistance, then, becomes ideological, utopian, redemptive, or religious in character. The irony of this theo-historical imagination is that history appears, time and again, as a contribution of biblical truth, as the shattering of cyclical time, as the liberation from “prehistorical” myth and Greek fate, while, at the same time, it is the shattered cosmos of the ancients that seems to bury also the possibility of meaning and “life.” A history which, as Schopenhauer noted with a penchant for the unhistorical, speaks about “what only happens once and never again,”²¹³ cannot be more than a chronicle of death, Croce’s *storia morta*. It is now the irresistible mystique of the counter-historical beginning—of the beginning as inception—that seems to defy the one-timeness of time. What begins must continue, must become plot, must vouch for what “has yet to come.” In the return to the inception, to the beginning beginning, the “incipient being-again” cooriginates as a continuous present.

By the mere logic of narrative time, history as the account of one-time events loses “ground.” To be historical, Ricœur reminded us, “an event must be more than a singular occurrence, a unique happening.” The beginning beginning cannot “pass away”; cannot be merely *in illo tempore*. Beginnings pass on and hand down. They are wedges between an already and a not-yet, wedges that penetrate what they separate. They are temporal pivots, points where time turns—and here lies, for Heidegger, the most evocative content of beginnings: Their passing on and handing down (*Überlieferung*) is in truth a repetition, a “going back into the possibilities of the Dasein that has been there.”²¹⁴ Beginnings enable us to begin again.

Two Beginning Anew

The Palingenesis of Memory

*Zarathustra aber versank in eine schwarze Erinnerung, denn ihm war,
als habe er schon einmal in diesem Tal gestanden.*

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*

*Recommencement in discontinuous time brings youth, and thus the
infinity of time.*

—Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*

I

Recollection and Exposition

This next chapter begins on the assumption that beginning-again belongs to the grammar of beginnings just as the beginning itself. We have treated “beginning” as a narrative intervention into an otherwise meaningless flux, but also as a form of consciousness, a conscious act. With Heidegger, we could call this consciousness “incipient”; a consciousness that is grounded in its own ability and intention to begin. But Heidegger’s “incipience” already implies a specific use of the concept “beginning” that will prove itself different from Kant’s establishment of reason on its desire and ability to make “first beginnings,” or to begin on its own. For Kant, it was the act of beginning that could vouch for autonomy and, ultimately, lay the foundations of freedom. In the Kantian tradition, beginning, like freedom, is conceived as a forward-oriented postulate. For Heidegger, however, who stands in an overall Hegelian tradition, beginning appears as dialectically juxtaposed with a backward orientation: Heidegger’s beginning, as we shall see, is a forward going-back.

Between these two types of beginning lie two types of authority. As Edward Said noted in his work on *Beginnings*, each beginning creates an authority of the “first time.” In the “inaugural logic” of beginnings, Said writes, having done something for the first time becomes a “requisite

feat.”¹ The inaugural firstness of beginnings makes a difference that cannot be undone. Yet, in this firstness lies also a solitude; a difference that cuts the ties to all other. Can the making of difference, then, really be the creation of authority? Can authority consist in a beginning that refers to itself? Can the first beginning remain singular?

Paradoxically, as Said pointed out, the authority of beginnings increases with their subsequent repetition. In repetition, authority is transferred from the beginning to the beginner-again and, vice versa, from the beginner-again to the beginning. The creation of authority, the “authorization” of the beginning, then, occurs no sooner than in the act of beginning-again the beginning. But herein lies another paradox: Beginnings, it seemed to us, are revolts against relativity and repetitiveness, against empty, circular, or merely passing time. Repetition appeared as the antibeginning, as the meaningless un-begun, whereas the act of beginning established a pattern of meaning in an un-begun world. “The beginning,” Said rightly observed, “is the first step in the intentional production of meaning.”² How, then, can repetition validate the beginning of meaning?

The (De-)Temporalization of the Past

The subject of the following reflection will be the entanglement of singularity and repetition. Singularity, in the previous chapter, seemed to be presupposed in all beginning. The beginning emerged as an act of radical differentiation, a narrative incision into primordial simultaneity, that inaugurated the time of history. “There occurs, if you will, a temporalization of history (*Verzeitlichung der Geschichte*),” writes Reinhart Koselleck, “which increasingly removes itself from the chronology of nature.”³ The classical knowledge of history, Koselleck argues, was based precisely on the repeatability, or natural rhythm, of historical instances. The Polybian *anacyclosis*, or “up-cycling” of political regimes, the Stoic cycle of cosmic re-creation (*palingenesia*) between *kataklysmós* (flood) and *ekpyrosis* (conflagration),⁴ Cicero’s famous analogy of Rome as a human body at its various stages of life, and Seneca’s celebration of the eternal city’s second youth (*altera infantia*) represented, as Bodo Gatz has argued, reconceptualizations of the original image of the

world (*Welt-Bild*) as the *age* of the world (*Welt-Zeitalter*).⁵ In modern history, by contrast, the “organic cycle of life,” as Max Weber put it, is broken; past and future are torn apart by a “colossal opposition,” and history is destined to always produce anew something that is “preliminary” (*Vorläufiges*), but never anything that is final (*Endgültiges*).⁶ “Past and future can never mirror each other . . . ,” Koselleck will later write, “since past events cannot repeat themselves.”⁷ From Gadamer: “What has separated itself from its past can no longer be part of the return.”⁸ Where past accumulates, and where the accumulated past is severed from the open horizons of the future, there is no “again.” Differentiated time, according to Luhmann, “can no longer be depicted as approaching a turning point where it veers back into the past or where the order of this world (or time itself) is apocalyptically transformed.”⁹ Complex societies now must orient themselves in an “overstocked storehouse of possibilities,” as Luhmann puts it, that enables them to act historically and to make selections in temporality. Yet, in these selections, Luhmann argues, is also established a certain degree of “reversibility” and “the guarantee that we can think our way back into the past despite the irreversible course of time.”¹⁰ In this “despite” lies the paradox of the modern historical consciousness. To think “despite,” modern history must rely upon “counter-time,” or “metatime,” a time beyond time that is independent of system-histories and allows for “all systems to run *simultaneously*.”¹¹ In our consciousness of time, then, historical and quasi-mythic time converge. Where time only passes, things remain singular. But where time passes in *another* time, where it becomes, as we might say, pluri-chronic, where the past is detemporalized, the singularity of events opens itself to modes of reduplication—not necessarily recurrence in the proper sense, nor, however, singularity in the strictest fashion.

Historicism and the Metaphysics of One-Timeness

Luhmann’s observations raise an important point with regard to the “modern” separation of singularity and repetition. For, on the one hand, singularity and one-timeness came to represent the shift toward “fact,” irreproducibility, and uniqueness. On the other hand, however,

the one-timeness of history bereaved single events of their ability to produce historical coherence and meaning. This tension, it can be argued, stood behind the historicist rejection of “daguerrotypic history”¹² and of Ranke’s meanwhile proverbial *wie es wirklich gewesen ist*.¹³ But this tension also informed the discourse of “antihistoricism.” Indeed, and perhaps contrary to intuition, antihistoricism did not resolve the problem of singularity by challenging its primacy, but by transposing it to a “higher” plane of meaning. Referring to kairetic time, Michael Landmann aptly speaks of a “metaphysics of one-timeness (*Metaphysik der Einmaligkeit*), a metaphysics of what has never been before and will never recur”¹⁴—but we should wonder whether this metaphysics, which permeates both historicism and antihistoricism, is not in truth an *ethics* of one-timeness.

Georg Iggers, in his study on *The German Conception of History*, noted that the late nineteenth century preeminence of singularity and one-timeness was, in fact, itself the result of a first “crisis of historicism.”¹⁵ Dilthey’s *Geisteswissenschaft*, the neo-Kantian Marburg School (Hermann Cohen and Paul Natorp), and the cultural philosophies of Wilhelm Windelband and Heinrich Rickert reaffirmed, each in their own way, the uniqueness of historical events and the profound difference between the natural and the historical sciences. Their effort to rescue the individualization of the event from any general laws in history that were either teleological or naturalist was not merely methodological, however, as Iggers demonstrates, but also, and perhaps more importantly so, motivated by *ethics*. A deep ambivalence thus emerged between the “historical way of looking at things (*die geschichtliche Weltanschauung*),” as Dilthey put it in 1903, which “has liberated the human spirit from the last chains which natural science and philosophy have not yet torn asunder,” and an “anarchy of convictions” left behind by the same liberation.¹⁶ Dilthey, as Iggers argues, was unable to fully resolve this contradiction and advanced, for this reason perhaps, to a forerunner of “postmodernism.” The neo-Kantians, however, succeeded in overlapping the singularity of historical events with a rational and moral purpose. Heinrich Rickert, in 1896, could so formulate a “categorical imperative” of his own, where one’s “individuality” became

also one's task, "since no other person in this completely individual world has exactly the same task as you" and since the fulfillment of this task "will never be repeated."¹⁷ Wilhelm Windelband, in one of his uncompleted lectures, could at once affirm the "living individuality" in history and the "rational purpose" (*Sinn*) that governs it: "a logos which makes the historical world, too, into a cosmos."¹⁸

The (anti-)historicism desire to transform the chaos of one-timeness into a moral, rather than natural, cosmos of meaning and value is now no longer foreign to us. Once again, we must remind ourselves that antihistoricism is not a flight from history, not even a resistance to it, but typically a fulfillment and consummation of the historicist ambivalences. Antihistoricism seeks to claim both: The unalienable historicity of the individual and the nonhistoricizable totality of meaning. In the theological critique of historicism, such as in Ernst Troeltsch, this desire was fitted into a specific Christian repertoire of "absolutes." What we must not overlook, however, is that this ethicization and theologization of history followed precisely the course of the temporalization—or historicization—of history, which in turn presupposes a dichotomization of natural and historical time that has shaped historicism from Hegel on. Landmann's unquestioned distinction between "arrow" and "circle" thus reflects what Gerardus van der Leeuw, who may have well influenced Landmann in this regard, called the "great cleavage in the self-consciousness of mankind" that divides cyclical, primordial time and historical, "final" time.¹⁹

That this "cleavage" should primarily be seen as the partisan imagination of a Christian revision of history, beginning with Augustine's polemics against paganism, is a different matter. When Arnaldo Momigliano speaks of the often-repeated Greek cyclical view of history as all but a "modern invention,"²⁰ he is, no doubt, correct; yet, he does not answer to the *purpose* of this invention. Augustine's concerns, as Hannah Arendt clearly saw, were not about correct historiography but about history providing a language for the unique and radically new.²¹ For Augustine, the distinction between the "straight path to truth" in Christianity and the "walk in a circle" of the ancient philosophers was essential to safeguard the actual novelty of the gospels. In a pagan cosmos of

eternal return, no message could be genuinely new; no creation could create what had not been before; no redemption could redeem and make new the previous sinner. The dilemma of how an unchanging God could introduce newness into the world Augustine resolved in the same way as the problem of a first beginning: There is nothing new before the new is created. “[God] can begin a new work with (not a new, but) an eternal design.”²² Newness, to God, therefore, is neither an “accidental change of mind” nor the divine repentance of an “idle-ness” without beginning. It only applies to the “before” and “after” in the world of created things, a world that could not exist without the category of newness in time—not without history. What makes this category so necessary for Augustine is that without newness, there would be no “new” message, nor would there be human repentance, nor, by the same token, divine redemption. “[F]ulfillment,” as Reinhold Niebuhr would later write, “is possible only through the emancipation from the cycle of natural-historical recurrences.”²³

From this background, we must understand Hermann Cohen’s efforts to lift the myth of creation from its cosmological origins onto the plains of ethical historicity. Against the Greek concept of creation, which supposedly concerned itself with a material beginning only, Cohen posits the biblical concept of creation as an “overcoming of mythology” that replaces the recurring birth and destruction of the world with the creation of *moral individuality*.²⁴ To be sure, in the myth of cosmological recurrence is already hinted the notion of judgment and restoration: “The end of the world includes the *renewal of the world*,” Cohen writes. “Destruction is not thought of without regeneration.”²⁵ But what is restored in myth is merely the desire for a “primordial time,” the yearning for a golden age, the restoration of an “absolute past.” To the Greeks, history is only the “telling of their past.” To the prophets, on the other hand, history is the desire for an “ideal future” that is in “opposition to the past and present, and, therefore, to any previous eudaemonic sort of historical existence.”²⁶ Only in a history, whose future is both open and desired, unknown and anticipated, can the “new” enter. “This newness,” continues Cohen, “manifests itself in the dawning of the ideal over and against all actuality.”²⁷ “True” history, then, for Cohen, is a history for which newness is bound to the

creation of time as a creation of one-timeness, and where meaning is that which has yet to come.

From the same background, we may also understand Abraham Joshua Heschel's definition of Judaism as a "religion of history" and "religion of time," which shares, as most readers are aware, many traits with Paul Tillich.²⁸ Only in time and history, Heschel argues, are events always unprecedented, always endowed with an "ineffable uniqueness" that is unknown to the generalizing, spatializing thought in the natural sciences: "Two stones, two things in space may be alike," writes Heschel, "two hours in a person's life or two ages in human history are never alike."²⁹ There is a fundamental distinction between events and processes; for Heschel, events being unique, irregular, intermittent, while processes are continuous, steady, and uniform, constituting, like the cycles of nature, a permanence that has neither past nor future. The process cannot end or begin but only fall into obsolescence: "it is always replaced by its own effects"³⁰; but there is nothing to "replace" events. Rather than becoming "obsolete," they pass—or do not pass. They can be both a "liberation from what is definitely past" and that which never becomes a past. The event differentiates time, but it can also be a way to "overcome the dividing line of past and present"; it can be an attempt, as in "sacred" and "prophetic" history, "to see the past in the present tense."³¹ It is, then, the one-timeness of time that creates the individual in freedom, in its own unlikeness, in its own moment of departure and return. Thus, rebuffing both the "Greek world of space" and the Hindu "contempt for time," Heschel can finally repeat the credo that "Biblical history is the triumph of time over space."³²

The Singularity of Death

But does this triumph of one-timeness not also suggest an end in time? For must not, in the demythologized consciousness of time, the singularity of the event correspond to the singularity of death? "As the singular it is also the mortal," writes Landmann of the new historical consciousness.³³ "The ability of time to generate something new," he continues, stating the seemingly obvious, "is purchased at the expense of its ability to throw something that already exists into nothingness."

Subjugated to “progress,” as Weber expressed this sentiment, the life of the individual slips into “infinity,” bereft of any hope to ever be “fulfilled” and condemned, thereby, to an always senseless death: “For there is always another step further from where we stand; no one dies at the height that lies in infinity.”³⁴ At its end, time can reveal nothing that adds up; it cannot but reveal a death in between. Immortality must yield to historicity—and historicity, as Heidegger would say, following perhaps Max Scheler, is in essence *Dasein zum Tode*, a being onto death wherein the ultimate singularity of time is encapsulated: “The running towards death in each moment of being (*Dasein*) means the return of being from the *Man* to itself, in the sense of choosing itself.”³⁵ In another place, therefore, Heidegger will call time the “real principium individuationis.”³⁶

It is important to remember, however, that Heidegger, too, stands in a tradition of antihistoricism that embraces historical individuality but rejects its final verdict of senseless one-timeness. In Heidegger, therefore, the time of *Dasein*, or rather, the time that is *Dasein*, does not follow the diachronic pattern of before and after, nor the law of irreversibility. “Before and after are not necessarily earlier and later; they are not modes of *Zeitlichkeit*.”³⁷ *Zeitlichkeit*, in Heidegger’s terms, is *Dasein*—or “being in the being that we call human life”—which is “always in a mode of its possible time-being (*Zeitseins*).”³⁸ Human time, in this sense, is temporal, *zeitlich*; a How (*Wie*) rather than a What (*Was*). Historical time, on the other hand, is “what is over,” a *Vorbei* to which the time of *Was* cannot return. “Only the How can be repeated,” Heidegger writes.³⁹ It is in the “being together with death, that each person is brought into the How . . . into the How wherein all What is dispersed.”⁴⁰ The singularity of death, then, its historical one-timeness and, as it were, “whatness,” is mediated in the possibility of repetition and in the repetition of possibility, in a return to the “how” of “having-been.” To be sure, this return is not the actual recurrence of an historical event; it is not the repetition of “what was.” But who can claim, in all earnestness, that repetition, even in the most mythic sense, entailed the duplication of empirical, historical realities? “[W]ithin history,” as Ernst Jünger wrote in his book *At the Wall of Time*, “there is repetition but no return.”⁴¹

II

Beginnings Abolished

Naturally, the desire for repetition is no desire for mere sameness. It is only a desire for liberation from the end all beginnings announce. The disenchantment of time, as Eliade famously lamented in 1949, has left us “without defenses against the terror of history.”⁴² But it is not history itself that troubles Eliade but, supposedly, the impotence of modern man to *create* history: to perform Nietzsche’s unhistorical “leap into action.” Only “the man of archaic civilizations,” Eliade writes, “can be proud of his mode of existence, which allows him to be free and to create. He is free to be no longer what he was, free to annul his own history through periodic abolition of time and collective regeneration.”⁴³ Freed from the irreversibility of time, mythic man can thus create for himself “a new, a ‘pure’ existence, with virgin possibilities” in which history is abolished by a “continuous return *in illo tempore*.”⁴⁴ Mythic man, for Eliade, has the wisdom to begin anew, and if this wisdom should speak to the moderns, then it would be a *conscious* rebellion against the “diachronic structure of radical historicism.”⁴⁵ “Archaic man,” then, and his modern incarnation, is not unconscious of historical time but, to the contrary, refuses “to accept himself as historical being.”⁴⁶ Even if we cannot return to the “paradise of archetypes and repetition,” we can still arrive at a “creative freedom” which arms us against our own infatuation with history.⁴⁷

Eliade’s revolt against diachronic time is nothing short of emblematic of a desire to consciously correct the “crisis” of a history turned senseless and terrifying or, worse still, uneventful in a metaphysical sense. Steven Wasserstrom, I believe, is fully correct to suggest “that the turn to myth” that guided Eliade and others around him, also “impelled a return to history,” albeit in a counter-historicist, or antihistoricist guise.⁴⁸ Eliade, to be sure, occupied a rather dubious place in this return to history—yet, Wasserstrom’s poignant dictum that in the Weimar flights from time, myth was conceived less as an alternative to history than as “history reborn” holds true for Eliade’s regenerative model of time as well. Far from being a return to naturalism and rationalism

(the foes of nineteenth century historicism), his renaturalization of time was historical time cast in an alternate reality of “rebirth.” While history, for Eliade, has the ability to produce only what is new, mythic time can *make new* what is old; and while modern man can only begin where he begins, archaic—and that is: counter-modern—man can begin again, at any time, *ab initio*.

Historicism in Cycles

It is true that Eliade’s antihistoricism reflected a certain homesickness, or nostalgia, for the cosmic place of time that was akin to Schelling, von Baader, and Goethe—but we must remember that neither Schelling nor von Baader, nor Goethe, nor Eliade, accepted nature as a meaningless cycle of time and fate. It is, to the contrary, from the *historicized* image of nature, that the idea of regeneration, repetition, and second beginnings was borrowed. Friedrich Meinecke, therefore, could justly devote the final chapter of his *Historism* to Goethe’s revival of cyclical time: “[F]or Goethe, there was nothing mechanical, shallow or depressing about the cyclical concept,” Meinecke writes. “The cycle, in his view, was the exterior form of historical life, within all the valuable inner primal forms, with their rich metamorphoses, could have free play and development.”⁴⁹ The cycle, in short, offers a form of freedom merely linear history cannot afford. Not that Goethe abandoned the notion of progress and development for a simplistic return to mythic regress. This, for Meinecke, would have contradicted the mind of historicism. What Goethe, on the contrary, found in his early years was the idea of “circum-gress,” a cyclical advancement in which the individual could both die the death of progress and live the freedom of regeneration: In Goethe, Meinecke concludes, the cycle was thus seen “as a guarantee of a palingenesis for all living forms, a pledge that death can never have the last word.”⁵⁰ If Meinecke’s historicism culminates indeed in Goethe, then it seems to culminate in its own dissolution.

Little wonder, then, that from Goethe’s antihistoricist historicism, Meinecke can weave thin threads to the otherwise despised Hegel.⁵¹ Historicism, as we have noted, viewed itself largely in direct opposition to the Hegelian conception of history. Yet, as Friedrich Jaeger and Jörn

Rüsen have argued, historicism would not have been “thinkable” without the impulses it received from Hegel and German Idealism.⁵² Indeed, one could argue that nowhere are the themes of historicism so alive and so entwined with their counter-historicist echoes as in Hegel himself.

Time as Aufhebung

What Hegel believed to have offered was a dialectical “solution” to the problem of meaning that the three elements of historicism would later raise: How can there be meaning in the individual event? How can there be meaning in senseless progressivity? How can there be meaning in infinite futurity? Hegel, as is well known, sought the answer in the dialectics advancement.

Advancement, as Hegel developed the term in his “philosophical history,” requires a category neither nature nor history as a photographic image can supply: the category of nonexistence. From this category—which only time can postulate—follows Hegel’s well-known distinction of “history in general” as the “expression of spirit in time,” and nature as the “expression of the idea in space.”⁵³ In the law of nature, for Hegel, there is no development in the proper sense of the term, there are no beginnings and ends, no real transitions, nor is there true individuality. All nature knows is general recurrence, “the uniform repetition of one and the same mode of existence.”⁵⁴ To nature, Hegel argues, all individual stages (lit. rungs; *Sprossen*) coexist simultaneously, there is no “negation of form,” no advancement and “transfiguration” (*Umarbeitung*). Only time includes in its concept negativity: “non-existence is a function of time” alone—and time, for Hegel, “is the completely abstract dimension of the sensory world.”⁵⁵ The temporalization of history, then, which occurs gradually in a transition from the ancient, “unhistorical” Orient to modern, “historical” Europe, is a separation of time from nature, a gradual shattering of the recurring, sensual cosmos. “Time,” Hegel writes, “is the negative element in the world of senses,” it is the “corrosive aspect of negativity,” the devouring *Chronos* in whose trail are only “ruin and destruction.”⁵⁶ If time were purely temporal, if singularity were purely singular, then this trail would indeed be destined to remain all but a trail of negativity.

But the course of philosophical history teaches us otherwise: For “where one thing disappears, another takes at once its place.” We witness the downfall of the “brilliant cultures of the past,” but we also witness the “fresh and rejuvenated life” that arises from their ruins.⁵⁷ This rejuvenation, however, is not repetition: It is not the eternal rebirth of the always same ancient phoenix from its ashes. In the world of the “spirit,” repetition means transfiguration. “The rejuvenation of the spirit,” Hegel writes, “is not just a return to an earlier shape; it is a purification or working-over upon itself.”⁵⁸ In the dialectics of the “spirit,” advancement and progress can neither be solely linear, nor purely repetitious. There must be, in good dialectical fashion, a third between recurrence and singularity. “[P]rogress,” Hegel speculates, “. . . is not an indeterminate advance *ad infinitum* but has a definite aim—namely that of returning upon itself.”⁵⁹ There is “a kind of cyclic movement” in the path of the spirit as it attempts “to discover itself.” In this path, each manifestation of the spirit, each limited form, “can be dominant only once.” The reality of history is ruled by the tragedy of one-timeness, by “fragmentation (*Zerrissenheit*) and unhappiness.” But in thought, in the self-comprehension of the spirit, wherein all reality is determined, this fragmentation is “resolved,” at peace (*befriedigt*)—and this, Hegel concludes, “would be the ultimate purpose of the world.”⁶⁰

Beginning the Other Beginning

The claim to such an “ultimate purpose” is common to all idealist historicism, whose single source, as Karl Popper plainly stated, was Hegel.⁶¹ It is only in this respect that we can permit ourselves to introduce Hegel’s system of history into our discussion of beginning-anew: For it encapsulates the problem of one-timeness and recurrence, which is, in its last analysis, a problem of beginning and beginning-again. In fact, it would not be imprudent to characterize Hegel’s system of spiritual advancement as the *Aufhebung* of beginnings. From the perspective of Hegel’s logic, Aufhebung constitutes of course the quintessential dialectical concomitance of “preserving” (*aufbewahren*) and “putting an end to” (*ein Ende machen*).⁶² From the perspective of history, however, Aufhebung must be understood as a dialectical synchronicity of past and

future, progress and return, negation and retrieval. In the Aufhebung of beginnings, then, is also announced a retrieval of origins. In this way, Hegel not only applies the logic of “dialectical reason” to his “philosophical history” of 1822, but also anticipates the historical blueprint of the cyclicly advancing “spirit” in his *Science of Logic* of 1812. Speaking of the “absolute beginning” in philosophy, which is a point of primal “indifference” (*Indifferenzpunkt*), Hegel now can easily invoke the notion that “progressing is a going-back into the ground of the original, whereupon that by which we have begun depends.”⁶³

Beginnings, in the common, subaltern sense, create difference, both temporally and ontologically. The relative beginning is directed toward the future and toward being. But this beginning, once it has begun, must depend on the concreteness of its differentiations; its “immediate consciousness,” its “I” is always in relation to the different it creates, and vice versa. It cannot truly begin “at the beginning” unless it begins in a state of nondifferentiation, at a beginning that is “absolute” and “abstract”; that is “indifferent,” that is “pure knowledge.” Only logic as a “pure science” can begin at the absolute beginning, at the “empty beginning”—at the beginning which it itself postulates. Hence, Hegel arrives at the profoundly cyclical nature of the dialectical method in which the beginning cannot begin at itself, but must begin at the *other* beginning, at the “ground” toward which it progresses. “What is truly essential,” Hegel writes in the *Logic*, “is not that the beginning is purely unmediated, but that everything is a cycle in itself where the first is also the last, and the last the first.”⁶⁴

The Resurrection of Particulars

Having separated nature from history, Hegel, as Hayden White pointed out so well, could not but “revert” to nature to arrive at a notion of “successive recurrence” that would explain the “life of the ever present spirit” as a “circle of progressive embodiments.”⁶⁵ In this reversion, White argues, Hegel’s philosophy of history underwent a metamorphosis from tragedy to comedy: The tragic plot of a recurring rise and fall that envelopes all particulars and limited forms of the spirit dissolves into a comic plot in which all particulars are resurrected in a purified, purely

spiritual existence and eternalized in a synthesis of generalities. This dramatic synthesis White identifies as a form of what he calls the “organicist” paradigm in history. “The Organicist,” he writes, “attempts to depict the particulars discerned in the historical field as components of synthetic processes.”⁶⁶ To the “organicist” historian, individual entities become components of historical totalities “that are greater than, or qualitatively different from the sum of their parts.” Unlike in the “mechanistic” view of history in which processes tend to be reduced to unalterable laws of causality, typically resolving in a tragic mode of emplotment, the “organicist” approach presupposes a happy ending, as it were, an *Endzweck* that can shed meaning to all tragic particulars. To the “organicist,” history not only passes but can actually be “fulfilled.”

Karl Löwith’s remark that “Hegel believed himself loyal to the genius of Christianity by realizing the Kingdom of God on earth”⁶⁷ should be complemented by Jacob Taubes’s reflections on the eschatological nature of Hegel’s “New Testament of German Idealism,”⁶⁸ and by Karl Popper’s devastating verdict about Hegel’s “logical witchcraft.”⁶⁹ Popper, incidentally, saw in Hegel’s “hysterical historicism” already the tragic-comedic elements, which, combined with its inherent dogmatism, would constitute the inevitably conservative implications of “organicist” history. But one should add to Popper’s and White’s observations that Hegel’s conservatism hinged not only on its “naturalist” rhythm and teleology but also on its deliberately counter-natural, resurrectionist foundation: on the idea of rejuvenation as both an overcoming of the pastness of the past and a rebellion against the futurity of the future. From a Hegelian point of view, rejuvenation is both the *Aufhebung* of beginnings and the *Aufhebung* of ends. As much as Hegel seeks to emancipate time from nature, time, in its dialectical diachronization, passes only by returning upon itself. In dialectical time, past and future can never *not* mirror each other, to paraphrase Reinhart Koselleck. The future is never fully open, nor is the past ever fully closed.

Pausa: Counter-History as Fragmentation and Reversal

Hegel’s rebellion against the futurity of the future should strike us as a remarkable anticipation of twentieth-century counter-historicism. But

here we must pause to revisit that very concept. Counter-history, in our context, shall not refer to an alternative story or to a merely different version of the first—nor does it indicate a direct opposite or a rejecting revision—nor does it suggest a radical rupture or introduction of complete novelty—nor can we reduce counter-narratives to the mere shattering of hegemonic “master-narratives.” All these, to be sure, may well be aspects that shape the meaning of counter-histories, counter-narratives, or counter-memories,⁷⁰ but they leave untouched the narrative temporality that distinguishes the underlying forms of “counter-consciousness.”

At their barest core, counter-histories are readjustments of historical time. Consequently, they are also readjustments of any singularity that is separate from the past. The meaning of counter-history, as David Biale defined it, invoking a Nietzschean motif, is not a production of new facts and theories, but rather, a “transvaluation of old ones.” Counter-history, in this sense, is not historical revisionism—though it surely contains revisionist elements—but a form of historical “disclosure,” the bringing to light of a subterranean, palimpsest past that is considered “true,” “original,” and above all, un-passed. In Biale’s definition, the concept of transvaluation preserves precisely the richness of meaning we found attached to the concept of “transition,” or “threshold.” All experience of historicity, Gadamer had argued, consists of incisions in the continuous flow of passing time that allows us to become “free for the new *through* the passing away of the old.”⁷¹ To the extent that each passing is a turning at which both realities are equally present, linear historicity is never fully linear nor continuous. To the contrary, as Gadamer insisted, it is only in the experience of difference and discontinuity that history becomes a “reality” of its own.⁷² For Gadamer, “transition” so encompassed the encounter of “two realities,” the act of passing from one to another. Stripped of all its ideological emphases, the prepositional “counter” signifies indeed first and foremost a mode of *encounter*, the recognition of difference that calls for reply and return, a “*Widerruf*,” as Heidegger put it. This reply is a conscious aberration from the linearity of time.

The attack on the linear continuization of difference, which must remain silent about the “betweens” of discontinuous time, sets

counter-history apart from the historian's craft. Leaving ruptures open and raw, counter-history seeks the moment when time halts to turn about. Hence, Benjamin could speak of the "fractures in history" (*Bruchstellen in der Geschichte*) through which messianic time enters the world, as well as of a messianic "halting" (*Stillstellen*) that presents itself as "a revolutionary chance in the struggle for the suppressed past."⁷³ Jürgen Habermas, in his *Discourse on Modernity*, provocatively places Benjamin's fragmentation of historical time in a line of thought that stretches from the Young-Hegelians to Heidegger, and that tends to problematize and even reverse the modern separation of experience and expectation. In fact, for Habermas, counter-history invariably overlaps with counter-modernity where it seeks to "plug up" the open horizon of the future as a "source of unease."⁷⁴ Rather than taking refuge in teleological conceptions, which still would correspond to the linearity of "modern" time, Benjamin's counter-history introduces fragmented moments of a messianic past whose unfilled horizons of expectation are filled and, indeed, redeemed by the act of remembrance. To Benjamin, the past clings to the present because it is always unfinished; just as to history, the horizon of the future clings to the present because it is always open. But in Benjamin's tragic view of history, the fragmented moments of messianic time enter an already shattered world. History leaves behind nothing but piles of shattered past, while messianic time pulls redemption away from the fragments it must redeem. Here, the messianic future is not exactly "plugged up," as Habermas would say, but a source of relentless suction that tears apart expectation (past) and experience (future). This might again call to mind Löwith's "mere futurum" and Landmann's "teleokline" movement of biblical time, where all past and present becomes a mere anticipation of the future—but it is quite the opposite in the case of Benjamin. The future is precisely *not* anticipated, for the openness of its horizon is given only in the unfinishedness and fragmentation of the past. The future must be "remembered," but it can only be remembered in the redemptive memory of past fragments. Ernst Jünger once spoke of memory as a restoration of "something unbroken" (*etwas Ungebrochenes*).⁷⁵ Revolutions perform this memory as nothing less than a "tiger-leap into the past,"⁷⁶ which must, in turn, also be a heroic leap away from the gravitation of the

future. Thus, Robespierre, as Benjamin writes, was able to see “ancient Rome as a past charged with *Jetztzeit*.⁷⁷ Revolutions, in this sense, are resistances to the future, restorations that are born from the gaps of history—but also yearn to close the gaps of history, clogging thereby the entry points of the messianic. The tragic fate of revolutions is that they cannot remain where they begin: at the fractures of history.

Benjamin’s counter-narrative is a story that leaves intact the fragmentary in transition. Susan Handelman aptly speaks of a “disjunctive link” between profane and messianic, history and counter-history.⁷⁸ We could take this further to define being in counter-history as an inverted transition; as a becoming free for the old through the passing away of the new. Counter-history, in this definition, would describe not a flight from history, much less an indifference to the past nor the invention of antidotes to what Nietzsche called the “historical fever.” For Nietzsche’s antidote to an excess of history and to the “burden of the past” was precisely not mere forgetting, not mere antihistory: It was forgetting *at the right time*, an act of “stemming against the past” rather than discarding it. For Nietzsche, the forgetting at the right time belonged to the plasticity and creativity of a people as much as its ability to remember at the right time. The truly “unhistorical” nature is not timeless and without history but chooses its time to forget and to remember, to be in and outside history. This, for Nietzsche, was the birthplace of all “real” deed (*rechte That*): “No artist will create his artwork, no general will win his victory, no people will achieve its freedom without having desired and aspired to [this deed] in a state of the unhistorical.”⁷⁹

Nietzsche’s state of the unhistorical might well circumscribe the state of consciousness that is “beginning.” Beginning begins beyond history, without, however, being *above* history. Creativity, for Nietzsche, cannot take place in supra-history (*Übergeschichte*), because supra-history is all but a static image (*stillstehendes Gebilde*) of the present. Rather, creativity must take place in a present that is dynamic synchronization, the simultaneous, yet distinct presence of all tenses which, to recall Luhmann, enables us to plan for the future and, if necessary, to correct the past. The “creative one” must be free to choose where to leave and enter historical time. Where beginnings slip into

mere history, their ability to choose is lost—but where beginnings slip outside history, their ability to turn time has vanished. Beginnings, to reiterate the theme of the previous chapter, lie neither fully inside nor fully outside of history, but “in between”: They constitute liminal spaces, thresholds, transitions, pivots of continuity. Their liminality enables beginnings to “turn” time. Counter-time, in this specific sense, means turning-time, and counter-history, history that turns.⁸⁰

III

Meaning and Futurity

The desire for beginnings is a desire not only for freedom but also for meaning in an otherwise meaningless world. It is the same desire that historicism and antihistoricism intimately share: the desire for emplotment, for narrative totalities. Karl Popper, in his famous critique, called this desire the “emotional appeal of historicism,”⁸¹ while Hans Albert, following Popper, spoke of a “cult of historicity” (*Kult der Geschichtlichkeit*), a religion of time, in which “understanding” (*Verstehen*) took the place of explanation (*Erklären*).⁸² Popper’s refutation of historicism, it must be noted, was directed not against all historical method of inquiry, not against “historism” as such,⁸³ but against historicism’s sweeping claim to specific historical “laws” of development, progress or decline, spontaneous novelty, and social holism, that enable it to make teleological projections for the future and, in fact, to *close* the door to the future from the other side. “Every version of historicism expresses the feeling of being swept into the future by irresistible forces,” Popper concludes in *The Poverty of Historicism*.⁸⁴ To plug up this future and rescue the story beginnings allow to unfold, is historicism’s secret task and, indeed, as Popper argues, historicism’s “unconscious conservatism”—its ultimate resistance to change. Ironically, then, historicism and antihistoricism find themselves working toward a common goal: to replace the law of one-timeness, of senseless perishability and, conversely, unpredictability, with a law of the enduring present that enlivens what has passed and defuturizes what has yet to come.

“Only from the highest power of the present can we interpret that which has passed,” wrote Nietzsche in his *Untimely Reflections*.⁸⁵ Likewise, Hegel reassured the readers of his philosophy of history that “[w]hat ever is true exists eternally in and for itself—not yesterday or tomorrow, but entirely in the present, ‘now,’ in the sense of an absolute present.”⁸⁶ “True” histories, as we have seen, tend to begin in the present, in the midst of things, in an “anxious,” “endless” middle,⁸⁷ in which, as in the act of beginning itself, past, present, and future are given simultaneously. They begin in a present that runs counter time, suspending the irreversible course from past to future.

Yet, despite its seeming simultaneity, the liminal present of beginnings is by no means a free oscillation in temporal time. To the contrary, the thresholds of beginning are typically superimposed by distinct temporal intentionalities: Beginnings, by the rules of their own grammatology, are bound to futurity. What begins begins *into the future*, even if it is rhetorically committed to a recovery of the past. The beginning not only presentifies—it also futurizes; it “foresees,” as Said phrased it, “a continuity that flows from it.”⁸⁸ Thus the present of beginning is not pure “unhistorical” synchronicity, but a present that looks ahead, that views itself already as the beginning of a future.

Historicism and Utopianism

The present that views itself as the beginning of the future constitutes, for Karl Mannheim, the temporal mode of the progressive and utopian.⁸⁹ We have already alluded to the revolutionary character inherent in mere beginnings; now we must add the utopian aspect. According to Mannheim, the mind is utopian “when it is incongruous with the state of reality within which it occurs.”⁹⁰ Most commonly, utopianism will express itself in conceptions of linear futurity, chiliastic speculations, or liberal-humanitarian ideas of progressivism and perfectibility. It is significant that Popper’s understanding of historicism shares the essential elements of this utopian consciousness. Both the historicist and the utopianist, Popper argues, are dissatisfied with the present, making diagnoses for “the needs of their time” and purporting to grasp “what the true aims or ends of ‘society’ are.”⁹¹ Both historicism

and utopianism are ideologies of the future and, therefore, cannot but replace “being” with an “ought” in order to manage what otherwise eludes empirical description: Their futurity makes possible and necessary their normative import.

The beginning belongs to the same ideology: It emancipates from the present by articulating a freedom *to do*, a future that is equally open and held together by a structure of meaning. “The future is the temporality of desubjugation,” writes Marcel Gauchet in *The Disenchantment of the World*, “the indispensable temporal axis for a subjective social functioning.”⁹² It is the “productive projection into an open future” that enables the modern “social self” to transform the “indivisible dictatorship of origins” that reigned in primeval societies into an eschatological horizon of action and expectation. “From now on,” Gauchet continues, “there is no legitimate obligation to renew what used to be, but rather one to create what does not yet exist and what ought to happen.”⁹³ History is fully secularized not by virtue of temporal differentiation, but through the ultimate unrepresentability of the future. The future becomes “pure” where it is unknown, or as Gauchet puts it: “The less possible it is for us to consider the future an object of superstition and worship, the more apparent it becomes that the future will be *other* than we imagine.”⁹⁴ It is the future of historical time, as Reinhart Koselleck observed, not its past that “renders all that is similar unsimilar.”⁹⁵ For Gauchet, the complete “otherness” and “unsimilarity” of a fully secularized future resists the now outdated “logic of origins” that had governed the religious consciousness. But does it resist beginnings and their beginning again?

Futurity and Memory

Not according to Mannheim, who maintains that utopias need not be progressive. Conservatism and origins, too, can be expressions of the utopian mind. To be sure, the conservative temporality seems diametrically opposed to liberal futurity, for it views the present as the “last stage of the past” rather than the beginning of the future. To the progressive mind, the past has passed, while the future generates meaning and norm—the “ought” that overcomes the present. The conservative

consciousness, by contrast, finds meaning in “what lies behind,” seemingly protesting the “ought” of the future—yet, as to the liberal so to the conservative, the past has not truly passed but is translated into the idea of that which is “prefigured in a seminal state.”⁹⁶ What renders Mannheim’s conservatism utopian is its interpretation of the past as a generative origin, as something that lies behind but, at the same time, is not yet complete. The conservative and the liberal alike view the present as a liminal space between opposite ideal horizons of the nonpresent. Where progressivism, however, attempts at expanding the horizon of not-yet, conservative utopianism seeks the complete approximation of utopia and “here and now”: “Meaning and reality, norm and existence, are not separate here,” writes Mannheim, “because the utopian, the ‘concretized idea,’ is in a vital sense present in this world.”⁹⁷ Conservatism, then, which Mannheim describes as a “becoming self-reflective of traditionalism,”⁹⁸ is neither fully futurized nor fully cyclical or repetitive nor, for that matter, “pastified.” Rather, it is the *utopianization* of the concrete present, the infusion of the “here and now” not with a utopian future (for the future “endangers” the present) but with a “counter-utopian” past. “Each moment of the present has become what it is,” Mannheim quotes Gustav Droysen: “What it once was and how it became has passed; but its past still is contained in it in ideal form.”⁹⁹ For Mannheim, Droysen’s view of history—which is both deeply Hegelian and vehemently anti-Hegelian—represents a quintessential testament of utopian conservatism. Where Nietzsche praised forgetting as a restoration of the future, Droysen celebrated memory as an illumination of the present: “The finite mind only possesses the here and now, but it illuminates its present with a world of memories.”¹⁰⁰

This deeply historicist “world of memories” establishes what Mannheim understands to be a conservative counter-utopia, a “*Vergangenheitsutopie*,” in which the order of past and future is inverted. The conservative idea of freedom is constituted by remembered “*Herkunft*” (origin), not by visionary equality. It is the past that liberates. Hence, Mannheim cites Hegel’s disdain for the ideals of “abstract freedom,” for the “horrors of the French Revolution where all differences of talent and authority were erased.”¹⁰¹ Concrete freedom, by contrast (or rather, by dialectical negation), is the return upon itself—in anticipation,

perhaps, of existential “authenticity.” In Hegel’s use of “anamnesis,”¹⁰² the return upon oneself has not only the meaning of reproduction, but also indicates, dialectically speaking, a productive progression: Memory creates futurity and freedom, though futurity is precisely not understood as an openness to infinite difference, as in Gauchet, but as the de-differentiation of time, where the end becomes similar to the beginning.

Memory Liberates

Reinhold Niebuhr, in *Faith and History*, reiterates this theme when he writes that “the capacity to live in the past by memory . . . emancipates the individual from the tyranny of the present,” a theme that was articulated already by Max Scheler, and that returns in Edward Casey’s use of “de-presentation,” which he links to a “freedom in remembering.”¹⁰³ Likewise, Hans-Georg Gadamer speaks of Mnemosyne as the muse of both “remembering repossession” and “spiritual freedom,” a memory that restores the “unity between the having-been and the today.”¹⁰⁴ Niebuhr embraces memory as providing man with choices, with choices of reversal and rearrangement that openly resist the progression of one-timeness in history: “He can, if he wishes, find asylum from present tumults in a past period of history, or use the memory of a past innocence [*sic*] to project a future of higher virtue. Memory is, in short, the fulcrum of freedom for man in history.”¹⁰⁵ It is memory—which Niebuhr believes to have found only in biblical, anti-Greek thought—that “represents man’s capacity to rise above, even while he is within, the temporal flux.”¹⁰⁶ History, too, if it seeks to avoid the “idolatrous” relativism of historicism, must find its center beyond the flux of time. Memory so becomes a “dimension of existence” for Niebuhr, “that aspect of human freedom which is most determinative in the construction of historical reality.”¹⁰⁷ Without memory, he maintains, historical events would be reduced to “natural necessity and recurrence.” Without memory, there would be no responsibility for the singular.¹⁰⁸ “If history is real,” writes Yerushalmi in *Zakhor*, “then the Red Sea can be crossed only once, and Israel cannot stand twice at Sinai. . . .”¹⁰⁹ Memory, in a word, stresses the

one-timeness of history against the classical view of repetitious re-remembrance—but memory stresses, paradoxically, also the opposite: That history is not irrevocable, that events can be “called back.” Memories, as Maurice Halbwachs put it, are “repetitions.”¹¹⁰

IV

Ex Arches

“Memory” thus appears to be a uniquely suitable concept to mediate the historicist dilemma of one-timeness and recurrence. When Karl Mannheim wrote his reflections on the counter-utopian character of memory and on the conservative idea of freedom as a return, he could hardly have anticipated the steady rise of “memory” in the contemporary historical discourse.¹¹¹ Where memory was once associated with the unhistorical, or prehistorical practice of nations, tribes, and sentimental minds, it has now penetrated deeply into the language of a “new historicism” that conceives of itself as “post-historical.” Maurice Halbwachs’s at one-time self-evident distinction between “memory” and “history” that still prevails in the works of Yerushalmi and Pierre Nora, who, in 1989, deplored the “eradication of memory by history,”¹¹² has since given way to new forms of intersection, predicted, incidentally, by Jacques LeGoff already in 1977.¹¹³ More recently, the late Paul Ricoeur set out to rehabilitate memory as the “guardian of the ultimate dialectic constitutive of the pastness of the past, namely, the relation between the ‘no longer,’ which marks its character of being elapsed, abolished, superseded, and the ‘having-been,’ which designates its original and, in this sense, indestructible character.”¹¹⁴ Ricoeur here not only reverberates Heidegger’s “presencing,” but also Edward Casey’s Hegelian duality of persistence and pastness: “Persistence in memory,” Casey writes, “is persistence *into* the present, but that which persists also derives *from* the past and is itself a persistence *of* the past.”¹¹⁵ Pierre Nora thus referred to memory as a “perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present.”¹¹⁶ Aleida Assmann, in her 1999 book *Erinnerungsräume*, set apart the cultural act of “remembrance”

(*Erinnern*), which “occurs within time” and is “effected” by it, from the act of “storage” (*Speichern*), which “occurs against time and against forgetting,” as a timeless accumulation of the past.¹¹⁷ Unlike in the stored past, where storage also means continuous unchangedness, unlike even the presencing of the having-been, the act of remembrance means a “renewal of the remembered,” the reactivation of a latent memory, an awakening that changes the awakened and awakener, that signifies a rupture, a reversal, and a process of transformation.

A formidable locus classicus for this “awakening” and “renewal of the remembered” is a passage in Plato’s *Timaios* relating how Solon, the legendary legislator of ancient Athens and wisest of the Seven Wise, traveled to the Egyptian city of Saïs to retrieve a knowledge long lost about the origins of Greek civilization. To prompt the Egyptian priests, Solon first gives an account of what has been preserved in Greek mythology, the story of first man, the great flood, and the succession of generations beginning with Deucalion and Pyrrha, but one of the priests interrupts: “O Solon, Solon, you Greeks will always remain children, for an old Greek does not exist!” (22b). In Greece, the priest explains, no unbroken line of tradition can be found, no knowledge that has aged with time. Wars and natural disaster have again and again buried the past, punctured the memory of a people, whereas in Egypt, the steady cycles of the Nile and the faithfully engraved records on the temple walls preserved a seamless memory of time immemorial. Where the priests of Saïs possess a continuous past, Solon and the Greeks know only a tattered web of “children’s tales” (23b).¹¹⁸ So fragmentary is their memory, so ephemeral and irreparable, that the Greeks are destined to begin a new beginning, a new childhood in every generation. “Always anew you become young again,” says the priest to Solon (23b)—and this is not to be taken as a compliment.

But the subtext of the passage can be read differently: Solon goes to Egypt to learn about the distant past of his people, hoping to find answers about origins, but, in fact, recovers the original form of the Athenian state, lifting the memory of the sunken island Atlantis from the depths of collective forgetfulness. In a Platonic sense, Atlantis serves as the idea of Athens, its ideal *eidos*; and although it is not and—being manifest in history—cannot be the eternal idea itself, it still assumes

eternal form in the historical narrative. Solon, then, travels to the city of Saïs, which is said to have been founded by the weaving Egyptian goddess Neith, whom the Greeks know as the weaving goddess Athena, not only to *hear* the history of a glorious past and forgotten heritage from the mouths of the priests but to *see* the idea of the perfect state with his own eideitic eye, similar to the young Greek of Schiller's Ballad who in a loud voice cries "I want to see it!" before he removes the last veil that conceals the image in the temple at Saïs.¹¹⁹ However, while Schiller's tragic hero despairs at the sight of his own future, Solon gains wisdom in the vision of a true past. The veil that is lifted for him is the veil of eternity: He has seen the true idea of the city and sees Athens as a wanting *eikón* (image), waiting to be restored to its ideal past. To him, the past becomes a present, the origin a beginning. Suddenly, then, the historical superiority of Egyptian memory seems inverted. Where the priests collect and conserve and often do so, as they admit, only from "hearsay" (cf. 23a), Solon "sees" and re-remembers, leaping over a gap of nine millennia, leaping, in fact, over time altogether. Memory, to him, is not the storage house of a mummified past, as it were, not mere history but the *rebirth of knowledge*.¹²⁰

The priests of Saïs accuse Solon and the Greeks of a new beginning in almost every generation. "Always anew you become young again," they say, but their youth is a true *palingenesis*, a becoming again from the origin on, a beginning *ex arches*.¹²¹ Instead of aging, they give birth to themselves as a young people, they reoriginate. In contrast, all the Egyptian priests have accumulated for their own eyes are written images *ek palaion*, hieroglyphs from the "old times" (cf. 23a). They hold history but no origins; continuity but no beginnings; age but no youth.

Beginnings Regained

Beginnings rejuvenate. Yet, there is a difference between rejuvenation and the youthful naiveté of always first beginnings the priests of Saïs had ridiculed. There is a difference between new beginnings and beginnings-anew. In *Timaios*, Solon's new beginning is, in fact, no new beginning at all, but a *beginning anew* at the beginning—or, perhaps,

not even that: Solon begins *ex arches*—from the origin on. He does not return to the beginning *in illo tempore*; he does not turn back to an historical Once. He stands, rather, *in the beginning beginning*. His beginning is the origin: It begins at its own before. His re-remembrance is transformed into an act of beginning again the beginning. His memory is turned forward.

I readily admit that this reading of *Timaios* conflates, rather imprudently perhaps, what Kierkegaard had sought to separate: The Platonic concept of recollection and the “modern” (Christian) concept of repetition. For Kierkegaard, as is well known, recollection and repetition represented the “same movement”—in opposite directions, “for what is recollected has been, is repeated backward, whereas genuine repetition is recollected forward.”¹²² Both are quests for freedom and eternal life. But while for the Greeks, freedom and eternity seemed vouchsafed through the past, the moderns in the Kierkegaardian sense, are at risk to seek this freedom and eternity in the future: “[F]reedom must press forward, not retreat.”¹²³ The transcendence of repetition and its ability to produce something new lies in its futurity. Recollection, in the Platonic sense, cannot produce novelty: It only retrieves knowledge, knowledge that is sameness. Solon, from Kierkegaard’s perspective of recollection, begins the same beginning all over again. But does this retrieval, Solon’s “backward repetition,” not also authorize a new beginning, a beginning-again that can restore Athens to its ideal glory? Does this beginning-again not generate new choices and actions—does it not recollect into the future? Cannot Solon, having recovered his origins, speak the words of Kierkegaard’s “Young Man”: “I am myself again. Here I have repetition; I understand everything, and life seems more beautiful to me than ever”?¹²⁴

Let me, for the moment, leave Kierkegaard aside and return to Heidegger’s distinction—which concluded the previous chapter—between the empirical “beginning” as a “once” in the past and the beginning as a continuous “origin,” or inception. Like Plato, Heidegger seeks to reclaim the beginning, to reinvest it with the authority of an eternal origin. The mere historical beginning withers away before the beginning beginning which must be retrieved from the pastness of the past, not through history but through our “thinking inceptively” (*anfängliches*

Denken). “This inception is not the past,” writes Heidegger, “but rather, because it has decided in advance everything to come, it is constantly of the future (*das Zukünftige*).”¹²⁵ The “inception” so becomes the origin of “originary decisions,” and the beginning beginning of history lies where “a humanity comports itself decisively (*entscheidungshaft*) to being and its truth.”¹²⁶

What we can observe in Heidegger, is a *figura* of thought and history that will accompany us throughout this study. It is the motif of the beginning as the origin of “truth,” “unconditional will,” “decision,” and ultimately, of the beginning as “being.” In this “beginning,” the mythical and metaphysical sense of origin is filled with a strong performative and ethical content that seems, in turn, to authenticate the immanent futurity of the inception. Paradoxically, the inception—though it is not located in the past—must be “remembered” at a time when our knowledge has fallen into “decay,” when our “originary” knowing has retreated behind the “knowing-better” (*Besserwissen*) of history. This, of course, is the time of crisis, the time of decision—Heidegger’s “today”—but the decision can be made only in the correct remembrance of the beginning, in the hearing of the “claim of the incipient” (*Anspruch des Anfänglichen*). “Remembrance of the inception of our history,” Heidegger writes at a certainly critical time in 1941, “is the awakening of knowing about the decision that, even now, and in the future, determines Western humanity.”¹²⁷ Remembrance of the beginning is not a simple return to the past, but a “readiness for what is to come” (*Bereitschaft zum Künftigen*). Memory itself becomes a performative, future-oriented, and all but revelatory process, a “fore-thinking” (*Vordenken*) into the beginning beginning rather than a thinking back to a beginning in history. Remembrance, then, takes on the very unhistorical, or antihistorical meaning Nietzsche had already prepared, crossing over, however, into ontology. “Remembrance is no historiological staking out the past,” Heidegger declares: “Remembrance is placement into being itself, which still presences, even though all previous beings have passed.”¹²⁸ Thus beginning, being, and “presencing” (*wesen*) are strung together into a single grammar of “truth” that is veiled to the historian in the same manner as the ideal world is hidden to the empiricist. Remembrance now begins to look deceptively similar to the Platonic act of

re-remembrance. It is indeed the conflation of the beginning beginning (inception) with “being” (ontologically) and “presencing” (historically) that not only removes Heidegger’s beginning from the past but also places it into the realm of what *cannot pass*. The beginning beginning cannot pass, because it alone is “to come.” The origin, much as in Cohen, continues to originate. The inception, Heidegger writes, is “imperishable.” Its “imperishability” (*Unvergänglichkeit*), however, “does not consist in the longest possible duration of its consequences nor in the furthest possible extension of the breadth of its effects, but in the rarity and singularity of each varied return (*der je gewandelten Wiederkehr*) of what is originary within it.”¹²⁹

The “originary” returns. Heidegger’s overcoming of the past is neither an act of forgetting nor a leap into the future. It is, on the contrary, remembrance, return, and repetition. In repetition, “Being-as-having-been” becomes “authentic.” The past is raised from its pastness and embedded in the grammar of an imperishable past continuous, in a “having-been” that encompasses the horizons of past and future. The past, in other words, is given back to the inception; is once again transformed into true passing-on (handing-down). “Repeating,” Heidegger writes in *Being and Time*, “is handing down explicitly (*ausdrückliche Überlieferung*)—that is to say, going back into the possibilities of the Dasein that has been there.”¹³⁰ Beginning and repetition so become inseparable mirror images at the thresholds of time. Like beginnings, repetition requires a certain “resoluteness” (*Entschlossenheit*), an act of decision, a rebellion against inauthentic, unoriginary time; and like beginnings, repetition means freedom—positive and negative. “[I]t is in resolution that one first chooses the choice which makes one free for the struggle of loyally following in the footsteps of that which can be repeated.”¹³¹ Repetition, for Heidegger, breaks the cycle of repetitiveness, because it is a conscious act of beginning again, a resolute decision, a choosing of choice at the critical moment, which returns “Dasein” from its “decay” and allows us to be “there” in a more authentic manner.¹³²

Heidegger’s remembrance of beginnings, not unlike Plato’s *Timaios*, thus engenders the genre of what Mannheim called “conservative utopianism,” a counter-utopia, where repetition and memory, are anticipa-

tory, inverted recollections forward. Repetition, like the beginning, establishes future. It establishes a future that is, to speak with Gauchet, neither complete “otherness” nor complete “unsimilarity.” In repetition, the modern unease of the future has been abolished.

V

A Note on the Different, the Other, and the New

Repetition serves as a critique of radical beginnings and, consequently, as a critique of modernity. In our previous chapter, beginnings appeared in a variety of—not seldom contradictory—ways: as “absolute” and “first,” or as “subaltern” and “relative” beginnings; as archetypes and prototypes; as origins and as inceptions; as middles and as end points; as ruptures and as transitions; and as freedom and as bondage. What connected them, however, was our tacit assumption that beginnings refer to themselves, that their conscious imagination is always one of “new” and “first.” There were different beginnings, beginnings after beginnings, and beginnings next to beginnings—but there was no real emphasis on “other” beginnings, beginnings that are not merely different as in “another beginning,” or as in “beginning number one-two-three,” but beginnings that are, in themselves, *references* to another beginning, or to be precise, to *an other* beginning. “Otherness,” as Cornelius Castoriadis put it once, “is always the otherness of something in respect to another something.”¹³³ It differs—or is “other”—from “difference,” because it cannot be spatialized but only be understood in time, where each moment becomes “other” in relation to “another” on account of its uninterchangeability; it becomes other as that which has not yet been.

“Otherness,” especially since Levinas, has evolved into a complex philosophical term whose profound ontological and ethical implications cannot be reconstructed here.¹³⁴ With regard to the subject of beginnings, however, “otherness” may help distinguish “new” beginnings from “different” beginnings. It may also help distinguish the newness of beginnings from the newness of other things. To Castoriadis, the

“new as such” became possible only through the emergence of the “other.”¹³⁵ Conversely, as Levinas put it well before him, “the Desire for the new in us is a Desire for the other.”¹³⁶ It is also a desire for “renewal,” for a break in the “pure persistence in the Same,” that is a break with philosophy and the chronology of superimposed histories alike. “Philosophy’s itinerary,” Levinas writes, “still follows the path of Ulysses whose adventure in the world was but a return to his native island—complacency in the Same, misunderstanding of the Other.”¹³⁷ In philosophy, from the Greeks to Heidegger, “being is relieved from the weight of its otherness.” In history, Levinas continues, the Other is already “inscribed in the Same, the end in the beginning.” True novelty Levinas sees emerge only from elements neither “integrated” by chronology nor assimilated into the totalizing mind. Thus, while the modern consciousness, which Levinas calls a consciousness “with which no memory interferes, a freedom, upon which no past weighs,”¹³⁸ is insatiable in its desire for the new and its will to supersede the old, it also failed to recognize the otherness of past beginnings. To the moderns, the alterity of the past is assimilated into a “property” of thought. “Nothing preexists,” Levinas writes of the modern imagination: “one learns as if one *created*.”¹³⁹ To the modern mind, thought and reason encompass all that is new. The modern self-consciousness has consciously separated itself from the “old,” but this separation is, in truth, a “synchrony and unity” that negates the difference that has made this separation possible and that would make it possible again. “Assimilating and encompassing thought,” Levinas concludes, “goes beyond everything peremptory. . . . It is an edification of the true whose completion is like a novelty which no longer has to yield to any other which is newer, an absolute novelty which does not pass.”¹⁴⁰

The tragic irony of modernity is that it is always new. Where nothing can pass, become old, and yield to a newer, nothing can surprise us with its new alterity: There is no other to renew our Desire. “For thought,” Levinas writes, “everything is consummated”¹⁴¹—or, as Henri Bergson put it, “nothing is ever lost for it, nothing is ever created.”¹⁴² Modernity and thought become static concepts, cages of a consciousness that is bereft of the freedom to desire otherness and to renew itself. As the everlasting new, the modern mind tumbles back

into the “pure persistence in the Same.” If thought is to ever leave its self-constructed cage, Levinas argues with Bergson, it must renew itself in intuition, in the submission to organic time, to duration, which Bergson called an “unceasing creation, the uninterrupted up-surge of novelty.”¹⁴³ Only in passive, “pure patience,” “dis-interestedness,” and complete “dia-chrony” can the new arrive as truly unanticipated “new.” Only where our consciousness ceases to produce simultaneities of the same—only between memory and hope—can dia-chrony remain intact and transcendence enter: In the “concrete origin or originary situation,” Levinas writes, “the Infinite is put into me.” It is put into us as a “prophetic event of the relation to the new” and as a “throbbing of primordial time where, for itself, of itself, de-formalized, the idea of the Infinite signifies.”¹⁴⁴

Positive and Negative Beginnings

What Levinas offers as a critique of modernity is in truth a critique of radical beginnings, of beginnings beginning on their own, *tabula rasa*, conscious of themselves but unconscious of their traces in the “other” beginning. The modern project, which Levinas conceives as a project of confident reason, leaps toward radical newness without realizing that it has reached the *end* of newness.

Levinas’s critique happens to have a precursor in the history of thought. When René Descartes, in a famous passage of his *Discours de la Méthode*, likened our historical consciousness to convoluted cities with “crooked and uneven” avenues that ought to be torn down to their foundations and to be rebuild from the empty ground of drawing boards, he postulated a radicalism of new beginning as the basis of all untainted, error-free knowledge.¹⁴⁵ The method of doubt annihilates the past, erases the “superstitions of childhood,” to begin at the pristine beginning of thought. “I presume, therefore,” Descartes writes in the *Meditations*, “that everything I see is false, and I believe that none of what my deceptive memory has preserved for me ever existed.”¹⁴⁶ Ernst Cassirer’s judgment that the Cartesian method of doubt maintained a “purely negative attitude towards history”¹⁴⁷ is certainly correct to the extent that Descartes was still concerned with cognitive

principles or first grounds of certainty that were always present and could always be made present. But, on the other hand, the reduction through radical doubt had to be a retro-chronical process in itself, an archeology of first beginnings, a return to a quasi infancy which, of course, was quite different from the childhood of false beliefs the *Principia* sought to overcome. For the Cartesian self, the possibility of beginning anew was given through the ability to purify the intellect from the accumulations of error, to tear down the crookedness of our memories, and to begin at the first beginning not in a state of naiveté, but, quite to the contrary, in a state of methodical preparation.

In this respect, Schelling's harsh words for Descartes missed the ironic nature of doubt: "All that came before him he wiped out like with a sponge, as if there had been no philosophy in the past; but in truth, he threw philosophy back into its childhood."¹⁴⁸ To the idealist Schelling, the Cartesian method of doubt failed because its radical and a-temporal reduction only yielded a negative beginning. Descartes, in fact, "ended where he should have begun."¹⁴⁹ Schelling's own *System*, on the other hand, claimed a "positive" beginning, a beginning in "true time" that could only be uncovered by what Schelling called "historical" philosophy. "Time is the beginning of all philosophical exploration," Schelling writes in his *System der Weltalter*: "Without it the past cannot be grasped; and there will be no vitality (*Lebendigkeit*) in science before the pulses of time are beating again with life."¹⁵⁰ Where Descartes tore down the crooked city, Schelling promises to tear down the "building of time."¹⁵¹ It is the time of the "present world" that must be dismantled, a time whose desire to become "true" future and "true" past is in vain: "However much it tries and struggles, [this time] only postulates itself."¹⁵² "True" time, by contrast, is the time that enables the world to age, the time that postulates the world as history. As such, "true" time must be outside the past it constitutes, because it is in "true" time that time passes. The task of Schelling's historical philosophy, then, is to penetrate the static permanence of the world, conceived as an everlasting present, and to arrive at an organic view of time—at the "ages of the world." Rationalism, or "logical" philosophy, by contrast, perceives the world as a mechanical recurrence of events, where all knowledge is given a priori and where there is, literally, "nothing

new under the sun.” What logical thought lacks is the element of “surprise”: The rationalist wants to “put an end to things.”¹⁵³ The historical philosopher, however, wants to begin: He cherishes the “unexpected,” the other in time; his “narrative philosophy” replaces the a-temporal certainty of logic. As all historical can only be narrated, the knowledge of historical philosophy is unfinished in its beginning, an a posteriori unfolding into the future. Philosophy thus becomes the only “science that begins from the beginning” (*schlechthin von vorn anfangende Wissenschaft*),¹⁵⁴ but it is also a form of remembrance where the “true essence of man” is recovered and the origins of creation illuminated. Where this happens, historical philosophy becomes a “*Mitwissenschaft*” of creation, a confidant in knowledge about the “absolute beginning.”¹⁵⁵ It is in this “duality” of knowledge, in the “inner dialogue” (*innere Unterredungskunst*) between narration and anamnesis, that Schelling’s beginning at the beginning becomes an always new beginning; not an “absolute beginning,” because there is no one who can “truly begin” except for the Creator; but a beginning that, as in mythic time, *begins anew* the beginning that is absolute and other.

Repetition as Otherness

Schelling’s reading of Descartes is strikingly similar to Levinas’s response to modern rationalism, and may well have informed, as George Lukács noted, the very antimodernism (which, of course, is a form of modernism itself) that accompanies the metaphors of incipience and repetition.¹⁵⁶ But Schelling’s critique enables us to draw a distinction between new beginnings as conscious annulments of time, turning otherness into sameness (“rationality,” “modernity”), and, on the other hand, beginnings-anew as retemporalizations of time, turning sameness to otherness (“historical philosophy”). To rephrase with Schelling this peculiar grammar of beginnings-anew: The new beginning is a beginning-anew at the first beginning, at the origin; it not only mirrors but *repeats* the first beginning. It must be one with it, for it must be in its place; but it also must be “other,” for it must be new. Thus, its repetition is precisely not the recurrence of sameness but a repetition that, paradoxically, creates otherness: In repeating the first, the new

beginning finds the other to its own otherness. In this sense, every beginning-anew is an “other” beginning of the first. It requires time, dia-chrony, to maintain its otherness, but it also requires synchronicity—a mythic *One Time*—to establish itself as the “other,” to begin in otherness.

This, as Gilles Deleuze argued in his book *Difference and Repetition*, was the “stoic error” of expecting repetition from the laws of nature: That repetition was a cycle of resemblance. Only in a world of generalities, in a world of reason and law can repetition mean resemblance—but resemblance is not repetition. It is only the discovery of equality, a substitution of generalities. Repetition, on the other hand, as Deleuze conceives it, is “against the law,” it is “transgression”: “It puts law into question, it denounces its nominal or general character in favour of a more profound and more artistic reality.”¹⁵⁷ Repetition thus becomes a resistance to generality, a resistance to resemblance and replacement, and, in fact, repeatability as such. “To repeat,” writes Deleuze, “is to behave . . . in relation to something unique or singular, which has no equal or equivalent.”¹⁵⁸ Repetition, then, in its effort to establish individuality, otherness, and newness, will become the exemplary figure of counter-historicism or, better yet, of historicism fulfilled.

VI

Repetition and Infinity

Thus repetition comes to the rescue in the crisis of historicism; to the rescue in the dilemma between singularity and meaning; to the rescue in the relentless, devouring preliminary of progress; and to the rescue in our irreversible being-onto-death. Repetition reintroduces the “turning point” that differentiated time, according to Luhmann, had ejected from our experience of history. In repetition, time can be “transformed” again, though it cannot veer back, cannot pass backwards. This, for Kierkegaard, was the dialectic of repetition: That it must repeat forward, that it must repeat outside the cycle of fate and sameness. In repetition, the necessity of *anánke* is replaced through the possibility of

arché. “[R]epetition,” writes Kierkegaard, “appears as a task for freedom.”¹⁵⁹ Freedom, he writes in another place, “must press forward, not retreat.”¹⁶⁰ The task, then, is not the enjoyment of freedom itself, nor, however, is the task marked by pure and open futurity. Its fulfillment lies neither in the infinite, meaningless marching on of the modern beginning, nor in a regress to the “still life” of “same sameness”¹⁶¹ of the ancients, but rather, in the repetition of individuality, in the return upon oneself. “I am myself again,” exclaims the young man: “The split that was in my being is healed.”¹⁶² History, for Kierkegaard, cannot heal this split, even if it recognizes, as in Hegel, the “cheap” regeneration of generations. In history, “the same individual . . . makes a beginning many times,” but the question will always remain “whether he is lost through this initial beginning, or whether what is lost through this initial beginning is not recoverable.”¹⁶³ Repetition, on the other hand, is more than just another beginning and more than just recovery: It is genuine renewal, a bringing into existence, and hence, “making new” of what has been.¹⁶⁴

As such, Kierkegaard’s repetition anticipates Gadamer’s reflections on the idea of “transition,” the interpenetration of old and new. In the transition from old to new, Gadamer reminded us, we not only experience a rupture but also a “new beginning.” Still, the newness of this beginning consists precisely *not* in the negation of the old, not in erasure and forgetfulness but, rather, in “that the Old is *remembered* in its dissolution (*Auflösung*).”¹⁶⁵ This “remembrance of dissolution, where the future is released into its own, still uncertain horizon of destined meaning (*Bestimmung*),”¹⁶⁶ Gadamer calls “ideal” dissolution, a dissolution that affirms the past as passing forward, dissolving, to be sure, yet not in a tragic but cathartic sense. In the cathartic rhythemics of time, transitions are intervals, in-betweens, which, if we think of Husserl’s analyses, require not only the presence of both memory and expectation but also a degree of “repetition.” For Husserl, the experience of continuity and rhythmic duration was grounded in the “dual intentionality” of re-remembrance: “Though re-remembrance is not the same as expectation,” he writes, “it has a horizon that is oriented towards the future, towards the future of the re-remembered; and this horizon is posited [by intention].”¹⁶⁷ It is the “protentionality” of

re-remembrance that not only moves into the horizon, but also, and more importantly, always opens up (*eröffnet*) the horizon anew. The re-remembering consciousness also becomes the consciousness that is “awake” and aware of its transition from now to now. “The awake consciousness,” Husserl writes, “the awake life is a living-toward (*Entgegenleben*), a living from this Now to the new Now.”¹⁶⁸ The “awake consciousness,” in other words, is the consciousness conscious of its transition in time because it represents to itself what Gadamer would later call the “dissolution” in transition. Representation (*Wiedervergegenwärtigung*), in Husserl, is the modus of time that corresponds not to the memory of the past (this would be “presentation”), but to re-remembrance as an expectation (*Erwartung*). Re-remembrance, in this sense, is nothing less than a “regeneration” (*Wiedererzeugung*), and transition itself, the glimpse from this now to the next, which becomes, for Husserl, “something originary that prepares the way to future intentions of experience.” The flux of time, therefore, need not be perceived as a repeated “it is” but can also be experienced as the “original manifoldness of the ‘I can’: I can return to any moment in this flux to generate it [the flux] anew.”¹⁶⁹ Our constitution of time and sense of continuity and duration depends, in fact, on the regeneration of each “timepiece” (*Zeitstück*) in its fullness—and so does, for Husserl, the “self.” While duration and identity remain “unclear” in the pure looking-back into the past, re-remembrance and regeneration establish clarity: “In clear regeneration (*Wiedererzeugung*) I have my ‘self,’” writes Husserl, “and the clearer it is, the more complete it becomes.”¹⁷⁰

Husserl’s repetition as a completion and healing of one’s self resonates with Kierkegaard’s “I am myself again”—the paradoxical return to a self one always has been. In the dialectic of renewal and in the repetition of individuality, which Kierkegaard calls the “only true repetition,”¹⁷¹ the “new” self is in truth the “old” self, “quite the same self he was before, down to the least significant peculiarity,” as Kierkegaard writes in *Either/Or*. “[A]nd yet,” he continues, “he becomes another, for the choice permeates everything and transforms it.”¹⁷² Referring to this passage, M. Jamie Ferreira aptly describes Kierkegaard’s repetition as a “becoming what one is, a renewal of the self which brings what has been into existence now.”¹⁷³ In the bringing forth anew of what has

already been there, repetition is the realization of a choice—a choice to be transformed. Once again, however, just as the memory of repetition remembers forward, so the transformation in repetition transforms, as it were, backward: The “I chooses itself.” Ethically, then, repetition affords the freedom to become oneself. Logically, repetition is the act of becoming alone—the pure transition traditional logic, in fact, cannot grasp: Movement. In logic, transition falls “silent,” in repetition “transition becomes.”¹⁷⁴ “Modern philosophy makes no movement,” Kierkegaard writes, “. . . and if it makes any movement at all, it is always within immanence, whereas repetition is and remains a transcendence.”¹⁷⁵ It remains transcendence, because unlike in logic, where movement is the silent becoming actual (and immanent) of possibility, repetition’s movement is the renewal of a possibility, whose actuality, if freedom is to be preserved, must always be beyond. This, for Kierkegaard, was the true meaning of Aristotle’s “*kinesis*”: Movement *in transition*, movement as the expression of “freedom forwards.”

In the moment of transition, then, in pure movement, where all possible remains possible, as in Husserl’s “I can,” repetition assumes, for Kierkegaard, a quality of endlessness, or infinity. Repetition, however, also stresses the opposite: The specificity of return, of becoming oneself. “My emancipation is assured; I am born to myself,” writes Kierkegaard.¹⁷⁶ Gadamer, referring to Hölderlin’s “ideal dissolution,” speaks of the poetic transition through language as “liberation to its own infinity.”¹⁷⁷ In repetition, too, infinity is not abstract but a concrete quality of “one’s own.” Freedom, from the perspective of repetition, is precisely not the state of anarchy in the face of what Luhmann called the “overstocked storehouse of possibilities” created by modern historicity—nor does it correspond to the seeming liberation through first, or new beginnings. To the contrary, it is the “second time,” as Kierkegaard writes, that at its very beginning overcomes the frustration of the first.¹⁷⁸ Repetition, in this sense, relieves us of the absolutely new, to which we resist, and it liberates us from the pressure of an absolute future in whose limitlessness we fail to recognize ourselves. The only “true” repetition, as seen in Kierkegaard, is the repetition of individuality—the repetition of limits and concreteness. But this repetition, unless it is the recurrence merely of sameness, is also

the transcending of limits and concreteness, the going beyond the “old” self in the act of “renewal.”

Repetition and Repentance

Without transcendence, the self cannot repeat, cannot renew. In immanence, the old passes away and can, at best, be mediated into the new. Philosophy, in the Greek and Hegelian sense, for Kierkegaard, remains bound by the immanence of passing time, whether as an image of eternity or as a dialectic between old and new. To approach transcendence, repetition must abandon both the philosophical and naturalist realm: It must become religious. “‘Repetition,’” Kierkegaard writes, “is and remains a religious category.”¹⁷⁹ What Constantin Constantinus, the protagonist of the “Report” in Kierkegaard’s *Repetition*, fails to realize is that repetition involves a will to change beyond self-sufficiency, that it involves, in its last analysis, a form of atonement. A clever “ironist,” Constantinus cannot go beyond to repeat himself. His report ends where all false repetition and metaphysics of one-timeness must end—with an ode to death: “Why has no one returned from the dead?”¹⁸⁰ Because in the “drama of existence,” life is not given again. To the “Young Man” of the second part, on the other hand, life is “more beautiful than ever.” The young man can celebrate the birth to himself, the liberation from the repetitions of nature and fate, the overcoming of Hegel’s Aufhebung and of Plato’s *stasis* alike. He has transferred repetition into his individuality: It is no longer the external repetition that he seeks, but the internal, repetitious consciousness, the forward-recollecting memory. However “primitive” the discoveries of the young man, Kierkegaard entrusts him to experience, by virtue of the absurd, “true repetition” as eternity.¹⁸¹ Able to turn back to himself, to “take himself back again,” the young man—young perhaps as in the rejuvenated sense of *Timaios*—has squared the circle between stasis and mediation: His *kínesis* is not the force of linearity in time, but the eternalizing in-between, the instant Plato’s *Parmenides* described as *metabállon*—turning.¹⁸² It is this instant (*exaifnes*), which in *Parmenides*, is lodged between kinesis and stasis, “outside all time” (156e), that moves the young man into repetition as eternity: an eter-

nity, however, that is not timeless, but time in its “fullness,” future and past at once, “temporality,” as Kierkegaard calls it in the *Concept of Anxiety*, “whereby time constantly intersects eternity and eternity constantly pervades time.”¹⁸³ In Kierkegaard’s *Either/Or*, this eternal moment still appears as attached to the “aesthetic existence,” the dissolution of personhood and memory in a mood of despair.¹⁸⁴ In *Repetition*, however, the moment is conceived as a moment of despair and change: as transition.¹⁸⁵ Repetition, as Kierkegaard puts it, “enters in after the whole movement of the crisis has started, but enters in precisely by pressing forward.”¹⁸⁶ What occurs in the moment of crisis, then, is not the aesthetic dwelling in despair, “whereby he immediately is the man he is,” but an ethical turning “whereby a man becomes what he becomes.”¹⁸⁷ In logic, this turning is expressed by the nonconcept of metabállon; in poetics, it would coincide with the Aristotelian reversal in plot—*metábasis*; in ethics, it would be the turning of conscience—*metánoia*; in religious existence, it would be the turning between atonement and pardon, the turning turning, which Kierkegaard calls “repetition in the highest sense.”¹⁸⁸

For in atonement, the last traces of immanence are wiped away. Where atonement commences, the return to oneself becomes possible only through intervention of a pardoning voice. Repeating renewal needs the discontinuity of genuine “otherness.” Here it is important to emphasize, as Levinas did in his final chapter of *Totality and Infinity*, that repetition, in the sense of recommencement, must not be confused with a continuity of transformation, that it is different from the mythic concepts of metamorphosis or metempsychosis. Recommencement requires “discontinuous time,” Levinas writes, and it is this discontinuity that makes possible “absolute youth.”¹⁸⁹

But has “absolute youth” not also been the privilege of beginnings? Have not beginnings rejuvenated the self? Have not beginnings been the source of autonomy and freedom? Kierkegaard and Levinas, of course, will reply that there are no true beginnings other than beginnings-again. “[E]ven if you are free,” Levinas writes in his reading of *Sanhedrin* 36b–37a, “you are not the absolute beginning. You come after many things and after many people.”¹⁹⁰ In a time-world whose absolute beginning we cannot be, the beginning-again of our own beginnings remains the only

absolute to resist the plenitude of relative beginnings. Repetition, Edward Said noted, establishes the authority of the first: In repetition, we can truly begin at the beginning. Descartes, as we recall from Schelling's critique, could not but begin at the end. Modernity, if conceived as the enterprise of reason, as in Levinas, could not but remain in the cycle of sameness. Recollection, which, for Kierkegaard, encapsulated the Greek mode of memory, cannot but begin "with the loss" and the recovery of what has always been there: The great advantage of recollection is "that it has nothing to lose."¹⁹¹ However, its great disadvantage is that it has nothing to gain beyond itself, that it cannot transcend the beginning, that its youth is never discontinuous but always already old: that it can never truly begin-anew. Where there is no true recommencement, there can also be no true atonement and pardon. Only in recommencement can we maintain a relation, as Levinas writes, "with the recommenced past in a free return to that past . . . , and in free interpretation and free choice, in an existence as entirely pardoned. This recommencement of the instant," he continues, "this triumph of the time of fecundity over the becoming of the mortal and aging being, is a pardon, the very work of time."¹⁹² The paradox of pardon, for Levinas, lies in its retroactive "inversion of the natural order of things," in its claim to the reversibility of time. Pardon is not mere forgetting, and the pardoned is not again the innocent. "Active in a stronger sense than forgetting," Levinas writes, "pardon acts upon the past, somehow repeats the event, purifying it."¹⁹³ Rather than negating or denying the past, pardon "conserves" the past, but it conserves it as pardoned in a "purified present." The past, in this manner, is truly *aufgehoben*. The true face of time reveals itself in the very nature of pardon, in the possibility of recommencement that delivers us from the future as a "swarming of indistinguishable possibles which would flow toward my present and which I would grasp"; it reveals itself in a newness that, though "absolutely new," is also "heavy with all the springtimes lived through," an "ever recommencing alterity of the accomplished"; and in a dialectic of "death and resurrection" where "[r]esurrection constitutes the principal event of time."¹⁹⁴ Thus Blanchot can call "the power that begins everything over again . . . older than the beginning," and in fact, a correction of "the error of our death."¹⁹⁵ With similar solemnity, Paul Ricoeur concludes his thoroughly Heideggerian

essay on “Narrative Time,” posing the rhetorical question: “And is not repetition itself a kind of resurrection from the dead, as any reader of Michelet will recognize?”¹⁹⁶

Transition

As the reader of Michelet will recognize, all history is said to be a resurrection from the dead—and it is repetition that holds the magic formula not only to revive but also to redeem. Like Kierkegaard, Levinas relates repetition to eternity in a dynamic, “kinetic” sense—to eternity as a task, to “infinity.” Repeating time so takes on the meaning of “messianic time,” an eternal futurity that removes both perpetuation and death from the end of times.¹⁹⁷ But, once again, we must be cautious not to confuse this futurity with the rather un-Hegelian and, in Mannheim’s definition, liberal concept of utopianism, with the one-way dynamic of mere—radical—beginnings. Repetitions do not begin *tat-bula rasa*. They conserve what they renew. In their forwardness of time is given a returning reversal, the abolishment of radical beginnings, as well as of radical futurity. Heidegger’s “thinking forward into the more beginning beginning (*anfänglicheren Anfang*)”¹⁹⁸ reflects this inverted futurity. In coming toward itself (*Zukommen*), Heidegger’s Dasein also comes *back* to itself: “By the term ‘futural’, we do not here have in view a ‘now’ which has not yet become ‘actual’ and which some time will be for the first time. We have in view the coming (*Kunft*) in which Dasein, in its ownmost potentiality-for-Being, comes towards itself.”¹⁹⁹ “Authentic” futurity, for Heidegger, is a retrieval, or restoration of the Dasein that has always been there; and “anticipation,” in the existential sense, can be nothing other than a “coming back understandingly to one’s innermost ‘been.’” Against history, and against the pastness of the past, this “having been” *is*, just as the “inception,” Heidegger’s beginning beginning can never become a “was,” but always continues to be, always “presences.”

On one level, then, repetition, or the return to oneself, can be understood as an act of identification. Derrida, in an almost Kierkegaardian manner, speaks of an “interminable and indefinitely phantasmic process,” built upon the imagination of how to say “I.”²⁰⁰ In this respect,

repetition ties back to the historicist rescue of the individual, to Rickert's "individuality as a task," and no less, to the metaphysics of one-timeness that we found manifest in the religious critique of myth. The point of existential repetition is that it repeats in otherness, that it repeats singularity—that it *creates* singularity.

On another level, repetitions must be understood as a *specific form of beginnings*. Rather than abolishing beginnings, as the mythic circularity of recurrence might suggest, repetition, in the "modern"—or better yet, counter-modern—sense, reclaims the beginning as incipience. With Kierkegaard, one could speak of a "kinetic" beginning, of the beginning as movement, as transition, as turning—but always in a dialectic of task and retrieval (*Wiederholen*, for Heidegger) of individuality. Here we cannot but notice that repetition begins to look like the beginning itself; that repetition, too, stands at the thresholds of continuity, pregnant, as it were, with the *vita ventura*, with futurity, as well as with what Gadamer had called "ideal dissolution," the remembering of the passing past. "It is the life which is promised to those who set their hands to the plow without looking back," John Caputo writes about the Kierkegaardian sense of repetition. "It has to do with the possible, with effecting new life, not with reawakening one who slumbers. Repetition starts at the beginning, not at the end. It means to produce something, not to reproduce a prior presence."²⁰¹ But have we not repeated here our own beginnings?

Only to the extent that repetitions claim to be beginnings in themselves. The repeating consciousness is always an *incipient* consciousness. Beginning-anew has always a sense of new beginning, but it has also a sense of specificity and individuality, a sense of otherness mere new beginnings lack. At the *post mortum* of modernity, which has also been declared the end of history,²⁰² we cannot begin at the "absolute" beginning, as Levinas reminded us, because there is no absolute author, no absolute subject—but we can begin at the "authentic" beginning; we can begin at the "other" beginning—we can repeat. Whether this repetition is indeed an existential commitment to the "abyssal play" of flux, as Caputo would like to see it,²⁰³ or not rather a fixed figura of meaning—much like the discredited beginning itself—in an otherwise meaningless stream of the *Unheimlich*, to invoke another Heideggerian

term, cannot concern us here. What we must conclude, however, is that the repeating consciousness, despite its ideal futurity, derives its authority from an act of retrieval: Where beginnings assimilate the old into the new or even ignore it altogether, repetitions reach back into the old to renew it through—at times cataclysmic—dissolution. In both we can see Mannheim’s utopian mind at work, for both act to redeem us from what Niebuhr had called the “tyranny of the present.” But while beginnings act to change the present toward its ideal future, repetitions, to paraphrase Levinas, *act upon the past*. Repetitions do not forget; they repair. Beginning-again “purifies” the first beginning, and it is the beginner who now also becomes the purifier. Rather than beginning in the narrative innocence of “in the beginning,” repetition begins as radical repentance. Renewal, reform, restoration, recovery, regeneration, *renovatio*, *rinascimento*, resurrection—renaissance are expressions of this radical repentance. They belong to a typically antiliberal lexicon of purgatory where religion, history, and political utopianism are fused into the powerful notion of a “New Man.” Their endless suggestiveness lies in the realization that repetition—even if clothed in the shroud of suffering—in truth empowers, redeems, and promises eternal life.

Three Turning

Transformations into the Open

*Io ritornai dalla santissima onda
Rifatto sì come piante novelle
Rinovellate di novella fronda,
Puro e disposto a salire alle stelle.*

—Dante, *La Divina Comedia*, Purgatorio, Canto XXXIII

Die Umkehr ist die größte Gestalt des “Anfangens.”

—Martin Buber, *Der Glaube des Judentums*

I

Inventory, Incomplete

We must take inventory. The previous chapters considered beginnings as auxiliary terms in a grammar that imposed specific patterns of meaning onto an otherwise meaningless world—the world as middle and flux. The beginning revealed itself as a narrative rather than empirical concept. It unraveled as a fictional space of in-between, an incision into the “flux” of things and, where it began again, as a reversal and repair of the “momentum”—but this fiction took on the shape of time: of a time told against itself. The time of narrative, as Ricoeur noted, is always counter-chronic. Beginnings are begun in an act of counter-temporalization (*Gegen-Verzeitlichung*, if we want to develop Koselleck’s terminology). Hence, to the nominal beginning, we joined the action verb—beginning as a conscious act, the making of threshold, the holding of betweenness, the transition and transcendence from old to new. There was no beginning without the dialectics of old and new, without the dialectics of transition and synchronization—and there was no beginning-again, no repetition that claimed not for itself a new beginning, a renewal of forwardness. Just as the beginning begins a transgression of the very present it also posits, so the moment of

repetition—the *momentum*—is filled with a desire to overcome the present of “what is” and to move toward what ought to be, toward anticipation. Their desire for discontinuity and their inherent futurity—even if in an inverted order of before and after—gave both beginning and repetition meaning beyond the indicative. Beginnings and repetitions appeared as conscious choices in temporality, as practices of memory and forgetting, as freedom and imperative: They articulated an ethics of “counter-time.”

Thus Bonhoeffer could celebrate creation as the beginning of freedom, and John Caputo assured us that repetition represented not only a state of constant *Angst* but also “the constancy and continuity of choice.”¹ Heidegger related the inception to a return to the possibilities of Dasein, and repetition to a recovery of resoluteness in discontinuous time, retrieving what has “been there,” or the “having-been,” and uncovering a new sense of “presencing” and “imperishability.” Beginnings and repetitions, then, are not only tributes to choice and resoluteness but also strategies of continuity and permanence. “Men in the middest,” Frank Kermode taught us, invest their imagination in “coherent patterns” of meaning hoping to find a “satisfying consonance with the origins and with the middle.”² History, as we have seen, is such a pattern of imagination—as is its shadow image, “counter-history.” All efforts to savor the moment of the middle, the pure momentum, *exaifnes, kairos*, failed under the omnipresence of imaginative plot, whether diachronic and simple, as a pattern of beginning-middle-end, or synchronic and “fulfilled,” as in the kairetic superimposition of past-present-future. Beginning totalizes. But it is again the dialectics of beginning that seems to also resist this totalization: The beginning establishes completeness, and yet is itself a rupture through the complete; it employs the world as flux, and yet claims its openness; it encompasses all already, and yet anticipates what is not yet. So again: It repeats the before, but not as the before. It does not repeat the already but makes new. It does not return to the already but turns the beginning toward the not-yet. It begins the beginning, but it does not begin *at* the beginning. The again can never be truly “again,” no more than the beginning can ever be at the “beginning.” This has been the mysterious logic

of beginnings: In the flux of being, there is neither a Twice nor a Once. We cannot but begin, and we cannot begin. Just as we cannot return to innocence, we cannot return to the unbegun.

But We Can, of Course, Turn

But we can, of course, turn. We can imagine ourselves at the point “in between,” between beginning and beginning-again: at the turning. At a turning that is not the same as the narrative turning point, Aristotle’s *peripéteia*, for it does not have inscribed the fullness of plot, not even the fullness of time. At a turning that does not represent completeness but, to the contrary, the incomplete, this turning is common to both beginning and repetition; and we must resist the sequential order of beginning-turning-beginning-again that seems to be implied in its middleness. Beginning, beginning-again, and turning are not stages in the same process, but overlapping modes of one and the same consciousness; of one and the same middle. The incipient consciousness is also the turning consciousness; is also the repeating consciousness. Each mode is a simultaneous horizon of the other. Each mode is a between.

Turning is the mode of the incomplete—and incompleteness, if we recall Droysen, appeared to be the mode of lived historicity, of *Geschichtlichkeit*. Paul Ricoeur rightly linked the term *Geschichtlichkeit* to a conceptual fabric of vitality, freedom, and development that accompanied its uses from Hegel to Dilthey to Heidegger.³ We need not repeat that lived historicity seeks to be different from history, that the “historical reality,” as Max Scheler put it, does not follow the linear plot of “antiquarian” historicism. What inspires the search for historical reality and, perhaps, the recent reawakenings in memory as well, is that an “existential,” remembered past does not accumulate completeness but continues to “have been”; to go on and to *pass on*. Memory, as we remember with Edward Casey, operates in and through the duality of pastness and persistence—which is the same duality that inheres all beginnings and beginnings-again.

But there is more: Into the correlative fabric that weaves together memory, repetition, and the incomplete is also woven the idea of *re-deemability*. “Historical reality,” Scheler writes, “is incomplete and, so

to speak, redeemable.”⁴ A past that is complete—passed and “over”—cannot be redeemed. History that is chiseled across the walls of Saïs cannot be redeemed. Time that only knows a rigid before and after cannot be redeemed. Redemption needs the incomplete. It needs turning. *Wendezeit*. Crisis. Kairos. It needs a metahistorical pivot, the moment (*Augenblick*) that, as Karl Barth saw it, “lies between the times without being a moment in time.”⁵

However we conceive of it, turning resists completion, resists finitude; it resists history. Turning always carries horizons of beginning and fragments of redemption. In Scheler’s “historical reality,” therefore, events are never complete, the doors of time never closed. We can always turn, though we can never truly *return*. History, to paraphrase again Ernst Jünger, knows no returns, only repetitions. Time moves forward—but it moves forward in a dialectic of transition that allows repetitions to move against time, to retrieve and to create. Likewise, for Scheler, the repetition of memory is not a mental image that we possess in the present, not a representation of what has passed, but a kind of imaginative “repossession,” a “living and dwelling” in the very situation of the past. Ernst Cassirer referred to this type of memory as “symbolic” in his 1944 *Essay on Man*: “Symbolic memory is the process by which man not only repeats his past experience but also reconstructs this experience. Imagination becomes a necessary element of true recollection.”⁶ True recollection, in turn, assumes an aesthetic quality; its “image” becomes an expression of a “creative force” that is, at the same time, the expression of a “new freedom of consciousness.”⁷ Cassirer, like Scheler, viewed memory neither as a storehouse nor as a mimetic image, nor as a complete retrieval but as *creation* of the past. “It is not simply a repetition but rather a rebirth of the past,” he writes, “it implies a creative and a constructive process.”⁸

Echoing in Cassirer is, of course, Henri Bergson’s seminal distinction between merely repeating, habitual memory and memory as a conscious, extra-temporal recollection (*mémoire-souvenir*) with the ability to “act out anew” (*jouer à nouveau*) the past.⁹ To Bergson, habitual memory (as in the memorization of a poem) remained confined to temporal repetition, “self-sufficient” and mechanical, whereas “pure memory” (*souvenir pur*) encompassed a totality of repetitions, not sequenced and ordered, but simultaneously given in a dreamlike “whole.”

Yet, removed from all habitual movement, pure memory also remains “powerless” and “useless,” like the disinterested gaze of a painting, unless it is, as it must be, localized in the memory of the body, unless it is “made present” in the “present presence.” This present, which Bergson also describes as the “sensorial-motoric” state of the body, is characterized not by its difference from past and future, but by an “attitude towards the immediate future,” by an “anticipatory action,” where no other past is alive than the past that can “work towards this action.”¹⁰ Presentness, then, is characterized by a sense of presencing forward, as it were, beyond the boundaries of the present moment. This also defines the direction of memory: “In truth,” Bergson concludes, “memory does not consist of a going back (*régression*) from present to past, but in a progression from past to present.”¹¹ We might also say: Memory proceeds from the complete, from that which no longer acts, to the incomplete, to that which is free to reenact. Memory, to speak with E. J. Furlong, is not a noun but a verb, an ongoing activity.¹² Or, in still different words: Mnemic imagination renders the past incomplete again, open, passing forward, turnable, as it were, even unbegun, uncreated, an-archic, as in Levinas’ sense of a past that is “pre-original.”¹³

“[R]emembering,” Scheler thus writes, following Bergson, “is the beginning of freedom.”¹⁴ For rather than securing the continuous “stream of psychic causality,” memory disrupts this stream, creating discontinuity and liberating us, in effect, from its habitual causality. This liberation, for Scheler, not only removes the fetters of history but also creates the condition for renewal: It enables repentance. Only in memory, Scheler maintains, can repentance enter as a “true incursion into the past sphere of our life,” as a “genuinely effective encroachment upon it,” as an act of making-new, turning the past—towards redemption.¹⁵

II

Turning and Meaning

A conceptual triangle of incompleteness, turning, and redemption has just emerged that is, perhaps, nowhere as explicit as in Paul Tillich. For

Tillich, redemption lies “beyond time”¹⁶—but it does not lie *outside* time, not in a fixed space of eternity. It transcends history: It both traverses and *transforms* historical time. Tillich’s notion of redemption, profoundly rooted in Weimar intellectual and political messianism,¹⁷ appears to be driven by a passionately antimetaphysical, even antiutopian, concreteness of the “not-yet.” In redemption, time and history are not abolished but aroused and “shaken up.” The eternal “bursts” into the course of time, and the moments where this course is shattered are moments where the metatemporal encroaches upon the temporal; they are “turning points,” kairos. Kairos, especially in Tillich’s later thought,¹⁸ means *Wendepunkt*, not the point of arbitrary change, but the point in history where the “eternal” seizes the temporal, judges upon it and, at the same time, gives direction (*richtet*) to it, transforming the moment and restoring its freedom to pass forward into the New. Newness here means transcendence, the overcoming of the present being and its recognition of the old as “old.” “Meaning,” Tillich writes, “is the positing of the New.”¹⁹ The New transcends both mythic cyclicity and modern directionlessness, the moving of time along space. “Time without direction is time under the rule of space.”²⁰ History, if it is true *Geschichtlichkeit*, subverts this rule, because in history the New is posited as transcending the cycle of life, transcending even death.²¹

But history can posit the New only through kairotic time, through the moment of turning from “old” to “new,” at the turning that *posits* old and new, imprinting its direction on the course of time. The kairos, in this way, retemporalizes time—but it also conquers space: It not only stands at the threshold of continuity but is itself the threshold, the transition that makes time possible. “[T]ime,” Tillich writes, “gives direction and is creative; it creates something New, a ‘New Being’ (*Neue Kreatur*), as Paulus called it. Now the tragic cycle of space is overcome, for history has a definite beginning and a definite end.”²²

Yet, for Tillich, the definitiveness of beginning and end are by no means forms of emplotment. To the contrary, it is the kairos that creates meaning, meaning from the middle, from the moment of turning. Beginning and end of history are mere by-products of the middle. “The middle of time,” Tillich writes, “is that place where the meaning of temporality has realized (*verwirklicht*) itself objectively in one moment,

in such a manner, that we can determine from it not only the meaning of the whole but also, looking backward, the beginning and, looking forward, the end.”²³ It is the middle, the turning, that creates plot and meaning, not the plot that creates the middle. This is the paradox of meaning in history: In the complete plot, in the fixed order of beginning-middle-end, there is no turning, and where there is no turning there is no meaning.

Tillich’s meaning in history, then, seems to differ radically from Löwith’s conclusions about biblical and “Christian” history as forms of historicism motivated by mere futurity and eschatology. “What really begins with the appearance of Jesus Christ,” Löwith writes, “is not a new epoch of secular history, called ‘Christian,’ but the beginning of an end.”²⁴ The meaning of kairos, for Löwith, lies in its redemptive emplotment, “uniting the past as preparation with the future as consummation.”²⁵ In the history of salvation, there is unity and solidarity “from beginning to end,” a divine *oikonomia*, whose middle completes what is ultimately yet another story—another meaningful myth. In short, meaning in history is generated by a closure in narrative. History so begins to “make sense,” to signify consonance.

But “making sense” is not the meaning of Tillich’s kairos—which aims at exactly the opposite. Rather than rendering the story complete, rather than joining together preparation and consummation, beginning and end, Tillich’s kairos tears the plot apart, fractures its completeness. For Tillich, the point of turning, not unlike Barth’s *Augenblick*, can itself not be part of the plot. It has nothing in common with the poetic *peripéteia*, with the unexpected turning that would, for Aristotle, make a story interesting and complex. Where there is plot, turning can never be unexpected. The kairos must be pure suddenness, it must defeat all emplotment, because it derives its meaning precisely from the incomplete. Rather than being the midpoint in a story, the kairos “stories” (as a verb); it continues to be, like Benjamin’s narrator, in a middle whose end points remain incomplete middles themselves, utopian in the “true” sense. Only here can be genuine *peripéteia*, a turning that is unexpected and unexpecting—the birth of something new.

The Middle as Concrete Utopia

The middle so displaces beginning and end in the competition for meaning. Incompleteness holds meaning because it leaves open the gaps of fracture (*Bruchstellen*) which, as Ernst Jünger playfully noted, are also the sites of finding (*Fundstellen*).²⁶ This openness also predicates Tillich's call for a "new realism" from the depths of crisis and kairos, a realism "that is not finitude resting in itself, but . . . open for the Eternal."²⁷ Only openness, only the incomplete enables genuine turning. Only in openness can there be repentance and only through repentance can the new renew. Kierkegaard, therefore, linked crisis to repetition, Barth joined turning and resurrection, and Tillich builds his vision of Christian existence on the restoration and renewal of kairos, down to the missionary effort to teach the "middle of history" to all those for whom the middle still lies in the future.²⁸

Like beginnings and repetitions in the "true" sense, Tillich's kairetic middle seeks to shatter all traces of plot, while establishing a counter-plot, a rupture in continuity, a disjunctive moment, that is, in its last analysis, a new beginning, without, however, bearing the immediate imprint of any complete beginning-middle-end structure: A new beginning, in a word, that resembles the beginning beginning, Heidegger's incipience and *Ursprung*, and that is modeled after Ernst Bloch's notion of the present as "actuality to-be-done" (*unerledigte Aktualität*).²⁹ All history, for Tillich, whether it is the history of ancient Israel or the history of ancient Rome, begins in the middle, because all history is a narrative construction from the present. But only kairetic history perceives its middle as a task, transcending the *stasis* of sameness. The kairos, Tillich notes in a series of lectures of 1951, is the "right time of realization" (*Verwirklichung*)³⁰—and realization, as any task, requires both futurity, the anticipating openness of plot, and presence in the Now, the experience of the already: It requires "concrete utopia."

Concrete utopia, not unlike Kierkegaard's concrete infinity, formulates Tillich's dialectic of "fulfillment" (*Erfüllung*) and unfulfilledness in kairetic time. The kairos, as he explains in an essay deeply indebted to Ernst Bloch, is fulfilled, as well as unfulfilled time.³¹ It is both grounded in the historical experience and lifted above history by expectation, by

the ontology of the not-yet. In Bloch's thought, concrete utopia appears as thoroughly "antimetaphysical" and "immanently linked to its time"; abstract utopia, by contrast, leaps past all "intermediary links" toward a distant goal that is beyond or above, removed from the here and now. Somewhere in between, in the middle, Bloch seeks to find "real" utopia, an "ideal without leaping over the way, a way without dismissing the ideal."³²

Tillich follows Bloch's "perambulant" philosophy to characterize his kairos as a self-realizing being-toward-the-future, while being conscious of a human resistance to pure futurity. Realization, to be sure, requires futurity, but it cannot become "real" in a being that is toward the pure future of Koselleck's historical "unsimilarity" or Gauchet's complete "otherness." Pure futurity, as Max Weber already knew, is devoid of meaning: It is "senseless progressivity," the infinite production of the preliminary, a mysterious plot without turning points, apocalyptic transformations, or redemption. The linear differentiation of time, from Weber to Koselleck, to Gauchet, established the openness and, *eo ipso*, secularity of future. But the future, where it is *anticipated*, can no longer be fully open. There are, as Luhmann noted, techniques of "defuturization" that accompany all futurization in modern societies and which act as "countermeasures to an excessively open future."³³ Utopias, for Luhmann, belong to the predominant forms of such "temporal integration," combining, through anticipation, "present future" with "future presents." Not that utopias promise a further prognosticability of the future. To the contrary, utopias tend to consciously produce the futurization of time, affirming the openness of future, yet also reaching into it by means of anticipating action, or, as Luhmann writes, tongue-in-cheek: "If you cannot see, you have to act!"³⁴ Action—like technology—defuturizes its own futurity.

Luhmann's dilemma of modern temporal integration characterizes Tillich's conception of kairos as well: The kairos needs openness, the presence of the preliminary, but not future as complete otherness. Turning needs action, and action needs expectation—but expectation no longer denotes pure futurity. In the not-yet are always interspersed pieces of the already. Tillich's middle, in that sense, derives its meaning precisely not from the opening up of future but from its subtle clog-

ging. A future where, as in Tillich's reading of Bergson, "God himself is open, not knowing, as it were, what the future will be," or as in his reading of Whitehead, where the future is all but a "process wherein an infinity of possibilities is realized always anew," does not allow for kairotic existence.³⁵

But does not the kairos, for Tillich, encompass the future of a radically "New Being"? What exactly would this newness be? It is, on the one hand, "transcendence," the breaking through the cycle of being, the victory of time over space. But it is, on the other hand, a "restoration of the Old," not a "simple restoration," as Tillich remarks, "but the elevation of the Old to something new, to a new creation."³⁶ Invoking more than once Bloch's (counter-)utopian thought, Tillich speaks of a "backward facing utopia," of a correlation of past and future that is deeply rooted in human historicity: "What enters into the future and is expected to be fulfilled in the future, is perceived as that which has already been here in the past, as that which corresponds with the 'being' (*Wesen*) of man."³⁷ This "being," Tillich continues in a Heideggerian vein, is linked to the "having-been" (*gewesen*): "It is one of the most profound insights of the German language that being is that from whence we come and that which has always already been here."³⁸ "There is an Old," writes Tillich in 1954, "that does not become obsolete (*veraltet*), there is an Old that makes possible the New in the first place. And this Old that makes possible the New is being (*das Wesen*)."³⁹

Tillich's kairotic middle so not only reverberates the dialectic of transition, threshold, and *Augenblick*, the dialectic of transformation altogether, but also the existential, antihistorical, revolt of the "having-been" against the merely historical "was." In this dialectic and revolt, the kairos resembles of course what Gadamer would later sum up as the "moment of existence," which is, as in Kierkegaard and, for that matter, Barth, also a moment of choice, a cathartic beginning-anew.⁴⁰ But it also shares elements with what Bloch rebuffed as the "anti-travel" (*Anti-Reise*) from Plato to Hegel, the eternal anamnesis and *déjà-vu* of being: "The having-been," Bloch writes of the Hegelians, "has primacy over the to-come, to such an extent that being (*Wesen*) becomes identical with having-been (*Ge-wesenheit*)."⁴¹ Bloch, in fact, most clearly saw the a-linear conception of Hegel's historicizing logic, though he also saw

most clearly the paradoxical entwinement of newness and renewal. “It cannot be denied,” he writes, “that the category of the *novum* is, to this day, entwined in and united with a category that is entirely foreign to it—the category of *renovatio*.⁴² Here, Tillich could find in Bloch his most congenial witness. For the kairos seeks more than the dialectic entwinement of old and new: The kairos, for Tillich, is a specific form of renewal, a reverse transition. The old must be elevated to something new. Creation must become a “new creation.” The beginning must become renewal.

III

Renewal and Novum

Renewal, Ernst Bloch insisted, is not the same as the “life of the New.”⁴³ Renewal always implies a return to the having-been; the new implies a reaching forward to what has not been before. Dante’s bold “*incipit vita nova*” so remains the opening sentence of the modern world, the audacity of *Neuzeit*, but it also remains the opening sentence of all renewal, of all rebirth and renaissance. In this duality, Bloch encounters the great Janus-face of the modern mind. Here, at the threshold, he finds that novum and renovatio, beginning and beginning-again, are linked in a dialectic of anamnesis and hope, that the ever-new expectation of the not-yet is entwined in the “unveiling of the primordial” (*Schleier-Wegziehen vom Uralten*). There is no pure novum, because there is no pure primordial.

Yet, there is a difference between the mythic memory of a primordial state of paradise, the yearning for a lost golden age, and the utopian reaching back into the past that characterizes modern renovations. In fact, the “utopian-radical novum” that Bloch envisions has nothing in common with the “receptive renovation of a lost having-been.” It has no interest in retrieving the past as complete and perfect, as if it were a resurrection from the dead. “Rather,” as Bloch writes, “the *true* reaching back reaches towards the future, towards that which has not yet become in the past; and it reaches, therefore, ultimately towards the

still un-originated originating (*selber noch unentsprungene Entspringen*) of everything that happens.⁴⁴ The true renovation is a return to the New, a return to what has never become. Only here is “realization” possible, the concrete content of utopia, whose ultimate Novum is the “realization of the realizing” (*Realisierung des Realisierenden*). The new must emerge from the not-yet of the past. Here, for Bloch, is genuine *Neubeginn*—beginning anew.

And here Bloch reveals modernity, *Neuzeit*, as akin to renaissance, not merely to *the Renaissance*, which he thoroughly admires and regards as nothing short of *Zeitenwende*,⁴⁵ but as a form of renaissance itself, as modernity beginning again, as a renaissance figura of thought. New thinking, if it is new by its own beginning, is thinking in renaissance. As such, new thinking—Renaissance, for Bloch—marked the birth of Neuzeit, a new beginning that had already stepped outside the original myth of restoration, outside the mythic return to paradise, whose relapse Bloch diagnosed in Rousseau’s romantic return to nature. In Bloch’s understanding, the Italian Renaissance appears as entirely unromantic, a return to antiquity that served neither as a quelling of nostalgic urges nor as a tribute to tradition, but, to the contrary, as “a pretext for one’s own beginning of youth and, at the same time, maturity.”⁴⁶ Renaissance rejuvenates and makes wise the new beginners. The hidden power of renassances, according to Bloch, lies in their virtuous ability to overlay the plenitude of history with a certain unambiguousness of plot where all history is rendered prehistory (*Vorgeschichte*) and all beginning a “resurrection from the confusions of false multiplicities.” Not that renassances are necessarily movements of new simplicity (though one could certainly look at the Humanists in this way⁴⁷): But they are driven by desires for new clarity, a “morning of measure,” as Bloch puts it, that enters as a corrective reduction of the whole—to the whole. This is the deeper logic of new beginnings: That they begin anew not when old beginnings have withered away, but when old beginnings have *begun too much*, when too much has become, when what has become has obscured its beginnings and its ends—the “one that is needed.” “New life,” Bloch writes, “is such that it is, without distraction, directed towards *the one* that is needed in and through all *alteritas*.⁴⁸ The new beginning thus restores future, hope, and meaning: It

restores the direction toward the not-yet, a paradoxical restoration, of course, for the not-yet is and cannot be but not yet. But in this restoration, Bloch finds the utopia of all renaissance: that it can be true to hope and “true to the beginning whose genesis is still to come.”⁴⁹

Surpassing Memory

Against Hegel’s ultimately circular dialectic, whose “return to the beginning” and mere “unraveling” of becoming pay tribute to the Platonic anamnesis, Bloch champions a dialectic that is “synthetic” and “anticipatory” at once.⁵⁰ There is a forwardness in his “utopian inmembrering” (*utopisches Eingedenken*) that is well known to us from previous readings of Kierkegaard, Husserl, Benjamin, or Heidegger. But there is also a reluctance, equally known to us, to accept the final verdict of all openness and “senseless progressivity.” Rather than abandoning beginning, origin, and redemptive anamnesis, Bloch reframes the anamnetic return in terms of his “ontology of the not-yet.” What is re-remembered is not what has been. The anamnesis of the entire philosophical tradition in Plato’s footsteps, which Bloch dismisses as “non-utopia,” as a means to evade “decisions,” and as a “method, wherein change and future are held in disdain, where fixed eternity is ruminated, and being recognizable only as having-been,” this anamnesis of the “eternal logos,” has nothing in common with the utopian memory, with the anamnesis that yields to “openness.”⁵¹ It has nothing in common but its figura of return: The “structure,” as Bloch cannot but notice, is the same. Utopian re-remembrance is a “return to the beginning.” But it is no cycle of restoration, where the end merges into the beginning, “as if nothing had happened.” The difference between anamnesis in the platonic sense (at least, allegedly so) and re-remembrance as utopian inmembrering is that in utopia things *do happen*. They happen because the beginning that is restored is a beginning that anticipates; because the return that turns toward the beginning is a return that turns toward the not-yet, toward the *ens imperfectissimum*, away from redemption—toward creation (*Schöpfung*).⁵²

The new thinking of utopia, in this sense, becomes “*Umkehr*,” turning—and the new beginning, in this sense, the beginning as re-

stored anticipation, is a beginning that has to “heal something” (*etwas gutzumachen*).⁵³ But it can only heal and repair if the turning turns into the open, if renovation is open to let enter the Novum, if turning transforms, creates: if it becomes a forming anew (*Neu-Gestalten*).⁵⁴ This means that turning itself must be anticipatory, that it must reach forward. “Something new emerges from it,” writes Bloch, “and this new is, unlike motion alone, irreversible.”⁵⁵ Turning, in other words, cannot be turned back. One is reminded of Barth’s “irreversible turning” (*nicht umzukehrende Umkehr*) that places the “new man” between knowledge (*Erkenntnis*), repentance, and the *futurum resurrectionis*.⁵⁶ This is where, for Barth, sin and grace intersect, and this is where the indicative of being (history) is turned into the imperative of the new (metahistory). For Bloch, too, there is a finality of the novum that is rooted in the otherness of the not-yet. One cannot turn toward the new; the new must turn to us. One can only turn away from the old; that is: One can return to the old and *from it*. One can “creatively” (*schöpferisch*) return to a past that is turned, as yet to be done, toward the future. This creating return, this returning forward, Bloch articulates in the dialectic of “*Überholen*,” which is reminiscent of, yet also distinct from Heidegger’s similar use of the term.⁵⁷ To Bloch, the past not only passes and passes-on, as in the romantic having-been that cannot perish, but it also *surpasses*: It passes on what has not been. In this way, Bloch leaves behind both the “pure passing-by” of natural time,⁵⁸ as well as the historicist imperishability of the Platonic-Hegelian having-been. While Heidegger projected an “eschatology of being” where the “once of Before” (*das Einstige der Frühe*) would overtake (*überholen*) the “once of the to-come” (*Einstige des Kommenden*), thus establishing the primacy of the already, Bloch stressed the renewing quality of the not-yet. Surpassing turns passing forward, and yet, it also passes in reverse: The past is “overhauled.” The past becomes like new, renovated and passed over by the Novum. Time, in a word, recapitulates and does repentance. It surpasses its own beginnings, rather than, as in Heidegger, being surpassed by its beginnings. Here, youth and maturity are one. Here, utopia becomes concrete. Here begins the Faustian wayfaring that seeks to travel “beyond all known and having-been.” Indeed, it is none other than Faust, who, for Bloch, represents the “original, true

renaissance-type,” cast into purgatory by the hands of Luther’s “dark-protestant Orthodoxy.”⁵⁹

Note on the Triadics of the New

What Bloch rejected as Luther’s anti-Renaissance legacy, Tillich sought to reclaim in his famous essay on the “New Being,” originally composed for the 1954 Eranos conference in Ascona under the theme “Man and Transformation.” Proposing nothing less than a new thinking in Christian theology, Tillich presented the New as threefold, in a triadics of creation, restoration, and fulfillment. In creation, the New means beginning, whether absolute or day-to-day. The new begins, and in this beginning Tillich finds the creation of one-timeness and individuality, in short: the creation of history. “The New as creation turns the universe into history; and this is what happens everywhere in myth.”⁶⁰

But history, for Tillich, oscillates between the “fulfillment of being” and the “missing of being” (*Wesensverfehlung*), and ambiguity of human existence that is in need for repair—that needs restoration (*Wiederherstellung*). The new as restoration repairs history, turning it, counter-historically, into historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*): “It is the historical that has overcome the missed being.”⁶¹ Restoration so overcomes the “failure” of history, it overhauls history, without, of course, restoring that which is “historically old,” the obsolete “was.” Restoration, in this sense, can never be “return,” but must be turning, repentance, “actuality,” “rebirth,” *anakenaiosis*, “new creature”—renaissance. For Tillich, Renaissance and Reformation, astonishingly, mean the same thing: rebirth. “Rebirth,” he writes, “. . . is the New in history that is predicated, on the one hand, by the history that has been before, and on the other, by the demands of being (*Wesensforderung*).”⁶² He continues: “The New Being is restoration. And this restoration is rebirth, birth of the New.”⁶³

But this restoration, this dialectic between new and renewal, remains again ambiguous if it is not touched by a third: by “fulfillment.” Without fulfillment, creation and rebirth would become cyclical, would remain myth at its most literal interpretation. Fulfillment offers

the New beyond the New, it offers forwardness, turning creation and rebirth into “symbols” of New Being. Fulfillment, in a word, demythologizes—and Tillich consciously follows Bultmann in this regard—the mythic plot of creation and rebirth, of beginning and beginning-anew. Fulfillment sublates the mythic narrative into symbolic transparency. Ernst Cassirer wrote about this transition from myth to symbol as an “ontological turning” (*ontologische Wendung*): “What appears to the mundane, ‘profane’ view as an immediately given reality of ‘things’ is turned into a world of ‘signs’ by the religious world view. . . . Things and events no longer mean themselves but become signs of an ‘other,’ of something that is ‘beyond.’”⁶⁴ There is a conflict—a “crisis”—between meaning and image that besets, according to Cassirer, all symbolic thought. A crisis that is resolved, in opposite ways, only in mysticism and aesthetics. Likewise, Tillich champions “fulfillment” as both the overcoming of sensual myth and the reconciliation of symbol and meaning. Through “fulfillment,” myth is suspended in a moment of “participation” (*Teilhabe*) and “being-seized” (*Ergriffensein*),⁶⁵ in a kairos that is mystical, existential, and aesthetic, beyond the “limits of space and time,” beyond history, and even beyond ethics. “Fulfillment” is transformed into the “New Being.” Of this New Being, Tillich writes: “It liberates us from all relation to the ought (*Sollensrelation*), and therefore means freedom as such.”⁶⁶

Once creation, restoration, and fulfillment are taken together, not as three eschatological stages, but as a symbolic simultaneity, a trialectic that instantiates, incidentally, the simultaneity of beginning, beginning-again, and turning, history itself is turned into a symbol of the “becoming of the New Being”—into *Heilsgeschichte*. “History as such,” Tillich writes, “means universal restoration, the New in the sense of healing, liberation, emancipation, and redemption.”⁶⁷ There is, then, a representative quality in history that connects healing with redemption. Just as its telos—undoubtedly present, for Tillich—lies in the “individual” rather than in the universal, so does “universal restoration” lie in individual acts of turning rather than in teleological futurity. The meaning of history, and beyond history, is encapsulated in a “change of direction.” Tillich aptly invokes both the Hebrew *teshuvalah* and the Greek *metanoia* to articulate a sense of turning that shares all the good

ingredients of existential authenticity: “[T]urning towards that which lies in all Being beyond the schism of essence and existence, toward the Being-Self (*Sein-Selbst*) that includes, simultaneously, the predicates of the ‘Good’ and the ‘True.’”⁶⁸

IV

Repentance Beyond History

Back to Scheler: “Not utopianism but Repentance is the most *revolutionary* force in the moral world.”⁶⁹ What makes repentance, for Scheler, revolutionary? Not that it leaves behind the past to seek refuge in a distant future, as might be the case in “abstract” utopianism. Not that it negates the present to find asylum in the eternal, as the mystic wishes to do. Not that it ennobles the moment to an aesthetic delirium that belongs to what Scheler called the “subhistorical world of pleasure.” To the contrary, Scheler’s repentance rejects all antihistoricism; it rejects all denial of historical reality. “To acknowledge history,” he writes, “to see it in its hard reality—but to revive it with the water of eternal springs—that is worthier than flight and more fitting to the age.”⁷⁰ Rather than transcending history, repentance *comprehends* history, promising redemption and rebirth. But rebirth requires the alteration, if not annihilation of the past. From the “ashes of the old” a “new heart” arises.⁷¹ Repentance “annihilates,” but only to “rebuild.” It annihilates, as Scheler puts it, for the “rebirth of the new man.”⁷² The “new Self,” while rising above the valley of the past, witnesses the “descent of the old self, its destruction and expulsion.”⁷³ Repentance, in other words, marks the passage from old to new, a significant and auto-biographical metaphor in Scheler’s own Catholic period—but it also marks a state of self-recognition, the view of the “valley below,” the turning that sees before and after, Aristotle’s discovering *peripéteia*. It stands for a profound “self-revision,” a “self-regeneration” that defies the linear course of history and time. Repentance, like memory, liberates. It rescues the “Self from suffocation under the weight of history.”⁷⁴ It disrupts continuity. It subverts plot—and it brings a “new

resolution,” a transforming self-knowledge, a return to the “Self,” to the “root,” to the “living centre.”⁷⁵ It enables, as Scheler writes, “life to begin, with a spontaneous, virginal beginning, a new course springing forth from the centre of the personality which, by virtue of the act of repentance, is no longer in bonds.”⁷⁶

Repentance revolutionizes because it turns time. Where memory “repossesses” the past, repentance makes an “incursion” into the past. It conquers and repairs. It repeats in the Kierkegaardian sense, it purges and transforms and recovers—even resurfaces—the self. To Karl Barth, therefore, resurrection and repentance will become analogous terms of turning (*Wende*): “Resurrection from the dead is the turning,” he writes, “. . . the turning of all times and things.”⁷⁷ Turning (*Wende, Umkehr, Umschlag*), one could argue, is the dominant image in Barth’s *Römerbrief*, the defining moment in his understanding of religion in general: “Religion is the human possibility . . .,” he writes, “to reproduce, relive, and bring to form the revolution (*Drehung*), turning (*Wendung*), and movement from the old human to the new. . . .”⁷⁸ Religion, in this sense, cannot but be historical, cannot but move along with historical time—yet, it also cannot be merely historical, for resurrection, which is both the archetype and prototype of repentance, that which repentance repeats—for resurrection, wherein human repentance is prefigured and fulfilled, is also a “limit” (*Grenze*) to history: It is the “unhistorical event *kat’exochen*,”⁷⁹ the “absolute moment,” that lies, paradoxically, in the midst of history, conjoining and disjoining: a threshold of simultaneity. “We stand at the *threshold*, but we *stand* at the threshold,” Barth writes. “This is the new world that we—ever again—approach.”⁸⁰ Here, at the threshold, history ceases to be analytical; ceases to be “relative” and sequential. It no longer means one thing after another. It no longer means nothing (*Unsinn*). At the threshold, history becomes “unhistorical” and, therefore, “useful.” At the threshold, history becomes present. It becomes “critical” in the Nietzschean sense, *storia contemporanea*, as in Croce, history in the Now, as in Hegel. “For in past and present, there is a simultaneity that can heal the muteness of the past and the deafness of the present, that can make speak the former and make hear the latter. This simultaneity,” Barth continues, “. . . announces and receives the

unhistorical, the un-perceptible, the unfathomable, that is the end and beginning of all history.”⁸¹

What resounds in these words is the familiar tone of kairotic time, time of threshold, time of turning. We are, naturally, reminded of Benjamin’s narrator, the synchronic chronist, the history-teller, whose memory holds all stories in a web of simultaneity and flux that defied emplotment and closure. We called this history-teller the open-ended narrator, the narrator in passing time. What we find, once again, is the familiar rebellion against “antiquarian,” fossilizing history, against the history of “*Urkunden*” (documents) and the study of sources which, for Barth, is no more than a “photographed and analyzed chaos,” unable to apprehend simultaneity in “flux.”⁸² And what we encounter, once again, are the typical two types of history: The history of historians, a “useless” and “impotent” history for Barth, and the history of “meaning” and “unity,” the history of the “presentness” (*Gegenwart*) and simultaneity (*Gleichzeitigkeit*), “unhistorical history,” the history of Genesis, of the synchronic beginning, of incipience, the “real” history of the “builders of the future.” This history, Barth does not hesitate to reveal to us, resembles and is a “synthetic piece of art.” We witness a vertiginous leap in Barth’s theology, a leap from repentance to history (against its grain, of course)—to aesthetics: “Where this piece of art, this happening, this Oneness does not dwell as an origin in the writer of history, there is no history.”⁸³

The Aesthetics of Turning

“Where art happens, i.e., where there is a beginning, history receives a push, history begins or begins again.”⁸⁴ Thus writes the Heidegger of the famous *Kehre* (turning), which manifested itself most directly in his essay on the “Origin of the Work of Art.” Not only did there occur, as commonly understood,⁸⁵ a turning in Heidegger’s thinking: There is also a new predilection in his post-*Kehre* work for the notion of “turning” (*Umkehr, Wende*) itself. We must think “everything in reverse” (*umgekehrt*), writes Heidegger, if we want to arrive at what “is.” This means that we also must be able to see “how everything turns to us (*zukehrt*) differently.”⁸⁶ Art, whose “essence,” for Heidegger, is poetry,

whose essence, in turn, is the “founding of truth”⁸⁷—art makes us see, but it also makes us turn. Poetry, therefore, in Heidegger’s 1946 essay on Hölderlin and Rilke, appears not only as a mode of affirming exposedness, middle, and venture, but also of turning: a “turning (*Umkehrung*) into the inner innermost,” a “turning (*Wende*) into the open,” which is also a “turning of the turning-away (*Abkehr*) from the open,” a “turning memory,” a turning, finally, that is redemption at the “turning of an era.” “The gods that have ‘been otherwise,’ ‘turn’ (*kehren*) only at the ‘right time’—only when man has turned at the right place in the right way.” This is where the “humble time of world-night” has found its own “middle”—“midnight,” “holy night.”⁸⁸

Poetry, then, the “founding of truth,” which lies at the origin of all art; poetry, the “making” (*Schaffen*) and “retrieving-creating” (*Schöpfen*) from which all art originates, is in itself a form of turning, a form of ontological repentance, a turning away from the forgetfulness of *Lethe*, a turning away from the turning away, a turning from the closure of making-sense toward the “open” of *aletheia*: Art returns from the stability of plot to the restlessness of the “uncovering middle” (*entbergende Mitte*).⁸⁹ Our “essential being” (*Wesen*), Heidegger writes, “is set in motion.”⁹⁰

But art also brings to a halt; poetry creates permanence, an “essential staying” (*wesendes Bleiben*). The poet’s poetry remains, or lives on, as a “having been” (*Ge-wesenes*), overcoming, as it must, once again, that which has only passed (*nur Vergangene*): “What never falls, in this manner, into the course of passing-away has already overcome all fleetingness (*Vergänglichkeit*).”⁹¹ The poet, the creative one, the “one who ventures,” not only “turns about” the turning against the “open,” but also remembers to turn inward again (*er-innern*) the wholeness of *Heil*: The poet, in other words, repairs *Un-Heil* and restores to mortal humanity the “traces of the fugitive gods at the darkest world-night.”⁹² It is the poet, the artist in essence, who calls the prophetic call of turning that will make the gods return. The poet becomes the prophet who exhorts the people to turn around, to repent, and the people follow this call (Heidegger writes this in 1935–1936) and retrieve the history that will “remove it back” (*Entrückung*) to its imposed mission (*Aufgegebenes*) and “move it into” (*Einrückung*) its inheritance (*Mitgegebenes*).⁹³

The poet, as the prophet—the poet *as* prophet—restores to his people both the future and the origin. But he can do so only if he rebels against the pastness of the past, against the history of the past, against historicism, which Heidegger, in another place, will call the “continuous destruction of the future.”⁹⁴ The historian, like the “primitive,” is “futureless.”⁹⁵ The prophet-poet, however, turns history back to its futurity. Art no longer encompasses nor can be encompassed by an “educated knowledge of the past,” but “happens” itself, making history, and giving history its ground (*gründen*). Where art happens, there is a beginning, a “real beginning”: Through art, history “begins again.” Art is the beginning beginning—the inception that drives the beginning forward. Art is an origin. In art, Heidegger proclaims, truth not only “originates,” making a leap into being from where “essence came from” (*Wesensherkunft*), but also becomes “historical,” announcing destiny (*Geschick*) and the to-come: Art “places truth into work” (*Ins-Werk-Setzen*).⁹⁶ This means that, for Heidegger, art cannot be, as in Plato, a mimetic image of a given first reality but must, rather, be a first reality, an origin in itself. The origin of the artwork is the artwork as origin. Just as the origin, Heidegger’s beginning beginning, is both a place of conserving return and a source of creative turning, a repetition in a word, so the artwork belongs both to the “creative ones” (*Schaffende*) and the “conserving ones” (*Bewahrende*), preparing the “way” for the former and securing a “place to be” for the latter.⁹⁷ The artwork so evolves into a code for the “historical existence” of the “people,” the ultimate expression, in fact, of a people’s desire for origins and desire for beginnings. To remember one’s “incipience” (*Anfänglichkeit*) will, in 1942, become Heidegger’s antivenom to the “Bolshevik” and “Anglo-Saxon” forgetfulness of beginnings.⁹⁸

Heidegger’s remarkable—and above all disturbing—“turning” places art at the place where only penitents can stand: at the threshold that conjoins and disjoins, at the limits of history, at the passing-on, at the surpassing of time. In art, repentance, prophecy, and redemption are coextensively given and realized. They are given because the artwork remains at the moment of turning, in the momentum, in the kairos: in the dialectics of transition. Art, in this sense, is the beginning that is always in the “middle,” the truly dialectical origin, the origin of radical

Aufhebung. Hegel's ultimate verdict that art, when its aesthetic reconciliation has become “objective,” when it has become an historical form, also must come to its end, to its “disintegration and dissolution,” has been suspended.⁹⁹ In fact, Heidegger turns Hegel's pastness of art back to “presencing,” building his aesthetics of “event” (*Ereignis*) upon Hegel's own recognition that art, “in its most general definition,” constitutes a “middle,” that it represents the “reconciled contradiction” between “sensual” and “spiritual,” “concrete” and “abstract,” “singularity” and “reduplication” (*Verdoppelung*).¹⁰⁰ In this way, Heidegger stops, as it were, Hegel's self-dissolution of art in the middle of its Aufhebung, at the very place of its turning, turning it around—back and forward—to an aesthetics in reverse that resembles Schelling's call for an “aesthetic philosophy,” a science that would, at its “fulfillment,” flow back into the “ocean of poetry from where it once emerged.”¹⁰¹

Symbolic Synchronicity

But one could also look at it in another way: Heidegger models his turn to aesthetics after Hegel's own “aesthetic historicism,” to borrow a phrase from Heinz and Hannelore Schlaffer.¹⁰² His view of art reflects, in essence, Hegel's philosophy of history, the artwork now occupying the very presentness Hegel had reserved for the self-comprehension of the “spirit.” Writing of the aesthetic desire in man, Hegel duplicates precisely the process of historical self-recognition we encountered in his philosophy of history: In art, man “raises the inner and outer world to an object of his spiritual consciousness wherein he can recognize his Self again.”¹⁰³ Like history, art has alienated itself from nature, but it has also alienated itself from the “concept.” Like history, art has stepped into a process of sensual individuation and tragic dialectics, but it has also created access to a “truer being”: “Art,” Hegel writes in his *Aesthetics*, “purifies the true content of all phenomena from the appearance and illusion of this evil and ephemeral world, giving them their higher, spirit-born reality.”¹⁰⁴ It is precisely through its sensual individuation in history that art can retrieve and represent the “eternal powers” (*ewige Mächte*) that historiography alone cannot abstract from the chaos of events. The historian remains entangled in the “accidentalness of

common reality.” The artwork, however, appears to “signify through” (*hindurchdeuten*) to a spiritual, which, at the same time, however, is also hidden and “soiled” by the artwork itself.¹⁰⁵

What Hegel thus formulates is a raw theory of symbol that circulates around the origin and end of art. The symbol not only marks the beginning of art, the state of *Vorkunst* (pre-art) that is not yet conscious of its symbolic nature, but also its end, or dissolution, in the Romantic period, where “art seeks to escape its own exteriority to return to itself.”¹⁰⁶ It is in the Romantic negation of exteriority that art at its end becomes conscious of its symbolic character. Romantic art recognizes itself again as a symbol, and the “spirit” recognizes art as a window for its own self-comprehension: “The hard crust of nature and mundane world make it more cumbersome for the Spirit to penetrate to the idea than do the works of art.”¹⁰⁷ Art helps the “idea” shine through—but it still conceals, in good dialectical fashion, what it reveals. The symbolic character of art can therefore remain only auxiliary to the “spirit” and must thus be subject to the same progressive expiration that haunts all concrete world: Art, for Hegel, is only capable of representing a “certain rung (*Stufe*) of truth,” but it is unable to fully transcend the sensual, unable to climb the rungs philosophy. Heidegger now repairs Hegel’s aesthetics by converting the onto-symbolic character of art into a symbol of historicity. Instead of proclaiming an end of art, Heidegger, as Schelling, proclaims and end of metaphysics that is, in turn, a new beginning of exteriority.

Following Heidegger in this regard, Hans-Georg Gadamer comments on Hegel’s bleak view of aesthetics: “Each alleged end of art will be the beginning of new art.”¹⁰⁸ What has come to an end in art, Gadamer continues, is merely its self-evidence and self-justification. With the end of Antiquity, art becomes problematic, because the artwork is no longer identical with its content. It has lost the presence of gods, it has lost, as Hegel put it, its “true content,” and so assumed a “character of pastness.”¹⁰⁹ This is where Gadamer restores Hegel’s circular dialectics. Rather than becoming a past in the simple historical sense, art took a turn from its end to a new beginning: To the beginning of symbol, which, if viewed through Hegel’s aesthetics, would be the beginning of the beginning. The old images are shattered, but what remains

are fragments of memory: pieces that continue to symbolize wholeness. Building on Plato's *Symposion*, Gadamer constructs a notion of symbol that evokes a tearing apart and restoration for which the matching of the broken pieces implies an act of cognition and recognition. Just as the ancient *symbolon* reunites long-separated soul mates, recognizing each other as "long known," so the artwork "proffers something like a recognition (*Wiedererkennung*), that helps us ever anew to be at home again."¹¹⁰ The symbol, as Gadamer writes in *Truth and Method*, is more than merely a sign: "[I]t is the remnant of lived life in the past, testifying to what it shows by virtue of its existence, i.e., it makes the past itself present and makes it recognized as such."¹¹¹ The symbol, in other words, makes available to us a specific form of temporality that also characterizes the artwork—a "simultaneity of past and present." The artwork "mediates" between the "appearance of history" and the "appearance of progress," creating a "simultaneous present" that is also an "overcoming of time," and that encompasses, in a mysterious way, the viewer as well.¹¹² "There is indeed an absolute present between the artwork and the observer," Gadamer writes in another essay, "that remains firmly in place despite our heightened historical consciousness."¹¹³

Gadamer's artwork, unlike history, but not unlike Hegel's "spirit," cannot pass, nor can it, for that matter, ruthlessly progress. It resists history. It is in a state of "eternity": not in timeless, eternal eternity, of course, but in a finite, temporal eternity, in a time of its own, in *Eigenzeit*. The artwork, like beginning and repetition, exists in the time it creates against time. It becomes a symbol of counter-time: a symbol of beginning, a symbol, finally, of Gadamer's own dialectic of transition and tradition—and that is the point: In Gadamer's aesthetics, Heidegger's turning restoration of Hegel repeats itself further. Where Heidegger restored the artwork to its "ground," Gadamer rescues its symbolic historicity. For both, the artwork brings to work what Cassirer called "symbolic memory," a memory that reenacts the past and resists the forgetfulness of modernity: the "forgetfulness of beginnings" in Heidegger, that in Gadamer is the forgetfulness of symbol. "Is it not characteristic of modernity," Gadamer asks, "that it is stuck in a deep lack of symbols (*Symbolnot*), and that breathless progressivity . . . has denied us the possibilities of recognition (*Wiedererkennung*)?"¹¹⁴ In

this moment of aesthetic crisis, art teaches again to recognize, and it is through the recognition of art, through the restoration of symbol, that the “permanent is seen in the fleeting.”¹¹⁵ Gadamer’s return to aesthetics, then, which engenders in so many ways, Schelling’s return to symbol, myth, and, indeed, beginnings, sees itself as a reflection of the human desire for duration (*Dauer*). Art yields continuity—but only in the sense of tradition, of “transferal” (*Übertragung*) and “translation” (*Übersetzung*): Its task is not to “conserve,” but to “bring together the petrified remnants of the past with the Today.”¹¹⁶ Its task is to synchronize, to “reach beyond the historical differentiation of time.”¹¹⁷ Art transports us into a moment of “timeless present” (*zeitlose Gegenwärtigkeit*), which Gadamer even likens to the “Christian message of simultaneity.”¹¹⁸ Gadamer deliberately aestheticizes the Muse of Mnemosyne as a memory-symbol that can contain past and present, that can synchronize and, therefore, also liberate from time and history. Art, in its deeply mythic ways, achieves “the synchronicity of times, styles, races, and classes.”¹¹⁹ Where it restores its mythic moment, art also achieves a moment of messianic redemption.

V

Kairetic Aesthetics

Now we can no longer overlook the profoundly kairetic elements in Gadamer’s philosophy of art that are representative of an aesthetic—or symbolic—resistance against “empty” time, “closed” memory, and “antiquarian” history. The recurring motif continues to be—also here—the motif of turning. A turning that requires—and creates for itself—presentness, the simultaneity of temporal horizons; and that requires—and creates for itself—incompleteness, a past that is to be done. One should rightly think of Lessing’s classic notion of the “fruitful moment” that captures both “unchangeable duration” and that which can only be considered “transitory.”¹²⁰ The aesthetic moment becomes “pregnant” when it realizes both the “before” and the “after,” when it becomes “present” and poetic in a spatial sense, without, how-

ever, confusing time and space.¹²¹ To be sure, painting, in Lessing's aesthetics, is not poetry, but as the eye is "continually present," it can recognize the imaginative horizons of the moment. "That alone is fruitful," Lessing writes, "which leaves open the play of imagination."¹²² Painting history, in this way, or painting a story, will never be a reproduction of diachrony but, on the contrary, an "expansion" of the moment, a synchronization of moments, as we might say, that requires temporal imagination, but that also requires a certain temporal incompleteness: The pregnancy of the moment occurs outside the moment itself, in the incompleteness of movement toward and away from the aesthetic Now.

Setting out to close Lessing's gap between poetry and painting, Gadamer speaks of the "all-presentness" (*Allgegenwart*) of art, a present and presence that synchronizes time, opens up space, and unites, on top of it, all humankind.¹²³ If art is truly "absolute," as Gadamer maintains in an unabashedly romantic manner, then our self-recognition in art must correspond with the recognition of that absolute. To be sure, it lies in the symbolic nature of art and in the mythic nature of poetry that it simultaneously "holds back" (*vorenthalten*) and "holds ready" (*bereithalten*),¹²⁴ an old Heraclitic cliché, that had already fascinated Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger. Yet, it is the same symbolic nature of art that also enables us to recognize the forgotten correlate of our existence, the missing "fragment of being" (*Seinsbruchstück*) that now restores "wholeness" (*Heiles*) to us; that restores to us a concrete recognition of the "absolute," and that restores in us a concrete memory of the "beautiful."¹²⁵ There occurs, then, an aesthetic anamnesis, which Gadamer expresses in a mythic image that he consciously relates to Plato: The soul, "exiled in earthly gravity" and unable to return to the "heights of truth," begins "to grow wings again" and to "lift itself up": "Thanks to the beautiful, we are able to re-remember the true world."¹²⁶

Invoking the ancient Phoenix in this remarkable passage, Gadamer gives art the power of Plato's utopian palingenesis, Heidegger's "remembering turning," and Kierkegaard's forward repetition. The aesthetic moment thus takes on the shape of the *momentum*: Art is in "fulfilling implementation" (*Vollzug*),¹²⁷ in a making that is equally transitive and intransitive. Gadamer elucidates this making through

the Aristotelian *energeia*, which encompasses—and transcends—Kierkegaard’s Aristotelian kinesis. Where Kierkegaard adopted kinesis as a movement in transition, a hermeneutic flux, Gadamer settles on *energeia* as a movement for which becoming and having-become are synchronized in an “immanent simultaneity of duration.”¹²⁸ The problem, for Gadamer, that mere kinesis, as a moving and never arriving movement, remains, as it moves along, *atelés*—without destination, is resolved in the making movement of *energeia*: “The fulfilling implementation (*Vollzug*) has its fulfilled being in itself (*télos echei*).”¹²⁹ “Making,” in this sense, is not a process of before and after, not a cumulative succession (*Nacheinander*), but a “whole that is present.” Making, in this sense, is not a “doing” at all, but rather, an “opening” (*Aufgehen*).

The Self as Other

Our aesthetic detour, then, brings us back to Bloch’s anamnesis of openness and to Tillich’s thoroughly platonic turning toward the self, to his symbolic kairos, where the “Good” and the “True” merged together in “fulfillment.” Gadamer is quite conscious of his return to “Greek concepts,” and questions, in fact, the ability of the moderns to recognize, as the ancients did, the simultaneity of the “True,” the “Beautiful,” and the “Good.”¹³⁰ We must remember, that for Gadamer, art is a moment of rediscovery, that his notion of *energeia* is intimately linked with the Heideggerian brand of *alétheia*, and that his rendering of contemplation, *theoria*, is “participation”: “Seeing is no mere observation. It means ‘to be wholly there,’ and that means highest activity and reality.”¹³¹ In art, the observer becomes a participant in recognition. Art is action in a “nondoing” sense: The act of recovering recognition, the act of making, the act of turning, and the act of simply “letting-be (*Seinlassen*)—all acted and acting at once. Aesthetics is transformed into a “dialogue” of symbols, a mutual restoring to completeness. The presence of art “speaks into us,” Gadamer writes, and understanding the meaning of this “speaking” is tantamount to an “encounter with oneself” (*Selbstbegegnung*).¹³² There is a playfulness in Gadamer’s aesthetics that he juxtaposes with the liturgical

counter-temporality of festival time, which he also likens to “fulfilled time,”¹³³ kairos, returning turning time, concrete utopian time, and that reminds us of Bergson’s counter-temporal, forward-repeating *mémoire-souvenir*, whose ability to playfully “act out anew the past”—*jouer à nouveau la passé*—distinguished it from mere recollection and repetition. Aesthetic recognition, or symbolic re-remembrance, for Gadamer, is such an “acting out anew,” a beginning-again, a repetition that echoes, more than anything else, perhaps, Kierkegaard’s “I am myself again.” “This is you!” speaks Gadamer’s symbol. We recall in his aesthetic recognition the recognition of the “long known,” the acquainting oneself anew with a distant past that helps us “to be at home again.” Art, in this nostalgic overtone, art as a symbol of homecoming, confirms “what is” and acts as a “shelter” (*Geborgenheit*) in a dialogue of “familiarity” (*Vertrautheit*)—“I am myself again”—but neither Kierkegaard nor Gadamer see in this “again” a stasis of pre-stabilized recurrence. Kierkegaard’s moment was conceived as a moment between despair and change. “I am myself again”; this was not the dwelling in an aesthetic equilibrium but an unsheltered venture into otherness. So it is with Gadamer, who seems to return to the Kierkegaard of *Either/Or*, when he writes: “The familiarity with which the artwork touches us is, at the same time, and in a strange way, also the shaking and shattering of the familiar. It not only recovers, in an act of joyous and terrifying terror, the ‘This is you!’—it also says to us: ‘You have to change your life!’”¹³⁴

Transformation into the Open or the Aesthetics of Sin

“Bad traveling,” writes Ernst Bloch, “means to remain unchanged as human being.”¹³⁵ “True movement,” writes Karl Barth, “can only be in the irrevocably final transition from the Same to the completely and thoroughly Other.”¹³⁶ To the one who “hates correction,” writes Maimonides, there is no repentance.¹³⁷

Gadamer’s aesthetics complete our return to repentance. Turning, *metanoia*, *teshuva*, called for a kairos of synchronization: Art became its symbol. This Hermann Cohen realized when he extended the idea of atonement (*Versöhnungsidee*) from religion to morality, to art—not as

three separate areas, much less as stages in a process but, to the contrary, as simultaneous aspects of turning reconciliation: the reconciliation between man and God (religion), between man and man (law and state), and between man and himself (art).¹³⁸ The originary simultaneity of these aspects Cohen finds preserved in the Hebrew term *teshuvalah*, which he renders as “turning, turning away, return to the Good, and returning inward to oneself.”¹³⁹ True atonement, Cohen maintains, cannot be thought other than as a “unification” (*Vereinigung*) of these realms, each of them a “way” that represents a way of action. It is the “image” of teshuvah that illuminates the logic of repentance: “Turning away from the current way”¹⁴⁰—a turning that signifies the beginning of repentance (*Buße*) and yet already reaches forward to its completion. The act of turning away reflects, like a simultaneous mirror image, the act of turning toward. In the act of turning, all actions—future, past, and present—are “comprised,” because they can only be in an aesthetic moment—in the “image” (*Bild*) of teshuvah. In atonement, then, originates a transtemporal “unity of man.” Atonement encompasses all; it is the “renewal of the *entire being*”¹⁴¹—but the all it encompasses is neither the isolated individual nor the totalizing totality a system of ethics could claim for itself. Rather, in atonement, as in aesthetics, the “I” and the all are welded together: Atonement, reconciles the temporal singularity of the “I” with the timeless totality of mankind.

In *Religion of Reason*, Cohen returns to this idea, linking the becoming of “I” to the recognition of sin. “[T]he individual shall unfold into an I only through sin,” Cohen writes and continues in another passage: “[Sin] must be the transitory concept (*Durchgangsbegriff*) for the founding establishment of man as I.”¹⁴² The emphasis, for Cohen, lies on the transitoriness of the concept. Sin, like evil, has no inherent meaning other than being the gate through which the individual must enter to become an “I.” Pure ethics can only recognize the “totality” (*Allheit*) of moral individuals. In ethics, there is only moral sameness, laws and imperatives that constitute justice and norms. Ethics knows moral autonomy and social guilt, it knows right and wrong, but it does not know the category of “sin.” Cohen seems to closely follow Kant in this regard, who interpreted sin as distinct from ethics, as an “innermost

personal guilt” in the realm between man and God, a guilt that cannot be reduced to wrong actions at a certain time, but that must be seen as a “temporal unity,” as a “whole,” as a synchronicity of disposition (*Gesinnung*).¹⁴³ Like Kant, Cohen associates disposition with the continuous fashioning of a “new heart,” whose entirety is at stake in the event of sin.¹⁴⁴ Conversely, sin, for Kant, as for Cohen (as well as Scheler), constituted an “infinite” violation that could only be repaired through a total “change of heart” (*Sinnesänderung*), amounting to nothing less than a moral rebirth: “For a change of heart is the departure from evil and the entrance into goodness, the laying off of the old man and the putting on of a new. . . .”¹⁴⁵ The “old subject of sin” so must “die out” for the new to live in justice. Liberation from sin, which for Kant, announced the kingdom of God on earth, requires a radical self-transformation, the replacement of the old self by a new one that can be born only from the infinity of guilt and the totality of self-hood.

Where Kant invoked Paul’s letters to the Colossians (3:9–10) and Ephesians (4:22–24), Cohen draws on a passage by Maimonides that conveys a similar sense of radical change: “I am another individual (*ani acher*),” the penitent cries out in *Hilkhot Teshuvah*, “and not the one who committed those deeds.”¹⁴⁶ What would be possible in no human court of law, becomes, in the context of sin, a privilege of atonement and a passage to selfhood: To annul the past and to reinvent the self. “Thus the new man is born,” writes Cohen: “In this way the individual becomes the I. . . . Man can become a new man. This possibility of self-transformation (*Selbstverwandlung*) makes the individual an I.”¹⁴⁷ It is through the “sinful I” alone that a “new I” can emerge, a moral newness that disrupts the continuity of ethics. The meaning of sin, then, is in truth a passing-through, as much as a surpassing, a retrieving further of selfhood. Sin becomes a threshold, a possibility of turning, a possibility of reversal. Realizing the possibility of teshuvah, of turning, the individual recognizes itself not only as an I but as a *free* I, as an I that can—and is obligated to—“choose a new way for itself.” Religion, unlike ethics, introduces sin not for the sake of sinfulness but for the sake of the “liberation from sin,” for the sake of self-liberation

and moral autonomy. Sin, in this way, never marks a closure, never an end, but always a beginning, an “ever repeating beginning into the always opening new life.”¹⁴⁸ This beginning, this opening, can neither be continuously present nor occur once and for all, *in illo tempore*, but must, like the origin, as an origin, begin anew at any moment. Cohen speaks of a “momentariness of ascent (*Momentaneität des Aufschwungs*) to true moral life”: “Repentance,” he continues, “provides man with this new life, though it can only exist in the bliss of a moment. But this moment can repeat itself endlessly: it must never grow old but must—and can—rejuvenate and renew itself.”¹⁴⁹ Repentance, like the “new heart” itself, so remains a continuous task of interruption, a task that, in turn, lends continuity (*Stetigkeit*) to the I, a concrete continuity, a continuity that is conscious and not the product of “mere abstraction.” In the experience of sin, the I experiences a rupture of the self; it recognizes the self as an other and returns, in atonement to the self of selfhood, to the complete self whose completion remains an “infinite task” with an “infinite goal”—the task itself.¹⁵⁰

We are now able to see how in the dialectics of Cohen’s teshuvah, always scintillating between turning and turning inward (*Umkehr* and *Einkehr*), the infinity of morality is modeled after the infinity of origin and creation. The “I” of atonement becomes its own, self-repeating, self-renewing origin. In atonement, the I returns to itself to create itself anew. Joseph Soloveitchik later will take up this motif and call repentance an “act of self-creation.” “Man,” he writes, “cancels the law of identity and continuity which prevails in the ‘I’ awareness by engaging in the wondrous, creative act of repentance.” He continues: “Man, through repentance, creates himself, his own ‘I.’”¹⁵¹ As a “self-fashioner,” the penitent not only reenacts the continuous renewal of creation (*maase bereshit*), a renewal that, as Cohen puts it, emphasizes each moment as a “new beginning,”¹⁵² but also becomes a creator in his own right, an artist whose aesthetic self-recognition parallels, ever again, the beginning anew of “I.”

This parallelism, which is obviously consistent with the correlative realms of repentance itself (i.e., religion, ethics, art), is apparent already in Cohen’s *Aesthetics of Pure Feeling*. There, Cohen speaks of the artwork as an open all (*Allheit*), a simultaneous appearance of singu-

larity and infinity, an “infinite task,” whose conclusion must remain fictional, but whose fiction is also the aesthetic reality of completeness—*Vollendung*.¹⁵³ What distinguishes art from morality (*Sittlichkeit*) is that in art, completion does not remain merely a task: “Here is no difference between idea and reality.”¹⁵⁴ The artwork establishes its own definite, ideal reality, “a world in itself” that is as absolute as it is isolated, and yet, there is also an “infinity that seems to strive beyond the artwork, only to be embraced again by its totality.”¹⁵⁵ The artwork not only stays in touch with the world from which it derives its singularity, it not only *is* the rock of marble, from which it is made, but it also creates a world outside itself, an infinity toward which it strives—the sublime (*Erhabenes*) that transcends the beautiful and that transcends the singular. “The real artwork,” Cohen continues, “is an event; it is completed in itself to the extent that it carries its own completion as the ground of its *flight towards the complete*.”¹⁵⁶ In the artwork, the complete and the incomplete are given simultaneously: Art is completion is flight, completion to-be-done. The artwork, like the symbol, always reaches beyond itself: As an “event” (*Ereignis*), it is always in the future. It is because of its symbolic futurity, because of its synchronic presentness, that art cannot be mere mimesis of the past. To the contrary: Art, for Cohen, creates (*erzeugt*)—much in the sense of Gadamer’s *ergebeia*: It creates infinite singularity. Mere contemplation loses ground. The aesthetic experience becomes a “doing” (*Tat*),¹⁵⁷ the aesthetic feeling a task or, rather, an “aesthetic yearning” (*ästhetische Sehnsucht*) for the prophetic ideal.¹⁵⁸ Art, therefore, cannot be separated from the principle of morality, nor from religion, nor from the idea of humanity. It is in art alone that the self recognizes itself as a whole, as a *Gestalt*: as an infinite self. “The primary image (*Urbild*) of humanity emerges in the true artwork,” Cohen writes, “the *Urbild*, that reveals neither the spirit nor the morality of man, but both combined in man’s nature. . . .”¹⁵⁹ By the same token, the apperception of nature, the aesthetic experience, evokes the unity of the self, allows for self-recognition through “feeling”—but not as self-love, not as complacent egoism, not as a self that is complete in itself: To the contrary, in the aesthetic feeling, love emerges as the love of the self for the nature of man, for that which transcends the

boundaries of self—toward the other; and it is in this love alone that “the self of man is created.”¹⁶⁰

The Aesthetics of Redemption

Art creates selfhood—a unified, transcending self: The aesthetic self is the moral self, is the religious self. It is a symbol of unity. Schelling celebrated this unity perhaps most emphatically when he wrote in the final pages of his *System des transzendentalen Idealismus*: “Art is to the philosopher the highest of everything, for art opens to him the holy of holies, where that which is separated in nature and history, and which must always escape itself in life, action, and thought, is fused together in an eternal and originary unity or, as it were, in One burning flame.”¹⁶¹ “Nature,” Cohen writes in a powerful essay on the aesthetic value of religion, “is in unity, like humanity, like God himself.”¹⁶² In the same essay, Cohen takes this unity to its full moral conclusion—to its origin: “[T]he aesthetic apperception of nature,” he writes, “emerges directly from the messianic idea of God.” He continues: “The messianic concept of man can justly be called the foundation of modern aesthetics.”¹⁶³ A foundation in the dual sense of origin: In aesthetics, the concept of nature, returns to the concept of messianic humanity, which for Cohen, is nothing less than the concept of *history*.¹⁶⁴

The old Hegelian difference between nature and history has been sublated—once again, and as Hegel had predicted, and as Schelling had already exercised. The artwork reconciles the particular with the universal, the Once with the Again, the concrete with the utopian, the self with the other, the temporary with the continuous, and so on. The artwork establishes unity, a system of comprehensive identity. For Schelling, the aesthetic apperception erased the boundaries between history and nature, opening a view of “total reality” (*Gesamtwirklichkeit*), not through the works of art, but, as Odo Marquard put it, *as* artwork itself.¹⁶⁵ We recognize this trope from our excursions into Barth, Heidegger, and Gadamer, where aesthetics not only penetrated history but also symbolized “fulfilled” history. In aesthetics, the dilemma of historicism has appeared, time and again, to be reconciled,

versöhnt, atoned for, as it were, through the use of symbolic time. The completeness (*Vollendung*) of the artwork symbolized the incomplete—the open. The aesthetic recognition of the Self symbolized the recognition of the Other. The aesthetic kairos symbolized messianic synchronicity, a moment, as Cohen put it in his *Aesthetics*, that may revel in the “fiction of closure” (*Abschluß*), but whose closure must, at the same time, be thought as a “peacefulness and, therefore, goal of morality.”¹⁶⁶ The artwork, in short, symbolized for Cohen, as it did for Schiller, whose legacy he profoundly engenders, the ultimate infinity of Kant’s categorical imperative.¹⁶⁷ In our aesthetic self-recognition as nature, in our self-reconciliation, we recognize ourselves as infinitely obligated to humanity; we recognize ourselves in a history that is neither comical nor tragic but *satirical*, a drama of uncovering, “in which the aesthetic veils are forcefully torn from the backstage of delusion.”¹⁶⁸ This, for Cohen, is messianic history, the “poetry of social sympathy,” the redemption of the present through a future whose “symbol” and, indeed, “aesthetic figure,” is the messiah. It is in this sense that, for Cohen, messianic man becomes the origin of art. What is messianic man? “Messianic man,” Cohen proclaims, “is the man of the One, unified mankind.”¹⁶⁹ Messianic man is the man whose self is reconciled, the man of aesthetics, the man of nature, the man of history, the man of freedom, the man of repetition, the man who can say at once with Kierkegaard “I am myself again,” and with the prophets: “Nobody is foreign to me.”¹⁷⁰

If the messiah is an “aesthetic figure” and if messianic history is in truth a satire and if aesthetics is in truth a poetic rejection (*Verwerfung*) of the beautiful as appearance, who, then, embodies the true artist? It is the artist who “is imbued with the spirit of the prophets,” a spirit that uncovers, preserves, and guards the “moral ideals of humanity.” It is no accident perhaps that Cohen recognized this true artist in the “greatest and most tragic artist of the Renaissance,” in the painter of the Sistine Chapel whose longing aspired for nothing less than painting “world history in its origins”—the same world history the prophets had endowed with their ideal style and their memory of the ideal beginning.¹⁷¹

VI

Forward Recollections: Grammar, Imagination, Ideology, Beginnings

“A system is complete when it has returned to its point of beginning.”¹⁷² For Schelling, the dissolution of thought into the “ocean of poetry” marked the turning point of this return. “Poetry,” reads the fragment of the *Älteste Systemprogramm*, “deserves a higher dignity, for it becomes at its end what it was at its beginning—the educator of humankind.”¹⁷³ In the poetic self-recognition lies for Schelling—as for Cohen—the recognition of humanity. In its final act, the history of selfhood arrives at the recovery of an “orginary identity,” which now becomes the new foundation of a consciousness that “creates itself,” much like in Schelling’s narrative philosophy, “all over again from the beginning” (*von vorn sich schaffendes Bewußtseyn*).¹⁷⁴

Let me return here to our own beginnings: the poetics of time, the writing of history, the counter-writing of aesthetics. Not that our beginnings should claim to present a system of any kind. We have merely been collecting, as one collects things to experience them in their own time, to place them, one by one, side by side, into the simultaneous—and so we have gathered without history and without biography, without attention to the order of things, a bill of particulars. Borrowing from George Steiner, I have called the things we have gathered “grammars.” To Steiner, thinking is grammar, a grammar that becomes distinctively “human” in the use of the future-tense and its related modes of the subjunctive and the “counter-factual.”¹⁷⁵ The grammar of beginnings is as counter-factual as the grammar of hope. Writing long before Steiner and anticipating, in many ways, Foucault’s “quadrilateral of language,”¹⁷⁶ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy experimented with a grammatical method that recognized grammar as a simultaneous consciousness of “backward” (history), “outward” (world), “inward” (society), and “forward” (calling). The speaking individual, to Rosenstock-Huessy, is always in the middle of a simultaneous “cross of reality,” in a present that he creates under the pressure of future and past, inside and outside: “*Here*’ he speaks from an inner space to an outer world, and from

an outward world into his own consciousness. And ‘now’ he speaks between the beginning and the end of times.”¹⁷⁷ Grammar, like language itself, is always between things. It is, as Fritz Mauthner noted in his *Kritik der Sprache*, “in the air.”¹⁷⁸ But it also is, as Rosenstock-Huessy insisted, “embodied” (*leibhaftig*), a concrete simultaneity at the intersection of time and space.¹⁷⁹ Foucault would later speak of “general grammar” as the “study of verbal order in its relation to the simultaneity that it is its task to represent.”¹⁸⁰ Grammar, in this sense, always comes after language, and yet, in another sense, also before: It articulates an order language presumes. Language, for Foucault, sequentializes the “simultaneity of representation,” but its sequence remains “artificial,” a representation of the “contemporaneous” through the “successive.” General grammar establishes the order of “discourse,” but it also lies before that order, before the “sequence of verbal signs” that is language. Grammar, in this sense, allows for a “continuous flow” of thought, while itself remaining outside chronology: Unlike language, grammar belongs to the realm of spatial, “pre-conceptual” imagination—it belongs to the thresholds of time.¹⁸¹ Grammar thus exists in what Foucault calls the “middle region” between the “already ‘encoded’ eye and reflexive knowledge,” in a region that “liberates order itself,” and yet, to a culture, is also a “pure experience of order and of its modes of being.”¹⁸²

If I permitted myself to borrow from the language of “grammar,” then only in a far more prosaic way, collecting elementary forms of beginning and thinking out of which we can begin to speak in sentences. Before we speak in sentences, before we think in a continuous flow of thoughts, before we begin, we live in *nomina* and verbs, in modalities and *tempus*—in fragments of meaning, yet already meaning something to us. In their basic grammatical form, beginnings occupy a fluctuating middle between state and action, between past and future, between indicative and imperative, between imperative and putative. To begin means to be in the middle of grammar, in a simultaneity of grammatical horizons: at the threshold of a sentence. Hence, the meaning of grammar is also image, *grámma*, capturing, as in Lessing’s *Laokoon*, all before and after, all is and was, and ought, in a moment of imaginative openness: “To the seeing eye all parts remain continuously present.”¹⁸³

Let me return, then, to this image of beginning, to this simultaneity of seeing, to this seeing memory—to this ideology. Ideology is not a term we should use lightly, all the more because its meaning is anything but exact.¹⁸⁴ If we choose, nonetheless, to include the term “ideology” in this study, then it is not to label “falseness” but to invoke elements of social *imagination* that apply to the grammatical origins of what we shall call “thinking in renaissance.” We have already, in Karl Mannheim, encountered a fundamental feature common to both ideologies and utopias: Their incongruence with what one might call actuality, their nonconformity with the present. Not all ideologies are conservative, legitimizing merely what is, and not all utopias are progressive in a liberal sense, rejecting all that is in anticipation of what ought to be. To the contrary, in our previous chapters, we were concerned with future-driven ideologies, as much as with conservative utopias, or progressive pasts, that touched, in fact, upon the ideological foundations of historicism and its double countenance of antihistoricism and counter-historicism. Rather than treating ideologies and utopias as two separate modes in the sociology of knowledge, Paul Ricœur regards them as complementary functions of one and the same cultural and social imagination, which, in turn, is constitutive of a specific social reality. What Mannheim’s minimal definition of ideology and utopia formulates is, for Ricœur, a fundamental human experience of “discrepancy” that “in many ways, already presupposes that individuals as well as collective entities are related to their own lives and to social reality not only in the mode of a participation without distance but precisely in the mode of noncongruence.”¹⁸⁵ Our belonging to society, Ricœur continues, is the product of a social and cultural “imagination” that operates in both “destructive” and “constructive” ways, through figures of participation and figures of noncongruence, “as both confirmation and contestation of the present situation.”¹⁸⁶ To imagine ourselves what we are not, to imagine ourselves elsewhere and, as in Luhmann’s thesis, in different times, is the prerogative of complex societies, whose horizons of imagination are shaped by the complementary polarity of ideology and utopia: The former a function of preserving an existing order, a process of identification that “mirrors” this order, like a “picture”; the latter a function of “disruption,” a “breakthrough” that

refuses participation in the mirror image, and that resists congruence with the “picture” of order. “Its image,” Ricœur writes of this type of imagination, “. . . is productive, an imagining of something else, the elsewhere.”¹⁸⁷ Ricœur’s image of utopia, then, as we can recognize without difficulty, is an image not only of aesthetic antimimesis, of *energeia*, but also of Bergson’s “anticipatory action” in memory. Utopias move and motivate society. This is where Plato and the prophets met in Hermann Cohen’s imagination, and this is where Karl Mannheim recoiled from the prospect of an all-and-all rational society, “a world in which there is never anything new, in which all is finished and each moment is a repetition of the past,” devoid of all “reality-transcending elements,” a world of “matter-of-factness,” that has no room for human will nor room for human history. The world of history, which is the world of meaning, needs unfinishedness: “[W]ith the relinquishment of utopias, man would lose his will to shape history and therewith his ability to understand it.”¹⁸⁸ Dispensing with ideology, for Mannheim, meant enlightenment; dispensing with utopia the advent of a dark age.

But Ricoeur seeks to rehabilitate the possibility of an ethics not only in utopia but also in ideology. While ideologies, by virtue of their “conservative function,” are always “on the brink of becoming pathological,” it is precisely this being “on the brink” that lends them also a special place in our imagination: “Ideology preserves identity,” Ricœur concludes his reflections on this term, “but it also wants to conserve what exists and is therefore already a resistance.”¹⁸⁹ To the ideologue, everything that is already is a symbol of what is not. The ideologue’s approach to reality is at once a conscious confirmation of all that is and a conscious resistance to its negatability. In ideology, the new, the non-identical, must be integrated into the existing present. Ideology’s preservation of identity is already a restoration of selfhood from the rubble of nonidentity: a restoration of present from the fragmentary forces of futurity. Likewise, traditionalism and conservatism, as Mannheim observed, are themselves reconstructive responses to the disarray that liberalism tends to leave behind. Repairing stability thus itself becomes a utopian imagination. Ideology, then, for Ricœur, functions as nothing less than a “turning point” in social and cultural imagination, a

point of turning between integration and resistance, between participation and departure, between permanence and transcendence. Ideology, in this sense, articulates, once again, an experience of liminality, a kairotic imagination, an aesthetic synchronization of differentiated time and space, a grammar anterior and resistant to the sequence of signs. The ideologue, ironically, stands at a place where neither the positivist nor the utopianist can fully stand: at the “here and now.”

It is this sense of a prolonged, topified, “here and now,” this imagination of “present,” that defines, for Mannheim, as well as for Ricoeur, ideology. Unlike the positivist, the ideologue does not completely affirm the “givenness” of the present, and unlike the utopianist, the ideologue does not completely reject that givenness.¹⁹⁰ Rather, as in the work of art, ideology creates its own temporal space, a “givenness” of its own, in which is actualized the noncongruence with the present. Peter Karsted, in his “essay on promethean consciousness,” speaks of an “ideological threefoldness,” a simultaneous act of interpretation (past), stabilization (present), and projection (future), in which the ideological consciousness not only surpasses temporalization but is transformed into the all-encompassing “temporal horizon” itself.¹⁹¹ Ideologies, for Karsted, create a structure of stability, a symbolic permanence, always remaining and always reaching beyond, “jamming” the flux of the future and yet affirming ruptures and openness. Their desire for preservation (*In-Stand-Haltung*) is opened up by their desire for realization (*Zu-Stande-Bringen*).¹⁹² The present, as in Bloch’s “concrete utopia,” still needs to be done. The present ideologies imagine is an anticipation of the permanent past; their conservatism is a forward recollection.

Let me, then, once more, return to our beginnings: the poetics of time, the writing of history, the counter-writing of aesthetics. In the grammar of beginnings, the primacy of the present, the reality of the middle, the ideality of turning, formed, invariably, a center of meaning. History, memory, and aesthetics embraced this center with similar energy and similar dialectical strategies. Beginning, beginning-again, and turning were ultimately about the middle, about the incongruent imagination of presentness, the seeing together of time, the concreteness of utopia, the jamming of the “flux.” From the “middest,” begin-

nings and ideologies create patterns of consonance. Yet, their pattern is not a pattern of proximity but, to the contrary, a pattern of distance, a consonance of “tiger-leaps.” Their beginning begins not where the past has passed but where the past is incomplete. Their present is not confined to the horizons of experience, but conjoined with recollection and expectation; it is “presencing.” Beginnings always imagine more than is. Their sense of present is a counter-factual contuition of temporal horizons: a subjunctive of time.

But beginnings also belong to patterns, programs, “symbolic templates,” as Clifford Geertz put it, that enable societies to *recognize* themselves.¹⁹³ In their aesthetic “plasticity,” cultures generate ideologies whose symbols are “new” enough to transcend the present and “old” enough to remain recognizable. Ideologies, like beginnings, come to life at the very point of turning between old and new: Their symbols emerge at a point of crisis, at the fissures of self-recognition. “It is, in fact,” Geertz writes, “precisely at the point at which a political system begins to free itself from the immediate governance of received tradition, from the direct and detailed guidance of religious and philosophical canons on the one hand and from the unreflective precepts of conventional moralism on the other, that formal ideologies tend to first emerge and take hold.”¹⁹⁴ Ideologies thus emerge precisely at the points of what Gadamer called *Symbolnot*, at the brink of Heidegger’s feared forgetfulness. They emerge in a state of alienation, of unease and meaningless futurity, yet also at the dawn of a poetic *energeia*—or as Geertz puts it: “It is in country unfamiliar emotionally or topographically that one needs poems and roadmaps.”¹⁹⁵

The poetics of time, the writing of history, the counter-writing of aesthetics: Poems and roadmaps that have taken the shape of ideology—and ideology has taken the shapes of beginning—and beginning has become about ideology, perhaps even ideology’s archetypical rootword. Everything turns in the beginning. All imagination stands at a threshold. All symbol-systems are turning points. We now realize that our notes on a grammar of beginnings were notes not on philosophical thinking but on ideological emplotment. That beginnings are not concerned with knowledge but with an imaginative strategy of recognition; that the authority of beginnings lies neither in their cognitive

contribution, nor in their historical explanation, but in their conscious suspension of the factual: In the fiction of firsthood, which is the fiction also of the present. “To begin—to ignore or suspend the undefined density of the past—is the wonder of the *present*,” Levinas writes about modern consciousness.¹⁹⁶ To begin is the wonder of the present, it is present’s privilege. To begin is to suspend the past, not to reject, ignore, or forget all that has come before, but to negate the possibility of a past that has, in actuality, passed: A past whose presentness has, as it were, come to an end. The past of beginning is a past bereft of its irretrievability and bereft, thus, of its authority. The consciousness of beginnings creates a distance of access, presentifying what has previously been immune to our grasp. In beginning, the doors of time are left open to uncover their thresholds. The consciousness of beginning is in this regard historical *kat’exochen*: It rejects the past as complete. However, it is also ideological *kat’exochen*: It posits the present against the given. In the beginning, everything is transformed into the open.

Therefore, we can rearticulate the paradox—the always-compelling ideology—of beginnings: that beginnings begin again the present past; that being in the present is resisting the present; that beginnings, precisely through their fiction of incision, create a grand, counter-historical, counter-empirical continuity that is pregnant with repentance and pregnant with redemption. The continuity of beginnings is “conscious,” as Karl Löwith wrote, commenting on Jakob Burckhardt, a continuity that is more than mere “going on” and that implies a “conscious effort in remembering and renewing” the symbols of the past, rather than accepting their permanence. In the consciousness of continuity dwells a desire for preservation that is, paradoxically, joined together with a desire for future and freedom. “Conscious historical continuity constitutes tradition and frees us from it.”¹⁹⁷ Conscious continuity is the discontinuous, revising, and restoring continuity beginnings create. It treads in the ominous path of Hegel’s dialectical historicism: in the path of idealist *Geschichtlichkeit*,¹⁹⁸ soaring between linear eschatology and eternal recurrence, in the dialectics of novum and renovatio.

Our consciousness of beginnings, then, fits squarely into Löwith’s bifurcated mind of “present,” into Bloch’s consciousness of “modern,”

into the mind of “now,” of “today”—*hodie, hodiernie*, into the present that is, as Augustine had noted, fundamentally other than the everyday (*cotidie*). The beginning mind is not everyday, but everyday anew. Each day is a beginning, new and now—and each day, as Bloch mused, begins in a morning that is already a tomorrow (*das Morgen*). Its beginning is a “fresh coming-in that drives away the night, and a to-come that lies beyond today, in the future.”¹⁹⁹ But its beginning is also a beginning that must “repair something,” that must “overhaul” and “surpass” the past. In each morning, there is an element of atonement and an element, therefore, of new life. Not by accident, then, does Bloch’s perambulant philosophy proceed on a curvilinear path from Dante’s “*incipit vita nova*” to Paul’s “*in novitate vitae ambulamus*.²⁰⁰

Beginning, beginning-again, and turning are the modes of morning dawn. They are modes of consciousness that correspond with what Koselleck called the three “layers of time” (*Zeitschichten*): Linearity, repetition, and pointing-beyond (*hinausweisend*).²⁰¹ They are modes of consciousness that engender the dialectical mediation of kairos and continuity. They are modes of thinking newness, modes of transition, and modes of renewal—and they appear to us as three inseparable layers in one of the most profound cultural imaginations: in the ideology of renaissance.

VII

Thinking in Renaissance

Renaissance, to us, is a mode of thought, a consciousness, a figura of imagination, whose simultaneous rootwords are beginning, beginning-anew, and turning. Thinking in renaissance is thinking in a mode that precedes, yet anticipates, the history it vividly imagines. Just as the recurring tropes of “exile,” “restoration,” and “return,” entered the “realm of universal human experience,” as Shemaryahu Talmon noted, before they were experienced in actuality, so the idea of renaissance seems to exist as an imaginative prefiguration of history, as a figura into which real events can be retrofitted to establish patterns of meaning, patterns,

that more often than not, follow the biblical plot and its metaphysical correlates.²⁰² Hence, as Konrad Burdach documented so well, the Renaissance use of restoration, rebirth, and renovation was profoundly shaped by the language of the Psalms, by the prophets, and, of course, by the letters of Paul. Conceiving of itself as a collective renovatio that projected the biblical plot onto the restoration of Rome, the Renaissance, for Burdach, engendered and secularized the sacraments of baptism and atonement—the *sacramentum regenerationis* and the *sacramentum resurgentium*²⁰³—but it no less engendered, as Bernhard Ullmann noted in 1952, the biblical metaphor of exile.²⁰⁴ “*Ad patriam venio longis a finibus exul,*” writes Benvenuto Campesani upon discovering a lost manuscript by Catull.²⁰⁵ Boccaccio, summarizing the life of Dante, praises the poet for bringing back the Muses who were exiled from Italy: “*Questi fu quel Dante, il quale primo doveva al ritorno delle Muse, sbandite di’Italia . . .*”²⁰⁶ The poet, as in Heidegger’s reading of Hölderlin, calls the prophetic call of turning that will make the gods return.

Thinking in renaissance, then, shares the universal tropes of restoration: renaissance as homecoming, as turning, as repentance, as a baptismal fountain of new life. Yet, to think in renaissance also points beyond these tropes: It presupposes, unlike the myths of eternal return and periodic renewal, an historical specificity, a metaphysics of one-timeness, as we called it with Michael Landmann, that is deeply rooted in a historicist mode of thought. There is indeed, in every conscious renaissance, a perception of itself as “the” renaissance, a uniqueness of beginning again the unique beginning, a repetition in otherness. Thinking in renaissance, as we understand it, is accompanied by an epochal self-perception that singles out the moment of restoration as the kairos of history. Renaissance is not recurrence. It is the one-timeness of restoration—the most historicist of all antihistoricisms. Machiavelli’s *Roma renata* served as the unique reincarnation of a unique past at a unique moment—or turning point—in Italian history: the revolution of Cola di Rienzo. Italy, in Machiavelli’s imagination, became the unique land, the last metahistorical remnant chosen to “revive dead things” (*risusciatare le cose morte*) and to draw its energies for renewal from the return to beginnings (*riduzione verso il principio*).²⁰⁷ “The re-

turn to origins,” writes August Buck about this passage, “can occur only where there is a will to renewal. Only a generation that desires to supersede its fathers can create new achievements that are its own.”²⁰⁸ To the Renaissance, Buck argues, the present appeared as distinct from the past, recovering and yet superseding it, returning to the old, and yet creating a new that was not known to the previous generations. The epochal consciousness, then, that emerges at this point is able to see a distinct past and, simultaneously, a distinct present: *hodie-hodernie*. It is able to see itself in the middle of times, at that synchronic moment where all continuity collapses to be rebuilt in a redemption of the past to-be-done. Renaissance so becomes the final cycle of history, the final awakening, the irreversible turning, the irrepeatable repetition. What makes the epoch a turning, or *conversio*,²⁰⁹ is the conscious inversion of *in illo tempore* and *in nostra aetate*, the counter-historical inversion of two historical singularities, the recognition of the present as a symbol of a specific, historical, yet still breathing “once”: “Despite all that happened, and despite the ruins and the rubble of centuries,” writes Burdach of the Renaissance consciousness, “Rome still stood there, like a personal, living being.”²¹⁰ Its past, in other words, had not passed but only gone underground to be unearthed in fragments, whose incompleteness, as Leonard Barkan wrote, may reveal one of our salient fantasies: “the wish to enter historical moments via their breaks or discontinuities.”²¹¹

The epochal consciousness of renaissance, in this sense, finds in the fissures of time, in the fragmentary remains of Rome, a place of entry for the forces of restoration—*Bruchstellen* are *Fundstellen*. In the broken pieces, the past becomes incomplete again—presencing, renewable, redeemable, beginnable. “Rome is the city of beginnings,” writes Michel Serres. It “does not cease to be founded.” Its history and time are never complete but simply “what pass between two occurrences of the founding action.”²¹² Aby Warburg captured this incompleteness in his famous concept of *Nachleben*, which preserves a dialectic of after-life (second life) and living-on.²¹³ In the ruins of Rome, the past is both distant and near, both absent and present, underground and above, found and founding. In the ruins of Rome, the Renaissance beholds the broken *symbolon* that calls out “This is you!” and asks to be restored.

In beholding the ruins, the Renaissance is able to utter the shibboleth of repetition: “I am myself again.” In the symbol, Gadamer insisted, the past is made present, recognizable, synchronized. Time, as we fear it, is overcome. The symbol, for Gadamer, is a shelter of familiarity, a symbol of returning home: *nóstos*. The symbol is an encounter with oneself: *Selbstbegegnung*. It offers to us the missing fragment of being: *Seinsbruchstück*. In the experience of fracture, halt, turning, epoch; in the experience of discontinuity; in the beholding of broken pieces, history, for Gadamer, becomes “real.” There exists not only the possibility to experience epochs, but also the possibility for epochs to experience themselves: to become aware of their epochal character; to become aware of their beginning; of themselves. “Rome,” muses Petrarch, “would be resurrected, if only it began to recognize itself.”²¹⁴

Hans Blumenberg placed this awareness of epochal self at the threshold of modernity, which, “in contrast to the middle ages, appeared no sooner than its self-interpretation (*Selbstauslegung*).”²¹⁵ Modernity, in Blumenberg’s thesis, begins upon its self-recognition and, indeed, self-affirmation (*Selbstbehauptung*). Working from a similar—and of course deeply Hegelian—paradigm, Johann Droysen called all epochs of history “stages of self-recognition.”²¹⁶ Schelling, in his *Ages of the World*, invoked a “coming-to-onself” (*Zu-Sich-Selber-Kommen*) in the re-remembrance of the “first origin of things” (*erste Herkunft der Dinge*).²¹⁷ Self-recognition would thus become the essential element also in the Renaissance interpretations of Jules Michelet and Jacob Burckhardt. “L’homme s’y est retrouvé lui-même,” writes Michelet of the period he names “renaissance”: Man has found himself again.²¹⁸ Erwin Panofsky, seeking the “innovation” of what he calls the “main” (i.e., Italian) Renaissance, finds primarily its heightened state of “self-awareness,” a consciousness of awakening youth and rebellion that was as real to the epoch as it was imaginary and self-deceptive.²¹⁹

But self-recognition is not only homecoming to the self. Nostalgia not only restores but also shatters the familiar. The symbol that cries out “This is you!” also demands, as Gadamer admonished us, “You have to change your life!” The aesthetics of turning call for nothing less than a total “change of heart,” a *Sinnesänderung*, as Kant reflected upon the infinity of sin, or as Cohen noted about the “new man” emerging

from the mysterious moment of teshuvah: The possibility of self-transformation makes the individual an I. The I recognizes itself in its ability to say *ani acher*—I am another: I am an Other. We are reminded of Scheler's repenting “self-revision,” of his atonement that “annihilates” to rebuild, of the “new heart” that arises ever anew from the “ashes of the old.” Too, we are reminded of Gadamer’s aesthetic anamnesis, in which the soul, “exiled in earthly gravity,” began to “grow wings again” and to “lift itself up” to the “heights of truth.”

It is the ancient myth of the Phoenix that, for Konrad Burdach, constitutes the source of all thinking in renaissance. It is also the “retransformation into the ideal originary form” that, for Burdach, constitutes the meaning of *reformatio*: a return to the origins that is neither contemplative nor limited in action, but which is lived anamnesis, a memory that entails “a concrete turning around of the total inner life.”²²⁰ In his famous *Kenyon Review* essay of 1944, Panofsky described the Renaissance as an all-encompassing “change of consciousness.”²²¹ Unlike all other “renascences,” the Renaissance, for Panofsky, was characterized by a new consciousness of distance and rupture, by a sense of epoch and “epoch-making,” by a sense of finding founding of oneself, that consciously rejected the unbroken continuity of historical realities, consciously shattering the sameness of historical identity. To posit itself as new, the Renaissance had to interrupt the continuity of consciousness and time. It had to distance itself from the old in order to reclaim it in freedom. “[T]he classical past was looked upon from a fixed, unalterable distance . . . ,” writes Panofsky: “As in perspective, this distance prohibited direct contact—owing to what may be called an ideal projection plane—but permitted a total and objectivized view.”²²² While premodern renascences stressed the reality of continuity, Charlemagne’s *translatio imperii*, the Italian Renaissance discovered the imagination of discontinuity, thus liberating itself from the fetters of the very past it claimed to restore: “The classical world ceased to be both a possession and a menace—and became, instead, the object of everlasting nostalgia.”²²³ This nostalgia and “creative form of classicism”²²⁴ accounted for what Alfred v. Martin described as a powerful romantic undercurrent of the otherwise rational, classical, and naturalist Renaissance, whose legacy was to be reclaimed by the Enlightenment itself.²²⁵

Petrarch, who stood at the threshold to the Renaissance, at a caesura of his own making, so not only invented the “dark” Middle Ages, the long midnight of history (*tenebrae*),²²⁶ but was also driven by the emotional yearning for a time other than his present. Antiquity, v. Martin writes, “with its patina of a glorious past, possessed that charm of the exotic which only distance can create: it was to him [Petrarch], who felt burdened by everything that was near, like a far-away land to which his yearning could travel freely.”²²⁷ No wonder, then, that August Buck described the phenomenon of so-called renaissancism as a “turning away from the undesirable present,” an ideological disposition *par excellence*, whose master was none other than Jacob Burckhardt: “A pronounced distaste for his own time was also in Burckhardt the strongest impulse to turn away from the present and to immerse himself into the history of Italy.”²²⁸ Burckhardt’s longing for the Renaissance, in other words, which he famously invested, like Michelet, with the powers of individuation and self-recognition, was itself a form of renaissance: a romanticism of ruins, an incongruence with the present, a nonconformity with time, a search for the ability to say “I am another.” Celebrating the Italian Renaissance as a “guide for our era,”²²⁹ Burckhardt, like his Renaissance predecessors, inverted the order of present and past, separating “our era,” Vasari’s confident “*secolo che noi viviamo*,” from what Niebuhr called the “tyranny of the present,” from the present present, as it were, from the givenness of the near, from the sameness of I, to reenact, *jouer à nouveau*, as in Bergson’s memory, to reposess, as in Scheler, to overhaul-surpass, as in Bloch, the distant past.²³⁰ The Renaissance repeats Antiquity not as one imitates to make same, but as an act of *aemulatio*, a symbolic beginning-anew toward the past that presupposes a shattered continuity of similitude and that carries in itself the seeds of supersession and invention.²³¹ Foucault later speaks of *aemulatio* as “a sort of ‘convenience’ that has been freed from the law of place and is able to function, without motion, from a distance.”²³² Unlike in imitation, *aemulatio* requires the ideal absence of the emulated. In emulation, the distinction between the original and the projected begins to vanish, just as the place allotted to each thing is “overcome.” Drawing on Pico della Mirandola, Stephan Otto refers to the Renaissance as an “ontological placelessness,” a sense of space-temporal au-

tonomy, a declaration of limit, *péras*, that enables the individual to set the boundaries of self across the horizons of otherness and time—to recognize itself precisely in the nonidentical.²³³ The distant past, to the Renaissance, so appears as an historical twin, as the other I—not the same, but a mutual duplication of originality and selfhood. In repeating Antiquity, the Renaissance is as original, as unique, as one-timely, as Antiquity itself. Its sense of self, as Ernst Cassirer put it, was not about mere “appropriation” (*Aneignung*), but about “anamnesis in the truest sense”: “Renewal from its own ground of thinking.”²³⁴ Self-liberating re-remembrance; self-purging liberation; self-regenerating atonement. “[T]he new generations started to purge their minds of the grossness of the past,” writes Vasari in his *Lives*, to imitate (or emulate) what had remained “buried under the ruins in Italy,” and to reverse the end of art in a process of “resurrection” that reached its fulfillment “in our time”—*al secolo che noi viviamo*.²³⁵ The present is a resurrection. *Hodernie* is a palingenesis of memory, a new life that atones for the sins of the old; imitation no longer means mimetic duplicity but the dynamization of a dead past, the past as possibility. Renaissance as a going back into the possibilities of Dasein that has been there, forgotten and yet presencing under the rubble of the first Rome. Hence, the specific novelty of the Renaissance lay, for Cassirer, less in its content than in its “dynamics,” in the renewal of “energies,” in its new *energeia* and “*ponere in atto*,” in what Heidegger would call *Ins-Werk-Setzen* and Gadamer *Vollzug*.²³⁶ Its poetry, as in Heidegger’s art as event, is founding, retrieving-creating, remembrance of origins, rekindling of incipience, setting in motion of essential being, making of history, and turning at the turning.

I am, of course, not attempting to reconstruct a unified picture of the Italian Renaissance, nor do I seek to give a single interpretation of its history. To the contrary, most historians, including even Burckhardt, have credited the Renaissance with an unprecedented inner heterogeneity, with a preference for plurality, paradox, multivocality, and discursive thinking.²³⁷ Likewise, thinking in renaissance cannot be reduced to a single conceptual content. Thinking in renaissance is a “form” of thought. There is at best a cluster of tropes that appears ever anew in the guise of the triad of beginning, beginning-again, and

turning. Thinking in renaissance is no mere thinking in restoration: It is thinking in second beginnings. Peter Burke rightly compared Rienzo's dream of revolution to the advent of the second Adam.²³⁸ The second Adam, we learnt from Jürgen Moltmann, is a "new creation" that follows from "creation's end." The Renaissance, Michelet believed, gave rise to a new "*héroïsme de création*," to a new "*héroïsme d'action*."²³⁹ Panofksy stressed the "power to create," a "prerogative of God," that permeates the Renaissance mind in the images of Prometheus and Hercules.²⁴⁰ Ernst Gombrich alerted to the potential vicinity of modern renassances to the totalitarian desire "to create a 'new man.'"²⁴¹ Moshe Barasch pointed to the ambiguous line between mere "making" and "*creatio ex nihilo*," the ultimate fantasy of all New, that dominates the artistic discourse of the Renaissance and its dual loyalties to the ancient past and the unencumbered present.²⁴² Renaissance man, for Burckhardt became the image of the divine artist, "the continuous mover and incessant creator," the second creator, who remembers and surpasses the first, and whose art-in-action, whose *ponere in atto*, turned the Renaissance into a total work of art.²⁴³

The second beginning validates and annihilates the first. All renaissance stands between the conscious violence of beginning and the subliminal terror of repetition. As memory itself, renaissance remembers in between pastness and persistence. Where the pre-Gothic and the Middle Ages left Antiquity "unburied," writes Panofsky, the Renaissance stands "weeping at its grave," trying to resurrect its soul.²⁴⁴ But its tears have nothing in common with what Burckhardt called the "vale of tears" of mediaeval man. Its tears are tears of nostalgia, tears of distance, of discontinuity, tears of joy, tears of power. The second Adam replaces, sublates—if we recall Karl Barth—the first, sublating also the "new man's" being in "mere" historical time, liberating the new I from the curse of continuity. Renaissances, as Peter Burke observed, are reconciliations of linear and cyclical time. They express, as no other consciousness, Löwith's historical bifurcation of the modern mind, the desire for beginnings that is always followed by a desire to plug up open ends. All authority *ex nihilo* is haunted by a fear of nothingness. All utopian forward is haunted by a fear of going nowhere—of being *atélés*. All demolition of *stasis*, of sameness, is haunted by a fear of

flux and total otherness. But in renaissance, all fears are quieted: We are not bound by history, nor are we traveling into the open, nor are we trapped by eternal return. Renaissances resist the past as they resist the future. They resist closure as they resist openness. “Turned backward, they struggle into the future,” writes Burdach before Benjamin’s angel of history.²⁴⁵ Renaissances, like works of art, like works of redemption, hold their where-to in the middle—*télos echei*. They create movement, *momentum*, but they do not create fleetingness. Their forwardness, as in the aesthetics of eschatology, is fulfilled in their own temporal space, in their own kairotic epochality—in *Eigenzeit*. Beyond history, and yet in the midst of its ruins, traversing the broken here-and-now, renaissances create permanence, a present that presences precisely by its absence: by virtue of its immunity to empirical givenness. “Resurrected souls are somewhat intangible,” notes Panofsky, “but they have the advantage of being immortal and omnipresent.”²⁴⁶ “Est-ce un si grand mal de mourir?” asks Michelet in his *History of France*. “A ce prix, on renait en ce qu’on eut de meilleur.”²⁴⁷ What indeed is death to the romantic historian, if not the turning to a better life? The resurrected man, writes Karl Barth, has “left death behind.” In resurrection, all “relativity of history” has been suspended; time can no longer threaten us; resurrection is the “un-historical event *kat’exochen*,” the suspension of perishability. “Where man is one with himself there is no becoming and no perishing.”²⁴⁸ Where Rome remembers itself, there is resurrection. What, then, are renaissances and their repetitions, if not modes of being with oneself again, modes of dying the death of self-recognition that always redeems and promises eternal life? Or as Michelet wrote with a simple stroke against all pastness of the past: “Aimer les morts, c’est une immortalité.”²⁴⁹

Here we leave behind our grammar of beginnings. It is, ultimately, a fictional grammar, rooted, as Burdach said of the Renaissance itself, not in empirical observation but in emotions, myth, and fantasies—in resistance to the empirical world, and in resistance to the meaningless course of history.²⁵⁰ Renaissance, as Michelet noted in 1838, meant the appearance of a new art and a new freedom of imagination (*libre essor de la fantaisie*).²⁵¹ The grammar of beginnings creates and inhabits this freedom. It is counterfactual, operating between ideology and utopia,

between historicism and its antihistoricist correctives. Gustav Landauer once called renaissances “learned errors of history” (*gelehrtenhafte Geschichtsirrtümer*), conscious forgeries, that are unwilling to submit to the factuality of historical time.²⁵² Schelling called for a poetic history that would resemble a “regression” and “anti-historical progression” (*anti-historischer Fortschritt*).²⁵³ Dissolved in the ocean of poetry, the “curse of historicity” would hold no power over renaissance, whose true medium, as Vasari already knew, is art and imagination: The aesthetics of sin, the poetics of time, the artwork of politics. If ideology, as Paul Ricoeur held, is the imagination that preserves and resists identity; if it offers, as Geertz wrote, a symbolic template of collective self-recognition at the moment of turning between old and new; if it is, as Mannheim indicated, a utopian construction of the here and now; if it clings, as Adorno suggested in the *Jargon of Authenticity*, to all language of “rooted genuineness” (*Wurzelechtes*) and self-recovery, then thinking in renaissance will fit this profile disturbingly well: “[N]o one can say the word ‘genuineness’ (*Echtheit*) without speaking in ideology,” writes Adorno.²⁵⁴ No one can say the word return without speaking in ideology. No one can come home without entering the house of ideology. Indeed, there are few other ideologies as suggestive and powerful as incessant and renewable, as the ideology of return, of turning—of renaissance. Few other ideologies are as suited to express counter-history in history, to find repetition in one-timeness, to fuse the utopian with the concrete, the conservative with the revolutionary, the modern with the antimodern; few other ideologies can claim to preserve what they demolish; few other ideologies can build coherent social realities from a single source of illusion: from the myth of beginning-anew.

Thinking in renaissance is the method to this myth. It offers the grammatical frame to the semantics of restoration. It assures its thinkers that in every beginning there is the possibility to begin again, that every beginning is incipience: that in every “I am myself” there is the possibility of “I am an Other”—*ani acher*. The rerooting of renaissance engenders the “jargon of authenticity,” whose rootword is “shelteredness” (*Geborgenheit*).²⁵⁵ It also engenders the jargon of flux, Caputo’s

unsheltered, irreducible, Kierkegaardian repetition. Thinking in renaissance is that ideological-utopian longing for self and otherness, for authenticity and duplication, for shelter and exile: “With great defiance,” writes Burckhardt, “do the artists [of the Renaissance] affirm their freedom from the constraints of place (*Ortszwang*).”²⁵⁶ It is exile that, for Burckhardt, “either destroys the human being or raises it to its highest form.”

Thinking in renaissance so emerges as anything but a simple formula of restoration. To the contrary, its grammar resists formula and order: a grammar that always resists and is always vanquished by the rise of semantics. The imaginary language of renaissance is a language of middle, of turning, of directionless simultaneity, of synchronic chronicles, a language before “jargon,” still in possession of its dialectical *momentum*; a language that, as Adorno put it, “is always also something other, wresting itself free from its magic origins—a language entangled in the process of demythologization.”²⁵⁷ Thinking in renaissance is just that: a demythologizing method of myth, a disenchanting illusion, an ideal imagination, a being “at the brink,” whose becoming reality, whose entrance into history, must inevitably, be its transformation into jargon, be it the jargon of humanism or the jargon of its darker counter-part.

Thinking in renaissance is incessant *energeia*. Ernst Cassirer labeled its epochal moment an “ideal type,”²⁵⁸ a period not of the past but of the future, reflecting not only Max Weber but also Heinrich Rickert’s historicist rescue of “individuality as a task.” “We believe in the individual,” Michelet declares in his 1855 introduction to his volume on Renaissance, calling, in the same breath, his book “*un appel aux forces vives*.”²⁵⁹ Renaissance, in this sense, will always remain an event, a figura of imagination and thought, always at the brink of being pathological and always yearning for a distant past to-be-done. When Erwin Panofsky, in 1944, articulated his belief that we are, essentially, still living in an age of Renaissance, he not only offered a sweeping definition of the modern age as a renaissance that was “total and permanent,” but also invoked a renaissance of the ideal type itself, a redemption from the dark ages of his century.²⁶⁰ The lease on humanity

may have come to end in 1933, by a renaissance, perhaps, of a different kind, but it would, for Panofsky and a generation of exiled thinkers in renaissance, always be renewable in “our time.”

Epilogue and Transition

Renaissances rejuvenate and make wise the new beginners. They are, as Ernst Bloch masterly captured, filled with both youth and old age, filled with the double imagination of *novum* and *renovatio*. “Recommencement in discontinuous time brings youth,” wrote Levinas. “Always anew you become young again,” the priests of Saïs speak to Solon. Renaissances make young *ex arches*, from the beginning on, but they will always be compelled to deny their purely innovative character: their own beginning. Renaissances so reject the revolutionary fantasy of interruption for its own sake, rejecting also the redemptive woes of apocalyptic millenarianism. Renaissances neither produce an end of history nor a thousand-year stasis. To the contrary, renaissances, insofar as they are aware of themselves, conscious of their continuity, insofar as they are, to speak again with Burckhardt, consciously continuous, remain in that elusive space of turning, the most evocative place historicism can claim for itself—against itself. Renaissances remain in a beginning that is and is not their own: in incipience.

The beginning cannot be thought without its correlates. It does not exist outside the triangle of beginning, beginning-again, and turning, which corresponded, in our essay, to the triangle of history, memory, and aesthetics. Renaissances are deliberate beginnings: conscious modernities. Renaissances are deliberate repetitions: conscious counter-modernities. Renaissances are deliberate turnings: metanoetic modernities. We say modernities in the plural, because renaissances, by virtue of their own self-epochization, defy the epochization through history. Renaissance can only be, always anew, *hodernie*.

As we now turn from the grammar of beginnings to the semantics of restoration, from thinking in renaissance to writing in resurrection, we will notice that renaissances share most essential elements of cultural restorations, reawakenings, and revitalizations, which Anthony Wallace rightly defined as a “special form of culture change phenome-

non,” a total transformation of what he calls the “cultural mazeways”: a “changing the total Gestalt.”²⁶¹ Konrad Burdach, we recall, characterized the Renaissance *reformatio* as a “concrete *Umgestaltung* of the total inner life.” William McLoughlin well described such total and concrete changes as “critical disjunctions in our self-understanding,” which, far from being “pathological,” serve a purpose that is “therapeutic” and “cathartic.”²⁶² Renaissance is the therapy against the throes of historical time. It cures the illusion of complete novelty with the illusion of complete renovation. In renaissance, as the history of its art amply illustrates, illusion brings clarity.

Renaissances belong to the general anthropology of revitalization—yet, there is a specificity to both thinking and repetition that warrants Renaissance with a capital “R,” Panofsky’s “main” Renaissance, and that singles out the Renaissance as the ideal type of repetition. Thinking in renaissance is a figura of thought, a resurrectionist trope, a universal experience, common to the intellectual history from Plato to Hegel, and reaching beyond, into the realm of “radical” hermeneutics. But thinking in Renaissance is a *prefiguration* of thought, a mode of didactic historicism, a metahistorical *paideia*: Jacques LeGoff rightly spoke of the Renaissance as an “historical mentality,” a paradoxical disjunction of its epochal pastness and its continuous presence. The Renaissance so remains the *magistra vitae* for all future renaissances, a persistent source of *aemulatio*.²⁶³

The Renaissance is still present, still there to be re-remembered, still there as the ideal, as the origin, as open actuality. It functions as a mnemonic locus,²⁶⁴ as symbolic *lieu de mémoire*, whose purpose, as Pierre Nora saw it, is “to stop time,” “to block the work of forgetting,” “to immortalize death,” but most importantly, “to escape from history.” “Memory,” Nora writes in a tone already so familiar to us that it seems redundant, “is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present.”²⁶⁵

Memory, for Nora, is “life.” It resembles Gadamer’s “ongoing vitality” and Croce’s *storia viva*. It resembles the very ideological foundations of historicism, as well as its ideological opposition. Memory is life. But its modern spaces, its *lieux*, which Nora describes as torn away from the moving-on of history only to be placed again within its flux,

exist in a narrow sphere of semivitality, in a between that is “no longer quite life, not yet death.”²⁶⁶ It is the same sphere of intermittent between that the Renaissance claims for its revitalizing *energeia*: The sphere of “stunted life,” of a “near death,” but not, as Burdach well understood, the complete coming to an end.²⁶⁷ All turning needs the incomplete. Renaissances are born from the imagination of dying, not death itself. Resurrections still need the distant presence, the present absence of a “spirit” or “soul,” or “origin.” Renaissances need ruins.

Repeating the Renaissance is a mnemonic technique that takes on the form of anamnesis. “Every ‘renaissance,’ every ‘reformation,’” writes Yerushalmi, “reaches back into an often distant past to recover forgotten or neglected elements with which there is a sudden sympathetic vibration, a sense of empathy, of recognition.”²⁶⁸ Anamnesis reflects this sense of recognition, this sympathetic repetition, that constitutes for itself a hermeneutic awakening. What is re-remembered has already been there, neglected, yet still capable of resonance. Anamnesis is the beginning-anew that revives the beginning. The second beginning “understands” the first. Beginning-again finds itself in the beginning. The self of anamnesis finds itself in the Other.

Repetition frees from the course of history which occasionally appears to be the “curse” of history. Time and again we have witnessed how memory became a code for liberation, if not a yearning for an age of what Nora called “real memory,” unviolated and unbrutalized by the histories of “hopelessly forgetful modern societies.”²⁶⁹ Memory not only is repetition, as Halbwachs recognized, but also resurrection. In both reigns the capacity to forget at the “right time,” to begin in the midst of *kairos*, a capacity of what Edward Casey called “memorial freedom”: “to consider myself both same and other in one and the same apprehension: the same self precisely *in* and *as* differing from itself.”²⁷⁰ This capacity for nonidentical repetition, for self-recognition in the other, for self-liberating depreciation, for self-temporalization, characterizes the ideological underpinnings of the mentality called renaissance. It characterizes, at the same time, its utopian—and heterotopian—going beyond itself. Repeating renaissance must always pass through *alteritas*, must always pass through the places of elsewhere, through a site of withered roots. The epoch as ideal type is

transformed into the ideal of the epoch: individuality and selfhood as a task. Renaissances thus attach themselves freely to restorations of other kinds—to nationalism, to religious revival, to collective reconstructions of self, but they also transcend these restorations in the dual rhythm of reclaiming origins, in a restoration of beginnings that is a restoration of *beginning*, incomplete, as we read in Benjamin, and lacking closure. Renaissances assert themselves through ever renewed non-congruence with the given, through the permanence of turning, through the irresistible vagueness of content, through the ideality of realization. Renaissances, as modes of beginning, work in and outside history. Their seeming antihistoricism is no escape from history but an historicism of liberation, a classic form of counter-historicism, of counter-plot and, ultimately, sacred history:²⁷¹ *Heilsgeschichte* from the middle, a change of heart that promises redemption.

Part Two (Verso)
Writing in Resurrection or
The Semantics of Restoration

One The Imperishability of Being Writing Jewish History in Resurrection

Wir nahen uns einem neuen Auftritte, wenn auch freilich bloß durch Verwesung.

—Johann Gottfried Herder, *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte*

We are eternal, not as an idea may be eternal: if we are eternal it is in full reality.

—Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*

I

A Story of a Particular Kind

Shortly before the establishment of the state of Israel in May 1948, the Jewish philosopher and Hebraist Simon Rawidowicz, then teaching at Leeds University in England, published his famous and often-quoted essay on “Israel—The Ever Dying People.”¹ The essay opens with a sweeping account of Judaism perceiving itself, from the moment of its historical infancy, as continuously being at the verge of death, as living under the continuous impression of impending peril, of an end that paradoxically seems to precede its beginning. Always near its end, the body of the Jewish people goes on dying, but its “spiritual creativity” (*yetzirah*), though ridden with constant anxiety, lives on: “Filled with the fear of its end, it seeks to make a new beginning,” writes Rawidowicz, adding to the dismay of his Zionist audience: “[both] in the Diaspora and in the State of Israel.”² Rather than being the product of its natural homeland, and rather than being in continuous development, Rawidowicz preferred to see Jewish creativity, or the Jewish “spirit,” as living on a peculiar history of “falling and rising,” on the alternate course of “being uprooted and striking new roots,” never fully at home and never fully elsewhere: As living on the history of continuous rebirth and renaissance—*techiya*.³ To Rawidowicz, who, in 1924, produced the first critical edition of Nachman Krochmal’s writings,

arguing that the Jewish Hegelian was, in fact, much closer to Vico and Herder than to Hegel himself, “falling and rising” constituted the historical pattern that, in defiance of history, rendered the creative spirit a spirit of survival, if not immortality.⁴ A remarkable line concludes his reflections: “A people dying for thousands of years means a living people. Our incessant dying means uninterrupted living, rising, standing up, beginning anew.”⁵

For the purpose of this essay, I shall consider “beginning-anew” to be the principal rootword of all renaissance, restoration, and cultural reawakening. It is a “spiritual” rootword, not one that is grounded in the empirical world. The melancholy story of decline, the “disinterested mourning over the vanishing of nations in the past,” as Hegel wrote in his 1823 *Philosophy of World History*, finds reward in the realization that “from change and decline new life emerges and comes into being, that new life rises from death.”⁶ Philosophical history, for Hegel, comes to recognize the secret “up-cycling” of the “spirit”: a law of a higher imperishability through continuous “rejuvenation.” While the historical individual must go on dying, the “universal spirit” rejuvenates itself, emerging ever-more “purified” and self-cognizant from the terrors of ephemeral singularity. Rawidowicz, as we can safely suspect, applies this tragic-comic principle of spiritual rejuvenation to his principle of creativity, which in turn he applies—against Hegel—to national survival. Rather than succumbing to its sublation, the Jewish people violate the axiom of one-timeness: It begins again. For Rawidowicz, who stands, in this respect at least, in a long legacy of Jewish anti-Hegelian Hegelianism, the new life that rises from death belongs to the dying nation itself. It is a life of difference and yet also a restoration of sameness: It is a restoration of beginnings.

Rawidowicz’s conclusion, as will become evident momentarily, is no exception in the writing of Jewish history. Nathan Rotenstreich, in a study of 1984, already addressed the peculiar predominance of a Jewish recourse to cyclical patterns in history, a strategy that served “as a kind of life preserver introduced to the historical river, as described by Hegel.”⁷ Unlike the Hegelian *Volksgeist*, whose creativity was destined to reach a point of exhaustion at the end of its highest manifestation, the Jewish national spirit tended to be presumed in possession of a unique

ability to recover and to begin anew. The modern source for this otherwise prophetic conception of cyclical restoration most likely would be in Krochmal's unfinished opus magnum, the *Guide for the Perplexed of Our Time*, written in the late 1830s and published posthumously in 1851—under the auspices of Leopold Zunz, one of the founders of the German *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Science of Judaism).⁸ A Galician *maskil* (follower of the enlightenment), who was reared in traditional Jewish learning but no less conversant in the works of Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Herder, and Vico, Krochmal wrote his final work as an apologia of enlightened, “scientific” Judaism through a metaphysics of history, the ultimate science of his time. Like Vico, Krochmal approached history from its national instantiations, distinguishing among three periods in the “natural order” (*seder ha-tivî*) of a nation’s spirit (*ruach*): A time of “first blossoming and birth,” in which the national spirit sets out to transform all material pieces into organic limbs of “a single person” (*ish echad*); a time of actualization and maturity, which Krochmal also calls the “period of strength and action” (*mo’ed ha-oz ve-ha-mif’al*); and lastly, a period of “withering” (*balut*) and “death” (*mavet*) that is already coextensive with the “natural order” of the cycle. In this final period, writes Krochmal, a nation’s glory will gradually dwindle and diminish until it disappears: It is the period of “melting away and extinction” (*mo’ed ha-hituch ve-ha-kilayon*).⁹

Krochmal’s three ages in a nation’s life show indeed considerable resemblance with the inalienable course of “rise (*sorgimento*), progress, state, decadence, and end” which, for Vico, constituted the “common nature” of all nations. By understanding the inherent cyclicity of human history, the *ricorso di cose umane civili*, Vico believed to have found within the diversity of individual historical manifestations an “identity of intellectual substance” (*identità in sostanza d’intendere*). The constant “reappearance of human things” so revealed a super-historical similitude, a secret pattern of an “ideal history” (*storia ideale*) embodied in all individual nations and common to all humanity itself.¹⁰ Understanding this pattern offered to the historian a synchronic and hence trans-temporal view of human history in its various “modes” and “guises.” The same understanding, however, was conceived by Vico not as an empirical description of individual events but as a narrative pattern by

which the historian *represents* history—not unlike geometry—as ideal to himself. The multitude of ephemeral human histories, in a word, is “made” into history by the methods of the New Science. “We do indeed dare to claim,” writes Vico of this method, “that whoever contemplates this science, narrates to himself (*narri a se stesso*) this ideal eternal history insofar as he . . . makes it for himself (*esso stesso sel faccia*) by the very proof that ‘it had, has, and will have to be’ (*dovette, deve, dovrà*).”¹¹ In the poetic synchronization of events, the historian creates and receives, realizes like the artist himself, the providential “harmony” (lit. *convenevolezza*) of the universe, a harmony that constitutes also the “beauty” (*bellezza*) of the historical world, as well as its inherent normativity. The New Science does not present us with a universal historical narrative, whose individual chapters correspond to the individual biographies of nations, but instead with an aesthetic realization of an “eternal order” as it “will have to be.” Narrating history to oneself, then, is no mere representation but the parable of an *imperative*.

What Vico, writing in 1725, postulated as “ideal” history under the guidance of “eternal laws” that applied to all humanity but were realized in their *totality* only in the mind of the historian, Krochmal sought to uncover, a century later, in the particular course of Jewish history. If other nations are destined to perish, he reasons, then it is because their “spiritual essence” (*ha-ruchani*) is singular and wanting (*prati*), because it is merely “private” Volksgeist. The Jewish nation, by contrast—though not immune to the natural cycle of its material existence—is accompanied by the “divine presence” (*shekhina*) wherever it goes and whenever it declines: Its “spiritual essence,” like Vico’s *leggi eterne*, is universal and all-inclusive (*clali*). In Judaism, then, the cycle of national existence does not come to a close, but, as Jay Harris rightly emphasized,¹² repeats itself time and again, defeating, by virtue of this repetition, the state of complete withering and death. Repeating the never complete, the spirit of Judaism thus progresses in cycles.¹³ By this progressive repetition, Judaism comes to embody in toto the universals of Vico’s ideal history. In Judaism, the eternal emerges not merely in the eyes of the historian but *through* its historical modification. Judaism sublates itself, rising ever-more purified from its own decline and actualizing ever more the “ideal” and “eternal” of history. “[W]ith the completion

of the period of withering away and vanishing,” Krochmal writes of Jewish history, “there would always emerge a new and reviving spirit (*ruach hadesh ve-mechayeh*). And if we fell, we would rise again invigorated with new strength.”¹⁴

Here, then, we find the source of Rawidowicz’s concluding remarks. From Krochmal to Rawidowicz stretches a view of Jewish history that essentially reenacts, *pars pro toto*, as it were, Hegel’s optimism of the universal spirit, folding it into an ideal harmony of uninterrupted repetition—but it is an optimism with dire implications. For if incessant dying, as Rawidowicz intimates, means uninterrupted living—can there be genuine living without uninterrupted dying, or without intermittent death? Can there be continuity without historical caesura? Must we not look at death and dying as the great companions of renewal? Must, then, destruction not be turned into a mere chapter, perhaps the ominous turning point, the *peripéteia*, or worse still, the *anagnórisis* (resolution) in a grand plot of suffering self-fashioning? Must we not interpret persecution as the purgatory history of “refinement”—not “like silver,” as the prophet Isaiah said (Isaiah 48:10), but in the “furnace of affliction”?

These are, of course, intended to be rhetorical questions which, troubling as they seem, also point to something rather banal about such semi-Hegelian reading of history: New beginnings need interruptions. Being-onto-death, as Heidegger well knew, generates great possibilities. Resurrections require dying. Renewals are better than permanence. The discontinuities of decline, as most revivals will not fail to recognize, are more useful than the continuities of linear progression. The world of history prefers change to stasis, repairs to unbrokenness. The language of plot is meaningless without beginnings and ends. The logic of redemption calls for the presence of imminent destruction. Crises are good for reawakenings. Crises, as Jakob Burckhardt once wrote, are the “true sign of life”¹⁵—or as Arthur Liebert summed up this wide spread sentiment in 1924: “A time without crisis is a dead time, as a man without crisis is a dead man.”¹⁶

Rawidowicz’s conclusion may well belong to such a genre of what we may call “crisis-historicism,” whose early masters were the Hebrew prophets themselves, yet one might also find something intuitively

“right” about his assessment. After all, would a brief survey of Jewish history not confirm that exile and destruction have been, at all times, as real as the ever-puzzling arrival of rebirth and restoration? While the prophet of exile wonders whether “these bones can live” (Ezek. 37:11), Krochmal tells the story of a “second time of blossoming and growth.”¹⁷ In Judaism, Krochmal is convinced, it is history itself that teaches the laws of resurrection. “Every instance of dissolution of Israel’s body politic,” writes Shemaryahu Talmon of the biblical mind-set, “generates the hope of its regeneration.”¹⁸ Max Weber called this hope a “stupendous paradox,” “unexampled in history,” that can be explained only by the persuasive poetics of prophecy.¹⁹ For Weber, it was the prophets who forged exile and return into a mysterious plot of redemption, juxtaposing national restoration (*shiva*) and individual repentance (*teshuvaḥ*) in a poetic trope that would become formative for all Jewish *Geschichtsbewußtsein*. The hope for regeneration, it seems, not only pervades the grand narrative of Jewish history, it becomes the grand narrative itself.

That history becomes intelligible only through a grand narrative, or by the poetic structure of a story (*mythos*), has been a common motif since Aristotle’s *Poetics*. Wilhelm v. Humboldt noted in 1821, that the writer of history must “in different ways and not unlike the poet himself transform into a whole what he has collected in disparate pieces.”²⁰ In the historian’s imagination, according to Humboldt, reality is “born anew,”²¹ both as a mimetic image of natural events and as an artwork of higher meaning. “[T]o be historical an event must be more than a singular occurrence, a unique happening,” Paul Ricœur would later write in his seminal essay on “Narrative Time”: “It receives its definition from its contribution to the development of a plot.”²² In the same spirit, Hayden White spoke of historical “emplotment” as the “way by which a sequence of events fashioned into a story is gradually revealed to be a story of a particular kind.”²³

... a story of a particular kind. What I shall argue throughout this chapter is that writing Jewish history is not only the writing of a particular story but that it tends to be indeed the writing of a story of a *particular kind*: the story of beginning-anew. By itself, of course, this observation would state little more than the expected. If we only

remotely accept the narrativist paradigm, then all history becomes historical by being told in story form alone. There is history, as in Hegel's well-known distinction, that "happens" and there is history that is written.²⁴ We do not have to be strict narrativists to acknowledge that writing Jewish history as a story of a particular kind is but one manifestation of Hegel's "subjective" history that facilitates collective coherence: one of many poetic renderings that, as Humboldt stated unabashedly, weave together all fragmentary and incomplete by the faculties of imagination and fantasy²⁵—nor do we have any reason to believe that there is a story of a particular kind that could vouchsafe "resurrection" and "eternity." All we can hope to show is that the modern, "historical" writing of Jewish history, from its most innocent nineteenth century beginnings to its responses to the Holocaust, seems to have been the particular kind of story that begins anew. What will emerge in this essay is a history that is less than eternity but more than temporality: a history not *of* resurrection, if such a history could ever be justified, but *in* resurrection. Hence, the motif of resurrection and beginning-anew will present itself not only as a story of a particular kind to embellish and make sense of the senseless history of dying. It will also present itself as an attempt at *ethicizing* history. Fantasy will thus become an imperative. From the counterfactual will emerge an ethics of factuality.

II

Destruction and the Construction of Immortality

Reflecting upon Jewish life in Eastern Europe, the Jewish historian Simon Dubnow wrote in 1925 that "construction and destruction go by turns in the history of our people."²⁶ In Jewish history, Dubnow believed, was manifest an esoteric "secret" and "law" of survival that stood in correlation with an ever-renewed social memory and the unique ability to attract and repel, to adapt to the ways of life while, at the same time, beating a distinct national path. "Every generation in Israel," Dubnow wrote in another place, "carries within itself the remnants of worlds

created and destroyed during the course of the previous history of the Jewish people.”²⁷ A “thread of eternity” so weaves through this history, a thread “that binds all the links of the nation into a chain of generations” (*toldot*)—into a chain whose links are linked, paradoxically, by interruption.²⁸ “The spirit of each generation turns about continually in its circuit,” Dubnow continues, “and the spirit returns again to its circuit, the point of the nation’s existence.”²⁹ Like Hegel’s self-purging Spirit, Dubnow’s spiritual nation returns upon itself ever more conscious of itself: “The Jewish Spirit is alert; it is ever purging and tempering itself in the furnace of suffering.”³⁰ Jewish history, for Dubnow, is and must be in its last analysis “spiritualized history,” self-sublating history, and yet also history in the most historical sense.³¹ What makes the Jewish nation “eternal” is not that it lives outside the realm of history and time but that it is “historical at *all times* [emphasis added],” a people *historicissimus*, a people, as Dubnow writes, invoking the Jewish liturgy, “that was, is, and will be.”³² The secret of survival, for Dubnow, lies in this pluri-temporality, in the all-presence of the accumulated past and of the will to hope, which wraps around the national “body” a “second soul” that surpasses the “wreckage” of change, rendering the body at its core “indestructible.” Where other nations “grow and wither,” the Jewish “body,” which is a body of “spirit,” survives the turns of destruction and construction, of wrecking and building, because its rise and decline are always cotemporal, always turning and always reaching into each other’s present.

Dubnow’s theory of history perfectly reiterates, by all accounts, Krocchmal’s spiritual renewals and Vico’s ideal history, even though there is, as far as I can see, no explicit reference to their work. One might, on the other hand, also conjecture that Dubnow simply moved along in the same philosophical tradition, which, according to Rotenstreich, turned to cyclical thinking and Jewish liturgical time to explain, as well as to secure the “eternity” of Judaism. At the same time, however, Dubnow did not at all intend to write a religious history of the Jews, nor a spiritual history, but instead a *social* history in the proper sense.³³ Rejecting the “crooked path” of sacred history and the mere “necrological” interests of the early Wissenschaft alike, Dubnow proposed a “bio-sociological” approach that regarded Judaism as a “living organ-

ism,” a complex nation under the strict laws of evolution. This notwithstanding, however, Dubnow was able to infer from his own bio-social history a “perennial vitality,” an indestructible “will” to autonomy that defied, at all times, the tragic course of historical events.³⁴ It is precisely in the social history of the “living organism” that the “eternal” in Judaism could be uncovered, or as Dubnow had written earlier, still under the spell of Graetz: “Now as before, the genius of Jewish history holds watch over the sons of the ‘eternal people’ who are dispersed all over the lands of this world.”³⁵

The “genius of Jewish history” and its eternity is a motif more common among modern Jewish historians than one might think. Even Salo Baron, who in 1930 became the first to hold a chair in Jewish history,³⁶ and whose work undoubtedly set the standard for a new, “objective” generation of Jewish historians, was not immune to this recurrent theme. Although he was deeply critical of Dubnow’s “idealistic approach” to history, which favored “spiritual” rather than contextual factors, Baron also decried the new secularism and materialism that had entered Jewish historiography, attacking, in fact, Dubnow’s very attempt at subsuming the religious factors of Judaism under its bio-social and national development.³⁷ “The religion of Judaism,” Dubnow wrote in his *Weltgeschichte*, “was fashioned in accordance with the image of social conditions of the nation’s existence, not the reverse.”³⁸ Baron, however, claimed exactly the opposite: “Long before the full evolution of its diaspora community the Jewish people had become a basically nonpolitical entity,” he wrote in the introduction to his 1942 study *The Jewish Community*. “Indeed, in its long diaspora career it had demonstrated the independence of the essential ethnic and religious factors from the political principle.”³⁹ Precisely because of this “independence,” Jewish history, even in its social context, could not be subjected to the laws of social history alone: Its “essential” factors were beyond the merely historical. Thus, in the opening chapters of his *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, first published in 1937, Baron contemplates the “eternal life of the nation” insofar as it remains, at its core, or by virtue of its always returning “remnant” (*shear yashuv*), in a history that is independent of and even opposed to nature.⁴⁰ There are indeed “eternal” elements that Baron gathers from the history of Judaism, not

by reduction but, to the contrary, by inclusion of minute changes, by a “totality” of view that can accommodate all contradictions and discontinuities: “It is their totality which gives life to the ‘eternal’ elements.”⁴¹ Torn between constant anxiety and “firm hope” (the biblical *bitachon*), the Jewish people move along a painful course between history and nature, always taking on a new form, always adapting themselves, yet also remaining strangely the same. Baron, of course, did not go as far as to proclaim a “spirit,” let alone “essence” of Judaism. But his recourse to “eternals” strikingly echoed what Martin Buber wrote about the Jewish “soul” in 1930: “If one wishes to speak of the soul of Judaism, one must consider all the transformation it underwent through the ages till this very day; but one must never forget that in every one of its stages the soul has remained the same, and gone on in the same way.”⁴² As long as the religious moment continues to be an integral part of Jewish nationalism defying the “menace of a new schism” between national and religious life, Baron too predicts that the “saving remnant” will march on into the “unfathomable future.”⁴³ With regard to the imminent struggle between “history” and “nature” that happens to be the classic Hegelian struggle of the previous century, Baron indeed quotes Martin Buber for an answer: “The Jewish people has become the eternal people not because it was allowed to live, but because it was not allowed to live.”⁴⁴ Here, Baron finds the “most magnificent feature” in the history of the Jews: Their “persistence in living *in despite of nature*.”⁴⁵

As some have argued, Baron’s eagerness to distance himself from the spiritual history of Dubnow was, in fact, a strong affinity in disguise.⁴⁶ Both Dubnow and Baron shared a powerful appreciation for the conflicted sociocultural forces of the Diaspora; both interpreted Jewish history as a constant struggle against the “natural” impulses in history; both employed—in ways equally descriptive and normative—an essentially “spiritual” (counter-natural and, by extension, counter-historical) factor in Judaism; and both recognized the eternalizing effects of resisting nature, the tragic theme that “perennial life” springs from the destruction of the living. Writing on the “Future of the Jews in Europe” in 1940, Baron commanded in the spirit of the second book of Isaiah a “self-imposed objectivity” that would enable the Jewish leaders

of the moment to “restore their composure” and to formulate an “intelligent remedial action.”⁴⁷ But two years later, Baron spoke of the “rebuilding of the destroyed religious, educational and cultural institutions and the reawakening of the vast creative cultural energies of European Jewry.”⁴⁸ Finally, in June of 1945, in an essay entitled “At the Turning Point,” Baron allowed himself to dream, albeit within the limits of “dispassionate” history, of a “great awakening,” of “cultural resurrection of European Jewry,” and of the “emergence of some new vital spiritual and religious forces out of its untold sufferings.”⁴⁹

We are, of course, not suggesting that any mere hint of “rebuilding” and “reawakening” already implies an intellectual commitment to cyclical history. Our fundamental experience of “history,” as Reinhart Koselleck has repeatedly shown, is by no means linear alone but always shaped by the perception of repetitive events and actions, as well as by that which “points beyond.”⁵⁰ Still, there is a difference between the experience of repetition, which might come to us both in the form of a “routine” or as a sudden recognition of a present moment as having been there before, and the repetition that is anticipated, that belongs to both the having-been-there and the pointing-beyond, that is experience and expectation, that is descriptive and normative at once. A history that perceives and postulates, that postulates what it perceives in the form of rebuilding and reawakening belongs to the second kind of repetition—to a repetition that interiorizes rather than exteriorizes historical cyclicity or, for that matter, “eternity.” Hence, the mystery of Jewish survival, for Baron, did not lie in the “perilous realm of metaphysics” but in the moral idea of *teshuva*h and in the fact that their previous history had “prepared” the Jews for their “subsequent destinies.”⁵¹ If we are, in a word, permitted to speak of Jewish survival, then it can only be the *interiorization* of the history of survival. Conversely, the notion of Jewish return and rebuilding becomes possible because there is a “perennial life,” the life of history itself that comes to the fore whenever the buildings of exteriority, the realms of nature, are shattered—or once more in Vico’s language: “The nations seek to tear themselves asunder, and their remains find refuge in the wilderness, until, like a Phoenix, they rise again.”⁵²

Despite the End of History

Little wonder, then, if the creation of a modern Jewish state, which Dubnow, who was murdered by Latvian Nazi collaborators in 1941, was not fortunate enough to see, has been consistently assimilated as yet another “rebirth” into the history of Judaism, as the ultimate instantiation of “destruction and construction,” of “exile and return,” or as Cecil Roth speculated in 1954, of “catastrophe and resurrection.”⁵³ Quite naturally, it seems Jewish history after 1945 has come to be looked upon as a period of “revival,” as Nathan Glazer wrote about American Judaism, a period of “recovery and renewal,” as Lucy Dawidowicz put it, or as Jonathan Sarna more recently suggested, a “postwar revival” that would become part of an entire “latter-day” movement of “Jewish renewal,” however elusive in content.⁵⁴ Reviewing Sarna’s historiographical work, which concludes, incidentally, on a reference to Rawidowicz, a popular journal promptly and aptly transmogrified the idiom of the ever-dying people into the “ever-revitalizing people.”⁵⁵ Invoking, as so many before him, the prophet Ezekiel, another author, writing in 1991, recapitulated the years following the annihilation of European Jewry: “The skeletons began to move; life was renewed.”⁵⁶

What such astounding optimism seems to suggest is that rather than marking an “end of history,” as Arnold Gehlen announced in 1952,⁵⁷ a destruction so grave and so total as the Holocaust itself remained open to be interpreted as a “new beginning,”⁵⁸ an incision in history, deeper perhaps and more painful than any before, but an incision nonetheless, a dark middle, no different, morphologically at least, from any other rupture in continuous time. Rupture, by the logic of renewal, is interruption, an end in between. The end becomes a transitory concept. Ending means turning. Ending generates and demands a response—teshuva.⁵⁹ The logic of renewal replaces continuous, or successive, continuity with the conscious continuity of rebirth. Every Jew living today, Lionel Kochan suggested in 1992, should feel the touch of a “renaissance of his people during the last four to five decades.”⁶⁰ A renaissance so unthinkable and so defiant of the “natural” course of history, that Arthur Cohen, in 1962, called for a renewal of “sacred history” that would become the first stage in a greater “rejuvenescence of Jewish

theology,” which, in turn, would enable Judaism to undergo a “renewal of the historical,” to reenter the very history from which it had been expelled—and to continue, against all odds, to survive in it.⁶¹

Even at its most unimaginable conflagration, Dubnow’s secret law and rhythm of destruction and construction did not seem to have faltered. Why, then, should the recurrent motif of “beginning-anew” not appear to be consistent with the actual course of Jewish history, however unusual this course might seem to the observer? If so, would the writing of Jewish history as a series of rebirths not indeed follow an inherent symmetry, even congruence of Hegel’s “objective” and “subjective” history? Does this story, then, not also justify the *writing* of a particular kind?

Writing in Resurrection

“One cannot write Jewish history in its total course,” Leo Baeck remarked in one of his last lectures before his death in 1956, “without regarding it as a history of continuous rebirth: Rebirth from epoch to epoch, rebirth that created epochs of its own—epochs of giving old ideas a new expression.”⁶² To Baeck, who had served as a liberal rabbi in Berlin before his deportation to Theresienstadt in 1942, the continuous rebirth of the Jewish nation was as empirically evident as the two rebirths of the Italian people: Its cultural and aesthetic Renaissance and its great social Risorgimento of the nineteenth century.⁶³ Like Jakob Burckhardt, whom he greatly admired, Baeck considered the ability to produce rennaissances the hallmark of great civilizations.⁶⁴ But in Judaism, renaissance is not merely a sociocultural phenomenon that repeats itself from time to time, testifying to the inner vitality of the nation: It is, for Leo Baeck, a frame of mind, a “mode of thought” (*Denkweise*), prefigured in the message of the prophets and living on as a “task” in every generation to follow. Only where this mode of thought had been internalized did Judaism “find itself again”—only then was it “reborn.”⁶⁵

The continuous rebirth of Judaism, according to Baeck, proves wrong Oswald Spengler’s theory of necessary end of all civilization⁶⁶ and Arnold Toynbee’s “rhythm of degeneration.”⁶⁷ It also proves wrong

the entire logic of Hegelian historicism, which had no room, in Baeck's assessment, for the reality of revolutions and renaissances.⁶⁸ For Baeck, the conscious continuity of rebirth weaves a "continuous thread" (*Leitfaden*) that enables us to not only recognize and write Jewish history in its own rhythm and periodicity, but to also liberate it from the irreversible verdict of historicism. Retrieving the original meaning of "period" as *peri hodos*, which might best be rendered as the Goethean "circumgress" and which is suggestive also of Vico's concept of *ricorso*, Baeck interprets the periods of Jewish history not as abstract and retroactive divisions in an evolutionary process of change, inevitably leading to national decline or "sublation," but as revolutionary turning points that mirror, *per analogiam*, the "ability of a young individual to build for itself a world, a second life, a second I: to fashion an ideal I."⁶⁹ As the individual has the capability to create itself anew, to begin again and yet also become "totally new," a nation too can fashion an "ideal I," an ideal "We," as it were, whose "renewal" is a mode of becoming oneself again: a mode of self-recognition—of recognizing that which endures—and, at the same time, a task, an unfinished turn toward ideality, toward the self that is not yet. Writing Jewish history as a history of "rebirths" (*Wiedergeburten*) so represents, for Baeck, the prophetic *Denkweise* itself, the very "style of thought" that, in turn, ensures that Judaism retains its vitality and remains—in defiance of all history in a Hegelian key—able to renew itself into the future. Rebirth, for Baeck, is not a resurrection of the past "as it was" but, to the contrary, a turning forward, a renovatio of the past-to-be. Inspired by Ernst Bloch, whom he squarely places, as Gershom Scholem did,⁷⁰ into the prophetic tradition, Baeck conceives of the past as being-in-the-beginning. In Jewish history, the past is "utopian" in Bloch's sense of a "realization" of the "not-yet" which, for Baeck, is the quintessential prophetic disposition. Thus, Baeck interprets utopia and henceforth, prophetic history, as a "commandment" (*Gebot*), an affirmation of unfinished presentness: "Utopia begins with you, now and here; with you begins the distance, in this hour and at this place, now. Make a beginning: Begin!"⁷¹

If I have introduced Baeck at this premature point in our discussion, then it is because his interpretation of history shares most exemplary features of thinking in renaissance and writing in resurrection,

because it belongs to the grammar of utopian renovatio: There is a modality of beginning, beginning-again, and turning; there is a counter-writing of diachronic plot; there is a forward return, which is reminiscent of repetition in the Kierkegaardian sense, of a repetition that exists in a paradoxical space between sameness and difference. To repeat “authentically,” for Kierkegaard, meant to retrieve oneself by transformation and self-transgression: by becoming, paradoxically, another. In “true” repetition, the “new” self not only resembles the “old” self, but is one with it. The self of repetition, Kierkegaard writes, is “quite the same self he was before, down to the least significant peculiarity . . . , and yet, he becomes another, for the choice permeates everything and transforms it.”⁷² In repetition, the I “chooses itself,” but it can only choose from itself as another. In a different passage, Kierkegaard will speak of repetition as a “task for freedom,” which is, *inter alia* a task toward infinity.⁷³ As such, repetition also stands outside the necessity of history, defeating, above all, Plato’s “static” anamnesis and Hegel’s cunning reason. Repetition is no mere “recollection” of the past but a self-transformation into the future. The self of repetition is both old and new.

Kierkegaard’s repeating self and Leo Baeck’s “ideal I” of national rebirth have more in common than we can examine at this point. Let me stress instead what the philosophical trope of nonidentical repetition yields to the writer of history. First, it enables us to formulate the retrieving conservation of the “old” self as a task that requires, paradoxically, distance and “choice,” a repetition without repetition, as it were, that seeks selfhood in difference rather than mimesis. Second, it enables us to endorse “progress” without historical self-effacement, without the devouring directionlessness of the future: In repetition, the process of “becoming,” which Kierkegaard called the momentum of kinesis, may lead through a wilderness of difference, but it will always be coming “home” to the ideal self. “I am myself again,” speaks the young man of Kierkegaard’s *Repetition*. I am myself again, because I did not continue to be who I was; because I do not continue to be who I am. Thirdly, the use of repetition or “rebirth” enables the historian to postulate an ideal self beyond historical time: to establish an unfinished origin.

One motivation, then, to write Jewish history as a repeating-resurrection might indeed be to “be oneself again”; to come home to the self after the exile of alienation, of displacement and destruction. “At the moment when we turned around and saw nothing but abyss, when we felt the earth tremble beneath our feet and had lost all that could support us—at that moment,” Ahad Ha-am wrote in 1890, “a will to live was awakened in us with all its force . . . , and in a flash we recognized ourselves.”⁷⁴ To every exile from without corresponded, for Ahad Ha-am, an exile within, an “inner bondage” (*avdut pnimit*) whose redemption required nothing less than a “resurrection of the hearts” (*tchiyat ha-levarot*), a “transformation of the hearts” (*shinui lev*)—a *Gesinnungsänderung* in the Kantian sense. The destruction of the Second Temple, to which Ahad Ha-am here referred, served as a mode of self-recognition and self-transformation. Following Isaiah, the expulsion into exile so rendered a return to oneself.⁷⁵

Another motivation for writing history in resurrection appears to be the redemption of Jewish history from what is vaguely perceived and decried as the perils of “historicism.” With good reason: For if both the empirical structure and the ideal “task” of Jewish history are to be found in continuous “rebirth,” then Judaism can neither be “reasoned away,” as the Enlightenment attempted to do, nor considered a “fossil” or “imperishable mummy” (*unverwesliche Mumie*), as in the judgment of the Romantic theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher,⁷⁶ nor, for that matter, can it be sacrificed on the “altar of world history” to be fully raised or “sublated” to the level of the Universal Spirit, as the Hegelian system would demand.⁷⁷ If “sacred” regeneration, as Eliade maintained (albeit for all the wrong reasons), means both rebirth *and* birth, beginning anew *and* new beginning,⁷⁸ then the regenerated is both young *and* old, both sublated and sublating, just as Hegel’s Universal Sprit itself. Thus, Heinrich Graetz could write in his *History of the Jews* (1873): “This people is . . . both old and young. While from its countenance the lines of hoary antiquity cannot be effaced, the face is as fresh and youthful as if born yesterday.”⁷⁹ Likewise, Ahad Ha-am, writing in 1902, noted the simultaneous man and childhood of his people, which he viewed as both a unique challenge and opportunity for its regeneration.⁸⁰ Simon Dubnow, in his 1893 “Historiosophical Essay” on Jewish

history, wondered whether the Jewish people belonged to the most ancient, to the old, or to the modern nations, concluding that it belonged “to all three at once.”⁸¹ This historical synchronicity, which would have a profound impact on the Zionist interpretation of history,⁸² articulated itself in the pervasive trope of modern Jewish “old-new-ness,” which allowed for the coexistence of continuity and rejuvenation—a dialectic inherent in all thinking in renaissance. For renaissance, or the idea of bringing back to life a bygone age, as Ernst Bloch recognized in his *Tübinger Einleitung*, is less a commitment to the past than a “pretext for one’s own beginning of youth and, at the same time maturity.”⁸³ The great and evocative paradox of rejuvenation is that it channels the energies of youthful naiveté into the depositories of historical seniority and entitlement. “The first test which a nationality has to pass to establish its durability and its right to undiminished development,” Heinrich Graetz writes in 1864 in a tone that reminds one of Jacob Burckhardt, “is to give evidence of a capacity for rejuvenation after having lived through the frailties of old age.”⁸⁴ Indeed, he writes in another place, where other nations have quietly left the scene, the Jewish people, “so often on the brink of death, still wanders over the earth having rejuvenated itself several times.”⁸⁵

From this follows another motivation still: Writing history in resurrection means the defiance of an end, the very defiance that again distinguishes all renaissances, whose emphatic rejection of the finality of death, whose resistance to a mode of forgetting where the past slips away into darkness without traces of its passing, is in truth a yearning for the ruins of semilife, for the ever-dying sites of memory. To the Renaissance, the ever-dying city of Rome became a fountain of rejuvenation. To Vico, Rome would forever remain the universal exemplar for all nations, an *imperium sine fine* in Virgil’s classic prophecy.⁸⁶ A people in ruins will go forth to find the ruins of its past. It will find what has not completely vanished but is distant enough to command retrieval: To command a new beginning. Every resurrection, as Graetz mused, must unfold from an “indestructible core,” which like Isaiah’s “immovable stump” (Isaiah 6:13) withstands mortality, and which can be unearthed by the historical skill of reconstruction.⁸⁷ The death of nations is in truth a state of slumber. However, if a nation can arouse itself, it

becomes as indestructible as its “core”—or as Graetz boldly writes: “If but once it has proven its ability to rise from the slumber of the grave then it will have attested its immortality.”⁸⁸

Regeneration as Transcendental Apperception

If resurrection becomes “real” in history, if immortality can be derived from *res gestae* rather than historical imagination, then history, it seems, has been defeated. For it is history, the modern medium of change and perishability, that will have become a medium of permanence and immortality. This inversion of history into antihistory is of great significance for the development of “Jewish” historicism, which must now be seen as an attempt at transforming earlier forms of Jewish providential history—nothing short of an embarrassment to the modern mind—into a new kind of stability, into a system of meaning that would retrieve “origins” and beginnings as symbols of indestructibility buried in the grounds of history rather than being subject to divine providence. Refusing to accept the historical verdict of civilizations coming to a “necessary end,” as Spengler would later put it, and forced to relinquish a fundamentally unhistorical plot of redemption, the modern Jewish concept of history thus came to celebrate beginnings as the eternal possibility of *beginning again*. With the rise of modern Jewish historicism, cooriginated, I would argue, a modern Jewish “resurrectionism,” which could base itself precisely on the simultaneity, contemporalization, and invertibility of old and new. Old-newness, by historical apperception, means immortality.

What I am suggesting is that “regeneration” became a form of historical apperception in Jewish history. It acts as a category of mind, which at the same time acts as a “transcendental idea” in the Kantian sense. Put differently, the “subjective” projection of continuous rebirth and rejuvenation, even immortality and eternity, onto “objective” sequences of events not only attaches meaning to historical sequences, but is also projected back onto a specific historical consciousness that derives meaning from the very continuous rebirth it commands. We have called this process an interiorization of the history of survival, which is, *inter alia*, the exteriorization of a specific *Denkweise*, to speak

with Leo Baeck—a correlative act that is once again remarkably close to Vico's conception of “ideal” history and self-narration. On one level, then, the “anomaly” of Jewish continuity appears to be explained through an “anomaly” of a different kind: The positive, and as Baeck emphasized, paradoxical notion of “rebirth” and “rejuvenation.” On another level, historical rebirth tends to be taken as a normative figura of regeneration, a commandment transpiring the same history from which it was derived. Just as Kant's transcendental ideas opened a “field,” a space at the limits of reason into which expectation and hope could enter, directing morality into a realm freed from the “shackles of experience,”⁸⁹ the idea of Jewish history, at least in its modern crystallization, reveals a tendency to be conceived as transcendental, as a form of historical apperception pointing beyond itself and transcending history into the realm of infinity, which is the realm of morality.

Resurrectionism and Historicism

As the idea of “resurrection” is derived from the realm of the historical, albeit in defiance of its final verdict, the writing of Jewish history in this idea indicates less a “disavowal of historicism,” as Yosef Yerushalmi suggested,⁹⁰ than a rewriting of historicism against itself. Writing in resurrection, in that sense, becomes a form of antihistorianist historicism, whose high-flown name may be “counter-historicism,” but whose simple form amounts to “doing historicism in a Jewish way.”

Let me review here that the notion of “antihistoricism” seems to require little explanation, whereas one will be hard-pressed to find a unanimous definition of “historicism.”⁹¹ Religious writers of “crisis,” such as Ernst Troeltsch, would chastise historicism for its extreme individualism and necessary relativism of values, while critical rationalists, such as Popper or Albert, rejected historicism for its grand scheme and ultimately religious conception of history.⁹² Most historians saw themselves in opposition to Hegel, while most historians will name Hegel as the indirect progenitor of historicism.⁹³ In short, “historicism” appears to be as much the imagination of its opponents as it represents a movement or “attitude” in its own right. Nevertheless, if we understand, as Peter Koslowski has more recently done,⁹⁴ “good” historicism (or

historism) as a form of historical inquiry based upon the axioms of singularity, one-timeness, change, transience, temporality, irreversibility, pastness, and preliminary, then such commonly used metaphors as “renewal,” “beginning-anew,” “return,” “restoration,” or “renaissance” will inevitably become inconsistent with the historical approach. There is, strictly speaking, no “return,” no “turning around” in history, no “restoration” of a past. Renewals and resurrections do not occur in empirical history. They occur, in fact, and rather consciously, *against* history. What is renewed defies the irreversible transition from then to now. It defies the empirical order of time, the diachronic succession of before and after.

Renovatio constitutes, in that sense, a counter-historical metaphor, whose descriptive function is driven by normative contents or “tasks.” What appears as restoration to the historian, is at best the account of a collective *imagination*, whose powerful suggestiveness lies in its paradoxical ability to satisfy both “progressive” and “conservative” impulses.⁹⁵ What is restored is a sense of permanence and immunity to transience, without, however, reinstating a continuous submission to the past. In renewal, transience comes to halt, historical singularity experiences reduplication, the completed past is replaced by a lingering *imperfectum* that is as accessible as it is remote, as binding as it is liberating.

Distance

Pierre Nora identified this accessibility through remoteness as “distance-memory,” a memory that no longer signifies a “retrospective continuity but the illumination of discontinuity.”⁹⁶ Rather than looking for “origins,” this memory seeks “births”; rather than celebrating the “cult of continuity,” this memory requires the discontinuity of a “fractured past.” In modern memory, Nora claims, the “old ideal of resurrecting the past,” of writing history as a resurrection, as was of course Jules Michelet’s well-known formulation of 1869,⁹⁷ has come to an end. It has come to end because the past has ceased to be “solid and steady.” The past has become “invisible,” Nora writes, and must be “represented” (in the often-invoked “original” sense of the word) through the

mirrors of “difference” in a “fractured universe.” Writing history in this memory-pregnant way forecloses the historicist themes of progress and decadence, as well as any symmetrical resuscitation of the past. Instead, it resembles what Nora calls the “ephemeral spectacle of an unrecoverable identity”: “It is no longer genesis that we seek but instead the decipherment of what we are in the light of what we are no longer.”⁹⁸ We recover ourselves not in continuous existence but in distance and fragmentation of continuity. Quite ironically, as we will soon witness, the project of writing Jewish history as a resurrection resonates well with Nora’s observations on “distance-memory”—not that it presupposes a past that is “solid and steady” and merely “rememorated.” To the contrary, “renewal” in Jewish history appears to be a form of “representation” itself. Unlike in the “cult of continuity,” the present of historical resurrection does not view itself as a “sort of recycled, updated past,” but as a “birth” indeed: a beginning that begins the beginning, a turning that turns the turning, or, as Nora writes of the interiorization of “Jewish” memory, a memory that remembers memory.⁹⁹

The Story as Task

However, we have jumped ahead of our schedule. What this chapter has set out to explore is a style of history that is neither pure historicism nor pure antihistoricism, but instead a *historicism of a particular kind*. It seems that in this historicism, Jewish “renewal,” despite its historical oddity, despite its resistance to historical reality, is perceived as unequivocally “real,” that it is perceived as belonging to the pale of history and that it must, therefore, be understood *through* history. Rawidowicz, in fact, speaks of a “dynamic Jewish realism” (*reyat meziut*) that is needed to recognize this peculiar reality and to unscramble its inherent meaning.¹⁰⁰ However, Rawidowicz is also aware that this realism cannot be limited to historical empiricism. To write history as a renewal cannot stop at the reconstruction of an unusual sequence of events; it cannot be a mere tribute to the facticity of the past, not a representation of Jewish history as a series of ups and downs—nor is it merely a story, a *narratio rerum gestarum* of a particular kind that happens to be the plot of continuous rebirth. Writing in resurrection, as both Baeck and

Rawidowicz emphasized and, indeed, epitomized, is a “task”: a story *as task*.¹⁰¹ To think in renewal means to accept the inherent renewability of existence and to accept, subsequently, the task of renovatio. But to speak of renewal in history, of periods of restoration following decline, also presupposes a history no historian can write: the history of that which is restored, reclaimed, resurrected—the history of an “essence,” “origin,” or “authentic beginning.” For surely, in history, resurrection is not the resurrection of the countless corpses lining its troubled path, but the resurrection of something still “alive,” the reclamation of an “idea” untrammeled by the progression of time. In the language of renewal is absorbed, unwittingly at times, a resistance to open futurity, a resistance to ultimate fracture, whose palimpsest writing reflects a prophetic idealism, the utopian realism of realization, and in its last analysis a poetic theologumenon of history: the myth of Jewish persistence through the continuous rejuvenation of its “essence.”

III

Wissenschaft Between History and Memory

“What saved Judaism from the fate of pure historicism,” writes Ismar Schorsch in his seminal study of the Jewish turn to history, “was the concept of essence. Behind the panorama of events existed and operated the essence of Judaism. It was this unchanging though ever unfolding idea which provided the continuity as well as the motive power of Jewish history.”¹⁰² Schorsch, in my opinion, correctly interprets the nineteenth century Science of Judaism (*Wissenschaft des Judentums*) as an historical quest for “essence” that was epitomized in Heinrich Graetz’s opening question to his 1846 *Konstruktion der Jüdischen Geschichte*: “What is Judaism?” An unusual question to the historian, as Graetz readily conceded, that had to strike us as naïve as the inquiry “What is truth?” But it is this question that any historian must ask when what is at stake is the history of a national-religious body claiming coherence over time. Surveying its entire history, Graetz, as is sufficiently known, settled for nothing less than the “root idea of Judaism”

(*judentümliche Grundidee*), a “logical synthesis” of divergent positions over the long course of Jewish existence that only the historian could retrieve. For Graetz, the new science of history enabled its adherents to apprehend Judaism in its “totality”: “In history, its entire essence, the sum of its entire forces, must become explicit.”¹⁰³ We have already seen a later manifestation of this “totality” in Martin Buber’s Jewish “soul” and in Salo Baron’s search for “eternals.” This essentialism, combined with the “unhistorical” synchronization of time, would become responsible for a “Jewish” dialectic of historicism. Accordingly, the Jewish historian quest for “essence” marked, to Schorsch, a radical departure not only from the same historicism it embraced but also from the givenness of an ideal continuity it sought to restore. Rethinking Judaism in terms of the new historical science, as it evolved with Herder, Humboldt, and Fichte, constituted nothing less than a “rupture in Jewish continuity”¹⁰⁴—a rupture, which, as Yosef Yerushalmi noted, reflected in itself a sense of discontinuity, a *consciousness* of rupture: “The modern effort to reconstruct the Jewish past begins at a time that witnesses a sharp break in the continuity of Jewish living and hence also an ever-growing decay of Jewish group memory.”¹⁰⁵ The Jewish turn to history, in Yerushalmi’s terms, occurred at a moment of memory loss to which itself contributed. In the midst of a process of forgetting, both textually and ritually, the Science of Judaism emerged to build a method around this process: to forget by recollection. Maintaining his stark dichotomy, Yerushalmi attests to a “truly new kind of recollection” in modern historiography that is “radically different” from the workings of memory. “The historian does not simply come in to replenish the gaps of memory,” writes Yerushalmi: “He constantly challenges even those memories that have survived intact.”¹⁰⁶ Unlike the keepers of collective memory, unlike the canonizers of text and action, the historian ventures to “recover a total past,” unselectively by principle (if not always in practice), and thus deliberately cutting against the grain of tradition.¹⁰⁷ Modern Jewish historians, in that sense, became revolutionaries by mere virtue of their being historians, and Schorsch aptly notes that the rise of a modern historical consciousness in Judaism was tantamount to an “intellectual revolution” that would lead to a “fundamental change in

mentality.”¹⁰⁸ Once entangled in the new discipline of historical studies, we cannot but think historically.

To Yerushalmi, this need to think historically not only completed the loss of collective memory but also led to an inevitable loss of “coherence and meaning” in history: “The Jewish past,” he writes, “unfolds to the historian not as a unity but, to an extent unanticipated by his nineteenth-century predecessors, as multiplicity and relativity.”¹⁰⁹ Reinforcing Yerushalmi’s bleak observation, Paula Hyman noted that it could no longer be the task of Jewish historians “to replace the shattered collective myth of religious tradition.”¹¹⁰ Without collective memory, there cannot be a unified “Jewish” history. The recollection of a “total past” did not produce an *Universalgeschichte* of a particular kind, as the Science of Judaism had still hoped to write, but instead a field of highly specialized “normal” histories that make it increasingly difficult to recognize a Jewish “essence” or “idea,” or for that matter, to find “Jewish” meaning at all. It seems, then, that from the Science of Judaism gradually emerged a “pure” historicism, and that modern Judaism, if it seeks to escape the fate of this historicism, must not only “prove its validity to history,” as Yerushalmi put it,¹¹¹ but also prove itself *against* history.

Referring to this duality of proving itself to and against history, Amos Funkenstein challenged Yerushalmi’s reading of nineteenth century Jewish historicism as a mere “faith of fallen Jews,”¹¹² arguing instead that the historian began to enjoy the status of a “priest of culture,” who could forge a new sense of “collective memory” from the selfsame ruins historicism would recover and leave behind.¹¹³ The nineteenth century Science of Judaism, to Funkenstein, was no less concerned with the preservation of Jewish uniqueness and eternity than its “unhistorical” predecessors. It represented, in this sense, as much a “radical historicization” because it aimed for a radical re-remembrance of collective memory—a distance-memory of memory, to paraphrase Nora. What distinguished the “revolution” of a modern Jewish historical consciousness from the sacred memory conception of history was that Jewish eternity now had to be formulated not as transcending the world of history but as “an immanent promise arising from the history of the world itself.”¹¹⁴ The “indestructible core” had to be located *within*

history, retrievable by the modern historian's "recollection of a total past," and indestructible precisely by its ability to extricate itself from the recollective pastness of this total past, by its ability to withstand the immanence of historical time.

Conquest of the Historical World

Whether the "revolution" of Jewish historical consciousness began indeed with the emergence of a German *Wissenschaft des Judentums* or already at the height of the *Haskalah* (Jewish Enlightenment) is a debate of no immediate concern to us.¹¹⁵ It is enough to note that historical thinking was by no means foreign to the European, and particularly German Enlightenment, and that, as Hans Liebeschütz suggested, "the confrontation between Judaism and historicism, which would become an important theme in the era of emancipation from Abraham Geiger to Franz Rosenzweig, began with Moses Mendelssohn."¹¹⁶ Already Wilhelm Dilthey, in an essay of 1901, tried to restore the historical consciousness to the Enlightenment.¹¹⁷ Building upon Dilthey, Ernst Cassirer argued in his 1932 monograph on the philosophy of the Enlightenment that the eighteenth century was far from being as "blind to history" as the Romantics had charged against the previous generation. To the contrary, the value of historical thinking and criticism was perfectly obvious to the great innovators and reformers of the Enlightenment. The "Neologues," writes Cassirer, were quite aware that it was "history which would carry forward the torch of the Enlightenment."¹¹⁸ It was, after all, history that could set the stage for innovation and reform. Rather than ignoring historicity, as earlier rationalists seemed to do, the Enlightenment aimed for what Cassirer calls the "conquest of the historical world": to *conquer* history by means of radical immanence.¹¹⁹

From Total Past to Total View

It was in Lessing, as Cassirer suggested, that the ambivalence of "change" appeared to be reconciled with both the historical and the religious. Lessing recognized the historical as a "necessary factor, as an

indispensable moment of the religious.”¹²⁰ But it was only Herder, who, for Cassirer, was able to step outside Lessing’s schematic history, abandoning its didactic plot and recovering the concrete form of singularity (*Einzelgestalt*). “History destroys the illusion of identity,” writes Cassirer of Herder’s 1774 manifesto, “it does not know any real-identical, any recurrent sameness; it continuously creates new creations and lends everything it brings to life a form of its own, endowing it with an independent mode of being that cannot be lost.”¹²¹ As many scholars, including Cassirer himself, have pointed out, Herder was steeped not only in the Protestant tradition of personal redemption but also in Leibniz’s metaphysics of “monads” that enabled him to formulate an individuality that could remain in and for itself and still reflect an historical totality: an individuality that could be both “means” and “end” of history.¹²² The harsh and ultimately utilitarian verdict of irreversible progression that pierced Lessing’s vision of human education through gradual advancement toward a “third age,” in which both the “old” and the “new” covenant would inevitably become “antiquated,”¹²³ is suspended in Herder’s prestabilized harmony of history, where each historical monad, each individual and each nation, can coexist simultaneously in the “total view” (*Allanblick*) of a “divine painting” (*Gottesgemälde*).¹²⁴ “Each nation,” writes Herder, “has the center of its happiness within itself, like the center of gravity in a sphere.”¹²⁵ How, then, Herder wonders, can we decide which of the nations is antiquated and which headed toward the future? There is, for Herder, no discernable linear progress but instead, a synchronic beauty of manifoldness (*Mannigfaltigkeit*), which Isaiah Berlin, in his well-known study on Vico and Herder, straightforwardly termed “pluralism”¹²⁶; a pluralism, incidentally, that Berlin rightly recognized as “aesthetic.” This was precisely what Friedrich Meinecke had in mind when he championed Herder as the first to truly rescue history from its utilitarian role in the Enlightenment: “[T]he liberation of aesthetics from utilitarianism, and the idea that beauty is an end in and of it itself, prepared the rise of historism: the very concept that individual epochs and phenomena must not be judged by their utility but by their own inner value.”¹²⁷ The education of humankind so must be aesthetic rather than historical. From the *Allanblick* of the historical theater that we witness and inhabit as

spectators and actors, there is no need for a “third age.” The human individual is pluri-aged, to borrow a term from Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy.¹²⁸ “Nobody lives in one age alone,” writes Herder, “but rather builds upon all that was before, which in turn is nothing but the foundation for what is to come.”¹²⁹

More than Hegel, Herder’s historical individualism and resistance to the dialectics of perfectibility would prove useful for the conception of a Science of Judaism that was not only concerned with the recollection of a total past but also with the construction of a “total view,” encompassing past, present, and future. Schorsch, therefore, relates Leopold Zunz’s reluctance to fully dispense with “old” rabbinic literature directly to his high esteem for Herder’s philosophy of history.¹³⁰ Zunz might indeed have borrowed his notion of a “great total view” (*grossartiger Gesammtblick*) from Herder’s vocabulary. In his well-known essay on rabbinic literature of 1818, which came to serve as an outline of a future Science of Judaism, Zunz admonished the historian to maintain a “constant view of the whole,” not, however, in order to reject but rather to *appreciate* its parts. To the intuitive mind of the historical genius, as Zunz wrote in 1845, the history of humankind is spread out “like a living work of art.”¹³¹ This total view, for Zunz, would enable the historian to synchronize old and new in ways unknown to both the establishment of vulgar “rabbinism” and to the unscrupulous innovation of reform. Where the rabbis only saw the past and the reformers only saw the future, the historian was actually able to see the *present*. But because history, as Zunz maintained, appeared to the historian as a total image, as a vast “sea of spiritual activity,” the historian cannot experience the present other than as a between: “If we are today the witnesses and children of an eternally working activity, so must our present also be the mere beginning of a future, that is, a transition from knowledge to life.”¹³² Even though the practice of the historian consists in the epochization of time, the epoch itself must be subordinated to the intuitive totality to be truly understood and valued: “History and its justification is not knowledge of one epoch, one event, or one action: it is comprehensive (*umfassend*), interrelated (*zusammenhängend*), and just (*gerecht*) knowledge.”¹³³ A distant and neglected century so can, by virtue of historical synchronization, inject life into a lifeless present.

It is, in other words, the historical recourse to, or representation of a distant past, acting precisely as a distance-memory in Nora's sense, that renders Zunz's Science a mediator between the fetters of tradition and the perils of progress: between sacred memory and profane forgetting. We must not, as Zunz writes, "surrender our honorable past" in the name of progress nor must we let the total past dictate our present. To the contrary, in the artwork of history, the past can never be complete without contemporality—and this means it can never be "completely" rejected, nor can it be regarded a "complete" authority. The aesthetic view, Herder's *Allanblick*, as I would like to stress, is an *affirmation of the incomplete*. All singular events, for Herder, served as both means and ends to history, complete and content in themselves on the one hand, open and in aesthetic harmony with the synchronic plot of the *Gottgemälde*, on the other. We find a resonance of this image in Ranke's famous aphorism that all ages are equally close to God and, notably, in Franz Rosenzweig's treatment of aesthetics: "But before God, all ages are alike. To Him, man is ever the child."¹³⁴ Similarly, Zunz regarded all epochs equally close to the "spirit," who, like a "center of gravity" (*ruhender Pol*) rests in the middle of all moving particulars.¹³⁵ Hence, although there had to be value in each part, no part alone could be taken for the "eternal" and "true" itself.

Another Dialectics of Origin

Nevertheless, Zunz's Wissenschaft conceived of itself by no means as a mere accumulation of parts and taking inventory of knowledge. To be sure, as no human life lacks value in "true love of humanity," which Zunz finds exemplified, among others, in Pestalozzi and Herder, so in "true science," no knowledge is too small and too insignificant to be acquired and preserved. But to the extent that history, for Zunz, claimed to be a quest for the "good" and the "beautiful," to the extent that the historian indeed experienced the present as a transition from knowledge to life, recognizing the "ideals of the spirit," the task of Wissenschaft had to also encompass the distinction of the "old" that was useful (*Alte brauchbare*) from the "antiquated" (*Veraltetes*) that should be known but no longer lived. Hence, Zunz distinctly described

the Science of Judaism as a science separating that which remains (*Bleibendes*) from that which passes away (*Vorübergehendes*).¹³⁶ Less than five years later, Immanuel Wolf would write of the Science of Judaism: “It alone teaches us to recognize the inner character of Judaism and to separate the essential from the accidental, the original from the added.”¹³⁷ This familiar rhetoric, which would perpetuate itself throughout the Jewish reforms over the course of the century, had already been the program of the pilot issue of Joseph Wolf’s *Journal for the Promotion of Culture and Humanity among the Jewish Nation* in 1806: “Sulamith, finally, seeks to separate in wisdom the true from the false, the real from the illusional, the useful from the pernicious.” It seeks, as the editor continues, “to pry from hard and arid rock the fount of goodness, which will stream forth in its original purity to improve the juices of the nation.”¹³⁸ The Science of Judaism, writes Zunz, “can tear away the veils of the past—and it alone can prepare the minds for the future.”¹³⁹

The task of the Jewish historian, then, was conceived as threefold at least: First, to recover the contemporaneous nature of Judaism: to view it in its totality; second, to abstract from the totality an “idea” or “essence” that was more than the sum of its parts; and third, to derive from this “more” an “ideal” history—a history, in other words, that transpired the historical without ever *becoming* history. What Zunz identified as *Urgeist* functioned both as an ideal origin and goal of history: The individual manifestations of Judaism, its literature and epochs, Zunz conceived as emanations (*Ausflüsse*) from the eternal original spirit, that at the same time also served as the guarantor for their continuity. At its highest, “intuitive” level, the work of history would be to know this eternal spirit not only through the past but especially in all “becoming” (*Werdenden*).¹⁴⁰ Recovering the origin, in short, became the source for the past as passing-on and, ultimately, the gate to historical imperishability. “Judaism in its originality and inner consistency could well be shaken,” Immanuel Wolf wrote in his program for a Science of Judaism, “but it could never be destroyed.”¹⁴¹

A generation later, Abraham Geiger introduced his concept of a Science of Judaism as a recovery of the “ideal content” within Judaism, as a knowing of its very “spiritual motive” that acted as a “unique life-giving force.” What made Jewish history unique, to Geiger, was again

its contemporality of “remote antiquity” and “immediate present.” This uniqueness also required a unique approach: “It is therefore not mere curiosity which acts as a spur to this study,” Geiger wrote in 1872, “not merely the desire to eavesdrop on the mystery of the origins of Judaism, but at least equally the desire to detect the extent to which all of its later development was essentially already inherent in the growth and flowering process of the original seeds.”¹⁴² The unique development of Judaism, to Geiger, lay in its “inner history,” in a spiritual momentum that had to be abstracted from its “time-bound forms” to be fully grasped and to be fully brought to life.¹⁴³ The knowledge of the “unique life-giving force” so would become a unique life-giving force itself. The recovered origin revealed itself as a recovery of originating.

From this emphasis, we may also understand Geiger’s dissonance with Isaac Jost’s conception of a “general” Jewish history. Reviewing Jost’s two-volume *Allgemeine Geschichte des israelitischen Volkes* of 1832, Geiger took issue with the “external” dimension of Jewish history as subordinate to world history. Already in his earlier and much more comprehensive *Geschichte der Israeliten*, Jost had given a rather dispassionate account of a Jewish history devoid of its inner historical agency after the fall of the Second Temple.¹⁴⁴ Ismar Schorsch likened this quietist reading of history to a style of *vita contemplativa* at a time when the young circle of Jewish historians, led by Leopold Zunz, had plunged “with near messianic fervor into the *vita activa*.¹⁴⁵ While Jost, in Schorsch’s thoroughly unsympathetic, though undoubtedly correct, account still labored under the crumbling Enlightenment program, Zunz and the Berlin *Verein* of Jewish historians had already embarked on a new sense of the past: on a past that could become, if studied meticulously and in an unprejudiced manner, “a force for revitalization.”¹⁴⁶ What Jost lacked most, for Schorsch, was a sense of historical empathy: a sense of meaning in Jewish history. Similarly, Salo Baron wrote in his otherwise far more sympathetic tribute to Jost’s legacy of 1928: “It is perhaps one of his essential weaknesses that, treating a subject like the history of the Jewish people, he had no definite view as to what this Jewish people really was.”¹⁴⁷ This, in essence, was Geiger’s critique as well. Where Jost had interpreted Jewish history as the material history of the Jews living within *Universalgeschichte*, Geiger followed the spiri-

tual trajectory of the Wissenschaft to write a universal history of “Judaism” itself. Where Jost had seen the outward dispersion of the Jewish nation among the histories of the world, Geiger invoked the persistence of a total inner development in Judaism *despite dispersion*. To Jost, Diaspora Judaism had to be absorbed inevitably into the histories of the great civilizations and cultures. To Geiger, however, such an image of diasporic absorption was tantamount to exiling the “spirit of history” itself—and a history without spirit was all but lifeless: “Here we are touched by the musty odors of a field of dead corpses,” he wrote about Jost’s endeavour.¹⁴⁸ What Jost had painted with a broad brush of historical source material, Geiger dismissed as a “dreadful canvas of rigid immobility” (*Schaundergemälde starrer Unveränderlichkeit*) that obscured the inner wholeness and vital energies of Judaism. In his response to Geiger, Jost made concessions to an “inner” Jewish history, which he understood as the history of books: as Jewish “bibliography.” Nevertheless, Jost also remained firm in his original position that there was no subsisting totality of Jewish history. “The history of the Jewish people,” he retorted, “. . . cannot be viewed as a totality in and of itself, but must be seen as one aspect in the history of the most important peoples and states with whom the Jews had come into contact.”¹⁴⁹ It was this history, Jost maintained, through which Jewish history had been “complemented” (*vervollständigt*) since its loss of autonomy, providing it with a hitherto unknown “momentum of life” (*Lebensmoment*). The historical vitality of Judaism, for Jost, had its origin not in self-sufficiency and coherence, but in the exteriorization of its “own nature” and in the assimilation of “seeds alien to its origin.” Given such radical exteriority of Jewish history, Jost could indeed hope for the arrival of a talented “German historian” equipped with “good factual knowledge and German diligence,” to improve and complete what the Jewish historian had prepared.¹⁵⁰ Jewish history so would justly be transformed into a province of German history.

At first blush, the exchange between Geiger and Jost might be viewed as a confrontation between essentialist and nonessentialist conceptions of history, anticipating in some ways the differences between Simon Dubnow and Salo Baron. Geiger, then, would appear on Dubnow’s “spiritualist” side, and Jost on Baron’s integrative, socioreligious side

(of which Baron was probably aware when he wrote his essay on “Jost the Historian”). Put differently, Geiger sought to consciously produce a historicism of a particular kind, whereas Jost dabbled in the kind of “pure historicism” that would, in its last analysis, make it impossible to formulate anything resembling Jewish history. But the main difference, in my view, lay somewhere else: While Jost studied Jewish history from its “end,” thus conceiving of it as a steady process of diasporic disintegration, as an ever-dying body, whose historical life had to be ignited from the outside, Geiger looked at Jewish history from its “beginning,” turning the science of history not only into a recovery of “hidden” beginnings, but also and especially so, *into a beginning itself*. Jewish history, for Geiger, had not come to an end, nor would it come to an end, for the “vital forces” inherent in every one of its periods “have not yet achieved their full development.”¹⁵¹ The inner totality of Jewish history so was still incomplete, still beginning: The spirit of Judaism had not yet recognized itself. Jost, then, may have been the more “realistic” historian, the historian who gave Judaism “time and place,” as Heinrich Graetz put it.¹⁵² However, Geiger brought to history what historical realism had fatefully excluded from its realm: the idea of revitalization. In Geiger’s timetable of Jewish history, the fourth and final period would mirror the first and most originary period, the period of “vigorous creation, unfettered and unhindered.” Marked by an “effort to loosen the fetters of the previous era,” this fourth period was to be termed an “era of liberation” through reason and historical research, but it was not be interpreted as a rejection of past. To the contrary, the new beginning in Jewish history had to encompass all previous beginnings: It had to accept the total view as a task. “What is being attempted,” Geiger writes of this era of liberation, “is solely to revitalize Judaism and to cause the stream of history to flow forth once again.”¹⁵³

Atzeret: Halt and Turning

Yerushalmi was not incorrect to have looked at the Science of Judaism as a project to “recover a total past.” However, this recovery was no mere recollection: It represented, rather, a repetition under the firma-

ment of Herder's *Allanblick*. The past, to the Wissenschaft, served as a vessel of both historical retention and eschatological pretension. It was the total view rather than the total past that empowered the historian to bring to life the “field of dead corpses”; to transform the “dreadful canvas of rigid immobility” into a harmonious and dynamic *Gottgemälde*. Again we find the motif—as in Zunz—that the sources of the past are in truth ruins and remnants (*Überbleibsel*) signifying an end as much as a beginning: From the ruins of the “old” Hebrew literature arises a “new,” “Jewish” literature.¹⁵⁴ Separating the useful from the useless, as we have seen, the Science of Judaism consciously placed itself in the middle of transition: at the point of turning.

At the point of turning, at the point of turning halt, Zunz recognized the task of Wissenschaft as one with the meaning of the Hebrew term *atzeret* (halting): In his remarkable 1820 sermon on the Jewish festival of *Shemini Atzeret*, which concludes the eight days of Sukkot, Zunz interprets the holiday as a “day of halt” (*Tag des Aufenthalts*) and “looking back,” a day on which “the pain of parting (*Abschied*) shall awaken new and beautiful decisions.” “Day of awakening!” he exclaims in a passionate, prophetic fervor: “Awake, you sleepers who have spent the feast and your life in a dreamlike slumber!”¹⁵⁵ The present day—the day of the present epoch (*atzeret*)—is a day of looking back at one’s “entire life,” at “past times” and “long buried generations,” but it also is a day of looking forward into the “new age,” forward into the “mysterious, unknown, tremendous future,” forward into the “great path of fulfillment.” We stand, Zunz reiterates, at the turning (*am Wendepunkte*), and it is this standing that must remind us not to stand still but to progress, to “go forth and return to the Eternal,” to pursue (*nachjagen*) knowledge relentlessly. If we deny ourselves to Wissenschaft, then we will also have lost the “sense for the great world that has passed and for a greater world to come.”¹⁵⁶ Against the false prophets of standstill and ignorance, Zunz calls upon the prophets of the past: “O great prophets of old! Rise from your graves and come to defeat the band of false teachers.”¹⁵⁷ From the prophets we will learn what it means to “look back to the history of all times” and to “forget the present moment for the sake of the future.” This, for Zunz is the deeper meaning of *atzeret*, and this is the meaning of Wissenschaft.

Through liturgical language, Zunz established a program of science that, to my mind, reflects all but a thinly veiled call for repentance and regeneration through history. Zunz himself speaks of atzeret as an introspective moment, juxtaposing it with the momentum of turning and progressive return. History yields to the modern penitent the possibility to turn inward and to turn around—*Einkehr* and *Umkehr*, as this will be called a century later in Hermann Cohen. Atzeret, the “day of halt,” merges with Leo Baeck’s regenerative *epoché*, with the epoch as historical rebirth, “giving old ideas a new expression.” The day of halt, for Zunz, fills a present that only the historian can inhabit: It is the present of an incomplete before; the present as a task; the present as infinity. As the infinite (*das Unendliche*), to Zunz, is the realm of liturgical existence; and as poetry is the “expression and language of the ideal that brings us to life,” not in denial of all sensual nature, but “next to and despite the work for the real, the near, and the necessary”; and as the liturgical poetry (*gottesdienstliche Poesie*) has been obscured by “superstition, idolatry of the letter, and cabballistic whims,” so it must be the task of Wissenschaft to reclaim the infinite ideals of poetry, and to enter, in our age, an “alliance” (*Bündnis*) with poetry—so it must be the task of poetry and science to “harmoniously penetrate each other.”¹⁵⁸ History itself, then, must become poetic. In this alliance, Zunz finds another alliance: the alliance of freedom, progress, and immortality (*das Unsterbliche*).¹⁵⁹

What has just been noted is not merely an aesthetic conception of history with a strong echo of Herder and Friedrich Schiller,¹⁶⁰ but more pertinently even, a conscious interpenetration of historical and liturgical time: A dialectic of material history and symbolic memory that uncannily anticipates, as we shall see, Franz Rosenzweig’s liturgical historicism. Again it becomes evident that Yerushalmi’s view on the Science of Judaism as dissolution of memory is insufficient—not wrong, because there is that element too, but incomplete. Clearly, the pioneer Jewish historians were acutely aware that their project represented a farewell from the wealth of continuous tradition—but they were also aware that the creation of discontinuity, of atzeret, offered to them a new wealth of possibilities, which included the possibility of distance and memory, and the possibility of return. In an age where history

meant forgetting, Zunz practiced Wissenschaft as a form of memory, whose liturgical symbol was the seemingly outdated sign of Tefillin—“the seal of your noble birth, an old piece of parchment . . . that helps you forget what is called rich and poor in this world to make you remember the imperfections of your soul.”¹⁶¹ To the bearer of this sign, which Zunz also calls a symbol of “faithfulness and return” (*Treue und Rückkehr*), “past works and forgotten resolutions come back to memory.” When the sign is unwound, one parts with it “like with a tender friend, whose sure return sweetens the pain of farewell.”¹⁶² The sign of Tefillin is the symbolon of restoring recognition. The Science of Judaism, like the sign of Tefillin, ceases to be a merely external ritual (*blos Äußerliches*) to become an interiorized “means of remembrance” (*Erinnerungsmittel*), a vessel of “sacred memory” (*geheiligte Erinnerung*): We look around in the past and find the “eternal and immortal.” We remember and “let go of the foolish fashions.” We wear the symbol, and our forward stumbling feet are “paralyzed.” We wear it to “return.” But we do not, for Zunz, discard the symbol to arrive at its “essence.” We cannot discard the body of history to arrive at the “spirit.”

Wissenschaft as Regeneration

Wissenschaft and the “correct” study of Jewish history thus took on a religious symbolism that maintained a critical duality between what Immanuel Wolf called the “purely spiritual principle” (*reingeistiges Prinzip*) and the principle of “total” history.¹⁶³ To grasp Judaism in its totality, to grasp it as both a “religious idea” and a material manifestation in history, as Judaism and as history of the Jews, the Science of Judaism embarked upon a precariously dialectical trail on which, as Gershom Scholem noted, conservative and destructive tendencies appeared to be “interwoven with one another.”¹⁶⁴ “Faithfulness and return,” Zunz called this dialectic—the ability to bind the past upon oneself without being bound by it; the ability of turning in historical time. It is in this dialectic that we also recognize the dialectic inherent in the powerful imagination of renaissance. Surveying the Science of Judaism, especially how it had been conceived by Zunz, Heinrich Graetz speaks indeed of a “rejuvenation” and “awakening” of “dormant

forces” that belonged to a general “epoch of regeneration,” beginning with Moses Mendelssohn: “Jewish science accelerated the miracle of resurrection. It awakened the Jewish people from the darkness of the grave.”¹⁶⁵ In this “rejuvenescence” and “rebirth,” Israel “rubbed his eyes” to “collect his memories” and to become “on that occasion both old and young,” rich in “gray antiquity and yet as though he was of yesterday.”¹⁶⁶ Wissenschaft, then, embodied and emulated the entire spiritual-historical dimension of Judaism, which Graetz, as we have now seen repeatedly, defined exactly as old-newness, and which constituted the imperishable ground of renewability. Wissenschaft, in a word, became itself a retrieving renewal in action—it became a renaissance.

To be sure, Heinrich Graetz, himself a model writer in resurrection, was already touched by the rising view of nationalism—much in contrast to the accepted protocol of the Science of Judaism—yet, his restorative interpretation of the Wissenschaft, which of course ignored the trail of complete assimilation that followed many of its members, did not remain unanswered. Leo Baeck looked upon the legacy of Zunz and his Berlin circle as a “work of renewal” and upon the Science as Judaism in general as a “process of reawakening.”¹⁶⁷ Schorsch, as we have already noted, found in Zunz a revitalizing force. More recently, David Myers wrote that “Wissenschaft was more than simply a word to describe the methodological rigor of its practitioners. It was a program for group definition and renewal.”¹⁶⁸ What Myers rightly alludes to, are less the actual effects of renewal than the compelling *self-perception* of the Science of Judaism as a *Jewish Renaissance*.¹⁶⁹ Wissenschaft, as Wolf Landau wrote in 1852, is not only a “means of regeneration” (*Regenerationsmittel*) but the *only* means of regeneration.¹⁷⁰ It is through the same science that we can glimpse at the “kernel” of “eternal persistence” and at the “seed” of “rebirth.” What science truly studies is not the past qua past but the “means” to a “continuous force of creativity” (*fortwährende Zeugungskraft*). Mosaism, Landau, reminds his readers, is no “blind belief for children and weaklings.” It is the historical source of “heroism in battle,” of “heroic perseverance”; it is the eternal spirit of the Maccabean epoch.¹⁷¹ Heroically, the historians would thus educate, revitalize, and rejuvenate the remnant of Israel, as in the days of Esra, where “Science, the saving genius

of Judaism, breathed at once new life into the people, giving it a new impulse.”¹⁷² Max Wiener called this regenerative function of the Science of Judaism its “biological sense.”¹⁷³ Moses Hess, who took the idea of historical regeneration to its ultimate conclusion in his book *Rome and Jerusalem* of 1862, looked to the Science of Judaism as a means to reconstruct “historical” religion and to transform “dead dogma” into a “living, creative knowledge,” that would produce itself “anew at any moment” from the spirit of Judaism.¹⁷⁴ Unequivocally, then, Wissenschaft imagined itself as meaning life, perhaps even a second life—and it was probably no accidental premonition that the last volume of the *Monatsschrift*, issued in 1939 at the eve of destruction, contained an unusual essay on the term “palingenesis” in rabbinic Judaism. “In contrast to biological fatalism,” the writer contends, “. . . pure monotheism knows in essence of man’s free moral decision.” He continues: “This view finds its clearest expression in the concept of rebirth (*Neugeburt*) of which man, and only man is capable.”¹⁷⁵

IV

Wissenschaft as Suicide

If Wissenschaft meant “life” and heroic “regeneration,” how can we understand a critique of its ideals as bitter and sharp as Scholem’s devastating eulogy to the nineteenth century “historical suicide”? To Scholem, the Science of Judaism was full of contradictions from its very beginnings, creative at times, before it ultimately declined into a “diligent but lifeless discipline,” turning its practitioners into “gravediggers and embalmers.” “Their books,” he charges, “the classical works of the Science of Judaism, are a kind of procession around the dead, although at times it seems that the authors themselves are the ghosts of Old Israel, seeking their salvation while dancing among the graves.”¹⁷⁶ Written in 1944, Scholem’s critique rings of course with tragic irony. Because of the “sins” of Science, German Jewry died twice: Once at the hands of Wissenschaft, and once at the hands of its German perpetrators.

But it would be reductive to explain Scholem's unease with the legacy of Jewish studies through the lifelessness of its discipline and the conceit of emancipation altogether. Lifelessness and antiquarian historicism were attributes commonly attached to the Wissenschaft already by its contemporary opponents. Samson Raphael Hirsch, who headed German-Jewish neo-Orthodoxy, wrote—in a tone no more wanting in irony than Scholem's—about the Science of Judaism as being merely concerned with carrying “old Judaism to the grave” and preserving its memory in a “mausoleum of the heart.”¹⁷⁷ Moritz Lazarus, on the other hand, who taught a generation later at the liberal *Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums* in Berlin, well recognized the regenerating program of the Science, accusing it, however, as having been a “resurrection” of merely “theoretical, historical, and philological” interests, leaving “present and vital Judaism” disempowered.¹⁷⁸ Martin Buber, in an essay of 1901 for Theodor Herzl's journal *Die Welt*, credits the “so-called” Science of Judaism with “critical subtlety” and “rare diligence,” but calls it unable to live up to its name. “It remained what it has always been: a chapter in philology.”¹⁷⁹ Simon Dubnow spoke of the “mummies of Wissenschaft des Judentums who have not tasted of its elixir of life.”¹⁸⁰ Franz Rosenzweig, in his famous letter on education of 1920, championed a “new” Science of Judaism, replacing the “old song” of spiritual religion and creed, and educating its followers “into something living, into something that exists.”¹⁸¹

Scholem's emphatic rejection of the Science of Judaism as “lifeless,” then, would hardly seem original had it merely followed the well-trodden path of confronting “antiquarian” history with vital futurism, as in Nietzsche's untimely reflections, or as in Theodor Lessing's characteristic formulation of the vitalist skepticism against history: “History (*Historik*) has long become the destroyer and grave-digger of *Geschichte*.”¹⁸² Replacing the “old science” by a new science, where, as Friedrich Gundolf put it in an essay of 1912, “the gathering of knowledge would not become pollard but blood,”¹⁸³ served undoubtedly as a common subtext of poetic antihistoricism. A Jewish disciple of the neo-Romantic poet-prophet Stefan George, Gundolf called for the dissolution of “text-book-history” and for nothing less than a “total transformation” (*Umwandlung*) and “revolution” (*Umwälzung*) through a “new word”

and a “new deed.” One is reminded of Zunz’s transition from knowledge to life and of Rosenzweig’s “end of book-writing.” The “real historians,” for Gundolf, were poets in the spirit of Herder and Nietzsche, who recovered the “Becoming-always-anew of the eternally selfsame essence” (*Immer-neu-werden des ewig gleichen Wesens*), proclaiming a history that would boldly regenerate the “myth of immortality” (*Mythus der Unsterblichkeit*). When, in the same mythic vein, Theodor Lessing prophesied a new historical science of “lived life” (*dargelebten Lebens*), a *Willenschaft* (willingness) rather than *Wissenschaft*, that would be nothing but “eternal present,” looking upon the past as a “myth that is animated by the blood of always present life,”¹⁸⁴ we can certainly see that the Jewish rebellion against the Science of Judaism was no isolated phenomenon at its time.

Yet, the truly “demonic” and “frightening” side of the *Wissenschaft* lay, for Scholem not in its philological necrophilia, nor in its rational “etherealization” of Judaism, which ignored the so unspiritual “basement” of its vitality,¹⁸⁵ but in the self-perception of its practitioners as builders in a great plot of regeneration: “They, who saw themselves oriented toward the building of the people, did not feel themselves to be gravediggers.”¹⁸⁶ The romantic dialectic of construction and destruction, of recovering the total past and negating it through its essence, slipped inevitably into a sober, “dark brilliance” of a renaissance, whose turned image was that of the tombstone. The Science of Judaism so posed under the banners of a false regeneration, of a delusion of new life—of a revitalization that meant in truth the dismantling of vitality. Although its intentions may have been pure and genuine, namely to rescue Judaism from prejudice and violent historicism, its actions led the Science to deny Judaism its history, paradoxically, by rendering it historical in the purest sense. To mistake purity and essence for vitality was the “original sin” of the Science of Judaism; to make it the source of revitalization was its demonic call for “suicide.”

Essence Depurified

As David Myers formidably argued, Scholem’s grim report on the rational sterility of the nineteenth century Science of Judaism served in

some respects as a “Romanticist corrective” that was deeply imbued with the Zionist sensibilities of the “Jerusalem” school around Yitzhak Baer and Ben-Zion Dinur.¹⁸⁷ But Scholem, though undoubtedly touched by the neo-Romantic sources of his generation,¹⁸⁸ did not think of himself, nor of his call for a restoration of vitality, as romantic. The “idyllic recasting of the past” was as foreign to him as the rational “castration of the truth.”¹⁸⁹ The “sentimental” side of Wissenschaft was no better to him than its “spiritualization”; its “pietistic conservatism” fared no better than its tendency of “destruction.” A dialectitian at heart, Scholem favored rather a “dismantling of the dismantling,” a destruction of the destruction that would become “construction and affirmation.”¹⁹⁰ The process of this “new” Science of Judaism, a new science for what Scholem called the “generation of renaissance,” would be a process of disenchantment, of “creative destruction,” a critical unmasking, as well as a sentimental rediscovery: “[N]ot the washing and embalming of the dead body, but the discovery of its hidden life by removing the masks and curtains which had hidden it, and the misleading inscriptions,” writes Scholem, and he continues: “Through its fruitful dialectic, through a radical breakthrough to its turning point on its way, which are the points of construction, historical criticism henceforth also serves as a productive decoding of the secret writing of the past, of the great symbols of our life within history.”¹⁹¹

A productive decoding of the “secret writing of the past,” a recovery of the “great symbols of our life,” a reentry into history not as history of suffering, not as history of that which is, but as the “creation of a completely new image of our history,” as *symbolic* history, as that which points beyond and yet offers recognition—these were some of the elements in Scholem’s program of a new science, of Wissenschaft as renaissance. It would be, as all renaissances, a release of the “living flow,” of the “tremendous vitality” that runs through history “with all its light and shadow.” It would be, unlike the “old” Science of Judaism, but not unlike Kabbalah, a “fresh beginning.”¹⁹² It would be, like mysticism itself, a restoration of the great dialectic between material and spiritual history. “The Kabbalah in its last dialectical form,” Scholem writes in an essay on Franz Rosenzweig, “is the last theological domain in which the questions of the Jew’s life found a living reply.”¹⁹³ Excised

from Judaism by the nineteenth century “historical amnesia,” this “living reply” waits for its reawakening in a “new mysticism.” In essence, then, the renewal of Wissenschaft would be a renovation of myth—the most distant of all Jewish distant-memories.

Let me close here the circle to Pierre Nora: Nora characterized “distance-memory” as an illumination of discontinuity. It is a memory seeking “birth” rather than distant origins *in illo tempore*. It is a memory that presentifies rupture and difference in order to recover “what we are in the light of what we are no longer.” Jakob Burckhardt anticipated this concept of distance-memory in his notion of what Karl Löwith understood as “conscious continuity”—a continuity that “is more than mere going on, because it implies a conscious effort in remembering and renewing our heritage.”¹⁹⁴ If there is continuity in history at all, if there is a “duration of our existence,” then it must be imagined within the consciousness of fracture and repair, of perishing and revival. “[M]any a noble flower tends to perish in such a large process,” Burckhardt wrote about the fate of the Middle Ages in the light of the Renaissance awakening, “. . . but one should not therefore wish that the great total event (*Gesamtereignis*) had never happened.”¹⁹⁵ “New life rises from death” was Hegel’s trivial formula of rejuvenation—and musing about the dissolution of the “long, fateful, and terrible night” of the Middle Ages, he wrote: “The grave, the dead spirit, and the Beyond have been suspended. The principle of here and now (*das Prinzip des Dieses*) that drove the world to the crusades evolved into a worldliness (*Weltlichkeit*) for its own sake.”¹⁹⁶ This new worldliness for its own sake, which Burckhardt would attach to the spirit of the Italian Renaissance, and which would resonate with Nietzsche’s Renaissance interpretation and its reception in the George circle as well, seems to have been at the center of Scholem’s own counter-renaissance. The task of the new Wissenschaft, for Scholem, was the “destruction of the enclosing wall” that had kept Judaism isolated from the impurities of life for generations, a breaking through to the redemptive potentials of “sin” as the quintessential symbol of vitality. Through the “gates of impurity” leads the way to the “restored world.”¹⁹⁷ The new science would not be a redemption from the sins of the old, but indeed a redemption *through sin*, a self-purification through crisis. “Crises,” as Jakob Burckhardt wrote

nonchalantly, “clean up.”¹⁹⁸ They first clean up the hulls of history “from which life has long vanished,” and then the lazy resistance to “interruption” (*Störung*). Into the void of disturbing rupture enter what Burckhardt calls the “strong” thinkers, poets, and artists, who have no fear of contradiction, danger, and lived life. Lived life, like the artwork in Franz Rosenzweig’s aesthetics, repeatedly cleanses itself from the ether of nonworldliness: “It decontaminates itself, and man, from its own purity.”¹⁹⁹

The quest for “essence” so vanishes in the recovery of “life.” “[L]ife that is alive,” writes Rosenzweig in his *Star*, “does not ask about essence.”²⁰⁰ The great error of the nineteenth century, according to Rosenzweig, was its conception of Jewish life in “static elements,” its withdrawal onto “standpoints,” onto points where we can halt and stand still, where we must, in fact, stand still, paralyzed and mortified by the question of what is.²⁰¹ The historical Wissenschaft, as Rosenzweig wrote in 1914, seeks what is in what once was, studying the past as a “dead object” (*totes Gegenständliches*), instead of recognizing, as Goethe’s contemporaries did, that in human life there is a “being that withdraws itself from the deadening power of history” (*tötende Macht der Geschichte*).²⁰² This “being,” which endures both philosophical eternity and historical transience, may well be called “essence,” but it is an essence of a different kind than the one that had been at the all-encompassing center of the old Wissenschaft. The “essence” of Judaism, for Rosenzweig, can be none other than Judaism as a whole (*das ganze Judentum*), no essence at all, but life itself,²⁰³ a “maze of paradoxes,” that cannot be measured by the orderly course of time. The “essence,” in this respect, is all that is, and the simple fact *that* it is: “One *is* it,” says Rosenzweig of Jewishness and Judaism.²⁰⁴ To search for anything beyond would reveal nothing but a halting of the “stream of life”—whereas the awakening of a “new self-consciousness,” depurified and disordered, the rerooting in oneself, and in nothing but oneself, would allow the stream to flow again as a stream of paradoxical polarities, not unlike Scholem’s recovery of impure dialectics, of a “new mysticism.” “Mysticism will keep us together,” writes Rosenzweig about this new self-consciousness that he sees emerge from the ruins of the previous century.²⁰⁵ The rerooting in oneself is a rerooting in the

“maze of paradoxes,” a rerooting into the “unexpected reversals” which, as Rosenzweig notes in the *Star*, “are of the essence of Jewish life.”²⁰⁶ It is a rerooting, then, into the heart of crisis, into the “*Entscheidungspunkt* of life,”²⁰⁷ into the midst of turning. It is a rerooting that heeds the call “Into life!”—Rosenzweig’s version of the all-present *incipit vita nova!* of his time. But it is also a rerooting that defies the simple identity of essence and life. In the essence of Judaism, Rosenzweig writes in “Atheistic Theology,” are “thought together” a “unity of life” and an “eternal yearning” (*ewige Sehnsucht*). The Jewish people does not “suffice itself” as a bearer of essence, because it is not the bearer of a “fulfilled essence” (*erfülltes Wesen*), but the symbol of that which transcends its bearer. The “kernel” (*Kernstück*) of essence so lies, paradoxically, beyond essence itself, in the realm of “teaching” (*Lehre*), which is not the same as the realm of Wissenschaft. “Essence,” in that sense, cannot be known but only be realized: “What is said of the people becomes at the same time a task (*Aufgabe*) for the individual.”²⁰⁸ The “essence” so can neither be abstracted from a total past nor from the “inner-human” stream of vitality; rather, the “essence,” if this term must exist, is what roots the Jewish people—as a people removed from the soil of mere history—in the future.

Not Yet History

Here, Rosenzweig walks, unexpectedly perhaps,²⁰⁹ in the ways of his teacher Hermann Cohen, for whom “mere” history meant the history of what was, the history as story, as myth: “Everything remains history in the sense of the past,” he writes of the first Greek experiments in historical thought.²¹⁰ Even Plato’s “historical eternity” (*geschichtliche Ewigkeit*) remained, like the idea of the state, within the limits of an idealism between past and present.²¹¹ Eternity, for Plato and the Greek *polis*, stood still. Its utopian city, the memory of Atlantis, was no more than a filling of the present with an ideal past, a utopia without “seeing afar” (*Fernsicht*). Reiterating Jakob Burckhardt’s idiom, Cohen speaks of a “standstill in Greek culture,” a standing still that was the inevitable result of a “refraining from future.”²¹² Only in the prophets did this static image of time (*Zeitbild*) become an “ideal image” (*Idealbild*)—not

an image of the ideal, but an ideal image—a dynamic “consciousness of time” (*Zeitbewußtsein*): “For this image no present is enough, and it cannot be derived from any past. It is a completely new concept of time that fills this consciousness: from the future emerges the infinity of time.”²¹³ From the future emerges, originates in a reverse sense, which is, of course, precisely the sense of “origin” that characterizes Cohen’s work, a time without *Stillstand*, a time that is not only in constant flux but also an “eternal re-origination” (*ewige Neuentstehung*).²¹⁴ It is this eternal reorigination, recreation, and beginning-anew, it is, in fact, this notion of “resurrection” (*Auferstehung*), that resists, in Cohen’s *Religion of Reason*, all “flight from world” (*Weltflucht*) and, by extension, all flight from history. Future does not negate the reality of present and past, though it breaks its eternal rings, the ring of idealism and the ring of the state. To the contrary, it is the future that makes past and present *real* and hence *historical*. “The future becomes the reality of history,”²¹⁵ writes Cohen, and he adds in another place that our yearning for future, Rosenzweig’s *Sehnsucht*, is precisely—and quite obviously—not in the future but “fills my whole life and every moment of my being-there.”²¹⁶ The future, in other words, becomes a “constant present” (*beständige Gegenwart*) for Cohen, who anticipates here most intimately Ernst Bloch’s utopianism of the present, which in turn reminds us of what Rosenzweig called “actualizing utopia” (*verwirklichende Utopie*).²¹⁷

To the extent, then, that the debate over historicism and antihistoricism retains some validity, Cohen would fall where antihistorians usually fall—on the side of “lived historicity” (*Geschichtlichkeit*). “Time for the non-prophetic man is the dark destroyer, and history is at bottom meaningless,” Abraham Heschel would later write in a tone reminiscent of Cohen and the entire tradition of Jewish “antihistoricism”; whereas the achievement of Israel had been “to have experienced history” as “a triumph of time over space.”²¹⁸ Indeed, it was the prophets who, for Cohen, created the “concept of history” in the proper sense: history (*Geschichte*) as “the being of future” (*Sein der Zukunft*).²¹⁹ While to the Greeks history (*Historie*) was one with knowledge (*Wissen*) and indeed no more than mere story, mere myth, mere past, even if eternally in the present, the prophets looked ahead into the “future of *Menschenge-*

schichte,” whose ideal concept would be one with *Weltgeschichte*—world-history. “Without the idea of humankind,” writes Cohen, “history would remain merely a problem of knowledge (*Wissensproblem*) over the past of nations. . . . But national history is not yet history (*Geschichte*) at all.”²²⁰

“Not yet history”: Whether we may call this “not-yet” antihistoricism or an historicism of a particular kind, shall now be of secondary significance to us.²²¹ What mattered to Cohen, was that the becoming of history had to be conceived not as a passing into the past but as a proleptic leap into the future, an *Aufschwung* (“elevation”) that was intimately linked to an inversion of past and future: to the idea of resurrection. For resurrection (*Auferstehung*), rebirth (*Wiedergeburt*), and renewal (*Erneuerung*) represented, for Cohen, the very paradoxical inversion of the horizons of time that was concentrated in idea of teshuvah, in the act of turning. Atonement is “self-sanctification” (*Selbstheiligung*)—and self-sanctification, as Cohen puts it in *Religion of Reason*, “must relate to each and every moment of human life. It eminently relates to the moment in which the I shall be ever rejuvenated (*verjüngt*) to new life, and its sole continuity (*Bestand*) and affirmation depends on that continuous rejuvenation.”²²² Just as atonement and turning removed the penitent from the completed pastness of the past, from *Historie*—but only to give him back to the future of *Geschichte*—so it was the resurrection of a people, its “constant revival” (*unaufhörliche Wiederbelebung*), that turned its continuous existence (*Fortbestand*) into a continuous “re-creation” (*unaufhörliche Neuerzeugung*).²²³ Just as atonement was, for Cohen, the medium of an active “self-renewal” (*Selbsterneuerung*) and thus the gate to immortality, so it was the “infinite task” of “holiness” in a people that pointed—as an “essence” being always in the future—beyond its life and beyond its death: “Death can no longer be regarded as the mere end of life. It must open the view that it is only a transition to another life.”²²⁴ In each moment of dying, then, in Israel’s ever-dying suffering, manifests itself the coming world—*olam ha-ba*. But it manifests itself as coming from both without and *within* the moment, as coming to and from transition, as coming to and from *Geschichte*. Immortality, whose “lever” (*Hebel*) Cohen calls resurrection, is a merit not of the metaphysical soul, but of the

“historical soul” (*geschichtliche Seele*).²²⁵ To delay immortality into the Beyond would be delaying it, as in the myth of utopia, beyond time. But from this Beyond, because it has left the immanence of time, cannot emerge, for Cohen, “the concept of an historical future, and much less the concept of a personal future.”²²⁶ Hence, Cohen rejects, as Buber would in his famous essay of 1954 on prophetic and apocalyptic history, the notion of eschatology, of history rushing toward and coming to an end, and he rejects it primarily on *moral* grounds. For Buber, apocalypticism was all but a sign of “decadence.”²²⁷ For Cohen, eschatology meant a “fateful error,” a flight from history by which the “bridge” (*Brücke*) between the Beyond and the “relation of matter” would be dismantled. To restore this bridge, to dismantle the dismantling, to depurify eschatological time, to return the Beyond to history, to write history as continuous resurrection—this was, despite their differences, Cohen’s, Rosenzweig’s, and Buber’s common effort. Messianism thus had to be understood not merely as future, much less as an end, but as *historical* future (*geschichtliche Zukunft*), a future that is already there, now, while, at the same time, remaining genuinely new and not yet: “The concept of history and of historical experience,” writes Cohen, “has elevated itself above the limits of past and present, and the authentic being-there, the authentic reality of human life and of all nations, is placed into the future and into the evolution towards it.”²²⁸

Beginnings from the Middle

Not yet history is the theme that weaves through the writing of Jewish history as dialectic of immortality and resurrection, of imperishability and beginning anew. In Cohen, this dialectic is all but resolved through a correlation (*Wechselwirkung*) where the annulment of past, of *Historie*, through resurrection makes history “real,” realizing, in the double sense of the word and renewing in the sense of teshuvah, the ever-newness of the future. If history thus is to be written as *Geschichte*, then it must be written, like creation and like the aesthetics of atonement, as a history of the new—then it must be written as the history that cannot be written, because its events are never complete and present only as future. Just as the origin cannot be written but only reorigi-

nate in the speech of revelation and in the *Gesinnung* (total intention) of atonement, so *Geschichte*—the new—cannot be written but only be “renewed” in the middle of the moment. This renewal, as Rosenzweig wrote in the “New Thinking,” can be a renewal only through “Jewish words,” but not, as the Wissenschaft of *Historie* had imagined, through “Jewish things.”²²⁹ There is no “essence” of Judaism, he writes in another place: “There is only a ‘Hear O Israel.’”²³⁰ Rosenzweig’s renewal of history, then, is anything but a removal of history from the fetters of temporality. If history is to be renewed through the word, through revelation, then it must be renewed in the midst of time, in a moment that, instead of standing still, instead of being mathematical, is a moment of *narrative time*. “Revelation,” Rosenzweig writes in the “Urzelle” of 1917, “. . . is capable of being a midpoint (*Mittelpunkt*), a firm (*fest*), immovable midpoint.”²³¹ But in the *Star* he writes: “The ground of revelation is midpoint and beginning in one.”²³² The “ground” of revelation is both in the middle of space and at the beginning of time; it is both a midpoint and a beginning, as is revelation itself: A midpoint that begins. Conversely, Rosenzweig maintains that while “presentness” is revelation’s content, historicity remains its “ground and its warrant.”²³³

Our reference to “narrative time” is of course not accidental. Paul Ricoeur introduced the concept to capture a peculiar “temporal dialectic” in all narrative plot, a dialectic between the chronological succession and metachronological configurations of “significant wholes.”²³⁴ The point for Ricoeur was that the chronology of narrative and plot bears, in fact, the creative imprint of narrative a-chronicity: that narrative time emerges from metatemporal configurations of what we might call, with Herder, a total view. Narrative time, in this respect, mediates dialectically between temporal “episodes” and the plot as a whole or, as it were, narrative eternity. Likewise, we could argue that it is narrative time—the time of revelation, in a word—that mediates, in Rosenzweig, between his seemingly static configuration of eternity and his otherwise all-dynamic conception of existence. The paradox, then, how revelation can be at once a “renewal” through the word and a “firm” and “immovable” midpoint, how it can be a middle and a beginning, is engendered by the paradox of narration itself: that the story always begins

in a middle that presupposes the eternal configuration of beginning-middle-end, but that its beginning—despite this configuration—is no less a beginning.

Epochs Without Halt

To begin in the middle thus receives a curious place in Rosenzweig's thinking about and in history. It is this very beginning in the middle that makes, for Rosenzweig, the writing of Jewish history, or the Jewish writing of history, different from all other writing of history. In a lecture of 1919 on "Spirit and Epochs in Jewish History," Rosenzweig, in fact, descends into the underworld of Wissenschaft to retrieve the true meaning of epoch: Why, he wonders, did the great historian Heinrich Graetz begin his history of the Jewish people not at its beginning, where all *Historie* would begin, but "somewhere in the middle"?²³⁵ We have arrived at a point in our study where we are already sufficiently prepared to predict what is to follow: Graetz, as Rosenzweig prefers to read him, made his beginning in the middle, because this alone is the beginning that the "nature of his special subject"—the subject of Jewish history—demands. He began in a middle from where he could beat the trail in two directions, forward and backward. Beginning in the middle, Rosenzweig suggests, was Graetz's conscious articulation of the "essence" of Jewish history, an essence that is, once again, not standstill, not the result of abstract epochization, but the incarnation of the "spirit" in the epoch itself: "The spirit of history," Rosenzweig writes in a passage, whose overtones are almost obscenely young-Hegelian, "creates for itself a body (*Leib*) in the epochs of history."²³⁶ Thus it is history that reverses the spiritualization of the spirit, that reconciles the "spiritual" and the "worldly," and that indeed brings the spirit back to its "middle."²³⁷ But the middle is not the same as the "body" of the spirit, and the spirit is not the same as its materialization in the epoch. Writing history in epochs may be good enough for writing a history of the world, but it does not suffice to write a history of eternity. Graetz's beginning in the middle indicated, for Rosenzweig, the writing of a history without epochs, the writing of a history of the "spirit"—which on one level seemed fully consistent with the imagina-

tion of nineteenth century Wissenschaft, while on another level, postulating a radical history without standpoint and without the order of time. As a beginning, Graetz's middle could not remain in itself. It had to go forward and backward, it had to be future and past (in this inverted order), it had to be rupture (*Riß*) and bridge (*Briicke*). The emphasis lies of course, as in the entire *Star*, on the copula "and."²³⁸ Graetz had to begin in the middle because he realized that the great "division of epochs" (*Epochenscheide*) that accompanied the year 70 C.E., did not, as it should have according to the laws of historicism, bring an end to his people, but that it became itself "a middle, a link, yes, in a certain sense even the climax of its history."²³⁹ The end of the previous epoch so became the beginning of a new—an insight no deeper than Hegel's new life from death, with the exception, however, that Rosenzweig uses this writing of history from the middle as a writing of history in turning, in transition in an almost Gadamerian sense.²⁴⁰ "It is the sudden (*das Plötzliche*), the leap and the rupture . . . that make possible [historical] evolution," he writes in draft to a lecture of 1920. "*Historia facit saltus.*" Its periodicity is a periodicity of the *Augenblick*—of the kairotic moment.²⁴¹ Its meaning is the meaning of the "middle." Here we see how Rosenzweig, as David Myers has already observed, if also, I believe, with the wrong conclusions,²⁴² turns the historicism of Wissenschaft against itself, a strategy that appears to be rather typical of Jewish historicism. The history of the middle is an "overcoming" (*Überwindung*) of the history of epochs, it is an overcoming of the "dividing power" of epochal divisions: "The spirit of Judaism transcends them [epochal divisions], for it is older and younger than them. It does not tolerate epochs. But this also means: it does not tolerate history."²⁴³ The Jewish "spirit" is once again both "old" and "young," and in this old-newness lies, once again, the ground for its eternity: "We do not age," Rosenzweig continues, "perhaps because we have never been young, as it may be. We are eternal."²⁴⁴ If the history of Judaism, in other words, seeks to become Jewish history, it must dispense with the order of time and with the organizing principle of epochs. It must invert the order of before and after, a theme that is familiar from the systems of Bloch and Benjamin, from thinking in renaissance itself, and that concludes Rosenzweig's reflections on eternal life: "To invert a Between means to

make its After a Before, its Before an After, the end a beginning, the beginning an end. And that is what the eternal people does.”²⁴⁵ Conversely, if we seek to return to the eternity that we already are, we must, as Rosenzweig writes in 1920, turn a “total turning,” *Umkehr* and *Einkehr* in one, a turning, whose goal is the “new-old man” (*neu-alte Mensch*), the *baal teshuvah* (turning penitent), who stands higher than the *tzaddik gamur* (completely righteous), the man of crisis, who is more alive than the man of *Historie*.²⁴⁶ Turning so cannot be mere return, and Rosenzweig remains critical of all “one-sided” teshuvah, whether Zionist, Orthodox, or culturalist—nor can turning be the subject of history. Where history writes not in turning points, not from epoch to epoch, but in turning itself, it cannot be written—and where it cannot be written it loses its “power.” The “spirit” of history, then, is free from the “shackles of epochs” and free from the “omnipotence of time”: “It traverses history unperturbed”²⁴⁷—as spirits tend to do. It does so, however, not because it is removed from history altogether, because it has only been freed from the shackles of epochs and the shackles of time, but because it is history in its totality: Because in Jewish history, world-history has not passed but is as past and future in the now—“We carry it in its totality in us.” Rosenzweig addresses his Jewish audience in Kassel: “The morning of world-history still dawns in *You* at every morning today.”²⁴⁸ It is made, like the beginning itself, if we recall Hermann Cohen, every day anew. Still, it remains, as in Dubnow and virtually every historian discussed in this essay, in a history of normative contemporality, transcending history not because of its unhistorical remoteness but because it is *historia historicissima*.

How, then, was Graetz, the writer of history, able to begin in the middle? Because he was able to view Jewish history as an aesthetic image, not as an image of “rigid immobility,” as Geiger had charged against Jost’s historicism, but as Herder’s *Gottgemälde* of synchronic beauty and manifoldness of movement—as eternal configuration. Because he was able to mount, as Rosenzweig speculates, like the poet of the *Italian Journey*, the highest citadel to glimpse at the layout of the city—to acquire, like Herder, its *total view*—before he had to descend and to lose himself again in its crooked streets and corners.²⁴⁹

Hours of Eternity

What epochs are to history, the “hour,” in Rosenzweig, is to eternity. In the *Star*, Rosenzweig defines the hour as a moment that is “more than its content,” a moment of standstill, a *nunc stans*, that at once stands (*Stunde*, in German) and, paradoxically, reveals “something new.” It is stationary and yet also a form of circular motion; it is a “circular returning upon itself,” a merging of beginning and end that is possible because there is a middle or, as Rosenzweig writes, because it has “indeed many middle moments between its beginning and its end.”²⁵⁰ The hour thus is defined as the “fullness of moments” and as a “multiplicity of old and new.” The hour, like the true epoch without halt, does not end to give way to a new hour, but recommences in its fullness: “There begins ‘again an’ hour,” and this recommencement (*Wiederbeginnen*) is, as all genuine beginning-again, a re-creation of the time of creation, a reorigination at the origin, a beginning-anew the beginning. It vouchsafes, as all genuine beginnings-again, as all imagination of rebirth, a freedom from the transitoriness of the moment and a freedom from the perishability of temporal being. “We turn our backs on temporal life,” writes Rosenzweig on the Jewish protest of eternity against the ephemeral of historical time.²⁵¹ Nonetheless, it is a *turning*, a Jewish “self-purification” that needs its “depurification” in advance, an act of atonement that needs an act to be atoned for, but that will, in the turning itself, become “an entrance to eternity,” or a “second birth,” a “rebirth” (*Wiedergeburt*), a repetition that comes to mean, as in Hegel and as in his great foe Kierkegaard, a transformation into “freedom.”²⁵² To turn one’s back on temporality is to turn time into the liturgical clockwork of the hour—which is the clockwork of resurrection. Still, it remains a turning, a threshold that conjoins and separates the temporal from the eternal, turning that transforms and creates anew. “In the hour,” as Rosenzweig puts it, “. . . one moment, whenever and if ever it were to perish is created anew (*umgeschaffen*), into something newly issued and thus imperishable, into a *nunc stans*, into eternity.”²⁵³

Return and Transition

We are ready to make our way back. Hermann Cohen had stressed national resurrection (*Auferstehung*) as a bridge between history and eternity, a mediation (*Vermittlung*) that could reveal “historical significance,” giving meaning and purpose to history, but *inter alia* giving meaning and purpose also to eternity.²⁵⁴ For Franz Rosenzweig, the Days of Awe, which Cohen singled out as the days of turning and ethical rebirth, “place the eternity of redemption into time” until, with the completion of Sukkot, Zunz’s *atzteret*, the “reality of time” is fully reinstated and the circuit of the year ready to “begin again.”²⁵⁵ “If we are eternal,” Rosenzweig writes, “it is in full reality.”²⁵⁶ The reality of the “eternal,” if it claims to be as real as it is, must be one of time, of history, and of hourly redemption. The program that is in the “blood” of Jewish existence, as Rosenzweig writes in his essay on “Spirit and Epochs of Jewish History,” is “to demand, to preach, and to promise the *eternal*—in the midst of time.”²⁵⁷ Even if this program reverberated little more than a truism among Rosenzweig’s Jewish and Christian contemporaries of crisis, it still points to a peculiar trope in thinking about Jewish history not as eternal in the Beyond, nor as eternal without history, but as *eternal history*: As a history of infinity that becomes eternal by virtue of its repeating resurrections, by virtue of its epochs, which are turning points, which are moments of rebirth, as we saw in Leo Baeck, moments of eternity that become, as Rosenzweig put it, “origins of the future.”²⁵⁸ To be in the moment, to be in the epochs of history, so means to be in the origin and to anticipate eternally what is not-yet. Only thus, Rosenzweig thinks, does the future become “eternal,” and only thus is the moment filled with the infinite reality of life—with the life that is yet to come and hence the “not-yet-infinite” that remains the eternal task of the present: “The world must become wholly alive.”²⁵⁹ It must be vitalized from the overcoming of historical time, from the overcoming of *Historie*. “The end of history,” Theodor Lessing wrote in 1916, “restores (*wiederherstellt*)—life.”²⁶⁰ This, it seems to me, remains the most common feature of “antihistoricism,” especially in its Jewish variation: that it is not flight from history but a *return* to history. That it is not antihistoricism but historicism in a “real”

sense. Only in the Jewish “reentry” (*Wiedereintritt*) into history, Martin Buber wrote in 1952, can the “spirit” of Judaism verify and actualize itself (*bewähren*) in the “midst of history.” Only from the midst of history can historicism become “realistic”—and only from this midst can it become a realism of the future—“messianic” history: “The metahistorical (*das Übergeschichtliche*) leaves its imprint on the historical; but it does not replace it.”²⁶¹ “Into Life!” is thus the familiar call of all resurrected spirit. It is the call of all resistance to historical time and yet also the call for all affirmation of history. It is the call of renaissance that resists in its unalienable triad of beginning, beginning-again, and turning, all completeness of the past and all finitude of the present—or once more in Rosenzweig’s solemn words: “Life offers resistance; it resists, that is, death.”²⁶²

Writing Jewish history in resurrection so emerges as a powerful social imagination of resistance and revitalization. To the extent that resurrection tends to be the language of the disenfranchised and powerless, the language of the ever-dying, it should be of little wonder that historical resurrectionism has become, more often than not, the mirror through which Jewish history looks at itself. It is no unusual mirror, much less, it seems, a distinctively “Jewish” mirror, if this should matter at all. Rather, it could be argued that resurrectionism in its *modern* form is a trope that bears a strong Christian imprint in the history of writing history, just as the idea of the Renaissance itself would have been unthinkable without the language of baptismal redemption. One need only think of Friedrich Schlegel’s deeply Catholic²⁶³ lectures on the *Philosophy of History*, held in Vienna in 1828, and culminating in a passionate call for the restoration (*Wiederherstellung*) of a Christian age: “The origin of Christianity is the only firm and first point of halt and holding-on-to (*Anhaltspunkt*), to which we can return,” Schlegel writes in his concluding lecture. A return, however, whose objective would not be to imitate (*nachkünsteln*) and conjure back old times and forms . . . , but to view clearly (*übersehen*) what has remained unfulfilled and not yet realized.”²⁶⁴ From the “midpoint” of “origin” (*Ursprung*), which is a “turning point” (*Wendepunkt*) as well, a point that allows us to “look back onto the whole” as incomplete, as in “relation to the invisible world,” we can hope for and anticipate the “liberation”

and “redemption” of the human race “in the historical midst of all times.” In this “middle,” the time of history assumes the temporality of “Christian time,” which, for Schlegel, is the overcoming of the Hegelian *Zeitgeist* and of all “old evils of time” (*alte Zeitübel*), the overcoming of pastness altogether: “We depend on the future far more than on the past.”²⁶⁵ The Christian historian, as Schlegel noted in his *Athenäumsfragmente* of 1798, ceases to be a recollector of the past to become, once he has returned to the middle, a “retrospective prophet” (*rückwärts gekehrter Prophet*), a prophet of restoration.²⁶⁶ Inspiring, of course, Walter Benjamin, Schlegel already practiced an astonishing form of anti-historicism, as well as a peculiar form of thinking in renaissance. “Turned backward, they struggle into the future,” Karl Burdach would later write of renassances and their historical self-perception.²⁶⁷ Ernst Cassirer, in his 1944 *Essay on Man*, credited this self-perception with being the hallmark of “great” history: “It is this ‘palingenesis,’ this rebirth of the past, which marks and distinguishes the great historian.”²⁶⁸ By this account, there would be no greater historian than Jules Michelet, the romantic historian of renaissance, whose mysticism of resurrection would spark the revival and imagination of the Renaissance in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, an imagination, as Lucien Febvre noted, that was driven by Michelet’s recovery of “love” (not unlike in Rosenzweig) and by his profound attachment to the story of Lazarus²⁶⁹: “[M]ort et rené je fis la Renaissance,” Michelet wrote in the Preface to his *Histoire de France*.²⁷⁰ The history of renaissance, as in Michelet’s famous dictum, became a resurrection in itself, a *Denkweise*, as we have seen in Leo Baeck, a mode of thought of rebirth. Time and again we see that resurrection acts as an historical apperception.

Renaissance is a mode of thought, as is beginning-anew, as is beginning itself. It need not be, as in Schlegel, the reinstitution of a new age, at whose advent the mode of renaissance would vanish behind the presence of the epoch. It could also be, as it appears to be more common in the writing of Jewish history, a reinstitution of pluri-agedness, in which the historical epoch, the periodization of history, the organization of historical time altogether, is suspended and dissolved in a new, “unhistorical” history of “lived life” and liturgical ryhthmicity. Gustav Landauer called this new history a history in “modalities” rather than

in the order of time. For Landauer, whose own historical *Denkweise* was that of revolution, of turning time between utopia and topia, history could be correctly understood only as a modulation of time, leaving the “standpoint of time” (*Zeitstandpunkt*) and regarding peoples and periods as “contemporaries” (*Zeitgenossen*) across an uncompleted past and unachieved future.²⁷¹ Of this “new” historian, Landauer asks to “halt in a moment of introspection,” to halt in an *Augenblick* and to see the world as a “world of becoming,²⁷² of transition, of the never-complete, of the side-by-side of manifoldness, of the unforeseeable, and the un-extricable.” History in its “old” form can only see the abstracted past, but the “new” history, far from being “dry” and “bloodless,” can say of the world: “There has been nothing but life.”

True life, for Landauer, is what happens between the “living along” (*Mitleben*) of topos and the “private life” (*Privatleben*) of utopia. It is the life of “crisis,” of turning around, of revolution, and history, if it is truly “modulated,” must be reduced to *Zwischenzeit*, to the time in between. But this reduction is in truth an overcoming of the limits imposed by epochal time. *Zwischenzeit* is in transition, in threshold, in the great middle that makes old and young, that conjoins “destruction and creative spirit,” that is in turning—that is *in* revolution.²⁷³ Herder already recognized the role of “eternal revolution” in the total view of history.²⁷⁴ Jacob Taubes pointed to the centrality of “revolution,” the total transformation that “makes new as it negates,” in the eschatological imagination of the West.²⁷⁵ No other history, for Taubes, has embodied the history of constant revolution as much as Jewish history, where Israel continues to be the “place of revolution,” the middle of a constant making new that breaks with the cycle of eternal recurrence and myth. Leo Baeck, writing against the notion that “history makes no leap,” celebrates the “revolutionary spirit” of the prophets that continues to live in the “genius” of Israel: “Out of the genius, out of the revolutionary nature of its beginnings, something—a spirit, a will, a hope—is reborn; something returns.”²⁷⁶ It is through revolution that history becomes possible as history; a painful process of purification, but also a process of continuous repentance and rebirth. “*Je vivifiais l'histoire en face de la destruction,*” Michelet notes in his diaries while writing his *Histoire de la Révolution* in 1842: “*C'était vivre et c'était mourir.*”²⁷⁷

In the face of destruction is written the history of new life. It is not, as we have seen, a progressive history, where the old is replaced by a new that has not yet been, nor a history of simple sublation, where individuality is sacrificed on the “altar of world history,” but a history of old-newness, a history of what Rosenzweig called the factuality of the “and,” of the turning middle, of the epoch as turning point, of the *Augenblick*, that is at once an aesthetic configuration and a turning from and toward time. “We can only master time in time,” Heschel writes in his essay on the Sabbath.²⁷⁸ The same holds true for history as well. To master history becomes the deepest desire to whom history has been an enemy. To write history as a resurrection becomes the response to whom history demands a response. Writing history in resurrection is more, in this respect, than a mode of thought. It is more than thinking, and more than mere imagining. That it is too and most fully: imagination, poetry, fantasy, and myth. No history should be written as a resurrection, as a renaissance, not even as mere restoration, if it takes seriously the solitude of suffering and the event of death. No history can claim to revive its skeletons. Renaissance is the fantasy of the remaining few—but it is also an imperative, an appellation, a “task,” and as such, to recall Rawidowicz, a form of “realism.” History calls out and demands return. Not long ago, Robert Gibbs called for a “different way of doing history”—“the study of history as a form of repentance.”²⁷⁹ Renaissance may well be this form of repentance: a repentance that responds to all times present. For to think in teshuvah, in resurrecting response, presupposes and creates not—as frequently assumed—a timeless image of history, but to the contrary a *synchronic* image, the image of “was, is, will be,” which is a liturgical image, a ritual temporality, where everything, as Rosenzweig wrote, “has already been there”—*So ist Alles schon da.*²⁸⁰ “Without this anticipatory pre-understanding,” as Steven Katz put it so well in an essay on Rosenzweig, but thinking perhaps also of Salo Baron, “the catastrophe(s) would be overwhelming in its traumatic negativity, and Israel, like its ancient neighbors in the face of national calamity, would disappear from history.”²⁸¹

The fiction of renaissance, in a word, which is the eternal poetry of resisting history, can also be looked upon as an imperative that demands and enables always anew to master history in history, to defy

that which does not allow to live with the defiant call to life. This imperative cuts through the image of the liturgical cycle, which itself already is a cycle not of mere recurrence but one of repetition and rhythm, giving it, paradoxically, a direction—Vico’s ideal *dovette, deve, dovrà*, which we have seen return in Leo Baeck’s “ideal I” of history, in the return to the self that is not yet.²⁸² The imperative of resurrection also cuts through the supra-historical, through *Übergeschichte*, and through the ether of removed eternity. Resurrection brings back the future into the present, turning history, as Hermann Cohen imagined, into “ideal history,” or as Buber wrote in the same spirit, raising the “historical moment into the light of the supra-historical.”²⁸³ If there is, as Buber maintained, writing in 1902, an “indestructibility of being in the most tragic of all peoples,”²⁸⁴ then it can be a becoming only of the future, an unending imperative remaining always anew at its beginning: “Man cannot complete and has yet to begin—to begin in the greatest earnestness of reality.”²⁸⁵ There is, for Buber, as for Cohen, no greater responsibility for the historical world than to begin again.

Writing in resurrection thus serves, despite its romantic illusions, and despite its conservative connotations, the *ethicization* of history. From the hour of liturgical time emerges the unfinished present of moral eternity. To keep this present unfinished, to keep its beginnings beginning, will become, as we shall see, the difficult desire of the “Jewish Renaissance.” That we cannot speak, however, of *the* Jewish Renaissance, without pausing to reconsider renaissance as a mode—the principal mode perhaps—of writing Jewish history has been our effort to show in this chapter.

Two The Retrieval of Ambivalence

Jewish Renaissance and the (Re-)Turn(-ing) to/of Tradition

Ich gehöre den ewigen Wandel-Welten.

—Alfred Mombert, *Sfaira der Alte*

In Wahrheit ist Tradition stets ein Moment der Freiheit und der Geschichte selber.

—Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*

I

Repetition

In our previous chapter, we suggested that the modern Jewish turn to thinking in history remained rooted in the conceptual tradition of restoration and rebirth, if also demystified, and that the possibility of a “Jewish Renaissance” seemed therefore already contained in the concept of a “Jewish history.” Modern Jewish “resurrectionism” thus emerged as a variant of historicism; a historicism of a particular kind that served as moral apperception of time. Affirming rather than negating the historical, the story of resurrection presented itself not as an act of transcendental acquiescence but as task. This task we shall now call “renaissance.” Its historical principle is the conscious continuity of distance-memory, the making and presupposing of ruptures, of thresholds and liminal histories that allow and demand for the axiom of one-timeness to be dissolved into an image of contemporaneous unfinishedness: In the synchronization of threshold, every time is present without being complete. At their turning, renaissances take stock of other times, responding to their otherness and putting in question the returning self, whose continuity and place in history is ruptured and in need of repair. “History is worked over by the ruptures of history, in which a judgment is borne upon it,” Levinas writes in *Totality and Infinity*. “When man truly approaches the Other he is uprooted from history.”¹ The rerooting of renaissance is conditioned by the uprooting from

history, which continuously acts as a recovery and corrective of roots. Return and turning are correlative modalities of beginning-anew, and beginning anew is the correlative concept of repentance. In this fundamental dialectic lies the capability of renaissance to formulate the possibility of an ethics of its own. Approaching the “Jewish Renaissance,” we must be attentive to the fragments of an ethics dispersed within its romanticizing jargon of homecoming and pristine past: We must be attentive to the fragments of turning.

Renaissance and Renaissancing

We must, then, from the very onset query the notion that the Jewish Renaissance, as it evolved during the first decades of the twentieth century, was concerned solely with the recovery of an authoritative past, practice, or tradition: that it could have been an unqualified return to premodern ideals. To be sure, renaissance, rebirth, and return were quintessential fixtures in a conservative vocabulary, which Fritz Stern, writing on Paul de Lagarde’s Germanic *Wiedergeburt*, once summarized as “the idealism of antimodernity,”² yet, the same idea of “renaissance” also acted as a counterweight to a new conservatism that frequently presented itself in neo-Romantic guises. When, in 1927, the Viennese poet Hugo von Hofmannsthal, himself a thorough admirer of the Italian Renaissance, described the “conservative revolution” as a simultaneous longing for “connectedness” (*Bindung*) and “wholeness” (*Ganzheit*), replacing the modernist predilection for freedom and ambiguity with a “new German reality,” he also stressed the curious fact that this new renaissance saw itself in distinct “opposition to that spiritual upheaval of the sixteenth century which we usually grasp in its two aspects, the Renaissance and the Reformation.”³ The “conservative” renaissance, in that respect, was a renaissance in defiance of *the Renaissance*. It was a modern rebellion against the beginnings of modernity. Thomas Mann once described this peculiar “reactionary modernism” as a “mixture of robust modernity and an affirmative stance toward progress combined with dreams of the past.”⁴

Undoubtedly, the Jewish Renaissance was a phenomenon that paralleled much of this dialectic, yet, it cannot easily be adapted to the

dynamics of this “conservative revolution.” Far from being a merely Jewish mirror to the modern “Germanic rebirth,” though by no means entirely divorced from it, the Jewish Renaissance strove for connectedness and wholeness, quite certainly so, but also for the very ambivalence and open-endedness that the antimoderns, in their call for a new innocence, had so virulently, and so brutally, repudiated. “Our ‘Renaissance,’” as the early Leo Strauss wrote in 1924 in response, incidentally, to Lagarde, “is no blossoming of naïve forces, but the effort and the result of a Jewish spirit that problematizes itself.”⁵

This assessment, as unusual at it seems coming from one of the patriarchs of modern conservatism, will prove itself to be more accurate than the political philosopher Strauss perhaps had anticipated. What this chapter seeks to show is that the Jewish Renaissance was concerned less with the recovery of an idyllic past, or golden age, but more with the *act of recovering itself*. The object of retrieval thus retreated behind the retrieving subject. Quite consciously, the Jewish Renaissance, as I shall argue, was more about “renaissancing” than about concrete directives or results, more about being *in renaissance* than about unambiguous rebirth: It viewed itself less as an action program of reformation than as a *critique* of rigid forms and continuities. Nurtured by the conscious and valued contradictions of the fin-de-siècle, the Jewish Renaissance thus preferred unscripted opaqueness to ideological clarity. Vague and tenuous, its concept of “return” possessed an almost irresistible tenacity and immunity to criticism, as well as to empirical failure—but it also possessed the capacity to resist closure and its own naiveté. We return, then, to our underlying premise that, as a mode of beginning, the Jewish Renaissance functioned as a corrective of the present, an alternate modernity, instituting, however, no alternative other than the act of beginning itself.

Return to a Pristine Past

But this alternative, as Leo Strauss would later argue, was fatally flawed. Writing in 1952, when the “Jewish Renaissance” in prewar Germany had to be interpreted, by all accounts, as a tragically failed program of revival, Strauss resorted to the traditional concept of teshuvah in order

to articulate a response of his own to the “contemporary crisis of Western civilization.” Teshuvah, to Strauss, carried the meanings of repentance and return in a profound and concrete sense of “homecoming” that was unknown to the German-Jewish Renaissance. “Repentance is return,” he writes, “meaning the return from the wrong way to the right one. This implies that we were once on the right way before we turned to the wrong way.”⁶ If repentance and restoration are related, as Strauss takes from tradition, and if restoration is followed by the “perfect end” of redemption, then teshuvah can be nothing less than “the restoration of the perfect beginning,” a “perfection,” that “results in the beginning.”⁷ This “beginning,” for Strauss, is not the dialectical *act* of beginning, as in the imagination of the “modern,” nor the dialectics of origin, as it is known to us from Hermann Cohen. Rather, it is a given state of purity to which the impure direct their turning, or as Strauss writes: “Redemption consists in the return of the youngest, the most remote from the past, the most future ones, so to speak, to the pristine condition.”⁸

Against the Historicist Renaissance

At first blush, Strauss’s call for “return,” “perfect beginnings,” or pristine past, surely seems to share the classic ingredients of countermodernism, just as it seems to share the ubiquitous predilection for “crisis,” which, as Charles Bambach has shown, became its own tradition in the Weimar years.⁹ One is struck by the mere assumption of a “pristine condition” and the seeming naïveté that is implied in the idea of a return resulting in the beginning. In fact, Strauss himself repeatedly expressed his admiration for what traditions do “naively” and without self-reflection, and it was one of his own students, Werner Dannhauser, who recalled the essence of his master’s teachings: “We learned what is perhaps hardest of all to learn: to become naïve again.”¹⁰ Yet, if “becoming naïve again” was a Straussian quest, how, if at all, was it different from what Ernst Simon once called the second naïveté (*tmimut ha-shmiah*) in the German-Jewish Renaissance, especially as conceived by Martin Buber and, under different cover, Franz Rosenzweig?¹¹ Was their Jewish Renaissance not a pristine example of trading progress and

assimilation for return and tradition, an example, in other words, of Jewish teshuvah, return and introspection?

As much as the young Strauss was intrigued especially by Rosenzweig's project and its roots in Hermann Cohen, the Strauss of the post-war period could not but view the Jewish Renaissance of the Weimar years as a mere extension of modern historicism, which, while itself claiming the return to and "revitalization of earlier ways of thinking," remained unable to accept the possibility of actual, or "unqualified" return. Vitiated from the very outset by the belief that "modern thought . . . was superior to the thought of the past," the Weimar Jewish Renaissance, just as historicism itself, was deaf to the "otherworldliness" of the past, assimilating its transcendence into the sameness, or all-prevailing immanence of the present, and subjecting it to the same "petrified and self-complacent form of self-criticism" that characterized the modern mind.¹² Deeply rooted in the modern predicament, the otherwise noble renaissance of Jewish learning approached the past it sought to retrieve from a position that was, as Strauss wrote to Löwith in his famous exchange on modernity, "know-it-all-contemplative" (*besserwissend-kontemplativ*) rather than "learning-wanting to know, and practical."¹³ The return of this renaissance, in a word, was naïve to assume that return to the pristine past and turning away from the crisis of the present could be achieved by modern means. It was naïve in thinking that the fresh forces of a distant past it sought to liberate from the rubble of modernity were forces that actually *came* from the past. Unable to free itself from the immanence and "this-worldliness" of the present, unable to recognize the past as an "eternal possibility" (*ewige Möglichkeit*), the historicist renaissance thus remained without firm ground and was destined to culminate, as historicism itself, in little more than nihilism and, ultimately, its own dissolution.¹⁴

The failure of the modern Jewish Renaissance, for Strauss, lay in its own modernity and refusal to acknowledge a past that was, and continues to be, "superior to the present."¹⁵ Claiming "return," the Jewish Renaissance had nothing to return to, no "what," no "something," no inalienable set of "presuppositions," but only the movement of turning. Its "principle," as Strauss comments on Franz Rosenzweig, was "not a principle strictly speaking but 'a force.'"¹⁶ It was a movement but not a

tradition. Beginning with subjective, experiential knowledge, rather than with an objective “essence,” as it were, the new learning that called itself a renaissance both historicized and individualized the primacy and givenness of the Jewish past: “The sacred law,” Strauss writes, “as it were the public temple, which was a reality, thus becomes a potential, a quarry or a store-house out of which each individual takes the materials for building up his private shelter.”¹⁷ The error of turning experience into its own presupposition, of rendering return its own object, denied the “new thinking” and its related project of renaissance the ability to recognize what Strauss calls the “pre-philosophic equivalent” to the Greek concept of nature: The notion of “custom” or “ways.”¹⁸ Not that the “new” thinking was ignorant of customs and ways. Rather, as Strauss maintains, wherever it honored ritual and practice, as Rosenzweig did, it failed to experience them as *objective presuppositions*, as the “what” of return. To the “new” thinking, custom and ways are always afterthoughts. Tradition is always that which is mended or, as we would say in our time, invented from a distance. “These present-day Jews who return to the tradition,” Strauss writes, “try to do in the element of reflection what traditionally was done unconsciously or naively. Their attitude is historical rather traditional.”¹⁹

Fidelity to Tradition

But can there be a return that is truly “unqualified” and, as Löwith wondered, unaffected by history? Can one return to tradition out of tradition? Can one come home from home? Obviously, the meaning of return, or teshuvah, is predicated not upon its being-at-home but its distance; not upon the continuous but upon interruption. Teshuvah, as we recall, is defined by Strauss as the “return of the youngest, the most remote from the past, the most future ones, to the pristine condition.” Return, like remembrance, demands remoteness and rupture: It demands the self-reflection of modernity. To the moderns, Strauss contends, there is no other way of return than through the “most intensive reading of old books”—but this reading will always separate, like a “screen,” the modern reader from what the ancients experienced with a “freshness and directness which have never been equaled.”²⁰ The return

to “old books,” then, is to Strauss, a distinct form of distant learning, and it is the peculiar privilege of the most distant, of those most alienated from tradition, to recover, by virtue of the very screen that filters their vision, the most “original meaning” of the past. Thus, tradition, as Nathan Tarcov rightly remarked, serves Strauss as both “access and obstacle to understanding.”²¹

The “unqualified” return, then, to a “pristine condition,” that serves at its lasting foundation and continuous stream of “something,” is an act different from being *in* tradition. What Strauss calls “customs and ways” corresponds both to a “naturalness” of the Law and to the “fundamental and permanent problems of philosophy,” it is both an “old” or “ancestral” foundation to return to and a *continuous form of engagement*. The permanence of nature, as Friedrich Schiller mused in the year of the French Revolution, allows us to search for our selves of yesterday: Even if we have temporarily lost ourselves, “we can always find *her* again to be the same, and *ourselves in her*.”²² By the same token, the natural problems of classical thought which, to Strauss, are guideposts of how we “ought to live,” exist “always and all times,” and their freshness and naiveté is both preserved and obscured by the screen of tradition. It is, then, not tradition itself that ensures permanence, but its deontological reference to the timeless, and Strauss can therefore speak of a “living tradition,” which is, in fact, “incompatible” with traditionalism. Fidelity to this “living tradition” and to continuity itself must mean to know the timeless behind the “screen” and, accordingly, to be able “to distinguish between the living and the dead, the flame and the ashes, the gold and the dross”—a program that Strauss, of course, could have borrowed more easily from the entire tradition of nineteenth century Jewish historicism and Reform Judaism.²³

What is reclaimed no less in such discriminating fidelity is the classic jargon of renewal that rings familiar from the very Jewish Renaissance Strauss was putting on trial, but familiar also from the very Hermann Cohen, he all too quickly charged—as Leora Batnitzky recently demonstrated—with the annihilation of tradition. Where Cohen, adopting a thoroughly Hegelian tone, spoke of a sensible “reshaping” (*Verwandlung*) and, indeed, gradual “annihilation” (*Vernichtung*) of the

past by the force of an “historical judgment” (*Geschichtsbeurteilung*), in which the “old motive” would merrily survive, Strauss quite rightly saw its outcome—which may be the outcome of Hegelianism altogether—as a “pitiless burning of the hitherto worshiped.”²⁴ Thus, Cohen’s prophetic reforms remained what they claimed to be: reform, reshaping, and destruction, but they fell short of what Strauss hoped to reclaim: return, restoration, and homecoming. Yet, it is in the same call for teshuvah, that Strauss encounters a familiar hermeneutic cycle he cannot break: For if the role of the modern returners is to “transform inherited knowledge into genuine knowledge by revitalizing its original discovery, and to discriminate between the genuine and spurious elements,” as Strauss writes of modern political thought,²⁵ then their return cannot be but a reform and reshaping of the past. “[R]enewing the past changes our sense of it,” Frank Kermode wrote of the “classic,” stating the obvious.²⁶ Still, Strauss seeks to hold on to the “classic past” as an almost ideal origin that originates ever more clearly the farther our distance from it. “Within a living tradition,” he writes, “the new is not the opposite of the old but its deepening: one does not understand the old in its depth unless one understands it in the light of its deepening.”²⁷ In stark contrast, then, to the ideal naiveté and prephilosophical innocence, the old can only be fully understood through the new, and it is this understanding that in turn enables us to discriminate between the “genuine and the spurious elements”—to uncover, in a word, by the means of history, and distance-memory, a tradition beyond tradition.

Distance-Continuity

From the perspective of hermeneutics, as will become clear in this chapter, Strauss’s rescue of tradition paralleled almost exactly the ideological self-conception of the Jewish Renaissance, where distance operated not only as the illuminating conquest of the old but also as the mirror of permanence. Far from indulging in a “classicism nostalgia,” as Robert Pippin once suggested,²⁸ and recoiling from all “pain-loving antiquarianism” and “intoxicating romanticism,”²⁹ Strauss reworked the idea of the “classic” into a dialectic of nature and history that

strangely echoed Hegel's dialectics of the classic as a vivification of ancient statuary perfection and anticipation of the romantic ideal.³⁰ The classic, for Hegel, signified to itself and in itself the moment between conservation and dissolution, tradition and creative forming: Its timelessness lies in living continuity, in a constant mediation between no longer and not-yet.

It was Gadamer, Strauss's critic,³¹ who found in Hegel's "classic" a timelessness not outside but inside history, a "form of historical being" that cannot be outlived but only be understood, as in Strauss, ever more deeply.³² Just as all classicism, for Gadamer, is ultimately restorative, so the classic itself offers us a possibility for recognition (*Wiedererkennung*) in a moment of crisis: "It brings together . . . the petrified remnants of the past with the Today."³³ The classic thus establishes a bridge between distance and belonging, between familiarity and foreignness (*Vertrautheit und Fremdheit*), enabling us to return not to tradition but to the "momentum of tradition" through an understanding that is not an "act of subjectivity" but an "entering into an event of passing-on (*Einrücken in ein Überlieferungsgeschehen*)."³⁴ It is, for Gadamer, precisely the counter-play of distance and return that operates as a form of "filtration" (*Filterung*), not unlike Strauss's "screen" of tradition, which not only filters "all kinds of turbidity," but also allows for "new origins of understanding." In this respect, the hermeneutics of distance and passing-on differs, for Gadamer, from the antiquarian understanding of "naïve" historicism, whose object can be understood only "when it is dead enough."³⁵ In contrast to historicism, the "true" act of understanding is never "complete" but in "constant flux," and as such itself part of the "event-of-passing-on" and its endless process of self-filtering, purifying, and deepening.³⁶

To reclaim tradition as a figment of past completeness, to reclaim the "what" of return, would thus be, according to Gadamer, a relapse into "naïve historicism." Just as the text, for Gadamer, is always superior to its author, and becomes even more superior by virtue of its distance, so traditions grow in their authority not by the permanence of "what has once been" but through conscious affirmation and "care" by ever more distant generations. This affirmation presupposes already the same fundamental "otherness" (*Anderssein*) that inheres all genuine under-

standing and that renders impossible all repetitious return. Return remains an ambivalent act between freedom and history, superior in one respect, to “mere” continuity, barred, in another respect, from the continuous self-verification of tradition. We shall note in passing that it is the same ambivalence that accounts for the ambivalent status of the *Baal Teshuvah*, the Jewish returnee to the law, whom Strauss implicitly invokes in his romanticizing call for a return to the Jewish “ought.” Although the returning penitent might stand where no righteous can stand (*Berakhot* 34b), he will never cease to be a returnee and will thus never cease to be a symbol of ruptured continuity. For the penitent returns not only *to* but also *from*: He returns from the other side, from *Anderssein*; he is *acher*, the heretical other, whose otherness will always challenge the straight path of tradition, and whose homecoming will always put into question the ones who stayed home.

This remains the insurmountable antinomy of return, which neither Strauss nor the “Jewish Renaissance” could resolve. To the returning “penitent,” to the modern *Baal Teshuvah*, all presupposition of the “already” is qualified by the precondition of the not-yet, all classic “here” is qualified by a romantic “there.” To be sure, the scholastic mind, as Strauss finds it in Maimonides, may still think from within Gadamer’s “event of passing-on” (*Überlieferungsgeschehen*), but the recovery of this event cannot deny the “gap” that separates the recoverer from the recovered. There can be no “unqualified” return, as Strauss surely knew, because it is the return itself that qualifies; and there can be no fidelity to a “living tradition” without the pretense of knowing what is “genuine” in it and what is “spurious.” To contend the contrary would be what Gadamer called the naïve historicism of completeness, whose counterimage was what Strauss called the radical historicism of the future. Between this naïveté and radicalism, in Hegel’s *Mitte* of the classic, in Gadamer’s *Zwischen* of hermeneutics, and in Strauss’s return to being in the midst of the *querelle des anciens et modernes*, may be the place of return and turning, the high and the low of passing-on. In this between, it may be that the superiority of the past and the superiority of the present meet, recognizing each other, recognizing the “one” in the “other”—and that is our “encounter” (*Begegnung*), as Gadamer wisely put it, with tradition.³⁷

II

“Jewish Renaissance” (with a Capital “R”)

Now that we have qualified the “unqualified” return to tradition and witnessed how even as “conservative” a thinker as Leo Strauss could not but borrow from the utopian imagination of rebirth and renaissance, we can turn to the very renaissance Strauss sought to challenge in his later thought: to the German-Jewish Renaissance. Our thesis remains that the idea of Jewish Renaissance was carried less by a notion of return than by a consciousness of turning: that it conceived of itself as “renewal” rather than retrieval. That it found itself in *encounter* with tradition rather than *in* tradition as such. That it stood neither fully inside nor fully outside of the event of passing-on. That what appeared to Strauss as the ultimate weakness of its revitalizing program was in truth its ideological strength—the very strength of ambiguity.

The German-Jewish Renaissance emerged from the complex cultural milieu of the fin-de-siècle and gained momentum in the Interwar period, before it came to a violent halt with the rise of Nazism. Historians tend to look at this period, which overlapped by and large with the dynamics of European modernism, as a period of unparalleled Jewish cultural productivity and self-awareness.³⁸ Celebrating a rebellious new beginning and reclaiming the unalienable rights of youth, the German-Jewish Renaissance, much like its Italian predecessor and ideal type, affirmed itself as making modernity and as creating its own period in history while, at the same time, acting as an agent of recovery. Ernst Gombrich, in an essay of 1967, described the Italian Renaissance as an unscripted movement from the midst of a people, never reaching a state of “completeness,” let alone an “even” expression of itself, yet paradoxically developing its own “badge” of outward signs, styles, and speech, developing, in a word, its own consciousness, its own sense of the past, and a tradition in which to recognize itself. Likewise, one could argue, the Jewish Renaissance evolved as a movement not from the “establishment” but from a younger generation of what Gombrich would call “dedicated souls” searching for a style *all’antica* while hoping to “discard and transcend the traditions of the past.”³⁹ Put differently, the Re-

naissance search for a tradition, for a classic past in which to recognize oneself, cannot be understood without its concomitant *discarding* of tradition. The finding cannot take place without the inventing; the building not without the presence of ruins. Conversely, the “invention of a tradition,” which Shulamit Volkov once called “the most comprehensive . . . collective Jewish project of modernity,”⁴⁰ and which presumed the recovery of a Jewish style *all' antica*, became the principal desire of a renaissance that understood itself as a complete transformation of Jewish existence. The emphasis of this invention, as Volkov beautifully demonstrates, did not lie on the inventing itself, but on the *invention of continuity*. As in most projects of revitalization, whether national, religious, or cultural, or any combination of the three, the Jewish Renaissance disguised innovation in the production of ancient symbols, which could serve as symbols of self-recognition. Michael Brenner depicted this process as a “search for authenticity,” in which modernist and conservative tendencies appeared to be consciously combined. To the German Jews of *Bildung* during the Weimar years, as Brenner writes, the concept of authenticity represented primarily “the creation of art products that would be received not as modern inventions but as modern interpretations of long-established ‘genuine’ religious or folk traditions.”⁴¹ The creation of symbols of Jewish self-recognition, in other words, received its legitimacy not from the continuity of “genuine” tradition but from the distance of interpretation and from the otherness of return. What Franz Rosenzweig celebrated in the *New Learning* as the return to the sources from the fringes of tradition, held true for the Jewish Renaissance at large. The “new” in the new learning, Rosenzweig writes in 1920, is that the “traveler no longer returns at night, no longer locks the gates of the Ghetto behind him to spend the night in study . . . , that he finds the spiritual homelands (*geistige Heimstätten*) outside the Jewish world.”⁴² A “learning in reverse” (*Lernen in umgekehrter Richtung*), the “new learning” draws its energy and force from precisely that degree of “alienation” that once meant to the old learning the “kiss of death.” Its vitality is awakened not by the continuity of canniness but by the disruptions of the uncanny: The best learners are the ones who are most “alien” to their tradition, just as the best repentant is the one whose turning has come the longest way.

Seeking Distance

Rosenzweig's new learning, which was a program as much as an insight into how a generation far removed from its tradition relates to its dissociated past, anticipated of course—as well as corrected—what Strauss would later call the redemptive return of the youngest and most remote, or the “most future ones,” to the “pristine condition.” It also anticipated, in this respect, Gadamer's hermeneutics of distance, which seems to loom behind Pierre Nora's uses of memory as well. For Gadamer, as we have seen, distance not only represented the possibility for hermeneutics but also the very *productive act* of understanding. It is the same distance that enables us to understand “differently” and to recognize the “one” in the “other.” Through distance and discontinuity in time (*Zeitenabstand*), traditions and origins (*Herkommen*) allow themselves to be consciously affirmed. We “understand” traditions, then, only in the act of returning to them—or, as Nora puts it, we understand “what we are” only “in the light of what we are no longer.”⁴³ The memory of distance, for Nora, who shares Gadamer's distaste for the “reproductive” quality of romantic remembrance, is a memory that gives “birth”—much in the sense of Burckhardt's modernist Renaissance—rather than a memory that recovers: It is a memory that “illuminates discontinuity” rather than searching for continuities. But it is not a memory that solely invents: to the contrary, it is a memory that *repairs*.

So much for a familiar trope, which is an intuitive given to all typical renaissances and ventures of social innovation. Renaissances need distance, an “unalterable distance,” as Panofsky wrote of the Italian Renaissance, that prohibits direct contact but permits a “total and objectivized view.”⁴⁴ This “total view,” for Panofsky, enabled the Renaissance to free itself from the bonds of the immediate past and to recover what was most distant to it: the classical period. Through distance, the Renaissance became both “modern” and “ancient,” both young and old. In the ideological framework of renaissance, the creation of distance is the first step into the repairing return. Petrarch had to first invent the Middle Ages before he could reach into the distant past. Burckhardt had to first imagine the state of delusional slumber before he

could write the history of a cultural reawakening. We have to first know what we are “no longer” before we can remember what we are.

Naissance and Renaissance

We begin again, then, by looking at modernism, which formed the backdrop of the Jewish Renaissance, as a peculiar production of distance—of a distance that claimed to be so radical that it recoiled, at first, from the “historicism” idea of renaissance. Not repetition but rupture seemed to be the language of modernism.

One may illustrate this language of rupture through the aesthetic writings of the Viennese architect and champion of modernism Otto Wagner. “If one examines with an objective eye how everything around us is in motion,” Wagner wrote of the emergence of a new art in 1895, “. . . then one will have to be convinced that there is a greater rift between the moderns and the Renaissance than between the Renaissance and antiquity.”⁴⁵ To Wagner, who stood at the forefront of fin-de-siècle urban renewal,⁴⁶ modernism implied and was in itself the result of a radical break with the past. Where older developments in style had evolved from a continuous going back to previous traditions, generating all but a hodgepodge (*Sammelsurium*) of past styles and new forms, the modern style should emerge, as if spontaneously, not from the past, nor from its recovery, but from the *present*. What makes the modern style modern, for Wagner, is its complete correspondence with “our present appearance,” its “springing forth” from the sources of now, rather than its imitation, or even emulation, of the old. Freed from the “spell of tradition” (*Bann der Tradition*), the modern artist follows an instinct of “creating anew” (*Neuschaffen*) that consciously rejects the historicist school of “imitation” (*Nachäffen*) and borrowing. Once released from the tutelage of old masters and conscious of its present possibilities and innovations, modern architecture would be able to create things “with which neither Renaissance nor antiquity could have competed.”⁴⁷ There is no doubt, for Wagner, that his generation is superior to the past, because it is the first generation to be truly independent and to truly live in the present, if not in the future. “A hearty and encouraging ‘Forward!’ (*Vorwärts*) to the modern creative (*schaffenden*) architect,” Wagner writes,

and he continues: “But also a warning against exaggerated reverence (*Anbetung*) for the old, so that a new self-awareness—however modest—can emerge, without which no great deed can be created.”⁴⁸ Thus, Wagner’s *Baukunstjünger* (young disciple of architecture) received a license to create new forms (*Schaffung von Neuformen*), unfettered by history and answerable only to the principles of functionality and present-day application. “So tremendous is this revolution (*Umwälzung*),” Wagner comments on this new style, “that we cannot speak of a renaissance of the Renaissance. Rather, what has emerged from this movement is a completely new birth (*völlige Neugeburt*): a naissance.”⁴⁹

This “completely new birth,” which Wagner, who could not but resort to the cliché of a “Phoenix arising from the ashes of ‘tradition,’”⁵⁰ also considered a “rebirth,” albeit without a specific object to be reborn other than the subject of giving birth to new aesthetic ideas, was certainly no unusual expression of fin-de-siècle modernism. “Militantly anti-historical,” Carl Schorske writes of a particular brand of “young” artists that would also have considerable impact on Wagner, “the Secession self-consciously liberated the fantasy to formulate a style untrammeled by the past.”⁵¹ Drawing a fluid distinction between the German *völkisch* program of rejuvenation, which had rejected the immediate past to attach itself to the remote past of Greek or—thinking of Richard Wagner—Germanic symbols, and the program of Young Vienna, Schorske argues that fin-de-siècle modernism was less revivalist in its orientation than a “form of existence and a sensibility different from all that had gone before, one *detached from history*.”⁵² Herbert Schnädelbach called this detachment from history, which stood in a long tradition of antihistoricism from Schopenhauer to Nietzsche, “a reflex of resistance to too much history” and a “rediscovery” and “emancipation of the present” that viewed itself in distinct opposition to the “renaissances” of imperial culture. Rather than inventing “neo-conceptions” (such as “neo-classicism”) in an effort to restore continuity, the fin-de-siècle invented itself.⁵³ “It is raining inventors, I know them by the dozen,” the Viennese writer and cultural critic Hermann Bahr once lamented about this phenomenon.⁵⁴ With unprecedented freedom and pride, the young one declares: “The world was not before I created it!”⁵⁵ Dolf Sternberger, in a well-known polemic for the *Neue Rund-*

schau of 1934, called this need for “total renovation” the “lingering will for destruction” (*nachbebender Vernichtungswille*) of what came to be known as *Jugendstil*—the “style of youth.”⁵⁶ Its protagonists, he writes, were carried away by the “powerful feeling of a new beginning, by a consciousness of being grounded in the completely new and upon nothing but themselves, and by the pleasure of a newly found self-expression.”⁵⁷ Quickly, the attributes “young” and “youthful,” which echoed not only the sentiment of complete and unencumbered novelty but also a right of distance from the old aesthetic, political, and moral values, became common currency among the rebels against the past and as such, of course, new denominators of style. “To the present its art, to art its freedom,” was the motto of the Vienna Secessionists, the hotbed of *Jugendstil*, whose self-perception was that of a “new spring.”⁵⁸ “To us, the word ‘modern’ . . . does not signify the contradiction of now and before,” wrote Max Burckhardt, who then headed the Vienna Burgtheater and also served on the editorial board of the Secession mouthpiece *Ver Sacrum* (Holy Spring), “rather it signifies the contradiction between future and past.”⁵⁹ A “style of the future,”⁶⁰ *Jugendstil* advanced to a code word of antihistoricism, radical presentness, and mobility. “Modern man,” Burckhardt continues, “does not rely on what is fashionable, nor does he look back to the past in an anxious effort to save from it as much as he can for the future. No, he wants to make everything different from how it has hitherto been. . . . He represents the tendency of movement (*Bewegungstendenz*) over the tendency of inertia (*Beharrungstendenz*).”⁶¹

That this “tendency of movement” and futurity at all cost, which William McGrath has aptly likened to a “Dionysian” disposition of the fin-de-siècle,⁶² would soon generate a sense of disorientation, dismemberment, and loss is little more than commonplace. “From its very beginnings,” writes Sternberger in reference to Otto Wagner’s *naissance*, “the birth of the absolute New carried in itself a seed of death.”⁶³ Suspended in a “space empty of history,” Sternberger continues, the youth of *Jugendstil* reflected nothing but itself, relying on a fleetingness of “feeling” rather than permanence of the past. Indeed, Ernst Mach’s uncompromising “empirio-criticism,” which culminated in his famous crisis and “dissolution of the I” inspiring many young literati such as

Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Robert Musil, or Hermann Bahr, can be regarded as symbolic for a generation that had traded, as Stefan Zweig put it, the “golden age of security” of the parents for an “uncontrolled form of existence.”⁶⁴ In a world of constant flux, “fleeting and without substance,” in a world, whose reality, as Mach writes in a letter to Hermann Bahr, consists only of “eternal motion,” in this world, the “persistence of the I” is all but an illusion: “From the moment of its birth to the moment of its death it changes without halt.”⁶⁵ “The I cannot be rescued,” Bahr reiterated this thought in an essay on Mach: “Reason has toppled the old gods and dethroned our earth.”⁶⁶ By 1905, Hofmannsthal, who had attended Mach’s lectures in Vienna in 1897, was ready to offer a poignant idiom of his time: “The nature of our epoch is multiplicity and indeterminacy. It can rest only on the slipping away (*das Gleitende*), and it is aware that what other generations believed to be firm is in fact, the slipping away.”⁶⁷ In one of Hofmannsthal’s earlier essays of 1893, we can read: “It is as if we had no roots in life. We are wandering shadows, clear-sighted and yet also day-blind. . . .”⁶⁸ In an all but programmatic poem of 1897, *Lebenslied*, Hofmannsthal tells how the young and lonely artist, unthreatened by the power of the past, encounters, wherever he goes, a “mysterious threshold.” Homeless, he submits himself to every wave and ripple—“*Es gibt sich jeder Welle der Heimatlose hin.*”⁶⁹

Beginning in Ambivalence

This must suffice to sketch the sentiment, the distinct *Lebensgefühl*, of the fin-de-siècle generation, which was the same generation to create the Jewish Renaissance, and the same generation viewed by Leo Strauss with a sense of sympathy and retrospective sorrow for the Promethean mystique of beginnings that would leave it disoriented and unable to return. However, behind this radical youthfulness, behind the insatiable desire for new beginnings, stood a longing also for the “old” beginnings. Not by accident did the central “tribune of youth,” published between 1908 and 1914 in Berlin and Vienna, choose “The Beginning” for its name and a poem, “Prometheus,” for its opening issue.⁷⁰ Committed to the “emancipation of youth” and to its “irreplaceable intrinsic

value (*Eigenwert*) and beauty,” the journal strove for nothing less than a *Jugendkulturmampf* (culture war of youth) that would free the young generation from the lethargy and “realism” of the adult world.⁷¹ Yet, the journal claimed to reject only the world of the adults, not the world of the past: “We young people are more interested in the ‘once upon a time’ and in the ‘it shall be’ than in the ‘it is,’” the eighteen-year-old editor of the journal wrote in 1910.⁷² Under the guidance of the Jewish educator Siegfried Bernfeld and the German education reformer and founder of “free-schools,” Gustav Wyneken, *Der Anfang* proclaimed a new idealism that was both a romanticism and a genuine idealism of the not-yet: “From the heights of its not-yet-standing-there, youth seeks to determine its life,” one of the contributors wrote in a 1913 issue. This idealism, he continues, is not the empty idealism of academic philosophers, but one of “inner value,” “normative,” and “creating directions and goals.”⁷³

Considering the vast upsurge of youth movements during this period, one can safely agree with George Mosse, who was among the first to have paid attention to the neo-Romantic underpinnings of the Jewish national movement, that “all over Europe the young generation felt the urge to break with the bourgeois world, to revitalize a culture which seemed to have lost its vitality.”⁷⁴ To German Jews, Mosse argues, who, unlike the “real” Germans, did not have a Romantic past to recover, this revitalization meant inevitably an uncomfortable amalgamation of Germanic *völkisch* ideas and Jewish imaginations of a glorious past. But at the same time, it may have been precisely this amalgamation and its consciously transcultural corollaries that distinguished, from its very inception, the Jewish revitalization from its Germanic counterpart. The exclusion from the Germanic return to the past, as Michael Löwy has suggested, offered to the Jewish intellectuals at that time two distinct alternatives: The “re-culturalization” of Judaism through a process of dissimilatory “anamnesis” and the alignment with “revolutionary (especially libertarian) utopias loaded with nostalgia for the past.”⁷⁵

By and large, the Jewish Renaissance opted for both. Unable to re-create a Jewish Walhalla, and more importantly perhaps, unwilling to fully distance itself from the values of enlightenment and emancipation, the Jewish Renaissance—though undoubtedly viewing itself as a

movement of radical youth—continued to echo the inherent ambivalence of modern beginnings. The *Heimatlose* of Hofmannsthal's *Lebenslied*, a poem that the young Martin Buber cherished with a “holy shudder,”⁷⁶ deeply corresponded with the feelings of a young Jewish generation that found itself—often against its will—still remotely rooted in the traditional Jewish world of the *Shtetl*, still familiar with the idiom of Jewish languages, still cognizant, however faintly, of Jewish practices, and still able to experience ambivalence rather than indifference. Experiencing a “terrible path of fragmentation,” as Buber wrote to his Galician grandfather in 1900, the world appeared to these Jewish moderns as a “world of confusion” (*Welt des Wirrsals*): “[I lived] in a fleeting fullness of spirit,” Buber would later remember, “but also without Judaism, without humanity, and without the presence of the divine.”⁷⁷ “*Heimatlos*” (homeless) was the title of an illustration the Jewish graphic artist Ephraim Moshe Lilien, who grew up in poor conditions in the Galician town of Drohobycz before he moved, via Cracow and Vienna, to Munich, was commissioned to do in 1901 for the journal *Ost und West*, the Berlin-based journal for “Modern Judaism” (*Illustrierte Monatsschrift für Modernes Judentum*).⁷⁸ “Ahashver’s Lament,” was the title of a poem on the “wandering Jew” by Ludwig Wihl in the same issue of the journal: “My heart alone has remained young / Despite all change and wandering,” he writes, and he goes on to contrast his wandering with the immobility of the bourgeois world: “But you can hardly move beyond yourselves / For you prefer within the old to stay / As if everything had to continue just this way.”⁷⁹ The curse of wandering so became, to the young poet, simultaneously a virtue of mobility and going forward, even at the cost of confusion and disarray. Destined to never arrive, Ahashver, the figment of age-old anti-Jewish fantasy, was transformed into a symbol of constant innovation, yearning, and of a tragic, yet eternal youth.

To be sure, such internalized stereotypes as the constant wandering and homelessness of the Jews functioned as symbols as much as anti-symbols. Obviously, Lilien’s depictions of homelessness and exile, which almost single-handedly created the popular iconography of Zionism, were less intended to strengthen the virtue of wandering than to glorify the virtue of return.⁸⁰ On the other hand, however, it was the

very *juxtaposition*, or the aesthetic synchronization of place and placelessness, of movement and inertia, of wandering and destination, old and young, old and new, bondage and freedom, that infused the image with inner momentum, offering a total view across the gap of generation and geography. The “old Jew” resting on his cane and entwined in the thorns of *Galut*, one of Lilien’s famous *Leitmotive*, represented not only the counterimage to the “young Jew” turning his back to the old and plowing forward to where the sun rises, but also the feeling of the same profound contradiction and ambivalence, or indeed “betweenness,” that was innate to the very dynamics of modernism. “Culture,” as Martin Buber wrote in an essay for the journal *Der Kunstmwart* of 1901, “develops in contradictions and without uninterrupted continuity. . . .”⁸¹ Great and “culturally formative epochs,” an early commentator on Lilien’s work writes in the same year, are always at the “cross-roads of two antagonistic tendencies . . . , between two far separated cliffs.”⁸² Both writers agree that no epoch was greater in its inner contradictions than the Italian Renaissance, the “rebirth,” as Buber puts it, “of the entire human being.”⁸³

Beginning by Synchronization

This “rebirth” from contradiction may help explain the dialectics of naissance and renaissance, of breaking and restoring the “spell of tradition,” in fin-de-siècle culture. In the conscious act of beginning was reawakened a moment of going back. “Let us be as before,” the young man speaks to his awakening friend in Hermann Bahr’s “Dialogue on Real Life.”⁸⁴ But his older friend reminds him that it was the youngster’s search for “reality” that had separated them: “We are too far apart,” he replies, “to be arm in arm; but not apart far enough to not run against each other. [We are] from the same generation, a beginning and an end that do not want to touch each other.”⁸⁵ The closeness of old and young, as Bahr saw it in this dialogue, constituted also its tragic distance. But beyond the distance, there existed a sense of synchronicity, a simultaneous plurality of ages, or as Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy wrote in 1926, reminiscing about the very phenomenon of youth movements, a “polychronicity” that rendered “countless” the “rebirths”

(*Wiedergeburten*) of the individual: “Every day a new life begins.”⁸⁶ Thus, Georges Barbizon, one of the editors of *The Beginning*, found a program of tempered, rather than radical, innovation in the (Berlin) Secession: “Neither a dull repetition and imitation, nor a blind rejecting and destruction, but a collecting (*Sammeln*), a weaving further of open threads, an enrichment, without forgetting our own individuality. . . .”⁸⁷ The true beginning, then, would not be a beginning of complete rupture but a beginning of synchronization. Likewise, in a poetic study of 1891, Hofmannsthal has his protagonist—a young man of the Renaissance named Andrea—reject at first all that has been and to savor only the present moment before he comes to realize that all moments in his life are bound up with the yesterday he had so boldly erased: “And today—yesterday is all but an empty word. What once has been continues to be forever more.”⁸⁸ Martin Buber, who would later embark on a lifelong friendship with the poet, commented on this line in his first published essay of 1897, reflecting perhaps his own realization “that the yesterday is in our souls and that we cannot escape it.”⁸⁹ Drawn to the “yesterday” that he still felt present in *his* soul, Buber soon thereafter began a highly successful career in recovering and popularizing the heritage of Hasidic lore, whose “unadulterated” (*unverdorben*) and essential teachings he came to consider the “most powerful and most original” of all things the Jewish Diaspora had created: “It is the proclamation of rebirth (*Verkündigung der Neugeburt*), Buber writes in 1908: “There will be no renewal of Judaism that does not carry its elements in itself.”⁹⁰

Inventors in Tradition

Thus Hermann Bahr was not incorrect to question modernity as an age of inventors and radical beginners, writing of the “moderns” what was perhaps unknown to themselves: “They revere tradition. They do not want to rebel against it. They only want to stand upon it. They want to direct the work of their ancestors towards their new age: They want to bring it up to date.”⁹¹

Bringing the past “up to date” was also the program of the journal *Ost und West*, which prided itself, as no publication before, in creating

a new “Jewish solidarity” among the alienated fractions of contemporary Judaism and in bridging—“by pointing to a common past”—the profound cultural division of literally “east and west.” Indeed, the editors were able to promise a “rejuvenated creativity” (*verjüngte Schöpferkraft*) that was both “unencumbered by the templates of tradition” and driven forward by the vital powers of the past: “Long humiliated and held in disdain, the old-Jewish life (*das altjüdische Leben*) rises again to ascend slowly but steadily, and wrapped in the garments of the new age, the steps towards the throne.”⁹² What exactly this “old-Jewish life” comprised remained, of course, of secondary if any significance at all to the editors of the program. It was enough to assure their readers that it would not be tradition in the formal sense, nor a science, or Wissenschaft, that would deal with “dead material”; and that it would not resemble any form of Judaism known to the present, but a Judaism “as it shall be and is already beginning to be.” This, to the editors of a journal that described itself as geared toward “modern Judaism,” was the quintessential (non-)definition of modernity: An age of the future that is in truth the age of a risen past, a freedom from tradition that is in truth a “bringing-up-to-date,” to recall Hermann Bahr; and a creation of distance that is in truth a recognition of a lost lore. In this respect, as Bahr contends, even Otto Wagner, who seemed most concerned with a modern style *ab initio*, was by no means “an innovator out of the blue sky,” but “stood firmly in our old tradition, which to the architects of the *Ringstraße* had been completely lost.”⁹³ Once again, what this long-lost “old tradition” would be we do not learn from Bahr. But if we consider that the architecture of the Vienna *Ringstraße* had largely been an effort to establish continuity through the aesthetics of historicism, that it conceived of itself as a “Renaissance of the Renaissance,” to paraphrase Otto Wagner’s great opponent Gottfried Semper,⁹⁴ we can better appreciate Bahr’s point: that the naissance of the Renaissance was truer to the Renaissance spirit than its renaissance; that new beginnings, even if they are imagined, do more justice to tradition than historicist preservation; that distance is truer to “our past” than continuity. Or, as Otto Wagner himself wrote in 1898: that only “by the thrust of modernity tradition received its true value.”⁹⁵

The True Keepers of the Past

Not without irony, then, especially if we consider Sternberger's polemic against *Jugendstil*, the moderns emerge as the "true" keepers of the past. Unlike in the *Ringstraße* quest for continuity, which mirrored the outward essence of the Habsburg world of values—only to be compared by Adolf Loos to a Potemkin-like city⁹⁶—the value of tradition came to be vouchsafed not by those from within but by those from without: from resistance rather than devotion. This paradox, which so fascinated Hermann Bahr, appears perfectly reasonable to us if we recall Gadamer's hermeneutics of distance and its remarkable preincarnation in Rosenzweig's "new learning." It is no longer astonishing to juxtapose the desire for distance with the desire for home, and the yearning for youth with the yearning for the ancient, nor is it surprising to find staunchly classicist sensibilities entwined in neo-Romantic manifestos. The old Hegelian motif of preservation through destruction, of return by alienation, holds true also of the fin-de-siècle feeling.

A case in point would be Eugen Diederichs' 1900 program of publishing, *Zur Jahrhundertwende* (For the Turn of the Century). Diederichs, who founded his publishing house in Florence, the cradle of the Italian Renaissance, in 1896 and would later, among many other projects, create a series of monographs on "The Age of the Renaissance" under the editorship of Marie Herzfeld, unabashedly considered himself to be the "leading publisher of neo-Romanticism."⁹⁷ But neo-Romanticism, for Diederichs, was not to be confused with the "direction of decadence" that the literature of "primitive" romanticism had entered upon. "The Romantics at the beginning of the nineteenth century fought against the cold sleekness of antiquity and believed to have found in the Middle Ages, to which they returned in lore and legend, the source of natural humankind," Diederichs writes in the announcement: "We moderns, however, search for our ideals in the age where the forces of a people burst forth from the natures of humanism."⁹⁸ It is the age of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that Diederichs has in mind, the age of Paracelsus and Dürer, the age of the "northern" Renaissance. From the "heads of scholars," this Renaissance must be brought to the "people"—no longer "dead knowledge" it

shall be, but “art.” The true neo-Romantic, rejecting, as Nietzsche did, the “philistines of *Bildung*,” seeks to return to the “naturalness, authenticity, art and joy of being” of the Renaissance man. Through Nietzsche, Diederichs also found his way to the classic past. “We have returned through Nietzsche to the Renaissance,” he writes in a letter to the philologist Otto Jimmisch, “and whoever engages in the Renaissance, will also inevitably arrive at antiquity.”⁹⁹ In the reaching back of neo-Romanticism to its ancient ideals, Diederichs hoped to help prepare a “new German culture,”¹⁰⁰ a “New Renaissance,” as another of his publishing programs of 1900 promised,¹⁰¹ and a “new idealism” (*Neuidealismus*), a “new will” (*neues Wollen*) that would speedily translate itself into action.¹⁰² To “awaken creativity” in the present youth, to liberate its “imagination,” and to recover the “instinctual life of the child” from a *Wissenschaft* that had divorced itself from the vitality of ideas, was Diederichs’ program of 1904.¹⁰³ A “spiritual rebirth” (*geistige Wiedergeburt*) stood at the center of Diederichs’ marketing strategy in the fall of 1902.¹⁰⁴

It is striking, yet also characteristic of the period, to what extent Diederichs’ publishing house contributed to the imagination and dissemination of a renaissance that was as Germanic as it was Italianate, as romanticist as it was classicist, as progressive as it was retrospective, and as devotional as it was rebellious: “I felt that here a heretic posed his I against the world,” Diederichs remembers the founding moment of his publishing company, while standing at the Malatesta temple of Rimini.¹⁰⁵ The same Diederichs, who in 1896 considered Florence his “second home,” almost, as he recalls, “as if I had already lived there once during the age of the Medici,”¹⁰⁶ could invoke, in 1911, a regeneration of a “conscious feeling of race,” a return to “heroic life” of the people of “poets and thinkers,” and a turning away from the apathetic, “paper German” (*papierdeutsch*) culture of the past; a recovery of Rembrandt’s and Goethe’s “seeing eye,” and, at the same time, a reaffirmation of Kant’s enlightened “self-thinker.”¹⁰⁷ When Martin Buber, in 1907, contemplated the publication of the collection *Ecstatic Confessions*, he turned to Diederichs, with whom he had enjoyed a friendship since 1903: “It seems to me,” he writes in a letter to the publisher, “that this book, which seeks to bring together long lost sources that are of great

significance for the soul of humankind, belongs in your publishing house.”¹⁰⁸ Diederichs agreed, and two years later, the book appeared with great success. In its introduction, “Ecstasy and Confession,” Buber compared the ecstatic experience of the mystic, an experience beyond time and free of shackles like eternity itself (*zeit- und fessellos wie die Ewigkeit*), to an act of “re-creation” (*Neugezeugtwerden*) and “rebirth” (*Wiedergeburt*) that would bring back “unity” to the “I” and reflect nothing less than the “primordial experience of the world-spirit.”¹⁰⁹

Renaissancism

Diederichs’ idiosyncratic renaissancism reflects perfectly well the capricious relationship of fin-de-siècle intellectuals to the Italian Renaissance. In many respects, the great end of the nineteenth century was intimately bound up with its romantic beginnings: Stendhal and Michelet celebrated the Italian Renaissance as nothing less than a new spring and awakening of freedom and imagination after a dark winter,¹¹⁰ while Burckhardt found in the Renaissance the new “worldliness” and “subjectivity” that would resonate with the new elevation of the individual. Walter Pater, in 1871, stressed the spirit of the Renaissance as a spirit of “reassertion” and “rehabilitation of human nature, the body, the senses, the heart, the intelligence,” replacing the “greyness” of the old ideal with a “happy world of its own creation,” with a new instinct of “self-culture”: “The demand of the intellect is to feel itself alive.”¹¹¹ In 1877, Arthur Gobineau fused this new vitality with racial speculations in a dramatic rendering of what he considered to be the exemplary lives of a superior human species: Savonarola, Cesare Borgia, Michelangelo, and Machiavelli.¹¹² In Nietzsche’s *Antichrist* of 1888, the Italian Renaissance returns as the necessary “transvaluation of Christian values,” a force “to bring the anti-values, the distinguished values, to victory.” The “great struggle” of values and antivalues, which is the struggle of the Renaissance, will become Nietzsche’s struggle as well: “My question,” he writes of the Renaissance, “is her question.”¹¹³

At the peak of the fin-de-siècle, it seems, this question was everyone’s question. Celebrating the Italian Renaissance for its aesthetic heroism

and instinctive suspension of the ethical, a generation of writers and artists feverishly descended upon its “ideal” which, in 1900, the *Wiener Rundschau* described as an “unchained and ruthlessly in all directions firing play of power.”¹¹⁴ Inherently congenial with the premises of *Lebensphilosophie* (philosophy as life), the Renaissance became an object of fascination also for Wilhelm Dilthey, one of Martin Buber’s teachers in Berlin, who looked upon this period as the period of an unprecedented “revolution” (*Umwälzung*) that entailed an “affirmation of life,” an “idealization of the this-worldly” (*Verklärung des Diesseits*), a new appreciation for the “beauty” (*Schönheitsherrlichkeit*) of the natural world, and ultimately, echoing Nietzsche, the “greatest transvaluation of all values” (*größte Umwertung aller Werte*).¹¹⁵ In 1899, however, Julius Hart, an eccentric life-reformer with strong ties to the publisher Diederichs, branded this “Dionysian” renaissancism—of which he himself was not quite innocent—the romanticism of all those “who are always looking back”: “The naïve morality, the primitive egotism of Renaissance-Italy floats in the goblets from which, at the end of the century, the romantics of the classical Walpurgis-night are drinking.”¹¹⁶ Writing in 1904, Samuel Lublinski noted the “angry and sentimental romanticism of the Renaissance” (*zorn- und wehmütige Renaissanceromantik*) of his time,¹¹⁷ and Emil Schaeffer, in an essay for the *Neue Rundschau* of 1905, explained that “those youngsters who—now freed from the shackles of convention—stretched their arms toward nature . . . were bound to seek refuge in the Renaissance and to intoxicate themselves with historical figures whose boundless egos rose above the masses of small-time commoners, happily devouring all fruit from the tree of life.”¹¹⁸ Thomas Mann, writing in 1918, distanced himself with good reason from the “wicked” (*ruchlose*) *Bellezza Begeisterung*, or enthusiasm for beauty, that had captured this generation, calling it a mere desire of the weak for a “Cesare-Borgia-style-of-life,”¹¹⁹ and in an article of 1929, the German literary scholar Walther Rehm, remembered the “hysterical renaissance” around 1900 as a pure “romantization of poison and dagger.”¹²⁰ In short, the fin-de-siècle infatuation with the Italian Renaissance was no secret at its time, and what Hofmannsthal once wrote about Hermann Bahr may have been true for a good many of its troubled protagonists: “He cannot free himself of the Renaissance.”¹²¹

But what made the symbolic memory of the Renaissance so attractive was not only its aesthetic wickedness; it also offered a highly evocative language of liberation that was couched neither in the return to tradition nor in its annihilation, but in a peculiar *tradition of antitradition*. Just as the Renaissance style, as Schorske reminds us, “symbolized to the liberal professorate the emergence of modern secular culture,”¹²² so the Renaissance itself took on an archetypical function of repair in an age that experienced, paradoxically, a crisis of both “conservative” traditionalism and “liberal” resistance to tradition. In this perhaps truly modernist *aporia*, the return to and of the Renaissance enabled the fin-de-siècle renaissancists to express themselves in willful contradictions and transtemporal, as well as transcultural, syntheses. The heroes of the “fruitful decadence,” of which the “New is born,” as Marie Herzfeld wrote in 1896, would not be the “vanishing ones” but the “dissolvers” (*Auflöser*), the “extra-temporal ones” (*Außerzeitliche*), from whose work the “purely human” and “good” would grow.¹²³ The crisis of the “old,” which to many was the crisis of Europe, called for a rehabilitation of the renaissance idea not only for its potential of liberation and suspension of old values, but also for its productive syncretism, its “synthesis of all syntheses,” as Buber later put it.¹²⁴ A response to the “slipping-away” and to the “spell of tradition” alike, fin-de-siècle renaissancism reinstated a new malleability of time and place.

Thus, writing in 1917, Rudolf Pannwitz recorded the yearnings among his compatriots for a new renaissance: “Europe is longing for its new renaissance and the people, or the Ceasar, who will force it onto them.”¹²⁵ But contrary to the Germanic renaissance that would too soon satisfy this longing, Pannwitz envisioned his new renaissance to be “a fusion of our interspersed European half-cultures (*halbkulturen*) with the great oriental classical cultures.”¹²⁶ Less than a year later, Konrad Burdach’s essays on Renaissance and humanism, which were written with a new German humanism in mind, appeared with a dedication to all those “who after the past four years . . . were yearning for the high goals of humankind.”¹²⁷ In 1927, Nicolai Berdyaev, viewing with horror the rise of Stalinism, declared the “end of the Renaissance” in an essay that was published in the ecumenical journal *Die Kreatur* (coedited by Martin Buber), calling for “repentance and purification,” for a

“return (*Umkehr*) to the past epochs of creativity,” which would yield a “rebirth” after the present crisis.¹²⁸ In January 1939, across the Atlantic, the *Menorah Journal* ran a call “To a Renaissance” in an effort defeat the Nazi ideology and to reaffirm, at the same time, Jewish self-respect. “Protests and charities are not enough,” the editor writes about the work to be done for each individual Jew: “He must receive anew—that is, must reinterpret—his historic heritage.”¹²⁹ In a series of lectures on the Renaissance held between 1950 and 1952, when Europe was recovering from its darkest age, Ernst Bloch found the language to speak again of a time of “spring” and a “time of turning” (*Zeit der Wende*), where “one society declines and another one arises,” which to him, was the meaning of a “progressive revolution.”¹³⁰

III

Reviving Rinascimento

Here we can return to the Jewish Renaissance, which, as we can now see, belongs not only to the *Weltgefühl* of fin-de-siècle renaissancism and its feeling of conscious ambivalence, but also to the timeless idiom of *Wendezzeit* and “holy spring.” When, in 1901, Martin Buber published his essay on the “Jewish Renaissance” in the first issue of *Ost und West*, he took for granted that renaissance was an existing sentiment of the time, claiming authorship neither to the expression nor to its ideas.¹³¹ Like the term “Zionism,” which had been coined in 1893 by the Viennese writer Nathan Birnbaum to describe a movement already in full bloom, Buber’s concept of “Jewish Renaissance” claimed to only articulate the prevalent self-awareness of contemporary German Jewry. “We live in a period of cultural germination (*Epoche der Kulturturkime*),” Buber wrote, in the “awakening” of an “artistic feeling” that infuses “everyday life with a sense of beauty,” and in an assertion of national individuality where the “specific qualities of an ethnic group” are “condensed” to break forth creatively and productively, without desire to expand or possess territories: an awakening of “national instincts.”¹³²

Given the early history of Zionism and its precursors in the nineteenth century, such language of cultural awakening and national renewal was of course by no means Buber's invention. Moses Hess believed that a "striving for rebirth" (*Streben nach Wiedergeburt*) had emerged in modern Judaism like never before, a rebirth of the national body and of what he termed in an essay of 1862 the "living religion" (*lebendige Religion*) of Judaism.¹³³ This "rejuvenation" of the people and its religion, as Hess wrote in another place, reflecting upon a "new" Jewish messianism modeled after Feuerbach's *Philosophy of the Future* of 1843, would be nothing less than a complete "creating anew" (*Neuschaffung*).¹³⁴ Likewise, and as we have seen in the previous chapter, the "capacity for rejuvenation after having lived through the frailties of old age," constituted for Heinrich Graetz the proof for the "ineradicable persistence of the Jewish people."¹³⁵ Writing in 1887, Graetz finally credited his own generation with living that very proof: "We ourselves belong to the rejuvenated, released from the fetters of a spiritual death."¹³⁶ Nathan Birnbaum, who would later become a *Baal Teshuvah* in the traditional sense, freely employed such images as "re-creation" (*Neugestaltung*) or "process of re-vitalization" (*Wiederbelebungsprozess*) in his 1884 pamphlet *Assimilationssucht* (Addiction to Assimilation).¹³⁷ In 1893, Birnbaum entitled his famous appeal to the Jews of German-speaking Europe "National Rebirth."¹³⁸ Ahad Ha-am, in his debut essay of 1889, "*Lo zeh ha-derekh*," took issue with the language of "political redemption" as an "appendage" (*tiflab*) to "*tchiyat ha-metim*," or "resurrection of the dead," calling instead for a "*tchiyat ha-levavot*," a "resurrection of the hearts."¹³⁹ Micha Berdichevski, writing in 1889, formulated a program for the "revival of language" (*tchiyat ha-safa*) that would become constitutive for the "Hebrew Renaissance."¹⁴⁰ A decade later, he proclaimed a "resurrection of the people" (*tchiyat ha-am*) that would depend on a radical revolution.¹⁴¹ Theodor Herzl, in his *Judenstaat* of 1896, praised his century for having "ushered in a delightful renaissance (*köstliche Renaissance*)" and looked forward to a time when the "Maccabees would rise again."¹⁴² Only a year later, Max Nordau spoke of a "revivification of Jewish people-hood" (*Wiederbelebung des jüdischen Volkstums*), which in 1898 he likened to the age of the Italian Risorgimento and to the fulfillment of Dante's "*erhabene Träume*" (sub-

lime dreams), and which in 1899 he described as nothing short of a rise from the dead: “We felt like in a dream, like brothers, who after a thousand years buried in a grave, suddenly were flesh and blood again. . . .”¹⁴³

In short, by the time Buber published his call for a Jewish Renaissance, the jargon of rebirth in its many colorations was so well established that it would seem moot to single out his renaissance as anything but another articulation of what most historians have long determined as the dynamics of national reawakenings. Yet, despite its obvious participation in the spirit of national awakenings, Buber’s idea of a Jewish Renaissance also considered itself “superior” to the goals of mere nationalism. “Not the urge for possession and territorial expansion seeks to come to life, but an aspect of individuality: It is a self-reflection (*Selbstbesinnung*) of the national souls.”¹⁴⁴ Drawing a distinction that is reminiscent of Simon Dubnow’s program of “national individualism” as opposed to “national egotism,”¹⁴⁵ Buber understood national reawakening primarily as an inward process, whose turning outward would be aesthetic rather than political. In the Jewish national movement, as Buber saw it, a “new culture of beauty” would reveal itself to the people, a “blending of general and national culture,” and a “human life” that would be “saturated with beauty and benevolent power.”¹⁴⁶ Encouraged by the new developments of “aesthetic youth education” and by the “socialization of art,” both of which were programmatic features of the fin-de-siècle period,¹⁴⁷ Buber’s renaissance, not unlike Otto Wagner’s naissance of modern style, claimed to be a “creating anew” (*Neuschaffen*) rather than “return” (*Rückkehr*), a celebration of the “becoming” (*das Werdende*) rather than an adoration of the “rigid monuments of protective tradition” (*starre Denkmäler schützender Tradition*).¹⁴⁸ “In the confusion of our days,” Buber writes in another essay of 1901, “. . . there have emerged men in our midst, who at the time when the ax is laid upon the roots and new life is breaking from the earth, proclaim the living fire and prepare the way to the becoming future.”¹⁴⁹ So new will this renaissance be that its culture will no longer resemble an “image of human hand” but a “newborn creature” (*neugeborenes Wesen*) that “cannot be compared to any existing thing.”¹⁵⁰ Here, then, Buber’s renaissance is not a rebirth but a truly “new birth”

(*neue Geburt*), a spontaneous breaking forth of what Buber defines as “culture” over and against “civilization.” While civilization seeks to “preserve and alleviate” human life, culture strives for its “elevation” and “perfection” (*Veredelung*). While civilization seeks “purpose” (*Nützlichkeit*), culture seeks “beauty” (*Schönheit*). While civilization is hostile to innovation, culture creates beyond its own will: “New and unexpected things emerge from its hands and become more powerful than [the culture that forms them].”¹⁵¹ Renaissance, for Buber, was—and would be again—one such unexpected thing: “The mystery of the New, the rich sense of discovery, the free life of venture and overflowing joy of creativity dominate this age.”¹⁵²

To the Jewish Renaissance, then, there was a Renaissance to emulate, and indeed to resurrect: The “great age of the Quattrocento,” which Buber, then a student of art history in Vienna, who was surely familiar with Jacob Burckhardt’s seminal essay on the Italian Renaissance, also calls “the crown of all historical ages.”¹⁵³ But this emulation, if it claimed truthfulness to its Italian ideal type, could neither be return nor mere revival. If culture emerges unexpectedly, it cannot be a scripted process. Hence, Jewish Renaissance, as Buber hopes to define the term, *cannot* mean “return to the old traditions of feeling (*Gefühls-Traditionen*) that are rooted in folklore.” Such return, Buber admonishes his readers, would be unworthy of the “noble name ‘Renaissance.’” Not return, but rebirth. We have to “dig deeper,” Buber writes, “if we want to understand the future of our people.”¹⁵⁴

A New Illumination

It was in the course of “digging deeper” that Buber recovered the history of Hasidism. Still treated as a “symptom of disease” (*krankhafte Erscheinung*) in his 1901 manifesto on Jewish Renaissance, Hasidism advanced to a “renewal of the Jewish primal idea” in his 1903 essay on Renaissance and movement.¹⁵⁵ In Hasidism, Buber found prefigured what the struggle of the fin-de-siècle Jewish Renaissance was about to accomplish: The “transformation of latent energies into active ones.”¹⁵⁶ A “liberation of feeling,” Hasidism, not unlike Stendhal’s *germes féconds*, wrestled from “beneath the surface” (*Untergrund*) against what

Buber called the “tyranny of the Law” (*Zwingherrschaft des Gesetzes*), against “Rabbinism” and “Jewish scholasticism.”¹⁵⁷ But it was not the revolutionary character of the movement that attracted Buber: It was not its radical rejection of tradition but its “genuine renewal.”

In an essay on Hasidism of 1935, Buber indeed reflected upon what it means to “renew”—not necessarily to renew *something*, but to renew as an *activity*. Most social movements, he argues, perhaps not without some remorse about his own youthful rebelliousness, renew by laying “the axe to the root of the existing order.” Many religious renewals, on the other hand, such as early Christianity, claim to restore an “original content,” while others, such as Reform Judaism, separate the essential from the unessential. But Hasidism, Buber believes, proceeded differently: It renewed through a “new illumination” of existing traditions, renewing thus their “vitality” without changing their substance. “Here no separation takes place,” Buber writes, “although here too the battle between the old and the new must break out. . . .”¹⁵⁸ In fact, the strength of the movement lay precisely in this “measuring of two forces against each other, the moving force and the conserving force.”¹⁵⁹ In this ambivalence, Hasidism was able to illuminate the old more deeply through the new. Unlike the later reformers, its founders, as Buber writes in 1903, “did not negate the old forms, but gave them a new sense and thus liberated them.”¹⁶⁰

Likewise, the “Jewish Renaissance,” as Buber understood it, was born not from the rejection of tradition but from its resuscitation or respirtualization. It was a conscious re-naissance, not an aestheticist naissance. “When asked what gave us the right to call the essence of our movement a ‘Renaissance,’” Buber writes in an essay on the Hebrew language in 1909, “we find ourselves reaching back to our antiquity, to the great classical period of our tribe, in quite the same fashion as the Italians of the fourteenth century reached back to the classical period of their tribe, only that our doing so is not limited to the realm of culture but extended to the realm of the entire national life.”¹⁶¹ Greater, in this respect, than the Italian Renaissance, and following the example of Hasidism, which functioned as its proto-Renaissance, the Jewish Renaissance would be a “rebirth of the complete human being from the dialectical narrowness of Scholasticism,” a sudden leap

from “mediaeval asceticism” into a “broad and soulful appreciation of nature,” “feeling of life,” and “freedom of individuality.”¹⁶²

These, of course, were the exact conceptual categories by which Jacob Burckhardt defined the “completion,” and “perfection” (*Vollendung*) of the individual in Renaissance Italy, an era, which he admired as the “mother closest to our civilization” and “guide for our time.” Like Hegel, Burckhardt saw in the new spirit of worldliness (*Weltlichkeit*) and subjective religiosity not only “in complete opposition to the Middle Ages” but also proof that the European spirit, trammelled by the Church, was “still alive.”¹⁶³ Conversely, Buber, who praised Burckhardt’s *Kultur der Renaissance* in its timely 1949 Hebrew edition as a book that “does not age,” believed to have found proof that the Jewish spirit was still alive beneath the crust of “rabbinism,” and that after two centuries of self-denial and assimilation, the Jewish Renaissance would be nothing less than the “resurrection from semi-life to life.”¹⁶⁴

Renewing Religiosity

Burckhardt, of course, did not entirely discard the Middle Ages from his system of history, yet, he still discounted them, perhaps in an effort of contrast, and probably following Michelet, as an age of “degenerate, tyrannically enforced church-doctrine” (*ausgeartete, tyrannisch behauptete Kirchenlehre*), undermined only by scattered islets of individual mysticism.¹⁶⁵ A “veil of belief, childlike superstition, and delusion,” he wrote in a passage that would become a credo for many, was woven over the Middle Ages under whose “crust” there continued, however, a surviving stream of “true religiosity” (*echte Religiosität*).¹⁶⁶

In a quite similar fashion, Buber called the “middle age” dividing the classical spirit from its rebirth a static “era of Law” (*Gesetzesära*), the age of renaissance an “era of liberation” (*Befreiungsära*).¹⁶⁷ In a speech of 1912, Buber adopted a tripartite view of history, typical of nineteenth century historicism, distinguishing a period of “Jewish prehistory” (*jüdische Vorzeit*), where creativity was at its peak, a period of Galut (Middle Ages) that brought “social disease” and “alienation,” and a period of “resurrection,” which he interpreted as the return of the “creative ones.”¹⁶⁸ But this “return” was possible only because history, as

Buber writes echoing once more Burckhardt, knows “rivers of ethnic life that . . . continue underground, only to break forth thousands of years later.”¹⁶⁹ Fusing Burckhardt’s “true religiosity” with Georg Simmel’s writings on religion, Buber equaled the “renewal of Judaism” with a “renewal of Jewish religiosity,” which would be diametrically opposed to the idea of “religion.”¹⁷⁰ Encompassing “the totality of rituals and doctrines,” the yoke of the *mitzvot*, religion is concerned with “organization” and stability, whereas genuine religiosity, void of all descriptive content, is to be conceived as an unconditional “act,” as “realization of Divine freedom.” Religiosity means “activity” of the individual, creativity, and future. Religion demands collective “passivity,” the preservation of a past.¹⁷¹ At its low point of stability, Buber called religion even “untrue,” just as inertia and “undecidedness,” for Buber, equaled “sin.”¹⁷²

Renaissance as Kinesis

“Renewal,” then, for Buber, was a term intimately linked to the conception of spontaneous “culture” as opposed to regulated “civilization.”¹⁷³ It was conceived as a venture into a new fragility that had little in common with the yearning for a secure, premodern existence. Just as Buber’s Quattrocento was an age not of “return” to, not even “recovery” of the classic past, but a “rebirth of the whole human being,” so the Jewish Renaissance resisted the nostalgic longing for past times and forms, for it had to be filled with a “sense of the to-come,” as in the great “John the Baptist natures” (*Johannes-Naturen*): It was a reclamation of “free-acting life” (*freithätiges Leben*), a discovery of “new lands” rather than a simple homecoming; an emancipation from the history of historians and a return to the “self-written history of autonomy” (*Selbständigkeit-Geschichte*); it constituted a “program of action” that was not the program of a political party “but the unwritten program of a movement.”¹⁷⁴

Anticipating in this respect Cassirer’s or Gombrich’s dynamic interpretation of the Renaissance, Buber thinks of the Jewish Renaissance not as a period in time but as an unscripted doing. “The Jewish movement,” he writes in an essay of 1903, “is in its last analysis the striving

for a freer and more perfected activity (*Betätigung*) of the re-awakened national forces.”¹⁷⁵ Where the “idea” serves as the nation’s “consciousness,” renaissance and movement serve as the nation’s “will.” But one can only speak of a movement, as Buber maintains, if the movement goes “upward” (*Aufwärtsbewegung*), if “forces” that had once been suppressed, “become free” and “fertilized”: “Thus they move, and move the world.”¹⁷⁶ Moving forward and “upward” become the new directives of a movement whose inherent logic and self-legitimation point into exactly the opposite direction—into a going back. It is this “inversion” of the renaissance that gives Buber’s renaissance—not unlike Kierkegaard’s forward repetition—the very momentum it claims for itself.

Kierkegaard spoke of kinesis to recapture the “true” Aristotelian concept of a movement in transition, a movement of true becoming: “[T]ransition becomes.”¹⁷⁷ It is the movement from possibility to actuality, but not as in the realm of logic, where movement must remain a “silent” between; rather, it is a movement posited by the sphere of freedom, where “possibility remains and actuality emerges as transcendence.”¹⁷⁸ True movement, to Kierkegaard, is a movement that cannot come to a halt in actuality, for then it would lose the possibility of itself, its own momentum, just as true repetition cannot be a going back, cannot be what Kierkegaard calls recollection in the Greek sense, because then it would be a mere “consolation” of freedom, but not freedom as it moves toward the infinite. In contrast to the Greeks, who, in times of crisis, sought tranquility in the past, the “modern view,” that Kierkegaard holds, seeks in crisis a “true repetition forward.”¹⁷⁹ Repetition, for Kierkegaard, is paradoxically the movement forward that enables the shattered I, the I that the moderns of the fin-de-siècle would deem “unrescueable,” to say “I am myself again.” This paradox, which, as we have argued, is inherent to the renaissance idea, may well have informed Buber’s “inverted” renaissance: As an “upward” movement, as a movement in and toward freedom, the Jewish Renaissance cannot be mere recollection, it cannot be a going-back, it cannot be a return to a specific “what.” If it is movement, yet also a resistance to the aimless slipping away of the modern predicament, it must be repetition in the Kierkegaardian sense.

Indeed, Buber's earlier writings seem to reflect Kierkegaard's concern with genuine movement. In *Daniel*, a series of highly expressionist dialogues conceived by his own account in 1909 and published in 1913, Buber invoked the "secret of the personal kinesis" as a "bringing together of meaning and action," or "meaning and being" that would enable the "knowing one" (*den Erkennenden*) to "transform himself into the world and to thus make it actual (*verwirklichen*)."¹⁸⁰ "Transformed, he performs by the movement of his being the secret movement of the world," Buber writes in the dialogue on "polarity": "He lives the life of the world, he does its deed, he works its workings."¹⁸⁰ As in Kierkegaard, Buber conceives of the transformation through crisis as a repenting going back to a new self: "Resolved in transformation, purged (*geläutert*) and transfigured (*verklärt*)," Buber writes about the "great actor," "he actualizes the hero in ever new first-timeness (*Erstmaligkeit*)."¹⁸¹ What Buber's kinesis, then, realizes, is not an end but a beginning: A new first time.

This might explain why Buber, sharing the initial enthusiasm of countless compatriots, greeted the outbreak of the First World War as a crisis with great possibilities of self-recovery. "The Age of Kinesis, into which we have entered," he writes in August 1914, while on vacation in Pescara, Italy, "did not start with this war, it has only become manifest in it."¹⁸² A "new aeon," Buber then believed, had arrived—the aeon of "making actual" (*Verwirklichung*), that would force even those who opposed the war to hear the "thunder of kinesis," to "cast off the familiar, the secure, and the conditional," and to throw themselves into the "abyss of the unconditional," which, for Buber, would be the abyss of a "new birth."¹⁸³ "Incipit vita nova," he writes less than two months later to the philosopher and historian Hans Kohn in Prague, who would become his first biographer.¹⁸⁴ In the course of the same months, Buber cherished the historic "moment" as a "bursting power of the simultaneous," where past and future, and "all times" would melt into the "whole present," into a "musical score" of "tension, urge, and elevation of the living"—into a moment of timelessness: "And as the believers of many ages are present in the crucifixion by Fra Angelico, extracting, by their presence, the event from the course of time," Buber muses, inspired by the work of an early Renaissance artist, "so the timeless (*das Zeitlose*) is near whenever the ages come together in unity."¹⁸⁵

From crisis to kinesis to kairos: With this familiar trope Buber linked himself not only to Kierkegaard and to the emerging school of crisis theology that would dominate the Interwar period, but also to the idea of turning-return, of teshuvah, which doubtlessly formed the traditional ground of his Jewish Renaissance and renewal. In an open letter to the Dutch peace activist Frederik van Eeden, written in October 1914, Buber again described the present time as a moment of “shaking up and reshuffling” (*Aufriütteilung und Umschichtung*), a time not of “gradual transition,” nor of “progress,” but of “leap” (*Sprung*), “turning” (*Wende*), and “transformation” (*Wandlung*).¹⁸⁶ Quoting, as he must, the rabbinic tractate *Berakhot 34b*, Buber compares his German compatriots to the “turning ones” (*die Umkehrenden*), who stand where the righteous cannot. Too, he finds in the “heart of this War the ignition of a great turning about (*Umkehr*), of which I cannot yet speak today.”¹⁸⁷

Return Through Turning

There is, of course, no need to extensively pillory Buber’s war enthusiasm if we consider the context of what Peter Gay once called a “war psychosis” spreading all over Western Europe during the month of August 1914 and grotesquely infecting a host of German and Jewish intellectuals: “The war seemed a release from boredom, an invitation to heroism, a remedy for decadence.”¹⁸⁸ In Buber’s case, this remedy lasted with remarkable tenacity through the spring of 1916, when it seems to have abated under the pressure of his close friend and social revolutionary Gustav Landauer.¹⁸⁹

But even if Buber eventually abandoned his delusional glorification of “power and spirit,” he did not abandon the conceptual pattern that had created it: The idea of renaissance as an act of teshuvah from the midst of crisis. Georg Simmel, in a macabre essay of 1916, mused about the “cultural significance” of the war, invoking a secret “rhythm” of civilization, a constant struggle of “content” against “form,” which at the height of culture would be what it is in everyone’s inner soul: a state of “ongoing crisis,” which was tantamount to the act of ongoing self-purification.¹⁹⁰ The war thus appeared to Simmel and Buber alike

as an epoch of “turning,” of cultural repentance, of rebellion against form, that would, as Buber put it in 1914, free “elemental powers” (*Elementarkräfte*) in all heroic individuals and heroic peoples, powers of an “absolute” action that would not need to know a “what” but only a “how.”¹⁹¹

The absence of a “what” in the liberation of “elemental powers” was by no means coincidental. In a 1910 essay on the Zionist leader Theodor Herzl, whom he likens to an “elementally active one” (*Elementaraktiver*), Buber recalls his personal development from a “doctrinaire” of “content,” whose search for an “essence” and “program” of Judaism was still rooted in a “superficial” heroism of life, to someone whose “people-hood” had “grown,” without specific contents, into his human nature as an “eternal reality.” No longer an “idea” but a “direction,” the “content” and “program” of Judaism, that had occupied the Jewish movement at first, so dissolved into a “sound, a rhythm, a melody of our life.”¹⁹² With astonishingly inventive boldness, Buber credits none other than the overwhelmingly assimilated Herzl with precisely this “elemental,” prereflective, “primal,” and literally naïve Judaism. Ignorant of the “contents” of Judaism, ignorant of its traditions and obligations, ignorant even of its modern cultural dilemmas, Herzl’s “greatness,” according to Buber, lay in his unproblematic, pre-conscious, Jewish “urge” (*Trieb*), an urge only the pure and innocent *Elementaraktive* can experience. Herzl, in a word, was able to act “elementally” precisely *because* of his ignorance and naiveté. To the “problematic” Jew (*Problematiker*), however, who can not claim such primal innocence but must, instead, “overcome” the history of alienation and “fundamental duality” (*Entzweiung*), there is no return to the state of the elementally active: “He does not have access to the naïve, to the primal and elemental,” Buber writes of the “problematic one.” He cannot retrieve such primal innocence—but he can receive “enlightenment” (*Erleuchtung*) by turning, at the time of crisis, his contemplative life into a “life of action.”¹⁹³ The modern returnee, then, can never fully return to the “elemental” condition of his originary self, but he can, by his own action and “kinesis,” *turn*. Where the passive one remains in the sin of inertia, the elementally active “walks in the light even if he errs.”¹⁹⁴

The Mythic Present

It is difficult to ignore a certain tautological character in Buber's "action" and its related concept of "direction."¹⁹⁵ To Buber, despite his tireless efforts to distance himself from the "activist" circles of the Interwar period, being-in-action and being-in-direction were circular values onto themselves. But behind this conscious emptiness of contents also stood a distinct philosophical imperative of restless renovation and, equally so, a *critique* of the neo-Romantic return to forgotten myths, to which belonged, for Buber, the myth of folk culture. Commenting on the educational program of Zionism and its reinvention of folk traditions, Buber in fact chastised the "dreamers of lived experience" (*erlebende Schwärmer*) who sought to reconnect with their past through the "mere reading" of Bialik's poems and the "rote-recitation" (*Absingen*) of Yiddish folk songs, demanding, instead, an "inner re-creation" (*inneres Nachschaffen*) of and "working participation" in the great "contradictions" of the creative process that was Jewish religiosity.¹⁹⁶ Renewing the past, for Buber, so meant *participation* in the past or, as he puts it, a "placing-oneself" (*Sich-Einstellen*) into the creative process.¹⁹⁷ In contrast to the nostalgic longing for a "Golden Age," which he identifies—like Hermann Cohen—as the recurrent motif in "occidental myth," and in opposition to the mytho-phobia of "rigorous Law and rabbinic dialectics," Buber defines myth not as a story from an ancient past but as an "eternal function of the soul."¹⁹⁸ Thus, Buber argues, Jewish myth constitutes not a past at all but an "historical continuity," a "continuity of mythic narration," whose ultimate exemplification is of course the Hasidic tradition.¹⁹⁹ In striking anticipation of Gadamer's "event of passing-on" and his Hegelian definition of the classic, Buber views the continuity of "living myth" as an "eternal relatedness" (*ewiger Zusammenhang*), whose redemptive correlative is the "eternal renewal" (*ewige Erneuerung*).²⁰⁰ Myth, in this way, functions as the subterranean "stream," as the "buried primal ground" (*verschüttetes Urgut*), as the "forgotten direction," or the "inner history" (*innere Geschichte*), from whose memory (*Gedächtnis*) true religiosity can break forth ever anew.²⁰¹ Thus, true religiosity, whose renewal Buber repeatedly advertises, must in itself be an act of memory: "With regard to its inner reality," Buber

writes in 1909, “Jewish religiosity is a memory (*Erinnerung*), a hope, perhaps, but it is not a present.”²⁰²

Leora Batnitzky, who has most skillfully analyzed this passage, rightly placed Buber’s concept of renewal in the vicinity of Heidegger’s renewed philosophical project of “self-realization through recollection,”²⁰³ but she also alludes to the paradoxical fact that Buber’s “memory,” much like Kierkegaard’s and indeed, much like the modern discourse on memory since Bergson, is an inverted one: A memory that is a hope, but not the presence of a completed past. We are reminded of Heinrich Graetz’s remarkable note that Judaism has never been present in its history: It has always been in the past and in the future at once. Never “present,” if presence means the separation of no-longer and not-yet, Judaism is *always* present, if “always present” means the inability to pass. The historical present is thus replaced by a mythic present, or by the same total view of temporality that has enabled history to make turns and renaissances. In classic “counter-historicist” manner, Buber recognizes the Jewish past as “infinite,” as pregnant with futurity and passing-on: Filled with a “shudder of eternity,” the young Jewish “I” experiences, in the process of discovering itself, an “immortality of the soul” and an “immortality of works and deeds” that emerges from the endless past, and it experiences that there is “duration” beyond its own span of life.²⁰⁴

To reexperience this duration, this “subterranean stream” of genuine religiosity, of Judaism as a process of “religious struggle” and “religious creativity,” is what Buber defines as the idea of “renewal.” Unlike the continuity of duration itself, renewal of duration presupposes the rupture in the stream of tradition that is called religion. “Tradition,” Buber writes in the first of his *Three Speeches* of 1909, “is the most noble freedom to a generation that lives it with brightness and sense, but it is the worst kind of slavery to the inheritors who accept it with slow tenacity and inertia.”²⁰⁵ Accordingly, writing in 1934, Buber approached the passing on of tradition through a phenomenology of the new: “Just as a child, is not the sum of its parents, but something that has never been before and cannot be anticipated, so tradition can only be accepted by a new generation if it is *renewed*.”²⁰⁶ Passing on thus cannot be the receiving of a “detachable something” (*ablösbares Etwas*), but must mean the

act of beginning-anew. In his famous 1919 speech “Heruth,” Buber thus distinguishes the mere “joining on” (*Anschluß*) to tradition from a “resumption” (*Wiederaufnahme*) that requires “something originary” (*etwas Ursprüngliches*), distinguishing, in other words, the tradition of continuity from the tradition of distance.²⁰⁷ Genuine “renewal” always requires a return to “first-timeness”; a return to the origin that originates, that is beginning and beginning-again at once.

Renaissance and Reform

Buber’s concept of renewal and renaissance thus differed considerably from the discourse of gradual reformation. “[B]y renewal,” Buber writes in another essay of 1909, “I do not mean anything gradual, an accumulation of small changes, but something sudden and awe-some; not continuation and improvement, but return and revolution.”²⁰⁸ Sharing with the ideologues of Zionism, as well as with the generally non-Zionist exponents of German-Jewish neo-Orthodoxy, the bitter distaste for the liberal and assimilatory perspectives of German Reform Judaism, Buber consequently rejected the idea of reform as “under-national,” calling its adherents in an open letter to Hermann Cohen a “characterless (*artlos*), memory-less, and unsubstantial marginal brood (*substanzloses Randgezücht*).”²⁰⁹

What provoked, in all likelihood, such a naughty attack was not only Buber’s commitment to nationalism, but also his awareness that the language of reform seemed precariously close to his own. Consider only Abraham Geiger’s case for a “new” reform of 1837, which claimed to differ from the “mere casting off of all that is cumbersome”: “The call for reform is now a different one: a transformed, new total form (*Gestalt*), a rejuvenated life, and forms that are saturated with and penetrated by the spirit! The difficult and the easy, the whole and the part, shall have meaning and significance, shall elevate the spirit, warm the heart, and bear on the entire expression of vitality.”²¹⁰ When viewed from its rhetorical arsenal, Geiger’s idea of a “new” reform as a “rejuvenation” of life and respiritualization of tradition was a clear premonition of Buber’s program of “renewal.” But judging the nineteenth century movement of reform and its parallel movement of Wissenschaft

by its fruits—which were the fruits of overwhelming assimilation—Buber dismissed the reformers as a “pale and weak” group of assimilationists, misled by the European enlightenment, and hardly worth a refutation.²¹¹

When, in 1909, Buber took issue with Moritz Lazarus’s posthumously published pamphlet *Renewal of Judaism*, it was primarily to reinforce the difference between “reform” and “renaissance.” Lazarus had argued that true reform could only be achieved through the “revival” and “real introduction” (*wirkliche Einführung*) of “prophetic Judaism,” a cliché that too closely resembled Buber’s own.²¹² Accordingly, Lazarus wrote of his plan of “renewal”: “What is necessary is not to create anything new but to reclaim the old, true, and eternal within Judaism”²¹³—yet another cliché that had been exhausted ad nauseam by earlier reformers, above all Geiger: “It is precisely the position of Reform that one must indeed value the kernel in its full worth, but can access it only through shucking the husk.”²¹⁴ True “reform,” or “purification” of Judaism, therefore, meant also for Lazarus a renewal of a spirit lost in an interim period of “petrification” by which he intended the solidification of Halakhah. The “renewed” religion, by contrast, would no longer be about laws but about the “spirit of the Law,” or, in Lazarus’s words, the “true” and “innermost” and “practical” “fulfillment” (*Erfüllung*) of the Law.²¹⁵

If we call to mind a fragment on the “Psychology of the Renaissance” that Buber seems to have written in preparation for his dissertation at about 1900, we might be in a better position to understand his vehement reaction to Lazarus. In the fragment, which has yet to be fully published, Buber sharply contrasts the “knowing ones” (*die Erken-nenden*) with the “fulfilling ones” (*die Erfüllenden*): “The knowing ones,” he writes, “have no relationship to the ideal, for they only relate to it when it has ceased to be an ideal. . . . The knowing ones explore and understand the fulfilled ideal to pass it on as a past development.”²¹⁶ To the knowing ones, the “ideal”—which Buber does not further define—has become “material,” an object that belongs as object already to the past. “What is essential is lived in the present, objects in the past,” Buber would later write in *I and Thou*.²¹⁷ Where the “knowing ones” can handle only the passive form, the “dead” ideal, the “fulfilling

ones,” whom Buber also likens to the “baptizers” (*Täufer*), artists, and redeemers (*Erlöser*), are the ones to “create” (*schaffen*) and “live” (*leben*) the ideal: “In the fulfilling ones,” Buber continues, “[the ideal] is represented in its entire purity, in the clarity of action, fulfilling and destroying itself.”²¹⁸ It was the nature of these creating “fulfilling ones” and “John-the-Baptist” characters that stood out in Buber’s Jewish Renaissance of 1901. More than thirty years later, speaking at the reopened Frankfurt Lehrhaus, Buber still invoked the true “teaching” of Judaism as an “action” that, unlike activism for action’s sake, meant a “life in fulfillment” (*Leben in der Erfüllung*).²¹⁹

Buber’s all but allergic reaction to Lazarus’s program of “fulfillment,” then, must be seen in the light of his own claims to the term. In an unusually confrontational manner, Buber charged Lazarus with a “rationalization of faith, simplification of dogma, and relaxation of law.” He accused him of negation for the sake of negation and of creating an only “more European” and more “presentable” (*salonfähig*) version of Judaism in the guise of universal ethics.²²⁰ Buber’s own renewed Judaism, however, claimed to be exactly the opposite: intensification instead of relaxation, “Oriental” instead of European, and “authentic” instead of assimilated. An irreconcilable rift opened between the creative-active “*Urjude*” (authentic Jew) and the “destructive”-passive “*Galuthjude*” (Jew of exile) that articulated itself in such simplistic categories as “pure” and “impure,” “free” and “unfree,” and “productive and unproductive.” If unity was ever to be restored, Buber admonishes, then only through the “ejection of the negative” (*Ausstoßung des Negativen*) and, invoking a familiar New Testament motif, the expulsion of the “hagglers” from the temple.²²¹

In Buber’s world of “renewal,” then, the “authentic” seekers of unity are chosen to separate—precisely as the despised reformers from time immemorial—the dross from the gold. The secret “inner history” demands for the “pure and eternal in tradition” to be separated from the “turbid and temporal”; it calls for the Herculean task to separate the “suppressed vitality” from the “ruling dead matter.” If “fulfillment” of tradition is the task of genuine renewal, then this fulfillment, as Buber, writes, must be in truth “choosing fulfillment” (*wählende Erfüllung*): “That it is choosing and negating at once—this makes for its revolution-

ary character.”²²² Thus, already in his 1901 manifesto on a Jewish Renaissance, Buber announced the preparatory work required: “Many a source of disease we will have to remove, many an obstacle we will have to subdue, before we shall be ready for the rebirth of the Jewish people.”²²³ As late as 1943, in a Hebrew essay on the “Regeneration of a People,” Buber saw this very “principle of selection” endangered by an uncontrolled influx of, as it were, “un-regenerated” Jews: “The steady fortresses of regeneration have been undermined by a loose, amorphous, and for the most part unmalleable [*unbildsam*], or hardly malleable element.”²²⁴ This “element” were the refugees from Europe, who had either been too traditional or too assimilated, or perhaps simply too traumatized to join in the project of a great Jewish Awakening. In the end, Buber wrote, the future of the regeneration will depend on the “balance of forces” between the “regenerating nucleus and the resisting strata.”²²⁵

The Absence of the Law

It was this very notion of a “selective principle” that Jacob Rosenheim, a vocal spokesman of German-Jewish neo-Orthodoxy and, as Mordechai Breuer put it, “enthusiastic admirer of Samson Raphael Hirsch and his teachings,”²²⁶ rejected as “*Teil-Judentum*,” or “partial Judaism.” In a 1917 essay, Rosenheim harshly criticized Buber for his selective use of the Jewish experience, for reducing Judaism to “one third” of its history, and for his antirational addiction to “unity” (*Einheitssehnsucht*) that resulted in Buber’s “fatal one-sidedness.”²²⁷ Lazarus, by contrast, though another “alienated” Jew for Rosenheim, had at least appreciated the heritage and logic of Halakhah; “Buber, however,” continued Rosenheim, “intoxicated by his *Teil-Judentum* and his battle theory, approached it without true understanding.”²²⁸ In the last analysis, Rosenheim thought, Buber was seduced by “Paulinic theology.”

What Rosenheim observed was only to be reiterated about six years later in Buber’s famous correspondence with Franz Rosenzweig, and then in an ongoing revelation-and-law controversy that still creates a rift among contemporary scholars.²²⁹ In his famous piece “*Die Bauleute*” (Builders), Rosenzweig drew attention to the fact that the “Problem of Law” in Buber’s earlier speeches had appeared only for the sake of

“systematical completeness” and that Buber did not develop, let alone revise, his initial attitude—or nonattitude—toward Halakhah.²³⁰ In leaping toward the “Law of freedom” (*Gesetz der Freiheit*), Buber’s “liberated Jew” leapt, it seems, over the “age of law” altogether. He dismissed it rather monologically and, with it, as Rosenheim lamented, “two thirds of Judaism.”

In a later exchange on the same subject, Buber extricated himself from a similar criticism by Joachim Prinz, a member of the Berlin Theological Seminary with great sympathies for Zionism (and, later, the American Civil Rights movement), who had commented on the glaring discrepancy of Buber’s demand for a “life in law” and his absence of a demand for life *according* to the law.²³¹ Reviewing his own earlier statements on tradition and Halakhah, Buber reiterated his position that tradition could not be reduced to the passing on of “contents and forms that travel as complete and firm from generation to generation,” adding that it constituted, rather, a “*mode of existence*” (*Existenzweise*) that was “independent” of such specific contents or forms.²³² This “mode of existence,” for Buber, was distinguished precisely by its state of incompleteness, by its not-yet-being a “secure formedness” (*sichere Geformtheit*), by its transitory being in between: “Living tradition is transformation.”²³³ It is neither acceptance of tradition, nor its rejection; rather, it is an “awakening” (*Erwachen*).²³⁴

A Passion for Passing-On

Thus Buber vehemently repudiated what appeared to his critics as Paulinic antinomianism,²³⁵ rejecting, by the same token, the insistence on continuous content in Orthodoxy and the “memory-less” approach of Reform Judaism. Stressing an “awakening” to, rather than acceptance of, tradition, Buber followed, intuitively perhaps, the fault lines between what Aleida Assmann described as the passive memory of “storage” and active memory of “retrieval,” where memory ceases to be an effort to preserve against time to become a “renewal of the remembered.” Hence, in a 1932 address to the Berlin “School of Jewish Youth,” Buber reminded his audience that each generation is a “community of memory” (*Erinnerungsgemeinschaft*), whose continuity was established

not by a “sentimental looking back or nostalgia (*Rücksucht*),” nor by a “mystical” remembrance that would continue “on its own” (*von selber*), but by an “awakening power,” by a *renewal* of the “age-old bond of memory.”²³⁶ In typical Renaissance manner, the continuity of memory so appeared to be grounded in the profound discontinuity of remembrance, or, to speak again with Gadamer, in the productive passing-on through distance. In fact, what Gadamer would call the participation in the “event of passing-on,” Buber anticipated as the “passion for passing-on” (*Leidenschaft des Überliefern*), in which each new generation must remember anew—or “put itself into” (*er-innern*)—the mnemonic objects the previous generation has left behind.²³⁷ Franz Rosenzweig, in his opening address to the Frankfurt Lehrhaus of 1920, had called this “putting-oneself-into” the “other memory,” the memory that was not “boring piety” but a return (*Einkehr*) from the external to the internal, a return that would be, inevitably, a “homecoming” into the “innermost being.”²³⁸ In his 1934 speech on “Teaching and Deed,” Buber directly characterizes the putting-oneself-into the event of passing-on as an “organic” process of transmission (*Übergabe und Übernahme*) that was tantamount to a “creating anew and rebirth.”²³⁹ To be in tradition, thus meant, for Buber, not to live according to what tradition says, but to live in the *mode of transmission* itself, in the mode of remembering, in the mode of repairing anamnesis—in the mode of renaissance.

Here we can reformulate Buber’s critique of traditional (“orthodox”) memory as an argument against the desire for preservation and mere continuity, whereas his dissatisfaction with the liberal (“reform”) approach was its inherent “memorylessness,” or in other words, its failure to make the program of forgetting the condition of remembrance. In neither case, “renewal” seemed possible. In fact, where it gradually reformed, Reform Judaism, in Buber’s view, was all but a relapse into “rabbinism” and “rationalism”; where it expelled the “unessential” and cumbersome, it was all but a selective negation and annihilation of tradition.

Emancipation from Form

Buber’s argument against reform was remarkably consistent with Burckhardt’s dismissal of the Protestant Reformation as progress “not

through positive teachings but negation of a past” (*Negation eines Bis-herigen*): as a “break with *everything historical*” (*Bruch mit allem Historischen*).²⁴⁰ To be sure, Reformation and Reform Judaism emerged from entirely different preconditions, yet the hermeneutic incompatibility of Renaissance and Reform seemed obvious to both Burckhardt and Buber. The historian of the Italian Renaissance looked at the German Reformation as a mere revolt against authorities, a revolt that hindered the free development of art and architecture at that.²⁴¹ In his *Historical Fragments*, Burckhardt defined the Reformation simply as the “belief of all those who prefer not to ‘have to do’ something any more.”²⁴²

It was, then, the inner logic of the Renaissance that demanded, for Burckhardt, a distinction from all other variations of reform. What applied to aesthetics also applied to religion and culture and, ultimately, to the state as a “work of art”: The Renaissance was not a reform of form but the *emancipation* from form and formalism. For this reason, Burckhardt explained the greatness of the Italian Renaissance by the nonexistence of an Italian Reformation. For the same reason, Buber could neither accept the Jewish reformer Lazarus nor fully identify with Ahad Ha-am’s philosophy of “resurrection of the heart,” which, to him, was still steeped in “talmudic problems” and “Maimonidean abstractness.”²⁴³ For Ahad Ha-am, despite his reasoned rejection of religious reform as well as orthodox “Slavery to Scripture,”²⁴⁴ still believed in the *value* of form. That wine in a broken jug spoils was the message of Ahad Ha-am’s well-known parable: there is no “essence” without “form.”²⁴⁵

However, Buber saw in the broken vessels a liberation of essence. Never, he writes in a speech dedicated to the memory of Gustav Landauer, have “specific forms” been the “goal” of a “true renaissance.” To the contrary, if renaissance ever took form, then only because the “thrust” (*Wucht*) of its “renewed human contents . . . shattered the forms of old.”²⁴⁶ This, to Buber, was the true prophetic protest: a protest against the “merely formal,” which was a protest also against the merely static. In opposition to the priestly religion of form, the prophets became “movers of the whole” (*Beweger des Ganzen*).²⁴⁷ They were not, as Hermann Cohen maintained, reformers but revolutionaries in a total sense: “Judaism cannot be renewed by piecemeal,” Buber writes

against his deceased opponent Lazarus, “but only as a whole and unified work.”²⁴⁸ Echoing Landauer’s thoughts on revolution, Buber speaks of a complete “transformation” (*Umgestaltung*) and “forming anew” (*Neugestaltung*) that would lose its momentum and, indeed, its “spirit,” once it became form again.²⁴⁹ The Italian High Renaissance was such an example for Buber: In its striving for ever more perfected form, it produced astounding art, but lost the “unity of its spirit.”²⁵⁰ Likewise, Wilhelm Dilthey understood the “revolutionary” period of the Renaissance as a state of “heightened energy”—as the age of *energeia*: “Not form but force; not limited apperception but will; not the ideal of the limit but the perfection of infinity.”²⁵¹ This, to Dilthey, is the spirit of the Renaissance—and if we are allowed, as Buber writes, to speak of a “content of renewal,” then we accept this content to be something that is not “rigid and finished” (*Starres und Fertiges*), but a “natural tendency of the national spirit,” a striving for form, rather than form itself, an ever “new form” seeking “ever new fulfillment”—a “new feeling of the world (*Weltgefühl*).”²⁵²

Dispersion of the “What”

What emerges, then, as the content of renewal, as the “what” of return, is the momentum of a specific “feeling” toward the world and toward the past, an emotion that is kinesis. If there is “form” to the Jewish Renaissance, then it is the form derived from our “collective memory” (*Volksgedächtnis*), the form passed on in our “inner history,” which is, as Buber insists with a nod to Hermann Cohen, nothing that “has become” (*Gewordenes*) but a “commandment” (*Gebot*) toward the “not-yet-realized.”²⁵³ The form of renaissance, in other words, is once more the not-yet of the past, a dynamic content enveloped in an everchanging *Gestalt*.

Leo Strauss’s quest for the “what” of return, with which this chapter opened, is thus suspended, as in Strauss himself, into the “ought” that seems to come from the past, rendering what has passed a new imperative. The “what” to which all renaissance returns is the “what” that is not yet something, the tradition that has not yet left its momentum of passing-on, the revolution, to paraphrase Landauer, that has not yet

reached its “topia.” Conceiving of tradition as a “mode of existence,” Buber finds refuge from the formness of form in what curiously mirrors Heidegger’s “mode of *Zeitlichkeit*,” where the possibility of time-being (*Zeitsein*) was predicated not upon temporal contents but on the repeatability of the “How.”²⁵⁴ In the return to the “how,” Heidegger found the historical “what is over,” the “what” to which we cannot return, to be finally “dispersed.” In this manner, Heidegger binds repetition (*Wiederholung*) to the handing down or tradition (*Überlieferung*) of *possibilities* rather than actual contents. Unlike in the mythic recurrence of the past, “repetition” does not “bring again” (*Wiederbringen*), but “arises” as a *refusal of the past* from what Heidegger calls a “resolute projection of oneself” (*entschlossenes Sichentwerfen*): It does not repeat what once was but makes a “reciprocal rejoinder (*erwidert*) to the possibility of that existence which-has-been-there.”²⁵⁵ Being in tradition, then, for Heidegger, has nothing in common with being in continuity, nor with the retrieval of a something, but is a *disjunctive response*, a reply, to a past, which is at once “recalled” and “disavowed” (*Widerruf*).²⁵⁶ The process of handing down by repetition so becomes a “mode of resoluteness” in which nothing other is handed down than the *mode of repetition itself*. The self-transmission of this mode Heidegger calls “authentic historicality,” a handing down and repeating that is rooted not in the past but in the future.²⁵⁷ Likewise, Buber’s “memory” is a repetition not of the “what” but of the “how,” a repetition of itself as the act of remembrance.²⁵⁸ Repetition in this sense, repeats repetition. Return returns the “how” of turning.

But it is still a turning. It still resists linear progression, because it resists the mere going-back. It still honors the simultaneity of two opposite movements, which Buber, in *I and Thou*, termed the “turning back” and “turning toward,” a duality of turning that is “at once release and preservation, at once bond and liberation.”²⁵⁹ In the moment of crisis, in the “sickness of our age,” as Buber writes again in *I and Thou*, there is no simple going-further. A culture that simply progresses is a culture that will fall into alienation from itself and, one day, be superseded by another. Mere moving-on is the curse of historicity Strauss diagnosed in the modern predicament. However, there are cultures that become aware of the possibility to turn time and to be “renewed”:

To these cultures, there is no “Beyond” (*Weiter*), much less a “Backward” (*Zurück*), but only the “unheard of return—the breaking through.”²⁶⁰ These are the cultures in which crisis means, as Burckhardt put it, the “culmination of the Existing and the New.”²⁶¹ These are the cultures at the threshold. To stand at and withstand this threshold, to be at the moment of what Heidegger called the “moment of vision,” is Buber’s Shibboleth of Renaissance as a mode of being that is a return—in turning repetition—to oneself: “Following the path of its primal powers, the generation of turning (*Wende*) returns to itself,” he writes in “Heruth.”²⁶² It is a return, of course, as in Kierkegaard and as in the repenting sense of teshuvah, to the “new” self rather than the old, a going back that is possibility, a return that is return to the quasi-innocence of first-timeness—a return that is in its deepest sense a *beginning*.

Emancipated from both old forms and lasting contents, the Jewish Renaissance so returned to the great moment of unformedness that defined the birth of modernism²⁶³ to the moment of radical naissance, which is the moment for which one tradition ends before another begins. Equipped with the “nothing but the empty forms of preparedness,” Franz Rosenzweig’s new learners find their way back to Judaism not by the return to “old books,” to which Strauss had to resort, but by a “new, bookless start,” that would afford them with nothing other than the “opportunity to make a beginning.”²⁶⁴ “Beginning,” Buber writes in a speech of 1928, “is the greatest mode of turning.”²⁶⁵ Conversely, whoever experiences a “complete inner turning” (*Umschwung*) knows that “he can, as it were, begin anew, as if he had been born a second time.”²⁶⁶ A people, as Buber reflects upon the event of *mattan torah* (the giving of the Torah) on Mount Sinai, does not “grow together” from the acceptance of a law but from a “collective beginning anew” (*gemeinsamer Neubeginn*).²⁶⁷ It does not grow together from the shared memory of a shared past but from the shared defiance of completed time. “To make your own beginning” is the message Buber derives from the legacy of Hasidism.²⁶⁸ It is this message that was embedded also in the conscious unfinishedness of Buber’s Jewish Renaissance: “We have called for turning . . . not for completion.”²⁶⁹

Return to the Beginning and Transition

We can now see that Strauss's critique of the modern Jewish Renaissance as a renaissance that had nothing to retrieve but its own modernist desire for beginnings was correct and justified on its own terms, even though Strauss was hardly able to extricate himself from it. There is no "what" to which this renaissance could have returned, because it was the "what" itself from which it sought to turn away. In this respect, the Jewish Renaissance was destined to remain without content, without true "fidelity to tradition," without the faintest sense of obligation to what Strauss had conceived as the "classic past." Of all the returns it brought about, one return seemed to be glaringly absent from its imaginative arsenal: the return to "Judaism" in the traditional sense.

But it may be argued that, rather than being a return to Judaism (however defined), the Jewish Renaissance claimed the mode of a Judaism of return: Conceiving of itself as a "mode of existence," the Jewish Renaissance cherished the action of teshuvalah, the action of renewal, the action of the action, as sufficient guidelines for the *Weltgefühl* it sought to evoke and recover, or, as Hans Kohn wrote in his preface to the Bar-Kokhba volume *Vom Judentum*, quoting Maurice Denis: "A renaissance is produced not mainly by works of perfection, but through the power and unity of an ideal in a vital generation."²⁷⁰ In the "empty forms of preparedness," where form meant nothing but the beginning of its "bare beginnings," to recall Franz Rosenzweig, the Jewish Renaissance reached back and over the crisis of modernity to retrieve not a distant past but a sense of crisis as an origin: to retrieve the very "freshness" and "directness," the tradition before tradition, which Strauss had deemed irretrievable. Thus, the Jewish Renaissance ironically retrieved and reestablished Strauss's most desired being in the middle of the *querelle*, the being in the momentum of Old and New. No less ironically, it was this conscious ambivalence, this fugitive return to the power of return, this imperative of the bare beginning, this most powerful of all illusions, that seems to have carried a generation of young Jews in central Europe through the challenges and changes of the early twentieth century. It advanced, in fact, to a form of intellectual resis-

tance allowing the Berlin writer Alfred Döblin, though estranged from Judaism, to still publish the book *Jüdische Erneuerung* (Jewish Renewal) as late as 1933 and to demand, in light of what was then developing, a “new representation (*Neu-Darstellung*) of Judaism”: “Not regression, but a new people, nay, a new humankind. That is how the ‘people’ begins.”²⁷¹ In the same year, Buber demanded a new phase of Jewish education for the Frankfurt Lehrhaus: the “renewing phase.”²⁷² In September 1933, after Jews in Germany had already been legally branded “undesirables,” Buber addressed the leadership of German Jewry invoking the liturgy of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year: “The day of judgment and renewal has dawned upon us. Today, the world is at its birth.”²⁷³

Three The Unfinishedness of Return

Renaissance and the Reaestheticization of Judaism

Und die gewesenen Dinge werden Ton in seinen Händen sein.

—Martin Buber, *Die Schaffenden, das Volk und die Bewegung*

Sondern um in die Wirklichkeit überzugehen, muß die Kunst Menschen umschaffen.

—Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*

I

The Zionist Artwork

In November 1897, only a few months after the First Zionist Congress, the prominent Viennese writer and critic Hermann Bahr was quoted in Herzl's mouthpiece, *Die Welt*, as a staunch supporter of the new Jewish movement: “Incidentally, I have had the recent opportunity to study the ideas of Zionism closely,” Bahr said in the interview, “and I cannot deny that they have had a powerful effect on me, that their beauty has captured me with a spell of unspeakable magic.” He continued: “I do not care much for political affairs and, therefore, cannot speak to the political significance of Zionism; but as an artist, I can hardly disregard the ideal beauty Zionism represents.”¹

Hermann Bahr’s purely aesthetic evaluation of an emerging movement with political aspirations was neither unusual for his time nor unique in the early Zionist project. When, five years later, the well-established painter Max Liebermann, who had been one of the founders of the Berlin Secession in 1898 and, in 1920, would become president of the Prussian Academy of Arts, was interviewed about the same subject, *Die Welt* quoted him as calling Zionism “something profoundly ideal” (*etwas unerhört Ideales*), whose “moral effect” and “cultural progress” could not yet be fully grasped.² To inflate an otherwise thin comment, the interviewer paraphrased Lieberman, adding that it was the artist in particular, “whether painter or sculptor, poet or com-

poser,” who could see the true “feeling” of Zionism: Where the assimilated Jew was able to see only a “piece of art,” the artist could see the entire “artwork.”³

Given the overwhelming aesthetic disposition of the fin-de-siècle, where art held the promise of a “turning” and “lustrous resurrection,” and the artist was compared, as Ludwig Klages did in 1896, to a “man of deed, general, and hero,”⁴ the invocation of an “ideal beauty” and praise for the Zionist “artwork,” and indeed *Gesamtkunstwerk*,⁵ must have appeared as little more than common parlance of the time—yet such parlance was characteristic also of Zionism’s deepest self-perception. Recent scholarly inquiries established a strong affinity between Zionism and the visual arts,⁶ and it is not inappropriate to look at the formative years of the Zionist movement as a particular variant of what Thomas Mann called *Ästhetenpolitik*, the politics of aesthetes, or to speak with Benjamin, “aesthetic politics.”⁷ Indeed, despite the harsh polemics and inner divisions that existed between the first generation leaders, who were associated with Herzl and Max Nordau, and the young faction of *Kulturisten*, whose program was significantly shaped by the visionary legacy of Ahad Ha-am and the young Martin Buber, (aesthetic) culture and politics were never fully divorced in Zionism. In fact, the relevance of aesthetics for the nascent movement was perfectly evident already to the early Herzl, who, of course, harbored strong artistic feelings himself. As his diaries amply illustrate, “decorative architecture,” “colorful parades,” “artistic festivals,” and “magnificent posters”⁸ belonged as much to the design of a Jewish state as did the organization of labor and the establishment of a bank. “Artists will understand,” Herzl noted in June 1895, “why I who otherwise am known to be a man of reason, had to let grow hyperboles and dreams in between my practical, political and legal explanations like green grass in between grey cobble stones. . . . Yes, artists will understand. But there are too few of them.”⁹

A Culture of Beauty

To increase the number of such artists who could “understand”—to foster a community of Jews with aesthetic sensibilities—may well be

viewed as a core feature of the Jewish Renaissance movement, which emerged alongside the cultural wing of Zionism and not seldom imagined itself as taking the place of “true Zionism.”¹⁰ A critique of what Ahad Ha-am once called the simple and merely physical Zionism of the “rumbling stomachs,”¹¹ the Jewish Renaissance claimed to be both a “higher,” as it were, and a “lower” form of nationalism: “higher” because it placed the emphasis of national regeneration on the rebirth of Jewish “hearts” (*techiyat ha-levarot*) and “lower” because it deemphasized the urgency of a physical return to Eretz Israel and located the origins—if not the consummation—of the Jewish revival in the diaspora. “Galuth is no less than indispensable for the Jewish Renaissance,” wrote Nathan Birnbaum in 1903.¹² Similarly, Martin Buber’s call for *Gegenwartsarbeit*, or immediate work for the present, remained implicitly affirmative of the Jewish diaspora while noting the urgency of a “great and radical education of the people.”¹³ Unlike the utopian *Schwärmer* (enthusiast) whose empty rhetoric led to a stagnation of thought (*Gedankenträgheit*), Buber’s realism of the present allows one to become an agent in the necessary transformation of national life, a transformation (*Umgestaltung*) which, for Buber, signified the “education of a truly new generation.”¹⁴

The primacy of education, *Bildung* in the humanistic sense, and re-education, *Umbildung* in an arguably modernist sense, prevailed both in Buber’s concept of immediate work and in the Jewish Renaissance that it embodied. As this chapter will try to show, Buber’s “greater Zionism,” which he also considered a Zionism of realization (*Verwirklichungszionismus*), and which fully reflected his idea of renaissance, was something like a “*Bildungszionismus*,” a mirror, in many ways, of Enlightenment ideals, contrasting illusion (*Schwärmerei*) with free thought and here-and-now realism, and correcting the romantic worship of the soil with a humanistic yearning for “reborn Jewish culture.” This commitment to humanistic ideas, however, should not obscure how deeply Buber’s Jewish Renaissance was embedded in, and formative for, the nativist *jungjüdische Bewegung* (young Jewish movement) which, as Mark Gelber rather bluntly put it, “subscribed to a *völkisch*-racialist brand of cultural Zionist ideology.”¹⁵ To Buber, whose language at that time seems to suggest just that, *Umbildung* entailed both an intellec-

tual and a national-physical rejuvenation. But it also entailed a sense of movement, a certain unfinishedness and transcendence of boundaries that rendered transformation a value in itself, repudiating thus the very *völkisch* ideology his language seemed so often to invoke.

The prominent role of aesthetics in this project of national reeducation cannot go unnoticed. Indeed, an emerging “culture of beauty,” an awakening “artistic feeling,” an “infusion of everyday life with a sense of beauty,” an attempt at the “aesthetic education of our youth,” and an effort to “socialize art,” were traits Martin Buber considered common to both a humanistic and a Jewish Renaissance.¹⁶ They were traits firmly rooted in the language of aesthetic liberation, in particular Stefan George’s *Blätter für die Kunst*, which strove for the “discovery of ever newer and purer art-heavens,” worshiping art, at the same time, as the “highest expression of a people.”¹⁷ “The national movement, Buber wrote in his own manifesto for a Jewish Renaissance, “is the form in which the new culture of beauty announces itself to our people.”¹⁸

The rise of an “aesthetic-Jewish ideal” and the suffusion of Jewish life with a “new beauty” was the program also of the *Jüdische Verlag*, which Martin Buber helped found together with the poet Berthold Feiwel, the writer Davis Trietsch, and the graphic artist Ephraim Moses Lilien.¹⁹ Similar ideas of a “rejuvenated creativity” (*verjüngte Schöpferkraft*), a new Jewish art that would lend a voice to the Jewish national soul, and a renewed Jewish solidarity forged by the forces of a revitalized culture, characterized the Jewish monthly *Ost und West*, perhaps the single most important vehicle of the Jewish Renaissance movement in Germany.²⁰ We seek a “self-confident, internally firm and holy, true and creative Jewish life that will emerge from the soil of a beautiful mankind . . . ,” the editors of the journal announced in the first issue of 1901.²¹ A year later, the editors stated that though Jewish art had “not yet reached its height,” the number of Jewish artists engaging in Jewish subjects had increased far beyond their own expectations.²²

What constituted “Jewish art” and how the writers of the Jewish Renaissance struggled to define such art cannot be the subject of this inquiry. “How futile it is to debate whether or not there is Jewish art,” Buber recognized in an essay of 1902, maintaining that art cannot be judged by its history but only by its actual “creativity.”²³ To Buber, it

was the *making* of art, rather than the artwork itself, that would restore to Judaism its aesthetic sensibility. Accordingly, we shall look at how art *functioned* in the Jewish Renaissance and in the early Buber in particular, and how from the aesthetics of making emerged an ethics of transformation and unfinishedness.

II

The Renaissance of the Renaissance

Renaissances, to us, are forms of consciousness, which reflect a desire for cultural renewal that is also a desire for the possibility of cultural atonement—the possibility of teshuvah. To justify themselves, renaissances must first detect decline, decadence, or degeneration before they can act as modes of cultural self-purging and resuscitation, as periods of “education to oneself.” Uearing a symbolic past, renaissances are means of self-recognition from a distance; awakening from the slumber of ruins, they are therapeutic and cathartic.²⁴

But renaissances are also didactic. Giorgio Vasari, whose *Lives of the Great Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* of 1550 remains one of the earliest written testimonies of both Renaissance and renaissancism, spoke of a period when “good paintings and sculptures remained buried under the ruins in Italy, unknown to the men of that time who were engrossed in contemporary rubbish” until, “helped by some subtle influence by the very air of Italy, the new generations started to purge their minds of the grossness of the past. . . .”²⁵ Before becoming creative himself, Vasari’s new artist, then, had to first unlearn the “awkward” and “crude” styles that had invaded Italian culture after the fall of the Roman empire “by skillfully imitating the works of antiquity.”²⁶ What Vasari described was a process of negative didactics, the weaning away from a state of decline by force of imitation and—for lack of a better explanation—the influence of national “air,” until, “in our times,” art was truly “reborn.”

Following Vasari, the modern interpreters of the Italian Renaissance saw in it not only a spontaneous creation by imitation but also a phe-

nomenon of profound reeducation: the reshaping of a world view that gave birth to a new way of life. “Suddenly, spirit and soul make a gigantic leap towards the cognition of their innermost life,” Burckhardt wrote of Dante’s *Vita Nuova*, which would advance to the quintessential motto of the neo-Romantic revolution.²⁷ Offering a dramatic model for complete transvaluation, the Italian Renaissance gripped Nietzsche and his self-declared apostles, who recognized in it the last “great era” in history, the “golden age of the past millennium,” and the unencumbered birth of “anti-values.”²⁸ “The Italian Renaissance,” Nietzsche wrote in 1878, “bore in itself all the positive forces which have given birth to modern culture: liberation of thought, disobedience of authorities, victory of Bildung over the darkness of descent, enthusiasm for science and for the scientific past of mankind, the unchaining of the individual, a fervor for truthfulness, and a distaste for appearance and mere effect . . . ; indeed, the positive forces of the Renaissance have yet to return in our contemporary modern culture.”²⁹ Like Vasari, Nietzsche posed the Renaissance spirit against what he perceived as decline and loss of vital energy, elevating, as Burckhardt did, art to a “great stimulans of life”: “Art reminds us of a state of animalic vigor; it is at once an excess and overflowing of blooming sensuality into the world of images and desires, and at once an awakening of our animalic function through the images and desires of a heightened life.”³⁰ Art, in Nietzsche’s *Fragments* of 1887, which were published under the fateful title *The Will to Power*, appears as the “freedom from moral narrow-mindedness,”³¹ as return to “childlike sensuality,” and as the ultimate antidote to the Protestant “décadence.”³² Art, for Nietzsche, liberates. It liberates from the past and it liberates from the narrow confines of “moralism.” But Nietzsche’s artist not only liberates himself: He also becomes a “*Bildner*"; that is, a maker of images and educator at once.³³ It is the artist who has the power to reverse the course of decline and to teach the ideals of a past at which we have not yet arrived. “We have not, despite all efforts of three centuries,” Nietzsche writes, “reached again the man of the Renaissance, who himself remained behind the man of antiquity.”³⁴

Nietzsche’s radical renaissance of the Renaissance and Burckhardt’s discovery of rebirth as innovation provided a rich philosophical fabric

for Buber's own theory of a cultural renaissance.³⁵ Invoking the Italian Renaissance, the "crown of all historical periods," Buber emphatically rejected the idea of a mere "return to the old traditions": "We justifiably call it 'renaissance' . . .," he wrote in 1903, "because it is a rebirth, a renewal of the entire human being . . . and not a return to old ideas and life forms; it is the path from semi-being to being, from vegetation to productivity, from the dialectical petrification of scholasticism to a broad and soulful perception of nature. . . ."³⁶ A "new type of Jew" was to emerge who resembled the vanished, yet eternally reborn Renaissance man. Both Burckhardt and Nietzsche interpreted the Renaissance as a period of renewed sensuality, a return to *Weltlichkeit* and nature, and as a turning away from scholastic methods and forms; to both, the Renaissance artist, as the most realized and universally refined individual, represented the truly free character, the mind unbound by tradition and convention. To both, finally, the Renaissance was a transcendence of boundaries. "With great defiance," Burckhardt writes, "the artists . . . affirm their freedom from local constraints and the constraints of place (*Ortszwang*)."³⁷ Quoting the artist Lorenzo Ghiberti, he continues: "Only he who has learned everything is nowhere a stranger; even if robbed of his fortune and without friends, he still remains a citizen of every country. . . ."³⁸ No force, for Burckhardt, contributed more to the forming of free individuals than the flight from tyranny, the experience of exile, even if self-imposed. "Ultimately, the effect of exile is that it either destroys the human being or raises it to its highest form."³⁹ An individual and cosmopolitan, the artist has reached this highest form, has liberated himself and continues to liberate his beholders through art.

New Lands

The deeper relationship between Burckhardt's reading of the Italian Renaissance as a culture in search of self-liberation and the Jewish Renaissance as a cultural movement with both national and supranational characteristics now becomes more apparent. Rather than "negating" Galut (exile), as Zionism was compelled to do, if only to maintain its own logic and *raison d'être*, the Jewish Renaissance could

appreciate—even demand—the cultural germinations of exilic life, and still reject what it perceived as the “passive” and “distorted” existence of “Talmudic,” “scholastic” Judaism. “[A] rebirth of the complete human being from the dialectical narrowness of Scholasticism to a broad pantheism, to a flowing feeling of life, from the constraints of sects and guilds to the freedom of personality”—this was Buber’s early and unmistakably Nietzschean vision of a Jewish Renaissance.⁴⁰ Neither return nor progress, neither nostalgia nor utopia, symbolized this renaissance, but rather the discovery of “new lands,” the “secret of the new.”⁴¹ Both Zionism and Jewish art, which Buber called “two children of our rebirth,”⁴² were discoveries of such “new lands”; discoveries, however, in an anamnetic sense: rebirth of hidden memories and desires, or as Buber put it, “re-creation from ancient material.”⁴³ Both Zionism and Jewish art, Buber maintained, were fruits of the entrance of Judaism into Western civilization, of the very culture they sought to leave behind as hostile and inauthentic to the Jew. Forged by the forces of exile, the Jewish Renaissance Jew elevated both his humanity and national memory. Exile, in its most tortuous way, brought about the “great turning point” (*Umschwung*), the awakening of an “ancient desire for national existence,” and a universal “yearning for beauty and action.”⁴⁴ Even though Buber believed that a “national art” could exist only on its own “soil” and under its own “sky,” the “cultural buds” and “artistic seeds” that were planted in the Jewish soul by the modern age had to be nurtured where they had sprouted: in the diaspora.

The Artist as Educator

More clearly also emerges the role of the artist. For it was the artist who could claim the greatest degree of freedom, who embodied the highest form of individuality (which, of course, was the fundamental trope in Burckhardt’s understanding of the Renaissance), and who was closest to nature and to the sense of *Weltlichkeit* that transforms religious “scholasticism” into a religion of life. “Our tribe, which has for so long produced scholars who hated life, began to create artists,” Buber proclaimed at the Fifth Zionist Congress in 1901. “And one by one these artists turned toward the destiny of their people.”⁴⁵ That, in turn, the

destiny of the people would depend on the promotion of Jewish art and artists, or as Berdichevsky had demanded, “creators and builders,”⁴⁶ was a major part of Buber’s appeal to the members of the Congress. But this happened at a time when the cultural debate had already come to a deadlock resulting, ultimately, in the “walkout” of the culture-oriented Democratic Faction.⁴⁷

But what, if given the opportunity, could art contribute to the work of its “older brother,” to the work of Zionism? For Buber, the answer emerged naturally from his perception of the classical Renaissance: Jewish art would become a “great educator,” an “educator to true Judaism,” as well as an educator of those who perceived Judaism from the outside. “Our art will arise, and if one should say—these people are dead—art will strike his eyes with a powerful beam so that he will see and behold their beauty and recognize that these people are fuller of living juices and overflowing living energies than any other people on earth.”⁴⁸ Echoing Nietzsche, whom he celebrated in his earlier writings as the prophet of a “new art” and even “new culture,” Buber understood art as sheer vitality, as the ultimate testimony to Jewish life.⁴⁹ Of all riches of the Jewish Renaissance, Buber writes, “nothing moved me so strongly, so magically, as the renaissance of Jewish art.”⁵⁰ If art meant vitality, Nietzsche’s “animalic vigor,” then it was the artist who could best diagnose and reverse the exilic illness of decline. The artist as educator now served as a teacher for “a living perception of nature and people,” as a teacher, Buber continues, “for a living feeling of all that is strong and beautiful,”⁵¹ a feeling that is to be “recovered” through the encounter with art. The “aesthetic education of the people,”⁵² then, which Buber so often invoked, became the pivotal concept of *Gegenwartsarbeit*. For it was education in the very sense the Renaissance had suggested: education away from decline—to “new life.”

It is this regenerative function of art that the author of the widely read book *Degeneration*, Max Nordau, had in mind when he wrote in 1905 that the “art of the future”—which, for him, was a revival of the classical image—would “re-erect” the human being: “In the world of the artist, the hunchback becomes straight again, the dwarf grows tall, the fragmented human being becomes whole.”⁵³ The artwork, Nordau continues, must “elevate the people . . . , must teach the people to re-

spect itself.”⁵⁴ Almost two decades later, the Viennese Zionist Oskar Rosenfeld wrote that it was “not the political *Tatmensch* but above all the artist who was called upon to bring recovery (*Gesundung*) to Jewish life.”⁵⁵

III

Rembrandt and Renaissance

But the concept of the artist as educator and cultural regenerator cannot be exhausted in Burckhardt’s suggestive interpretation of the Italian Renaissance and Nietzsche’s aesthetic legacy—nor was it purely motivated by humanism in the classical sense. Rather, one might look to one of the most influential texts of the late nineteenth century Renaissance fever, Julius Langbehn’s *Rembrandt as an Educator* of 1890, which, by 1896, had already gone through forty-four editions. Although the book did not expressly glorify the Italian Renaissance but, quite to the contrary, presented itself as an essay on anti-Renaissance that was, in truth, little more than a tirade of anti-Semitism, it employed much of the mode of thought that is characteristic of cultural rebirth: the diagnosis of decline, the purging of the self, and the reawakening of the national soul. For Langbehn, who wrote from the perspective of a Germanic revival, this process was characterized by a turning away from intellectualism and a “turning towards art” (*Wendung zur Kunst*): “[W]e see this change of spiritual climate,” he writes, “by how the type of the professor disappears from the German stage . . . to make room for the artist.”⁵⁶ The struggle against cultural degeneration, Langbehn continues, is fought in a war of image against letter: “Book or picture (*Buch oder Bild*), this is the question; there is nothing in between.”⁵⁷ Inverting the German ideal of *Bildung* that had existed since the Enlightenment, Langbehn concludes that the answer lies in the word itself: “All true *Bildung* is the creative formation of an image and therefore artistic.”⁵⁸ In Langbehn’s Teutonic universe, the visual arts (*bildende Künste*) would be at the center of the future German nation, a nation purified of the artless Jewish elements. It soon becomes clear that this

nation of strong, sensual, world-affirming, and freedom-minded individuals is all but another incarnation of the Tuscan heroes, and that Langbehn's "Third Reformation"⁵⁹ is in truth a second Renaissance.

What Langbehn formulated was exactly the alternative model of redemption through Bildung that the Jewish Renaissance and Zionism, both disenchanted with, yet also indebted to the Enlightenment, seemed to be searching for. Confronting the ideals of German humanism with the sensibilities of neo-Romanticism, Langbehn created a new "enlightenment" that was not the awakening of reason, but an "awakening of sensuality" (*Erwachen der Sinnlichkeit*).⁶⁰ The role of art was no longer defined as an expression of cultural distinction and personal edification but as a way to *unlearn* the enlightenment of the intellect and to repair the rift between mind and nature. "A false ideal must be destroyed," wrote the self-declared prophet and reformer of life, Julius Hart in his book *The Revolution of Aesthetics*, which he envisioned to be the introduction to a "revolution of all sciences": "There is only one way: We have to overcome the . . . ideal of reason. . . . And we must awaken the true and actual ideal man, redeem and liberate the creative spirit from its thousand year long yoke of delusion."⁶¹

It is peculiar that both Burckhardt's Renaissance and Langbehn's *Rembrandt* took themselves for expressions of a continuous, albeit subterranean past, as well as of a contemporary *Kulturkritik*. In their own ways, Burckhardt and Langbehn were conservative thinkers who felt threatened by the antivalues of modernism: Burckhardt lamenting the loss of classical harmony; Langbehn lamenting the loss of romantic innocence.⁶² But while Burckhardt's classical disposition toward art and aesthetic life ultimately prevented him from linking art and nationalism,⁶³ Langbehn went on to inspire the idea of Germanic nationalism and rose to new prominence during the years of cultural pessimism following the disaster of World War I.⁶⁴ It was no accident that Burckhardt not only belittled the aesthetic significance of Rembrandt, whose work he repeatedly judged as "vulgar" and "plebeian" (*pöbelhaft*), even amateurish,⁶⁵ but also resisted the rising Rembrandt cult in which romanticism and nationalism were crudely fused into a "German Renaissance."⁶⁶ To Burckhardt, the "violent naturalism" of Rembrandt, his obscure and distorted "poetry of ugliness,"⁶⁷ were all but offensive to

the culture of harmony, beauty, and moderation that characterized his image of the Renaissance. In Rembrandt and the Renaissance, then, a clash became manifest between the romantic and the classical, between the irrational and the rational, between nationalism and humanism. It was this conflict that lent the Jewish Renaissance its distinctive character.

Renaissance and Humanism

Little has been written about the Jewish reception of Langbehn's *Rembrandt*.⁶⁸ To be sure, Langbehn's anti-Semitism was as blatant and pathological as can be, especially in the later editions of his book. It is difficult to imagine, however, that the German obsession with Rembrandt—the book and the artist himself—that incidentally also captured the sociologist Georg Simmel, one of Martin Buber's teachers in Berlin,⁶⁹ did not affect the German-Jewish Renaissance movement. Indeed, Rembrandt's well-known penchant for biblical and Jewish subjects rendered him of particular interest to the revival of Jewish art.⁷⁰ A peculiar presence of Rembrandt's work in the journal *Ost und West*,⁷¹ the wide admiration for the Dutch painter Jozef Israëls, who was dubbed the Jewish "descendent of Rembrandt" and credited with reviving the tradition of Jewish national art,⁷² as well as the profound affection for Rembrandt's legacy that many Jewish artists shared, could well indicate a phenomenon of Jewish Rembrandtism that seems to have reflected the German Rembrandtism at this time. In fact, Bernard Susser even suggested that Buber's early essays on the Jewish Renaissance were "mutatis mutandis" of the same cloth as Langbehn's *Rembrandt*, and indeed a "Jewish version" of it⁷³—but this Jewish version, if present at all, was no simple caricature of the German prototype. When, in 1934, Julius Bab published his book *Rembrandt and Spinoza*, creating perhaps one of the last documents of Jewish Rembrandtism, he did so not in the romantic tone of his German—and Jewish—predecessors but in the hope to reconcile Langbehn's folk hero with the hero of the radical enlightenment.⁷⁴ Not "estrangement and exclusivity" surrounded Rembrandt and Spinoza, wrote Julius Bab four years earlier, "but a mysteriously

similar attraction, a deep, innermost longing for mutual completion.”⁷⁵

This faith in mutual completion sustained much of the imagined German-Jewish symbiosis. But it was also a faith in the continuous presence and refinement of the Enlightenment. Where Langbehn searched for a *völkisch* Rembrandt, Bab stressed Rembrandt’s most perfected humanity (*Menschsein*) sheltered behind the “proud and clear Renaissance façade” of his home.⁷⁶ The mysterious, dark, and deeply romantic master of the North, whom Oswald Spengler hailed in 1927 as painting in the “color of the future” (the color brown, unfortunately),⁷⁷ was thus reinvented, in the Jewish mirror, as the symbolic artist of lucid humanism. The *völkisch* Rembrandt, whom Langbehn let loose to undo the woes of the Enlightenment, became himself a man of the Enlightenment.

Thinking in similar dialectics of symbiosis, Buber, in his later work, sought to fuse cosmopolitan humanism and national “Hebraism” not as mutually attracting opposites, but because he believed that Hebraism *was* humanism and that “Hebrew humanism” represented only a fuller, “farther goal” than the European humanism Renaissance and Enlightenment had initiated.⁷⁸ For Buber, writing in 1941, “true humanism” was different from the idea of a “vague humanity at large”: “[W]e are not merely striving for an intellectual movement but for one that will encompass all of life’s reality.”⁷⁹ The practical component of Hebrew or biblical humanism became most evident in Buber’s thinly veiled plea for intellectual resistance of October 1933: “Biblical humanism cannot, as does its Western counterpart, raise the individual above the problems of the moment; it seeks instead to train the person to stand fast in them, to prove himself in them.”⁸⁰ Invoking the Renaissance as return to “primal forces,” Buber rejected Western humanism as a mere return to Apollinian antiquity, as a striving for perfected form; whereas in biblical humanism, he saw the return to originality (*Ursprünglichkeit*), to an unsculpted immediacy of the past.⁸¹ While Western humanism was concerned with the edification of the individual, biblical humanism is concerned with community; where Western humanism sought form, biblical humanism seeks relation. While the “false and high-flown humanism of yesterday” produced a mere

“pseudo-humanity” (*Scheinmenschlichkeit*), Buber’s humanism claimed the recovery of “true human life” (*wahrhaftes Menschenleben*).⁸²

The Humanism of Unfinished Form

Western European humanism, then, was for Buber no more than a “caricature of a lost ideal,”⁸³ derived from the Renaissance, but subsequently petrified in form and ethicism. Buber’s humanism, on the other hand, saw itself as a return to the truly “creative,” transformative and, as it were, aesthetically depetrifying Renaissance Burckhardt had once conceived. The striking centrality of transformation as a genuine Renaissance concept—a concept Buber seems to have acquired from the writings of the German philologist Konrad Burdach⁸⁴—suggests a deep rootedness of Buber’s renaissance not only in the Jewish discourse on atonement, or transforming teshuvah but also in the classical notion of *metamorphosis* from Ovid to Pico della Mirandola.⁸⁵ In fact, as a “molder and maker” of himself, as a “wonderful chameleon,” to whom it is given “to have that which he chooses and to be that which he wills,”⁸⁶ Pico’s Renaissance man represented, for Burckhardt, “one of the most noble legacies of this period.”⁸⁷ When Walter Pater, in an essay of 1871, praised Pico’s philosophy as one that “helped man onward to that reassertion of himself, that rehabilitation of human nature, the body, the senses, the heart, the intelligence,” he only added to a thoroughly anthropocentric reading of the Renaissance where human self-assertion was tantamount to liberation.⁸⁸ In his 1867 essay on Winckelmann, Pater’s admiration for Pico becomes even more evident, when he writes about “those who act, as well as those who create and think”: “They are great and free, and have grown up on the soil of their own individuality, creating themselves out of themselves, and molding themselves to what they were, and willed to be.”⁸⁹ For Burckhardt and Pater, then, Pico’s ideal of (self-)transformation stood first and foremost for the liberation from the constraints of completed form. Aesthetically speaking, the “archaic immobility” of Greek sculpture, which Winckelmann had compared to a “quiet sea,” appears to be “stirred” and “pregnant with possibilities” in Pater’s renaissancism: “[I]ts forms are in motion. . . . Everywhere there is the effect of an awakening, of a child’s

sleep just disturbed.”⁹⁰ It is in this context that, as Paul Barolsky noted, the Renaissance idea of the *non finito* and *abbozzato*, or merely sketched, emerged as a counterweight to the perfection of form itself.⁹¹ Looking, among other examples, at Michelangelo’s torsi in the grotto of Boboli, Barolsky finds that rather than seeking rest in a classical equilibrium, the Renaissance posed a dialectic between form and formlessness, between Medusean petrification and Pygmalean coming-to-life.⁹²

Invoking the same torsi by Michelangelo, Buber, in a speech of 1912, spoke of the “struggle between the forming and the formless principles,” a struggle that runs through the entire “history of the spirit.”⁹³ The formed cannot remain pure form (*Gestalt*), for it is always penetrated by the formless, and it is those who experience the unfinishedness of their soul (*den unbewältigten Seelenblock*) as a potential rather than inertia of matter (*träige Materie*) who can truly become formers (*Gestaltende*). But every forming, for Buber, means in truth transforming (*Umgestalten*), and “therefore, the forming struggle is a process that always begins anew.”⁹⁴ It is this “human beginning” (*menschliches Beginnen*) that Buber renders the task, or “mandate” (*Auftrag*) of art. In his 1922 lectures on “Religion as Presence,” he describes the task of art as the “task of something that strives to become (*eines Werdenwollen-den*), something Gestalt-like that is not yet actual, that is still dormant in the actual, latent in its ground, and that wants to be lived to life from within, to be actualized.”⁹⁵ It is a task that differs from the task of religion and is yet narrowly related to its realm. For both art and religion encounter the formless as a boundary, a beginning to one and an end to the other, but an encounter also of the limits, where one “touches” the other creatively. At the “limits of form and formfulness,” Buber writes, religion stands with “open arms, embracing and ordaining boundaries” and “pointing toward the formless and, despite all attempts at forming, un-formable.”⁹⁶ Thus, where art encounters the formless, it also encounters religion, and where it makes the formless its art, it encounters yet another boundary religion embraces and ordains: the boundary of ethics. Quoting Goethe, Buber alludes to an aesthetics of deed that takes formlessness as *both* its beginning and end—as its moral imperative: “The highest, the most perfected in man

is formless. One should beware of giving it any other form than the form of noble deed.”⁹⁷

The dialectics of form and formlessness, then, the act of forming and leaving unformed, which is inherent in the dialectic of forming itself, is precisely what can yield to form its pointing-beyond, and to art its aesthetic morality. To recognize the individual and its world as in need of form and, at the same time, as threatened by the self-sufficiency of form will become the imperative of aesthetic education. Thus, Buber chastises “the impotence and alienation of the formers” as a disease of petrified form in the exilic life, while cherishing the legacy of Pico as an “awakening” to the anthropological question.⁹⁸ It is here that Buber’s words of 1933 begin to take on meaning: “Do not escape . . . into a world of *logos*, of perfected form!” he admonished the German-Jewish community at the eve of expulsion and destruction.⁹⁹ Any “formal renaissance” Buber called “inflated nonsense,” urging instead for a “concrete *transformation* of the total inner life”: for “rebirth” at the deepest moment of crisis.¹⁰⁰

Rethinking the Renaissance

In light of the Germanic subversion of humanistic values, Buber’s initial conception of renaissance, still clouded in Nietzschean and Burckhardtian inflections, seems to have undergone a transformation of its own toward an emphasis on “Hebrew humanism.” This transformation may well have been inspired by the “Third Humanism” that emerged in Germany “as an ideal disposition,” as one author wrote in 1937, “against the spreading materialism of the post–World War I period,” pursuing a new Bildung, a true *paideia*, that would link Cicero, Petrarch and Dante to Hölderlin, Nietzsche, and the George-Kreis.¹⁰¹ But there may also have been an earlier occasion for Buber to rethink his original renaissancism in terms of a new humanism. In January 1911, Buber turned to Fritz Mauthner, the author of the then-spectacular *Kritik der Sprache*, with a request that testifies to his thorough concern with the term “renaissance”: “It is of great importance to me to learn,” Buber writes to the older philosopher, “when and by whom the word

rinascimento has first been applied to an epoch of Italian cultural history, and when . . . the concept of Renaissance was used to describe a general process in different peoples and at different times, a process such as the reconnecting (*Wiederanknüpfen*) to the classical age of a ‘race.’¹⁰² Mauthner’s reply was almost certainly not what Buber had hoped for: “[R]inascimento,” he writes with reference to his own *Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, which had just appeared, “[is] a blasphemous re-interpretation (*Umdeutung*) of the rebirth in Christ.”¹⁰³ Whether Buber followed up on Mauthner’s self-reference to the *Wörterbuch* cannot be established with certainty. But if he did, he would have encountered the term “renaissance,” as a “catchword of our time,” under the entry “Ideal Men” (*Idealmenschen*): “Men of force, or men of blood, who live their lives, romping about without morality; strong individualists.”¹⁰⁴ Reiterating his perception that *rinascimento* was indeed no more than a “parody” and “transmogrification” of the Christian rebirth,¹⁰⁵ Mauthner mocks renaissance as a 500-year long episode in history, culminating in Richard Wagner and Friedrich Nietzsche, and producing, in recent times, a host of “revolution-journalists,” among whom the young Buber would surely have had to count himself. But worse still, Mauthner contended that the Renaissance had “run its course,” that there was nothing new to learn from classical antiquity, that socialism had replaced the cult of the individual, and that the critique of language would finally remove the ideal concept of “renaissance” itself: “The critic of language has not lost his desires, but he has lost his ideals.”¹⁰⁶ The recovered use of “renaissance,” to Mauthner, would have been little more than a precritical anachronism.

Mauthner’s devastating antirenaissancism could hardly have been a support for Buber’s deepening interest in *rinascimento*. But it may—if Buber did indeed pursue Mauthner’s reference, which is likely, given his great admiration for the philosopher of language—have forced him to reconsider a term he had not yet fully extracted from the ideological periphery of Nietzsche’s “superman” and from the air of the very fin-de-siècle Mauthner bitingly likened to an unborn egg without a shell.¹⁰⁷ In his turn to a humanism, then, that was decidedly anti-individualistic, anti-Romantic, and driven by moral imperatives, that was “biblical” rather than heroic, Buber came to reflect and indeed

anticipate a mood of Renaissance defamation among Christian thinkers during and in the immediate aftermath of World War II. Berdyaev's brief assessment in 1933 that the Italian Renaissance "began with the affirmation of man's creative individuality [and] ended with its denial," and Reinhold Niebuhr's verdict of 1939, that "[t]he Renaissance is the real cradle of that very unchristian concept and reality: the autonomous individual,"¹⁰⁸ testify to a religious disenchantment with the "secular," "immoral" Italian Renaissance that was directly related to the experience of a modern crisis in humanity and theology. What distinguished Buber, however, from these critical voices was his desire to "rehumanize" the Renaissance rather than entirely rejecting it: Holding on to the term "renaissance," he sought to bring it back to its moral origins.

To Buber, then, both Hebrew humanism and Jewish Renaissance were comprehensive *moral* regenerations of individual and collective. When, in 1949, he contributed the introduction to the first Hebrew edition of Burckhardt's *Kultur der Renaissance*, Buber emphatically distanced himself from the Nietzschean concept of the Renaissance "'superman' beyond the distinction of good and evil," which he now viewed as "a failed attempt at greatness," tracing instead the "renewal of the entire human being" back to its mediaeval, Christian, and ultimately biblical roots.¹⁰⁹ At the same time, however, Buber defended the notion of "renaissance," and in particular Burckhardt's interpretation of it, as a timeless symbol of a renewal of culture that was as aesthetic as it was prophetic. What Buber saw in Burckhardt's unadulterated, "original," Italian Renaissance was a moral metamorphosis through art: an aesthetic teshuvah. Only in the reconciliation of ethics and aesthetics, only in the aestheticization of Judaism,¹¹⁰ could the Jewish self-transform itself in the image of the Renaissance and be truly "liberated." Aestheticization, to the Jewish Renaissance, thus became self-emancipation in the truest sense.

Aesthetics and Aestheticism

But this aesthetic liberation and aestheticization of Judaism must not be confused with the aestheticism of the fin-de-siècle that Arnold Hauser once called a "lifestyle of nonfunctionalism" (*Lebensstil der*

Funktionslosigkeit).¹¹¹ The reaestheticized Jew of the Jewish Renaissance was precisely *not* the disengaged aesthete whose “disposition fragmentaire,” to use the example of Mallarmé,¹¹² prevented him from interacting responsibly with reality. Jewish aestheticism, from the perspective of the Jewish Renaissance, was diametrically opposed to the new aesthetic Judaism, which had arisen precisely against the “parvenue-like hypertrophy of the aesthetic,” as Arthur Zanker wrote in the journal *Esra*, and against Jewish “overeducation” (*Überbildung*) and “hyperintellectualism.”¹¹³ Likewise, “individualism, intellectualism, and aestheticism” represented, for Moses Calvary, one of the ideological patriarchs of the Jewish youth movement, the three root causes of the very “rootlessness” Zionist education had to overcome.¹¹⁴

Even to the young Martin Buber, who seemed to be tempted most by the beauty of fin-de-siècle aestheticism, the role of the artist was not entirely unproblematic. Once more echoing Nietzsche, and perhaps also the tone of the Viennese *Ver Sacrum*, he distinguished between the artist and the “creative one” (*Schaffender*): “The creative ones are not the ‘artists’,” he writes in 1902. “The pure artists are much more concerned with the making than with the becoming of things. To be sure, the perfect technique of an artwork is a beautiful . . . thing, but our time has lost the sense for what lies beyond and not only brings happiness but redemption.”¹¹⁵ The “creative ones,” for Buber, are distinct also from “pure intellectuals,” whose single pursuit is “truth” and the production of “ideas” and books. Reflecting the probably more affected than genuine bibliophobia of his time, Buber instinctively repudiates the overeducated, and aesthetically refined Jewish *Luftmensch* (a term he actually uses) as a thinker who “thinks a lot about the ornamented, un-living interpretations of passages in old books,” but whose thinking remains without essence (*wesenlos*), a mere “concocting of abstractions” that has no relation to reality.¹¹⁶ Thus, the “Jewish intellect” constitutes, for Buber, not only a form of “luxury” but also the root of what he calls the “great Jewish national pathology.” If there is Jewish intellectual activity, he writes, then it is “distorted, rigid, sick, queer, out of touch with reality, unproductive, and inhuman.”¹¹⁷ To “transform” and “cure” this intellect, to effect an

“inner transformation” (*innere Umwälzung*)—this, to Buber, is the role of art as *Schaffen*, the role of “renaissance.”¹¹⁸ Hence, the “creative ones,” as Buber concludes, must be artists and intellectuals in one, re-aestheticized thinkers, reeducated intellectuals, connected “organically” with their people and experiencing from their “rootedness” (*Wurzelhaftigkeit*) the vitality of “conceptions and births.” They must be the “strong and the multi-talented, in whose midst the destinies of humankind meet to generate a new evolution in spirit and deed.”¹¹⁹ Buber’s “creative one,” in other words, is none other than the *uomo universale* of the Renaissance. But this meant, for Buber, that the creative one cannot come to rest, nor retreat into a state of the sublime: It meant that seeing is making.

An Unromantic Renaissance

Here we begin to understand Buber’s cautionary attitude toward (neo-) Romanticism. Though neo-Romantic ideas pervaded of course much of his earlier thought,¹²⁰ Buber later insisted that his renaissance not be mistaken for romanticism, and that his recovery of “religiosity” would resemble nothing like the “romantic” religion Leo Baeck once compared to the modern slogan of “*l’art pour l’art*.”¹²¹ “[N]ot romanticism but a renaissance,” Buber noted in his famous speech of 1919, *Heruth*: “For . . . it is always romanticism when the spirit, in its search for a people, submits and surrenders to the forms developed in that people’s past and transmitted, in word and custom, from that past. And it is always a renaissance when the spirit brings to life the primal forces encapsulated in those forms, calling them forth to new creation—when it encounters a people and makes it creative.”¹²² Mere nationalism, as well as the spiritual activism and philosophical expressionism of the inter-war period, seemed equally romanticist to Buber. Despite many stark parallels between his language of “deed” (*Tat*) and Kurt Hiller’s *Bund zum Ziel* (also known as the “Council of Spiritual Workers”) which attracted both Jewish and non-Jewish intellectuals, including Heinrich Mann, Franz Werfel, Walter Benjamin, and Max Brod, to name only a few, Buber remained critical of the “undirected activism” of this group

and declined to be associated with it. “‘Activism,’ in my opinion is mere to-do (*Getue*),” he wrote to Hugo Bergmann in 1917. “One can be either active or activist; it is one thing to want to take a specific action, but to want *the* action, this is mere literature.”¹²³

With his rejection of activism, Buber remained critical also of the educational philosophy of Gustav Wyneken, the perhaps most influential youth reformer of the Interwar period. Driven by a profound distrust in the heritage of imperial culture and rebelliousness against the old *Bildungsbürgertum*, Wyneken’s ideas of “creative education” (*schöpferische Erziehung*) shaped much of the German youth culture that characterized, as Peter Gay put it, a “hunger for wholeness” during the Weimar years.¹²⁴ A prominent member of Hiller’s activist group, Wyneken borrowed generously from the fin-de-siècle *Kunsterziehungsbewegung* in Germany and—like Langbehn—later advanced to an ideologue of Nazism.¹²⁵ In his book *Weltanschauung*, written between 1934 and 1936, Wyneken summarized his worldview, reflecting on art as a “counter-creation” (*Gegenschöpfung*) and “highest expression of the freedom of man.”¹²⁶ “To break through to this freedom—not as a renaissance of antiquity, but as a spiritual regeneration of the European race—this seems to me is our destiny and task.”¹²⁷ Dismissing the old canon of classical and humanist education, Wyneken established “Free-schools” which, in his conviction, resembled “works of art.”¹²⁸ With creativity and youthful playfulness (*Spieltrieb*) at their core, Wyneken’s schools presented themselves as birthplaces of a new, unencumbered culture whose backbone was the “aesthetic freedom of conscience.”¹²⁹

In a 1925 speech at the International Conference on Education in Heidelberg, Buber implicitly engaged Wyneken’s concept of “creative education,” revising, in fact, some of his own youthful expressions of redemption through art. Here, creativity no longer seemed derived from truly free and autonomous individuality, as in the Nietzschean Renaissance reception, but from the process of dialogical creation: “Creativity (*Schöpfertum*) originally only means the divine address to the being hidden in non-being.”¹³⁰ The creative one of Buber’s earlier writings is now primarily viewed as a *created* one, as *Geschöpf*. “Man, as a created one who can form and transform what has been created, cannot create himself. But he—and each person—can open himself and others toward

creativity.”¹³¹ The role of the artist as educator now appears greatly modified. “Creative work,” Buber writes, “is a ‘one-sided’ process.” He continues: “[A]s long as [the artist] is at work his soul goes out from him but does not enter him; he faces the world but no longer encounters it.”¹³² The artist, the creative one, cannot serve as an educator, because he is solitary, free perhaps, but removed from his environment. “Only if someone takes his hand, not as a ‘creator’ but as a fellow creature lost in this world, beyond the arts . . . , only then will he realize and participate in mutuality.”¹³³ Education based on pure creativity, Buber concludes, would lead to the most painful solitarization (*Vereinsamung*) of humankind. The liberation of creative forces, then, can only be a condition for education, not its goal. Art, in this sense, *conditions* the individual as much as it liberates it. Art and freedom for their own sake are mere illusions. “I love freedom,” Buber writes, “but I do not believe in it.”¹³⁴ A life lived from freedom alone, as envisioned by the romantic reformers, to Buber, was no more than a “pathetic farce.”¹³⁵

A Classical Renaissance

When viewed in the course of its development, Buber’s Jewish Renaissance, despite its often disparate sources of inspiration and its shift from outwardly neo-Romantic renaissancism to humanism, seems to have remained true to a classical mode more than to a romantic one.¹³⁶ His sharp criticism of the romantic renaissances that prevailed in German culture between the 1890s and the rise of Nazism, as well as his unease with what appeared to him as illusory, “fictitious” Zionism, rendered Buber a defender of the very classical modernity that Burckhardt discovered and which, a generation later, was revived by a good number of (Jewish) art historians, including Aby Warburg.¹³⁷ To Buber, the aestheticization of Judaism—just as its nationalization—was not redemption in itself, but served as a *condition* only, as an act of preparation: work for the present (*Gegenwartsarbeit*). To be sure, in his early writings (Jewish) art functioned primarily as a necessary resensualization of Judaism. Just as Hasidism, for Buber, renewed Jewish religiosity by infusing Halacha with feeling, so the artist, whom Buber in one passage calls a product of Hasidism, becomes an “educator to true Judaism.”¹³⁸ It is

precisely because the artist has fully realized his autonomy and has stepped outside the continuity of convention that he can reach back to the sensuous past of Judaism to heal a rupture in time that all renais-sances create and seek to mend. It is the aesthetic experience of art that reawakens the very Jewish sensuality that is needed to purge it from such common symptoms as “false moralism,” “hyperintellectualism,” or “rigid legalism.”¹³⁹ The aesthetic condition liberates Judaism and re-stores it to itself, but it does not lift the individual above the community, nor does it suspend morality. It may grant freedom, but it does not al-low for freedom from responsibility. To the contrary, the aesthetic ex-perience reawakens the “urge for community” (*Trieb der Verbundenheit*). Art, paradoxically, creates both independent individuals *and* cohesive communities. Aesthetic Judaism, in Buber’s later writings, appears, in-deed, increasingly reethicized, purged from his own romances with neo-Romanticism. “The great artist,” Paul Ernst, one of the leading figures of the German “Neu-Klassik,” wrote in 1908, “. . . demands from us to leave behind the mundane of our daily lives and to elevate ourselves above ourselves, to a superhuman body.” But this “superhu-man body” was unlike the body of the romantic hero: It was the pas-sionate body of the art of Michelangelo, the “overcoming” of the merely human. Art, as Ernst charges against the neo-Romantics, is the “experi-ence of moral duty” (*sittliche Verpflichtung*).¹⁴⁰ The beautiful as the path to the good, this was the tempered ethos that aligned Buber with new classicism rather than romanticism, with the Burckhardt school rather than with the German Rembrandtists—and that aligned him, ulti-mately, with the Enlightenment and the classical virtues of the German *Bildungsbürgertum* rather than with the vitalist revolutionaries.

It is a curious, though well-known, fact that in the German-Jewish Renaissance, as well as in European Zionism, the heroes of German classicism and humanism seemed to coexist peacefully with the heroes of the younger generation. Lessing, Goethe, and particularly Schiller¹⁴¹ were no less revered by the young Jewish rebels than Nietzsche, George, or Bakunin. “Few poets from a foreign nation have moved our feelings as much as Schiller,” wrote *Die Welt* in 1905.¹⁴² This, it seems, was es-pe-cially true for Martin Buber, who paid tribute to Schiller as early as in his Bar Mitzvah speech in 1891.¹⁴³ It is not implausible, then, as Paul

Mendes-Flohr already observed, that Schiller's *Aesthetic Education of Mankind* of 1795, which appeared in installments in the journal *Die Horen* (incidentally the favorite journal of Buber's grandmother Adele) could well have served as a model for the aesthetic regeneration of Judaism that Buber had in mind.¹⁴⁴ Written as a document against political oppression, Schiller found in art "the daughter of freedom,"¹⁴⁵ a means to escape the slavery of the state and to recover "nature's moral instinct," a "well-spring of beauty, untainted by the corruptions of the generations and ages which wallow in the dark eddies below it."¹⁴⁶ "[I]t is through beauty that we arrive at freedom," Schiller believed, for only "the aesthetically determined man will judge and act with universal validity as soon as he wishes to."¹⁴⁷ It is "the aesthetic State alone," Schiller concludes, the state of freedom, that "can make society actual."¹⁴⁸

It was this classical concept of "aesthetic politics" educating society to morality and actuality, rather than indulging in pure deed, that may have furnished the ideological background of Buber's renaissance as a movement to reaestheticize Judaism. Like Schiller, Buber believed in aesthetic liberation as a means to restore harmony and ethics. "Through the morning gate of beauty to the land of knowledge and morality," this could have aptly described Buber's attitude toward art.¹⁴⁹ It is here that the difference between Herzl's approach to art and Buber's emerges most clearly. For Herzl, art served as a necessary illusion to mobilize the masses. "In order to allure the Jews to the land," he told the Baron de Hirsch, "you have to tell them a fairy tale."¹⁵⁰ The beauty of Zionism, for Herzl, lay in its decorative "*Ausstellungsstil*" (exhibition style),¹⁵¹ in its ability to enchant the Jewish masses through aesthetic politics. For Buber and the Jewish Renaissance, however, art was a means of introspection and education to oneself: "We will behold," he writes, "and recognize ourselves."¹⁵²

IV

The Unending Work of Art

Buber's aesthetics of self-recognition, which we may consider emblematic of the Jewish Renaissance, concludes the circle to the previous part

of our study, to its back page: It brings us back, in fact, to Gadamer's concept of art as a symbol of homecoming, of shelter and familiarity, of being-one-self again, but as a symbol also of profound otherness. "The familiarity with which the artwork touches us," we quoted Gadamer, "is, at the same time, and in a strange way, also the shaking and shattering of the familiar. It not only recovers, in an act of joyous and terrifying terror, the 'This is you!'—I also says to us: 'You have to change your life!'"¹⁵³ Nothing, it seems to me, can better capture Buber's project of aesthetic Judaism, of aesthetic education, and of Jewish Renaissance.

Nothing, except perhaps for Hermann Cohen's remarkable call for a "new aesthetic life," for a "renewal of aesthetic rootedness" (*Urvüchsigkeit*) that would allow us to look at nature as a work of art, as a symbol of being-at-home, of aesthetic naiveté (*Einfalt*) and, at the same time, messianic peace.¹⁵⁴ If there is aesthetic value to the world, then it can only be, for Cohen, in the yearning for its creator and for its redemption: "One cannot have an aesthetic feeling (*ästhetisches Gefühl*) towards a work of art without feeling the devotion towards the eternal genius as the originator of the eternal work."¹⁵⁵ Likewise, one cannot experience nature *aesthetically* without experiencing it as a work of art pointing beyond itself to the one who created it. In the "pure feeling" of yearning (*Sehnsucht*), of transcending the artwork toward its primal image, or "idea" (*Urbild*),¹⁵⁶ aesthetics abandons its duplicity, leaves behind the allegorical, and leaves behind even the sublime (*das Erhabene*) to be reunited with the ground of ethics and the possibility of religion: "The sublime humbles itself to compassion before the fate of humankind."¹⁵⁷ The aesthetic individual steps down from the heights of the "ideal man" into the suffering depths of the *idea of man*—but the idea of man, for Cohen, is none but the messianic idea itself. Thus Cohen comes to regard the messiah as the origin of all (religious) art, as the one who "awakens" in us the "sense for nature" (*Natursinn*) that dwells in all aesthetic feeling, but also as the one who awakens in us a consciousness—a conscience even—of religiosity that allows us, that compels us, to experience nature as a work of (religious) art in itself. To Cohen, the peace of nature resting in itself is precisely not the peace of everlastingness, not of the peace of the perfected form, not even the peace of the sublime, which for Kant encompassed the possibility of formlessness,¹⁵⁸

but the peace that is in need of restless making and renewal (*Erneuerung*). Nature, as the work not of *one* creation but of creation creating ever anew, as the work of art that always begins and always remains unending—this nature, Cohen writes, this work of art, is “more than sublime”: It is “unending life” (*unaufhörliches Leben*).¹⁵⁹

As such, the prophetic concept of nature is a concept that by necessity resists the plastic arts. Where the sculptor must rely on the everlasting Once and thus is prone to the idolatry of finishedness, the prophet cannot but teach nature as the ever-new. A “teacher of morality,” he cannot teach the beauty of form, he cannot even teach nature as tradition. The prophet, Cohen writes, “is no progenitor of a tradition that is passed on, but originator (*Urheber*) and inventor (*Erdenker*) of a new teaching.”¹⁶⁰ In this radical concept of renewal lies, for Cohen, the foundation for the aesthetic rebellion against all “rigid faith of printed letters” (*starrer Buchstabenglaube*).¹⁶¹ It is Cohen’s own version of Buber’s emancipation from bookishness and of what Rosenzweig—like Langbehn—would later celebrate as the end of bookmaking, or the “bookless beginning”; his own concession, perhaps, to aestheticism.

But then again, the aestheticism of the prophets is not the aestheticism of bliss, but a tragic one, at best one that is satirical. It is not the art of indulging in oneself or *itself*, nor is it the art of indulging in “luxury” and “beauty.” It is not the “absolute art” of exhibition and illusion, but the art of bringing before us the plight of the poor.¹⁶² It is the art of social criticism. Hence, in their own “social realism,” as it were, the prophets rejected the aesthetics of beauty for the aesthetics of war, for the “representation of terror and atrocity.”¹⁶³ Yet, representing terror and atrocity must not be confused with the beauty of evil. If to the prophets terror and destruction became art, then only to be terrifying, unsettling, and shaking up and to serve but one didactic goal: to educate in the aesthetic image of renewal. “From the destruction of war,” Cohen writes in a manner, which here also ties together our theme, “[the nations] must rise again to a new being. War is their life of nature. But this must have an end if a new life of morality is to begin.”¹⁶⁴ From their “prehistorical existence” (*vorgeschichtliche Existenz*) of nature, the nations step by destruction into history. Inevitably, then, the messianic aestheticization of nature must lead to its messianic

historicization: the “messianic concept of God” as the incessant renewer of the world must lead to the “historical concept of messianic humankind” as ever striving toward justice in the face of terror and destruction.¹⁶⁵

At this junction of art and history, we may also understand Cohen’s portrayal of the Jewish historian Heinrich Graetz as a modern prophet, whose aesthetic gaze was kindred to that of the prophet-artist Michelangelo. It was Schelling, who revered Michelangelo as the creator of the untamed work of art: “Drawn to the foundations of organic, and in particular human form, he does not shun the terrifying but seeks it consciously, arousing it from its peaceful place in the dark workshops of nature,” he comments on the Sistine Chapel frescoes, which Cohen, too, admired for their messianic realism.¹⁶⁶ Similarly, Cohen writes of Heinrich Graetz in 1917: “His representation did not strive . . . for classical peace and quiet; rather, his speech charged ahead like the sea whipped by the winds of a great storm. Anger and zeal, not peacefulness and mildness, were the prevalent affections of his soul. . . .”¹⁶⁷ While this anger and zeal prevented Graetz, as Cohen notes with some bitterness, to be an objective judge and to fully prepare Judaism for its modern future, it still carried on the “great messianic principle” that was written into Graetz’s earliest reflections: A history that was “universal” in the truest sense and whose task was the “connection with the entirety of the world.”¹⁶⁸ This, for Cohen, was the deepest “foundation” of all representational work, whether in art, science, or religion. It was the consciousness of this prophetic origin and ideal of representation, which had reemerged, for Cohen, in none other than Friedrich Schiller, the modern prophet of aesthetic education, the prophetic poet whom he once calls the “singer of moral freedom, of the freedom of the ideal.”¹⁶⁹ To “recognize in every human being humanity” was, for Cohen, Schiller’s contribution toward an aesthetics, which would be nothing less than the categorical imperative of aesthetic life.¹⁷⁰ Here Cohen finds the German reincarnation of the “classical spirit of humanity.” Here he also finds what Gadamer found in the symbol: the aesthetic possibility of the Other. “There is no one foreign any more.”¹⁷¹ If art can educate, it educates toward the human being in me, toward the idea (*Urbild*) of the weak.¹⁷² It educates, as Cohen’s Michelangelo, the

“deepest and most tragic of all Renaissance artists,” and the most prophetic one as well, toward history in its “origins,” which means toward history in its incipience and toward history *as* incipience, as unfinished its course, as resisting its “no longer” and “already,” as resisting its sculpted form, its hieroglyphic permanence—to turn, in an act of didactic *Umwendung* toward the prophetic history of the “not yet.”¹⁷³

The artwork, like nature in its prophetic apperception itself, so becomes what Franz Rosenzweig, weaving together once again in a remarkable way, the psalmists and the *abbozzati* of Michelangelo, found to be the art that is always at its beginning. “There emerges,” he writes in 1920, thinking probably of Cohen, “in beginnings—and in beginnings only—an art of infinity (*Kunst der Unendlichkeit*).”¹⁷⁴ How much Rosenzweig may indeed have been thinking of Cohen, we may infer from his introduction to Cohen’s *Jüdische Schriften* of 1923, in which he retraces Cohen’s shift toward aesthetics, which to him marks nothing short of a “biographical turning” (*biographische Wendung*), as a turning away from the “systematic claims of religion” toward a love for the “nature in man and of man to nature,” a love that he likens to an “aesthetic humanization of religion.”¹⁷⁵ Art humanizes—and Rosenzweig stresses again the great admiration of his teacher for the art of Michelangelo—because it reveals the weakness, terror, and imperfection of humanity. It was in Michelangelo, as Rosenzweig writes in another remarkable effort to synchronize a distant age with his own, that the Renaissance abandoned the harmonies of perfected form to become nothing short of “expressionist.”¹⁷⁶ Away from the “autonomy of the beautiful,” and away from aestheticism’s “higher morality of *Künstlermoral*,” art turned into “taedium artis”—into the art of disgust.¹⁷⁷ Where this turning took place, art also ceased to be what all art for the sake of beauty must engender to be beautiful: “disguise,” “distortion,” and “turning away.”¹⁷⁸ Art that “humanizes” and is “true” means, to Rosenzweig, the opposite to all three. It is the art that refuses its beholder to deny oneself, to deny the world, and to deny that which is neither oneself nor the world. “Art,” Rosenzweig writes in the *Star*, “. . . can overcome only by turning suffering into Gestalt, not by denying it.”¹⁷⁹ We must note that “Gestalt,” in Rosenzweig, differs from the mimetic power (*Gewalt*) of the image, and that it is established not on

the completed fact of similitude but on the “actualizing power of the And” (*vertatsächlichende Macht des Und*), on the factuality (*Tatsache*) of becoming complete (*das Fertigwerden*), which is tantamount to “ever renewed *experience*.¹⁸⁰ We must note also that “overcoming” (*überwinden*), for Rosenzweig, is a term of distinct Hegelian flavor: an overcoming that does not “forget” and yet is capable of moving on. Thus art becomes, for Rosenzweig, a double-faced “companion” through the life of man: It makes human suffering more difficult and teaches him, at the same time, how to suffer. “It teaches him to overcome without forgetting.”¹⁸¹ It teaches the beholder to recognize himself in the suffering Other. Drawing on Cohen, then, Rosenzweig removes art from the realm of representation into the realm of recognition and of “making recognizable” (*Erkennbarmachung*). The image, the word, or the tradition itself, become artworks that can no longer be contemplated, but only be recognized, actualized, and “testified to.” The art that educates is no other art than the recognition of aesthetic life itself: “A life, an entire artwork, one that is entirely *beautiful*, for it will be entirely life, entirely *our* life.”¹⁸²

This life, despite its familiar ring, is not the life of aesthetic vitalism. Like Cohen, Rosenzweig accepts as aesthetic only what is also prophetic and ultimately related to the dramatic arts. Time and again, we are reminded that aesthetics without the prophetic “style” remains in mute, pagan forms: that the “style” of the psalms is in truth the style of aesthetic iconoclasm where, unlike in ancient litanies, “the form is shattered and created anew from within the soul.”¹⁸³ This shattering and renewal of form, which in the “nationalism of psalms,” is also a “transgression of limits” toward a Zion without boundaries, a Zion of the “middle” (*Weltmitte*), constitutes for Rosenzweig, and perhaps, for the Jewish Renaissance overall, a critique of all-established form through the unfinishedness of the artwork, a recognition of weakness through the making recognizable of mere “bare” beginnings, of beginnings that still are what they are before their perpetual ends: beginnings. Whether oriented toward a Zion with real boundaries (and Rosenzweig, unlike Buber, was not), and whether willing to engage in the impure tasks of worldly history, it was in the aesthetics of regeneration that the Jewish Renaissance encountered its deepest and highest moral possibility: the

possibility of unfinishedness. So we shall, in departing from this study on an idea, whose aesthetic imagination is intimately bound to the imagination of incipience as the beginning beginning, as the unfinished where time turns and atones against its past and forgetfulness, return to what may be the most important vision of Rosenzweig's "art of infinity" and, perhaps, of all endeavors under the banner of "renaissance": "There emerges in beginnings—very much in beginnings . . . —a thinking that is responsible."¹⁸⁴

V

Coda

. . . a thinking that is responsible. We have tried to delineate a thinking that is in renaissance and a writing that follows the semantics of restoration. Now we must grapple with whether such a thinking and writing can be justified in an age where renaissance and restoration have fallen, as one author puts it, "without uproar into near obsolescence,"¹⁸⁵ and where the thought of renaissance seems to fill us with a shudder of Western imperialism or wicked national revivalism, with fears of the returning hegemonic classic, and with a sense of incorrigibly modern self-righteousness. How can the idea of Renaissance, which has been so vastly discredited and relegated to the realm of popular imagination, still have meaning to a reader whose educated sensibilities must reject all renaissance as entirely fictitious, as a frivolous invention belonging to the tragic ideology we call modernity? For is our distrust in the modern, not a distrust in its schismatic beginnings, in its "clean break" and "fresh start," to speak with Jacques Barzun?¹⁸⁶ On the other hand, is our distrust in the restored, not a distrust in beginnings that continue to be and refuse not to be again, a distrust in the origin, the principle, the author, the restorer, the reclamer, or in the one who claims to re-remember, in the one even who claims only to conserve? Are we, then, not equally distrustful of radical beginnings as we are of radical perpetuity?

"To be obliged to responsibility," Emmanuel Levinas once wrote, "has no beginning."¹⁸⁷ Not in the sense at least, he continues, "of some

sort of perpetuity or of a perpetuity that would claim to be eternity,” no beginning, then, in the sense of the Greek arché, which makes possible, ever anew, the possibility of anamnesis, but a beginning that is anarchic, unbegun in the sense of an “inconvertibility into an assumable present,” unbegun in the sense of a beginning, whose past “refuses itself to the present and to representation,” because it refuses to eradicate its “traces.” Where beginnings begin there begins, for Levinas, also the erasure of traces, the loss of “ambiguity,” of the “nonabsent,” the end of “anarchy,” and thus the end of responsibility itself. To Levinas, the principal theme of modernity is its *théma*, its “thematization” through beginnings, which assimilates, “subjects,” and “usurps” all other to itself. It is a theme not uncommon in the assessment of modernity and its inglorious “end.”¹⁸⁸ But it is a theme that like its counter-theme—the theme of restoration—presupposes beginnings as unambiguous places from where to begin or to which to return: as unambiguously present in the present mind, and as constituting nothing but the subject in itself. That, of course, beginnings will do: Imagine the self at the great disjunction it alone is called to master. There is no beginning that does not transfer its power to the beginner, and there is no reclamation of origins, no act of restoration, no beginning anew, that does not authorize the restorer with the power of the restored. We cannot begin without that sense of self-entitlement that appears to interrupt all otherness and anarchy.

We have seen beginnings vanish in this study into the realm of poetic imagination, narrative, and counter-time, but we have also seen *beginning* emerge more clearly as a mode of being, as a frame of mind, as a *Denkweise*, a way of thinking that cannot, or will not allow itself to, think outside the triad of its imaginative desires: To begin, to begin again, and to turn around. Beginning, then, emerged to us as a consciousness so conscious of itself that it lost the unambiguousness of its beginnings, a consciousness filled with excessive reflexivity and doubt perhaps, as all modern consciousness is said to be, but a consciousness also filled with an excessive sense of being in between, of being (at) the threshold between now and then, and old and new, and self and other, and here and there, at the threshold where everything is trace, nonabsent, and in need of response, at the threshold, then, where conscious-

ness turns over into the infinity that is, or may become, the infinity of conscience.¹⁸⁹

This conscience we have called “renaissance.” It is a conscience that distrusts radical beginnings and radical perpetuity, that distrusts both time and timelessness, the fleeting and the eternal, and yet a conscience that speaks, with poetic defiance, meaning into the otherwise meaningless world. If our thesis has been that renaissances, by their sheer grammatical structure, by the simultaneity of their rootwords, make present distant times without submerging distance into the modern sea of sameness, that renaissances are, in fact, not schismatic new beginnings, nor primitive perpetuities, but postulations of thresholds and turning points, of temporal “Ands” that allow and obligate to experience the present in the presence of other times and to make time responsible for itself; and if our observation has been that the thinking that is renaissance is a thinking that atones for its own violence of beginnings, that seeks entitlement in beginnings other than its own, that rethinks ever anew the thinking that is modernity, and that revisits ever anew the Self, or the “We,” from the Self, or the “We,” we no longer are, then we must leave the course of this study with a conclusion that can be no more than another middle itself: that renaissances, as we have come to understand their ideal idea, are neither hostile toward modernity, nor indifferent to it, nor strategies of flight or alternate reality, nor resurrections after modernity’s alleged death, but contrary to all such and other revisions of the modern experiment, claims to a re-generated “old-new” that will act not as modernity’s defeat and eulogy but as its renewed and “renewing” imagination of *Gesinnung*—of a conscience that remains imperative. Whether renaissances, then, are destined to become wicked restorations of a mythic past or voices of conscience at the ever-renewed junction between “progress” and “return” will depend on whether they think of themselves as mere returns, in which the restoring self recognizes no more than itself, or as repairing repetitions, in which the Self is called to recognize itself to be unfinished again in the ever-distant Other.

Abbreviations

- Briefwechsel I–III*: Martin Buber, *Briefwechsel aus sieben Jahrzehnten*, vols. I–III, ed. Grete Schaefer (Heidelberg, Germany: Lambert Schneider, 1972–1975).
- GS 1:1–4:2*: Franz Rosenzweig: *Der Mensch und sein Werk. Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Reinhold Mayer and Annemarie Mayer (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974–1984).
- GWE*: Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Gesammelte Werke in Einzelausgaben*, ed. Herbert Steiner (Berlin, Germany: S. Fischer, 1950–1952).
- JB I*: Martin Buber, *Die Jüdische Bewegung: Gesammelte Aufsätze und Ansprachen*, Erste Folge, 1900–1914, 2nd ed. (Berlin, Germany: Jüdischer Verlag, 1920).
- JB II*: Martin Buber, *Die Jüdische Bewegung: Gesammelte Aufsätze und Ansprachen*, Zweite Folge, 1916–1920 (Berlin, Germany: Jüdischer Verlag, 1920).
- JuJ*: Martin Buber, *Der Jude und sein Judentum. Gesammelte Aufsätze und Reden* (Gerlingen, Germany: Lambert Schneider, 1993).
- KSA*: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe*, Vols. 1–15, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Munich, Germany: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag and Walter de Gruyter, 1988).
- LBIYB*: Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook (London, UK: Secker and Warburg, 1956).
- MBW*: Martin Buber Werkausgabe, Vols. 1–21, ed. Paul Mendes-Flohr and Peter Schäfer (Gütersloh, Germany: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2001).
- RdV*: Hermann Cohen, *Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums* (Wiesbaden: Fourier, [1928] 1988).
- RoR*: Hermann Cohen, *Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism*, trans. Simon Kaplan (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995).
- Schilpp/Friedman*: Paul Schilpp and Maurice Friedman, eds., *Martin Buber* (Stuttgart, Germany: Kohlhammer, 1965).
- Star*: Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans. William W. Hallo (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston).
- Stern*: Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung* (Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1990).

TE: Ernst Bloch, *Tübinger Einleitung in die Philosophie* (Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1970).

Werke I–III: Martin Buber, *Werke*, Vols. 1–3 (Munich, Germany: Kōsel and Lambert Schneider, 1962–1964).

Notes

Preamble

1. For the purpose of this study, we do not differentiate between the German and Austro-Hungarian empires, even though their Jewish dispensations were vastly different. One could argue, in fact, that the beginnings of the Jewish Renaissance were distinctly shaped by a multilingual and pluri-cultural awareness characteristic of the Habsburg experience.
2. Thus, Steven Lowenstein speaks of a “profound change of orientation.” Cf. idem, “Ideologie und Identität,” *Deutsch-Jüdische Geschichte der Neuzeit III (1871–1918)*, ed. Steven Lowenstein et al. (Munich, Germany: C. H. Beck, 1997), 278.
3. On the connotations of these terms, see David Sorkin, “Emancipation and Assimilation: Two Concepts and their Application to German-Jewish History,” *LBIYB* 35 (1990): 17–33.
4. Martin Buber, “On the Jewish Renaissance,” in *The Martin Buber Reader: Essential Writings*, ed. Asher D. Biemann (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 139. See also idem, “Jüdische Renaissance,” *Ost und West* 1, no. 1 (1901): 1–10. The most comprehensive study on the phenomenon of the German-Jewish Renaissance remains Michael Brenner’s *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996).
5. See in particular Benjamin Harshav, *Language in Time of Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); also idem, “Theses on the Historical Context of the Modern Jewish Revolution,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 10, no. 4 (2003): esp. 309–12; related to this subject, Barbara Schäfer, “Jewish Renaissance and *Tehiyah*—Two that Are One?,” *ibid.*: 320–35. For earlier treatments of the Hebrew Renaissance, see Shalom Spiegel, *Hebrew Reborn* (Cleveland, OH: Meridian, 1962 [1930]), esp. 209–416; Joseph Klausner, *A History of Modern Hebrew Literature (1785–1930)*, trans. Herbert Danby (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1974 [1932]), esp. 100–133. On Ahad Ha-am’s role in the Hebrew Revival movement, see Steven Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet: Ahad Ha’am and the Origins of Zionism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); David H. Weinberg, *Between Tradition and*

Modernity: Haim Zhitlowski, Simon Dubnow, Ahad Ha-Am, and the Shaping of Modern Jewish Identity (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1996). For the impact of Chaim Nachman Bialik, see Nathan Rotenstreich, “Bialik on the Renaissance of Jewish Culture,” *Modern Judaism* 10, no. 2 (Spring 1961): 151–59. On the aesthetic dimensions of Russian Jewish Renaissance, see Ruth Apter-Gabriel, ed., *Tradition and Revolution: The Jewish Renaissance in Russian Avant-Garde Art, 1912–1928* (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 1987).

6. Paradoxically, as most historians agree, this “symbiosis” existed as much as it did *not* exist. Thus, Enzo Traverso writes: “From the cultural point of view, the ‘Judeo-German symbiosis’ was in reality a gigantic explosion of Jewish creativity, originating in the encounter between a millennial tradition—a ‘hidden tradition,’ always marginalized and persecuted—and the German *Geist*.” But he continues to argue that German-Jewish culture “was never the result of a genuine symbiosis. Instead of inaugurating a dialogue between Jews and Germans, assimilation led immediately to a Jewish monologue, which took place in the Germanic world, was expressed in the German language, and was nourished by the cultural legacy, but which, in fact, was carried on in a void.” Enzo Traverso, *The Jews and Germany: From the Judeo-German Symbiosis to the Memory of Auschwitz*, trans. Daniel Weissbort (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 36, 40; or Paul Mendes-Flohr: “The German-Jewish symbiosis was within the mind of the Jew, regardless of whether or not it existed between the Jew and non-Jewish German.” Paul Mendes-Fohr, *German Jews: A Dual Identity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 94.

7. See, for instance, Jacob Boas, “German Jewry’s Search for Renewal in the Hitler Era as Reflected in the Major Jewish Newspapers (1933–1938),” *Journal of Modern History* 53, no. 1, On Demand Supplement (March 1981): D1001–24.

8. Ernst Cassirer, in an essay of 1943, has already clarified that “Renaissance” cannot be thought of *other* than as an idea. Rather than a period of historical content and actual historical facts “that ever existed at any given time,” it is an idea of historical “style.” “‘Renaissance’ and ‘Middle Ages’ are, strictly speaking, not names for historical periods at all, but they are concepts of ‘ideal types,’ in Max Weber’s sense.” Hence, Cassirer suggests that a study of “Renaissance” must be devoted “less to the *content* of ideas than their *dynamics*.” Ernst Cassirer, “Some Remarks on the Question of the Originality of the Renaissance,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 4, no. 1 (Jan. 1943): 55. For a history of the concept of Renaissance and its reception, see especially Wallace K. Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought. Five Centuries of Interpretation* (Cambridge, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1948); and William Kerrigan and Gordon Braden, *The Idea of the Renaissance* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

9. See Charles Bambach, *Heidegger, Dilthey, and Historicism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), esp. 37–39. See also Allan Megill’s *Prophets of Extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), esp. 110–13.

10. Stephen H. Watson, *Tradition(s): Refiguring Community and Virtue in Classical German Thought* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 46; emphasis mine.

11. Ibid.

12. Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Viking, 1968), 25–26.

13. Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, Vol. 2 (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), 210.

14. Karl Marx, “Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte” (1852), reprinted in J. P. Mayer, ed., *The Impact of the 18th Brumaire* (New York: Arno, 1979), 17.

15. Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, Vol. 1, 205. For the “abyss of pure spontaneity” see *ibid.*, Vol. 2, 216. This insight also applies to Arendt’s interpretation of the American Revolution as a “restoration” and rearticulation of “new freedom . . . in terms of ancient liberties.” Cf. Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1988), 43, 155.

16. Jacques Barzun, *Classic, Romantic, and Modern* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1961), 131.

17. I am quoting here from Harold Rosenberg, “The Resurrected Romans,” *idem*, *The Tradition of the New* (New York: Horizon, 1960), 167. To be clear: Marx saw in the practice of “weltgeschichtlicher Totenbeschwörung” essentially a mythic constitution of power through the “poetics” of history. Such resurrectionist revolution, he argued, would ultimately “paralyze” its actors: “Die Revolution selbst paralysiert ihre eigenen Träger und stattet nur ihre Gegner mit leidenschaftlicher Gewaltksamkeit aus.” Marx, “Der achtzehnte Brumaire,” 41. Of the “proletarian” revolution, on the other hand, he expected a constant dynamism of “beginning again” which, ironically, bears some resemblance with the self-conception of the Jewish Renaissance: “Proletarische Revolutionen . . . kritisieren beständig sich selbst, unterbrechen sich fortwährend in ihrem eigenen Lauf, kommen auf das scheinbar Vollbrachte zurück, um es wieder von neuem anzufangen . . . bis die Situation geschaffen ist, die jede Umkehr möglich macht. . . .” (*Ibid.*, 21). Hence, the ideal revolution, for Marx, is a revolution that reaches a point of *conscious irreversibility*, overcoming its desire to return to the past. “The revolution of the latest born class, the proletariat,” writes Harold Rosenberg, “would escape the mythical mechanism of resurrection and self-disguise which is the poetry of history,” and, quoting Marx: “The social revolution . . . cannot draw its poetry from the past but only from the future” (Rosenberg, “The Resurrected Romans,” 167). It is here that the difference between Marx’s ideal revolution and the idea of renaissance emerges. For Marx, it is the casting off of poetic superstition in history that would emancipate the revolutionary consciousness from its mythic desire for resurrection. For the idea of renaissance, in our conception, it is the *ethicization* of the poetic imagination as the enactment of *conscious reversibility*.

18. José Sánchez de Murillo, *Der Geist der deutschen Romantik: Der Übergang vom logischen zum dichterischen Denken und der Hervorgang der Tiefenphänomenologie* (Munich, Germany: Friedrich Pfeil, 1986), 279.

19. Cf. ibid., 281. For “Permanenz” and “beständige Renascenz als Erneuerung,” see Franz von Baader, *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. 9 (Gesammelte Schriften zur Religionssphilosophie 3), ed. Franz Hofmann (Aalen, Germany: Scientia Verlag, 1963), 322.

20. Consider Leo Baeck’s deliberately provocative conflation of (Paulinic) Christianity with romantic religion: “What is called the victory of Christianity was in reality this victory of romanticism.” Leo Baeck, “Romantic Religion,” idem, *Judaism and Christianity*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1958), 198. Some readers might feel, to the degree of offence, that the category of discourse that brings us to the idea of “renaissance” is one rooted in “romantic” Christianity rather than “rational,” “down-to-earth,” Judaism. Be that as it may, the conceptual crossing of boundaries constitutes to the author of this study a source neither of particular excitement nor anxiety. One could also think of Jacques Barzun’s most elementary assertion that “romanticism has to do with creating a new society different from its immediate forerunner,” which would apply, in an equally elementary manner, to the social imagination of renaissance and cultural repentance. Cf. Barzun, *Classic, Romantic, and Modern*, 36.

21. Franz von Baader, *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. 10, 32: “Diese unmittelbare und vermittelte, gegebene und aufgegebene Geburt, unterscheidet die Schrift damit, daß sie nur die erstere als die natürliche und angeschaffene, nicht aber die zweite für solche erkennt.” Also, de Murillo, *Der Geist der deutschen Romantik*, 281.

22. Cf. Max Scheler, “Gesamtreue (1919–1921),” in idem, *Schriften aus dem Nachlass*, Vol. 6 (Varia II), ed. Manfred Frings (Bonn, Germany: Bouvier Verlag, 1997), 143–44. The text is an addendum to Scheler’s 1918 essay “Reue und Wiedergeburt.”

23. Julia Kristeva, *Nations Without Nationalism*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 2–3: “The cult of origins is a hate reaction. *Hatred of those others* who do not share my origins and who affront me personally, economically, and culturally.” The idea of “renaissance,” as I hope to sketch it here, resists this cult of origins, though it remains, as all ideology of return, immensely susceptible to it. Likewise, the idea of atonement, as it will emerge, is not necessarily a resultant of what Kristeva calls the “archeology of purity.” Cf. Julia Kristeva, *The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt: The Powers and Limits of Psychoanalysis*, Vol. 1, trans. Jeanine Herman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 21–23. For an earlier critique of the “idol of origins,” see Marc Bloch, *The Historian’s Craft*, trans. Peter Putnam (New York: Vintage, 1953), 29–35.

24. Ernst Bloch, *TE*, 360. The link between “atonement” (specifically in the sense of *teshuvah*) and national revival has been suggested already by Ehud Luz, who also draws on Scheler and Bloch, among others, to explore the nationalisms of Kook and Buber. See Ehud Luz, “Utopia and Return: On the Structure of Uto-

pian Thinking and its Relation to Jewish-Christian Tradition,” *Journal of Religion* 73, no. 3 (July 1993): 357–77. André Neher has linked the idea of *teshuva*—without negating its inherently tragic elements—to the modern phenomenon of disassimilation. Cf. André Neher, *They Made Their Souls Anew*, trans. David Maisel (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990). Many readers will associate the healing repetition and surpassing-overhauling of the past that resonates in the idea of atonement with Freud’s analysis of memory as an acting out of the past: “[S]o dürfen wir sagen, der Analytierte *erinnere* überhaupt nichts von dem Ver-gessenen und Verdrängten, sondern er *agiere* es. Er reproduziert es nicht als Erinnerung, sondern als Tat, er *wiederholt* es, ohne natürlich zu wissen, daß er es wiederholt.” Sigmund Freud, “Erinnern, Wiederholen, Durcharbeiten,” in idem, *Gesammelte Werke, chronologisch geordnet*, Vol. 10: Werke aus den Jahren 1913–1917 (Frankfurt, Germany: S. Fischer, 1942), 129. Slavoj Zizek has developed this idea further via Jacques Lacan’s use of “transference.” In working through the “symptom,” he argues, “we are precisely ‘bringing about the past’—we are producing a symbolic reality of the past, long-forgotten traumatic events.” There emerges, then, the figure of an “internally inverted eight: a circular movement, a kind of snare where we can progress only in such a manner that we ‘overtake’ ourselves in the transference, to find ourselves later at a point at which we have already been.” Slavoj Zizek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London, UK: Verso, 1989), 56–57. While I cannot pursue here Freud’s theory of repetition and “Durcharbeiten” nor Zizek’s use of Lacan, I must acknowledge that renaissances act not only as cultural atonements but very much as cultural “therapies.”

25. Hence Jakob Klatzkin’s rhetorical question: “Bedeutet das moderne Trotzjudentum eine Aufrichtung des Adelsbewußtseins unserer Ahnen?” Jakob Klatzkin, *Krisis und Entscheidung im Judentum* (Berlin, Germany: Jüdischer Verlag, 1921), 144. On the term “Trotzjudentum,” see Jehuda Reinharz, *Fatherland and Promised Land: The Dilemma of the German Jew, 1893–1914* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1975), esp. 34–36. For an excellent and concise treatment of this phenomenon, synthesizing much of the relevant scholarship, see Christian Wiese, *Wissenschaft des Judentums und protestantische Theologie im wilhelminischen Deutschland: Ein Schrei ins Leere?* Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 49–58.

26. Cf. Arnold Paucker, “Die Abwehr des Antisemitismus in den Jahren 1893–1933,” in *Antisemitismus. Von der Judenfeindschaft zum Holocaust*, ed. Herbert Strauss and Norbert Kampe (Frankfurt, Germany: Campus Verlag, 1988), 143–71, esp. 146.

27. Jack Wertheimer, *Unwelcome Strangers: East European Jews in Imperial Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), esp. 151–53. Steven Aschheim refers to the Eastern European Jews as “cultural symbols” of German Jewish self-definition. See idem, “The Eastern European Jew and German Jewish Identity,” *Studies in Contemporary Jewry I* (1984): 21–22. Also, idem, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness*,

1800–1923 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), esp. 215–18. Of the larger phenomenon of German-Jewish “orientalism” Paul Mendes-Flohr writes: “The religious traditions of the East were reputedly untouched by the ‘soulless’ rationalism and materialism of the bourgeois West. The Orient—which had hitherto been regarded by Europeans as a distant, debased civilization—had suddenly acquired an alluring prestige as the polar opposite of what was increasingly perceived to be a decadent West.” Paul Mendes-Flohr, “Fin-de-siècle Orientalism, the *Ostjuden*, and the Aesthetics of Jewish Self-Affirmation,” in *idem, Divided Passions: Jewish Intellectuals and the Experience of Modernity* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 77. For a discussion of the contradictory reception of the *Ostjuden* among German-Jewish literati and artists, see Sander Gilman, “The Rediscovery of Eastern European Jews: German Jews in the East, 1890–1918,” in *Jews and Germans from 1860 to 1933: The Problematic Symbiosis*, ed. David Bronsen (Heidelberg, Germany: Carl Winter, 1979), 338–65. That the imaginative process and ambivalent “nostalgia” for *Shtetl* Judaism was by no means confined to fin-de-siècle German Jewry but, in fact, a larger twentieth century phenomenon is illustrated in Steven J. Zipperstein, *Imagining Russian Jewry: Memory, History, Identity* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), esp. 16–39.

28. See Shulamit Volkov, “The Dynamics of Dissimilation: *Ostjuden* and German Jews,” in Jehuda Reinharz and Walter Schatzberg, *The Jewish Response to German Culture: From the Enlightenment to the Second World War* (Hanover, MA: University Press of New England, 1985), 211.

29. Ibid., 211. One could illustrate this sentiment with the recollections of the German Zionist Kurt Blumenfeld: “Zionismus war uns die Frage einer ernsten Wahl, wir wurden ‘Herren der Wahl und nicht Sklaven der Wahl’ (Buber). Ich nannte diesen Zionismus . . . post-assimilatorisch.” Kurt Blumenfeld, *Erlebter Zionismus. Ein Vierteljahrhundert deutscher Zionismus* (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1962), 43.

30. Klaus Reichert, “Introductory Remarks,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 10, no. 4 (2003): 296.

31. Harshav, *Language in Time of Revolution*, 17.

32. Cf. Rachel Katznelson “Language Insomnia,” trans. by Barbara Harshav in Harshav, *Language in Time of Revolution*, 185: “We mean that blessed revolutionary thought which stimulates an internal war, inside yourself, which can then lead to a clash with the environment.”

33. Lucien Febvre, “How Jules Michelet Invented the Renaissance,” in *A New Kind of History: From the Writings of Febvre*, trans. K. Folca, ed. Peter Burke (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 264.

34. Ibid., 258.

35. Pico della Mirandola, *Heptaplus*, “Seventh Exposition: Of the Felicity Which Is Eternal Life,” trans. Douglas Carmichael (Indianapolis: The Library of Liberal Arts, 1965), 151.

36. Franz Rosenzweig, *Stern*, 269
37. Cf. Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 207.
38. Adin Steinsaltz, *Teshuvah: A Guide for the Newly Observant Jew* (New York: Free Press, 1982), 3.
39. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 283.
40. Cf. Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 7.
41. William McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607–1977* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 2.
42. John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State* (London, UK: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 30: “Cultural nationalists act as *moral innovators*, establishing ideological movements at times of social crisis in order to transform the belief-systems of communities, and provide models of socio-political development that guide their modernizing strategies.”
43. Thus, Emilio Gentile analyzes the Italian Risorgimento and fascism as modern renaissance movements, down to their baptismal metaphors and calls for collective metanoia. Emilio Gentile, “The Myth of National Regeneration in Italy: From Modernist Avant-Garde to Fascism,” in *Fascist Visions: Art and Ideology in France and Italy*, ed. Matthew Affron and Mark Antliff (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 24–45.
44. For the roots of this approach, see, for instance, Hans Kelsen, *Aufsätze zur Ideologiekritik*, ed. Ernst Topitsch (Neuwied-Berlin, Germany: Luchterhand, 1964); and Peter Strasser, “Aufklärung über die Aufklärung? Bemerkungen zur Aufklärung als Ideologiekritik und zur Kritik an der Ideologie der Aufklärung,” in *Ideologiekritik und Demokratietheorie bei Hans Kelsen*, ed. Werner Krawietz et al. (Berlin, Germany: Duncker & Humblot, 1982), 103–22.
45. Cf. Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, *Booking Passage: Exile and Homecoming in the Modern Jewish Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 22: “But *recovery* and *return* both territorialize the Jewish imagination through closure.” Accordingly, Ezrahi calls on us to “*reopen*” the narrative of return. The idea of renaissance, in my view, has been that “reopening” from its very inception.
46. Martin Buber, “Warum gelernt werden soll,” *MBW* 8, 221.
47. Yaakov Shavit, *Athens in Jerusalem: Classical Antiquity and Hellenism in the Making of the Modern Secular Jew*, trans. Chaya Naor and Niki Werner (London, UK: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1997).
48. For a recent work on Jewish “orientalism,” see Yaron Peleg, *Orientalism and the Hebrew Imagination* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005). For other sources and brief discussion of an unusual Jewish “orientalist,” see Asher

Biemann, “Eugen Hoeflich: Tagebücher” (review), *Modern Judaism* 21 (2001): 174–84.

49. I am aware that “humanism”—like “renaissance” itself—has a complex history in German thought and culture, and that what appeared in the guise of a “new Humanism” was not necessarily accompanied by “liberal” values but, in fact, often staunchly conservative: “Der Humanismus aber sammelte die Gegner des ‘Fortschritts’ zum großen Teil um sich.” Horst Rüdiger, *Wesen und Wandelung des Humanismus* (Hildesheim, Germany: Georg Olms, 1966 [1937]), 228. On the genealogy of the term and its German manifestation, see Giuseppe Toffanin, *La fine dell’umanesimo* (Rome, Italy: Vecchiarelli, 1991 [1920]), esp. 301–54; Manfred Landfester, *Humanismus und Gesellschaft im 19. Jahrhundert* (Darmstadt, Germany: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988). For the phenomenon of a religious humanism, see, for instance, Jacques Maritain’s “true” and “heroic” humanism that would conform to the Christian vision of man. Cf. Jacques Maritain, *True Humanism*, trans. M. R. Adamson (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries, 1970), esp. xvii. The late Edward Said, on the other hand, proposed a new, decidedly secular, and particularly non-Eurocentric, humanism as a “means of questioning, upsetting, and reformulating,” that would resist “uncritically codified certainties” and appreciate “other languages, other histories.” Cf. Edward Said, “Humanism’s Sphere,” idem, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004). Sadly, Said did not have the chance to fully live his lofty humanism.

50. I should like to refer here to Jon D. Levenson’s study *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), which makes a formidable case that the idea of resurrection—contrary to common Jewish self-perception—has deep roots in the Jewish tradition. For an earlier reconsideration of resurrection in Judaism, see Neil Gillman’s essay “Beyond Wissenschaft: The Resurrection of Resurrection in Jewish Thought since 1950,” in *Who Owns Judaism? Public Religion and Private Faith in America and Israel* (Studies in Contemporary Jewry XVII), ed. Eli Lederhendler (Oxford UK: Oxford University Press, 2001), 88–100.

51. David Vital, *The Future of the Jews: A People at the Crossroads?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 148.

52. Simon Rawidowicz, “The Ever-Dying People,” idem, *State of Israel, Diaspora, and Jewish Continuity. Essays on the “Ever-Dying People”*, ed. Benjamin C. I. Ravid (Hanover, MA: Brandeis University Press, 1998).

53. Emil Fackenheim, *To Mend the World: Foundations of Future Jewish Thought* (New York: Schocken, 1982), 318.

54. Johan Huizinga, *Das Problem der Renaissance* (Darmstadt, Germany: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967), 6.

55. For a comparative study, see Tracy Mishkin, *The Harlem and Irish Renaissances: Language, Identity, and Representation* (Gainesville: University Press

of Florida, 1998). Mishkin, in fact, uses the Jewish experience as a “model of Black-Irish comparisons” (cf. *ibid.*, 3–5). Note also the discussion of “renaissance” and “modernism” in Houston A. Baker, Jr., *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), esp. 91–94. Also, C.W.E. Bigsby, *The Second Black Renaissance: Essays in Black Literature* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1980). It is significant that Bigsby emphasizes the classical renaissance theme of “the recreation of the self and the community, the rebirth of the black Lazarus” (*ibid.*, 5) as characteristic of this “second renaissance,” which to him also constitutes an “unfinished” moral regeneration (cf. *ibid.*, 8).

56. The November 2000 issue of the journal *Sh'ma*, published by the “Committee of Jewish Family and Life,” was indeed devoted to the “Jewish Renaissance Agenda.” Quotes from the essays by Jonathan Woocher, Jody Myers, Mike Moore, and Alisa Rubin Kurshhan, *ibid.*: 1, 16, 11, 13. Likewise, the Winter 2000 issue of *Contact* published a small manifesto by the Jewish educator Richard M. Joel under the title “The Road to Renaissance,” calling for an end of “continuity” and the beginnings of “something fresh and new . . . , something they could create and own themselves.” In 2001, a London-based journal was launched under the telling name *Jewish Renaissance*. Its editor, Janet Levin, described its purpose as “to encourage the resurgence of Jewish culture, to widen awareness of its existence, and to ensure that even more can enjoy the riches it provides.” The examples, of course, are many, and it would require a different kind of study—the study of Anglo-American Jewish popular culture—to do justice to this phenomenon of present-day “renaissance,” “renewalism,” and “teshuvaism.”

57. Cf. Steven Kepnes, Peter Ochs, Robert Gibbs, eds., *Reasoning After Revelation: Dialogues in Postmodern Jewish Philosophy* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1998), 25, 38, 39. It is noteworthy that Robert Gibbs includes “resurrection and the material world” as one of seven “rubrics” for Jewish philosophy. “The materialism of resurrection,” he writes, “is not an inversion of otherworldliness in general; it is not pure hedonism, but is precisely the materialism of sociality, the material needs of the others” (*idem*, *Correlations in Rosenzweig and Levinas* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992], 257). This assessment is remarkably close to what our observations will find. Ehud Luz rightly remarks: “It is characteristic of Jewish thought in the twentieth century that it takes the idea of *teshuvah* as a point of departure for the reinterpretation of Judaism. The utopian purpose of *teshuvah* is now less important than the restorative aspect.” Luz, “Utopia and Return,” 369. Likewise, Fackenheim writes: “Teshuvah is at the core of all Jewish existence” (Fackenheim, *To Mend the World*, 317). Also, Michael Wyschogrod: “The future of Judaism must include Jewish renewal.” *Idem*, *The Body of Faith: God in the People Israel* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1996), 230.

Part One, Chapter One

1. Cf. Roland Barthes, “Where to Begin?” *idem, New Critical Essays*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1990), 79.
2. Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill & Wang, 1974), 10.
3. Cf. Wilhelm Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften VII* (Stuttgart, Germany: Teubner, 1968), 277–78.
4. Cf. Wilhelm Schapp: *Verstrickt in Geschichten* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Heymann, 1976).
5. John Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics. Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 7; 282: “Radical Hermeneutics is trying to describe a situation in which we never get any rest, in which things are never secured against their opposite. We can never build a shelter against the winds of flux.” On the decline of origin and beginning, see the study by John Pizer, *Toward a Theory of Origin. Essays on Modern German Thought* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995). Pizer defines post-structuralism’s “central theme” as “that nothing in life and art can be reduced to single intentions, or units of knowledge (‘epistemes’).” (*Ibid.*, 5). “Given this all-encompassing assumption,” he continues, “the pursuit of origin is inevitably seen as invalid because it is associated with the attempt to demonstrate a singular, foundational locus.” Also George Steiner: “There are in Derridean deconstruction neither ‘fathers’ nor beginnings.” *Idem, Grammars of Creation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 23.
6. Catherine Keller, *Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* (London, UK: Routledge, 2003), 3: “Beginning is going on.”
7. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd edition. The first definition reads: “The action or process of entering upon existence or upon action, or of bringing into existence; commencing, origination.”
8. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, V.1, 1013a, 17–18.
9. Cf. *ibid.*, V.12, 1019a, 15–16. See also the discussion on Aristotle in Arnold Ehrhardt, *The Beginning: A Study in the Greek Philosophical Approach to the Concept of Creation from Anaximander to St. John* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1968), esp. 12–14.
10. Cf. Rudolf Carnap, “The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language,” reprinted in A.J. Ayer, ed., *Logical Positivism* (New York: Free Press, 1959), 65.
11. Theodor Adorno, *Jargon der Eigentlichkeit. Zur deutschen Ideologie* (Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1977), 12.
12. Cf. Vilfredo Pareto, *Trattato di sociologia generale*, Vol. 3 (Teoria della derivazioni), Edizione Critica, ed. Giovanni Busino (Turin, Italy: Unione Tipografico, 1988), § 1686: “Few [metaphysical terms] are designated for the common

people, who, with their mouths open, are stunned and surprised by the foreignness of words, thinking that they contain who knows what kind of mysteries.” See also Ernst Topitsch, *Erkenntnis und Illusion. Grundstrukturen unserer Weltauffassung* (Tübingen, Germany: J.C.B. Mohr, 1988), esp. 28–31.

13. Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Stuttgart, Germany: Reclam, 1985), B 478 and B 454–56.

14. Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik, die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten können* (Stuttgart, Germany: Reclam, 1989), A 155–56 and A 157: “So kann die Handlung in Ansehung der Kausalität der Vernunft als ein erster Anfang, in Ansehung der Reihe der Erscheinungen, aber doch zugleich als ein bloß subordinierter Anfang angesehen, und ohne Widerspruch in jenem Betracht als frei, in diesem (da sie bloß Erscheinung ist) als der Naturnotwendigkeit unterworfen, angesehen werden.”

15. Cf. Hans Blumenberg, *Säkularisierung und Selbstbehauptung (Erweiterte und überarbeitete Neuausgabe von ‘Die Legitimität der Neuzeit,’ erster und zweiter Teil)*, (Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1974), 168. Similarly, Horkheimer and Adorno characterize the enlightenment self-objectification of thinking as an “automatic, self-activating process.” Cf. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1989), 25. In another place, they will equate objectification with loss of memory: “The loss of memory is a transcendental condition of science. All objectification is forgetting.” Ibid., 230.

16. Blumenberg, *Säkularisierung und Selbstbehauptung*, 167–68.

17. Cf. Kant, *Prolegomena*, A 156.

18. Edward W. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (New York: Basic, 1975), xi.

19. Emmanuel Levinas, *Humanism of the Other*, trans. Nidra Poller (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 49.

20. Said, *Beginnings*, xiii.

21. Ibid., 36.

22. Ibid., 34.

23. Cf. Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 239.

24. Cf. ibid., 23.

25. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, V. 17, 1022a, 4–5. Heidegger would later interpret the Greek sense of limit (*péras*) not as limitation but as “that which makes the present appear.” “The limit releases into the unconcealed.” Martin Heidegger, “Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes,” *Holzwege* (Gesamtausgabe 5: Erste Abteilung: Veröffentlichte Schriften 1914–1970), (Frankfurt, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977), 71. Also, Helmuth Plessner: “Die Grenze des Dinges ist sein Rand, mit dem es an etwas Anderes, als es selbst ist, stößt. Zugleich bestimmt dieses sein Anfangen oder Aufhören die Gestalt des Dinges. . . .” Idem, *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch. Einleitung in die philosophische Anthropologie* (Berlin, Germany: Walter

de Gruyter, 1975), 100–1. Following Plessner, Odo Marquard develops this idea further in his essay, “Temporale Positionalität. Zum geschichtlichen Zäsurbedarf des modernen Menschen,” in *Epochenschwelle und Epochenbewußtsein*, ed. Reinhart Herzog and Reinhart Koselleck (Munich, Germany: Wilhelm Fink, 1987), 343–52.

26. Georg Simmel, “Brücke und Tür,” in idem, *Brücke und Tür. Essays des Philosophen zur Geschichte, Religion, Kunst und Gesellschaft*, ed. Michael Landmann (Stuttgart, Germany: K. F. Koehler Verlag, 1957), 6.

27. Ibid., 7.

28. Gerardus van der Leeuw, “Primordial Time and Final Time,” *Man and Time. Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks*, Bollingen Series XXX.3 (New York: Pantheon, 1957), 325.

29. van der Leeuw, “Primordial Time and Final Time,” 328.

30. John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1957), 57.

31. In Aristotle’s *Poetics*, *mythos* is most commonly rendered as “plot” or “plot-structure.” See Stephen Halliwell, *Aristotle’s Poetics* (London, UK: Duckworth, 1986), 5. I follow the English edition of the *Poetics*, trans. W. Hamilton Fyfe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953).

32. Aristotle, *Poetics*, 7, 3–4 (1450b; 31).

33. Paul Ricœur, “Narrative Time,” *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 1 (Autumn, 1980: On Narrative): 171.

34. Cf. Aristotle, *Poetics*, 9, 2–4 (1451b, 35). See also Halliwell, *Aristotle’s Poetics*, 79: “Such universals are meant to be intelligible precisely as such: that is, the mind which contemplates poetic mimesis can perceive it and understand it as the dramatic communication of universals.”

35. Ricœur, “Narrative Time,” 171.

36. Hayden White, *Metahistory. The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 7.

37. Aristotle, *Poetics*, 10, 1–4 (1452a, 39). Fyfe translates *peripetēia* simply as “discovery.” It would be more precise to say “turning recognition,” even though Aristotle uses the word *anagnorisis* for recognition. *Metabasis*, on the other hand, might best be translated as “turning transformation,” similar to *metabolē*. In both, it is the tragic element of the unexpected that lends the plot complexity.

38. Cf. Ricœur, “Narrative Time,” 178.

39. Cf. Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 50.

40. Georg W. F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik: Das Sein* (1812), (Hamburg, Germany: Felix Meiner, 1986), 39. On the concept of beginning in Hegel, see Karin Schrader-Klebert, *Das Problem des Anfangs in Hegels Philosophie* (Vienna, Austria: R. Oldenbourg, 1969).

41. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, 39.

42. Ibid., 39: “Der Anfang ist nicht das reine Nichts, sondern ein Nichts, von dem Etwas ausgehen soll.”

43. Cf. *ibid.*, 41.
44. Cf. Harry Redner, *In the Beginning Was the Deed: Reflections on the Passage of Faust* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).
45. Cf. Augustine, *Confessiones XI*, Cap. VII.9 and VIII.10, trans. Kurt Flasch, in *idem*, *Was ist Zeit? Augustinus von Hippo. Das XI. Buch der Confessiones. Historisch-philosophische Studie* (Frankfurt, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1993), 243.
46. Wilhelm Dupré, “Anfang,” *Handbuch Philosophischer Grundbegriffe*, Vol. 1, ed. Hermann Krings et al. (Munich, Germany: Kösel, 1973), 83. “[N]arration turns time into meaning,” writes Jörn Rüsen twenty years later. Jörn Rüsen: *Historische Orientierung: Über die Arbeit des Geschichtsbewußtseins, sich in der Zeit zurechtzufinden* (Cologne, Germany: Böhlau, 1994), 38.
47. A. C. Danto: *Analytical Philosophy of History* (London, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 11, 234.
48. *Ibid.*, 248.
49. Frank Kermode: *The Sense of an Ending*, 7.
50. *Ibid.*, 35–36.
51. For a synthetic assessment of this phenomenon, see Martin Kreiswirth, “Trusting the Tale: The Narrativist Turn in the Human Sciences,” *New Literary History* 23, no. 3 (Summer 1992): 629–57. For a discussion of the hermeneutic problems of historical narrativism, see Reinhart Koselleck, *Zeitschichten. Studien zur Historik* (Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp, 2000), esp. 111–15.
52. Johann Gustav Droysen, *Historik. Vorlesungen über Enzyklopädie und Methodologie der Geschichte*, ed. Rudolf Hübner (Munich, Germany: R. Oldenburg 1974 [1868]), 25.
53. *Ibid.*, 149.
54. *Ibid.*, 150.
55. *Ibid.*, 152.
56. *Ibid.*, 420.
57. Cf. Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Vol. 1, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 92; 94: “The refiguring of time by narrative is, I hold, the joint work of historical and fictional narrative.”
58. “If the event is a fragment of a narrative, it depends on the outcome of the narrative, and there is no underlying, basic event that escapes narrativization.” Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 242. Tellingly, Ricoeur uses the example of the Renaissance. For a sweeping discussion of narrative positions, see *idem*, *Time and Narrative*, Vol. 1, 91–174. On the connection between narration and continuity, see Hans Michael Baumgartner, *Kontinuität und Geschichte: Zur Kritik und Metakritik der historischen Vernunft* (Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1972), esp. 249–56. See also Reinhart

Koselleck and Wolf-Dieter Stempel, eds., *Geschichte—Ereignis und Erzählung* (Munich, Germany: Wilhelm Fink, 1973), Part B (Narrativität und Geschichte), 519–90.

59. R. G. Collingwood, “The Theory of Historical Cycles” (1927), idem, *Essays in the Philosophy of History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1965), 86.

60. Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Die Kontinuität der Geschichte und der Augenblick der Existenz,” idem, *Kleine Schriften I: Philosophie, Hermeneutik*, (Tübingen, Germany: J.C.B Mohr, 1967), 159.

61. Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode. Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen, Germany: J.C.B. Mohr, 1965), 419: “Nicht nur ist die Welt nur Welt, sofern sie zur Sprache kommt—die Sprache hat ihr eigentliches Dasein nur darin, daß sich in ihr die Welt darstellt.”

62. Cf. Gadamer, “Die Kontinuität der Geschichte,” 160.

63. Cf. ibid., 158.

64. Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Über leere und erfüllte Zeit,” idem, *Kleine Schriften III: Idee und Sprache* (Tübingen, Germany: J.C.B. Mohr, 1972), 235.

65. Ibid., 232.

66. Ibid., 233. On Gadamer’s concept of transition, see also idem, “Die Kontinuität der Geschichte,” 156–57.

67. Aleida Assmann, *Zeit und Tradition: Kulturelle Strategien der Dauer* (Cologne, Germany: Böhlau, 1999), 5.

68. Cf. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Vol. 1, 147.

69. Augustine, *Confessiones*, 11, Cap. xx.26 (Flasch, *Was ist Zeit?*, 259).

70. Cf. Ernst Bloch, *TE*, 151.

71. Jörn Rüsen stated that while the “narrativist paradigm,” seems largely uncontested in the realm of metahistory, historical practice does not regard itself as “mere story-telling.” Jörn Rüsen, *Zerbrechende Zeit: Über den Sinn der Geschichte* (Cologne, Germany: Böhlau, 2001), 43–48. For an earlier critique of the narrative method, see also Jürgen Kocka: “Zurück zur Erzählung? Plädoyer für historische Argumentation,” in idem, *Geschichte und Aufklärung. Aufsätze* (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 8–20.

72. Droysen, *Historik*, 273.

73. “Ogni vera storia è storia contemporanea.” Benedetto Croce, *Teoria e storia della storiografia* (Bari, Italy: Giu. Laterza & Figli, 1948), 4. Employing a strong Augustinian argument, Reinhart Koselleck arrives at a similar conclusion: “Jede Geschichte ist Zeitgeschichte, und jede Geschichte war, ist und wird sein: Gegenwartsgeschichte.” (Koselleck, *Zeitschichten*, 249).

74. Cf. Croce, *Teoria e storia della storiografia*, 10: “La storia è la storia viva, la cronaca, la storia morta.”

75. Ibid., 6.

76. Cf. Walter Benjamin, “Der Erzähler,” idem, *Illuminationen. Ausgewählte*

Schriften (Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1922), 400. The quote is from Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel: A Historicophilosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature*, trans. Anna Bostock (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971), 122.

77. Benjamin, “Der Erzähler,” 401.
78. Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Ästhetische und religiöse Erfahrung,” idem, *Gesammelte Werke 8: Ästhetik und Poetik I* (Tübingen, Germany: J.C.B. Mohr, 1987), 146.
79. White, *Metahistory*, 6.
80. Ibid., 6–7: “The historian arranges the events in the chronicle into a hierarchy of significance by assigning events different functions as story elements in such a way as to disclose the formal coherence of a whole set of events considered as a comprehensible process with a discernible beginning, middle, and end.”
81. Benjamin, “Der Erzähler,” 399.
82. Cf. Droysen, *Historik*, 345. When Droysen declared continuity and progression the only elements universal and necessary in history, he did so in a conscious attempt at distancing himself from his own teacher, Hegel. Unlike Hegel who knew both an absolute beginning and an absolute goal of history, a knowledge that distinguished the Western urge to “perfectibility” from the Oriental submission to cyclical fate, Droysen settled for a knowing the “direction” of continuity.
83. Cf. ibid., 29.
84. Cf. Benjamin, “Der Erzähler,” 398.
85. Cf. Georg Simmel, “Das Problem der historischen Zeit,” idem, *Zur Philosophie der Kunst. Philosophische und kunstphilosophische Aufsätze* (Potsdam, Germany: Gustav Kiepenheuer Verlag, 1922), 163–66.
86. Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 28.
87. Cf. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 256.
88. Ibid., 263.
89. Cf. Ernst Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen, Zweiter Teil: Das Mythische Denken* (Darmstadt, Germany: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1973), 131.
90. Ibid., 130.
91. Michael Landmann, *Ursprungsbild und Schöpfertat. Zum platonisch-biblischen Gespräch* (Munich, Germany: Nymphenburger Verlagsanstalt, 1966), 163. Landmann speaks of “retrospektiv, nach rückwärts ewig.”
92. Ehrhardt, *The Beginning*, 89.
93. Cf. Landmann, *Ursprungsbild und Schöpfertat*, 164. Plato, *Timaeus*, 37d, 5–7.
94. Landmann, *Ursprungsbild und Schöpfertat*, 160. On the concept of beginning in the Bible, see also Michael Carasik, “Three Biblical Beginnings,” in

Beginning/Again: Toward a Hermeneutics of Jewish Texts, ed. Aryeh Cohen and Shaul Magid (New York: Seven Bridges Press, 2002), 1–22. Catherine Keller has offered a fascinating theological inquiry into beginnings in *Face of the Deep*, esp. xv–24.

95. Augustine, *Confessiones XI*, Cap. XIII, 15–6 (Flasch, *Was ist Zeit?*, 249)
96. Philo, *On the Creation*, VII, 26–27 (Philo. Volume I, trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker (Loeb Classical Library 226), (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 21.
97. Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, II, chap. 13, trans. M. Friedländer (New York: Dover, 1956), 171.
98. Landmann, *Ursprungsbild und Schöpfertat*, 164.
99. Cf. Philo, *On the Creation*, VII, 28.
100. Cf. *Genesis Rabbah*, I. X, 1 A–B, trans. Jacob Neusner (Atlanta: Scholars, 1985), 13–14: “Why was the world created with [a word beginning with the letter] Bet? Just as the [Hebrew] letter Bet is closed [at the back and sides but] open in front, so you have no right to expound concerning what is above or below, before or afterward. . . . Concerning the day *after* which days were created, you may expound, but you may not make an exposition concerning what lies before then.”
101. “There was once a certain matron who asked R. Jose ben Halafta: In how many days did the Holy One create this world? He said to her: He did on the first day. She said to him: How do you teach me that? He said to her: Have you never made a banquet? She said to him: Yes. And how many kinds of food (*missus*) did you have? She said to him: Thus and so. He said to her: Did you set all of them before them simultaneously? She said to him: No, I cooked all the foods simultaneously but only brought them in before them *missus* by *missus*. . . .” *Midrash Tanhuma* 1.2 Genesis 1:1–3, Part II (S. Buber Recension), Vol. 1: Genesis, trans. John Townsend (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV, 1989), 2.
102. Cf. Georg W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte, Erste Hälfte, Band I: Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg, Germany: Felix Meiner, 1955), 35.
103. Cf. Assmann, *Zeit und Tradition*, 43–45.
104. Cf. Keller, *Face of the Deep*, xv.
105. Hermann Cohen, *RdV*, 79. For a detailed discussion of Cohen’s concept of origin, see Pierfrancesco Fiorato, *Geschichtliche Ewigkeit. Ursprung und Zeitlichkeit in der Philosophie Hermann Cohens* (Würzburg, Germany: Königshausen & Neumann, 1993), esp. 32–35; more recently, Reiner Wiehl, “Das Prinzip des Ursprungs in Hermann Cohens ‘Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums,’” in “*Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums*”: *Tradition und Ursprungsdanken in Hermann Cohens Spätwerk*, ed. Helmut Holzhey, Gabriel Motzkin, and Hartwig Wiedebach (Hildesheim, Germany: Georg Olms Verlag, 2000), 63–76. An earlier treatment would be Walter Kinkel, “Das Urteil des Ursprungs. Ein

Kapitel aus einem Kommentar zu Hermann Cohens Logik der reinen Erkenntnis,” *Kantstudien* 17, no. 3 (Festheft zu Hermann Cohens 70. Geburtstag, 1912): 274–82.

106. Pizer, *Toward a Theory of Radical Origin*, 113.
107. Hermann Cohen, *Logik der Reinen Erkenntnis* (Berlin, Germany: Bruno Cassirer, 1922), 36.
108. Ibid., 123.
109. Cohen, *RdV*, 98.
110. Ibid., 78.
111. Cf. ibid., 79: “Diese Erneuerung tritt an die Stelle der Schöpfung.” Cohen indeed speaks of Erneuerung as “einer Korrektur sehr ähnlich.”
112. Abraham J. Heschel, “The Sabbath” (expanded edition), in idem, *The Earth Is the Lord’s and the Sabbath* (Cleveland, OH: Meridian Books and The Jewish Publication Society, 1963), 100.
113. Cf. Cohen, *RdV*, 79–80.
114. Landmann, *Ursprungsbild und Schöpfertat*, 236.
115. Cohen, *RdV*, 291.
116. Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 182.
117. Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time. The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History* (London, UK: SCM, 1951), 59. Löwith acknowledges Cullmann as his primary source (idem, *Meaning in History*, 250n1). For a discussion of Cullmann’s concept of time, see Bo Reicke, “Christ et le temps,” in *Temps et eschatologie: Données bibliques et problématiques contemporaines*, ed. Jean-Louis Leuba (Paris, France: Éditions du Cerf, 1994), 65–80.
118. Karl Barth, *Der Römerbrief* (Zweite Fassung), (Munich, Germany: Chr. Kaiser, 1926), 70.
119. Paul Tillich, “Christologie und Geschichtsdeutung,” *Gesammelte Werke IV* (Der Widerstreit von Raum und Zeit: Schriften zur Geschichtsphilosophie), ed. Renate Albrecht (Stuttgart, Germany: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1963), 88.
120. Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen II*, 307.
121. John Marsh, *The Fulness of Time* (London, UK: Nisbet, 1952), 138.
122. Rudolf Bultmann, *The Presence of Eternity: History and Eschatology* (Clifford Lectures, 1955), (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 30, 35. Likewise, Marsh, *The Fulness of Time*, 141: “Christians alone have given ultimate significance to the Old Testament.”
123. Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, 43.
124. Marsh, *The Fulness of Time*, 33.
125. Paul Tillich, “Kairos II: Ideen zur Geisteslage der Gegenwart,” *Gesammelte Werke IV*, 33.
126. Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending*, 48. Cf. also idem, “An Approach Through History,” in *Towards a Poetics of Fiction. Essays from Novel: A Forum on Fiction, 1967–1976*, ed. Mark Spilka (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 29.

127. Cf. Paul Tillich, “Geschichtliche und ungeschichtliche Geschichtsdeutung” (Anhang C), *Gesammelte Werke 4*, 122–23; Jürgen Moltmann, *The Future of Creation* (London, UK: SCM, 1979), 29.

128. Marsh, *The Fulness of Time*, 87.

129. Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, 102.

130. Cf. *ibid.*, 95. Cullmann refers to I Cor. 15:46 and Rom. 5:12–16.

131. Marsh, *The Fulness of Time*, 65.

132. So, for instance Wolfgang Achtner and Stefan Kunz: “Into this nebulous variety of concepts of time, Jesus of Nazareth brought more clarity with his announcement of the nearness of the kingdom of God in the form of his person.” Wolfgang Achtner, Stefan Kunz, and Thomas Walter, *Dimensions of Time: The Structures of the Time of Humans, of the World, and of God* (Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2002), 165. Achtner and Kunz also adopt the concept of “fulfilled” time in their final, theologicoo-therapeutic chapter (cf. *ibid.*, 173–80). Characteristic of this position is also John Marsh’s assertion: “The Old Testament is itself aware that it does not provide answers to the questions it must needs ask of history. It looks forward to a future day of the Lord when God himself will provide them. So we now pass to the New Testament.” Marsh, *The Fulness of Time*, 74. For an earlier discussion of this polemics, see Erich Frank, “The Role of History in Christian Thought,” idem, *Wissen, Wollen, Glauben. Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Philosophiegeschichte und Existentialphilosophie* (Zurich, Switzerland: Artemis Verlag, 1955), 177–91.

133. Barth, *Römerbrief*, 86.

134. Bernard Dupuy, in an essay on Jewish conceptions of time, describes chronological, or “mere” time (*zeman*) even as “illusion,” a time of indefinite disposability, simply there, ever passing from before to after, whereas kairos (*eth*) denotes an “urgency,” an ethical moment waiting to be “realized”—a moment of beginning: “[L]e mot *eth* désigne le moment convenable pour commencer . . . , le moment décisif entre tous qui cache toujours une donnée mystérieuse.” Bernard Dupuy, “Temps et eschatologie dans le judaïsme,” in *Temps et eschatologie*, 43.

135. Marsh, *The Fulness of Time*, 76.

136. Cf. Barth, *Römerbrief*, 174, 149.

137. Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 82.

138. Moltmann, *The Future of Creation*, 164. This, at least, should invite us to rethink the common perception that, as David Novak put it, “Jews and Christians begin at the same starting point.” Cf. David Novak, *Jewish Christian Dialogue: A Jewish Justification* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 155.

139. Rosenzweig, *Star*, 339 (*Stern*, 376). See also Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History*, 291–95; Alexander Altmann, “Franz Rosenzweig on History,” in *The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig*, ed. Paul Mendes-Flohr (Hanover, MA: University Press of New England, 1988), 124–37; Paul Mendes-Flohr, “Franz

Rosenzweig and the Crisis of Historicism,” *ibid.*, 138–61; Stéphane Mosès, *Der Engel der Geschichte: Franz Rosenzweig, Walter Benjamin, and Gershom Scholem* (Frankfurt, Germany: Jüdischer Verlag, 1994), 25–83. For a more recent study of Rosenzweig’s philosophy of history, see David N. Myers, *Resisting History: Historicism and its Discontents in German-Jewish Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 68–105.

140. Cf. Tillich, “Der Widerstreit von Zeit und Raum,” *Gesammelte Werke* 4, 147. This notwithstanding, Tillich still advocated a “standing together” of synagogue and church in the struggle against the “gods of space.”

141. Achtner, Kunz, and Walter speak of a “tri-polar structure of time”: Endogenous time (time experience), exogenous time (history), and transcendent time (religion). In the final chapter, “transcendent time” appears as a “resisting” to the pressures of exogenous time. (cf. Achtner, Kunz, Walter, *Dimensions of Time*, 161).

142. Moltmann, *The Future of Creation*, 164.

143. Jacob Taubes, *Abendländische Eschatologie* (Munich, Germany: Matthes & Seitz, 1999), 26.

144. Reinhold Niebuhr, *Faith and History: A Comparison of Christian and Modern Views of History* (New York: Scribner’s, 1949), 24.

145. Cf. Taubes, *Abendländische Eschatologie*, 35–36. Taubes’ allusion to Hegel is fully intentional, for he maintains that it was the biblical overcoming of Aristotelian logic that had been formative to the young Hegel. The central argument in Taubes’ book, in fact, is that apocalyptic logic is not rational but historical (dialectic).

146. Niebuhr, *Faith and History*, 24.

147. Cf. *ibid.*, 26.

148. Cf. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 2.

149. Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 1, ed. R. Tiedemann and H. Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1972), 226. For an analysis of this passage and a formidable account of Benjamin’s concept of origin, see Pizer, *Toward a Theory of Radical Origin*, 41–70. One could compare this to the duality of “open” and “archaic” myth. Cf. Kurt Hübner, *Die Wahrheit des Mythos* (Munich, Germany: C.H. Beck, 1985), 156–57.

150. Cf. Ernst Bloch: *TE*, 366 (“das selber noch unentsprungene Entspringen”).

151. Genesis Rabbah, I. X, 2 A-B; 14.

152. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, *System der Weltalter. Münchner Vorlesung 1827/28 in einer Nachschrift von Ernst von Lasaulx*, ed. Siegbert Peetz (Frankfurt, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1990), 177 (38. Vorlesung).

153. Rosenzweig, *Stern*, 337 (*Star*, 304): “Ewig gegenwärtige Erinnerung.”

154. Reinhart Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1979), 353.

155. Abraham J. Heschel, *God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1955), 201.
156. Cf. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (New York: Schocken, 1989), 10.
157. Augustine, *Confessiones* II, xx.26 (Flasch, *Was ist Zeit?*, 259).
158. Niklas Luhmann, “Gleichzeitigkeit und Synchronisation,” in idem, *Soziologische Aufklärung. Konstruktivistische Perspektiven* 5 (Opladen, Germany: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1990), 98.
159. Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Die Aktualität des Schönen,” *Gesammelte Werke* 8, 101.
160. Luhmann, “Gleichzeitigkeit und Synchronisation,” 101.
161. Ibid., 125.
162. Luhmann, *The Differentiation of Society*, trans. Stephen Holmes and Charles Larmore (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 307.
163. Cf. Luhmann, “Gleichzeitigkeit und Synchronisation,” 118 (“Ein in laufendes Nachjustieren in der Zeit”); and ibid., 119, where Luhmann speaks of “Rückwärtskorrekturen,” as the ability “to understand anew the already absorbed and digested in the light of what is to follow.” See also idem, “The Future Cannot Begin. Temporal Structures in Modern Society,” in idem, *The Differentiation of Society*, 285: “Social systems are nontemporal extensions of time. They make the time horizons of other actors available within one contemporaneous present.”
164. Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard Trask (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1959), 82; emphasis mine.
165. Assmann, *Zeit und Tradition*, 4.
166. Cf. Luhmann, “World-Time and System History: Interrelations Between Temporal Horizons and Social Structures,” in idem, *The Differentiation of Society*, 297.
167. Cf. ibid., 299, 312.
168. Cf. Peter L. Berger, *The Heretical Imperative: Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation* (Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1980), 10.
169. Cf. ibid., 114–16.
170. Cf. Harvey Cox, *The Secular City: A Celebration of Its Liberties and an Invitation to Its Discipline* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), 19–21.
171. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Interpretation of Genesis 1–3* (New York: Macmillan, 1959), 13.
172. Ibid., 14.
173. Cf. ibid., 13.
174. Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return or Cosmos and History*, trans. Willard Trask, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press [Bollingen Series XLVI], 1991), 139.
175. Wasserstrom, *Religion After Religion: Gershom Scholem, Mircea Eliade, and Henry Corbin at Eranos* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 159–71 (“Mystic Historicities”).

176. It is worth considering the polemical nature of the so-called circular/linear, “circle” and “arrow,” dichotomy between Greek and biblical thought. See, for instance, Gerald A. Press, *The Development of the Idea of History in Antiquity* (Kingston, Canada: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1982), 3–22. Press locates the origin of this dichotomization in Augustine’s polemical rejection of Greek historical time.

177. Charles Bambach, *Heidegger, Dilthey, and the Crisis of Historicism*, esp. 37–55.

178. Cf. Henri Bergson, *Zeit und Freiheit* (Hamburg, Germany: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1994), 166, 77.

179. Paul Tillich, “Der Widerstreit von Zeit und Raum,” 140–48.

180. Barth, *Römerbrief*, 150.

181. Nicolai Berdyaev, *Slavery and Freedom*, trans. R. M. French (New York: Scribner’s, 1944), 260.

182. Nicolai Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History*, trans. George Ravey (Cleveland, OH: Meridian, 1962), 70.

183. Paul Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations* (New York: Scribner’s, 1976), 35–6.

184. Bultmann, *The Presence of Eternity*, 11.

185. Tillich, “Geschichtliche und ungeschichtliche Geschichtsdeutung,” 113.

186. Tillich, “Sieg in der Niederlage,” *Gesammelte Werke IV*, 134.

187. Cf. Berdyaev, *Slavery and Freedom*, 257–61.

188. Nicolai Berdyaev, *The Beginning and the End*, trans. R.M. French (New York: Harper, 1952), 211–12.

189. Berdyaev, *Slavery and Freedom*, 260.

190. Benjamin, “Über den Begriff der Geschichte,” *Illuminationen*, 260.

191. Cf. ibid., 261. On Benjamin’s conception of messianic and historical time, see Richard Wolin, *Walter Benjamin: An Aesthetic of Redemption* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), esp. 48–50.

192. Hence, Habermas sees in Benjamin the reversion of Koselleck’s horizon of expectation and space of experience. Cf. Jürgen Habermas, “Das Zeitbewußtsein der Moderne und ihr Bedürfnis nach Selbstvergewisserung,” idem, *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne. Zwölf Vorlesungen* (Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1984), esp. 21–6.

193. See Paul Mendes-Flohr, “‘To Brush History Against the Grain’: The Eschatology of the Frankfurt School and Ernst Bloch,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 51, no. 4 (December 1983): 631–50. And idem, “‘The Stronger and the Better Jews’: Jewish Theological Responses to Political Messianism in the Weimar Republic,” in *Jews and Messianism in the Modern Era: Metaphor and Meaning* (Studies in Contemporary Jewry VII), ed. Jonathan Frankel (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), esp. 162–65; Anson Rabinbach, “Between Enlightenment and Apocalypse: Benjamin, Bloch and Modern German Jewish Messianism,” *New*

German Critique 34 (Winter 1985): 78–124. Michael Löwy even speaks of a “structural homology” and “undeniable spiritual isomorphism” between Jewish messianism (as understood by Scholem) and libertarian modern revolutionary utopias. Michael Löwy, “Jewish Messianism and Libertarian Utopia in Central Europe (1900–1933),” *New German Critique* 20, Special Issue 2: Germans and Jews (Spring/Summer 1980): 108. See also idem, *Redemption and Utopia. Jewish Libertarian Thought in Central Europe: A Study in Elective Affinity*, trans. Hope Heaney (London, UK: Athlone, 1992).

194. David Biale, *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 7.

195. Cf. Gershom Scholem, “Redemption Through Sin,” in idem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* (New York: Schocken, 1971), 140. On this point, see Michael A. Meyer, “Where Does the Modern Period of Jewish History Begin?” *Judaism* 24, no. 3 (Summer 1975): esp. 33–34.

196. Scholem, “The Crisis of Tradition in Jewish Messianism,” in idem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 51.

197. Ibid.

198. Cf. Benjamin, “Über den Begriff der Geschichte,” 254: “. . . die Geschichte gegen den Strich . . . bürsten.” See also Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History*, 36–38.

199. David Myers, *Resisting History*, 5. Later in the book, Myers writes of German-Jewish antihistoricism: “And thus, their best anti-historicist intentions were tempered by deeply ingrained—and ultimately inescapable—historicist impulses.” (*Ibid.*, 172).

200. Nietzsche, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie* (Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen II), §8, *KSA* 1, 311.

201. Friedrich Meinecke, *Historism: The Rise of a New Historical Outlook*, trans. J.E. Anderson (London, UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), 491.

202. Cf. Ernst Troeltsch, *Der Historismus und seine Probleme* (Erstes Buch), (Tübingen, Germany: J.C.B. Mohr, 1922), 107; and idem, *Der Historismus und seine Überwindung. Fünf Vorträge* (1924), (Aalen, Germany: Scientia Verlag, 1966), 70.

203. Cf. *ibid.*, 63; 4.

204. Ibid., 18.

205. Cf. Nietzsche, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie*, §1, *KSA* 1, 251.

206. Cf. *ibid.*, 306.

207. Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice. Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), 154.

208. Martin Heidegger, *Basic Concepts*, trans. Gary Aylesworth (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 93. (*Grundbegriffe* [Gesamtausgabe 51], 108).

209. Cf. ibid., 93 (*Grundbegriffe*, 108).
210. Ibid., 73 (*Grundbegriffe*, 87).
211. Cf. ibid., 73 (*Grundbegriffe*, 87). Translation modified.
212. Ibid., 73 (*Grundbegriffe*, 87). Translation modified.
213. Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung II*, idem, *Sämtliche Werke* 3, ed. A. Hübscher (Wiesbaden, Germany: F.A. Brockhaus, 1972), 502.
214. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 437 (pt. 74).

Part One, Chapter Two

1. Said, *Beginnings*, 32.
2. Ibid., 5.
3. Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft*, 58.
4. See Erich Kahler, *The Meaning of History* (New York: G. Braziller, 1964), 50–56; G. W. Trompf, *The Idea of Historical Recurrence in Western Thought from Antiquity to the Reformation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 12–15. For an earlier study on this subject, see Grace E. Cairns, *Philosophies of History. Meeting of East and West in Cycle Pattern Theories of History* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1962), 204–16.
5. Bodo Gatz, *Weltalter, Goldene Zeit, und sinnverwandte Vorstellungen* (Hildesheim, Germany: Georg Olms, 1967), 14.
6. Cf. Max Weber, *Wissenschaft als Beruf* (Stuttgart, Germany: Reclam, 1995), 18–20.
7. Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft*, 59.
8. Gadamer, “Über leere und erfüllte Zeit,” 229.
9. Luhmann, *The Differentiation of Society*, 272.
10. Ibid., 302.
11. Ibid., 303.
12. Cf. Droysen, *Historik*, 285: “. . . the narrative representation does not want to be an image, a photograph of there once was. . . .” On “daguerrotypic history,” see Siegfried Kracauer, “The Historical Approach,” in idem, *History: The Last Things Before the Last* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 49. Kracauer’s use of the “daguerrotype” shares of course much with Walter Benjamin’s thought on the subject of history and photography. In his essay “Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire,” Benjamin associates the daguerrotype with an expansion of Bergson’s “mémoire volontaire” and, *eo ipso*, minimization of the imaginative “mémoire involontaire.” Cf. Benjamin, *Illuminationen*, 221. See also his “Paris, die Hauptstadt des XIX. Jahrhunderts” (II. Daguerre oder die Panoramen), ibid., 173–78; and “Kleine Geschichte der Photographie,” idem, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* (Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1977), esp. 50–51. See also Jörn Rüsen, “Rhetorics and Aesthetics of History: Leopold von Ranke,” *History*

and Theory 29 (1990): 190–204. Using a different set of sources, Edith Wyschogrod reflects on this problem in her book *An Ethics of Remembering: History, Heterology, and the Nameless Others* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 76–83.

13. On Ranke, see Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft*, 55; Friedrich Jaeger and Jörn Rüsen, *Geschichte des Historismus. Eine Einführung* (Munich, Germany: C. H. Beck, 1992), 83.

14. Landmann, *Ursprungsbild und Schöpfertat*, 106.

15. Cf. Georg G. Iggers, *The German Conception of History. The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1968), 124–73.

16. Wilhelm Dilthey, “Rede zum 70. Geburtstag,” *Gesammelte Schriften* V, 9. Quoted in Iggers, *The German Conception of History*, 144.

17. Cf. Heinrich Rickert, *Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung. Eine logische Einleitung in die historischen Wissenschaften* (Freiburg, Germany: 1896), 716–17. Quoted in Iggers, *The German Conception of History*, 157.

18. Cf. Wilhelm Windelband, *Geschichtsphilosophie. Eine Kriegsvorlesung. Fragment aus dem Nachlass*, ed. Wolfgang Windelband and Bruno Bauch. *Kantstudien* 38 (Berlin, Germany, 1916), 9–11. Quoted in Iggers, *The German Conception of History*, 151.

19. Cf. G. van der Leeuw, “Primordial Time and Final Time,” 338.

20. Arnaldo Momigliano, *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 18: “The often-repeated notion that the Greek historians had a cyclical idea of time is a modern invention.” Also, Gerald A. Press, *History in Antiquity*, 128.

21. Cf. Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 65–66.

22. Augustine, *The City of God*, XII:17, trans. Maurice Dods (New York: Modern Library, 1993), 400.

23. Niebuhr, *Faith and History*, 58.

24. Cf. Cohen, *RdV*, 74–75.

25. Cohen, *RoR*, 244 (*RdV*, 285).

26. Ibid., 249 (*RdV*, 291).

27. Ibid.

28. Cf. Tillich’s “Der Widerstreit von Zeit und Raum,” which appeared in 1959 originally in English as “The Struggle between Time and Space,” in *Theology of Culture*, ed. Robert C. Kimball (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959).

29. Heschel, *God in Search of Man*, 202.

30. Ibid., 211.

31. Ibid., 212.

32. Ibid., 206.

33. Landmann, *Ursprungsbild und Schöpfertat*, 106.

34. Weber, *Wissenschaft als Beruf*, 20.

35. Heidegger, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs* (Gesamtausgabe 20: II. Abteilung: Vorlesungen 1923–1944), 440. By comparison, see Scheler: “Der Tod ist also nicht ein bloß empirischer Bestandteil unsrer Erfahrung, sondern es gehört zum Wesen der Erfahrung jedes Lebens, und auch unsres eigenen, daß sie die Richtung auf den Tod hat.” Max Scheler, “Tod und Fortleben” (1914), in idem, *Die Zukunft des Kapitalismus und andere Aufsätze* (Munich, Germany: Francke Verlag, 1979), 22.

36. Martin Heidegger, *Der Begriff der Zeit. Vortrag vor der Marburger Theologenschaft*, July 1924, ed. Hartmut Tietjen (Tübingen, Germany: Max Niemeyer, 1989), 26. A similar interpretation we find in Hannah Arendt: “The mortality of man lies in the fact that individual life, a *bios* with a recognizable life-story from birth to death, rises out of biological life, *zōē*.” Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 42.

37. Heidegger, *Der Begriff der Zeit*, 24.

38. Ibid., 11, 26.

39. Ibid., 25 and 24: “Die Vergangenheit ist das Vorbei, sie ist unwiederbringlich.”

40. Ibid., 27.

41. Ernst Jünger, *An der Zeitmauer*, in idem, *Werke* 6: Essays II (Stuttgart, Germany: Ernst Klett, 1932), 446.

42. Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return or Cosmos and History*, trans. Willard Trask (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press [Bollingen Series XLVI], 1991), 156.

43. Ibid., 157.

44. Cf. ibid., 81.

45. Mircea Eliade, “The Sacred in the Secular World,” *Cultural Hermeneutics* 1 (1973): 105.

46. Cf. Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, 85.

47. Cf. ibid., 161–62.

48. Cf. Wasserstrom, *Religion After Religion*, 112–24.

49. Meinecke, *Historism*, 479.

50. Ibid., 478, 479. George Huppert suggested that Meinecke’s historicism was deeply shaped by Renaissance historians, stressing the dimension of *national* history. One could expand Huppert’s observation on Meinecke’s Renaissance roots to stress his cyclicizing construction of historicism. Cf. George Huppert, “The Renaissance Background of Historicism,” *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History* 5, no. 1 (1966): 48–60.

51. Hence, Georg Iggers rightly notes that “the history of ideas presented by Meinecke has almost a Hegelian ring.” Iggers, *The German Conception of History*, 32.

52. Friedrich Jaeger, Jörn Rüsen, *Geschichte des Historismus. Eine Einführung* (Munich, Germany: C. H. Beck, 1992), 30.

53. Cf. G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte, Erste Hälfte*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg, Germany: Meiner, 1955), 154.
54. Ibid., 153.
55. Ibid.: “Die Zeit ist dies ganz abstrakte Sinnliche.”
56. Cf. ibid., 178.
57. Cf. ibid., 34–35.
58. Ibid., 35.
59. Ibid., 181.
60. Cf. ibid., 182.
61. Karl Popper, *Die offene Gesellschaft und ihre Feinde II: Falsche Propheten* (Munich, Germany: Francke Verlag, 1958), 36.
62. Cf. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik: Das Sein*, 65.
63. Ibid., 37.
64. Ibid.
65. Cf. White, *Metahistory*, 115–16, 121.
66. Ibid., 15, 117–18.
67. Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 57.
68. Cf. Taubes, *Abendländische Eschatologie*, 149.
69. Popper, *Die offene Gesellschaft* II, 16.
70. See for instance, Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*, 10–12. Zerubavel defines counter-memory as a memory that is “essentially oppositional and stands in hostile and subversive relation to collective memory.”
71. Cf. Gadamer, “Die Kontinuität der Geschichte,” 155.
72. Cf. ibid.
73. Benjamin, “Über den Begriff der Geschichte,” *Illuminationen*, 260. Likewise, Ernst Jünger, *An der Zeitmauer*, 416: “Bruchstellen sind Fundstellen.”
74. Cf. Habermas, *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne*, 22.
75. Ernst Jünger, *An der Zeitmauer*, 505.
76. Benjamin, “Über den Begriff der Geschichte,” 258.
77. Ibid.
78. Susan Handelman, *Fragments of Redemption: Jewish Thought and Literary Theory in Benjamin, Scholem, and Levinas* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 169.
79. Nietzsche, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie*, §1, KSA 1, 253–54.
80. I should like to emphasize this “turning” quality of counter-history to distinguish it from antihistory in a wider sense and from counter-history in the predominantly Nietzschean interpretation. Daniel Krochmalnik has identified five distinct uses of counter-history in Nietzsche and his followers: counter-history as “against history as such,” “against historicism,” “against the hegemony of historical judgments,” “against canonical historical sources,” and finally “against the presumed direction of history.” Daniel Krochmalnik, “*Neue Tafeln*: Nietzsche

und die jüdische Counter-History,” in *Jüdischer Nietzscheanismus*, ed. Werner Stegmaier and Daniel Krochmalnik (Berlin, Germany: Walter de Gruyter, 1997), 60. It is this last application of counter-history, which Krochmalnik by and large interprets as a Jewish return to myth, that will be most useful to us; not, however, because it represents what Scholem once called a “revolt against antimythic Judaism,” (cf. Gershom Scholem, *Zur Kabbalah und ihrer Symbolik* [Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1986], 131) but because it inverts the antihistorical inversion of time: Rather than being an emancipation from the past, counter-history will appear to us as an emancipation from the future.

81. Karl Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism* (London: Routledge, 1999), 159.

82. Cf. Hans Albert, *Traktat über kritische Vernunft* (Tübingen, Germany: J.C.B. Mohr, 1991), 161.

83. In fact, Jaeger and Rüsén make a conscious distinction between “Historismus” as “diejenige Art der denkenden Auseinandersetzung mit der menschlichen Vergangenheit, die für die für die historischen Wissenschaften seit der Wende vom 18. Zum 19. Jahrhundert typisch ist . . . ,” as “die in den historischen Fachwissenschaften sich ausprägende spezifisch moderne Art des historischen Denkens,” and “Historizismus” in Popper’s sense, i.e., as an eschatological trajectory from Hegel to Marx. Cf. Jaeger and Rüsén, *Geschichte des Historismus*, 7–8.

84. Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, 160. In the *Open Society*, Popper speaks of a “moral futurism” of historicism. Cf. idem, *Die offene Gesellschaft und ihre Feinde II*, 297.

85. Nietzsche, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie*, pt. 6, KSA 1, 293.

86. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, 182.

87. Cf. Berdyaev, *The Beginning and the End*, 207.

88. Said, *Beginnings*, 76.

89. Cf. Karl Mannheim, *Konservatismus. Ein Beitrag zur Soziologie des Wissens*, ed. David Kettler et al. (Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1984), 120.

90. Karl Mannheim: *Ideology and Utopia. An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (1929), (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 192.

91. Cf. Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, 74. Popper’s linkage of historicism to utopianism, does not, however, contradict its conservative disposition. “[D]er Historismus als eine Methode ist—soweit wir es übersehen können—eine Gestaltung des deutschen konservativen Geistes.” Mannheim, *Konservatismus*, 64.

92. Marcel Gauchet, *The Disenchantment of the World: A Political History of Religion*, trans. Oscar Burge (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 177.

93. Ibid.

94. Ibid., 184.

95. Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft*, 59.

96. Mannheim, *Konservatismus*, 120.

97. Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, 232.

98. Mannheim, *Konservatismus*, III.
99. Ibid., 121 (Droysen, *Historik*, 325).
100. Droysen, *Historik*, 325.
101. Quoted in Mannheim, *Konservatismus*, 117.
102. On this term, see Schrader-Klebert, *Das Problem des Anfangs in Hegels Philosophie*, 17–18.
103. Niebuhr, *Faith and History*, 19. Scheler speaks of the act of remembering, which also yields “knowledge of history,” as a “liberator from historical determinism.” Cf. idem, *On the Eternal in Man*, trans. Bernard Noble (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1971), 41: “For remembering is the beginning of *freedom* from the covert power of the remembered thing and occurrence.” Casey borrows Husserl’s concept of “de-presentation” to explain self-identity: “By remembering myself in this self-differentiating way, I de-present myself to myself. The forging of my personal identity calls continually for such de-presentational activity.” Edward S. Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 292.
104. Cf. Gadamer, “Die Aktualität des Schönen,” 101.
105. Niebuhr, *Faith and History*, 19.
106. Ibid., 18.
107. Ibid., 20.
108. Johann Baptist Metz, therefore, speaks of a “dangerous memory of freedom,” dangerous in the sense of shaking up, for this memory is not nostalgic and comforting but invokes the Christian *memoria passionis*, the memory of suffering, disruption, and social liberation. For Metz, it is the memory of kairotic singularity that allows the Christian, forces him, in fact, to acknowledge the singularity of the event, to repeat singularity. Cf. Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, trans. D. Smith (New York: Crossroads, 1980), 109–11. John Caputo, who quotes Metz, relates this “dangerous memory” to the Kierkegaardian sense of “repetition.” Cf. idem, *Radical Hermeneutics*, 281.
109. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 10.
110. Cf. Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. Lewis Closer (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 47.
111. See, for instance, Kerwin Lee Klein, “On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse,” *Representations* 69, Special Issue: Grounds of Remembering (Winter 2000): 127–50.
112. Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” *Representations* 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (Spring 1989): 8. The essay is a translation of Nora’s introduction to his book on French collective memory, *Les Lieux des mémoire* (Paris, France: Editions Gallimard, 1984). It should be noted, however, that the editors of this special issue made clear that “rather than insisting on the opposition between memory and history . . . we want to

emphasize their interdependence.” Natalie Zemon Davis and Randolph Starn, “Introduction,” *Representations* 26: 5.

113. Jacques LeGoff, *History and Memory*, trans. Steven Rendall and Elizabeth Claman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

114. Paul Ricœur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 498.

115. Casey, *Remembering*, 40.

116. Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 8.

117. Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (Munich, Germany: C.H. Beck, 1999), esp. 27–28.

118. *Páidon brachú*, literally, the *remaining pieces* of little children’s stories.

119. “Er ruft’s mit lauter Stimm”—“Ich will sie schauen!” Friedrich von Schiller, *Das verschleierte Bild zu Sais* (1795), quoted in Jan Assmann, *Das verschleierte Bild zu Sais. Schillers Ballade und ihre griechischen und ägyptischen Hintergründe* (Leipzig, Germany: Lectiones Teubnerianae, 1999), 13. The young wisdom seeker in Schiller’s ballad, however, does not refer to Solon.

120. The motif of memory loss and recovery permeates, in a strange way, the entire dialogue, which itself is a continuation of an unfinished conversation held the day before, beginning with a double absence: absence of one of the original participants and absence of full memory of the original conversation. “Only parts we remember,” Timaios admits to Socrates: “But what we do not remember you will return to our memories” (cf. 17b). Timaios who is to fill the place of the absent guest, asks Socrates to begin *ex arches*, rendering the beginning of the dialogue a second beginning, a beginning anew from the beginning, a motif that will repeat itself when Critias speaks. For a lucid discussion on the centrality of “beginning” in this dialogue, see John Sallis, *Chorology. On Beginning in Plato’s Timaeus* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

121. Cf. 23b: “Pálin ex arches hoion néoi gígneste.”

122. Søren Kierkegaard, *Repetition. A Venture in Experimenting Psychology by Constantin Constantius*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 131.

123. Ibid., 317.

124. Ibid., 220.

125. Heidegger, *Basic Concepts*, 13 (*Grundbegriffe*, 15).

126. Ibid., 14 (*Grundbegriffe*, 16).

127. Ibid., 17 (*Grundbegriffe*, 21).

128. Ibid., 78 (*Grundbegriffe*, 92–93).

129. Cf. ibid., 15 (*Grundbegriffe*, 18).

130. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 437 (pt. 74).

131. Ibid., 437.

132. Cf. ibid., 376 (pt. 65).

133. Cornelius Castoriadis, “Time and Creation,” in *Chronotypes: The Construction of Time*, ed. John B. Bender (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 57.

134. See the classic work by Michael Theunissen, *Der Andere: Studien zur Sozialontologie der Gegenwart* (Berlin, Germany: Walter de Gruyter, 1977). More recently, Samuel Moyn, *Origins of the Other: Emmanuel Levinas Between Revelation and Ethics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

135. Castoriadis, “Time and Creation,” 55.

136. Emmanuel Levinas, “Old and New,” in idem, *Time and the Other, and Additional Essays* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1997), 121.

137. Cf. Emmanuel Levinas, *Humanism of the Other*, trans. Nidra Poller (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 26.

138. Levinas, “Old and New,” 124.

139. Ibid., 125.

140. Ibid., 127.

141. Ibid.

142. Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, trans. M. Andison (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946), 35.

143. Ibid., 18.

144. Levinas, “Old and New,” 138.

145. Cf. René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Donald Cress (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1993), 6.

146. Ibid., 63.

147. Ernst Cassirer, *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung* (1932), (Hamburg, Germany: Felix Meiner, 1998), 269: “So behält der Cartesische Zweifel der Geschichte gegenüber einen rein-negative Charakter: er wirkt abstoßend und ausstoßend.”

148. Schelling, *System der Weltalter* (6. Vorlesung), 24.

149. Ibid., 26.

150. Ibid. (4. Vorlesung), 16.

151. Ibid. (3. Vorlesung), 13.

152. Ibid., 15.

153. Ibid. (15. Vorlesung), 63.

154. Ibid. (21. Vorlesung), 87.

155. Ibid. (16. Vorlesung), 66.

156. Georg Lukács, *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft* (Georg Lukács Werke 9), (Neuwied, Germany: Luchterhand, 1962), esp. 130–38.

157. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 3.

158. Ibid., 1.

159. Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, 315.

160. Ibid., 317.

161. Ibid., 170.

162. Ibid., 220.

163. Ibid., 288.

164. Cf. ibid., 149. “The dialectic of repetition is easy, for that which is repeated has been—otherwise it could not be repeated—but the very fact that it has been makes the repetition into something new.” For a discussion of the theme, see M. Jamie Ferreira, “Repetition, Concreteness, and Imagination,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 25 (1989): esp. 24.

165. Gadamer, “Über leere und erfüllte Zeit,” 234.

166. Ibid.

167. Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewußtseins* (1893–1917), Husserliana X, ed. Rudolf Boehm (Hague, The Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), 23, 53.

168. Ibid., 106.

169. Ibid., 109. In this sense, perhaps, Derrida called the “I can” more “originary” than the “I” (cf. Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other; or, The Prosthetic of Origin*, trans. Patrick Mensah [Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998], 14).

170. Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewußtseins*, 109.

171. Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, 295.

172. Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* II, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959), 227.

173. Ferreira, “Repetition, Concreteness, and Imagination,” 24.

174. Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, 309.

175. Ibid., 186.

176. Ibid., 221.

177. Gadamer, “Über leere und erfüllte Zeit,” 235.

178. Cf. Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, 293.

179. Ibid., 326.

180. Ibid., 176.

181. Cf. ibid., 305.

182. Parmenides, 156e. See Günter Wohlfart, *Der Augenblick: Zeit und ästhetische Erfahrung bei Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche und Heidegger mit einem Exkurs zu Proust* (Freiburg, Germany: Karl Alber, 1982), 126; Arne Melberg, “Repetition (In the Kierkegaardian Sense of the Term),” *Diacritics* 20, no. 3 (Autumn 1990): 75.

183. Cf. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, trans. R. Thomte and A. Anderson, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 89. The “fullness of time” originates in Mark 1:15; see also, Wohlfart, *Der Augenblick*, 126.

184. See, for instance, Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* II, 193: “The more the personality disappears in the twilight of mood, so much more is the individual in the moment, and this, again, is the most adequate expression of the aesthetic existence: it is in the moment.” And: “He who lives ethically has . . . memory of his life—and he who lives aesthetically has not.”

185. Cf. Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, 320.
186. Ibid., 318.
187. Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* II, 189.
188. Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, 320.
189. Cf. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 282.
190. Emmanuel Levinas, *Nine Talmudic Readings*, trans. Annette Aronowicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 85.
191. Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, 136.
192. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 282.
193. Ibid., 283.
194. Cf. ibid., 284.
195. Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, 244.
196. Paul Ricœur, “Narrative Time,” 190.
197. Cf. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 285.
198. Heidegger, *Grundbegriffe*, 92.
199. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 373.
200. Cf. Derrida, *Monolingualism*, 28. On the role of imagination in Kierkegaard, see again Ferriera, “Repetition, Concreteness, and Imagination,” 24. For a discussion of Derrida’s concept of “inscribed origin,” its “reactivation,” and the “re-animation” of an “originary presence,” see Joshua Kates, *Essential History: Jacques Derrida and the Development of Deconstructivism* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2005), 188–90; also, János Békési, “Denken” der Geschichte. Zum Wandel des Geschichtsbegriffs bei Jacques Derrida (Munich, Germany: Wilhelm Fink, 1995).
201. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics*, 15.
202. On this trope, which has become popular since Francis Fukuyama’s *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992), see Lutz Niethammer, *Posthistoire: Has History Come to Any End?* (London: Verso, 1992); Howard Williams, David Sullivan, and E. Gwynn Matthews, eds., *Francis Fukuyama and the End of History* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997). Paul Ricœur, too, relates the rise of memory, to the end of history (“not before but after history”), cf. idem *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 161.
203. Cf. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics*, 268.

Part One, Chapter Three

1. Cf. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics*, 30.
2. Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending*, 17.
3. Cf. Ricœur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 372–73.
4. Scheler, *The Eternal in Man*, trans. Bernard Noble (New York: Harper, 1961), 41. Cf. Scheler, *Vom Ewigen im Menschen*, ed. Maria Scheler (Bern, Germany: Francke Verlag, 1954), 34: “Der ‘historische Tatbestand’ ist unfertig und gleichsam erlösbar.”

5. Cf. Barth, *Römerbrief*, 481.
6. Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1944), 52.
7. Cf. Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen II*, 311. It is the aesthetic consciousness that, for Cassirer, steps between “meaning” and “image” to soothe—if not resolve—the dialectic and “inner tension” that besets all “crisis” between myth and symbol. In contemplation, the image becomes “immanently meaningful,” its appearance (*Schein*) becomes a law of its own: “das Bild wirkt jetzt nicht mehr als ein Selbständige-Dingliches auf den Geist zurück, sondern es ist für ihn zum reinen Ausdruck der eigenen schöpferischen Kraft geworden.”
8. Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, 51.
9. Cf. Henri Bergson, *Matière et mémoire. Essai sur la relation du corps à l'esprit* (Geneva, Switzerland: Éditions Albert Skira, 1946), 81–82. Bergson speaks of a “jouer à nouveau le passé” (cf. *ibid.*, 231).
10. *Ibid.*, 146.
11. *Ibid.*, 245.
12. E. J. Furlong, *A Study in Memory. A Philosophical Essay* (London, UK: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1951), 83: “[W]hen we remember a past situation we do not merely have a visual or other image which we refer to the past; rather we image, in a more or less spontaneous way, or whole state of mind on the past occasion, both the sensing and the subsequent act of believing, doubting, assuming, willing, hoping and the rest. The accent is to be placed not on the noun, but on the verb, on the activity, not the object.” Likewise, Fritz Mauthner wrote in 1901: “Jede Erinnerung ist eine Aktion.” (*Idem, Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache I* [Leipzig, Germany: Felix Meiner, 1923], 466).
13. Cf. Levinas, *Humanism of the Other*, 50–52. Levinas interprets “anarchy” as a state of “pre-original susceptibility more ancient than the origin,” a responsibility that is not before *the beginning*, but before *beginning*. “To be obliged to responsibility has no beginning.” (*Ibid.*, 54). On this theme in Levinas, see Fabio Ciaramelli, “The Riddle of the Pre-original,” in *Ethics as First Philosophy: The Significance of Emmanuel Levinas for Philosophy, Literature and Religion*, ed. Adriaan T. Peperzak (New York: Routledge, 1995), 87–94. Ciaramelli discusses the very ambivalence of “origin” that we have encountered as a leading motif in this study: “To be origin,” he writes, “. . . means to begin in a present, that is, to avoid the causal chain of mediations, interrupting it at its origin, in order to start immediately from oneself without deriving from anything else. But, at this very moment, such an immediacy of origin implies a sort of paradoxical duality, an inner articulation. . . . Origin can arise or spring from itself only if it originally implies a reference to itself as to its own alterity, from which it emerges. . . . The self-originating origin implies the alterity of itself with regard to itself, an immanent alterity coming to Being in the same movement of the primordial leap.” (*Ibid.*, 89).
14. Scheler, *The Eternal in Man*, 41.

15. Ibid., 43–45.

16. Paul Tillich, “Kairos II. Ideen zur Geisteslage der Gegenwart,” *Gesammelte Werke VI*, 35.

17. See Gunther Wenz, “Eschatologie als Zeitdiagonistik. Paul Tillichs Studie zur religiösen Lage der Gegenwart von 1926 im Kontext ausgewählter Krisenliteratur der Weimarer Ära,” in *New Creation or Eternal Now: Is There an Eschatology in Paul Tillich’s Work?* ed. Gert Hummel (Berlin, Germany: Walter de Gruyter, 1991), 57–126.

18. On Tillich’s concept of Kairos, see Hans-Joachim Gerhards, *Utopie als innergeschichtlicher Aspekt der Eschatologie. Die konkrete Utopie Ernst Blochs unter dem eschatologischen Vorbehalt der Theologie Paul Tillichs* (Gütersloh, Germany: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1973), 76–80; Hannelore Jahr, “Vom Kairos zur heiligen Leere. Tillichs eschatologische Deutung der Gegenwart,” in *New Creation or Eternal Now*, 3–25.

19. Tillich, “Christologie und Geschichtsdeutung,” *Gesammelte Werke VI*, 90.

20. Tillich, “Der Widerstreit von Zeit und Raum,” 140.

21. On the phenomenon of “historical time” transcending the limits of “lived time,” see Thomas Luckmann, “Gelebte Zeiten—und deren Überschneidungen im Tages- und Lebensablauf,” in *Epochenschwelle und Epochenbewußtsein*, ed. R. Herzog and R. Koselleck (Munich, Germany: Wilhelm Fink, 1987), 297.

22. Tillich, “Der Widerstreit von Zeit und Raum,” 146.

23. Tillich, “Die politische Bedeutung der Utopie im Leben der Völker,” *Gesammelte Werke VI*, 183.

24. Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 197.

25. Cf. ibid., 187.

26. Jünger, *An der Zeitmauer*, 416.

27. Tillich, “Kairos II: Ideen zur Geisteslage der Gegenwart,” 41.

28. Tillich, “Sieg in der Niederlage,” 135.

29. Cf. Bloch, *TE*, 151.

30. Cf. Tillich, “Die politische Bedeutung der Utopie im Leben der Völker,” 210.

31. Tillich, “Kairos und Utopie,” *Gesammelte Werke VI*, 149–56.

32. Bloch, *TE*, 371. On Bloch’s utopianism, see Gert Ueding, “Ernst Blochs Philosophie der Utopie,” in *Utopieforschung. Interdisziplinäre Studien zur neuzeitlichen Utopie*, Vol. 1, ed. Wilhelm Voßkamp (Stuttgart, Germany: J. B. Metzler, 1982), 293–303.

33. Luhmann, “The Future Cannot Begin: Temporal Structures in Modern Society,” in idem., *The Differentiation of Society*, 279.

34. Ibid., 282.

35. Cf. Tillich, “Die politische Bedeutung der Utopie im Leben der Völker,” 184.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., 165.
38. Ibid.
39. Paul Tillich, “Das Neue Sein als Zentralbegriff einer christlichen Theologie,” *Eranos Jahrbuch 1954*, Band XXIII (Mensch und Wandlung), (Zürich, Switzerland: Rhein-Verlag, 1955): 257.
40. Cf. Gadamer, “Die Kontinuität der Geschichte und der Augenblick der Existenz,” 157.
41. Bloch, *TE*, 62.
42. Ibid., 366.
43. Ibid., 363.
44. Ibid., 366.
45. Cf. Bloch, *Vorlesungen zur Philosophie der Renaissance* (Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1972), 7: “Unser Stoff ist ein Morgen, wie die Weltgeschichte ihn noch selten gesehen hat, mit Frische, einer aufsteigenden Klasse, kurz: Renaissance. Das war nicht einfach Wiedergeburt in dem Sinn, daß eine Altes wieder erschienen wäre, etwa die Antike, wie das gewöhnlich gedeutet wird, sondern es war eine Neugeburt von etwas, was noch nie in des Menschen Sinn gekommen war, ein Durchbruch von Gestalten, wie sie noch nie auf der Erde gesehen worden waren. Die tauchten nun auf und vollbrachten ihr Werk, Zeit des Frühlings, Zeit der Wende: eine Gesellschaft wendet sich, eine neue kommt herauf.” The lectures were first given between 1952 and 1956 at the University of Leipzig and repeated in 1962–1963 at the University of Tübingen.
46. Cf. Bloch, *TE*, 368.
47. Hence, Konrad Burdach writes of Renaissance and Humanism as “ideal-ist” movements, guided by a “yearning for the primitive original form of humankind,” and by “natural feeling for simplicity, clarity. . . .” (Konrad Burdach, *Reformation, Renaissance, Humanismus*, 146).
48. Bloch, *TE*, 367.
49. Ibid., 375.
50. Cf. ibid., 332–33. This dialectic, in my view, that stands behind Bloch’s renovationist thinking, challenges the perspective that Bloch’s principle of hope handles the past inadequately. I cannot easily agree, then, with the view that “Nothing could be further from Bloch’s utopian ‘principle of hope’ than this interpretation [i.e., Walter Benjamin’s] of hope as a ‘secret agreement binding us to past generations,’ or as Benjamin explains, to those who once lived and are dead.” Cf. Astrid Deuber-Mankowsky, “Walter Benjamin’s *Theological-Political Fragment* as a Response to Ernst Bloch’s *Spirit of Utopia*,” *LBIYB* 48 (2002): 17. There is no doubt that Bloch seems to polarize hope and memory (e.g., *Das Prinzip Hoffnung I* [Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1959], 10–11); but stronger even than this polarization seems to me the conception of past and historical knowledge as *liminality*. Of this actualizing form of remembrance, Bloch writes: “Sie gehört vielmehr genau zur Schwelle des Neuen, damit es sich nicht mit ahistorischer Barbarei

verwechselt, damit es im Tiefgang des Eingedenkens auch nach rückwärts bleibe.” Ernst Bloch, *Experimentum Mundi: Frage, Kategorien des Herausbringens, Praxis* (Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1975), 93. For a discussion of this motif, see also Manfred Riedel, *Tradition und Utopie: Ernst Blochs Philosophie im Licht unserer geschichtlichen Denkerfahrung* (Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1994), 86–89.

51. Cf. Bloch, *TE*, 276.

52. Cf. *ibid.*, 284. Bloch also speaks of “creative expectation” (*schöpferische Erwartung*), *Ibid.*, 374.

53. Cf. *ibid.*, 360.

54. Cf. *ibid.*, 297.

55. *Ibid.*, 322.

56. Cf. Barth, *Römerbrief*, 187.

57. See Bloch, *TE*, 90–92. *Überholen*, literally passing-over. In English, “passing” already contains the dialectic ambiguity of passing (past) and surpassing (future). The point is that *überholen* also means to repair, to renew (overhaul). For Heidegger’s use of the term, see “Der Spruch des Anaximander,” *Holzwege*, 327: “Wie aber, wenn das Frühe alles Späte, wenn gar das Frühste das Späteste noch und am weitesten überholte?” John Caputo dwells on this passage quite happily, celebrating Heidegger’s eschaton as “the stirrings of a new beginning”: “And this is what we mean by eschatology: when we are driven into the end in such a way that the beginning can overtake it, so that the end turns itself around, reverses itself, and becomes a commencement. Valedictory and commencement, taking leave and beginning anew, all in one.” (Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics*, 163.) Caputo, then, formidably illustrates the hermeneutic project of beginning-anew that under girds all thinking in renaissance. Whether his reading of Heidegger is wishful and to what extent cannot be discussed here. An ambivalent circularity between old and new can hardly be denied: “Denken wir aus der Eschatologie des Seins, dann müssen wir eines Tages das Einstige der Frühe im Einstigen des Kommenden erwarten und heute lernen, das Einstige von da her zu bedenken.” (Heidegger, “Der Spruch des Anaximander,” 327.)

58. Cf. Bloch, *TE*, 139 (“das pure Vorbei”).

59. *Ibid.*, 65 (“der *ursprüngliche* echte Renaissancetyp Faust”).

60. Tillich, “Das neue Sein als Zentralbegriff einer christlichen Theologie,” 256.

61. *Ibid.*, 257.

62. *Ibid.*, 258.

63. *Ibid.*, 267.

64. Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen II*, 286. Tillich’s dialectical *Überwindung* of myth echoes quite intimately Cassirer’s description of a “crisis” between myth and symbol that all religion has to withstand. It is the “new ideality” of religion that introduces a separation between meaning and “being-there,” or, more precisely, meaning and image (Sinn und Bild), unknown to mythic

thinking. “Die Religion vollzieht den Schnitt, der dem Mythos als solchem fremd ist: indem sie sich der sinnlichen Bilder und Zeichen bedient, weiß sie sie zugleich als solche,—als Ausdrucksmittel, die, wenn sie einen bestimmten Sinn offenbaren, notwendig zugleich hinter ihm zurückbleiben, die auf diesen Sinn ‘hinweisen,’ ohne ihn jemals vollständig erfassen zu können.” (Ibid.) See also Scholem’s understanding of the symbol as that which “makes something transparent which is beyond expression” (Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* [New York: Schocken, 1954], 27).

65. Tillich, “Das neue Sein als Zentralbegriff einer christlichen Theologie,” 266.

66. Ibid., 265.

67. Ibid., 263.

68. Ibid., 268.

69. Max Scheler, *On the Eternal in Man*, 56.

70. Ibid., 12 (*Vom Ewigen im Menschen*, 8: “Die Geschichte anerkennen . . . ist angemessener, als sie fliehen”).

71. Cf. ibid., 61.

72. Cf. ibid., 57.

73. Cf. ibid., 48 (*Vom Ewigen im Menschen*, 42: “Verwerfung und Ausstoßung des alten Ich”).

74. Ibid., 60.

75. Cf. ibid., 61.

76. Ibid., 42.

77. Cf. Barth, *Römerbrief*, 6–7.

78. Ibid., 162. For a discussion of Barth’s conception of crisis as “turning-point” and its relation to Tillich, see Douglas J. Cremer, “Protestant Theology in Early Weimar Germany: Barth, Tillich, and Bultmann,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56, no. 2 (April 1995): 289–307, esp. 294.

79. Cf. Barth, *Römerbrief*, 182, 185.

80. Ibid., 161.

81. Ibid., 121.

82. Ibid., 122

83. Ibid.

84. Heidegger, “Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes,” in *Holzwege*, 65. The text of the essay is based on a series of lectures Heidegger gave between 1935 and 1936. Allan Megill has analyzed this text in a chapter on “Heidegger’s Aestheticism” in his book *Prophets of Extremity*, esp. 157–59.

85. For a discussion of Heidegger’s “Kehre” in respect to his essay on the work of art, see Karl Heinz Bohrer, *Das absolute Präzens. Die Semantik ästhetischer Zeit* (Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp 1994), 92–98. Walter Lammi, “Hans-Georg Gadamer’s ‘Correction’ of Heidegger,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 52, no. 3 (July–Sept., 1991): 487–507. Also Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Die Wahrheit des Kunstwerks,”

idem, *Gesammelte Werke* 3, 249–61; and idem, “Der Weg in die Kehre,” *ibid.*, 271–84.

86. Heidegger, “Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes,” 29.

87. Cf. *ibid.*, 63: “Das Wesen der Kunst ist die Dichtung. Das Wesen der Dichtung aber ist die Stiftung der Wahrheit.”

88. Cf. Heidegger, “Wozu Dichter?” in *Holzwege*, 270, 300, 307, 318.

89. *Ibid.*, 301.

90. *Ibid.*, 303.

91. *Ibid.*, 320.

92. *Ibid.*, 319.

93. Heidegger, “Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes,” 65.

94. Heidegger, “Der Spruch des Anaximander,” *Holzwege*, 326.

95. Cf. Heidegger, “Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes,” 64.

96. *Ibid.*, 65.

97. Cf. *ibid.*, 66.

98. Cf. Heidegger, “Hölderlins Hymne ‘Der Ister,’” *Gesamtausgabe* 53, 68; also Bohrer, *Das absolute Präsens*, 105–6.

99. On Hegel’s dissolution of art, see Jörn Rüsen, *Ästhetik und Geschichte. Geschichtstheoretische Untersuchungen zum Zusammenhang von Kunst, Gesellschaft und Wissenschaft* (Stuttgart, Germany: J. B. Metzler, 1976), 30–35.

100. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik I* (Werke 13), (Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1986), 51; 82; 83: “Diese Grundlage ihrer allgemeinen Bestimmung nach besteht darin, daß das Kunstschoene als eine der Mitten erkannt worden ist, welche jenen Gegensatz und Widerspruch des in sich abstrakt beruhenden Geistes und der Natur—sowohl der äußerlich erscheinenden als auch der innerlichen des subjektiven Gefühls und Gemüts—auflösen und zur Einheit zurückführen.” For a detailed discussion of Heidegger’s return on Hegel’s aesthetics, see Jacques Taminiaux, “The Hegelian Legacy in Heidegger’s Overcoming of Aesthetics,” in *Endings: Questions of Memory in Hegel and Heidegger*, ed. Rebecca Comay and John McCumber (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 114–38.

101. Cf. Friedrich W. J. Schelling, *System des transzendentalen Idealismus*, (Werke 9.1, Historisch-Kritische Ausgabe), (Stuttgart, Germany: Frommann-Holzboog, 2005), 329. In another place, Schelling will speak of art as the “ideal” (*Vorbild*) of science: “[W]o Kunst sey, soll die Wissenschaft erst hinkommen.” (*Ibid.*, 328.) The term “aesthetic philosophy” appears in the fragment “Das älteste Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus,” which Franz Rosenzweig, in a well-known essay of 1914 (first published in 1917), attributed to Schelling, rather than Hegel: “Die Philosophie des Geistes ist eine ästhetische Philosophie.” Hegel, *Friühe Schriften* (Werke 1), 235. See Franz Rosenzweig, “Das älteste Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus. Ein handschriftlicher Fund” idem, *Zweistromland. Kleinere Schriften zur Religion und Philosophie* (Berlin, Germany: Philo, 2001), 109–54. Al-

Ian Megill already has noted the similarities between Heidegger and Schelling in this regard, yet, Megill also points out that the notion of “crisis” ultimately separated Heidegger from the “Romantic dispensation” in Schelling. See Megill, *Prophets of Extremity*, 160–61.

102. Hannelore Schlaffer and Heinz Schlaffer, *Studien zum ästhetischen Historismus* (Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1975), 36.

103. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik I*, 52.

104. Ibid., 22.

105. Cf. ibid., 23.

106. Ibid., 392.

107. Ibid., 23.

108. Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Ende der Kunst? Von Hegels Lehre vom Vergangenheitscharakter der Kunst bis zur Anti-Kunst von heute,” idem, *Gesammelte Werke VIII*, 220.

109. Cf. Gadamer, “Die Aktualität des Schönen,” 96–97.

110. Gadamer, “Ästhetische und religiöse Erfahrung,” *Gesammelte Werke VIII*, 152.

111. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 146.

112. Cf. Gadamer, “Die Aktualität des Schönen,” 136.

113. Gadamer, “Ästhetik und Hermeneutik,” *Gesammelte Werke VIII*, 1.

114. Gadamer, “Die Aktualität des Schönen,” 137.

115. Ibid.

116. Ibid., 139.

117. Gadamer, “Wort und Bild—‘so wahr, so seiend,’” *Gesammelte Werke VIII*, 375.

118. Ibid. Gadamer, closely following Hegel, intends to rescue the aesthetic claim to the “absolute,” which he interprets as “independence from all limiting contingencies” (Ibid.). Invoking Nietzsche’s *Unhistorical Reflections*, Gadamer places art and religion at a critical distance to history. In fact, their “simultaneity” resists the lamentable historization of myth: “Etwas wehrt sich dagegen, daß Kunst, die von so bannender Gegenwärtigkeit ist, zum bloßen Gegenstand historischer Forschung gemacht wird” (Ibid., 377).

119. Gadamer, “Die Aktualität des Schönen,” 136.

120. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, “Laokoon,” *Lessings Werke VII*, ed. Franz Muncker (Stuttgart, Germany: Göschen’sche Buchhandlung, 1890), 210.

121. Ibid., 295.

122. Ibid., 209.

123. Gadamer, “Wort und Bild—‘so wahr, so seiend,’” 376.

124. Cf. ibid., 388: “Das Werk der Kunst . . . ist wie ein Mythos, wie eine Sage, und zwar gerade deshalb, weil sie das, was sie sagt, ebenso sehr vorenthält wie zugleich bereithält.”

125. Cf. Gadamer, “Die Aktualität des Schönen,” 123.

126. Ibid., 106.

127. Gadamer, “Wort und Bild—‘so wahr, so seiend,’” 387.

128. Ibid.

129. Ibid. See also Aristotle, *Metaphysics IX*, 1048a–49a.

130. Gadamer, “Wort und Bild—‘so wahr, so seiend,’” 388.

131. Ibid., 389.

132. Gadamer, “Ästhetik und Hermeneutik,” 6.

133. Cf. Gadamer, “Die Aktualität des Schönen,” 132–33. On Gadamer’s aesthetics of festival time, see also David P. Haney, “Aesthetics and Ethics in Gadamer, Levinas, and Romanticism: Problems of Phronesis and Techne,” *PMLA* 114, no. 1, Special Topic: Ethics and Literary Study (Jan. 1999): 32–45, esp. 38.

134. Gadamer, “Ästhetik und Hermeneutik,” 8.

135. Bloch, *TE*, 50.

136. Barth, *Römerbrief*, 143.

137. Maimonides, *Sefer Ha Mad'a* (Hilkhot Teshuvah IV), (Jerusalem, Israel: Feldheim, 1981), 85b.

138. Hermann Cohen, “Die Versöhnungsidee,” idem, *Jüdische Schriften I* (Berlin, Germany: Schwetschke & Sohn, 1924), 125. For an authoritative study on this essay and on Cohen’s concept of atonement, see Michael Zank, *The Idea of Atonement in the Philosophy of Hermann Cohen* (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2002), esp. 107–61. Also Marc de Launay, “Die Versöhnung als Abwandlung des Ursprungsprinzips in der Korrelation zwischen Gott und Mensch,” in *Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism: Tradition and the Concept of Origin in Hermann Cohen’s Later Work*, ed. Helmuth Holzhey et al. (Hildesheim, Germany: Georg Olms Verlag, 2000), 77–87; and Rivka Horwitz, “Two Models of Atonement in Cohen’s ‘Religion of Reason’: One according to Ezekiel, the other ‘joyful in sufferings’ according to Job,” *Ibid.*, 175–90. More recently, Lawrence Kaplan revisited Cohen’s idea of atonement and its reception in Joseph Soloveitchik, stressing also the critical role of Scheler. Cf. idem, “Hermann Cohen and Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik on Repentance,” in *Hermann Cohen’s Ethics*, ed. Robert Gibbs (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2006), 211–58.

139. Cohen, “Die Versöhnungsidee,” 132: “. . . Teschuba bedeutet Umkehr, Abkehr, Rückkehr zum Guten, Einkehr in sich selbst.”

140. Ibid.

141. Ibid.; emphasis mine.

142. Cohen, *RdV*, 216.

143. Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft* (Stuttgart, Germany: Reclam, 1974), 89.

144. Cf. Cohen, “Gesinnung,” *Jüdische Schriften I*, 200.

145. Kant, *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft*, 93. Cohen, I believe, is more indebted here to Kant than Nathan Rotenstreich acknowledges in his discussion of the same subject. See Rotenstreich, “Hermann Cohen: Judaism in the Context of German Philosophy,” in *The Jewish Response to German Cul-*

ture: From the Enlightenment to the Second World War, ed. Jehuda Reinharz and Walter Schatzberg (Hanover, MA: University Press of New England, 1985), esp. 62–63.

146. Maimonides, *Hilkhot Teshuvah II*, 4, 83a.

147. Cohen, *RdV*, 225.

148. Ibid., 228.

149. Ibid., 238.

150. Ibid., 239.

151. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, trans. Lawrence Kaplan (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1983), 113; 110: “Repentance, according to the halakhic view, is an act of creation—self-creation.” Soloveitchik, interestingly, draws in this passage on Scheler, though not directly on Cohen. For a somewhat hagiographic discussion on this subject, see Yitzchak Blau, “Creative Repentance: On Rabbi Soloveitchik’s Concept of Teshuvah,” *Tradition* 28, no.2 (1993): 11–18.

152. Cf. Cohen, *RdV*, 81.

153. Hermann Cohen, *Ästhetik des reinen Gefühls I* (Berlin, Germany: Bruno Cassirer, 1923), 271 (“Fiktion des Abschlusses”); 272: “Die Vollendung ist das Gepräge des Werkes der hohen Kunst. Kann sie aber abgeschlossen sein? Dagegen spricht schon die Geschichte der Kunst. Das Gepräge bedeutet die *Tendenz* zur Vollendung.”

154. Ibid., 212.

155. Ibid., 213.

156. Ibid., 209: “Das echte Kunstwerk ist Ereignis; ist in sich abgeschlossen, insofern es die Vollendung in sich trägt auf Grund seines *Fluges zur Vollendung*.”

157. Ibid.: “Das ästhetische Erlebnis ist immer eine Tat.”

158. Cf. Hermann Cohen, “Die Lyrik der Psalmen,” *Jüdische Schriften I*, 240.

159. Cohen, *Ästhetik des reinen Gefühls I*, 210.

160. Ibid., 209.

161. Schelling, *System des transzendentalen Idealismus*, 328.

162. Hermann Cohen, “Über den ästhetischen Wert unserer religiösen Bildung,” *Jüdische Schriften I*, 219.

163. Ibid.

164. Ibid.: “Denn dieser Begriff der Natur führt uns zu dem der *Geschichte*; der messianische Gottesbegriff zu dem geschichtlichen der messianischen Menschheit.”

165. Cf. Odo Marquard, “Identität: Schwundtelos und Mini-Essenz—Bemerkungen zur Genealogie einer Aktuellen Diskussion,” in *Identität (Poetik und Hermeneutik VIII)*, ed. Odo Marquard and Karlheinz Stierle (Munich, Germany: Wilhelm Fink, 1979), 366–69.

166. Cohen, *Ästhetik des reinen Gefühls I*, 276: “Ein Moment des Schönen ist es, darf es sein, die Fiktion des Abschlusses zu vertreten. Und der Abschluß ist als ein Frieden, mithin als ein Ziel der Sittlichkeit zu denken.”

167. Cf. Cohen, “Über den ästhetischen Wert unserer religiösen Bildung,” 220.

168. Cohen, “Der Stil der Propheten,” 279.
169. Cohen, “Über den ästhetischen Wert unserer religiösen Bildung,” 220: “Der messianische Mensch ist der Mensch der Einen, geeinigten Menschheit.”
170. Ibid.
171. Cf. Cohen, “Der Stil der Propheten,” 283. This artist is, of course, Michelangelo.
172. Schelling, *System des transzendentalen Idealismus*, 328.
173. Hegel, “Das älteste Systemprogramm des Idealismus,” 235.
174. Schelling, *System des transzendentalen Idealismus*, 333–34.
175. Cf. Steiner, *Grammars of Creation*, 6. Similarly, Catherine Keller speaks of a “Grammatology of Beginning” (Keller, *Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* [London, UK: Routledge, 2003], 7–12).
176. Cf. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Pantheon, 1971), 115–16.
177. Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Speech and Reality* (Norwich, VT: Argo, 1970), 52.
178. Cf. Fritz Mauthner, *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache I* (Leipzig, Germany: Felix Meiner, 1923), 19.
179. Cf. Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Die Sprache des Menschengeschlechts. Eine leibhaftige Grammatik in vier Teilen*, Vol. 1 (Heidelberg, Germany: Lambert Schneider, 1963), 756–58.
180. Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 83.
181. Cf. idem, *The Archeology of Knowledge & the Discourse on Language* (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 60–63.
182. Cf. Foucault, *The Order of Things*, xxi.
183. Lessing, *Laokoon*, 303.
184. Foucault, incidentally, sees a clear link between “discourse” (grammar, language) and the “continuous discourse” of ideology that “traverses the whole field of knowledge, though as it were in a subterranean manner, in order to reveal, on the basis of representation, the possibility of that knowledge. . . .” (Cf. idem, *The Order of Things*, 241; 85). For the vagueness of the term “ideology,” see for instance George Lichtheim, *The Concept of Ideology and Other Essays* (New York: Random House, 1967); John Plamenatz, *Ideology* (New York: Praeger, 1970); Kurt Lenk, ed., *Ideologie, Ideologikritik und Wissenssoziologie* (Neuwied, Germany: Luchterhand, 1970); Ernst Topitsch and Kurt Salamun, *Ideologie. Herrschaft des Vorurteils* (Munich, Germany: Langen Müller, 1972). Lewis S. Feuer, in *Ideology and the Ideologists* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), looks at the “Mosaic revolutionary myth” as the archetypical ideology, for it includes three quintessential ingredients: invariant myth, compound of philosophical doctrines, and chosen class (cf. ibid., 1). A more recent and comprehensive monograph that also addresses at length the Positivismusstreit is Peter V. Zima, *Ideologie und Theorie. Eine Diskurskritik* (Tübingen, Germany: Francke, 1989).

185. Paul Ricoeur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, ed. George Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 3.

186. Ibid. On the subject of social imagination, see also Cornelius Castoriadis, *L'institution imaginaire de la société* (Paris, France: Seuil, 1975); John B. Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology* (Cambridge: Polity, 1984), esp. 25–27.

187. Cf. Ricoeur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 266.

188. Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, 263; also ibid., 262: “It is possible, therefore, that in the future, in a world in which there is never anything new, in which all is finished and each moment is a repetition of the past, there can exist a condition in which thought will be utterly devoid of all ideological and utopian elements. But the complete elimination of reality-transcending elements from our world would lead us to a ‘matter-of-factness’ which ultimately would mean the decay of the human will.”

189. Paul Ricoeur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 266.

190. On the positivist sense of “givens” (*Gegebenheit*), see for instance Moritz Schlick, “Positivism and Realism,” in *Logical Positivism*, ed. Alfred J. Ayer (New York: Free Press, 1959), esp. 84–85.

191. Peter Karstedt, *Ideologie: Versuch über prometheisches Bewußtsein* (Monographien zur philosophischen Forschung 170), (Meisenheim, Germany: Anton Hain, 1979), 214–16.

192. Cf. ibid., 219.

193. Cf. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 217.

194. Ibid., 219.

195. Ibid., 218. Or in the words of Harold Rosenberg: “Poetry is inescapable in crisis.” Cf. idem, *The Tradition of the New*, 166.

196. Emmanuel Levinas, *Humanism of the Other*, 49.

197. Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 22. Löwith anticipates here the notion of “invented traditions.” Shulamit Volkov, borrowing from Hobsbawm and Ranger, will later speak of a “cultural rejuvenation” in modern Judaism, whose outcome became the “invention of a tradition” (cf. Volkov, “Die Erfindung einer Tradition. Zur Entstehung des modernen Judentums in Deutschland,” in *Historische Zeitschrift* 253, no. 3 [Dec. 1991]: esp. 607).

198. Ernst Gombrich already noticed the profound Hegelianism in Burckhardt’s Renaissance conception—a Hegelianism “without metaphysics.” Cf. Ernst Gombrich, “In Search of Cultural History,” idem, *Ideals and Idols: Essays on Values in History and in Art* (Oxford, UK: Phaidon, 1979), esp. 34–36. For a nuanced critique of Gombrich’s position, see Kerrigan and Braden, *The Idea of the Renaissance*, esp. 4–8.

199. Bloch, *TE*, 360.

200. Cf. Bloch, *Geist der Utopie*, 9: “[D]azu gehen wir, hauen wir die phantastisch konstitutiven Wege, rufen was nicht ist, bauen ins Blaue hinein, bauen uns

ins Blaue hinein und suchen dort das Wahre, Wirkliche, wo das bloß Tatsächliche verschwindet—*incipit vita nova.*” For the quote from Romans 6:4, see *idem*, *TE*, 360.

201. Cf. Koselleck, *Zeitschichten*, 19–26.

202. Cf. Shmaryahu Talmon, “‘Exile’ and ‘Restoration’ in the Conceptual World of Ancient Judaism,” in *Restoration: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Perspectives*, ed. James M. Scott (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2001), 107, 113. On the use of typological history and the “figura” motif, see Gert Melville, “Zur geschichtstheoretischen Begründung eines fehlenden Niedergangsbewußtseins im Mittelalter,” in *Niedergang: Studien zu einem geschichtlichen Thema*, ed. Reinhart Koselleck and Paul Widmer (Stuttgart, Germany: Klett-Cotta, 1980), 124.

203. Burdach, *Reformation, Renaissance, Humanismus*, esp. 31.

204. Bernard Ullman, “Renaissance—The Word and the Underlying Concept,” *Studies in Philology* 49 (1952): 105–18.

205. Quoted from the German translation, in August Buck, ed., *Zu Begriff und Problem der Renaissance* (Darmstadt, Germany: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969), 265.

206. *Ibid.*, 267.

207. Cf. Niccolò Machiavelli, *Dell’arte della guerra*, Libro VII, *idem. Tutte le opere*, ed. Mario Martelli (Firenze, Italy: Sansoni, 1973), 389. Machiavelli, in fact, derives this resuscitation of dead things from the arts (*poesia, pittura, and scultura*).

208. August Buck, “Zu Begriff und Problem der Renaissance. Eine Einleitung,” *idem, Zu Begriff und Problem der Renaissance*, 7.

209. See Hans Robert Jauss, “Il faut commencer par le commencement,” in *Epochenschwelle und Epochenbewußtsein*, 564–65.

210. Burdach, *Reformation, Renaissance, Humanismus*, 9.

211. Leonard Barkan, *Unearthing the Past: Archeology and Aesthetics in the Making of Renaissance Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 119. Applying the aesthetic concept of fragment to text, Michel Jeanneret even speaks of method of “dismembering” that was typical to the Renaissance (and to Antiquity itself): “The classics are dismembered into spare parts, the pieces are recollected in anthologies where they are classified to make their access easier.” Michel Jeanneret, “The Renaissance and Its Ancients: Dismembering and Devouring,” *MLN* 110.5 (1995): 1046. In a different, yet related, sense, Georg Simmel found in the ruin a “Charakter der Heimkehr” (cf. Simmel, “Die Ruine,” in *idem, Philosophische Kultur. Gesammelte Essays*, 140). One finds this motif already in Burckhardt’s “Ruinenentimentalität.” Cf. Jakob Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance in Italien: Ein Versuch* (Gesammelte Werke III), (Basel, Switzerland: Schwabe, 1970), 126.

212. Michel Serres, *Rome. The Book of Foundations*, trans. Felicia McCarren (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 115. Likewise, Hannah Arendt speaks of the “task of foundation” in Renaissance consciousness, a task, however,

that was characterized by the very “perplexity” of beginnings: “[I]t was of the greatest importance to them to find that even the foundation of Rome, as the Romans themselves had understood it, was not an absolutely new beginning.” Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind II*, 211.

213. Cf. Aby M. Warburg, *Ausgewählte Schriften und Würdigungen*, ed. Dieter Wuttke (Baden-Baden, Germany: Valentin Koerner, 1971), 331.

214. See Theodor E. Mommsen, “Der Begriff des ‘Finsteren Zeitalters’ bei Petrarca,” in Buck, *Zu Begriff und Problem der Renaissance*, 176.

215. Hans Blumenberg, *Aspekte der Epochenschwelle—Cusaner und Nolaner* (Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1975), 19.

216. Cf. Droysen, *Historik*, 357.

217. Cf. Friedrich Schelling, *Die Weltalter. In den Urfassungen von 1811 und 1813* (Munich, Germany: Felix Meiner, 1946), 169; 112.

218. Jules Michelet, *Oeuvres complètes VII* (Histoire de France au seizième siècle. Renaissance, Réforme), (Paris, France: Flammarion, 1975), 51.

219. Erwin Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 38.

220. Burdach, *Reformation, Renaissance, Humanismus*, 158.

221. Erwin Panofsky, “Renaissance and Renascences,” *The Kenyon Review* 6, no. 2 (Spring 1944): 230.

222. Ibid., 225.

223. Ibid., 227.

224. Cf. ibid., 203.

225. Cf. Alfred v. Martin, “Petrarca und die Romantik der Renaissance,” *Historische Zeitschrift* 138 (1928): 40. For the Enlightenment self-perception as a renaissance of the Renaissance, see Buck, “Zu Begriff und Problem der Renaissance. Eine Einleitung,” 12. Also, Enno Rudolph, “Die Renaissance—Eine Aufklärung?,” in idem, ed., *Die Renaissance und ihre Antike* (Die Renaissance als erste Aufklärung I), (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 1–5. Peter Gay, echoing Aby Warburg’s approach, constructs the Enlightenment as de facto a renaissance of the Renaissance (cf. Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment. An Interpretation. The Rise of Modern Paganism* [New York: Vintage, 1966], esp. chapters 1 and 2). Nevertheless, Gay also argues, that the “Enlightenment was not the last act of the Renaissance, important though the Renaissance was to the Enlightenment.” Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: A Comprehensive Anthology* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1973), 20.

226. Cf. Theodor E. Mommsen, “Petrarch’s Conception of the ‘Dark Ages,’” *Speculum* 17 (1942): 226–42.

227. v. Martin, “Petrarca und die Romantik der Renaissance,” 40. For a critique of v. Martin’s interpretation, see Hanns W. Eppenheimer, “Das Renaissance-Problem,” in Buck, *Zu Begriff und Problem der Renaissance*, esp. 112–15.

228. August Buck, “Die Auseinandersetzung mit Jacob Burckhardt’s Renaissancebegriff,” in idem, *Studien zu Humanismus und Renaissance. Gesammelte*

Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1981–1990 (Wiesbaden, Germany: Otto Harrassowitz, 1991), 30. Writing in 1936, in an attempt to offer intellectual resistance at another tragic *Zeitenwende*, Hans Joachim Schoeps took exactly the opposite position: “Man kann nicht sagen, daß Jakob Burckhardt seiner Zeit entflohen sei. Er hat ihr standgehalten wie kaum sonst einer.” Hans Joachim Schoeps, *Gestalten an der Zeitenwende. Burckhardt, Nietzsche, Kafka* (Berlin, Germany: Vortrapp Verlag, 1936), 19.

229. Jacob Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance*, 385.

230. August Buck thus speaks of a “productive memory” in Renaissance. Idem, “Zu Begriff und Problem der Renaissance. Eine Einleitung,” 4.

231. Klaus Hempfer rightly speaks of an “Überholbarkeit” implied in *aemulatio*. Cf. idem, “Probleme traditioneller Bestimmungen des Renaissancebegriffs und die epistemologische ‘Wende,’” in *Renaissance: Diskursstrukturen und epistemologische Voraussetzungen*, ed. Klaus Hempfer (Stuttgart, Germany: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1993), 17. The original meaning of *aemulatio* reflects this aspect: “competition, zealous imitation, jealousy.” Nevertheless, as Hempfer points out, Renaissance authors seem to have used both *imitatio* and *aemulatio* to describe their attitudes toward Antiquity.

232. Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 19.

233. Stephan Otto, “Renaissance und frühe Neuzeit,” in idem, ed, *Geschichte der Philosophie in Text und Darstellung III* (Stuttgart, Germany: Reclam, 1984), 13.

234. Cf. Ernst Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance* (1927), (Darmstadt, Germany: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969), 175. In Paula Findlen’s poignant formulation: “From the fourteenth century onward, Italian Humanists saw the past as an embodied presence.” Paula Findlen, “Possessing the Past: The Material World of the Italian Renaissance,” *The American Historical Review* 103, no. 1 (Feb. 1998): 95.

235. Cf. Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Artists*, trans. George Bull (New York: Penguin Classics, 1977), 45–46

236. Cf. Ernst Cassirer, “Some Remarks on the Question of the Originality of the Renaissance,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 4 (1943): 56. Gombrich, therefore, described the Renaissance as a “movement” rather than period (idem, “In Search of Cultural History,” 51). On “ponere in atto,” see Gerhard Regn, “Mimesis und Episteme der Ähnlichkeit in der Poetik der italienischen Spätrenaissance,” in *Renaissance*, 133–45.

237. See Hempfer, “Probleme traditioneller Bestimmungen des Renaissancebegriffs,” esp. 28–30.

238. Peter Burke, “Renaissance, Reformation, Revolution,” in *Niedergang*, 143. See also the beautiful reflections on this subject by Giancarlo Maiorino, *Adam, “New Born and Perfect”: The Renaissance Promise of Eternity* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987).

239. Jules Michelet, *Oeuvres complètes VII*, 50: “L’histoire est celle de l’âme et de la pensée originale, de l’initiative féconde, de l’héroïsme,—héroïsme d’action, héroïsme de

creation." On Michelet's use of "création personnel," see Lucien Febvre, *Michelet et la Renaissance* (Paris, France: Flammarion, 1992), 155–58.

- 240. Cf. Panofsky, "Renaissance and Renascences," 228.
- 241. Cf. Gombrich, "In Search of Cultural History," 50.
- 242. Moshe Barasch, "Creatio ex nihilo: Renaissance Concepts of Artistic Creation. A minor mistranslation," in *Die Renaissance und ihr Bild in der Geschichte* (Die Renaissance als erste Aufklärung III), ed. Enno Rudolph (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 37–58.
- 243. Cf. Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, 385.
- 244. Panofsky, "Renaissance and Renascences," 228.
- 245. Burdach, *Reformation, Renaissance, Humanismus*, 24.
- 246. Panofsky, "Renaissance and Renascences," 228–29.
- 247. Michelet, *Oeuvres complètes VII*, 50.
- 248. Barth, *Römerbrief*, 293.
- 249. Jules Michelet, *Journal I* (July 24, 1839), 358. Quoted in Wilhelm Alff, *Michelets Ideen* (Kölner Romanistische Arbeiten, Neue Folge, Heft 13 [1966]), 28.
- 250. Burdach, *Reformation, Renaissance, Humanismus*, 5–6.
- 251. Michelet, *Oeuvres complètes VII*, 51.
- 252. Gustav Landauer, *Die Revolution* (Die Gesellschaft. Sammlung sozialpsychologischer Monographien 13), (Frankfurt, Germany: Rütten & Loening, 1907), 34.
- 253. Cf. Schelling, *System des transcendentalen Idealismus*, 291.
- 254. Adorno, *Jargon der Eigentlichkeit*, 61; see also ibid., 54; 43.
- 255. Ibid., 25.
- 256. Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, 92.
- 257. Adorno, *Jargon der Eigentlichkeit*, 39.
- 258. Cassirer, "Some Remarks on the Originality of the Renaissance," 55.
- 259. Michelet, *Oeuvres complètes VII*, 50.
- 260. Panofsky, "Renaissance and Renascences," 223. On this aspect in Panofsky's thought, see Carl Landauer, "Erwin Panofsky and the Renaissance," *Renaissance Quarterly* 47, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 274.
- 261. Cf. Anthony F. C. Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," *American Anthropologist* 58, no. 2 (April 1956): 265, 267.
- 262. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 2.
- 263. Cf. LeGoff, *History and Memory*, 145–46.
- 264. Cf. Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 31.
- 265. Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," 19, 24.
- 266. Ibid., 12.
- 267. Karl Burdach, *Reformation, Renaissance, Humanismus*, 26.
- 268. Yosef Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 113.

269. Cf. Nora, “Between History and Memory,” 8.

270. Casey, *Remembering*, 292.

271. On Renaissance as an inverted “Heilsgeschichte,” see Hempfer, “Probleme traditioneller Bestimmungen des Renaissancebegriffs,” 11.

Part Two, Chapter One

1. Simon Rawidowicz, “Am ha-holekh va-met,” *Metzudah* 5–6 (1948): 134–48.

Reprinted in Shimon Rawidowicz, *Iyunim be-machshevet Israel I* (Jerusalem, Israel: Rubin Mass, 1969), 139–54. Quoted here from the slightly different text of a lecture in English, found in Rawidowicz’s *Nachlass*, now published as “The Ever-Dying People” in Simon Rawidowicz, *State of Israel, Diaspora, and Jewish Continuity. Essays on the “Ever-Dying People,”* ed. Benjamin C. I. Ravid (Hanover, MA: Brandeis University Press, 1998), 53–63.

2. Rawidowicz. “The Ever-Dying People,” 62.

3. For discussion of Rawidowicz’s lecture and his role in the project of the Weimar Jewish Renaissance, see Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture*, esp. 209–12. For the conceptual affinity between Jewish Renaissance and *techiya*, see Barbara Schäfer, “Jewish Renaissance and Tehiyah—Two that Are One?,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 10, no. 4 (2003): 320–35. Schäfer, in fact, devotes the first part of her essay to Rawidowicz’s use of *techiya* in response to Achad Ha-am.

4. For Rawidowicz’s assessment of Krochmal, see Simon Rawidowicz, *Kitvei Ranak (Rabbi Nachman Krochmal)*, (Berlin, Germany: Ayanot, 1924; 2nd, enlarged edition, London, UK: Ararat, 1961). See especially Rawidowicz’s introduction, *ibid.*, 99–125; on Herder and Lessing, see *ibid.*, 117–22. Also, *idem*, *Iyunim be-Machshevet Israel II*, 163–66. According to Jay Harris, however, the issue of who most decisively influenced Krochmal’s cyclical view of history cannot be resolved, because Krochmal never did “sufficiently elaborate on this issue.” Cf. Jay M. Harris, *Nachman Krochmal: Guiding the Perplexed of the Modern Age* (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 125 and 151n29. For a deeper discussion, see Steven Schwarzschild, “Two Modern Jewish Philosophies of History,” PhD diss., Hebrew Union College, 1955. For later essays on Krochmal, see Jacob Taubes, “Nachman Krochmal und der moderne Historismus” (1963), in *idem*, *Vom Kult zur Kultur: Bausteine zu einer Kritik der historischen Vernunft*, ed. Aleida and Jan Assmann et al. (Munich, Germany: Wilhelm Fink, 1996), 68–84; Shlomo Avineri, “The Fossil and the Phoenix: Hegel and Krochmal on the Jewish Volksgeist,” in *History and System: Hegel’s Philosophy of History*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 47–71. Nathan Rotenstreich examined Krochmal on various occasions, stressing both Hegel’s and Vico’s influence. See *idem* *Jewish Philosophy in Modern Times: From Mendelssohn to Rosenzweig* (New

York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), 136–48; *Tradition and Reality: The Impact of History on Modern Jewish Thought* (New York: Random House, 1972), 37–48; *Jews and German Philosophy: The Polemics of Emancipation* (New York: Schocken, 1984), 143–59. See also Lionel Kochan, “The Messiah as the Spirit of History: Krochmal and Graetz,” in idem, *The Jew and his History* (New York: Schocken, 1977), 69–87. Obviously, Rawidowicz’s own cyclical model can be related back to his earlier work on Krochmal.

5. Rawidowicz, “The Ever-Dying People,” 63. The Hebrew version uses the traditional phrase *hai ve-kayam*. In the Hebrew version, this line also follows a reference to the Holocaust, which is omitted in the English version (Cf. Rawidowicz, *Iyunim be-Machsheveth Israel I*, 153).

6. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte* (Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte 12), ed. Karl Ilting et al. (Hamburg, Germany: Felix Meiner, 1996), 18.

7. Rotenstreich, *Jews and German Philosophy*, 157.

8. See Ismar Schorsch, “The Production of a Classic: Zunz as Krochmal’s Editor,” in *LBIYB* 31 (1986): 281–315. Heinrich Graetz, therefore, considered Krochmal a major source for the Science of Judaism: “He was regarded as the mainstay of the young Jewish science, and had many admirers in Germany.” (Heinrich Graetz, *Popular History of the Jews*, Vol. V, trans. A. B. Rhine [New York: Hebrew Publishing, 1926], 487). Gershom Scholem, however, refused to see any significant influence of Krochmal on the Science of Judaism: “How mistaken those contemporary authors who write as if Krochmal in fact exerted any tangible, real influence upon the development of the Science of Judaism!” (Scholem, “Reflections on Modern Jewish Studies” [1944], in idem, *On the Possibility of Jewish Mysticism in our Time and Other Essays*, ed. Avraham Shapira [Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1997], 56).

9. Nachman Krochmal, *Moreh Nevukhei Ha-Zman* (*Kitvei Ranak*), 40. Two rather different translations of this passage appear in Harris, *Nachman Krochmal*, 123–24, and Michael Meyer, *Ideas of Jewish History* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1987), 202–3.

10. Cf. Giambattista Vico, *La scienza nuova III*, ed. Giovanni Emanuele Barié (Milan, Italy: Garzanti, 1946), 205–6. (Book 5, Section 3).

11. Vico, *La scienza nuova I*, 247 (Book 1, Section 4). I should like to refer here to the superb study by Mark Lilla, *G. B. Vico: The Making of an Anti-Modern* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), esp. 134: “The axioms of Vico’s ‘metaphysics of mind’ thus become the elements with which the historian recreates the general pattern of the past; he becomes an active ‘maker’ of this ideal account of the course of events once ‘made’ by past minds.”

12. Harris, *Nachman Krochmal*, 124. Harris also correctly interprets this repetition as a “polemical response to the conception of a superseded Judaism that prevailed in Protestant historiography.”

13. For this notion of progressive repetition, see Ismar Schorsch, “The Philosophy of History of Nachman Krochmal,” *Judaism* 10, no. 3 (Summer 1961): 237–45, esp. 244.
14. Krochmal, *Moreh Nevukhei ha-Zman* (*Kitvei Ranak*), 40.
15. Jakob Burckhardt, *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen*, 188.
16. Arthur Liebert, *Die geistige Krisis der Gegenwart* (Berlin, Germany: Pan Verlag, 1924), 5.
17. Krochmal, *Moreh Nevukhei ha-Zman* (*Kitvei Ranak*), 52: “*mo’ed ha-zmicha ve-hagadol leumah pa’am shniya*.”
18. Talmon, “‘Exile’ and ‘Restoration,’” 118.
19. Max Weber, *Ancient Judaism*, trans. Hans Gerth and Don Martindale (New York: Free Press, 1952), 364. On Weber’s image of ancient Judaism, see Freddy Raphaël, “Max Weber and Ancient Judaism,” *LBIYB* 18 (1973): 41–62. Hans Liebeschütz relates an interesting letter by Franz Rosenzweig, suggesting that he viewed Weber’s interpretation of Judaism as akin to his own: “Ich lese Max Webers Judentum, das ich eigentlich während des Krieges lesen wollte. Es ist schade, daß ich es nicht getan habe, ich hätte es gut im Stern mitverarbeiten können; es ist historisch das Gleiche, wie ich es philosophisch ausgesprochen habe.” Rosenzweig, *Briefe* (Berlin, Germany: Schocken, 1935), 405, quoted in Hans Liebeschütz, “Max Weber’s Historical Interpretation of Judaism,” *LBIYB* 9 (1964): 41.
20. Wilhelm v. Humboldt, “Über die Aufgabe des Geschichtsschreibers,” *Wilhelm von Humboldts Gesammelte Schriften IV*, ed. Albert Leitzmann (Berlin, Germany: B. Behr, 1905 [reprint Berlin, 1968]), 36.
21. Cf. ibid., 42: “... dann von der Einbildungskraft dergestalt aufs neue gebohren wird . . .”
22. Paul Ricoeur, “Narrative Time,” 171.
23. White, *Metahistory*, 7.
24. Hegel also speaks of a *narratio rerum gestae* (cf. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte* (Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte 12), 123. On the theoretical implications of Hegel’s distinction, see Nathan Rotenstreich, *Between Past and Present: An Essay on History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1958), 1–25.
25. Cf. Humboldt, “Über die Aufgabe des Geschichtsschreibers,” 37.
26. Simon Dubnow, *Pinkas ha-Kehillot ha-reshiot bi-M’dinat Lita* (Berlin, Germany: Ayanot, 1925), ix. Dubnow uses the terms “biniyan” and “hurban.”
27. Simon Dubnow, “The Survival of the Jewish People,” in Simon Dubnow, *Nationalism and History. Essays on Old and New Judaism*, ed. and trans. Koppel Pinson (Cleveland, OH: Meridian, 1961), 326.
28. On an early discussion of the dual aspect of Jewish history, *toldot* (generations) and *dirrei ha-yamim* (occurrences in time), see A. S. Steinberg, “Die weltanschaulichen Voraussetzungen der jüdischen Geschichtsschreibung,” in *Festschrift zu Simon Dubnows siebzigstem Geburtstag*, ed. Ismar Elbogen, Josef Meisl, and

Mark Wischnitzer (Berlin, Germany: Jüdischer Verlag 1930), 24–40. Steinberg compares the concept of *toldot* to an “inner” chronology, a “seamless continuity which has no outside knowledge of the natural and historical world and has no interest in it”; whereas *divrei ha-yamim* refer to temporal, discontinuous knowledge that allows for the formulation for historical periods: “Periodization is concerned with caesuras; it breaks the continuous nexus of the inner history apart, for this is the only way to make continuity visible” (*Ibid.*, 36).

29. Dubnow, “The Survival of the Jewish People,” 326.

30. Dubnow, *Die jüdische Geschichte. Ein geschichtsphilosophischer Versuch*, trans. Israel Friedländer (Frankfurt, Germany: J. Kauffmann, 1921), 106.

31. Cf. Dubnow, *Die jüdische Geschichte*, 12 (“vergeistigte Geschichte”). The English version makes the reference to Hegel more apparent. Cf. *idem*, *Nationalism and History*, 263: “In a word, Jewish history is history sublimated.”

32. Cf. Dubnow, *Die jüdische Geschichte*, 6; and *idem*, “The Survival of the Jewish People,” 327. The liturgical reference is to Salomo Ibn Gabirol’s hymn *Adon Olam*, where God is exalted as “he who was, is, and shall be.”

33. In fact, by 1925 Dubnow had distanced himself from his earlier writings, which now appeared to him as too one-sidedly spiritual and too indebted to the old school of Zunz and Heinrich Graetz. Cf. Dubnow, “The Sociological View of Jewish History,” in *idem*, *Nationalism and History*, 344–45.

34. *Ibid.*, 338.

35. Dubnow, *Die jüdische Geschichte*, 101.

36. On the history of Baron’s appointment, see Robert Liberles, *Salo Wittmayer Baron: Architect of Jewish History* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 58–93.

37. Cf. Salo Wittmayer Baron, “Emphases in Jewish History” (1939), in *idem*, *Jewish Historians and Jewish History*, ed. Arthur Hertzberg and Leon Feldman (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1964), 77; also *ibid.*, 23 (“World Dimensions of Jewish History”). See also Liberles, *Salo Wittmayer Baron*, 119–21.

38. Dubnow, “The Sociological View of Jewish History,” *Nationalism and History*, 340.

39. Salo Baron, *The Jewish Community I* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1942), 28–29. See also Liberles’s formidable treatment of Baron’s conflicted relationship to Dubnow in this regard (Liberles, *Salo Wittmayer Baron*, 249–53).

40. Cf. Salo Wittmayer Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, Vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), 13, 30.

41. *Ibid.*, 16.

42. Martin Buber, “The Two Foci of the Jewish Soul,” *idem Israel and the World. Essays in a Time of Crisis* (New York: Schocken, 1948), 29. The essay, which was based on an address Buber gave in Stuttgart, Germany, appeared incidentally in the same volume Baron seems to have consulted for his introduction.

43. Cf. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, Vol. 1, 30.

44. Ibid., 19. The quote is from Martin Buber, “Warum muß der Aufbau Palästinas ein sozialistischer sein?” (1928), in Martin Buber, *Kampf um Israel: Reden und Schriften 1921–1932* (Berlin, Germany: Schocken, 1933), 297.

45. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, Vol. 1, 19. Conversely, ibid., 12: “Nature’s resistance to history is enormous.” In a similar vein, Alfred Jospe wrote in 1961: “Israeli life is, first of all, characterized by what I would call a *defiance of nature*.” Jospe, “The Three-Fold Rebellion: Some Reflections on Israel Today” (1961), reprinted in idem, ed, *Tradition and Contemporary Experience: Essays on Jewish Thought and Life* (New York: Schocken, 1970), 294.

46. Cf. Liberles, *Salo Wittmayer Baron*, 123: “In fact, Baron’s relation to Dubnow was more complicated than he had carefully led his readers to believe. His own utterances on the topic emphasized the distance between them, but it was the actual proximity between them that necessitated the camouflage.”

47. Salo Baron, “Reflections on the Future of the Jews on Europe,” *Contemporary Jewish Record* 3 (1940): 356. Quoted in Liberles, *Salo Wittmayer Baron*, 267.

48. Salo Baron, *The Effect of the War on Jewish Community Life* (New York: Harry L. Glucksmann Memorial Lecture, 1942), 13. Also Liberles, *Salo Wittmayer Baron*, 279.

49. Salo Baron, “At the Turning Point,” *The Menorah Journal* 33, no. 1 (April–June 1945): 2.

50. Koselleck speaks of three basic “time-layers”: linearity, repetition, and pointing-beyond. Cf. idem, *Zeitschichten*, 19–23.

51. Cf. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, Vol. 1, 17; on teshuvah, see 10–11.

52. Vico, *La scienza nuova III*, 218 (Conclusion).

53. Cf. Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews* (New York: Schocken, 1954), 385. The use of “rebirth” in reference to the modern state of Israel is too commonplace in Jewish historiography to be singled out. It shall suffice to mention the influential Israeli historian Ben Zion Dinur, who in 1950 wrote about the “miracle of the resurrection of Israel and its historical foundations.” Cf. idem, “Ha-‘Nes’ shel Tekumat Yisrael ve-Yesodotav ha-Historiyim,” *Shivat Tzion* 19 (1950): 12–90; also idem, *Israel and the Diaspora* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1969), Book III: “The Rebirth of Israel.”

54. Cf. Nathan Glazer, *American Judaism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 106–28. Lucy Dawidowicz, *On Equal Terms: Jews in America, 1881–1981* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1982), 123–24. Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 275; 355: “The Holocaust, Israel, feminism, and spirituality all played into these latter-day calls for American Jewish ‘renewal,’ but the actual meaning of the term proved elusive—as elusive as ‘peace of mind’ had been half a century earlier.”

55. Dianne Ashton, “An Ever-Revitalizing People?” Review of Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History*, found at www.shma.com/bookreviews/Dianne.html.

56. Edward Feld, *The Spirit of Renewal: Crisis and Response in Jewish Life* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 1991), 150.

57. Cf. Arnold Gehlen, “Über kulturelle Kristallisation,” *Studien zur Anthropologie und Soziologie* (Darmstadt, Germany: Luchterhand, 1963), 323. Reprinted in Wolfgang Welsch, ed., *Wege aus der Moderne: Schlüsseltexte der Postmoderne Diskussion* (Weinheim, Germany: VCH Acta Humaniora, 1988), 133–43; esp. 141. It should be noted that Gehlen speaks of an end of *Ideeengeschichte* whose effects will, nonetheless, deprive history of the category of novelty altogether: “Die Erde wird demnach in der gleichen Epoche, in der sie optisch und informatorisch übershebar ist, in der kein unbeachtetes Ereignis von größerer Wichtigkeit mehr vorkommen kann, auch in der genannten Hinsicht überraschungslos.” *Posthistoire*, then, for Gehlen, is the history in which nothing new can happen. For a critique of Gehlen’s position as “neoconservative,” see Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity. Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), 3–4.

58. Hence the remarkably recurrent question in the literature whether the Holocaust constitutes an apocalyptic end or a beginning—or both. See, for instance, Saul Friedländer et al., eds., *Visions of Apocalypse. End or Rebirth?* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1985). For an earlier text with a similar formulation of its basic question, see Eva Fleischer, ed., *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era? Reflections on the Holocaust* (New York: KTAV, 1977). More recently, Steven Kepnes’ wrote: “The Holocaust marks an end, and after it we are trying to begin anew” (Kepnes et al., eds., *Reasoning After Revelation*, 40).

59. For a discussion of this motif and how it relates specifically to the Holocaust, see Steven T. Katz, “Jewish Theological Responses to the Holocaust,” in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1986); and idem, *Historicism, the Holocaust, and Zionism. Critical Studies in Modern Jewish Thought and History* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), esp. 19–21.

60. Lionel Kochan, *The Jewish Renaissance and Some of its Discontents* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1992), 1.

61. Cf. Arthur Cohen, *The Natural and the Supernatural Jew: An Historical and Theological Introduction* (New York: Pantheon, 1962), 301, 313.

62. Leo Baeck, *Epochen der jüdischen Geschichte* (Studia Delitzschiana 16), (Stuttgart, Germany: W. Kohlhammer, 1974), 127. The text is based on Baeck’s lectures in the “Montagsseminar” at the London Society for Jewish Studies, January 16–July 9, 1956.

63. Cf. ibid., 28.

64. Cf. Burckhardt, *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen*, 67.

65. Leo Baeck, *Epochen der jüdischen Geschichte*, 128.

66. Cf. Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes. Umrisse einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte* (1917), (Munich, Germany: C. H. Beck, 1923), 43: “Die Zivilisation ist das unausweichliche *Schicksal* einer Kultur. . . . Zivilisationen . . . sind ein Abschluß; sie folgen dem Werden als das Gewordene, dem Leben als der Tod, der Entwicklung als die Starrheit. . . . Sie sind ein Ende, unwiderruflich, aber sie sind mit innertser Notwendigkeit immer wieder erreicht worden.”

67. Like Spengler, Toynbee speaks of the “rhythm of disintegration” in *A Study of History*, Vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 548–58. At the same time, however, in good Hegelian fashion, Toynbee describes this “elemental rhythm” as “creation by destruction” and “birth by death”: “The perpetual turning of a wheel is not a vain repetition if, at each revolution, it is carrying the vehicle that much nearer to its goal.” Likewise, historical “palingenesia,” for Toynbee, “signifies the birth of something new and not just the rebirth of something that has lived and died before” (*Ibid.*, 556). Toynbee’s hideous anti-Semitism, which has experienced a peculiar rebirth in present-day liberal anti-Zionism, needs no rebuttal here. Nevertheless, for an early response to Toynbee, see Abba Eban’s 1955 lecture at Yeshiva University, “The Toynbee Heresy,” in Abba Eban, *Voice of Israel* (New York: Horizon, 1969), 165–86.

68. Cf. Baeck, *Epochen der jüdischen Geschichte*, 27.

69. Baeck, *Epochen der jüdischen Geschichte*, 28. For Baeck’s understanding of “period,” see *ibid.*, 15: “‘Periode’ meint einen in sich geschlossenen Kreis, in sich geschlossen, aber doch nicht selbständige für sich, nicht für sich allein zu betrachten, sondern im Zusammenhang mit anderen Kreisen, die innerhalb eines Gesamtkreises sind: Also einen einzelnen Kreis innerhalb eines Größeren, eines großen Ganzen.” Also, Vico, *La scienza nuova III*, 175–77.

70. See Gershom Scholem, “Reflections on Jewish Theology,” now in *idem, On Jews and Judaism in Crisis: Selected Essays*, ed. Werner Dannhauser (New York: Schocken, 1976), esp. 285.

71. Baeck, *Epochen der jüdischen Geschichte*, 124.

72. Kierkegaard, *Either/Or II*, 227.

73. Cf. Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, 315.

74. Achad Ha-am, “Wunden von Freundeshand,” *idem, Am Scheidewege I*, trans. Israel Friedlaender (Berlin, Germany: Jüdischer Verlag, 1913), 60.

75. Likewise, Krochmal interpreted the Babylonian exile as a time of inner transformation (cf. Krochmal, *Moreh*, 53). Samson Raphael Hirsch, as most leaders of German-Jewish orthodoxy at his time, celebrated the “purifying power of the Galuth” as a power granting atonement and ultimate redemption. Cf. S. R. Hirsch, “Galuth Edom”—The Healing Power of Galuth,” *idem, Collected Writings*, Vol. IV (Studies on Isaiah and Essays on the Psalms), (New York: P. Feldheim, 1986), 219.

76. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion. Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* (1799), ed. Rudolf Otto (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck und

Ruprecht, 1926), 176: “[D]enn der Judaismus ist schon lange eine tote Religion, und diejenigen, welche jetzt noch seine Farbe tragen, sitzen eigentlich klagend bei der unverweslichen Mumie und weinen über sein Hinscheiden und seine traurige Verlassenschaft.” For an interesting account of the mummy metaphor in German intellectual history, which encompasses also Ludwig Börne and Heinrich Heine, see Amy Newman, “The Death of Judaism in German Protestant Thought from Luther to Hegel,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 61, no. 3 (Autumn 1993): esp. 466–69.

77. Cf. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, 24. On Hegel’s specific views on Judaism, see Hans Liebeschütz, *Das Judentum im deutschen Geschichtsbild von Hegel bis Max Weber* (Tübingen, Germany: J.C.B. Mohr, 1967), esp. 33–42; Shlomo Avineri, “The Fossil and the Phoenix,” 47–71; Eric V. D. Luft, “Hegel and Judaism: A Reassessment,” *Clio* 18 (1989): 361–78. For a wonderfully evocative reading on this subject, see again Newman, “The Death of Judaism in German Protestant Thought from Luther to Hegel,” esp. 469–72.

78. Cf. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 73–75.

79. Heinrich Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart*, vol. 1 (Leipzig, Germany: Oskar Leiner, s.d.), xviii. Now printed in Heinrich Graetz, *The Structure of Jewish History and Other Essays*, trans., ed. and introduced by Ismar Schorsch (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary, 1975), 173.

80. Cf. Achad Ha-am, “Die Renaissance des Geistes,” *Am Scheidewege II*, 137.

81. Simon Dubnow, *Die Jüdische Geschichte. Ein geschichtsphilosophischer Versuch*, trans. Israel Friedländer (Frankfurt, Germany: J. Kauffmann Verlag, 1921), 4.

82. See Shmuel Almog, *Zionism and History: The Rise of a New Jewish Consciousness* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1987), 45–51. Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*, 13–36.

83. Bloch, *TE*, 368.

84. Heinrich Graetz, “The Rejuvenation of the Jewish Race,” in idem, *The Structure of Jewish History*, 143.

85. Ibid., 175.

86. For discussion of the “constancy of Rome” in Vico, see Lilla, *G. B. Vico*, 108–11. For Virgil’s notion of the eternal city, see Harold Mattingley, “Virgil’s Fourth Eclogue,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtault Institutes* 10 (1947): esp. 14–16.

87. Graetz, “The Rejuvenation of the Jewish Race,” 143.

88. Ibid.

89. Kant speaks of transcendental ideas as liminal to the limits of our apprehension of nature, opening a “field” beyond the “shackles of experience” that gives room to “practical principles”—the same space in which we find expectation and hope. Transcendental ideas so create the possibility for moral ideas and become “the task as such” of natural pure reason. (Cf. Kant, *Prolegomena*, A 183–85).

90. Cf. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 92.

91. For a critical survey of the historicism debate and an attempt at defining historicism, see Calvin G. Rand, “Two Meanings of Historicism in the Writings of Dilthey, Troeltsch, and Meinecke,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 25, no. 4 (Oct.–Dec. 1964): 503–18. Rand rightly considers historicism both a form methodology and a specific *Weltanschauung* (cf. *ibid.*, 517).

92. For a discussion of the earlier rationalists, see Jerome Rosenthal, “Attitudes of Some Modern Rationalists to History,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 4, no. 4 (Oct. 1943): 429–56.

93. Cf. Friedrich Jaeger and Jörn Rüsen, *Geschichte des Historismus*, 30–32.

94. Cf. Peter Koslowski, ed., *The Discovery of Historicity in German Idealism and Historicism* (Berlin, Germany: Springer, 2005), 5. Koslowski borrows his description from Karl Acham’s essay, “Diltheys Beitrag zur Theorie der Kultur- und Sozialwissenschaften,” *Dilthey-Jahrbuch für Philosophie und Geschichte der Geisteswissenschaften*, 3 (1985): 9–51.

95. Joachim Mehlhausen relates three common features of this imagination: a conservative disposition (seeking to preserve-recover a *status quo ante*); a desire for a continuous legitimacy of political power and social order; and a religiously or ideologically grounded belief in the “super-historicity of certain norms and values.” Cf. *idem*, “Restauration,” *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, Vol. 29 (Berlin, Germany: Walter de Gruyter, 1998), 87–88. See also Wallace, “Revitalization Movements,” 265.

96. Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire,” 16. Nora is not too far removed, in this regard, from Gadamer’s hermeneutics, which recognized, against the “naïve assumption of historicism,” “the distance in time as positive and productive possibility of understanding.” Cf. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London, UK: Continuum), 265 (*Wahrheit und Methode*, 279).

97. Cf. Jules Michelet, “Préface de l’histoire de France” (*Oeuvres complètes IV*), 22.

98. Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire,” 18.

99. Cf. *ibid.*, 16: “What is being remembered? In a sense, it is memory itself.”

100. Rawidowicz, “The Ever-Dying People,” 63.

101. *Ibid.*

102. Ismar Schorsch, *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism* (Hanover, MA: Brandeis University Press, 1994), 268.

103. Heinrich Graetz, *Die Konstruktion der jüdischen Geschichte: Eine Skizze* (Berlin, Germany: Schocken, 1936), 8.

104. Cf. *ibid.*, 162.

105. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 86.

106. *Ibid.*, 94.

107. See also the discussion on tradition, memory, and historiography in Edward Shils, *Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), esp. 50–62.

108. Cf. Schorsch, *From Text to Context*, 177.

109. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 96.
110. Paula Hyman, “The Ideological Transformation of Modern Jewish Historiography,” in *The State of Jewish Studies*, ed. Shaya J. D. Cohen and Edward L. Greenstein (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1990), 153.
111. Cf. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 84. See also David Myers, “Of Marranos and Memory: Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi and the Writing of Jewish History,” in *Jewish History and Jewish Memory. Essays in Honor of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi*, ed. Elisheva Carlebach et al. (Hanover, MA: Brandeis University Press, 1998), 1–21.
112. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 86.
113. Amos Funkenstein, “Collective Memory and Historical Consciousness,” *History and Memory* 1 (Spring/Summer 1989): 21.
114. Ibid.
115. On this issue, see Shmuel Feiner, *Haskalah and History: The Emergence of a Modern Jewish Historical Consciousness*, trans. Chaya Naor and Sondra Silverston (Oxford, UK: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2002).
116. Hans Liebeschütz, “Mendelssohn und Lessing in ihrer Stellung zur Geschichte,” in *Studies in Jewish Religious and Intellectual History*, ed. Siegfried Stein and Raphael Loewe (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1979), 179.
117. Wilhelm Dilthey, “Das achtzehnte Jahrhundert und die geschichtliche Welt” (1901), in idem, *Gesammelte Schriften III* (Stuttgart, Germany: B. G. Teubner, 1957), esp. 209–13.
118. Ernst Cassirer, *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung* (Hamburg, Germany: Felix Meiner, 1998), 266.
119. Following Cassirer, Peter Reill located the roots of modern historicism in an Enlightenment “crisis of historical consciousness,” which, unable to resolve the conflict between religious plot and historical one-timeness, came to anticipate, in its own ways, the twentieth century crisis of historicism. Peter Hanns Reill, *The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 47: “The path opened up by the Aufklärers contributed to the creation of the modern paradigm of historical understanding. In their own way, they were concerned in fathoming what is usually referred to as historicism.”
120. Cassirer, *Philosophie der Aufklärung*, 308.
121. Ibid., 309.
122. Johann Gottfried Herder, *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit* (Part 2), (Stuttgart, Germany: Philipp Reclam, 1990), 53: “Aber kein Ding im ganzen Reiche Gottes . . . ist allein Mittel—alles Mittel und Zweck zugleich, und so auch gewiß diese Jahrhunderte.” On Herder’s use of Leibniz, see Ernst Cassirer, *Philosophie der Aufklärung*, 308–9, and idem, *Freiheit und Form. Studien zur deutschen Geistesgeschichte* (Darmstadt, Germany: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1961), 108–17. Also, Robert Arnold Fritzsche, “Herder und die Humanität,” *Der Morgen* 3, no. 4 (October 1927): 402–10, esp. 403. This aesthetic conception of “monadological” history will of course return in Walter Benjamin.

See Stéphane Mosès, *Der Engel der Geschichte* (Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1994), esp. 112–33. While Mosès rightly links Benjamin's monads to Goethe's "Urphänomen" (*Ibid.*, 118), he does not develop the connections to Herder.

123. Cf. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts*, §§ 88–89, *Lessings Werke* 12 (Stuttgart, Germany: Göschen'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1890), 74.

124. Cf. Herder, *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit* (Part 3), 84. Likewise, Schiller spoke of a "Gemälde der Zeiten und Völker," which would be the task of *Universalgeschichte*: "Indem sie den Menschen gewöhnt, sich mit der ganzen Vergangenheit zusammenzufassen und mit seinen Schlüssen in die ferne Zukunft vorauszueilen: So verbirgt sie die Grenzen von Geburt und Tod, die das Leben des Menschen so eng und so drückend umschließen, so breitet sie optisch täuschend sein kurzes Dasein in einen unendlichen Raum aus und führt das Individuum unvermerkt in die Gattung hinüber." Friedrich Schiller, "Was heißt und zu welchem Ende studiert man Universalgeschichte. Eine akademische Antrittsrede" (1789), *Schillers Werke* IV (Frankfurt, Germany: Insel Verlag, 1966), 437.

125. Herder, *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte*, (Part 1), 35.

126. Isaiah Berlin, *Vico and Herder. Two Studies in the History of Ideas* (London, UK: Holgarth, 1976), 153. Berlin defines Herder's pluralism as "the belief not merely in the multiplicity, but in the incommensurability, of the values of different cultures and societies and, in addition, in the incompatibility of equally valid ideals, together with the implied revolutionary corollary that the classical notions of an ideal man and of an ideal society are intrinsically incoherent and meaningless."

127. Friedrich Meinecke, "Möser, Herder, Goethe," in Meinecke, *Zur Theorie und Philosophie der Geschichte*, ed. Eberhard Kessel (*Werke* IV, ed. Hans Herzfeld et al.), (Stuttgart, Germany: K. F. Koehler, 1959), 247.

128. Cf. Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, "Question for Martin Buber," in *Philosophical Interrogations*, ed. Sydney and Beatrice Rome (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), 33–34.

129. Herder, *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte* (Part I), 38. Moses Mendelssohn, in his critique of Lessing's *Education of Humankind*, may have thought of Herder when he wrote: "In reality, the human race is—if the metaphor is appropriate—in almost every century, child, adult, and old man at the same time, though in different regions of the world." Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem or on Religious Power and Judaism*, trans. Allan Arkush (Hanover, MA : Brandeis University Press, 1983), 96.

130. Schorsch discusses in particular Herder's impact on Leopold Zunz. See idem, *From Text to Context*, 248, and the reference to the Zunz correspondence (cf. Nahum Glatzer, *Leopold Zunz: Jude—Deutscher—Europäer. Ein jüdisches Gelehrten-schicksal des 19. Jahrhunderts in Briefen an Freunde* [Tübingen, Germany: J.C.B. Mohr, 1964], 178, Letter no. 73).

131. Leopold Zunz, *Zur Geschichte und Literatur I* (Berlin, Germany: Veit und Comp., 1845; reprint Hildesheim, Germany: Georg Olms, 1976), 1.

132. Ibid., 2. The same motif resurfaces in Zacharias Frankel's introduction to the *Monatsschrift* of 1851: "Da übrigens auch die Gegenwart mit Geschichte macht, den Faden aus der Hand der Vergangenheit nimmt und die Zukunft vermittelt, so haben auch bedeutende Vorfallenheiten und Zustände der Jetztzeit eine nicht zu übersehende Berechtigung, sie sind Bausteine und Grundlagen, durch und auf die das Geschichtsgebäude weiter begründet werden soll, und von denen die Gegenwart selbst getragen wird." Zacharias Frankel, "Einleitendes," *Monatsschrift für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 1 (Oct. 1851–Dec. 1852), (Dresden, Germany: Kuntze, 1852): 4.

133. Zunz, *Zur Geschichte und Literatur I*, 28. Likewise, Immanuel Wolf wrote in 1823: "Im Reiche der Wissenschaft steht nichts abgesondert, nichts vereinzelt da; alle üben vielmehr eine beständige Wechselwirkung auf einenander, sind durch eine innere Harmonie mit einander verbunden." Immanuel Wolf, "Über den Begriff einer Wissenschaft des Judenthums," *Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 1 (1823): 21.

134. Cf. Rosenzweig, *Star*, 375. Which is not to suggest, however, that Rosenzweig blindly followed Ranke. For a discussion on Rosenzweig's critique of Ranke, see Paul Mendes-Flohr, "Rosenzweig and the Crisis of Historicism," in *The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig*, ed. Paul Mendes-Flohr (Hanover, MA: University Press of New England, 1988), 151.

135. Zunz, *Zur Geschichte und Literatur I*, 3. Cf. also Frankel, "Einleitendes," 3: "Geschichte in ihrer letzten Deutung ist die Vereinigung der auseinander liegenden wechselnden und vorübergehenden Erscheinungen in einem Brennpunkt, von dem aus der Strahl der Gottheit auf die Begebenheiten fällt und in ihnen der über die Jahrhunderte hinaus waltende Plan offenbar wird."

136. Cf. Leopold Zunz, *Etwas über die rabbinische Literatur* (Vorwort), in idem *Gesammelte Schriften I* (Berlin, Germany: Louis Gerschel Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1875; reprint Hildesheim, Germany: Georg Olms, 1976), 5, 15, 30.

137. Immanuel Wolf, "Über den Begriff einer Wissenschaft des Judenthums," *Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 1 (1823): 23.

138. Joseph Wolf, "Inhalt, Zweck und Titel dieser Zeitschrift," *Sulamith, Eine Zeitschrift zur Beförderung der Kultur und Humanität unter der jüdischen Nation* 1 (1806): 10.

139. Zunz, *Etwas über die rabbinische Literatur*, 17.

140. Cf. Zunz, *Zur Geschichte und Literatur I*, 1.

141. Wolf, "Über den Begriff einer Wissenschaft des Judenthums," 7.

142. Abraham Geiger, "A General Introduction to the Science of Judaism," in *Abraham Geiger and Liberal Judaism: The Challenge of the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Max Wiener (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1962), 156.

143. Cf. ibid., 149.

144. Issac Markus Jost, *Geschichte der Israeliten seit der Zeit der Maccabäer bis auf unsre Tage nach den Quellen bearbeitet* (Berlin, Germany: Schlesinger, 1820–1828).

145. Cf. Schorsch, *From Text to Context*, 239.

146. Ibid., 243.

147. Salo Baron, “I. M. Jost, the Historian,” idem, *History and Jewish Historians*, 245.

148. Abraham Geiger, “Die jüdische Geschichte” (review), *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift für jüdische Theologie* 1, no. 2 (1835): 180.

149. Isaac Markus Jost, “Beitrag zur jüdischen Geschichte und Bibliographie,” *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift für jüdische Theologie* 1, no. 3 (1835), 358.

150. Ibid., 359–60.

151. Geiger, *A General Introduction to the Science of Judaism*, 149.

152. Graetz, *Popular History of the Jews*, Vol. V, trans. A. B. Rhine, ed. Alexander Harkavy (New York: Hebrew Publishing, 1926), 484.

153. Geiger, *A General Introduction to the Science of Judaism*, 156–57.

154. Cf. Zunz, *Etwas über die rabbinische Litteratur*, 3.

155. Leopold Zunz, “Erweckung zum Fortschreiten,” idem, *Gesammelte Schriften II* (Berlin, Germany: Louis Gerschel Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1876; reprint, Hildesheim, Germany: Georg Olms, 1976), 90.

156. Ibid., 95.

157. Ibid., 99.

158. Cf. Leopold Zunz, “Israel’s gottesdienstliche Poesie” (1870), in idem, *Gesammelte Schriften I*, 123, 132, 133.

159. Ibid., 125: “Israels gottesdienstliche Poesie darf man demnach so auffassen, dass Israel das Allgemeine, mithin das Unsterbliche bedeutet, Gottsdienst die Befreiung der Seele von Menschdienst, d. i. die menschliche Freiheit, und Poesie die Macht der Idee, d. i. des steten Fortschritts: alles drei im Bunde Gottes, d. h. in der Verbindung des Menschlichen mit dem Göttlichen lebendig erhalten.” Zunz then continues to distinguish three periods of this alliance: The prophetic, “poetic” period; the period following the destruction of the Jewish state, where poetry became gradually supplemented by science; and the period of decline and degeneration of both science and poetry. His present age Zunz interpreted as a “fourth period”—as a period of restoration. Given such a dynamic periodization of Jewish history, it is questionable to me whether we should indeed consider, as has been suggested, “Zunz’s appraisal of the Jewish past [. . . as] static, remorselessly unconcerned with growth and development, incapable of explaining change.” Cf. Leon Wieseltier, “Etwas Über die Jüdische Historik: Leopold Zunz and the Inception of Modern Jewish Historiography,” *History and Theory* 20, no. 2 (May 1981): 138.

160. In an earlier lecture of 1864, Zunz invokes Schiller’s aesthetic education as a model of intellectual harmony and “health”: “Es wird sich wohl Niemand her-

ausnehmen, an Schiller'schen Gedichten wie an einer Leiche zu seciren, um zu trennen, was darin Poesie und was Philosophie sei. Vielmehr sind wir in jedem Momente des Gedichts von beiden zugleich berührt und belehrt.” To be “affected” (*berührt*) and “instructed” (*belehrt*) at once, seems to indeed express Zunz’s conception of a science of Judaism. Zunz, “Die geistige Gesundheit,” *Gesammelte Schriften I*, 335.

161. Leopold Zunz, “Thefillin,” idem, *Gesammelte Schriften II*, 173.

162. Cf. *ibid.*, 174.

163. Cf. Wolf, “Über den Begriff einer Wissenschaft des Judenthums,” 17.

164. Cf. Scholem, “Reflections on Modern Jewish Studies,” 55.

165. Graetz, *Popular History of the Jews*, Vol. V, 481.

166. *Ibid.*, 482. On the modern period as an epoch of regeneration and rebirth, see *ibid.*, 297. Graetz begins his treatment of the Haskalah with the rhetorical question: “Can a nation be born in one day? Or can a people be born again?” (*Ibid.*, 296).

167. Cf. Leo Baeck, *This People Israel: The Meaning of Jewish Existence*, trans. Albert H. Friedlander (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1965), 360, 362.

168. David Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past: European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 18. Still more recently, Nils Roemer echoed this sentiment, identifying even Jost as involved in a “cultural renewal” and repeatedly stressing Graetz’s call for “awakening.” Cf. Nils Roemer, *Jewish Scholarship and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Germany: Between History and Faith* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 60, 146, 147. Consider also Jacob Katz’s observation that the Wissenschaft des Judentums was enlisted for the “purpose of reviving the Jewish spirit.” Cf. Jacob Katz, *Jewish Emancipation and Self-Emancipation* (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1986), 83.

169. Michael Brenner thus is fully correct to treat the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* as a kind of precursor to the Jewish Renaissance of the twentieth century (cf. Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture*, 13–22). Similarly, Michael Graetz dubbed the science of Judaism as a “19th century Renaissance of Judaism.” See *idem*, “Renaissance des Judentums im 19. Jahrhundert: ‘Der Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden’ 1819 bis 1824,” in *Bild und Selbstbild der Juden Berlins: Zwischen Aufklärung und Romantik*, ed. Marianne Awerbuch and Stefi Jersch-Wenzel (Historische Kommission zu Berlin 75), (Berlin, Germany: Colloquium Verlag, 1992), 211–27.

170. Wolf Landau, “Die Wissenschaft, das einzige Regenerationsmittel des Judenthums,” *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 1, no. 13 (1852): 483.

171. Cf. *ibid.*, 486, 490. It is no coincidence that Eduard Gans, one of the founding members of the Berlin circle, who would later opt for the baptismal font,

suggested in 1821 that the name for the new *Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden* should be “The Maccabees” (see Schorsch, *From Text to Context*, 207).

172. Wolf Landau, “Die Wissenschaft, das einzige Regenerationsmittel des Judenthums,” 489.

173. Max Wiener, *Jüdische Religion im Zeitalter der Emmanzipation* (Berlin, Germany: Philo Verlag, 1933), 176.

174. Cf. Moses Hess, *Rom und Jerusalem. Die letzte Nationalitätenfrage. Briefe und Noten* (Leipzig, Germany: M. W. Kaufmann, 1899), 5. One must recall here the mutual influence that existed between Hess and Heinrich Graetz. See especially Reuwen Michael, “Graetz und Hess,” *LBIYB* 9 (1964): 91–121. For a comprehensive study on Hess, see Shlomo Na’aman, *Emmanzipation und Messianismus: Leben und Werk des Moses Hess* (Frankfurt, Germany: Campus Verlag, 1984). More recently, Ken Koltun-Fromm has offered an engaging reading of Hess’s, analyzing the narrative dimension of his concept of “return.” See Ken Koltun-Fromm, *Moses Hess and Modern Jewish Identity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), esp. 43–65.

175. Edmund Stein, “Der Begriff der Palingenesie im talmudischen Schrifttum,” *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 83 (Neue Folge 47), no. 1 (1939): 194.

176. Scholem, “Reflections on Modern Jewish Studies,” 59.

177. Samson Raphael Hirsch, “Die Trauer des 9. Aw” (1855), idem, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 1 (Frankfurt, Germany: J. Kaufmann, 1902), 130–31. For a detailed view on Hirsch’s position on the science of Judaism, see Mordechai Breuer, *Moderernity Within Tradition: The Social History of Orthodox Jewry in Imperial Germany*, trans. Elizabeth Petuchowski (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 177–84. Also, Roemer, *Jewish Scholarship and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Germany*, 53–54.

178. Moritz Lazarus, *Die Erneuerung des Judentums. Ein Aufruf* (Berlin, Germany: Georg Reimer, 1909), 6.

179. Martin Buber, “Jüdische Wissenschaft,” idem, *Die jüdische Bewegung. Gesammelte Aufsätze und Ansprachen. Erste Folge 1900–1914* (Berlin, Germany: Jüdischer Verlag, 1920), 50.

180. Dubnow, “The Survival of the Jewish Race,” 335.

181. Cf. Franz Rosenzweig, “Bildung und kein Ende,” *GS* 3, 494. Translated in Franz Rosenzweig, *On Jewish Learning*, ed. Nahum Glatzer (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), 59.

182. Theodor Lessing, *Geschichte als Sinngebung des Sinnlosen Geschichts oder Die Geburt der Geschichte aus dem Mythos* (1916), (Hamburg, Germany: Rütten & Loening, 1962), 49.

183. Friedrich Gundolf, *Dichter und Helden* (Heidelberg, Germany: Weiss, 1921), 42. For an excellent treatment of the George circle and its role in ideology of antihistoricism, see Kurt Nowak, “Die ‘anti-historische Revolution’: Symptome

und Folgen der Krise historischer Weltorientierung nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg in Deutschland,” in *Umstrittene Moderne: Die Zukunft der Neuzeit im Urteil der Epoche Ernst Troeltschs*, ed. Horst Renz and Friedrich W. Graf (*Troeltsch-Studien* 4), (Gütersloh, Germany: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1987), 133–71. For an earlier treatment of the George circle and its impact on German-Jewish thought, see Ernest Kahn, “Jews in the Stefan George Circle,” *LBYT* 8 (1963): 171–83; and Wera Lewin, “Die Bedeutung des Stefan George-Kreises für die deutsch-jüdische Geschichte,” *ibid.*, 184–213.

184. Theodor Lessing, *Geschichte als Sinngebung des Sinnlosen*, 299. Quoted in Nowak, “Die ‘anti-historische Revolution,’” 144.

185. Cf. Gershom Scholem, “The Science of Judaism—Then and Now,” in *idem, The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 307, 309.

186. Scholem, “Reflections on Modern Jewish Studies,” 56.

187. Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past*, 169.

188. On this subject, see Biale, *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History*, 35–50.

189. Cf. Scholem, “Reflections on Modern Jewish Studies,” 66.

190. Cf. *ibid.*, 69, 68.

191. *Ibid.*, 67.

192. In his own periodization of Judaism, Scholem mentions (1) the Biblical period, (2) the rabbinic period, and (3) the period of Kabbalah, which alone constituted a “fresh beginning” (cf. *idem, “Reflections on Jewish Theology,”* 264). As Biale has shown, Scholem’s three-age model of Jewish history was in essence a transfiguration of Heinrich Graetz’s *Konstruktion*, placing new emphasis on the role of mysticism. The first stage of history, then, was conceived as myth, the second as religion, and the third as a romantic return to myth, or as Biale puts it, highlighting the Hegelian flavor, as “self-reflective myth” (Biale, *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History*, 43). For a lucid account of Scholem’s private periodization of history, see also Pierre Bouretz, “Gershom Scholem und das Schreiben der Geschichte,” in *Gershom Scholem. Literatur und Rhetorik*, ed. Stéphane Mosès and Sigrid Weigel (Cologne, Germany: Böhlau Verlag, 2000), 93–129.

193. Scholem, “Franz Rosenzweig and his Book *The Star of Redemption*” (1930), in *idem, On the Possibility of Jewish Mysticism in Our Time*, 204.

194. Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 22.

195. Jakob Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance*, 116–17.

196. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* (Sämtliche Werke XI, ed. Glockner), (Stuttgart, Germany: Frommann, 1928), 515.

197. Cf. Scholem, “Redemption Through Sin,” in *idem, The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 91.

198. Burckhardt, *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen*, 188.

199. Rosenzweig, *Star*, 354.

200. *Ibid.*, 308.

201. This of course is the theme in Rosenzweig's *Understanding the Sick and the Healthy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 41–42. Nevertheless, Rosenzweig does emphasize the personal standpoint in his letters. See, Franz Rosenzweig: *His Life and his Thought*, ed. Nahum Glatzer (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1998), 179: "I really believe that a philosophy, to be adequate, must rise out of the thinking that is done from the personal standpoint of the thinker."

202. Franz Rosenzweig, "Atheistische Theologie," idem, GS 3, 688. On this passage, see also Mendes-Flohr, "Franz Rosenzweig and the Crisis of Historicism," esp. 145.

203. Franz Rosenzweig, "Das Wesen des Judentums" (1919), GS 3, 526.

204. Rosenzweig, *On Jewish Learning*, 58. One is reminded here of Abraham Geiger's simple and solemn formulation of 1869, referring to the eternal spiritual life of Judaism: "es ist" ("it is"): "Ausserhalb freilich . . . , in Allem, was das Wohl der Menschheit betrifft, da schliesst es liebend sich an, geht in dem Volksleben auf, und dennoch bleibt in ihm sein Geist eigenthümlich: Es ist." Abraham Geiger, "Israel's Geistesleben. Predigt, gehalten in der neuen Synagoge zu Wiesbaden am Sabbathe, den 24. August 1869," in *Abraham Geiger's Nachgelassene Schriften I*, ed. Ludwig Geiger (Berlin, Germany: Louis Gerschel, 1875), 438.

205. Rosenzweig, "Das Wesen des Judentums," 526.

206. Rosenzweig, *Star*, 350.

207. Cf. Rosenzweig, "Das Wesen des Judentums," 525.

208. Rosenzweig, "Atheistische Theologie," 695.

209. Unexpectedly, if we consider William Kluback's conclusion that Cohen and Rosenzweig "comprehended the future and history in diametrically different ways." Kluback, "Time and History: The Conflict Between Hermann Cohen and Franz Rosenzweig," in *Der Philosoph Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929)*, Vol. II, ed. Wolfdietrich Schmied-Kowarzik (Munich, Germany: Karl Alber, 1988), 813. Peter Gordon has offered an authoritative corrective of this assumption in his book *Rosenzweig and Heidegger: Between Judaism and German Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), esp. 185–91. We should merely add to this corrective that Rosenzweig distinguishes between the "everlasting past" (*immerwährende Vergangenheit*) and the "eternal future" (*ewige Zukunft*), thus distinguishing also between a static eternity of the past and a dynamic eternity of not-yet. Cf. Rosenzweig, "Das Neue Denken," GS 3, 150.

210. Hermann Cohen, *RdV*, 292.

211. Cf. Hermann Cohen, "Das Soziale Ideal bei Platon und den Propheten," *Jüdische Schriften I*, 308; 324.

212. Ibid., 326.

213. Ibid., 325.

214. Ibid.

215. Cohen, *RdV*, 294.

216. Cf. ibid., 360–61.

217. Cf. Franz Rosenzweig, “Glauben und Wissen” (1920), *GS* 3, 588. In contrast to a “verneinende Utopie,” Rosenzweig invokes a “verwirklichende, sich selbst verwirklichende Utopie.” It is, of course, no easy task to locate “truly” utopian ideologies, or utopias that do not seek to be realized, in the literature of the twentieth century or, for that matter, of any century at all.

218. Heschel, *God in Search of Man*, 206.

219. Cf. Cohen, *RdV*, 305: “Der Geschichtsbegriff ist eine Schöpfung des Prophetismus. . . . Die Propheten sind die Idealisten der Geschichte. Ihr Sehertum hat den Begriff der Geschichte erzeugt, als des Seins der Zukunft.” For a further development of this thought, see the excellent essay by Robert Gibbs, “Hermann Cohen’s Messianism: The History of the Future,” in *Religion of Reason*, ed. Holzheg 331–49.

220. Cohen, *RdV*, 306.

221. I do sense an ambivalence regarding this question even in David Myers’ reading of Cohen as a Jewish exponent of “antihistoricism.” Myers correctly stresses Cohen’s distinction between *Historie* and *Geschichte*, relating it back to Kant and the Protestant discourse of the turn of the century. See Myers, *Resisting History*, 49–57.

222. Cohen, *RdV*, 239.

223. Cf. *ibid.*, 359; 354.

224. *Ibid.*, 351.

225. *Ibid.*, 359.

226. *Ibid.*, 289.

227. Martin Buber, “Prophetie, Apokalyptik, und die Geschichtliche Stunde,” *Merkur* 8, no. 12 (1954): 1101–15. English in *idem, Pointing the Way. Collected Essays*, ed. Maurice Friedman (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 192–207, esp. 203.

228. Cohen, *RdV*, 357.

229. Cf. Rosenzweig, “Das Neue Denken,” *GS* 3, 155.

230. Rosenzweig, “Anleitung zum jüdischen Denken” (1920–1921), *GS* 3, 601.

231. Rosenzweig, “‘Urzelle’ des Stern der Erlösung,” *GS* 3, 133.

232. Rosenzweig, *Star*, 188.

233. Cf. *ibid.*, 183.

234. Cf. Paul Ricœur, “Narrative Time,” 178.

235. Franz Rosenzweig, “Geist und Epochen der jüdischen Geschichte,” *GS* 3, 531.

236. *Ibid.*, 530.

237. *Ibid.*, 527–28. Rosenzweig invokes the Hebrew term *ruach* for a spirit whose “origin” lies neither in Athens nor in Rome, but in “our midst.”

238. On the significance of the “and,” see Rosenzweig, “Das neue Denken,” 158.

239. Rosenzweig, “Geist und Epochen der jüdischen Geschichte,” 532.

240. Rosenzweig indeed stresses the factor of *Überlieferung* in this rupture (*Ibid.*, 532).

241. Rosenzweig, “Glauben und Wissen,” *GS* 3, 586. Alexander Altman has already indicated the kairetic aspect of Rosenzweig’s philosophy of history in his

essay, “Franz Rosenzweig on History,” in *The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig*, 134. See also Leonard H. Ehrlich, “Rosenzweigs Begriff der Zeitigung aus den Quellen des Judentums,” in *Der Philosoph Franz Rosenzweig II*, 734–38. For the obvious parallels between Rosenzweig’s notion of *Augenblick* and Benjamin’s redemptive *Jetztzeit*, see Ulrich Hortian, “Zeit und Geschichte bei Franz Rosenzweig und Walter Benjamin,” *Ibid.*, esp. 825.

242. Cf. Myers, *Resisting History*, 101–3, in which Rosenzweig is rendered an “antihistoricist” thinker. Citing a letter of Rosenzweig to Friedrich Meinecke, Paul Mendes-Flohr argues that Rosenzweig did not reject “history per se: rather he is passionately rejecting the then-prevailing modes of historical scholarship,” a tendency he had in common with the members of the Patmos circle: “In fact, their rejection of academic scholarship was inspired by the sublime task of saving history from the trammels of historicism.” Mendes-Flohr, “Rosenzweig and the Crisis of Historicism,” 157. The perhaps strongest case so far for viewing Rosenzweig as a fundamentally historicist thinker (if we accept this label in the first place) is Leora Batnitzky’s essay, “On the Truth of History or the History of Truth: Rethinking Rosenzweig via Strauss,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 7, no. 3 (2000): 223–51. For an earlier treatment of this subject, see Michael Morgan, “The Curse of Historicity: The Role of History in Leo Strauss’s Jewish Thought,” *Journal of Religion* 61, no. 4 (Oct. 1981): 345–63, esp. 357–59. Also, Stefan Meineke, “A Life in Contradiction: The Philosopher Franz Rosenzweig and his Relationship to History and Politics,” *LBIYB* 36 (1991): 461–88.

243. Rosenzweig, “Geist und Epochen der jüdischen Geschichte,” 537.

244. *Ibid.*

245. Rosenzweig, *Star*, 420.

246. Cf. Rosenzweig, “Der jüdische Mensch” (1920), *GS* 3, 573.

247. Rosenzweig, “Geist und Epochen der jüdischen Geschichte,” 538.

248. Rosenzweig, “Jüdische Geschichte im Rahmen der Weltgeschichte” (1920), *GS* 3, 539. It must be stressed, however, that Rosenzweig does not intend to blur the inherent temporality of this “totality.” Rather, it is a truly aesthetic configuration in which “the tenses of reality cannot be interchanged.” Cf. Rosenzweig, “Das Neue Denken,” 150. The passage is strikingly reminiscent also of Scheler’s 1914 essay, “Tod und Fortleben,” where he writes: “Alles gegenwärtige geistiges Sein wird schließlich auf dem Hintergrunde einer vagen *Totalansicht* meines Lebens von mir erlebt, die sich außerdem in jene Vergangenheits- und Zukunftssphäre gliedert. Das geistige Auge, das diese Totalansicht vor sich ausgebreitet hat—es steht *über* diesem Wechsel, der jeweils die Sphären mit besonderen Gehalten erfüllt, und erst recht *über* seinen Ursachen.” Max Scheler, “Tod und Fortleben,” in idem, *Die Zukunft des Kapitalismus und andere Aufsätze*, ed. Manfred Frings (Munich, Germany: Francke Verlag, 1979), 49.

249. Rosenzweig, “Geist und Epochen der jüdischen Geschichte,” 532.

250. Rosenzweig, *Star*, 290. For an analysis of Rosenzweig's "hour," see Stefan Mosés, *System and Revelation*, 170–71, and more recently Zachary Braiterman's very evocative essay on "Cyclical Motions and the Force of Repetition in the Thought of Franz Rosenzweig," in *Beginning/Again*, 215–38.

251. Rosenzweig, *Star*, 415.

252. On atonement as entrance to eternity, see Rosenzweig, *Star*, 367–68; on Jewish self-purification, see *ibid.*, 405; on Jewish "rebirth" and freedom, see *ibid.*, 396: "The rebirth of the Jew—and it is of him that we are here speaking—is not his personal one, but the transformation of his people for freedom in the divine covenant of revelation." Rosenzweig is very alert to the "Christian" connotations of rebirth, trying to maintain a separation between "birth" (Judaism) and "rebirth" (Christianity) throughout most of the *Star*. Yet, as we can see, his conception of Judaism *as a people* cannot do without the ideological wealth of beginning-anew, repetition, and resurrection, just as the prerogative of beginning sometimes appears to be "Jewish" for Rosenzweig, at other times "Christian." (Cf. *Stern*, 399: "Der Christ ist ewiger Anfänger . . . Das ist die ewige Jugend des Christen.")

253. Rosenzweig, *Star*, 290 (translation altered). Cf. *Stern*, 323.

254. Cohen, *RdV*, 367. Alexander Altmann rightly speaks of Cohen's eternity as an "ethical concept" (cf. Altmann, "Franz Rosenzweig on History," 133).

255. Cf. Rosenzweig, *Star*, 324, 328.

256. *Ibid.*, 415.

257. Rosenzweig, "Geist und Epochen der jüdischen Geschichte," 538. One can take for granted that the eternal as Max Scheler put it in 1920, "must not be an asylum into which to escape after one has found oneself to be incapable of withstanding life and history."—"Und das wären schlechte 'Aeternisten', die nur aus Geschichtsflucht sich der Idee der Ewigkeit hingebäben. . . . Die Geschichte anerkennen, sie sehen in ihrere harten Realität—aber sie speisen aus dem Borne des Ewigen, ist angemessener, als sie fliehen." Max Scheler, "Vorrede zur Ersten Auflage," idem, *Vom Ewigen im Menschen*, 7–8.

258. Cf. Rosenzweig, *Star*, 226.

259. *Ibid.*, 223.

260. Theodor Lessing, *Geschichte als Sinngebung des Sinnlosen*, 317.

261. Martin Buber, "Judentum und Kultur" (1952), *JuJ*, 157–58.

262. Rosenzweig, *Star*, 222.

263. The depth of Schlegel's Catholicism may, of course, be explained by the fact that he entered the Catholic church later in his life, a "conversion-experience," that incidentally also seems to have marked his transition into historical thinking. Cf. Jean-Jacques Anstett, "Friedrich Schlegel's Philosophie der Geschichte," in Friedrich Schlegel, *Philosophie der Geschichte in achtzehn Vorlesungen gehalten zu Wien im Jahre 1828* (Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe, ed. Ernst Behler, Vol. 9), (Munich, Germany: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1971), xi–xiii.

264. Schlegel, *Philosophie der Geschichte*, 417.

265. Ibid. For the previous quotes, see ibid., 420; 426; 427.

266. Friedrich Schlegel, “Athenäumsfragmente,” no. 80, *Prosaische Jugendschriften*, ed. Jacob Minor, Vol. 2 (Vienna, Austria: Konegen, 1906), 215. Aptly, Karl Löwith registered the Jewish and Christian view of history as “prophecy in reverse.” Cf. Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 6.

267. Karl Burdach, *Reformation, Renaissance, Humanismus*, 24.

268. Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, 178.

269. Febvre quotes a well-known letter by Michelet to his son-in-law, Alfred Dumesnil, on July 30, 1850: “Lazarus means resurrection, a fine word, a fine name, a fine date. . . . To be resuscitated, to be born or to be reborn, I think that is all the same thing.” (Cf. Lucien Febvre, “How Jules Michelet invented the Renaissance,” 267.)

270. Jules Michelet, *Histoire de France*, Preface, 1869. Quoted in Febvre, “How Jules Michelet Invented the Renaissance,” 267n7.

271. For the concept of historical modality, see Gustav Landauer, *Die Revolution* (Die Gesellschaft. Sammlung Sozialpsychologischer Monographien, ed. Martin Buber), (Frankfurt, Germany: Rütten & Loening, 1907), 31–32. For the uncompleted past, ibid., 26–27: “Anders ausgedrückt heißt das, daß die Vergangenheit nicht etwas Fertiges ist, sondern etwas Werdendes.” For a discussion of Landauer’s conception of historical modality, see Norbert Altendorfer, “Tradition als Revolution: Gustav Landauers ‘gewordenes-werdendes’ Judentum,” in *Jews and Germans from 1860 to 1933*, 173–208.

272. Landauer, *Die Revolution*, 51.

273. Cf. ibid., 114–15.

274. Cf. Herder, *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte*, 39.

275. Cf. Taubes, *Abendländische Eschatologie*, 9. See also ibid., 15–21.

276. Baeck, *This People Israel*, 153.

277. Michelet, *Journal I* (May 9, 1842), 398–99. Quoted in Alff, *Michelets Ideen*, 25.

278. Abraham J. Heschel, *The Sabbath* (Prologue), 6.

279. Cf. Robert Gibbs, in *Reasoning After Revelation*, 39.

280. Rosenzweig, “Geist und Epochen der jüdischen Geschichte,” 536.

281. Steven Katz, “On Historicism and Eternity,” 19. Neil Gillman, following Paul Tillich and Paul Ricoeur, has compared the modern idea of resurrection to a “broken myth,” or “second” and “willed naiveté,” that is at once aware of its mythic, irrational character and accepted into modern, “rational” Judaism. Cf. Gillman, “Beyond Wissenschaft: The Resurrection of Resurrection in Jewish Thought Since 1950,” 97.

282. Peter Gordon has, therefore, most aptly described Rosenzweig’s concept of eternity as a “temporal orientation.” See, idem, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger*, 195.

283. Cf. Martin Buber, “Judentum und Kultur,” 159. It must be noted, however, that the “historical moment” invoked by Buber in this passage, was Judaism’s

return to history through its return to the land of Israel. In this sense, Buber's return to history went far beyond Cohen's concept of Jewish historicity. For Cohen's formulation of ideal history as opposed to the resurrection of the ideal past, see *RdV*, 290–93.

284. Cf. Martin Buber, "Die Schaffenden, das Volk und die Bewegung," *JB* I, 76. English in Gilya Schmidt, ed., *The First Buber: Youthful Zionist Writings of Martin Buber* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 146.

285. Martin Buber, "Der Glaube des Judentums," *JuJ*, 188.

Part Two, Chapter Two

1. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 52.

2. Cf. Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (New York: Anchor, 1965), 52. Also Armin Mohler, *Die Konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1928–1932. Ein Handbuch* (Zweite, völlig neu bearbeitete und erweiterte Fassung), (Darmstadt, Germany: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972), esp. 103, 109.

3. Cf. Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Das Schrifttum als geistiger Raum der Nation* (Munich, Germany: Bremer, 1927), 27; 31. A case in point for this search for wholeness would be Nietzsche's diagnosis of decadence: "Womit kennzeichnet sich die litterarische decadence? Damit, daß das Leben nicht mehr im Ganzen wohnt . . . —das Ganze ist kein Ganzes mehr." Friedrich Nietzsche, "Der Fall Wagner," *KSA* 6, 27. Hofmannsthal's observation has become a much-quoted reference in the literature, beginning with Hermann Rauschning's book *The Conservative Revolution* (New York: Freedom, 1941), which uses this passage as its motto. See also Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair*, 5; Mohler, *Die Konservative Revolution*, 10, 191; Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 21. For an earlier treatment of Hofmannsthal's term, see Detlev W. Schumann, "Gedanken zu Hofmannsthals Begriff der 'Konservativen Revolution,'" *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 54, no. 3 (Sept. 1930): 853–99.

4. Thomas Mann, "Deutschland und die Deutschen," in idem *Essays* 2, ed. Herman Kunzke (Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1977), 294. Quoted in Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*, 2.

5. Leo Strauss, "Paul de Lagarde," *Der Jude* 8, no. 1 (Jan. 1924): 8; reprinted in idem *Gesammelte Schriften 2: Philosophie und Gesetz—Frühe Schriften*, ed. Heinrich Meier (Stuttgart, Germany: J. B. Metzler, 1997), 323. For extensive commentary on this essay, see *Leo Strauss: The Early Writings (1921–1932)*, trans. and ed. Michael Zank (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), 97–99. For Strauss in the Weimar context, see the excellent study by Eugene R. Sheppard, *Leo Strauss and the Politics of Exile: The Making of a Political Philosopher* (Waltham, MA: Bran-

deis University Press, 2006), esp. 17–53. On Strauss's Judaism, see Steven B. Smith, *Reading Leo Strauss: Politics, Philosophy, Judaism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), esp. Part One.

6. Cf. Leo Strauss, "Progress or Return? The Contemporary Crisis in Western Civilization," lecture at the Hillel House, University of Chicago, November 5, 1952. Printed in *Modern Judaism* 1, no. 1 (May 1981): 17. For a comparative discussion of this theme—though not specifically on Strauss—see Ehud Luz, "Utopia and Return: On the Structure of Utopian Thinking and its Relation to Jewish-Christian Tradition," *Journal of Religion* 73, no. 3 (July 1993): 357–77.

7. Strauss, "Progress or Return?" 17; emphasis mine.

8. Ibid., 18.

9. Bambach, *Heidegger, Dilthey, and Historicism*, 37–39. On the concept of "crisis," see Reinhart Koselleck, "Crisis," trans. Michaela Richter, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 67, no. 2 (April 2006): 357–400.

10. Werner Dannhauser, "Leo Strauss: Becoming Naïve Again," *The American Scholar: A Quarterly for the Independent Thinker* 44, no. 4 (Autumn 1975): 640.

11. Cf. Ernst Simon, *Ha'im od Yehudim Anakhnu?* (Tel Aviv, Israel: Sifriat Poalim, 1982), 164. See also Paul Mendes-Flohr, "The Retrieval of Innocence and Tradition: Jewish Spiritual Renewal in an Age of Liberal Individualism," in *The Uses of Tradition: Jewish Continuity in the Modern Era*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America and Harvard University Press, 1992), 279–301. Following Ernst Simon, Mendes-Flohr speaks of a "second naïveté" especially with regard to Buber and Rosenzweig. For an earlier use of the term, see Karl v. Levetzow, "Die eingeborene Form," *Die Zeit* 16, no. 196 (July 2, 1898): 8: "Ein echter Künstler . . . muß sich erobern, was ich die 'zweite Naivität' nennen möchte." Cited from Gotthard Wunberg, ed., *Das Junge Wien: Österreichische Literatur- und Kunstkritik 1887–1902*, Vol. II (1897–1902), (Tübingen, Germany: Max Niemeyer, 1976), 875. Note also the discussion of a "Jewish naïveté" in Max Brod, *Heidentum, Christentum, Judentum: Ein Bekenntnisbuch*, Vol. I (Munich, Germany: Kurt Wolff, 1921), 73–80.

12. Cf. Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 158; on the "otherworldliness" and "transcendence" of the past, see idem, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 15.

13. Strauss to Löwith, August 15, 1946, in "Correspondence Concerning Modernity: Karl Löwith and Leo Strauss," *Independent Journal of Philosophy* 4 (1983): 107.

14. Cf. Strauss, "Progress or Return?" 27–28. For the equation of historicism and nihilism, see idem, "Natural Right and the Historical Approach," in idem, *An Introduction to Political Philosophy. Ten Essays*, ed. H. Gildin, (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 108. On the "ewige Möglichkeit," see idem, "Correspondence Concerning Modernity," 106.

15. Strauss, "Progress or Return?" 18.

16. Strauss, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion* (New York: Schocken, 1965), 14.
17. Ibid.
18. Strauss, “Progress or Return?” 40.
19. Ibid., 23.
20. Cf. Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, 155; and idem, *What Is Political Philosophy?* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1959), 27. In a review of Julius Ebbinghaus, *Über die Fortschritte der Metaphysik* (Tübingen, Germany: J.C.B. Mohr, 1931), Strauss already formulated the concept of “learning through reading” (*lesendes Lernen*) as a turning away from the “avowed ignorance” of the present generation. Strauss justifies this return to reading as “peculiar to the presently possible and necessary knowing about not-knowing,” which he considers radically different from the classical, i.e., Socratic knowing about not-knowing. Since the present generation finds itself in a “second, much deeper cave” than the “lucky” ignorant generation of Socrates, it needs what the Greeks did not need: a *propaedeuticum*—a learning through reading. Cf. Strauss, “Review of Julius Ebbinghaus, On the Progress of Metaphysics” (1931), trans. and reprinted in *Leo Strauss: The Early Writings*, esp. 215.
21. Nathan Tarcov, “Philosophy and History: Tradition and Interpretation in the Work of Leo Strauss,” *Polity* 16 (Summer 1983): 15.
22. Friedrich Schiller, Letter to Caroline von Beulwirth and Charlotte von Lengefeld, Jena, Sept. 12, 1789, in *Schillers Werke* (Nationalausgabe, Vol. 25), ed. Eberhard Haufe (Weimar, Germany: H. Böhlau Nachfolger, 1979), 292. Cited in Assmann, *Zeit und Tradition*, 138. Assmann, in fact, argues that the concept of nature formed a definite “alliance” against the modern theme of innovation: “Nature was conceived as a counter-force by which the norm of the classic could be given a new foundation and be made resistant to the modern forces of fashion, innovation, subjectivity, and history.” (Ibid., 141.)
23. Strauss, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, 24.
24. Cf. ibid., 24–25. For the passages in Cohen see *RdV*, 204–6. Leora Batnitzky has devoted great attention to this issue in her essay, “On the Truth of History or the History of Truth: Rethinking Rosenzweig via Strauss,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 7, no. 3 (2000): esp. 243–46, and has since revisited the issue at length. Cf. idem, *Leo Strauss and Emmanuel Levinas: Philosophy and the Politics of Revelation*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 106–13; and idem, “Hermann Cohen and Leo Strauss,” in *Hermann Cohen's Ethics*, ed. Robert Gibbs (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2006), esp. 201–4. Batnitzky would most likely disagree with me on characterizing Cohen as Hegelian, and while I fully accept her qualification of Cohen’s term “annihilation” as essentially “contra Hegel” (cf. “On the Truth of History,” 234n35), I cannot but find traces of *Aufhebung* in Cohen’s perception of reform. Thus Cohen writes in *RdV* (205): “Even in the very mind (*Geist*) that gives rise to the new motive, survives the aftereffect (*Nachwirkung*) of the institution that is to be fought against.” Strauss, in fact,

spoke of Cohen's latent Hegelianism in *Philosophie und Gesetz. Beiträge zum Verständnis Maimunis und seiner Vorläufer* (Berlin, Germany: Schocken, 1935), 16.

25. Strauss, *What Is Political Philosophy?* 77; also idem, “Political Philosophy and the Crisis of our Time,” in *The Post-Behavioral Era*, ed. George J. Graham and George W. Carey (New York: David McKay, 1972), esp. 218.

26. Frank Kermode, *The Classic: Literary Images of Permanence and Change* (New York: Viking, 1975), 16.

27. Strauss, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, 24.

28. Cf. Robert B. Pippin, “The Modern World of Leo Strauss,” *Political Theory* 20, no. 3 (Aug. 1992): 464.

29. Cf. Leo Strauss, *The City of Man* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1964), 1.

30. Cf. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik II*, 376; 460, where Hegel locates the classic work of art in a “middle” between the “statuary” perfection of the Egyptians or early Greek masters and the discovery of “freshness and vitality,” or Romantic “animation” (*Beseelung*), that would be perfected, incidentally, in Michelangelo’s “audacity.”

31. For an early treatment of Strauss and Gadamer, see Tarcov, “Philosophy and History,” 26. Gadamer’s critique of Strauss can be found in the appendix to *Wahrheit und Methode*, esp. 503–12. See also his “Interview on Leo Strauss,” *Interpretation* 12 (1984): 1–13, and the “Correspondence Concerning Wahrheit und Methode,” *Independent Journal of Philosophy* 2 (1988): 5–12; also Stephen Watson’s “Supplement: Quarreling Between the Ancients on the Moderns: Gadamer and Strauss,” idem, *Extensions: Essays on Interpretation, Rationality, and the Closure of Modernism* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), 160–68.

32. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 274.

33. Cf. Gadamer, “Die Aktualität des Schönen,” 137–34.

34. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 274–75.

35. Ibid., 282.

36. Cf. ibid., 283. We might compare this also to Rosenzweig’s concept of the “ever-new remnants” in Judaism: “It constantly divests itself of un-Jewish elements in order to produce out of itself ever new remnants of archetypal Jewish elements.” Rosenzweig, *Star*, 404.

37. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 283.

38. On the modernist context of the Jewish Renaissance, see Inka Bertz, “Jewish Renaissance—Jewish Modernism,” in *Berlin Metropolis: Jews and the New Culture, 1890–1918*, ed. Emily D. Bilski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), esp. 170–72.

39. Cf. Gombrich, “In Search of Cultural History,” 49–51.

40. Shulamit Volkov, “Die Erfindung einer Tradition: Zur Entstehung des modernen Judentums in Deutschland,” *Historische Zeitschrift* 253, no. 3 (Dec. 1991): esp. 606. Volkov draws on Eric Hobsbawm’s definition of “invented traditions” as “a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules . . .

which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable past.” For Hobsbawm, this link with the past remained intact even in revolutionary movements: “Revolutions and ‘progressive movements’ which break with the past, by definition, have their own relevant past, though it may be cut off at a certain date, such as 1789.” See Hobsbawm and Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition*, 1–2.

41. Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture*, 154.

42. Franz Rosenzweig, “Neues Lernen,” GS 3, 506. Similarly, Kurt Singer once remarked about the breaking forth of “subterranean Jewish forces” in the Catholic Henri Bergson: “Erneuerung kommt, nach dem tiefen Worte Georges, aus dem Fernsten.” Kurt Singer, “Von der Sendung des Judentums: Ideen zur Philosophie Henri Bergsons,” in *Vom Judentum: Ein Sammelbuch. Herausgegeben vom Verein jüdischer Hochschüler Bar Kochba in Prag* (Leipzig, Germany: Kurt Wolff, 1914), 73.

43. Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 18.

44. Panofsky, “Renaissance and Renascences,” 225.

45. Otto Wagner, *Die Baukunst unserer Zeit: Dem Baukunstjünger ein Führer auf diesem Kunstgebiete* (4th edition), (Vienna, Austria: Kunstverlag Anton Schroll, 1914), 42.

46. See Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage, 1981), 72–95. Also idem, *Thinking with History: Explorations in the Passage to Modernism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 157–71.

47. Wagner, *Die Baukunst unserer Zeit*, 47; 17; 37.

48. Ibid., 47.

49. Ibid., 40.

50. Cf. ibid., 8 (Preface to the second edition of 1898).

51. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, 86.

52. Schorske, *Thinking with History*, 146; emphasis mine.

53. Cf. Herbert Schnädelbach, “Die Abkehr von der Geschichte: Stichworte zum ‘Zeitgeist’ im Kaiserreich,” in *Ideengeschichte und Kunsthistorik: Philosophie und bildende Kunst im Kaiserreich*, ed. Ekkehard Mai, Stephan Waetzold, and Gerd Wolandt (Berlin, Germany: Gebr. Mann, 1983), 31, 41. Schnädelbach’s context, however, is the German empire.

54. Hermann Bahr, “Ferdinand Brunetière,” in idem, *Renaissance: Neue Studien zur Kritik der Moderne* (Berlin, Germany: S. Fischer, 1897), 147.

55. Hermann Bahr, “Das unrettbare Ich,” in idem, *Das Hermann Bahr Buch* (Berlin, Germany: S. Fischer, 1913), 64.

56. Dolf Sternberger, “Über den Jugendstil,” *Die Neue Rundschau* (June 1934), reprinted in idem, *Über den Jugendstil und andere Essays* (Hamburg, Germany: Claassen, 1956), 10. As most scholars agree, probably named after the Munich-based journal *Die Jugend*, which was founded in 1896. Journals of a similar aesthetic orientation at about the same time were *Pan* in Berlin, *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*.

tion in Darmstadt, and of course Aubrey Beardsley's *The Savoy*, which first appeared in 1896.

57. Ibid., II.

58. The motto was coined in 1897 by Ludwig Hevesi. See Moritz Csáky, "Die Moderne," in *Die Wiener Moderne. Ergebnisse eines Forschungsgesprächs der Arbeitsgemeinschaft Wien um 1900 zum Thema "Aktualität und Moderne,"* ed. Emil Brix and Patrick Werkner (Vienna, Austria: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1990), 26. Likewise, we find in the famous Bar Kochba volume of 1913 an essay by the title "Ver sacrum," in which the author proclaims: "Wir, die heute jung sind, fühlen in uns von neuem die uralte, drängende, heilige Frühlingsnot." Arthur Salz, "Ver sacrum," in *Vom Judentum: Ein Sammelbuch*, 169.

59. Max Burckhardt, "Moderne," *Die Zeit* 20 (1899): 185. Cited after Csáky, "Die Moderne," 30.

60. Cf. Manfred Wagner, "Der Jugendstil als Zukunftsvision," in *Wien um 1900: Aufbruch in die Moderne*, ed. Peter Berner, Emil Brix, and Wolfgang Mantl (Munich, Germany: R. Oldenbourg, 1986), 152.

61. Burckhardt, "Moderne," 185.

62. William J. McGrath, *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974).

63. Sternberger, "Über den Jugendstil," 18.

64. Stefan Zweig, *Die Welt von Gestern. Erinnerungen eines Europäers* (Hamburg, Germany: Rowohlt, 1982), 35. For the "Sicherheitsbestreben" of the previous generation, see *ibid.*, 14–16.

65. Cf. Ernst Mach, *Die Analyse der Empfindungen und das Verhältnis des Physischen zum Psychischen* (Jena, Germany: G. Fischer, 1900), 15–16; Peter Kampits, "Positivismus und Impressionismus," in *Die Wiener Moderne*, 103.

66. Hermann Bahr, "Das unrettbare Ich," 101. Bahr's reference is to Mach, *Die Analyse der Empfindungen*, 56: "Das Ich ist unrettbar."

67. Hugo v. Hofmannsthal, "Der Dichter und diese Zeit" (1905), *idem*, *GWE* (Prosa II), 272.

68. Hofmannsthal, "Gabriele D'Annunzio," *idem*, *GWE* (Prosa I), 171.

69. Hofmannsthal, "Lebenslied," *idem*, *GWE* (Gedichte und Lyrische Dramen), 12.

70. "Prometheus," *Der Anfang* 1 (Alte Folge), no. 1 (1908): 7–9. William McGrath has quite rightly focused on the reception of Nietzsche's "promethean revolt," as in Siegfried Lipiner's *Der entfesselte Prometheus* (Leipzig, Germany: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1876). Cf. McGrath, *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics*, 62–65. On the history of the journal *Der Anfang* and its founder, see Willi Hoffer, "Siegfried Bernfeld and 'Jerubbaal.' An Episode in the Jewish Youth Movement," *LBIYB* 10 (1965): esp. 152–56; and Philip L. Utley, "Siegfried Bernfeld's Order of Youth, 1914–1922," *LBIYB* 24 (1979): esp. 355–57.

71. Georges Barbizon, “Editorial,” *Der Anfang* 1 (Neue Folge), no. 1 (1913): 3–4.
72. Georges Barbizon, “Secession. Betrachtungen einer Achtzehnjährigen,” *Der Anfang* 1 (Alte Folge), no. 1 (1911): 11.
73. Herbert Blumenthal, “Von der Mission der Jugend,” *Der Anfang* 1 (Neue Folge), no. 5 (1913): 134–35.
74. George Mosse, “The Influence of the Volkisch Idea on German Jewry,” idem, *Germans and Jews: The Right, the Left, and the Search for a “Third Force” in Pre-Nazi Germany* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1987), 79. I also should note here Scheler’s 1923 critique of the German youth movement. Though Scheler finds in the ideology of “youth” important elements of regeneration (“Stirb und Werde gegen die Dekadenz”) and aesthetic self-valuation (“Die neue Jugend empfindet den ‘Leib’ und seine edle und schöne Formung wieder als Selbstwert”), he also accuses its “geschichtsflüchtigen Tendenzen.” If youth, for Scheler, can remain a meaningful postulate, then only as a “Neuformung des geschichtlichen Lebens” that is reminiscent of Kierkegaard’s return to the self: “Ich habe mich selbst und jenen Springquell wieder.” Cf. Max Scheler, “Jugendbewegung,” idem, *Gesammelte Werke* 6 (Schriften zur Soziologie und Weltanschauungslehre), ed. Maria Scheler (Bern, Switzerland: Francke Verlag, 1963), 391–96; for the previous quotes, 392, 393, 396.
75. Cf. Michael Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia*, 34.
76. Hofmannsthal’s “Lebenslied” was Buber’s selection for the anthology *Trunken von Gedichten: Eine Anthologie deutscher Verse*, ed. G. v. Gerster (Zurich, Switzerland: Manesse, 1953), 143. See also my introduction to *MBW* 6, 20–24.
77. Cf. Martin Buber, Letter to Salomon and Adele Buber, January 31, 1900, in *Briefwechsel* I, 153; and idem, “Mein Weg zum Chassidismus,” *Werke III*, 966.
78. Cf. M. Hirschfelder, “E. M. Lilien,” in *Ost und West* 1, no. 7 (1901): esp. 519. Of the vast literature on Lilien, I should single out Michael Stanislawski’s excellent essay, “From Jugendstil to ‘Judenstil’: Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism in the Work of Ephraim Moshe Lilien,” idem, *Zionism and the Fin-de-Siècle: Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism from Nordau to Jabotinsky* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 98–115.
79. Ludwig Wihl, “Ahasver’s Klage,” *Ost und West* 1, no. 7 (1901): 515.
80. See in particular Michael Berkowitz, *Zionist Culture and West European Jewry Before the First World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 119–43.
81. Martin Buber, “Kultur und Zivilisation,” *Der Kunstmwart* 14, no. 15 (May 1901): 83; reprinted in *MBW* 1, 158.
82. M. Hirschfelder, “E.M. Lilien,” 518.
83. Buber, “Kultur und Zivilisation,” *MBW* 1, 158. Likewise, Hirschfelder invokes “das Quattro- und das Cinquecento” as an age of deepest “Sündhaftigkeit” and yet also “der höchsten Blüte.” (Hirschenfelder, “E.M. Lilien,” 518.)

84. Hermann Bahr, “Dialog vom wirklichen Leben,” idem, *Buch der Jugend* (Vienna, Austria: H. Heller, 1908), 1.

85. Ibid., 2. Horst Fritz has identified this “simultaneity of end and beginning-anew” as a motif characteristic to both Jugendstil and Expressionist literature. Cf. Horst Fritz, *Literarischer Jugendstil und Expressionismus: Zur Kunstdtheorie, Dichtung und Wirkung Richard Dehmels* (Stuttgart, Germany: J. B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1969), 249–52.

86. Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, “Die Polychronie des Volks,” *Die Kreatur* 3 (1926–1927): 418.

87. Georges Barbizon, “Secession,” 13.

88. Hugo von Hofmannsthal, “Gestern. Dramatische Studie in einem Akt in Versen,” *GWE* (Gedichte und Lyrische Dramen), 179; by contrast, ibid., 149: “Das Gestern lügt und nur das Heut ist wahr.”

89. Martin Buber, “Zur Wiener Literatur,” trans. from the Polish in *MBW* 1, 119–29; for the quote 124. For an English translation with commentary, see William M. Johnston, “Martin Buber’s Literary Debut,” *The German Quarterly* 47 (1974): 557–66.

90. Martin Buber, *Die Legende des Baal-Schem* (1908), (Frankfurt, Germany: Rütten & Loening, 1916), xi.

91. Hermann Bahr, “Das junge Österreich” (1893), quoted in Csáky, “Die Moderne,” 31.

92. “Ost und West” (editorial), in *Ost und West* 1, no. 1 (1901): 1–2. For a monographic treatment of the journal, see David A. Brenner, *Marketing Identities: The Invention of Jewish Ethnicity in Ost und West* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1998).

93. Hermann Bahr, “Otto Wagner,” *Das Hermann Bahr Buch*, 152–53.

94. Cf. Gottfried Semper, *Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten, oder praktische Ästhetik: Ein Handbuch für Techniker, Künstler und Kunstfreunde*, vol. 2 (Mittenwald, Germany: Mäander Kunstverlag, 1977), 457. See also Wilhelm Dilthey’s discussion of Semper as a disciple of Richard Wagner’s idea of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, who “wanted to renew architecture from bottom up, just as [Richard] Wagner was revitalizing music by basing both theoretical observations and actual creation of vital impulses.” Wilhelm Dilthey, *Poetry and Experience* (Selected Works V), ed. Rudolf Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 177. On Semper and Otto Wagner (and Richard Wagner), see Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, 101–4.

95. Otto Wagner, *Die Baukunst unserer Zeit*, 8.

96. Cf. Adolf Loos, “Die Potemkin’sche Stadt,” *Ver Sacrum* 1, no. 7 (July 1898): 16. Loos, in fact, regards the Ringstraße as a “pillaging” of Renaissance Italy.

97. Cf. Eugen Diederichs, *Selbstzeugnisse und Briefe von Zeitgenossen* (Düsseldorf, Germany: Diederichs, 1967), 355–57.

98. Eugen Diederichs, “Das Verlagsprogramm: Zur Jahrhundertwende,” reprinted in *Eugen Diederichs: Leben und Werk*, ed. Lulu von Strauß und Torney-Diederichs (Jena, Germany: Diederichs, 1936), 52. George Mosse has already paid great attention to Diederich’s peculiar “New Romanticism” as a fusion of Germanic and humanistic ideals. Cf. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*, esp. 54–57.
99. Diederichs to Jimmisch, Sept. 23, 1910, in Diederichs, *Selbstzeugnisse und Briefe von Zeitgenossen*, 190–91. It was Diederichs, who also published Karl Joël’s *Nietzsche und die Romantik* (Jena, Germany: Diederichs, 1905).
100. Cf. Diederichs to Jimmisch, Sept. 23, 1910 (Diederichs, *Selbstzeugnisse und Briefe von Zeitgenossen*), 189.
101. Diederichs, *Zu neuer Renaissance! Ein Sendschreiben* (Leipzig, Germany: Diederichs, 1900). See also Diederichs, *Selbstzeugnisse und Briefe von Zeitgenossen*, 352. Martina Urban, in a recent essay, pointed to the important connections—and differences—between Diederichs’ neo-Romantic renaissance and Martin Buber’s project of renewal. Martina Urban, “The Jewish Library Reconfigured: Buber and the Zionist Anthology Discourse,” in *New Perspectives on Martin Buber*, ed. Michael Zank (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), esp. 39–41. Also Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*, 63–64.
102. Diederichs, “Aus persönlichen Aufzeichnungen” (1911), in *Eugen Diederichs: Leben und Werk*, 190. Between 1915–1919, Diederichs also published the journal *Die Tat*.
103. Diederichs, “Aus persönlichen Aufzeichnungen” (1904), in *Eugen Diederichs: Leben und Werk*, 104.
104. Diederichs, “Aus persönlichen Aufzeichnungen” (1902), in *Eugen Diederichs: Leben und Werk*, 61.
105. Diederichs, “Die Verlagsbegründung” (1896), in *Eugen Diederichs: Leben und Werk*, 36.
106. Diederichs, “Italienfahrt: Aus persönlichen Aufzeichnungen” (1896), in *Eugen Diederichs: Leben und Werk*, 35.
107. Cf. Diederichs, “Aus persönlichen Aufzeichnungen” (1911), 190–91.
108. Buber to Diederichs, June 20, 1907, in Buber, *Briefwechsel I*, 257.
109. Martin Buber, *Ekstatische Konfessionen* (Jena, Germany: Diederichs, 1909), xiv, xvi, xxvi.
110. Cf. Stendhal (Henri Beyle), *Histoire de la peinture en Italie*, Vol. 1 (1817), *Oeuvres complètes* 26 (Paris, France: Cercle du Bibliophile, 1969), 62. Jules Michelet, *Histoire de France* (*Oeuvres Complètes* VII), 51.
111. Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (London, UK: MacMillan, 1922), 41, 213, 221, 229. The quotes are taken from the essays on Pico (1871) and Winckelmann (1867). For an interpretation and reception history of Pater’s work, see Paul Barolsky, *Walter Pater’s Renaissance* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1987). It is noteworthy that Hofmannsthal considered

Pater's interpretation superior to Goethe's. Cf. Hofmannsthal, "Walter Pater," *GWE* (Prosa I), 235–40.

112. Arthur Comte de Gobineau, *Die Renaissance: Historische Szenen*, trans. Georg Lehmann (Berlin, Germany: Deutsche Buchgemeinschaft, s.d.). For a discussion of Gobineau's racial theories and peculiar interpretation of the Renaissance, see Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought*, 323–25.

113. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Antichrist*, §61, *KSA* 6, 250. For Nietzsche's interpretation of the (Italian) Renaissance, see the entry "Renaissance/Renaissancismus" in *Nietzsche-Handbuch: Leben, Werk, Wirkung*, ed. Henning Ottmann (Stuttgart, Germany: Klett, 2000). Whether Nietzsche was influenced by Gobineau, and to what extent, is still disputed. See also Ferguson, *Renaissance in Historical Thought*, 205.

114. Otto Sachs, "Leonardo da Vinci," *Wiener Rundschau* 4, no. 6 (March 15, 1900): 135.

115. Wilhelm Dilthey, *Weltanschauung und Analyse des Menschen seit Renaissance und Reformation (Gesammelte Schriften II)*, (Stuttgart, Germany: B. G. Teubner, 1969), 324, 326. According to Georg Misch, who edited this volume in 1913, Dilthey's texts on the Renaissance were written between 1891 and 1904 (cf. *ibid.*, vi), which was indeed at the height of fin-de-siècle renaissancism.

116. Julius Hart, *Der Neue Gott. Ein Ausblick auf das kommende Jahrhundert* (Florence, Italy: Eugen Diederichs, 1899), 78.

117. Samuel Lublinski, *Bilanz der Moderne* (Tübingen, Germany: Niemeyer, 1974), 120. Likewise, he speaks of a "Renaissanceschwärmerie" (Renaissance fantasies) in the circle around Stefan George, "an enthusiasm for heroic and stylized personalities who follow their passions without scruple, yet also without ever ignoring the manners of good society" (*ibid.*, 346).

118. Emil Schaeffer, "Das Moderne Renaissance-Empfinden," *Die Neue Rundschau* 2 (1905): 769.

119. Thomas Mann, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (Frankfurt, Germany: S. Fischer, 1983), 539–40.

120. Walther Rehm, "Der Renaissancekult um 1900 und seine Überwindung," *Zeitschrift für Deutsche Philologie* 54 (1929): 303, 305. Rehm clearly sees in the Renaissance cult of the fin de siècle an "Erscheinungsform der Dekadenz" (324). His use of "hysterical Renaissance," however, differs from Thomas Mann, who finds in that specific form of renaissancism as "self-critical" attitude (cf. Mann, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, 541). The interest in "evil" powers will also become the central theme in Max Brod's "Renaissanceroman," *David Reubeni: Fürst der Juden* (Munich, Germany: Kurt Wolff Verlag, 1925), where, in the opening chapter, young David wonders what it means to love God "with both urges, the good and evil urge" (*Ibid.*, 3).

121. "Er kann aus der Renaissance nicht herauskommen. . ." Hugo von Hofmannsthal, "Die Mutter," *Moderne Rundschau* 3, no. 2 (April 15, 1891): 75.

122. Schorske, *Thinking with History*, 115. Schorske refers here to Heinrich Ferstel's resistance to the romanticism of neo-Gothic architecture.

123. Marie Herzfeld, “Der andere Krag,” *Die Zeit* 8, no. 99 (Aug. 22, 1896): 121.
124. Martin Buber, “Das Judentum und die Menschheit,” in *JuJ*, 26: “Zu welcher Synthese bereitet sich heute der Geist des Judentums? Vielleicht zu einer, die eine Synthese all jener Synthesen sein wird.”
125. Rudolf Pannwitz, *Die Krisis der Europaeischen Kultur* (Nuremberg, Germany: H. Carl, 1917), 35.
126. Ibid., 226.
127. Burdach, *Reformation, Renaissance, Humanismus*, xiii.
128. Nikolaj Berdjaew, “Das Ende der Renaissance (Zur gegenwärtigen Kulturrkrise),” *Die Kreatur* 2 (1927–1928): 107, 236.
129. Henry Hurwitz, “To a Renaissance,” *Menorah Journal* 27, no. 1 (Jan.–March 1939): 2.
130. Ernst Bloch, *Vorlesungen zur Philosophie der Renaissance*, 7.
131. “Jüdische Renaissance,” *Ost und West* 1, no. 1 (Jan. 1901): 7–10; trans. in Gilya G. Schmidt, *The First Buber: Youthful Zionist Writings of Martin Buber* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 30–34.
132. Ibid., 7–8.
133. Moses Hess, “Mein Messiasglaube,” in idem, *Jüdische Schriften*, ed. Theodor Zlocisti (Berlin, Germany: Louis Lamm, 1905), 5.
134. Cf. Moses Hess, “Briefe über Israels Mission in der Geschichte der Menschheit,” in idem, *Jüdische Schriften*, 37. Hess deliberately invokes Feuerbach’s program of a “new philosophy” that would not merely be another “reform” (*Reformversuch*) of the “old” philosophy but differ from it “*toto genere*.” Cf. Ludwig Feuerbach, *Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft*, ed. Gerhart Schmidt (Frankfurt, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983), 112.
135. Heinrich Graetz, “The Rejuvenation of the Jewish Race,” 143, 262.
136. Graetz, “Historical Parallels in Jewish History,” idem, *The Structure of Jewish History and Other Essays*, 263.
137. Nathan Birnbaum, *Assimilationssucht: Ein Wort an die sogenannten Deutschen, Slaven, Magyaren v. mosaischer Confession* (Vienna, Austria: D. Löwy, 1884), 12–13.
138. Idem, *Die Nationale Wiedergeburt des jüdischen Volkes in seinem Lande* (Vienna, Austria: Selbstverlag, 1893).
139. Achad Ha-am, “Lo zeh ha-Derekh,” in *Al Parashat Drakhim*, vol. 1 (Berlin, Germany: Jüdischer Verlag, 1930), 6. See also the essay “Tchiyat ha-Ruach” (1902), in ibid., Vol. 2, 211–43. In the German translation, the essay appears once as “Die Renaissance des Geistes” and once as “Die Auferstehung des Geistes.” See Achad Ha-am, *Am Scheidewege*, Vol. 2, trans. Harry Torczyner (Berlin, Germany: Jüdischer Verlag, 1916), 105–55, and Achad Ha-am, *Am Scheidewege: Gesammelte Aufsätze*, Vol. 2, trans. Hugo Knöpfmacher and Ernst Müller (Berlin, Germany: Jüdischer Verlag, 1923), 192–244.
140. Micha Berdichevsky, “Le-Tchiyat ha-Safa,” in *Kitvei Micha Yosef Berdichevsky*, Vol. 2 (Early Writings, 1890–1888), ed. Avner Holtzman and Yitzchak

Kafkafi (Tel Aviv, Israel: Hakkibutz Hameuchad, 1996), 161–62. See also Nathan Rotenstreich, “Bialik on the Renaissance of Jewish Culture,” *Judaism* 10, no. 2 (Spring 1961): 151–59.

141. See Micha Berdichevski, “Shinui Arakhim” (1900–1903), in idem, *Ba-Derekh*, Vol. 2 (Lipsia, Germany: Abraham J. Stiebel, 1922), now partially in Arthur Hertzberg, ed., *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader* (New York: Atheneum, 1982), 294: “Our hearts, ardent for life, sense that the resurrection of Israel [*tchiyat ha-am*] depends on a revolution [*hafikhat ha-kearah al piha*].” On the Nietzschean background of Berdichevski’s “transvaluation of values,” see Daniel Krochmalnik, “Neue Tafeln: Nietzsche und die jüdische Counter-History,” 53–81.

142. Theodor Herzl, *Der Judenstaat*, in idem, *Gesammelte Zionistische Werke* I (Tel Aviv, Israel: Hozaah Ivrit, 1934), 24; 104: “Die Makkabäer werden wieder auferstehen.” Referring to this very passage, the Prague Zionist Oskar Epstein, celebrated Herzl’s otherwise “calculating, cold, and sober” Zionism as an example of “moral elevation” (*sittliche Erhebung*): “Der Zionismus erstrebt die Erhebung des jüdischen Volkes.” Oskar Epstein, “Erhaltung oder Erneuerung,” *Vom Judentum: Ein Sammelbuch*, 175, 177.

143. Max Nordau, “Ein Tempelstreit” (1897), in *Max Nordau’s Zionistische Schriften* (Cologne, Germany: Jüdischer Verlag, 1909), 9. For the reference to Dante, see his essay “Das unentbehrliche Ideal” (1898) in *ibid.*, 284–85. See also Nordau’s speech on the Second Zionist Congress (in Basel, Aug. 28, 1898): “Der Zionismus erweckt das Judentum zu neuem Leben” (*Ibid.*, 72). For the reference to the physical resurrection, see his speech for the Third Zionist Congress in Basel, Aug. 15, 1899 (*Ibid.*, 77).

144. Buber, “Jüdische Renaissance,” 7.

145. Cf. Simon Dubnow, “The Doctrine of Jewish Nationalism,” in idem, *Nationalism and History*, 99: “Morally, Jewish Nationalism must be understood as a manifestation of national individualism which has no connection whatsoever with national egotism.”

146. Buber, “Jüdische Renaissance,” 7.

147. Cf. Ernst Simon, “Martin Buber, der Erzieher,” in *Schilpp/Friedman*, 490. Simon refers us to John Ruskin, Alfredt Lichtwark, and Herbert Read. Buber, incidentally, found in Lichtwark a contributor for his series *Die Gesellschaft* (cf. Juliane Jacobi, “Einleitung,” *MBW* 8, 12). Quite aptly, Willy Haas writes of the artists and architects of *Jugendstil*: “Sie all meinten nicht nur Außen- und Innenarchitektur, sondern die ganze Gestaltung des Menschenlebens—sie waren ‘Lebensreformer’, wie das Schlagwort des Tages hieß.” Willy Haas, “Vom Jugendstil zum Expressionismus,” *idem*, *Gestalten* (Berlin, Germany: Propyläen Verlag, 1962), 60. To what extent this desire of total reform was implicated in the development of totalitarian, aesthetic politics has been exposed in an illuminating essay by Mark Jarzombek “The ‘Kunstgewerbe,’ the ‘Werkbund,’ and the Aesthetic Culture in the Wilhelmine Period,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 53,

no. 1 (March 1994): 7–19. Jarzombek rightly questions the project of aesthetic education and “Lebenskunst,” that would also inform the Jewish Renaissance, as inherently tainted with *völkisch* undercurrents. Once again, then, we are faced with an ideological framework of disconcerting ambiguity. Clearly, the Jewish Renaissance was indebted to the German discourse of aesthetic life. At the same time, however, it represented—as the following chapter will show—a form of *antiaestheticism* in opposition to the romantic reclamation of art. In fact, it was Expressionism, the very movement, which, as Jarzombek points out, became the “first victim” of Germanic aestheticism that would most deeply inspire the aesthetic imagination of the Jewish Renaissance.

148. Buber, “Jüdische Renaissance,” 10.

149. Buber “Kultur und Zivilisation,” 159.

150. Ibid., 157–58.

151. Ibid.

152. Ibid., 158.

153. Cf. Buber, “Jüdische Renaissance,” 8.

154. Ibid.

155. Cf. Buber, “Renaissance und Bewegung,” *JuJ*, 266.

156. Cf. Buber, “Jüdische Renaissance,” 8.

157. Buber, “Renaissance und Bewegung,” 266. Cf. Stendhal, *Histoire de la peinture en Italie* I, 62: “. . . les germes féconds qui doivent les repouduire se cachent sous terre, et attendent pour naître le soufflé réchauffant du printemps. . . .”

158. Martin Buber, “Geist und Leib der chassidischen Lehre” (1935), trans. “Spirit and Body of the Hasidic Movement,” in idem, *The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism* (New York: Horizon Press, 1960), 115.

159. Ibid. On this theme see the recent article by Rachel White, “Recovering the Past, Renewing the Present: The Buber-Scholem Controversy over Hasidism Reinterpreted,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (2007): 364–92.

160. Buber, “Renaissance und Bewegung,” 266. In the notes to his 1916 response to Hermann Cohen, Buber reiterated this motif, characterizing the “dynamic” character of Jewish thinking: “. . . nichts neues hineinbringend, sondern ertarrtes Erbgut neu belebend und fruchtbar machend.” Buber, “Noten zu ‘Völker, Staaten, und Zion,’” *JuJ*, 300.

161. Martin Buber, “Die Hebräische Sprache,” *JuJ*, 711.

162. Buber, “Jüdische Renaissance,” 8.

163. Cf. Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance*, 89, 339, 379, 385.

164. Buber, “Jüdische Renaissance,” 8; also idem, Preface to Jakob Burckhardt, *Tarbut ha-Renesans be-Italyah*, trans. Yaakov Steinberg (Jerusalem, Israel: Rubin Mass, 1949), 5–6. For Buber’s original (German) manuscript of his preface, see Martin Buber Archives, Ms.Var.350, b/96.

165. Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, 339. Likewise, Michelet spoke of the “tyranny of the Middle Ages” governed by a totalitarian church and an escapist

mysticism: “Mysticism filled everything. What place was there for reason? None.” (Jules Michelet, *Oeuvres complètes VII*, 55–56).

166. Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, 89, 339.
167. Buber, “Renaissance und Bewegung,” 268.
168. Martin Buber, “Das Gestaltende,” *JuJ*, 238–39.
169. Buber, “Jüdische Renaissance,” 7.
170. Buber, “Jüdische Religiosität,” *JuJ*, 63. See also Georg Simmel, *Die Religion* (Die Gesellschaft, Vol. 2), (Frankfurt, Germany: Rütten & Loening, 1906), esp. 17–18. On Buber’s use of this distinction, see lectures “Religion als Gegenwart” (1922), now in Rivka Horwitz, *Buber’s Way to “I and Thou”: The Development of Martin Buber’s Thought and His “Religion as Presence” Lectures* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1988), 26–27.
171. Buber, “Jüdische Religiosität,” 64–65.
172. Ibid., 64, 66: “Sünde ist im Grunde nichts anderes als Trägheit.”
173. A distinction Buber, as many of his contemporaries, borrowed from Ferdinand Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundbegriffe der reinen Soziologie* (Leipzig, Germany: K. Curtius, 1887).
174. Cf. Buber, “Jüdische Renaissance,” 8–10.
175. Martin Buber, “Renaissance und Bewegung,” 270.
176. Martin Buber, “Die Schaffenden, das Volk, und die Bewegung” (1902), *JB* I, 70.
177. Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, 309.
178. Ibid., 309–10.
179. Ibid., 317.
180. Martin Buber, *Daniel: Gespräche von der Verwirklichung*, *MBW* I, 183–245. For this quote, 229. On the date of the first draft, see Martin Treml’s commentary, *ibid.*, 317–18. Treml makes the important point that the date of 1909 would place the conceptual framework of *Daniel* in close vicinity to Buber’s early speeches on Judaism which he delivered between 1909 and 1911 at the Bar Kochba group in Prague, published as *Drei Reden über das Judentum* (Frankfurt, Germany: Rütten & Loening, 1911). On the significance of Buber’s *Drei Reden* for his conception of renewal, see Paul Mendes-Flohr, “The Retrieval of Innocence and Tradition,” 287.
181. Buber, *Daniel*, 227.
182. Martin Buber, “Pescara, an einem Augustmorgen. Berlin, nach der Heimkehr,” first in *Zeit-Echo: Ein Kriegstagebuch der Künstler* I, no. 3, ed. Otto Haas-Heye (Sept. 1914): 38–39. Reprinted in *MBW* I, 277–78; for this quote, 278.
183. Ibid.
184. Buber to Hans Kohn, September 30, 1914, *Briefwechsel* I, 371.
185. Martin Buber, “Der Augenblick: An das Gleichzeitige,” first in *Das Zeit-Echo*, no. 17 (1915): 90–92. Reprinted in *MBW* I, 275–76, for this quote, 276.
186. Martin Buber to Frederik van Eeden, October 16, 1914, *Briefwechsel* I, 379.

187. Ibid., 379. Still in 1916, Buber made the remarkable claim that it would be the German people who would lead Europe to its “Einkehr” and “Umkehr”: “Das Volk, das in dieser [Umkehr] vorangehen muß, ist das, dessen Leben im Geiste und dessen metaphysische Schöpfung einzig im modernen Europa denen der großen orientalischen Völker verwandt ist, das deutsche Volk.” Martin Buber, “Der Geist des Orients und das Judentum,” in idem, *Vom Geist des Judentums* (Leipzig, Germany: Kurt Wolff Verlag, 1916), 46. This passage, as Paul Mendes-Flohr pointed out, does not appear in subsequent editions (cf. *JuJ*, 62). Mendes-Flohr, *Von der Mystik zum Dialog: Martin Bubers geistige Entwicklung bis hin zu “Ich und Du”* (Königstein, Germany: Jüdischer Verlag, 1978), 169.

188. Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), II. On the broader phenomenon, see Kurt Flasch, *Geistige Mobilierung. Die deutschen Intellektuellen und der Erste Weltkrieg. Ein Versuch* (Berlin, Germany: Fest, 2000).

189. Paul Mendes-Flohr has most closely studied the Buber-Landauer exchange on this topic in *Von der Mystik zum Dialog*, esp. 135–50. See also Norbert Altendorfer, “Tradition als Revolution,” esp. 192–95, and Arthur Cohen, “Martin Buber and Judaism,” *LBIYB* 15 (1980), esp. 290–91.

190. Georg Simmel, “Die Krisis der Kultur” (Rede, gehalten in Wien, Jan. 1916), in idem, *Der Krieg und die geistigen Entscheidungen. Reden und Aufsätze* (Munich, Germany: Duncker & Humblot, 1917), 63–64.

191. Cf. Letter to van Eeden, October 16, 1914, *Briefwechsel I*, 377.

192. Martin Buber, “Er und Wir. Zu Theodor Herzls 50. Geburtstag,” *JuJ*, 778.

193. Cf. *ibid.*, 780–81.

194. *Ibid.*, 780.

195. Buber’s *Daniel* defined direction as “primal tension” (*Urspannung*) and “magic power,” as principle of “choice” and active “realization” (Buber, *Daniel*, 188–89). It seems likely to me that Buber related the German *Richtung* to the Hebrew concept of *Kavanah*, which, owing to its versatile root, can mean “direction” (*kivun*), “intention” (*kavannah*), but also “to be right” (*nakhon*), a versatility that can be paralleled in German (*Richtung*), Latin (*directio, directitudo*), as well as Greek (*kateuthynsis*). For Buber, the logical implications of being “in direction” were to be “decided” (*entschieden*), to be in a “momentum.” Thus “direction” became a fundamental concept in his moral philosophy, where “evil” was defined as “directionlessness” (*Richtungslosigkeit*), “indecision” (*Unentschiedenheit*), or simply “inactivity” (*Trägheit*). On the idea of “decision,” see also Horwitz, *Buber’s Way to “I and Thou,”* 64–65.

196. Martin Buber, “Cheruth: Eine Rede über Jugend und Religion” (1919), *JuJ*, 128.

197. *Ibid.*

198. Martin Buber, “Der Mythos der Juden” (1916), *JuJ*, 84; emphasis mine. For Buber’s reference to the “golden age,” see idem, “Judentum und Kultur” (1951), *JuJ*, 152.

199. Buber, “Der Mythos der Juden,” 84.
200. Ibid., 85–86.
201. Buber, “Der Heilige Weg,” 115, 116.
202. Martin Buber, “Das Judentum und die Juden,” *JuJ*, 11.
203. Leora Batnitzky, “Renewing the Jewish Past: Buber on History and Truth,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 10, no. 4 (2003): 347.
204. Buber, “Das Judentum und die Juden,” 13. Also, idem, *Daniel*, 244–45: “Beständigung und Verwandlung in Allgegenwart verbindend, erweckt die Seele das Ich, das Beständigkeit und Verwandlung als seine Gebärden besitzt.”
205. Buber, “Das Judentum und die Juden,” 10.
206. Martin Buber, “Die Lehre und die Tat. Frankfurter Lehrhausrede, April 1934,” idem, *Die Stunde und die Erkenntnis. Reden und Aufsätze, 1933–1935* (Berlin, Germany: Schocken, 1936), 64.
207. Cf. Buber, “Cheruth,” 128.
208. Martin Buber, “Die Erneuerung des Judentums,” *JuJ*, 28.
209. Martin Buber, “Völker, Staaten und Zion: I. Begriffe und Wirklichkeit (Brief and Hermann Cohen, July 1916),” *JuJ*, 280.
210. Abraham Geiger, “Neues Stadium des Kampfes in dem Judenthume unsrer Zeit,” in *Abraham Geiger’s Nachgelassene Schriften*, ed. Ludwig Geiger, Vol. 2 (Berlin, Germany: Louis Gerschel, 1875), 465.
211. Cf. Buber, “Der Geist des Orients und das Judentum,” *JuJ*, 60.
212. Moritz Lazarus, *Die Erneuerung des Judentums: Ein Aufruf* (Berlin, Germany: Georg Reimer, 1909), 10; and Buber, “Die Erneuerung des Judentums,” 30.
213. Lazarus, *Die Erneuerung*, 12.
214. Abraham Geiger, “Introduction to the Berlin Prayer Book” (1848), in *Modern Jewish History: A Source Reader*, ed. Robert Chazan and Marc Lee Raphael (New York: Schocken, 1975), 55.
215. Lazarus, *Die Erneuerung*, 108.
216. Martin Buber, “Psychologie der Renaissance,” MS.Var. 350 b/7, 2. Paul Mendes-Flohr dated the manuscript to 1900 and demonstrated that it contains parts, which Buber also used for a lecture at the *Neue Gemeinschaft* of the brothers Julius and Heinrich Hart. Cf. Mendes-Flohr, *Von der Mystik zum Dialog*, 97n113. Also Hans Kohn, *Martin Buber: Sein Werk und seine Zeit. Ein Beitrag zur Geistesgeschichte Mitteleuropas 1880–1930* (Cologne, Germany: Joseph Melzer, 1961), 28–30.
217. Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 64.
218. Buber, “Psychologie der Renaissance,” 3–4.
219. Martin Buber, “Die Lehre und die Tat,” 65.
220. Buber, “Die Erneuerung des Judentums,” 30.
221. Buber, “Das Judentum und die Menschheit,” 25.
222. Martin Buber, “Der Heilige Weg,” 114, 115.

223. Buber, “Jüdische Renaissance,” 10.
224. Martin Buber, “Regeneration eines Volkstums,” *JuJ*, 246.
225. Ibid., 253.
226. Mordechai Breuer, *Modernity Within Tradition: The Social History of Orthodox Jewry in Imperial Germany*, trans. Elizabeth Petuchowski (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 167.
227. Jacob Rosenheim, “Martin Buber und sein Kreis (Beiträge zur Orientierung im jüdischen Geistesleben der Gegenwart),” reprinted in Rosenheim, *Ohalei Yaakov: Ausgewählte Aufsätze und Ansprachen*, Vol. 1 (Frankfurt, Germany: J. Kauffmann, 1930), 55, 58, 60.
228. Ibid., 67.
229. See, e.g., Maurice Friedman, “Revelation and Law in the Thought of Martin Buber,” *Judaism* 3 (Winter 1954): 9–19. Friedman took issue with an earlier piece on this topic by Arthur A. Cohen, “Revelation and Law: Reflections on Martin Buber’s Views on Halakhah,” *Judaism* 1 (July 1952). For a further discussion, see also Zvi E. Kurzweil, “Three Views on Revelation and Law,” *Judaism* 9 (Fall 1960); Benny Kraut, “The Approach to Jewish Law of Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig,” *Tradition* 12 (Spring–Winter 1972); and Gershom Scholem, “Martin Buber’s Conception of Judaism” (1967), idem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis: Selected Essays*, ed. Werner Dannhauser (New York: Schocken, 1976), 126–71.
230. Franz Rosenzweig, “Die Bauleute: Über das Gesetz,” in his *Kleinere Schriften* (Berlin, Germany: Schocken, 1937), 107–8. The truth is that Buber did occasionally address the question of law, as in “The Words on the Tablets” (Martin Buber, *Moses: The Revelation and the Covenant* [New York: Harper, 1958], 119–40), but it is also significant that Buber, in his 1930 lecture “Die Brennpunkte der jüdischen Seele,” called himself “not qualified” (*nicht befugt*) to talk about the “Law,” dismissing it as “irrelevant” (*nicht zum Thema gehörend*) to the “Jewish soul” (see Martin Buber, “Die Brennpunkte der jüdischen Seele,” *JuJ*, 196). In “Cheruth,” Buber contrasted “teaching” (*Lehre*) and “Law” (*Gesetz*) as two entirely different approaches to a religious renewal (“Cheruth,” 128). Although Buber was sympathetic to Samson Raphael Hirsch’s neo-Orthodoxy (ibid., 132), he still considered it “incompatible” (*unvereinbar*) with his own (ibid., 133). In its last analysis, Buber claimed, the teaching is “greater” than the law: “There is greatness in a group whose adherence to the Law is awe inspiring; yet, greater still is the working of the national spirit” (Ibid., 134). For a clarification of Buber’s position on the law, see also his interview in *Philosophical Interrogations*, esp. 100.
231. “Die Lehre und die Tat: Eine Diskussion” (an exchange between Martin Buber and Joachim Prinz), first in *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, nos. 32 (Aug. 6, 1936) and 33 (Aug. 13, 1936). Reprinted in *Bulletin des Leo Baeck Instituts* 10, nos. 38–39 (1967): 221–31.
232. Ibid., 228.

233. Cf. *ibid.*, 223; 228.

234. *Ibid.*, 228.

235. For Buber's position on Paul, see his *Two Types of Faith: A Study in the Interpenetration of Judaism and Christianity* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), 46–48.

236. Martin Buber, "Warum gelernt werden soll. Aus dem 'Arbeitsplan' der Berliner Schule der jüdischen Jugend, 1932," reprinted in *MBW* 8, 220–22.

237. Cf. *ibid.*, 221. Recall also Buber's use of "Sich-Einstellen" (placing oneself into) in "Cheruth," 128. Leora Batnitzky alerted us to the "turning inward" quality of Buber's memory, which she rightly compares to Heidegger's distinction between "superficiality" (*Äußerlichkeit*) and "remembering" (*sich erinnern*). I share her judgment that Buber was indeed much closer to Husserl (even if "inverted") and Heidegger in this respect than usually acknowledged, but I would also conclude from our previous analyses that this conceptual figura is such common ground to the "thinking in renaissance" that it would be difficult *not* to uncover similar strategies of—to paraphrase Heidegger—remembering on the basis of forgetting. See Batnitzky, "Renewing the Jewish Past," 346–47; Batnitzky refers to a passage in *Being and Time* (389), in which Heidegger champions remembering as a way to reclaim "Dasein lost in the superficiality of its object of concern."

238. Rosenzweig, "Neues Lernen" (draft for the opening speech at the Frankfurt Lehrhaus, Oct. 17, 1920), GS 3, 510. In the *Star*, Rosenzweig writes: "Denn der Mensch soll nicht vergessen, er soll alles in sein innres erinnern" (*Stern*, 419).

239. Buber, "Die Lehre und die Tat," 61.

240. Jakob Burckhardt, *Historische Fragmente*, ed. E. Dürr and M. Bischoff (Nördlingen, Germany: F. Greno, 1988), 140.

241. *Ibid.*, 150.

242. *Ibid.*, 130: "Die Reformation ist der Glaube all derer, welche gerne etwas nicht mehr müssen."

243. Buber, "Die Erneuerung des Judentums," 31.

244. See Achad Ha-am, "Die Lehre des Herzens (Ein zweiter Brief an den Redakteur des *Pardes*)," *Am Scheidewege* 1 (trans. Torczyner), 98.

245. See Achad Ha-am, "Heiliges und Profanes," *Am Scheidewege* 1, 173.

246. Martin Buber, "Der Heilige Weg," 112.

247. Martin Buber, "Judentum und Kultur," *JuJ*, 154, 156.

248. Buber, "Die Erneuerung des Judentums," 43.

249. Buber, "Der Heilige Weg," 114. On the other hand, Buber did interpret the Jewish Renaissance also as a "way from a volcanic, formless cultural potential to a harmonious, beautifully formed cultural project." Cf. *idem*, "On the Jewish Renaissance," in *The Martin Buber Reader*, 139. The outcome of the Renaissance would thus not be formlessness but aesthetic form. We will look at this dialectic again in the next chapter.

250. Cf. Buber, "Judenum und Kultur," 153.

251. Dilthey, *Weltanschauung und Analyse des Menschen in Renaissance and Reformation* (Gesammelte Schriften II), 321. On Dilthey's conception of renaissance, see Elio Gianturco, "The Italian Renaissance in the Estimates of Emile Gebhart and Dilthey," *Comparative Literature* 4, no. 3 (Summer 1952): 268–76.
252. Buber, "Die Erneuerung des Judentums," 44.
253. Cf. Buber, "Der Heilige Weg," 114.
254. Cf. Heidegger, *Der Begriff der Zeit*, 25.
255. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 437, 438.
256. Ibid., 438.
257. Ibid.
258. Ehud Luz already made this point when he writes: "Buber, too, was generally speaking, not so much interested in 'what happened' as in 'how' it happened. It was this spiritual aspect of history that was 'handed down' as tradition and retained in the collective memory that Buber was most passionately concerned." Ehud Luz, "Buber's Hermeneutics: The Road to the Revival of the Collective Memory and Religious Faith," *Modern Judaism* 15, no. 1 (Feb. 1995): 71.
259. Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, 149.
260. Ibid., 104–5.
261. Burckhardt, *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen*, 230.
262. Buber, "Cheruth," 139.
263. For a more cogent discussion of the abolishment of form in modernism, see Frank Kermode, *Continuities* (New York: Random House, 1962), 10–14, 21–27.
264. Cf. Rosenzweig, "On Being a Jewish Person," in *Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought*, 224, 225.
265. Martin Buber, "Der Glaube des Judentums," 189.
266. Buber, "Regeneration eines Volkstums," 243.
267. Buber, "Der heilige Weg," 111.
268. Buber, "Die heimliche Frage," *JuJ*, 168.
269. Martin Buber, "Nationalismus" (Speech for the 12. Zionist Congress, 1921), *JuJ*, 311.
270. Hans Kohn, "Geleitwort," *Vom Judentum. Ein Sammelbuch*, vii.
271. Alfred Döblin, *Jüdische Erneuerung* (Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Querido, 1933), 97.
272. Martin Buber, "Aufgaben jüdischer Volkserziehung: Frankfurter Lehrausrede zur Wiedereröffnung des Jüdischen Lehrhauses am 19. Nov. 1933," idem, *Die Stunde der Erkenntnis*, 108.
273. Buber, "Gericht und Erneuerung," *JuJ*, 574. It is no accident that, in June 1935, the first in a series of books called "Bücher der Erneuerung" was published in Berlin, a collection of Jewish sermons by such noted rabbis as Adolf Altman of Trier, Alexander Altmann of Berlin, Joseph Carlebach of Altona, and Ignaz Maybaum of Frankfort (Willy Leven, ed., *Predigten an das Judentum von heute: Bücher der Erneuerung*, Vol. 1 [Berlin, Germany: Joachim Goldstein, 1935]). This

form of renaissance as resistance still resonates in Eugen Täubler's essay for the Schocken Almanach 5699 (1938–1939), "Zukunft und Vergangenheit: Aus der Einleitung eines Geschichtswerks" (now in Eugen Täubler, *Aufsätze zur Problematik jüdischer Geschichtsschreibung, 1908–1950*, ed. Selma Stern-Täubler [Tübingen, Germany: JCB Mohr, 1977], 44–46). Appealing to the Jewish past as a guide for a Jewish future, Täubler remarked: "We are, in this sense, facing the problem of a renaissance" (*Ibid.*, 46). What exactly this "Renaissance of Judaism" will be, and whether it will become "romantically untrue" or "renaissance-like true," is a question Täubler left unanswered.

Part Two, Chapter Three

1. "Christen über die Judenfrage: Hermann Bahr," *Die Welt* 1, no. 25 (Nov. 19, 1897): 8–9.
2. Adolph Donath, "Max Liebermann über den Zionismus," *Die Welt* 6, no. 43 (Oct. 24, 1902): 3.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Ludwig Klages, "Aus einer Seelenlehre des Künstlers," *Blätter für die Kunst. Eine Auslese aus den Jahren 1892–1898* (Berlin, Germany: Georg Bondi, 1899), 138: "... hierin gleicht er [the artist] dem mann der that, dem feldherrn, dem helden." On art as turning (Umschwung) and resurrection (glänzende Wiedergeburt), see "Einleitungen und Merksprüche," *ibid.* 27; II.
5. On the romantic origins and genesis of this term, which is mostly associated with Richard Wagner, see Detlef Kremer, "Asthetische Konzepte der 'Mythopetik' um 1800," in *Gesamtkunstwerk: Zwischen Synästhesie und Mythos*, ed. Hans Günther (Bielefeld, Germany: Aisthesis Verlag, 1904), 11–27.
6. See, for instance, Michael Berkowitz, *Zionist Culture and West European Jewry Before the First World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Michael Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle: Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism from Nordau to Jabotinsky* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).
7. Cf. Thomas Mann, "Ästhetizistische Politik," *idem, Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, 550. Walter Benjamin, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit: Drei Studien zur Kunstsoziologie* (Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1966), 42. Both Mann and Benjamin, however, referred to the aestheticization of politics in the context of neo-Romantic nationalism and fascism. For Benjamin, fascism aestheticizes politics whereas communism politicizes art (cf. *ibid.*, 44). Later German scholarship has applied Benjamin's notion of aesthetic politics mostly to national socialism. See, for instance, Rainer Stollmann, *Ästhetisierung der Politik: Literaturstudien zum frühen Faschismus* (Stuttgart, Germany: Metzler, 1978); Hans Günther, "Erzwungene Harmonie: Ästhetische Aspekte des total-

itären Staates,” in *Gesamtkunstwerk*, 259–72. For a recent assessment of Benjamin’s concept, see Martin Jay, “The ‘Aesthetic Ideology’ as Ideology: Or What Does It Mean to Aestheticize Politics?” in idem, *Force Fields: Between Intellectual History and Cultural Critique* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 71–84. It must be clarified that my reference to Mann and Benjamin in *no way* suggests an equation of Zionism and fascism. Only to the extent that Zionism aimed at the Jewish “masses” while promoting and employing a newly created aesthetic culture are we permitted to speak of an aestheticization of politics.

8. Theodor Herzl, *Tagebücher I (Gesammelte Zionistische Werke II)*, 56.
9. Ibid., 85.
10. See Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture*, 22–31. For the connections between Zionism, the Jewish Renaissance, and the culture of modernism, see Inka Bertz, “Jewish Renaissance—Jewish Modernism,” in *Berlin Metropolis: Jews and the New Culture 1900–1918*, ed. Emily D. Bilski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 165–87. Also, Asher Biemann, “Three Reflections on Zionism,” *Harvard Israel Review* 1 (Spring 2002): 4–11.
11. Achad Ha-am, “Dies ist nicht der Weg,” *Am Scheidewege I*, 91.
12. Nathan Birnbaum, “Die jüdische Bewegung,” idem, *Ausgewählte Schriften zur jüdischen Frage*, Vol. I (Czernowitz, Ukraine: Birnbaum & Kohut, 1910), 162.
13. Martin Buber, “Gegenwartsarbeit,” *JB I*, 20.
14. Ibid.
15. Mark H. Gelber, “The Jungjüdische Bewegung: An Unexplored Chapter in German-Jewish Literary and Cultural History,” *LBYB* 31 (1986): 113. For an earlier treatment of this subject, see Bernard Susser, “Ideological Multivalence: Martin Buber and the German Volkish Tradition,” *Political Theory* 5, no. 1 (Feb. 1977): 75–96.
16. Buber, “Jewish Renaissance,” in *The First Buber*, 30.
17. “Merksprüche,” *Blätter für die Kunst*, Folge III (1896): 21; Folge VII (1905): 5. Reprinted in Erich Ruprecht and Dieter Bänsch, eds., *Jahrhundertwende: Manifeste und Dokumente zur deutschen Literatur 1890–1910* (Stuttgart, Germany: J. B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1981), 239, 248.
18. Buber, “Jewish Renaissance,” 34.
19. “Neben dem jüdisch-sittlichen Ideal . . . soll das jüdisch-ästhetische aufgerichtet werden. In die neue jüdische Lebensanschauung soll etwas Tiefinnerliches, Seelenvolles einströmen, eine neue Macht, eine neue Schönheit.” Berthold Feiwel, “Vorwort,” *Jüdischer Almanach* (Berlin, Germany: Jüdischer Verlag, 1902). Quoted in Hans Kohn, *Martin Buber: Sein Werk und seine Zeit. Ein Beitrag zur Geistesgeschichte Mitteleuropas 1880–1930* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Fourier Verlag, 1979), 42–43. See also Paul Mendes-Flohr, “Zarathustra’s Apostle. Martin Buber and the Jewish Renaissance,” in *Nietzsche and Jewish Culture*, ed. Jacob Golomb (London, UK: Routledge, 1997), 238. For a discussion of Ephraim M. Lilien’s

contribution to the Jewish Renaissance, see Mark H. Gelber, “E. M. Lilien und die jüdische Renaissance,” *Bulletin des Leo Baeck Instituts* 87 (1990): 45–53.

20. Cf. Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture*, 28; on the role of art in *Ost und West*, see Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, “Defining ‘Jewish Art’ in *Ost und West*, 1901–1908. A Study in the Nationalisation of Jewish Culture,” *LBIYB* 39 (1994): 83–110.

21. *Ost und West* 1, no. 1 (Jan. 1901): 2.

22. *Ost und West* 2, no. 1 (Jan. 1902): 3.

23. Martin Buber, “Ein Geistiges Zentrum,” *JB* I, 90.

24. Cf. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 2.

25. Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Artists*, trans. George Bull (New York: Penguin, 1965), 45.

26. Ibid.

27. Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, 210.

28. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Der Antichrist*, KSA 6, 250.

29. Idem, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* I, Fünftes Hauptstück, KSA 2, 199.

30. Idem, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885–1887*, KSA 12, 394.

31. Ibid., 469.

32. Cf. Ralph-Rainer Wuthenow, *Muse, Maske, Meduse: Europäischer Ästhetizismus*, (Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1978), 108–9.

33. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885–1887*, 142. Nietzsche refers to the artist as “Bildner, Werthzuleger, Besitzergreifer.”

34. Ibid., 520.

35. Buber’s “Collegienbücher” clearly suggest his focus on renaissance studies. At Leipzig, he took “Vorlesungen zur Deutschen Renaissance” under August Schmarsow (Winter 1897–1898). A year later, he attended Schmarsow’s seminar on Italian sculpture of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, then a course on “Kulturgeschichte der Renaissance in Italien” (Prof. Goetz, Winter 1898–1899). See Buber Archives, MsVar. 350, a/6. On Buber and Burckhardt, see Asher Biemann, “The Problem of Tradition and Reform in Jewish Renaissance and Renaissance,” *Jewish Social Studies* 8, no. 1 (Fall 2001): esp. 64–66; for Buber and Nietzsche, see Paul Mendes-Flohr, “Zarathustra’s Apostle,” 233–36. On the Jewish reception of Nietzsche, see Werner Stegmaier and Daniel Krochmalnik, eds., *Jüdischer Nietzscheanismus*; Steven E. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany, 1890–1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press); Jacob Golomb, *Nietzsche and Zion* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004).

36. Buber, “On the [Jewish] Renaissance,” *The Martin Buber Reader*, 139.

37. Jacob Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance*, 92.

38. Ibid. In a similar fashion, Burckhardt called Rubens, whom he much admired, “a king without lands or subjects.” Jacob Burckhardt, *Recollections of Rubens*, trans. Mary Hottinger (London, UK: Phaidon, 1950), 9.

39. Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, 92.

40. Buber, “Jewish Renaissance,” 31.
41. Ibid. On Nietzsche’s emphasis of the discovery of new lands (Columbus), see Luca Farulli, “Nietzsche und die Renaissance: Die Reflexion über ‘Grenze’ und ‘Grenzüberschreitung,’” in *Renaissance und Renaissancismus von Jacob Burckhardt bis Thomas Mann*, 54–70.
42. Buber, “Von jüdischer Kunst,” *JB I*, 64.
43. Buber, “Jewish Renaissance,” 33.
44. Buber, “Address on Jewish Art,” *The First Buber*, 49.
45. Ibid., 55.
46. Micha Berdichevsky, “La-She’elah ha-Tarbut,” idem, *Ba-Derekh*, Vol. 2 (Maamarim), (Lipsia, Germany: Stiebel, 1922), 57.
47. Cf. Berkowitz, *Zionist Culture*, 89–91.
48. Buber, “Address on Jewish Art,” *The First Buber*, 52.
49. “The strongest testimony to life is productivity, and the most direct form of productivity is art.” Martin Buber, “Lesser Ury,” *The First Buber*, 65. On Nietzsche, see Buber, “Zarathustra” (Nietzsche Aphorismen), printed in *MBW I*, 110.
50. Buber, “Address on Jewish Art,” *The First Buber*, 59.
51. Ibid., 51.
52. Ibid., 61.
53. Max Nordau, *Von Kunst und Künstlern. Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte* (Leipzig, Germany: Elischer, 1905), 24.
54. Ibid., 25. In this light we have to see Nordau’s conservative aesthetic values and his plea for a “healthy art.” Cf. Max Nordau, *Entartung* (Berlin, Germany: Carl Duncker 1893), 550. Also ibid., 544: “The aberrations of art have no future. They will vanish once moral mankind will have overcome its state of exhaustion. The art of the 20th century will, in all respects, ground itself in the past, but it will have to fulfill a new task. . . .” On Nordau’s classicist aesthetics, see Todd Samuel Presner, “Clear Heads, Solid Stomachs, and Hard Muscles: Max Nordau and the Aesthetics of Jewish Regeneration,” *Modernism/Modernity* 10, no. 2 (2003): 269–96. See also Michael Hau, “The Holistic Gaze in German Medicine, 1890–1930,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 74, no. 3 (2000): esp. 498–99. It should be noted that Nordau fully recognized the value of art for the Zionist movement. In an article of 1901, “Der Zionismus der westlichen Juden,” he emphasized the “important role” that “Jewish art” and literature would play in the resensualization of young Jews: “Excellent Jewish novels, plays, and poems, paintings and sculptures will do more for the awakening of Jewish feeling in young souls than any systematic and rational education.” Nordau, *Zionistische Schriften*, 316. Buber, in fact, referred to this very passage when making his case for Jewish art at the Fifth Zionist Congress (cf. Buber, “Address on Jewish Art,” *The First Buber*, 47).
55. Oskar Rosenfeld, “Das Problem einer jüdischen Kunst,” *Esra* 1, no. 1 (1919): 12.
56. Julius Langbehn, *Rembrandt als Erzieher* (Leipzig, Germany: Hirschfeld, 1896), 2. Likewise, George’s *Blätter für die Kunst* announced an “Umkehr in die

Kunst” (*Blätter für die Kunst: Eine Auslese aus den Jahren 1892–1898*, 21). For a critical study of the modernist desire to educate through art I would urge the reader to consult Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1987), esp. 100–108.

57. Langbehn, *Rembrandt als Erzieher*, 8.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid., 171.

60. Ibid., 39.

61. Julius Hart, *Revolution der Ästhetik als Einleitung zu einer Revolution der Wissenschaft. Erstes Buch: Künstler und Ästhetiker* (Berlin, Germany: Concordia Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1909), 311–12. On the relation between the brothers Heinrich and Julius Hart and the young Martin Buber, see Martin Treml, “Einleitung,” *MBW* 1, 45–46.

62. On Burckhardt as a critic of modernity, see H.R. Guggisberg, “Burckhardt und Huizinga—Zwei Historiker in der Krise ihrer Zeit,” in *Johan Huizinga 1872–1972*, ed. W.R.H. Koops et al. Paper delivered to the Johan Huizinga Conference, Groningen, December 11–15, 1972 (Hague, The Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1983), 155–74; John R. Hinde, *Jacob Burckhardt and the Crisis of Modernity* (Montreal, Canada: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000), esp. 113–36; Felix Gilbert, *History: Politics or Culture?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), esp. 81–92. See also Carl E. Schorske, “History as Vocation in Burckhardt’s Basel,” idem, *Thinking with History*, 56–70. Schorske argues that Burckhardt’s Renaissance conception was itself a mirror of decadence held against his contemporaries and the advance of modernism. The “decay of medieval unity,” then, unleashed the “terror and beauty” that would characterize modern culture (cf. *ibid.*, 68). Schorske’s view that Burckhardt’s Renaissance was “beyond progress and regression” could well be applied to Buber and the Jewish Renaissance, where a similar tension existed between the virtues of mediaeval (premodern) naïveté and the modern awakening of culture.

63. “The term ‘art of the fatherland’ (*vaterländische Kunst*) is one about the value of which I have gradually come to have very negative thoughts.” Burckhardt to Heinrich Geymüller, December 27, 1874 (Jacob Burckhardt, *Briefe* 5:260), quoted in Lionel Gossman, “The Existenzbild in Burckhardt’s Art Historical Writing,” *MLN* 114, no. 5 (1999): 911–12.

64. On the influence of Langbehn, see Walter Laqueur: *Weimar. A Cultural History 1918–1933* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1974), 79–81; Bernd Behrendt, *Zwischen Paradox und Paralognismus: Weltanschauliche Grundzüge einer Kulturkritik in den neunziger Jahren des 19. Jahrhunderts am Beispiel August Julius Langbehn* (Frankfurt, Germany: Peter Lang, 1984); Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Dispair. A Study in the Rise of Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), 97–180; George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology. Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Schocken, 1981), 39–45.

65. Cf. Alfred Martin, *Nietzsche und Burckhardt. Zwei Geistige Welten im Dialog* (Munich, Germany: Erasmus Verlag, 1947), 230n2.

66. Cf. Robin Lenman, *Artists and Society in Germany, 1850–1914* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1997), esp. 24–52.

67. Cf. Gossmann, “The Existenzbild,” 910.

68. A study on the specifically Jewish reception of Langbehn, to my knowledge, does not yet exist. George Mosse, in his important chapter on “The Influence of the Volkish Idea on German Jewry,” mentions Langbehn in the context of Jewish Youth Culture, but does not elaborate on it. Cf. idem, *Germans and Jews: The Right, the Left, and the Search for a ‘Third Force’ in Pre-Nazi Germany* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1970), 83. Bernard Susser, in his essay on “Ideological Multivalence” (81), sees “notable traces of filiation” between Buber’s Zionism and Langbehn’s Rembrandt. For a detailed German reception of Langbehn, see Behrendt, *Zwischen Paradox and Paralogismus*, 154–210.

69. Georg Simmel, *Rembrandt. Ein kunstphilosophischer Versuch* (Leipzig, Germany: Kurt Wolff, 1919). On the other hand, Simmel wrote a scathing review of “Rembrandt als Erzieher,” (*Vossische Zeitung* [Nov. 17, 1912]), idem, *Vom Wesen der Moderne. Essays zur Philosophie und Ästhetik*, ed. Werner Jung (Hamburg, Germany: Junius, 1990), 145–62.

70. See Franz Landsberger, *Rembrandt, the Jews, and the Bible* (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1946); Anna Seghers, *Jude und Judentum im Werke Rembrandts* (Stuttgart, Germany: P. Reclam, 1981); Steven M. Nadler, *Rembrandt’s Jews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

71. For the ubiquitous “Moses zertrümmert die Gesetzestafeln,” see *Ost und West* 2, no. 4 (April 1902): 273.

72. Cf. Gilya G. Schmidt, ed., *The Art and Artists of the Fifth Zionist Congress, 1901: Heralds of a New Age* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 54.

73. Susser, “Ideological Multivalence,” 81.

74. Julius Bab, *Rembrandt und Spinoza: Ein Doppelbildnis im deutsch-jüdischen Raum* (Berlin, Germany: Verlag, 1934). The Jewish admiration for Rembrandt did not stop with Bab. In 1956, the Prague essayist and critic Willy Haas, then living in Hamburg, celebrated Rembrandt as an innovative humanist, whose art elevated reality to a spiritual and *moral* plane: “Seine Kunst ist der stärkste Ausdruck der Realität mittels des stärksten Ausdrucks seiner selbst.” Concluding that Rembrandt was the painter of the “human face” at the “threshold of becoming and withering,” Haas calls him a “Mann von heute . . . , und unser aller Mann.” Willy Haas, “Rembrandt,” first in *Rembrandt, ein Mann für Heute* (Hommerich, Germany: Verlag, 1959); reprinted in Willy Haas, *Gestalten. Essays zur Literatur und Gesellschaft* (Berlin, Germany: Verlag, 1962), 27–40. For the quotes, 29, 40. Another example: Ernst Bloch found in Rembrandt not only the “strongest painter of *Fernschein*” and “paradoxical light,” but also the painter of hope as such: “Rembrandts Paradoxlicht . . . ist *Perspektivenlicht der Hoffnung*, tief in Nähe und

Verlassenheit herabgeleitet, beantwortet.” Indeed, Bloch seems to find in Rembrandt the very “Hohlraum mit Funken” that connects his paintings with redemptive anticipation. Cf. Ernst Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung II* (Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1959), 937, 938.

75. Julius Bab, “Rembrandt und Spinoza,” *Der Morgen* 5, no. 4 (Oct. 1929): 397.

76. Ibid., 394–95.

77. Cf. Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, 327: “Ich hatte des Braun eine historische Farbe genannt. Es macht die Atmosphäre des Bildraumes zu einem Zeichen des Gerichtseins, *der Zukunft*.” In the same chapter, Spengler also expresses his disdain for the period of the Renaissance (to whom the “atmospheric color brown was entirely foreign” [ibid., 325]) as a period of mere opposition to the achievements of the *Gotik*: “Aber Renaissancekunst—das ist ganz und eigentlich antigotische Kunst.” (Ibid., 302). And: “[D]ie Gotik ist die *einzig* Grundlage der Renaissance. Die Renaissance hat die wirkliche Antike nicht einmal berührt, geschweigedenn verstanden und ‘wiederbelebt.’” (Ibid., 307.) Also: “Die Renaissance war aus dem Trotz geboren. Es fehlt ihr darum an Tiefe, Umfang und Sicherheit der formbildenden Instnkte.” (Ibid., 350). On the other hand, Spengler will charge the art of the Renaissance as imitating the classical ideal of “completeness” and hence recoiling from all historical action: Where the Renaissance, according to Spengler, remained “a-historical,” symbolizing a “punktformiges Jetzt,” the art of the North expresses “deed.” (Cf. ibid., 322–23.) Thus, Spengler identifies Rembrandt not only with the emotional “depth” of the Romantic, but also with a Faustian striving forward: “Das Tiefenerlebnis ist ein Werden und bewirkt ein Gewordenes; es bedeutet Zeit und ruft den Raum hervor; es ist kosmisch und historisch zugleich. Die lebendige Richtung geht zum *Horizont wie zur Zukunft*.” (Ibid., 336.) The above, then, illustrates that the aesthetic concern with “direction,” “deed,” and “future,” which happens to be so immanently present also in the work of Martin Buber, is rather commonplace for both Rembrandtists and renaissancists.

78. Buber, “Hebrew Humanism,” *The Martin Buber Reader*, 161: “[W]e must reach for a farther goal than European Humanism.”

79. Ibid., 159. Cf. the definition of “Hebrew Humanism” by Hugo Bergmann: “Wir wollen hebräisch sprechend, hebräisch seiend, alles Menschliche, das in uns ist, darleben.” Hugo Bergmann, “Hebräischer Humanismus,” *Jüdische Rundschau* 43, no. 33 (April 26, 1938): 1. Significantly, Bergmann emphasizes, like Buber, that the humanism of the Renaissance was precisely *not* a return to classical Antiquity and that, in fact, the ancient world did not know a concept of humanism at all: “Diese Rückkehr war eine Illusion. Die antike Welt kannte jenen Humanismus nicht, oder fast nicht” (Ibid.).

80. Buber, “Biblical Humanism,” *The Martin Buber Reader*, 50.

81. Ibid., 48.

82. Cf. Buber, “Der Staat und die Menschheit,” *JuJ*, 292, 295.

83. Ibid., 290.

84. Referring to Dante's *Convivio*, Burdach wrote in 1918 that the idea of humanism was "to return to the human origin, not by way of speculative thought, but by way of a concrete transformation of the whole of inner life." (Konrad Burdach, *Reformation, Renaissance, Humanismus*, 158). Buber seems to have met Burdach at least once in Berlin and was "very impressed" by him (see Letter to Ernst Simon, January 9, 1928, in *Briefwechsel II*, 299). Between 1927 and 1934, Burdach and Buber corresponded occasionally, exchanging copies of their works. In September 1927, Burdach sent Buber his booklet *Reformation, Renaissance, Humanismus* (2nd edition). See Konrad Burdach, Letter to Buber, 15. IX. 1927 (Martin Buber Archives, Ms.Var. 144.2).

85. Consistent with the Renaissance mentality of the fin-de-siècle, Eugen Diederichs published a popular anthology of Pico's works in 1905, edited by Arthur Liebert, who considered Pico, along with Marsilio Ficino, "the purest and most plastic Renaissance-philosopher and Renaissance-man." Cf. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, trans. and ed. Arthur Liebert (Jena, Germany: Eugen Diederichs, 1905), 92. On Pico's reception history, see also Kerrigan and Braden, *The Idea of the Renaissance*, 117–33 ("Pico della Mirandola and Renaissance Ambition"). On Pico's role as an innovator against the mere "imitation" of antiquity, see August Buck, *Die 'Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes' im Italienischen Selbstverständnis der Renaissance und des Barock* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Franz Steiner, 1973), esp. 9–12.

86. (Giovanni) Pico della Mirandola, *On the Dignity of Man*, trans. Charles Glenn Wallis (Indianapolis, IN: Library of Liberal Arts, 1965), 5. Relying on "the more secret Hebrew theology," Pico, in fact, emphasizes that "metamorphoses were popular among the Jews and the Pythagoreans," and that the idea of self-transformation is at the core of the prophetic message: "Ye are all gods, and sons of the most high." (Cf. ibid., 5–7.)

87. Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, 241. Ernst Cassirer, who quotes this passage by Pico at length, seems to agree with Burckhardt. Cf. Ernst Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance* (1927), (Darmstadt, Germany: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969), 90–92.

88. Pater, *The Renaissance*, 41.

89. Ibid., 218.

90. Ibid., 217–18.

91. Paul Barolsky, "As in Ovid, So in the Renaissance," *Renaissance Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 459: "Abbozzati and non finiti, Michelangelo's relief figures, emerging from stone as if petrified, reflect the *poesis* of figures out of stone, the metamorphosis of stone into the human form." Also, idem, *The Faun in the Garden: Michelangelo and the Poetic Origins of Italian Renaissance Art* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 151–59. The role of the fragmentary and unfinished, especially in Michelangelo, as a Renaissance

topos has also been stressed by Leonard Barkan. Barkan argues that, for Michelangelo, the inspirational content of an artwork represented a perfection of its own, whereas the “completeness of its surface polish [was seen] as a different, even lesser, perfection.” Barkan, *Unearthing the Past*, 207. As such, the fragmentary work offered a certain openness, involving the beholder as an agent in history who could restore the fragment through his imagination of past and future: “To place broken sculpture at the center of Renaissance culture is to declare that it carried a great value within itself, a value that depended on—but was not limited to—its reference to some past or future condition in which it was *not* a fragment.” (*Ibid.*, 207.) Juergen Schulz, on the other hand, argued in 1975 that Michelangelo’s aesthetics of the *non finito* was primarily a romanticizing myth and that the unfinishedness of many of his sculptures was merely circumstantial or the result of his own endless revisions and “continuous self-criticism.” Juergen Schulz, “Michelangelo’s Unfinished Works,” *Art Bulletin* 57, no. 3 (Sept. 1975): 366–73.

92. Cf. Barolsky, “As in Ovid, So in the Renaissance,” 461–64.

93. Martin Buber, “Das Gestaltende,” *JuJ*, 234. Ernst Simon emphasizes the role of Michelangelo’s torsi in Buber as well. Cf. Ernst Simon, “Martin Buber, der Erzieher,” in *Martin Buber*, 491. For a discussion of Buber’s polarity of form/formlessness, see Adir Cohen, “Aesthetics and Aesthetic Education in Martin Buber’s Thought,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 14, no. 1 (Jan. 1980): 51–73, esp. 66–68. An earlier and briefer treatment of the subject would be Marcia Allentuck, “Martin Buber’s Aesthetic Theories: Some Reflections,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 30, no. 1 (Autumn 1971): 35–38, esp. 36.

94. Buber, “Das Gestaltende,” 235. Hence, Buber stresses the element of transformation in Lesser Ury’s deeply “Jewish” art: “Die Seele des Baumes ist die unauflöliche Umwandlung des Baumes.” Buber, “Lesser Ury,” in *Jüdische Künstler*, 70. Quoted in Olin, *The Nation Without Art: Examining Modern Discourses on Jewish Art* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 238n75. Speaking of the same torsi, Georg Simmel wrote “Bei Michelangelo aber scheint der Stein seine eigene abwärts gerichtete Natur, seine schwere Formlosigkeit eifersüchtig zu bewahren und gibt seinen Konflikt mit dem höheren Gebilde nicht auf, das er doch hergeben muß.” Simmel, “Michelangelo,” in idem, *Philosophische Kultur. Gesammelte Essays* (Potsdam, Germany: Kiepenheuer Verlag, 1923), 166.

95. Martin Buber, “Religion als Gegenwart,” 59 (Lecture Two, Jan. 22, 1922).

96. *Ibid.*, 61. For an extensive treatment of Buber’s aesthetics in relation to religion, see Moshe Schwarcz, “Haguto ha-esthetit shel Martin Buber,” in idem, *Safa, Mythos, Omanut. Iyyunim be-Machshevut ha-Yehudit be-’Et ha-chadasha* (Tel Aviv, Israel: Schocken, 1966), 309–32.

97. Buber, “Religion als Gegenwart,” 61. Steven Schwarzchild suggests that Buber quoted Goethe “with some reservation.” See *idem*, “A Critique of Martin Buber’s Political Philosophy. An Affectionate Reappraisal,” *LBIYB* 31 (1986):

377–78. My impression, however, is that Buber was much more indebted to Cohen’s aesthetics than Schwarzschild—charging Buber with hanging on to the “basic irrationality” of his own teachings—is willing to acknowledge. In fact, Buber’s aesthetics of the unfinished form seems to be strikingly consistent with what Schwarzschild himself identifies as the “principle of incompleteness” in Jewish art: “The fragmentariness or distortion of the human image in Jewish art is in effect not a reduction but an *expansion* of the human form.” Cf. Steven Schwarzschild, “The Legal Foundations of Jewish Esthetics,” in *Mélanges André Neher* (Paris, France: Librairie d’Amérique et d’Orient Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1975), 71. Schwarzschild borrows the “principle of incompleteness” from Rachel Wishnitzer.

98. Buber, “Das Gestaltende,” 239. On Pico, see Buber’s 1938 essay “What Is Man?” in idem, *Between Man and Man* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1955), esp. 130. It was perhaps not by accident that in the summer of 1938, Ernst Cassirer wrote an essay on “Giovanni Pico della Mirandola,” placing Pico “in the center and inner circle of the great Humanistic movement” and stressing, in fact, his unwillingness to submit to “any dogmatic crystallization of the humanistic ideals and claims.” (Ernst Cassirer, “Giovanni Pico della Mirandola: A Study in the History of Renaissance Ideas,” in *Renaissance Essays from the Journal of the History of Ideas*, ed. Paul O. Kristeller and Philip P. Wiener (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 39. It is not far fetched to argue with Karen Michels that Jewish historians and art historians, such as Cassirer, Panofsky, or Kristeller, continued to embrace the Renaissance as a form of intellectual resistance to Nazism and restoration of humanistic values. Hence, Michels writes: “The preference for the Renaissance and its humanist and Neoplatonic patterns of interpretation shaped the mind-set of a large group of German Jewish intellectuals in art history and in the humanities in general. Where American research used the Renaissance to legitimize the American political system, the émigrés used the same historical epoch as a cultural paradigm for the transmission of the values that had been responsible for Jewish emancipation in Germany.” Karen Michels, “Art History, German Jewish Identity, and the Emigration of Iconology,” in *Jewish Identity in Modern Art History*, ed. Catherine M. Soussloff (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 174. For a detailed discussion of the renaissance trope as a “prototype and remedy,” see Kay E. Schiller, “The Renaissance as Prototype and Remedy: The Transatlantic Development of German-Jewish Humanist Culture” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1996). Schiller rightly treats the Italian Renaissance in Burckhardt’s legacy as a “pharmacos” to German-Jewish émigré scholars (*ibid.*, 17). This, of course, seems to be in stark contrast to the demonization of the Renaissance by Christian theologians during the same time. On this subject, see Herbert Weisinger, “The Attack on the Renaissance in Theology Today,” *Studies in the Renaissance* 2 (1955): 176–89.

99. Cf. Buber, “Biblical Humanism,” 50.

100. *Ibid.*, 46, 50. This is reiterated in “Hebrew Humanism,” where Buber speaks of a “true and complete transformation” (Buber, “Hebrew Humanism,”

161). See also the 1911 essay “The Renewal of Judaism” (*Martin Buber Reader*, 146): “I mean something sudden and immense—by no means a continuation or improvement, but a return and a complete transformation (*Umwandlung*).”

101. Cf. Horst Rüdiger, *Wesen und Wandlung des Humanismus* (Hildesheim, Germany: Georg Olms, 1966 [1937]), 279–97. For an earlier testament of the German interest in a specifically “German” humanism, see Ernst Bokowski, *Aus der Zeit des Humanismus* (Jena, Germany: Diedrichs, 1905). One should also note that Buber’s humanism of the unfinished form has an exact pendant in the “new humanism” of the German philologist, proto-feminist, and political activist, Gertrud Bäumer, who in 1930 painted a striking image of the German humanist as “‘der Wanderer,’ um den immer Sturm ist.” Following Heinrich Wölfflin, Bäumer speaks of “nordic beauty” as “nicht die Schönheit des in-sich-Geschlossenen und Begrenzten, sondern des Grenzenlosen und Unendlichen . . . Die fertige Form bedeutet der germanischen Phantasie zu wenig, sie muß immer überspielt sein vom Reiz der Bewegung.” Gertrud Bäumer, *Neuer Humanismus* (Leipzig, Germany: Quelle & Meyer, 1930), 78, 79.

102. Buber to Fritz Mauthner, January 4, 1911, *Martin Buber Archive*, Ms.Var. 481.I.20.

103. Mauthner to Buber, January 8, 1911, *Martin Buber Archive*, Ms.Var. 481.21.

104. Fritz Mauthner, *Wörterbuch der Philosophie. Neue Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache*, Vol. 1 (A – Intuition), reprint of the original edition of 1910–1911 (Zurich, Switzerland: Diogenes, 1980), 537. Mauthner actually refers to this passage in his letter to Buber of January 8, 1911.

105. Ibid., “[I]ch glaube bestimmt, daß das Schlagwort der Zeit eine parodistische, höhnische Lehnübersetzung des evangelischen Begriffs der Wiedergeburt war: *renaissance*, *rinascimento*.”

106. Ibid., 540.

107. Cf. Fritz Mauthner, “Fin de Siècle und kein Ende,” *Das Magazin für Literatur* 60, no. 1 (1891): 14.

108. Nicolas Berdyaev, *The End of Our Time* (London, UK: Sheed & Ward, 1933), 54. See also Herbert Weisinger, “The Attack on the Renaissance in Theology Today,” 178. Weisinger, in fact, includes “the Hebrew Buber” in the circle of contemporary theologians who “fire their heaviest salvos at the Renaissance” (Ibid., 181).

109. Burckhardt, *Tarbut ha-Renesans be-Italiyah*, 5–6.

110. This was incidentally also the program of the radical reformer and assimilationist Jakob Fromer in his book, *Das Wesen des Judentums* (Berlin, Germany: Hüpeden & Merzyn, 1905), 90–94. On Fromer, see Christian Wiese, *Wissenschaft des Judentums und Protestantische Theologie im wilhelminischen Deutschland*, 242–43.

111. Arnold Hauser, *Sozialgeschichte der Kunst und Literatur* (Munich, Germany: C. H. Beck, 1967), 942.

112. Cf. Wuthenow, *Muse, Maske, Meduse*, 106.

113. Arthur Zanker, "Zum jüdischen Kulturproblem," *Esra* 1, no. 6 (1919): 171. It should be noted that Zanker acknowledged his inspiration by Gustav Wyneken (cf. *ibid.*, 168).

114. Moses Calvary, "Die erzieherische Aufgabe des deutschen Zionismus," *Die Welt* 15, no. 1 (Jan. 6, 1911): 5.

115. Buber, "Die Schaffenden, das Volk, und die Bewegung," *JB* I, 68. Compare also Rainer Maria Rilke, "Über Kunst," *Ver Sacrum* 1, no. 1 (1898): 22–23. Ernst Simon points also to Constantin Brunner as a source for Buber's "Schaffender" (Simon, "Martin Buber, der Erzieher," in *Schilpp/Friedman*, 485). On Buber's position on Brunner (whose real name was Leo Wertheimer), see *idem*, "A. M. und Constantin Brunner," *MBW* I, 177–82 and the commentary by Martin Treml (*Ibid.*, 315–17).

116. Buber, "Ein geistiges Zentrum," *JB* I, 82.

117. *Ibid.*, 84.

118. Cf. *ibid.*, 90.

119. Buber, "Die Schaffenden, das Volk, und die Bewegung," 68. Similarly, Oskar Rosenfeld wrote that it was the "process of self-education in the creative one" (*Selbsterziehungsprozeß des Schaffenden*) that would resolve one of the "foundational problems of Judaism." Cf. Rosenfeld, "Problem einer jüdischen Kunst," 13.

120. Thus, George Mosse includes Buber in the German phenomenon of a "New Romanticism" (cf. *idem*, *The Crisis of German Ideology*, 63–64). For a nuanced treatment of this theme, see Manuel Duarte de Oliveira, "Passion for Land and Volk: Martin Buber and Neo-Romanticism," *LBIYB* 41 (1996): 239–60.

121. Cf. Leo Baeck, "Romantic Religion," 204.

122. Buber, "Heruth: On Youth and Religion," *The Martin Buber Reader*, 134.

123. Buber, *Briefwechsel* I, 488. Kurt Hiller was the editor of the yearbook *Das Ziel: Aufrufe zum tätigen Geist* (Munich, Germany: Georg Müller Verlag, 1916), which also featured Gustav Wyneken, Felix Weltsch, and Hans Blüher. Subsequent volumes appeared in 1918 (*Tätigster Geist! Zweites der Ziel-Jahrbücher* [Munich, Germany: Georg Müller]), featuring an article by Buber's close friend Max Brod, and 1919 (*Das Ziel. Jahrbücher für geistige Politik* [Munich, Germany: Kurt Wolf]). For further context, see Bernd Hüppauf, "Zwischen revolutionärer Epoche und sozialem Prozeß: Bemerkungen über den Ort des Expressionismus in der Literaturgeschichte," in *idem*, ed., *Expressionismus und Kulturrise* (Heidelberg, Germany: Carl Winter, 1983), 55–83. Buber did not tire to distinguish between "deed" and activism (see, for example, Buber, "Der Glaube des Judentums," *JuJ*, 187; "Die Brennpunkte der jüdischen Seele," *JuJ*, 204).

124. Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 70–101. On Wyneken and the German youth culture movement, see Peter Ulrich Hein, ed., *Künstliche Paradiese der Jugend. Zur Geschichte und Gegenwart Ästhetischer Subkultur* (Münster, Germany: Lit-Verlag, 1984). On Wyneken

and Jewish youth movement, see Willy Hoffer, “Siegfried Bernfeld and ‘Jerubaal.’ An Episode in the Jewish Youth Movement,” *LBIYB* 10 (1965): esp. 152–54.

125. See Fritz Stern, *Politics of Cultural Despair*, 173.

126. Gustav Wyneken, *Weltanschauung* (Munich, Germany: Ernst Reinhardt, 1940), 214.

127. *Ibid.*, 228.

128. Cf. Gustav Wyneken, “Die Aufgabe der Freien Schulen” (1914), idem, *Der Kampf um die Jugend: Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Jena, Germany: Eugen Diederichs, 1920), 10: “Such a school . . . is not the implementation of a program but of an idea. It is not based upon the sum of our experiences, but upon one unified and great vision, and in this it resembles most of all a work of art.”

129. Cf. Wyneken, “Solche Ansichten können wir nicht dulden” (1911), *Kampf um die Jugend*, 79.

130. Buber, “Rede über das Erzieherische,” *Werke* I, 788. See also, Simon, “Martin Buber, der Erzieher,” 493–94.

131. Buber, “Rede über das Erzieherische,” 808.

132. *Ibid.*, 791.

133. *Ibid.*

134. *Ibid.*, 792.

135. *Ibid.*

136. The distinction between classicism and romanticism, however, is by no means obvious. As G. E. von Gruenbaum has shown, romanticism itself can well be a form of classicism (“orthogenetischer Klassizismus”). See G. E. von Gruenbaum, “Von Begriff und Bedeutung eines Kulturtklassizismus,” in *Klassizismus und Kulturverfall. Vorträge*, ed. G. E. von Gruenbaum and W. Hartner (Frankfurt, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1960), 5–43.

137. On this point, see Silvia Ferretti, *Cassirer, Panofsky, and Warburg: Symbol, Art, and History*, trans. Richard Pierce (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), esp. 53–62; Gossman, “The Existenzbild,” 914; Georges Didi-Huberman, “Artistic Survival: Panofsky vs. Warburg and the Exorcism of Impure Time,” *Common Knowledge* 9, no. 2 (2003): 282; Charlotte Schoell-Glass, “Aby Warburg: Forced Identity and ‘Cultural Science,’” in *Jewish Identity in Modern Art History*, 218–30, esp. 226. Warburg’s affection for the Renaissance becomes evident from his collection of essays *Die Erneuerung der heidnischen Antike* (1932; English as *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the Cultural History of the European Renaissance* [Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1999]). Speaking on the occasion of a newly discovered fresco in 1899, Warburg congratulated the German Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence: “May it often find itself united with the Florentines in the performance of their finest duty: that of awakening their past greatness to new life.” (Warburg, “A Newly Discovered Fresco by Andrea del Castagno,” *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*, 722). On Warburg’s roots in Enlightenment ideals, see Michael Diers, “Warburg and the War-

burgian Tradition of Cultural History,” *New German Critique* no. 65 (Spring/Summer 1995): 67. One should also recall here Hans Liebeschütz’s remarkable essay on Warburg’s Jewishness and Renaissance humanism. According to Liebeschütz, Jacob Burckhardt officiated as the “secular patron saint” of the Warburg library, and Warburg even kept a Burckhardt paperweight on his desk. Yet, Warburg also recognized the potential danger in Burckhardt’s Renaissance interpretation. Thus, in a seminar of 1927, Warburg depicted a careful image of the Swiss historian: “[H]ere the old master appeared as a man who knew about the danger by which his insight into the depth of human nature threatened his very existence. He (Warburg) emphasized how Burckhardt preserved life and sanity by keeping a distance between himself and the powers of the past; Nietzsche, his former colleague, trespassed upon the zone of danger—and perished.” Hans Liebeschütz, “Aby Warburg (1866–1929) as Interpreter of Civilization,” *LBIYB* 16 (1971): 235.

138. Cf. Buber, “Von jüdischer Kunst,” *JB* I, 65. On a more detailed discussion of the relationship between art and Hasidism in Buber, see Margaret Olin, “Martin Buber: Jewish Art as Visual Redemption,” idem, *The Nation Without Art*, 99–126. It is noteworthy, that also Nathan Birnbaum recognized in Hasidism a new “feeling” for nature, or even the sublime, calling it an “aesthetic revolution.” See Nathan Birnbaum, “Die Juden und die Ästhetik,” first in *Die Welt* 15 (Nov. 3, 1911), reprinted in idem, *Um die Ewigkeit: Jüdische Essays* (Berlin, Germany: Welt-Verlag, 1920), 150.

139. Cf. Zanker, “Zum jüdischen Kulturproblem,” 169.

140. Paul Ernst, “Von der Kälte des großen Kunstwerks,” *Der Morgen* 2, no. 40 (1908), 1333.

141. In his famous 1966 lecture on “Germans and Jews,” Gershom Scholem wrote: “The significance of Friedrich Schiller for the formation of Jewish attitudes toward Germany is almost incalculable. . . . Schiller, spokesman for pure humanity, lofty poet of the highest ideals of mankind, represented everything they thought of, or wished to think of, as being German—even when, in the Germany of the last third of the nineteenth century, his language had already begun to sound hollow.” Gershom Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis: Selected Essays*, ed. Werner J. Dannhauser (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), 79.

142. Oskar Frankl, “Schiller und das jüdische Volk,” *Die Welt* 9, no. 18 (May 5, 1905): 14.

143. Martin Buber, “Rede gehalten von Martin Buber an seiner ‘Barmizwah’-Feier am 8. Februar 1891,” *MBW* I, 94. In his speech, Buber compared Schiller’s tribute to virtue (*Tugend*) in *Die Worte des Glaubens* of 1798 (verses 13–18) to Proverbs 8:20 (“I will walk in the way of righteousness [*Tugend*]”). Buber would return to Schiller only a few years later, in a seminar paper for Paul Barth at Leipzig University (1897–1898), entitled “Zu Schopenhauers Lehre vom Erhabenen” (now printed in *MBW* I, 131–47). There he concludes that “compared to the teachings of Kant and Schiller, Schopenhauer’s theory of the sublime was hardly a milestone” (*Ibid.*, 147).

144. Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, trans. Reginald Snell (New York: Ungar, 1965). Schiller's likely impact on Buber has already been noted by Paul Mendes-Flohr ("Zarathustra's Apostle," 235–36). On Buber's grandmother, see Buber, "Autobiographische Fragmente," *MBW* 6, 69; also the recent article by Paul Mendes-Flohr, "Martin Buber: Builder of Bridges," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 14, no. 2 (2007): 101–19. For an interpretation of Schiller's aesthetic letters, see Ulrich Floß, *Kunst und Mensch in den ästhetischen Schriften Friedrich Schillers: Versuch einer kritischen Interpretation* (Vienna, Austria: Böhlau, 1989); for Schiller's classical conception of aesthetics, see Wolfgang Schadewaldt, "Schillers Griechentum," in *Schiller. Reden zum Gedenkjahr 1959*, ed. Bernhard Zeller (Stuttgart, Germany: Klett, 1961), 258–70; on Schiller and the nexus of aesthetics and politics, see Hans-Heino Ewers, *Die schöne Individualität. Zur Genesis des bürgerlichen Kunstdideals* (Stuttgart, Germany: J. B. Metzler, 1978), 37–65; Jörn Rüsen, *Ästhetik und Geschichte. Geschichtstheoretische Untersuchungen zum Begründungszusammenhang von Kunst, Gesellschaft und Wissenschaft* (Stuttgart, Germany: J. B. Metzler, 1976), 19–24; Wolfgang Wittkowski, ed., *Friedrich Schiller. Kunst, Humanität und Politik in der späten Aufklärung. Ein Symposium* (Tübingen, Germany: Niemeyer, 1982). The direct link between Schiller's aesthetic education and Joseph Goebbels' aesthetic politics, which Paul de Man tried to establish in a lecture of 1983, should not lead us to conclude, however, that the Jewish reception of Schiller represented totalitarianism in disguise. Cf. Paul de Man, "Kant and Schiller," Lecture delivered at Cornell University, March 3, 1983, reprinted in Paul de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology*, ed. Andrzej Warminski (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 129–62, esp. 154.

145. Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (Second Letter), 26.

146. Ibid. (First Letter), 24; and ibid. (Ninth Letter), 52.

147. Ibid. (Second Letter), 27.

148. Ibid. (Twenty-Seventh Letter), 138.

149. Cf. P. Almoni, "Friedrich Schiller in der neuhebräischen Literatur. Zu seinem hundertsten Todestage," *Die Welt* 9, no. 19 (May 12, 1905): 14.

150. Herzl, *Tagebücher I*, 53.

151. Ibid., 37.

152. Buber, "Von jüdischer Kunst," *JB* I, 66.

153. Gadamer, "Ästhetik und Hermeneutik," 8.

154. Cf. Hermann Cohen, "Über den ästhetischen Wert unsrer religiösen Bildung," *Jüdische Schriften* I, 218–19, 235. For a discussion of Cohen's aesthetics in *Religion of Reason*, see Gert Mattenklott, "Zur ästhetischen Dimension der 'Religion der Vernunft,'" in *Religion der Vernunft*, ed. Holzhey 117–27.

155. Cohen, "Über den ästhetischen Wert unsrer religiösen Bildung," 236.

156. Hence, Cohen differentiates between allegory in Christian art and the prophetic primal images (*prophetische Urbilder*). Ibid., 217.

157. Ibid., 222.

158. Cf. Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, § 23 (A 74–76): “Das Schöne der Natur betrifft die Form des Gegenstandes, die in der Begrenzung steht; das Erhabene ist dagegen auch an einem formlosen Gegenstande zu finden, sofern *Unbegrenztheit* an ihm, oder auch dessen Veranlassung vorgestellt und doch Totalität derselben hinzugedacht wird.”

159. Cohen, “Über den ästhetischen Wert unsrer religiösen Bildung,” 219.

160. Hermann Cohen, “Der Stil der Propheten,” *Jüdische Schriften I*, 265.

161. Cohen, “Über den ästhetischen Wert unsrer religiösen Bildung,” 219.

162. Cf. Hermann Cohen, “Der Stil, der Propheten,” 277.

163. Ibid., 269.

164. Ibid., 270.

165. Cohen, “Über den ästhetischen Wert unsrer religiösen Bildung,” 219.

166. Friedrich Schelling, “Verhältnis der bildenden Künste zu der Natur,” in *Schellings Werke, Auswahl in drei Bänden*, Vol. 3, ed. Otto Weiß (Leipzig, Germany: Fritz Eckardt Verlag, 1907), 415. On the broader Jewish reception of Michelangelo, see Asher Biemann, “The Satyr as Prophet: Notes on the ‘Jewish’ Michelangelo,” *Images* 1, no. 2 (2008): in press.

167. Hermann Cohen, “Zur Jahrhundertfeier unseres Graetz,” in *Jüdische Schriften II*, 448.

168. Ibid., 452.

169. Hermann Cohen, “Deutschum und Judentum,” *Jüdische Schriften II*, 249.

170. Cohen, “Über den ästhetischen Wert unsrer religiösen Bildung,” 220. See also Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, § 60 (A 262–63).

171. Cohen, “Über den ästhetischen Wert unsrer religiösen Bildung,” 220: “Da gibt es keine Fremden mehr.”

172. Hence Cohen explains how the prophets, taking the “weak” as their ideal (*Vorbild*), came to view “die Sünde als das erste Urbild vom Menschen.” Cf. Cohen, “Das soziale Ideal bei Platon und den Propheten,” *Jüdische Schriften I*, 312.

173. Cf. Cohen, “Der Stil der Propheten,” 283. For the prophetic history of the future, see idem, “Das soziale Ideal bei Platon und den Propheten,” 324–26 and 328: “Nur die Entwicklung und nur die Zukunft befestigt das Dasein der Menschen.”

174. Franz Rosenzweig, “Jüdische Geschichte im Rahmen der Weltgeschichte,” GS 3, 548. Here I must point to Georg Simmel’s essay “Michelangelo” that seems to reflect similar sentiments. Michelangelo, according to Simmel aspired to the very realm of “Unendlichkeiten.” Cf. Simmel, “Michelangelo,” 178. Martin Buber, in an essay of 1922, praises Michelangelo as the artist who captured the “eternal act of creation”: “Ihn meint die Kunst, wenn sie, urselten, an das Geheimnis des Anfangs röhrt: aus der Selbsterfahrung der ewigen Schöpfung stammt die Bewegung des Schöpfergottes auf der der Decke der Sistina.” Buber, “Alfred Mombert,” idem, *Kampf um Israel*, 204.

175. Franz Rosenzweig, “Einleitung in die Akademieausgabe der Jüdischen Schriften Hermann Cohens,” *GS* 3, 204.

176. Franz Rosenzweig, “Anleitung zum jüdischen Denken,” *GS* 3, 611. A similar sentiment—by no means uncommon in Jewish aesthetics at that time—we find for instance in Felix Weltsch: “[E]s liegt ziemlich auf der Hand, die Juden zu den Expressionisten im weitesten Sinne zu rechnen—etwa im Gegensatz zu den Griechen, welche die Formkünstler par excellence waren. Nicht maßvoll, nicht edel, nicht zierlich ist die jüdische Kunst, wo man ihr spezifisch begegnet, sondern bewegt, gewagt, stark, zum Äußersten strebend, exzentrisch, phantastisch.” Felix Weltsch, “Jüdische Kunst,” in *Zionismus als Weltanschauung*, ed. Max Brod and Felix Weltsch (Mährisch-Ostrau, Czech Republic: R. Färber, 1925), 92. We should note in passing that, as Allan Megill points out, Heidegger expressed great affinity to German expressionism, (Cf. Megill, *Prophets of Extremity*, 116), which is yet another incident of the endless malleability of aesthetic ideologies. The connection between expressionism and fascism became the subject of Ernst Bloch’s 1938 reply to Georg Lukács’s scathing assessment of expressionist activism, in particular the *Ziel* circle, as an extension of German imperialism. Defending the expressionism of *Der Blaue Reiter*, and vehemently distinguishing it from the “beautiful beast” of Nazism, Bloch writes: “For all the pleasure the Expressionists took in ‘barbaric art’, their ultimate goal was humane; their themes were almost exclusively human expressions of the incognito, the mystery of man.” Ernst Bloch, “Discussing Expressionism,” reprinted in Fredric Jameson, ed., *Aesthetics and Politics* (London, UK: NLB, 1977), 24. For an extensive discussion of the expressionist underpinnings of Jewish aesthetics, see Zachary Braiterman, *The Shape of Revelation: Aesthetics and Modern Jewish Thought* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007). The timing of its publication did not allow me, unfortunately, to work Braiterman’s remarkable book into the present manuscript.

177. Cf. Franz Rosenzweig, “Anleitung zum jüdischen Denken,” *GS* 3, 611. Here, as in Cohen, we find a position of art as a form of “revolution” that strikingly anticipates Herbert Marcuse’s aesthetics: “Permanenter ästhetischer Umsturz,” writes Marcuse in 1972, “—das ist die Aufgabe der Kunst.” Marcuse, *Konterrevolution und Revolte* (Schriften 9), (Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1987), 105. In another place, Marcuse calls on the dramatic arts: “Und es muß schockieren, durch Grausamkeit schockieren und das selbstzufriedene Bewußtsein und Unbewußte zertrümmern.” Ibid., 110. On Marcuse’s aesthetics, see Heinz Paetzold, *Neomarxistische Aesthetik II: Adorno-Marcuse* (Düsseldorf, Germany: Pädagogischer Verlag Schwann, 1974), 102–31. Incidentally, Terry Eagleton, who discusses Schiller’s aesthetics at length, draws a direct line from Schiller to Marcuse, concluding that “[t]he test of a truly radical aesthetics will be its ability to operate as a social critique without simultaneously providing the grounds of political ratification.” Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1995), 119. Nicholas Wolterstorff, on the other hand, makes great

efforts to reclaim this aesthetics and view of the “artist as responsible servant” for Christianity: “And so we find in Marcuse nothing less than a surrogate for the Christian gospel of redemption and liberation, and for the Savior who is Jesus Christ.” Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Art in Action: Toward a Christian Aesthetic* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1980), 154. Though not uncritical of Marcuse’s position, Wolterstorff still finds the theme of moral responsibility in his aesthetics: “The autonomy of art contains the categorical imperative: ‘things must change.’” Ibid., 153 (The quote is from Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, [Boston, MA: Beacon, 1978], 13). To recruit the artwork, then, for the horizon of (religious) morality is no unusual strategy for Jewish, Christian, or neo-Marxist thinkers.

178. Rosenzweig, “Anleitung zum jüdischen Denken,” 612. Rosenzweig speaks of Verbergung (Letherausch), Verstellung (Maskenspiel), and Abwendung (Götzendienst), all three of which are tantamount to “Lüge.”

179. Rosenzweig, *Stern*, 419 (*Star*, 376): “Auch die Kunst überwindet nur, indem sie das Leiden gestaltet, nicht indem sie es verneint.” On this theme, see also Robert Gibbs, *Correlations in Rosenzweig and Levinas* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), esp. 133–34.

180. Rosenzweig, *Stern*, 270.

181. Ibid., 419.

182. Rosenzweig, “Anleitung zum jüdischen Denken,” 615.

183. Rosenzweig, “Jüdische Geschichte im Rahmen der Weltgeschichte,” 547.

184. Ibid., 548.

185. Kerrigan and Braden, *The Idea of the Renaissance*, xi.

186. Hence, Frank Kermode, following Barzun, speaks of “schismatic modernism” in the sense of a “clean break” and “new start,” as opposed to “traditionalist modernism,” which “implies or at any rate permits a serious relationship with the past.” Cf. Kermode, *Continuities*, 27.

187. Emmanuel Levinas, *Humanism of the Other*, 54.

188. Thus, Anthony Giddens, who incidentally hesitates to acknowledge modernity’s end, observing instead its increasing radicalization, notes that one aspect of modernity is its globalization where “there are no ‘others.’” Cf. Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 175.

189. Kant defined conscience as “a state of consciousness which in itself is duty (für sich selbst Pflicht ist).” Cf. *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft*, 287. It represents, in fact, the “moral faculty of judgment, passing judgment onto itself (die sich selbst richtende moralische Urteilskraft),” and as such an infinite “appraisal of actions,” calling the individual “to witness for or against himself” at any moment (Cf. ibid., 287–89). It is this ever-unfinished turning, or self-revision, of the moral faculty of judgment and its appraisal of actions that renaissances re-enact in the collective consciousness between future and past.

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