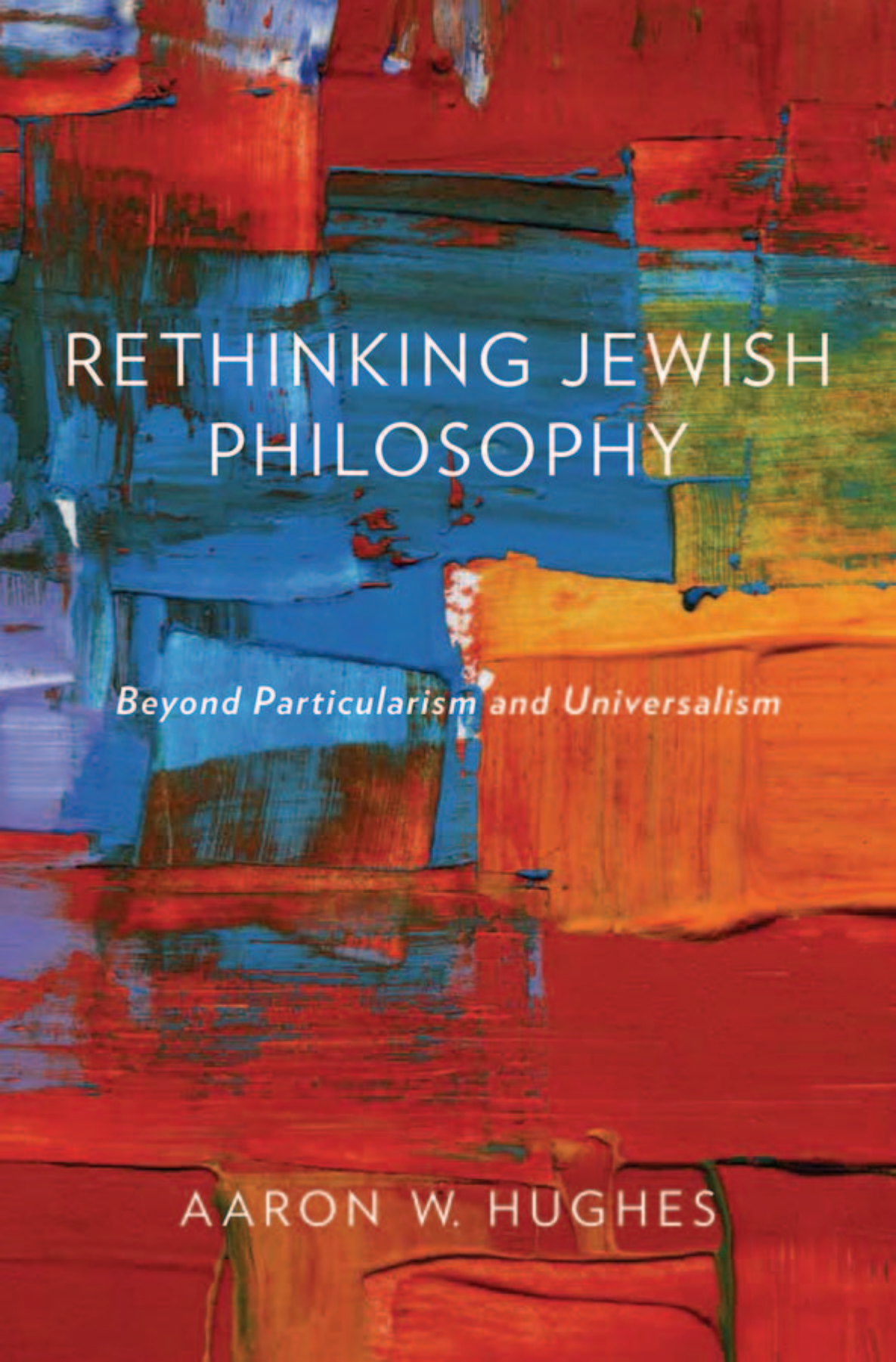
RETHINKING JEWISH PHILOSOPHY
Beyond Particularism and Universalism
AARON W. HUGHES

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Preface

Every preface is in reverse [Toute preface est à l'envers]. It presents itself the right way round, as is required, but in its construction, it proceeds in reverse; it is developed ("processed"), as one says of photography and its negatives, from its end or supposed purpose: a certain conception of its architectural "project."[1]

LIKE MANY OTHERS in my field, I have spent most of my life reading Jewish philosophers as shining exemplars of the universalizing tendencies within Judaism. Juxtaposed against the forces of obscurantism, so the master narrative of Jewish philosophy goes, these individuals articulated a Judaism that was as rational and inclusive as it was open to the cosmopolitan trends of the civilizations in which Jews historically found themselves. This narrative has performed a great deal of intellectual work as Jewish thinkers in the modern period have used it—and indeed continue to use it—in order to show that Judaism, as a religion not unlike others, can be integrated within and respond to the demands of the modern nation-state.[2]

Jewish philosophy, in other words, has been used to normalize Judaism, to demonstrate the tradition at its most rational. Jewish philosophy—in its many guises and forms—has been perceived to have taken the particular elements of Judaism and subsequently translated and constructed them into universal terms in ways that show potential filiations between a Judaism deemed authentic and an external standard imagined as universally binding. Yet the potential counterpoints between the particular and the universal risk masking the instability of both. Each requires the other for its determinacy, just as each is simultaneously undermined by the indeterminacy of its opposite. This alterity, the subject

matter of this study, needs to be interrogated and explored rather than assumed and passed over in silence.

What if the grand narrative of Jewish philosophy recounted above is little more than a myth? What if this reading of rationalism and universalism emerges from received opinion that has sought to expurgate the unsavory and emphasize the benevolent? Jewish philosophy must argue from—and indeed apologize for—the ground of the particular. If it did not, it would cease to be something we have been comfortable calling "Jewish philosophy." However, and this is the paradox, how can philosophy be philosophy if it is particular and apologetic? Jewish philosophy may well prove to be a category error in which a property is ascribed to something that could not possibly have that property. Jewish philosophy, I submit, needs to be rethought, if not actually renamed.

Appeals to the universal risk the effacement of the particular, just as appeals to the particular risk the reification of the idiosyncratic. The result is that Jewish philosophy has proved largely inflexible and rigid in its ability to negotiate these pitfalls. It is inherently conservative and apologetic. Despite the best intentions—offered by the likes of Maimonides, Franz Rosenzweig, and Emmanuel Levinas—configuring Jewish philosophy becomes an imaginary act by which the universal is necessarily envisioned through the semblance of the particular. Unlike the thinkers examined in this study, I am largely informed by the postmodern critique of foundationalism that avoids an essential truth just as it eschews a transcendent or metaphysical absolute. My take on the task, aims, and ends of something problematically referred to as "Jewish philosophy" separates me from many others who engage in this activity.[3] Philosophy, on my reading, cannot provide the means whereby individuals, to invoke Richard Rorty, "step outside" philosophy and critique it neutrally,[4] but becomes a form of rhetoric in the service of manufacturing truth claims.

But if Jewish philosophy may well prove to be impossible, this does not mean that Jewish theology, whether constructive or not, is equally impossible. Indeed, thinking from within the tradition as opposed to thinking about the tradition is certainly to be desired in the contemporary world,[5] in which Jews confront the onslaught of the secular forces of modernity and the continued presence of anti-Semitism.[6] This is another way of saying that I want this study to be more than just destructive. Although the first chapters of the study endeavor to expose the indeterminacy of the name and activity of something we have been habituated to call Jewish

philosophy, weaving through the chapters and culminating in the final one is the prospect for possibility, the realization that there exists some form of reconciliation between certain forms of Judaism and certain species of rationalism. This reconciliation, this thinking anew, represents the rethinking of this study's title.

Although the term "Jewish philosophy" is problematic, I opt to retain it (without the use of quotations) for the sake of convenience, even though I hope that by the end of this study, the term will be radically rethought and recast. Part of the problem, as we shall see in the chapters that follow, lies in determining what, precisely, is the goal of Jewish philosophy: Is it to think Jewishly about philosophy? Or is it to think philosophically about Judaism? Is it to address concerns for living Jews? Or is it to show how Jewish philosophy can speak to philosophy, whether faith based or not? These issues are certainly not easy to sort out, yet they ultimately must be. The result is what I like to call, for lack of a better term, a Jewish metaphilosophy. Indeed, the study that follows may well be as much an exercise in Jewish metaphilosophy as it is in Jewish philosophy. That is, how does Jewish philosophy—both in the past and in the present—construct its narrative: for whom, for what purposes, and with what consequences?

As with much of my recent work on Jewish philosophy, I seek to avoid the reification of temporality. I find customary adjectives appended to Jewish philosophy such as "medieval," "early modern," or "modern" both artificial and unhelpful. Instead of such periodization, I prefer to put so-called medievals and so-called moderns in living conversation with one another. This does not necessarily involve ignoring historical and cultural contexts, but it does have the distinct advantage of freeing such individuals from the traps of historicism that have heretofore confined them.

In the pages that follow, I suggest that the nature of Jewish philosophy—like that of any other religious or ethnic-based philosophy—is ultimately grounded in impossibility. It sets its sights on reconciling the irreconcilable and on reclaiming that which cannot be reclaimed because it never actually existed. This dialectic has certainly given rise to some very creative and original productions, as we see in the work of Philo, Maimonides, Hasdai Crescas, Rosenzweig, and others. In what follows, these individuals become my conversation partners, and their works form the intellectual prime matter from which I construct my own response to their responses. This does not mean that I consider my main job to be an

amanuensis, reproducing their works descriptively or even faithfully. On the contrary, I invoke and use their philosophical and other works simultaneously as primary and secondary sources. Far from writing their hagiographies, I struggle with them and learn from them; but, at the same time, I am not afraid to take them to task whenever or wherever I can. My criticisms are in no way intended to put an end to Jewish philosophizing, but rather to provide an alternative venue to think about matters that previous Jewish philosophers did not address because they largely took them for granted.

My goal in this study is to arrive at a thinking that does not reify either Judaism or philosophy as stable or authentic. Judaism—like philosophy—cannot become the privileged cultural resource or position, because once this happens, the result is violence, whether physical or metaphysical. To stabilize the ontologies of Judaism or philosophy—the particular and the universal—is to overlook how they define each other and, ultimately, how each undermines the perceived determinacy of the other. My hope, in other words, is to rethink Jewish philosophy using a language that avoids stability, hegemony, and occupation.

Structure

Following my introductory comments, chapter 1, "Impossibilities," explores the paradox of Jewish philosophy. Although it is important not to make the Jewish philosophical tradition into a monolith, this chapter seeks to articulate a series of overarching concerns that characterize its many historical moods and motivations. Primary in all of these iterations is the desire to defend Judaism and its tenets from a variety of internal and external discontents. These discontents threaten the fragile systems that Jewish philosophers largely created in their own image and that they subsequently sought to impose as normative on others. Within their discourses, the intersection of "Judaism" and "philosophy"—the constituent elements that skirmish with one another in the very construct "Jewish philosophy"—often means that the latter is used to universalize certain trajectories of the former, and that the former somehow particularizes certain elements of the latter. The central term in both of these constructions, however, is the adjective "certain." The universalization of the particular and the particularization of the universal represent the paradox of Jewish philosophy. They would also seem to signal both its impossibility and its absurdity.

Following this, chapter 2, "Irreconcilability," provides an analysis of the ambiguous, if not impossible, intersection of the universal and the particular. That which is accessible to all, irrespective of ethnicity or religion, ultimately must confront that which is perceived to make Judaism unique (e.g., concepts such as chosenness and the Law). Too often, however, we tend to accept without question the separation of these two categories and their epistemological groupings. As a result, there is a tendency to reinscribe them with a stability that both masks their fragility and takes for granted their distinction as two polarized identities. There is a tendency, in other words, to naturalize and divest the two of their distinct and anachronistic possibilities by creating hermetically distinct histories for them. This chapter examines this intersection and some of its consequences. How, for instance, does the particular become the particular? How is the universal inscribed within the polarized identity of the particular? The opposition between these two categories, whether constructed or natural, has and continues to produce instability as each category maintains its distance and alterity from the other. Subsequent markers—political, cultural, religious, intellectual—are marshaled to maintain this distance, now perceived to be one of ontological difference. Philosophers examined in this chapter include Moses Mendelssohn, Rosenzweig, Hermann Cohen, and Levinas.

Chapter 3, "Kaddish," begins the process of remembering a particular way of engaging in Jewish philosophy with an eye toward future possibility. Jewish philosophy, like any religious-based philosophy, does not begin in wonder, but rather in self-defense. The task of such a defense must, by necessity, be constructed on the wobbly ground of privilege and denial. Upon such a shaky foundation, Jewish philosophy sets itself up as the arbiter of the good, the true, and the beautiful. That which fits and upholds this reading is emphasized, and that which embarrasses or contradicts can be neatly excised. The cost of such an enterprise is the production of *a* particular type of Judaism in which we see reflected a particular set of concerns and wills to power that seek to enforce it. To explore this activity in greater detail, chapter 3 focuses on the artificiality of the terms and categories bequeathed to us by our nineteenth-century forebears, classifications that are still largely in use today. Modern classificatory rubrics such as Kalamic, Platonic, Neoplatonic, Aristotelian, and Averroian, all incidentally non-Jewish categories derived from the study of general philosophy and what was once called Oriental studies, were used to show a set of filiations between Jewish and non-Jewish thought. A basic narrative was

subsequently imagined and constructed: Jews began to engage in rational theology (*kalām*) in the eighth and ninth centuries, owing to contact with Muslims; this gave way to more philosophical, if largely unoriginal and potentially pantheistic, Neoplatonism in al-Andalus, followed by the importation of Aristotelianism into Judaism by Maimonides after an initial attempt by Ibn Daud. Maimonides's towering synthesis subsequently gave way to a series of criticisms (the so-called Maimonidean Controversies) from which he was defended by a series of epigones.

The chapter concludes by examining Solomon ibn Gabirol and Judah Abravanel, two outliers to the fragility inherent to something problematically referred to as the canon of Jewish philosophy. As long as these individuals were believed to be either non-Jews (in the case of Ibn Gabirol) or apostates (in the case of Abravanel), they were excluded from the canon, based on the belief that they had little or nothing to contribute to it. Once it became clear, however, that they were "ethnically" Jewish or indeed had not converted out of the tradition, then they could easily be inserted into the canon even though there is nothing "Jewish" about their major works. The negative could now be spun as a positive, since their very lack of reference to Jewish sources could show how they resisted the "particularist" urge and instead opted to be "universalists."

Chapter 4, "Authoritarianism," uses as its case study the figure of Maimonides, and his writings as a prism through which to re-imagine the creation of a canon of medieval Jewish philosophy in the nineteenth century. The quest to create a good, rational, and liberal medieval Jew has created an unstable terrain upon which stands the edifice of Jewish philosophy. This chapter seeks to deconstruct our inherited narrative of the history of medieval Jewish philosophy by retelling it from a different perspective. The medieval Jewish philosophers, while claiming rationalism as their gold standard, produced a totalitarian version of Judaism, one predicated on what they considered to be an authentic and pristine past.

Chapter 5, "Rosenzweig's Patient," presents Rosenzweig as a second case study and focuses on his magnum opus, *The Star of Redemption*. Rosenzweig, one of the most important modern Jewish thinkers, presents a system of particularism. Critical of his predecessors, Rosenzweig argues that the "All" is largely unknowable except through the existence of the individual within its midst. In this system, difference is crucial because it is what enables the individual to grasp this "All" in his or her idiosyncratic particularity. Previous systems of thought—from medieval

Aristotelianism to German idealism—smoothed over such particularity and the difference in which it was grounded by positing abstract universal forms. But Rosenzweig locates in the individual's finitude the ability to grasp the "All" by means of the relationships he or she enters into with others.

Rosenzweig's *Star* is arguably the greatest work of modern Jewish thought. However, I wish to argue that his desire to establish the superiority of Judaism and those who practice it sets up a highly problematic (and faulty) comparison that is powered by a dubious juxtaposition between an essentialized "eternal people" and an equally essentialized "peoples of the world." An early twentieth-century philosophical system that is grounded in racial and religious superiority, and that seeks rejuvenation based on an acknowledgment of shared ancestry, culture, and blood should immediately alert us to its implicit and explicit connection to fascism. For, ultimately, Rosenzweig's philosophy of Judaism is one that is predicated on Jewish difference and, as such, is highly exclusive.

Chapter 6, "Beyond," focuses on the present moment and the ways in which Jewish philosophy must confront diversity in its midst. It suggests that the goal of Jewish philosophy should not be to create an authentic or veritable Judaism, but to show a complex and contradictory Judaism, one that often speaks with many voices to any given subject. Rather than proceed along the normative lines of a particular/universal binary, this chapter attempts to provide an alternative to it. But what might this alternative look like? Will it even be recognizable as Jewish philosophy? Can the universal take on the particular in a manner that avoids the violence of colonialism, and is it possible for the particular to confront the universal without becoming drawn to the parochialism of tribalism?

* * * *

This study, in short, attempts to rethink the project of Jewish philosophy by revisiting its past. It concludes that if there is to be a Jewish philosophy in the present and future, it must acknowledge its location "in-between" particularism and universalism. This is certainly not to reify "in-betweenness" as somehow authentically Jewish. Rather, it is to acknowledge how the discourses of Jewish philosophy have historically contributed to—and, indeed, continue to contribute to—the understanding of something not unproblematically labeled as "Jewish peoplehood" and how this, in turn, casts light on the construction of the non-Jewish

other. Rather than maintain that there can be an authentic Jewish thinking, I instead look at how the myth of authenticity functions in Jewish thought. Such a myth does this by positing a pristine or originary past that is always just out of reach. Philosophy now becomes the path to arrive at pre-philosophy, that which can be signified as authentically Jewish. In its quest for this originary Judaism, Jewish philosophy—in both the past and the contemporary period—both imagines and maintains the boundaries between Judaism and non-Judaism. My goal, on the contrary, is to show how Jewish philosophy, once rethought, can begin the process of questioning such constructions and the boundaries that follow in their wake.

To do this, the work that follows provides a literary, rhetorical, and philosophical *étude* on the nature, function, and ends of Jewish philosophy with an eye toward its future (re)orientation.

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I dedicate this volume to Elliot R. Wolfson to mark fifteen years of inspiration, conversation, and friendship.

Rethinking Jewish Philosophy

Introduction

Occupation

IT IS CUSTOMARY to begin studies devoted to the topic of Jewish philosophy by defining what exactly this term, concept, or even discipline is.[1] Unless done so in a pejorative sense, we tend not to speak of Jewish mathematics, Jewish physics, or Jewish sociology. All the nouns in these compounds imply a discipline that, for the most part, is agreed upon by all who engage in it; yet, when the particularist adjective "Jewish" is added, the result is nonsense. Can one perform mathematics, physics, or sociology in a Jewish way? One would certainly think not. Even if a particular mathematician happened to be ethnically or religiously Jewish, he or she would ostensibly engage in the same activity as his or her non-Jewish colleague. If we are not comfortable with coupling particularist adjectives and universally recognized disciplines, why do we insist on thinking that it is okay to refer to something as "Jewish philosophy"? Can one philosophize from a Jewish perspective? Does Judaism provide some sort of insight into philosophy that those who are not Jewish lack? Implicit in the term, not surprisingly, is a great paradox. Is not thinking just thinking, regardless of the subject who thinks?[2]

At the heart of Jewish philosophy is fracture and dislocation. If we assume for the moment that Jewish philosophy exists, it would seem to refer to some sort of nondenominational or nonnational intellectual activity carried out by those who call themselves Jews. As philosophy, this activity makes claims to universal validity, but as an activity by a specific group of people, it must of necessity be inherently particularistic. Yet how does one square this intersection of the universal and the particular? Often it is customary to speak, in Hegelian terms, of the universalization of the particular or the particularization of the universal. Or, one might use Levinasian terms and proclaim that the particular functions as

a representative of the universal to the very universal that it claims to be. In the study that follows, I instead opt for a Derridean-inspired reading of these two terms, one that argues that meaning does not arise out of fixed differences, but is produced and performed in ways that are always partial and provisional through *différance*, in which differential meanings are endlessly deferred.

Jewish Philosophy or the History of Jewish Philosophy?

More than in other fields of philosophy, history has had a central place in the study of Jewish philosophy, to the point that philosophical inquiry has at times been subordinated to the project of establishing historical context or lines of historical development.[3] Jewish philosophy, as a result, tends to be studied and approached historically (from Saadya Gaon to Abravanel in the medieval period and from Mendelssohn to Levinas in the modern period). This means that the manner in which we are habituated to think about Jewish philosophy is historical. The result is that such individuals are situated historically and their arguments are largely taken for granted. We write biographies that border on hagiographies contextualizing Jewish philosophers, but we rarely grapple with the issue of whether the texts that they produced should ever have been regarded as successful arguments.[4]

However, even if we attempt to avoid subordinating philosophical research to historicist concerns, we nevertheless find ourselves paradoxically using history—be it the historical record, historical texts, or previous histories of Jewish philosophy—to get beyond history.[5] The use or abuse of history, however, has major ideological implications. Although the nineteenth century witnessed a preoccupation with history that succeeded in wedding Judaism to its perceived material manifestations, the attempt to break with historicization launched in the early twentieth century may be seen as an attempt to resuscitate an internal view of Judaism. History, in other words, forms the backdrop either against which Judaism can be situated or from which it can be removed.

These debates, however, have even more practical—or, at least, taxonomical—ramifications. If we engage in anything other than the history of Jewish philosophy, the assumption is that we cease to work in the area of Jewish philosophy at all and instead engage in Jewish theology, an equally murky term. Jewish philosophy, it is assumed, takes place in history and largely examines dead thinkers. It involves sifting through

their ideas, contextualizing them, and showing their contribution to (non-Jewish) philosophy. This, however, is not really what we are accustomed—at least non-Jewishly—to think of as philosophy, but, as I just argued, is something that borders on historicism at best and necrophilia at worst.[6]

The Perceived Tasks of Jewish Philosophy

It should come as no surprise to learn that there are perhaps as many different understandings of the task and goals of Jewish philosophy as there are individuals who engage in it. For some, it represents the unrelentless quest for "truth." Although this "truth" itself may not be particularized, for such individuals the use of the adjective "Jewish"—as a way to get at it—most decidedly is.[7] The Bible, the Mishnah, the Talmud, and related texts and genres, on this reading, become particular instantiations of more universal and verifiable claims provided by the totalizing gaze of philosophy. The problem, of course, is that these texts are not philosophical *on the surface*; they must, on the contrary, be interpreted, even misread, to bring their so-called rationalist insights to light. Yet, others eschew the non-Jewishness of the term philosophy and instead envisage themselves as working in a decidedly Jewish key for articulating or clarifying particular issues that have direct bearing on Jewish life and existence.[8] Between these two orientations, there exist many other related approaches to the topic of Jewish philosophy, which can and have included ethics,[9] gender studies,[10] multiculturalism,[11] and postmodernism.[12]

Despite their differences in both theory and method, what these approaches have in common is that they all represent the complex intersection between something that is not unproblematically signified as "Judaism" and a set of non-Jewish grids or interpretive lenses that are used to bring it into existence. Framed somewhat differently, Jewish philosophy—whatever it is, however it is defined, or whether it is even possible—represents the collision of particularistic demands and universal concerns. The *universal*, which, in theory, is open and accessible to all regardless of race, color, creed, or gender confronts the *particular*, which represents the sole concern of a specific group that, by nature or definition, is insular and specific minded.[13] This confrontation is certainly not unique to Jewish philosophy, I would argue, but is endemic to Judaism's very existence, in large part owing to its traditional diasporic existence.

Because it is concerned with a particular people, the Jews, and with how to frame their traditions in a universal light that is believed to conform to

the dictates of reason, Jewish philosophy can never be about pure thinking, if indeed there ever can be such a phenomenon. Rather, Jewish philosophy always seems to have had and, for the most part, continues to have rather specific and perhaps even practical concerns in mind. This focus on the practical usually translates into the notion that Judaism—at least the Judaism that Jewish philosophy seeks to manufacture—is comprehensible to non-Jews, and it ensures—at least in our contemporary context—that Judaism has a seat at the table, as it were, when it comes to pressing concerns in the realms of ethics and bioethics.

Jewish philosophy, as should already be apparent, is not a disinterested subject matter. It is, on the contrary, heavily invested in matters of Jewish peoplehood and in articulating its aims and objectives in order to ensure the health and subsequent continuity of this people. Future and past, therefore, become heavily invested in each other, and each is refracted in the other's gaze. The future is ideally shaped in the past's image just as the past is paradoxically brought into existence by a set of concerns that are anything but historical. This dialectic—past as future, future as past—makes little room for the present, something that is often identified as a problem. One of the tasks of Jewish philosophy is to mediate between these temporal coordinates by creating a retrievable, pristine past that can be upheld as the criteria by which to mark authentic Jewish existence and thinking. Framed somewhat differently, it is an attempt to use philosophy to get at pre-philosophy, a self-perceived and self-constructed originary form of Jewishness.

What we are accustomed to calling "Jewish philosophy" is, in many ways, an oxymoron since it does not engage in truth independent of religious claims. If philosophy represents the critical and systematic approach to ascertain the truth of a proposition based on rational argumentation, theology is the systematic and rational study of religion and the articulation of the nature of religious truths. The difference between theology and philosophy resides in their object of study. If the latter has "truth," however we may define this term, as its primary object of focus, the former is concerned with ascertaining religious dogma and belief. "To be a theologian," writes David R. Blumenthal, "is also to *speak of the ought*."[14] He elaborates that

> it is not enough to explain, to explicate, and to exegete. It is to make a prior commitment to formulating a vision and to preaching that vision as an ideal toward which humanity should, indeed, must

> strive. Theology is not a value-free discipline; it is, rather, a value-laden discipline and it should be so consciously, unashamedly.[15]

If philosophy is about what *is*, to use Blumenthal's language, then theology is about what *ought* to be. This useful distinction would, at first blush, seem to put these two systems, these two worldviews, at cross-purposes with each other. They would seem to be, in other words, mutually exclusive endeavors. Indeed, using this criteria, it might well be better to label Jewish philosophy as "Jewish theology" since it is unwilling to undo the major claims of Judaism (e.g., covenant, chosenness, revelation), even if it may occasionally and creatively redefine such claims.[16] So, although medieval Jewish thinkers may well gravitate toward the systematic thought of Aristotle and his Arab interpreters, and although modern Jewish thinkers may be attracted to the thought of Kant and Heidegger, the ideas of such non-Jewish thinkers are always applied to Jewish ideas and values. Hermeneutics thus becomes the primary activity that seeks to smooth over the tensions or impossibilities when the so-called Jewish and the so-called non-Jewish intersect.

If we retain the name "Jewish philosophy" for no other reason than force of habit, we must nevertheless realize that the juxtaposition of its two constituent terms create both instability and impossibility. One way to overcome this impossibility is to argue that philosophy represents a method rather than a worldview that demands total commitment. Thus, David Novak writes that

> if philosophy is understood as method, then, I believe it is not difficult to refute charges that it is either arrogant, un-Jewish, or both. As a method of inquiry, rather than a competing source of wisdom, it at all times respects the independent integrity of the object of its concerns.[17]

If philosophy is simply a method, it should be easily applicable to Judaism, in which case it could produce a Judaism in a philosophical register. But the issue might well be more complicated than this—as I hope should be apparent already—because the translation of the particular into a universal method or framework necessarily implies the distortion of both. Neither is left unscarred by the encounter. For Novak, as for many others, Judaism admits of philosophical reflection. This I certainly do not doubt. However, it is quite another matter to say that Judaism can be made to

conform to philosophy, or philosophy to Judaism. Indeed, it is perhaps possible to argue, following Jacques Derrida, that Judaism functions as a disruption that causes a tear in the tradition of Western philosophy.[18] Juxtaposed against Novak's confidence in the possibility of philosophical reflection, Derrida sees an impossibility, a reminder of the inherent homelessness and indeterminacy of the human condition.[19]

Yet another attempt to reconcile philosophy and Judaism comes by way of Levinas and his notion of "universalist singularity." This concept is based on the principle that the particularity of the Jewish people functions as a universal model or representative of ethics.[20] The particular destiny of the Jewish people provides the universal ground for all humanity. "To be with the nations," he writes, "is also to be for the nations [*être avec les nations, c'est aussi être pour-les-nations*]."[21] The paradox of Israel, according to him, is that it consists of an exceptional message that is nonetheless addressed to all. This reciprocity, but ultimate irreconcilability, between the universal and the particular is what makes Judaism and philosophy compatible. In his interview with Françoise Armengaud, he asks,

> Does the distinction between Judaism and philosophical reflection immediately emerge as a major conflict [*comme un conflit majeur*]? We may start out . . . in a world in which Judaism was lived, and in a very natural way [*d'une manière très naturelle*]: not at all, or not only, in what is called piety or rigorous ritualism, but above all with the sense that belonging to humanity means belonging to an order of supreme responsibility [*un ordre de supreme responsabilité*]. An order in which non-Jewish books also are perceived as being concerned with the meaning of life—which is contiguous with the meaning of human existence and already, perhaps, with the meaning of being. . . . Philosophy speaks of it also, but in another language, that always strives to be explicit, adjusting its terms to one another and formulating problems where there are breaks in the coherence. But has the handing down of the Scriptures ever taken place without transmission through the language of interpretation, which is already disengaged from the verses that sustain it, always to be found in the gaps in the utterances?[22]

In this passage, Levinas intimates that the interpretive principles underlying Jewish texts on the one hand and philosophy on the other, while taking place in different idioms and registers, may not be that different

after all. He continues: "I do not commit the error of denying the radical difference in spirit between the Scriptures and philosophy, . . . [however] I am now ready to speak of their *essential* connection in human civilization altogether, which is measured or hoped for as peace among men."[23] Philosophy and Judaism, on this reading, can and must be synthesized, as seen, for example, in Levinas's Talmudic readings.

Although my own assessment is ultimately closer to that of Derrida, it still worth noting that the latter's assessment of Judaism is more theoretical than practical, and more metaphorical than actual. Yet his concern is nonetheless real, as we shall see in the following chapter, based as it is on the "between," an imaginal space that is logically prior to philosophy and monotheism—which are customarily, if problematically, referred to as Athens and Jerusalem. Despite my agreement with Derrida, it is still necessary to explore the filiations—historical, cultural, intellectual, and religious—between Judaism and philosophy.

Whether in its medieval or modern guise, Jewish philosophy upholds the stated and received truths of Judaism, albeit often in new and original ways. Although Jewish philosophy may well use non-Jewish ideas to articulate its claims, it never produces a vision that ends in the wholesale abandonment of Judaism.[24] Even though critics of Jewish philosophy might argue that philosophy introduces "foreign" wisdom into the heart of Judaism, those scholars we are in the habit of calling Jewish philosophers do not perceive themselves to be tainting Judaism, but rather to be perfecting it or teasing out its originary meaning.[25] Nevertheless, the fact remains that Jewish philosophy seems not to be engaged in the pursuit of truth for truth's sake, but in the quest for an authentic Judaism that exists nowhere other than in a past and a set of texts that are deemed to be authentic and authoritative.

Occupation

I have decided to use the trope of occupation here as a way both to get at and to articulate some of the fractures inherent to the task of Jewish philosophy. As I am using it here, "occupation" implies a hierarchically asymmetric structure in which one group, term, or category seeks to move toward and somehow gain control of another on its own terms. Located in the hegemonic inequality between categories, social groups, and other differentials, occupation is therefore ultimately about violence of one sort or another. Thus, especially given the present context, occupation is a

highly loaded term, one that is full of overlapping political, ideological, and social meanings. Indeed, this is one of the main reasons I have decided to employ it.

Occupation seems to be a particularly relevant topos for analyzing the manifold ways that the two categories that make up the term "Jewish philosophy" intersect with each other. That is, how do the two terms that sit together awkwardly in the phrase "Jewish philosophy" occupy each other? Philosophy, with its emphasis on reason and universalism, would seem to signify the opposite of "Jewish" (i.e., Judaism), which, at least in theory, is defined by revelation and the particular. In order to sit together, the two words—a particularizing adjective added to a universal noun—that make up the term "Jewish philosophy" must ultimately occupy each other. What does this occupation mean, what does it entail, and what are its ends?

Yet, this project is not just about the semantic skirmishes that take place at or around a particular phrase. Rather, I wish to focus on the repercussions of this skirmish as it makes its way through a set of Jewish philosophical texts from the ninth century until the present. What are the various contexts—textual, historical, social, and ideological—that make Jewish philosophy possible? These are not simply academic pursuits; rather, they call into question the very ability of Jewish philosophy to produce a set of truths about Judaism and Jewish peoplehood. What can Jewish philosophy legitimate or justify? How can it be co-opted in the service of particular ideological agendas? Jewish philosophy, whether willingly or unwilling, has been used to create a discourse of both self and not-self, of inclusion and exclusion. How, for example, does Jewish philosophy both construct and describe the other? How does it define "*the* Jewish people" in relation to this construction? Does the intersection of self and other result in violence, whether of the physical or metaphysical variety?

My interest, then, is in how the discourses of Jewish philosophy contribute to the understanding (or even misunderstanding) of Jewish peoplehood. How, in other words, have the discourses of what are customarily referred to as Jewish philosophy reified and essentialized this category at the expense of the so-called non-Jewish? Can these discourses, as constructive and as theological, speak to contemporary issues of occupation that face Jews and Judaism (e.g., Jewish pluralism or the Palestinian–Israeli conflict)? Or, are these discourses actually part of the problem with the desire, both historically and in the contemporary period, to maintain Jewish difference?

Lurking behind the title *Rethinking Jewish Philosophy* are all these overlapping uses of the term "occupation." I have found this a convenient category of analysis because implicit in it is the fragility, if not impossibility, of the term and the activity. "Jewish philosophy," I wish to reiterate, is not a natural term. It is, on the contrary, one in which two radically different worldviews cohabit and seek to destabilize the other's alterity. This complexity permits, indeed justifies, the many uses to which the term can be put.

Rhetoric of Authenticity

All the thinkers to be examined in this study, like all Jewish thinkers under the influence of rationalism, share the belief that there is something the matter with contemporaneous forms of Judaism. They all long, in one way or another, to return to a pristine past that is unilaterally pre-valued as essential and beneficial, the norm against which contemporary social forms may be judged and found wanting.[26] The essentialism that informs this value judgment—that real or authentic Judaism is "x"—turns on the notion that this imagined and self-constructed past can become a symbol or metaphor for all that is good about Judaism, and thereby be employed as the norm against which all other beliefs and practices can be judged.

For the individuals under discussion here, this pristine past becomes the site of authentic and organic philosophizing, a place that can offer a radical critique of contemporary forms. This rhetoric of authenticity, not surprisingly, is inherently a political claim, one that makes explicit the attempt to retrieve a past constructed as normative. This, in turn, offers a critique of certain social practices and beliefs in the contemporary world based on their lack of, once again, perceived conformity with the ideal type of a past historical era.

Such claims, however, are anything but historical. They are, on the contrary, political judgments grounded firmly in ideology. We see this, for example, in Maimonides's desire to return to a period of pure intellectual contemplation or Rosenzweig's appeal to an authentic past—what he calls an *Altjudentum*—in which Jewish life is in sync with the rhythm of revelation. What these appeals have in common is the assumption that certain aspects of human culture and experience are somehow perceived to be distinct and immune from historical pressures.[27]

The result is that there is a decidedly political, even totalitarian, aspect of Jewish philosophizing. Because the present is found wanting or inauthentic when compared to an invented or imagined pristine past, it

becomes the Jewish philosopher's mandate to assert change. While claiming rationalism as their standard of legitimation, many of these thinkers ultimately produced all-encompassing versions of Judaism that were (and are) largely predicated on what they considered to be an authentic and uncontaminated past. If philosophy has, at least since the time of Plato, possessed a totalitarian dimension threatened by diversity (whether ethnic, religious, or intellectual), we should not be surprised that this dimension remains even when we append to it the adjective "Jewish." In the medieval period, no less than in the contemporary period, philosophy creates an exclusive vision, one that manufactures a particular type of Judaism that gains legitimacy from its proximity and occupation.

Philosophy of Peoplehood

Jewish philosophy, by its nature, deals with the issue of Jewish peoplehood. As a form of constructive theology, as we have just seen, its many discourses focus on uncovering a pristine and authentic Judaism that has the power to rejuvenate contemporary practice. With few important exceptions (most notably Franz Rosenzweig), Jewish philosophy is about making Jews "normal," about using universal, non-Jewish categories to imagine diverse Jewish identities.[28] Yet, in their desire to normalize Jews, the majority of these thinkers simultaneously reify Jews and Judaism, and in the process, they paradoxically make "*the* Jewish" or "*the* Judaic" either taxonomically or ontologically unique.

My concern is with why and how they do this. Or, perhaps phrased somewhat differently, how does Jewish philosophy produce a particular kind of Judaism? Rather than take these productions as immune from contemporaneous historical and political contexts, I prefer to understand them as embedded firmly within such larger contexts. The result is that philosophical understandings of Judaism are, read on one level, not philosophical at all. Instead, they represent ideological constructs that seek to create a philosophy of peoplehood using the languages and categories of the larger culture in which Jews lived. In a recent study, Bruce Lincoln, a scholar of religion, notes that the overwhelming orientation of the discipline of religious studies is the desire to protect its object from critical scrutiny. He writes that what is needed instead is

> a rigorous, uninhibited, unintimidated, theoretically and empirically informed, wide-ranging, irreverent, and appropriately critical

> study. . . . It is thus time to rethink the phenomenon in question—starting with the simple question of what it is that we are accustomed to call "religion," and whether that entity is to be regarded as something divine, something human, or something that somehow mediates the two.[29]

Replacing "religion" with "Jewish philosophy" in this quotation, we could quite easily make the case that the study of Jewish philosophy, both in introductory surveys and in more technical and specialized studies, tends toward both the descriptive and the benign. Since Jewish philosophy represents the universal strain within Judaism, so the master narrative goes, it is worthy of imitation in the multiethnic and multicultural modern world (at least in the diaspora). This serene and irenic ethos pervades much scholarship on the study of Jewish philosophy, whether medieval or modern.

Since Jewish philosophy is about producing a particular version of Judaism, one that defines the particular in universal terms and vice versa, I think it only natural to ask if these discourses, or at least certain of them associated with it, lead naturally into a proto- or atavistic nationalism. Returning to the theme of occupation, it becomes important to ask whether, if, or how Jewish philosophy, writ large, sustains the many meanings of this term. Do certain trajectories of Jewish philosophy, especially its ability to bifurcate neatly between "Judaic" and "non-Judaic," contribute to differences, including violence, between that which is too neatly signified as Jew and non-Jew, including that between Judaism and non-Judaism?

Apologetic Thinking

In a recent monograph, Cass Fischer has argued that theology has yet to find its place within the modern academic study of Judaism.[30] Believing theology to be reduced either to homiletics or irrationalism, Fischer maintains that Jewish theological language, in all of its multiplicity, needs to be seen as emerging out of religious practice.[31] Given what I have already argued in this chapter, his conclusions should come as no surprise—namely, that Jewish thought is theological and deeply rooted in a rationalist commitment to communal practice and lived religious experience. As early as 1923, Rosenzweig argued that Jewish thought is by nature apologetic because it takes place on the "border" [*die Grenze*] of Judaism and what lies beyond it. Speaking of Maimonides's *Guide*, he writes that

> the apologetic nature of the fundamental attitude yields the completely unpedantic character which still today is a fresh breeze for the reader and strikes him as in no way "scholastic"; this thinking has what systematic thinking cannot have so easily: the fascination—and the truthfulness—of thought reacting to the occasion [*des Gelegenheitsdenkens*]; but therefore a limit is also set for it which only systematic thinking [*die nur systematisches Denken*] removes: exactly the limit of the occasional [*die Schranke der Gelegenheit*]; only systematic thinking determines the circle of its objects itself; apologetic thinking remains dependent on the cause, the adversary [*abhängig von der Veranlassung, vom Gegner*].[32]

Since organic Jewish thought, using Rosenzweig's language, which takes place within Judaism, tends to be legal and systematic, it becomes apologetic only when it approaches the border of Judaism and non-Judaism. This border is responsible for making Jewish philosophy apologetic, because it is largely responsive to "external" voices. Apologetics, on this reading, potentially lacks the self-consciousness necessary for introspection.

In the pages that follow, but especially in the later chapters, I wish to reflect on these observations in a constructive sense. If, as I have argued here, Jewish philosophy represents an impossibility, what is the alternative? How can it be rethought? Is it even possible to reflect upon Judaism in ways that avoid the Scylla of universalism and the Charybdis of particularism?

Conclusions

Jewish thinkers, from Saadya Gaon to Emmanuel Levinas, have held on to the belief that they have uncovered Judaism in its pristine, timeless, or originary form. The approach taken in this study, on the contrary, is that Jewish philosophy should not be about asking what truth says Judaism should be *or* what Judaism says truth should be. Rather, we ought to ask how truth is imagined and manufactured, what role an activity named "philosophy" plays in that act of truth making, and how, in the process, it creates Judaism.

Jewish philosophy, like philosophy more generally, becomes less about truth than about rhetoric. This is produced by the desire, on the part of those individuals responsible for articulating it, to impose a particular

understanding (one paradoxically derived from universalism) on others. Whether in the teachings of Maimonides or in the construction of Rosenzweig or others, Jewish philosophy has a nationalist and a totalitarian aspect to it—one that is grounded in the commitment to an organic community in which the individuals that compose it, both past and present, are perceived to be united together through ethnic, cultural, and religious ancestry.

I

Impossibilities

THIS CHAPTER SEEKS to provide a general introduction to the problems that have continually beset Jewish philosophy. Although my concern here, as in this study more generally, is with the various discourses that make up Jewish philosophy, I hope it will become clear that I use them merely as examples of a much larger set of issues. The discourses that seek to establish an interface between Judaism and philosophy, for example, are little different than those that seek to mediate between that which is constructed as Judaism and that which is constructed as non-Judaism. At issue, then, is how Jews simultaneously understand and articulate themselves vis-à-vis perceived others. Jewish identity—whether understood philosophically, mystically, or theologically—is ultimately contingent upon the rhetorical formation of self and not-self. Rather than see these as natural categories, I prefer to regard them as taxonomic ones. The taxic indicators that both produce Judaism and differentiate it from non-Judaism, however, frequently become solidified as real, natural, or authentic markers of identity, and this solidification has very real consequences both historically and in the contemporary period.

To examine these issues, the present chapter focuses on how particular and universal demands collide in the desire to manufacture a particular type of Judaism: one that is envisaged as rational and in sync with contemporaneous non-Jewish trends. This is, to invoke Rosenzweig's comments at the end of the previous chapter, an attempt to apologize for Judaism, to find and take a "Jewish" essence and subsequently make it conform to a larger set of "non-Jewish" issues. In the contemporary period, this is witnessed in the formation of phrases and subdisciplines such as Judaism and environmentalism, Judaism and bioethics, or Judaism and science, all of which become variations on the larger theme of

Jewish philosophy. Because their discourses must ultimately attempt to differentiate between both terms in these phrases—defining what exactly is "Jewish" and what exactly is "non-Jewish"—a set of reifications and essentialisms are created that are, in turn, perceived to define Judaism's unique mode of being. My concern is with both the proceses by which this is accomplished and the intellectual problems that ensnarl those processes.

To explore this subject in greater detail, the present chapter examines the very category of Jewish philosophy. It is not meant to provide a history or chronology of the activity, for which there exist many competent studies,[1] but rather a quasi genealogy of its use. How and for what purposes are the two terms/categories/ontologies/epistemologies (or whatever we want to call them)—and all that travel in their wake—that make up the term "Jewish philosophy" put together? Although they are ultimately perceived to be distinct from one another, there is paradoxically no time when they have not occupied one another. Judaism, including those variations found in biblical times and those in the late antique period, has always defined itself in the language and categories of others. There is, framed somewhat differently, no pure or pristine thinking. "Jewgreek is greekjew," to cite Derrida (citing Joyce), and the issue is to reflect on the copula that is both unwritten yet omnipresent. Although I shall examine this phrase in greater detail below, suffice it to mention here that to imagine an alterity of an absolute or an essential nature—to imagine Judaism as the other of Hellenism, the nonphilosophical complement to the philosophical logos—is as ridiculous as it is impossible.[2] This chapter then examines the ramifications of this notion in the contemporary period, maintaining that there is no identity (no Greekness, no Jewness) without ambiguity. I try to conclude the chapter on a constructive note by suggesting that one possible way Jewish philosophy might solve its impasse is by moving beyond essentialization and reification. This involves the realization that while philosophy and Judaism can never be reconciled, their separation can also never be complete or total.

What Is Jewish Philosophy?

Since the first encounter of Judaism with Hellenism, a particular type of Judaism has articulated itself as normative through philosophical practice. In Philo of Alexandria's account of allegory, Saadya Gaon's defense of the creation of the world, or Hermann Cohen's and Emmanuel Levinas's

associations of Judaism with morality, we see that philosophy has been a tool with which certain Jews have imagined Judaism to be compatible with the larger cultures in which Jews have lived. This desire for compatibility has consistently encouraged thinkers such as the aforementioned to ascribe to their constructions a set of religious, ethical, or political values that Judaism could subsequently contribute to those cultures. Philosophy was used in all these imaginings as the yardstick to measure all forms of the tradition and select what was most authentic (often by external or non-Jewish criteria) and what was not. This has given a privileged place to a set of canonical thinkers and texts that are believed to articulate Judaism using a set of universal and rationalist criteria.[3]

Despite the quest for normativity, for the construction of a "good" Judaism that sits alongside the grandiose artifacts of European sensibility, we must not lose sight of the fact that, for some, philosophy enters Judaism over time and from without. In the opening lines of his masterful *Philosophies of Judaism*, Julius Guttmann writes,

> The Jewish people did not begin to philosophize because of an irresistible urge to do so. They received philosophy from outside sources, and the history of Jewish philosophy is a history of the successive absorptions of foreign ideas which were then transformed and adapted according to specific Jewish points of view.[4]

Note that Guttmann's book is titled *Philosophies of Judaism*, and not *Philosophy of Judaism*. Implicit in this is the notion that the task of Jewish philosophy or the philosophy of Judaism is to articulate the basic tenets of Judaism (e.g., creation, revelation, redemption) in various philosophical idioms. The implication, in other words, is that some (but certainly not all) of the questions that have preoccupied and that continue to preoccupy philosophers can also be answered from an ostensibly Jewish perspective, however "Jewish perspective" may be defined.[5]

According to Guttmann—and his view is certainly shared by many—the goal of Jewish philosophy is to articulate Judaism, to make it into something that can be defended against the attacks of non-Jews and to rationalize to Jews what it is that they do. But also note that, for him, this is not an autochthonous practice. Philosophy comes from the outside and is subsequently forced inside. This returns us to the border (*die Grenze*) of which Rosenzweig spoke at the end of the introduction. This border, potentially as porous as it is solid, is something that must constantly be

patrolled by philosophic sentinels. Unpatrolled, it risks becoming a site of violence, at which two potentially radical worldviews can collide.

This means that there is always something apologetic about Jewish philosophy as it seeks to smooth over the tensions inherent to the cohabitation of its two constituent parts. And thus there is always an intrinsic apologetic desire to create an aesthetically or intellectually pleasing form of the tradition—one that is attractive to Jewish and non-Jewish intellectuals alike. Writing in 1921, Harry Austryn Wolfson—holder of one of the first endowed positions in Jewish studies in the United States (the Nathan Littauer Professor of Hebrew Literature and Philosophy at Harvard)—sought to show the correspondence between Judaism and the broader cultural and intellectual contexts in which Jews lived. The philosopher Wolfson located the most dynamic features of this correspondence in the medieval philosophical tradition,

> For I believe, just as our pious ancestors believed, though for different reasons, that the Talmud with its literature is the most promising field of study, the most fertile field of original research and investigation. But I believe that medieval Jewish philosophy is the only branch of Jewish literature, next to the Bible, which binds us to the rest of the literary world. In it we meet on common ground with civilized Europe and with part of civilized Asia and civilized Africa. Medieval philosophy is one philosophy written in three languages, Arabic, Hebrew, and Latin, and among these Hebrew holds the central and most important position. In it we have the full efflorescence of Arabic thought and the bud of much of scholasticism.[6]

For Wolfson, all three forms of medieval philosophy—Jewish, Christian, and Muslim—represent iterations of the synthesis between monotheism and Greek philosophy inaugurated by Philo in antiquity. This means that Wolfson, and many like him, believe there is a common heritage, an Abrahamic tradition as it were, that inextricably links the three religions and their worldviews.[7] Yet, it is also an apologetic argument: Hebrew, even though Philo apparently knew no Hebrew, and by extension, Judaism, form the backbone of the entire medieval philosophical enterprise. Judaism, on his reading, is what sustains and intellectually nourishes the other two monotheisms.

For many following Wolfson, rationality becomes the perceived bond that ties Judaism to other traditions and vice versa. It simultaneously

is informed by and produces a Judaism that fits or accords with certain "non-Jewish" intellectual and aesthetic standards. Those parts of the tradition that fit with this model are included, and those that do not are excluded. This is a model of scholarship that goes back to the one inaugurated by practitioners of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in the middle of the nineteenth century.[8] Jewish philosophy and also its academic study thus potentially make the tradition into something that it is not. In the desire to make the tradition conform to a standard of rationality it has created in its own image, Jewish philosophy creates a highly selective narrative that risks distortion or, at the very least, betrays a certain privileging.

I certainly do not mean this as some kind of obscurantist or quasi-mystical critique. Rather, this comment returns me to the general theme of this chapter; namely, that Jewish philosophy has largely misunderstood its task, if it even has one, in its quest for normativity. What follows is certainly not meant to rehabilitate it, but to show what confronts it. From the inception of Jewish studies in nineteenth century until roughly the late 1970s, philosophy, especially the historical study of medieval philosophy, was the place where—to quote Wolfson—Judaism encountered "civilized Europe" on its own ground.

In the last two decades, however, things are no longer as they once were. The study of medieval Jewish philosophy, with the possible exception of interest in Maimonides, has largely tapered off. Whether because of the highly specialized and technical linguistic training needed to study medieval Jewish philosophy (which should include Hebrew, Arabic, and, ideally, Latin and Greek) or whether because of its perceived irrelevance, the study of medieval Jewish philosophy in North America is all but moribund. Perhaps this is the way it must be now that a new generation of Jewish studies scholars, one that no longer feels the desire for inclusion within the non-Jewish scholarly world,[9] can gravitate to more particularistic topics, such as Jews and film, or Jews and food, to name but a few topics currently in vogue. In Israel the study of Jewish philosophy still limps along, but largely on specialized philological ground that is primarily involved in the production of critical editions of texts. In the study of modern Jewish philosophy, the field tends to follow its Central European ancestors by arguing that the West needs Judaism in order to reach its aims and evade dogmatist dangers.[10] This was part of the apologetic aims of Moses Mendelssohn in *Jerusalem* (1783), and it largely continues to the present day, for example, in Emmanuel Levinas's discussion of Judaism as an antitotalitarian ethic in several works he wrote in the 1960s and

1970s.[11] It remains at stake today when bioethics commissions and councils in the United States or Canada need Jewish "representation" in order to determine the right course of action with respect to hot-button cultural issues (e.g., stem-cell research).[12]

Jewgreek is Greekjew: Extremes Meet

It is important to state forthrightly that I do not see "Jewish" as the problem when it attaches itself to "philosophy." The latter, in other words, is not the objective gold standard by which ideas and phenomena are judged to be truthful or not. Philosophy ought to become neither a lodestar nor an objective, disembodied gaze. On the contrary, philosophy represents and upholds the will of the status quo, that which seeks to divest, often violently, the particular of its particularity. Because it is just as embroiled in rhetoric and in the will to power as any other ideology, philosophy is problematic whether one puts the adjective "Jewish" in front of it or not.

Judaism, then, does not compromise philosophy. Philosophy is quite able to do this for itself. From its emergence in antiquity, philosophy has always possessed a totalitarian dimension that is threatened by diversity.[13] In Plato's *Republic*, for example, there is the assumption that individuals reap their own maximal good only when the city is most unified (e.g., 462a–b), and anything that compromises the city's unity is not to be tolerated by the rulers. Such notions, however, leave little or no room for those, like Jews, whose very existence impinges upon the religio-ethnic status quo. The particularism of Judaism, still left undefined, threatens philosophy because of the former's unwillingness or inability to be absorbed into the universal concerns or pretenses of the latter.

If Plato's ideal republic was threatened by diversity, Kant's Prussia was even less hospitable to the particular, now fully embodied as Judaism.[14] German idealism, for example, is heavily indebted to the language of Christianity and recycles many of the latter's supersessionist assumptions about the nature of Judaism, especially its reliance on the Law as opposed to the spirit. On Kant's reading, Judaism does not even make the grade as a religion, concerned as it is with external obedience to statutes and the Law instead of with inculcating inner morals. Based on traditional Protestant assumptions, Kant's Judaism is materialistic, lacking any ability to formulate or approach what he considers to be a universal concept of morality.[15]

If the case can be made that Judaism is bad for philosophy, the opposite claim can also be made: philosophy is bad for Judaism. Philosophy affords no space for revelation in general and revealed morality in particular. If Judaism prides itself on its chosen status based on the observance of a set of divine laws, it can make no room for a universal and universalizing system that, in theory, not only minimizes but actively subverts concepts such as chosenness. Jewish philosophers from the time of Philo onward have always been accused, thus, of misreading their own tradition, forcing it artificially into the terms and categories supplied by an "alien" system that makes a mockery of that which it seeks to describe.[16]

I do not, however, wish to frame this tension simply as a variation on the Athens/Jerusalem binary.[17] Although some of the tensions that we locate in the intersection of Judaism and philosophy may well emerge from this opposition, there are certainly other sources. Indeed, read on another level, the Athens/Jerusalem binary may be so full of essentialism—can there ever be a pure, untainted Jerusalem? Can there ever exist a pristine, logocentric Athens?—as to be rendered impossible. At the end of his essay "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas," Derrida appropriates the hybrids "jewgreek" and "greekjew" from Joyce.[18] It is important to be clear that, for Derrida, "Jew" and "Judaism" are not necessarily or even primarily demarcations of religious or ethnic identity, but instead become tropes of homelessness, of indeterminacy, and of a particular way of being.[19]

In this essay, Derrida reflects on the tension between Jerusalem and Athens and writes that the "history in which the Greek logos is produced cannot be a happy accident providing grounds for understanding to those who understand eschatological prophecy, and to those who do not understand it at all [*L'histoire dans laquelle se produit le logos grec ne peut être l'accident heureux livrant un terrain d'entente à ceux qui entendent la prophétie eschatologique et à ceux qui ne l'entendent point*]."[20] The Greek language, with its taxonomization of the world, is not neutral. Instead, it draws those who use it ineluctably and mesmerizingly into its semantics. The coupling of Hellenism and Judaism, Greek and Jew, in Derrida's suggestive language, creates an infinite separation that, in its very coupling, draws attention to the copula:

> Are we Jews? Are we Greeks? We live in the difference [*la différence*] between the Jew and the Greek, which is perhaps the unity of what is called history. We live in and of difference, that is, in *hypocrisy*

> [*Nous vivons dans et de la différence, c'est-à-dire dans l'hypocrisie*]. . . . Are we Greeks? Are we Jews? But who, we? Are we (not a chronological, but a pre-logical question) *first* Jews or *first* Greeks?[21]

Rather than answer the question of who we are we find ourselves in a hybrid in which extremes may well meet, but in a manner that is irreconcilable. "Jewgreek is greekjew," Derrida concludes. This exemplifies the movement beyond binary opposites to the necessary and mutual contamination of the in-between, of Jew with Greek and Greek with Jew.

If the practice of Jewish philosophy does anything, it would seem to be to force each term to reflect upon the impossibility of the other. Each—Greek, Jew, greekjew, jewgreek—occupies the other for the sake of its own transcendence. Each is engaged in the act of occupation for the same ideological ends: desire, control, power. Judaism can use philosophy to universalize itself, to produce a penumbra, for the sake of inclusion and normalcy. Philosophy, in like manner, uses Judaism to define itself (i.e., what it is not) or to particularize itself. Neither is left unscathed, yet neither has ever known anything to the contrary. At the same time, the terms remain—jewgreek and greekjew—separated by what is, in effect, a non-space. The space between—the between-space—is, if I read Derrida correctly, the very space that we inhabit. It is the perspective from which we think and exist, a perspective in which neither "Jew" nor "Greek" can possibly remain stable.

Producing the "Right" Judaism

Jewish philosophy surrounds itself with the mantle of truth. It sees as its main responsibility the production of a set of claims meant to articulate what it considers to be "proper" Judaism. This equation of truth and Judaism, however, should immediately make us wary of entanglements in totalitarian dimensions associated with ideological claims. The goal of Jewish philosophy, as witnessed in the introduction, is the production of *a* Judaism in the image of reason. This is a universalist and a universalizing Judaism, one that—especially since the articulation of Moses Mendelssohn—is believed to be proper for inclusion within the modern nation-state.[22] Although premodern Jewish philosophers were, for obvious reasons, not interested in the modern state, they nonetheless manufactured a similar vision of Judaism that was rational, masculine, and in conversation with larger, universalizing ideals. In so doing, Jewish

philosophy, irrespective of the larger philosophical schools with which it was in conversation, has engaged in the project of normalization, of expurgation, and of exclamation.

A corollary of Jewish philosophy's universalizing tendency is its large-scale engagement in the project of manufacturing "good religion." As a result, the study of Jewish philosophy has played a formative role in the North American academy.[23] When Jewish topics were first being introduced into the university curriculum, it enabled scholars to demonstrate that Judaism could be normalized. Jewish philosophy, again quoting Harry Austryn Wolfson in 1921, enabled Judaism to meet other civilizations "on common ground".[24] Many of the earliest scholars of Jewish philosophy in North America—for example, Nahum Glatzer and Emil Fackenheim—used their university positions to solve problems they considered to be plaguing Jewish communities in the West.[25] Yet, today and in a country where the proprieties governing the study of religion are premised on the distinction between "teaching religion" and "teaching about religion," such an approach may indeed seem more appropriate for a faith-based seminary than a university classroom.[26]

Once again, we face the impossibility of Jewish philosophy. What are its goals? Are they—as nineteenth-century German-Jewish scholars claimed—to demonstrate the towering heights to which Jews could rise if they were politically and legally emancipated? Or is the goal of the study of Jewish philosophy—as the earliest practitioners of the field in America claimed—to solve problems facing contemporary Jews and Jewish life? If the latter is overtly theological, then the former is decidedly apologetic. In both cases, we return to the notion that Jewish philosophy may indeed be little more than theological articulations of a threatened minority in the guise of universalism.

Philosophy or Theology?

The inherently apologetic strain to Jewish philosophy immediately raises these questions: Is it philosophy or theology? Why do we insist on calling it Jewish philosophy as opposed to Jewish theology? Does Jewish philosophy simply seek to prove a conclusion or a set of conclusions that it already holds dear? Does "philosophy" sound better because it lacks the christocentric overtones of the term "theology"?[27] Rather than inquire into how truth claims are constructed and disseminated, Jewish philosophers—like any subset of theologians—tend to take them for granted.

And, rather than question the ideology behind such theological claims, Jewish philosophy has a tendency to reproduce them.

The great majority of Jewish philosophical works, both in the past and in the present, essentially amount to an apology for (a particular form of) Judaism. Strauss is not far off the mark when, for example, he refers to Maimonides's *Guide of the Perplexed* as a Jewish book and not a philosophical one:

> One begins to understand the *Guide* once one sees that it is not a philosophic book—a book written by a philosopher for philosophers—but a Jewish book: a book written by a Jew for Jews. Its first premise is the old Jewish premise that being a Jew and being a philosopher are two incompatible things. Philosophers are men who try to give an account of the whole by starting from what is always accessible to man as man; *Maimonides starts from the acceptance of the Torah*. A Jew may make use of philosophy and Maimonides makes the most ample use of it; but as a Jew he gives his assent where as a philosopher he would suspend his assent.[28]

Although I do not endorse a Straussian approach to Jewish philosophy,[29] I nevertheless concur with him that the entire enterprise of Jewish philosophy may well be built on a misunderstanding of what philosophy is and, by extension, what Judaism is. Philosophy, which is grounded in the autonomy of independent reason, would seem to be diametrically opposed to a discipline—theology—that involves commitment to the authority of a particular religious tradition. Yet it is precisely and paradoxically from such a commitment that Jewish philosophy emerges.

One of the most popular Jewish philosophers in the recent decade has been Franz Rosenzweig. His entire program, as I shall argue in chapter 5 below, is built on showing the ontological uniqueness of the Jewish people, which is both a method and a conclusion that might well strike us as decidedly unphilosophical. In part 3, book 1, of his *Star of Redemption*, Rosenzweig discusses three concepts in particular that distinguish the Jewish people from all other nations: land, language, and law. On his view, language—like land and law—is something that for most people is not eternal, but rather lives only insofar as people speak it. Language, then, has a unifying factor that connects a living people to a specific land. Not so with Hebrew, however: "The eternal people [as he likes to call the Jews] lost its own language and everywhere speaks the language of its external

destinies [*die Sprache seiner äußern Schicksale spricht*], the language of the people with whom it perchance dwells as a guest."[30] Whereas language traditionally locates a people in time, the language of Israel removes itself, and by extension Israel, from time and relocates Jews in eternity.

While Rosenzweig certainly uses philosophical principles and methods to arrive at an unphilosophical or indeed anti-philosophical position, his claims are apologetic in the extreme. The privileged sphere of the Jewish people, according to Rosenzweig's reading, makes them a people apart. He uses contemporaneous philosophical trends to uphold the traditional Jewish claim of election or chosenness.[31] He sets Jewishness up as the antithesis or counterpoint of other nations. Because of this, Jews cannot be classified, understood, or analyzed using the methods used for other peoples.

Jewish Thinking Today: Philosophy or Apologetics?

The issue is little different in contemporary philosophizing. Although I will get into the specifics of this claim in the chapters that follow, it is worth noting here that much of the activity that today goes by the name of "Jewish philosophy" or "Jewish theology" still emphasizes chosenness and continues to reify concepts such as "Jewishness" and "non-Jewishness." As such, it is inherently conservative and largely unresponsive to postmodern trends in the academy that seek to question traditional notions of foundationalism. This means that rather than interrogate such terms, the overwhelming majority of discourses associated with Jewish philosophy simply accept and uphold them. The result is that contemporary Jewish philosophy remains as apologetic and as normative seeking as that produced by its predecessors, manufacturing a set of artificial boundaries between "Jews" and "non-Jews" that are retroactively projected as both stable and natural. When Jewish thinkers have tried to examine such artificiality—most famously Spinoza and Derrida—they have been marginalized in the tradition of Jewish philosophy as either apostates in the case of Spinoza or as irrelevant in the case of Derrida. If Jewish philosophers, in other words, stray too far across the Jewish/non-Jewish boundary, they cease to be "Jewish philosophers" and just become, perhaps pejoratively, "philosophers." As the remaining chapters of this study argue, this is a real problem because Jewish philosophy risks becoming little more than state philosophy that upholds, but never criticizes, the ideology of the status quo.

As soon as we define a "Jewish" perspective on the environment or on technology, we—once again returning to the presentation of those like

Maimonides or Rosenzweig—see the desire to articulate an authentically "Jewish" response. Based on the twin notions of authenticity and retrieval, contemporary Jewish philosophers are little different than their predecessors. Although Maimonides's pre-Copernican universe may be outdated and the scientific system he deploys in the *Guide* outmoded, his hermeneutical act is no different than those today who seek to provide Jewish answers to a host of non-Jewish, contemporary philosophical issues (e.g., ethics and bioethics).

Again, however, we confront the specter of impossibility. There can be no uniform or authentic Jewish voice (or authentic voice of any other kind, for that matter), precisely because authenticity is ideological as opposed to historical, and invented as opposed to natural. Jewish philosophy today, then, carries on the trajectory of previous Jewish philosophy. The results are potentially no less problematic.

Beyond Authenticity

Since this project is about "rethinking" Jewish philosophy, it cannot simply be deconstructive. It is thus necessary to think about how Jewish philosophy, despite its fractures and tensions, can be rehabilitated. One of the major problems with Jewish philosophy, past and present, is its reification of "Judaism" and its essentialization of an amorphous quality that is simply and simplistically referred to as "Jewishness." Yet, recent years have witnessed extensive examination of the ways in which group identity is both formed and disseminated. Whereas we might once have regarded identity—Muslim, Buddhist, or American, for example—as inherited, certain scholars have attuned us to think about the ways in which such identity is actively created or produced in response to changing social conditions.[32] We should, accordingly, be cautious of using an ahistorical model of the past as something uniform, in which pristine and clear meanings are simply handed down through the ages until they arrive in the present. Indeed, the very idea of a "stable past" is often a later invention used to serve a particular agenda.[33]

The problem with suggesting that Jewishness has not been handed down to us through the ages in a pristine and immutable form, however, is that it is not what people want to hear. In times of crisis or rapid change, there is a desire to hold onto something permanent. Students and adults alike are accustomed to think of themselves as passively ascribing to a set of religious, cultural, and ethnic characteristics that are eternal and, because of this, never undergo transformation. They perceive themselves

as existing at the end of a long line that runs back to Sinai, an understanding that they, in turn, pass on to their children. Such a proposition, however, ignores the fact that identity is never based on assenting to or recuperating group identity, but is part and parcel of active cultural work and construction in response to a host of social, economic, and intellectual variables.[34]

If Jewishness is constructed and invented, then how does this square with the common assumption that Jews and Jewishness are chosen or special? I would argue that it does not. Topoi such as Jews introducing ethical monotheism to the world, functioning as a holy nation of priests, being a light unto the nations (*or ha-goyim*), or providing a particular model of universal ethics are, ultimately, little more than rhetorical devices that function apologetically. Instead, I think it is important to resist the temptation to assume that communities simply constitute themselves around an essential core. In this regard, borders between Jews and Christians and Jews and Muslims in different periods and eras might well have looked much different than they do today in a post-1948 world. So, rather than assume that identities in the premodern world are fixed and inherited in predetermined ways, we ought to be aware of the ways in which they are invented, reinvented, enforced, and patrolled. What are the repercussions of such instability for something called Jewish philosophy?

Unfortunately, the history of Jewish philosophy has simultaneously ignored and contributed to these problems. It has taken this sui generis core of Jewish identity as its defining mark and, in the process, contributed to the creation of a pristine Ur-Judaism that can be accessed by philosophical activity.

Conclusions

Although the term "Jewish philosophy" really only dates to the nineteenth century,[35] the quest to put certain species of rationalism in counterpoint with Judaism for the sake of producing a particular and monolithic vision of the tradition is ancient, going back at least to Philo of Alexandria if not the Bible itself. Common to all these counterpoints is that the present lacks something that is retrievable in a past constructed as authoritative and authentic. It becomes the task of the philosopher both to construct this past and to make the present conform to it. This retrieval, to reiterate, is ideological and not historical. The past becomes open, functioning simultaneously as an escape and a prison. Although these processes are

certainly at work in all types of Jewish thought, from rabbinic theology to kabbalistic mythopoesis, I have chosen here to focus on their dynamics in the Jewish philosophical tradition. This is because, unlike rabbinic and kabbalistic thought, which are in many ways thought to be more "organic" or, perhaps better, are seen to offer systems of interpretation "internal" to the tradition, Jewish philosophy is often represented as the full-scale collision of the internal and the external, the particular and the universal.

This chapter has sought to explore some of the uses to which Jewish philosophy has been put over the past thousand years—first by showing what Jewish philosophy has tried to accomplish and then by invoking the specter that continually haunts its invocation and practice. In their desire to produce a particular type of Judaism, Jewish philosophers have rearranged the past, giving it another face, and, thereby, made it conform to their own construction of what it should be. This past then becomes the touchstone for constructing the lacunae and problems of the present.

All the while, we are left asking the question, Is "Jewish philosophy" philosophy, or is it some form of constructive theology? The goal of the activity, after all, is not to arrive at truth for truth's sake (whatever that may mean), but truth for Judaism's sake. That is, Jewish philosophy manufactures truth claims for Judaism, articulating what is "good" Judaism and how it differs from "bad" Judaism. This articulation, as will become clear in the following chapters, has a totalitarian dimension to it—one that undermines the very goals that Jewish philosophy sets for itself.

Rather than just deconstruct Jewish philosophizing and its history, the present chapter has also suggested one possible way that the tradition might negotiate around its traditional pitfalls of essentialism and reification. In the multicultural present, Judaism, or perhaps we should say Judaisms, inevitably engage in conversation with multiple and overlapping others. Rather than continue along a path of what constitutes "Jewishness" and what constitutes "non-Jewishness" in those encounters, it might be more productive for philosophers to envisage the imperceptible line that differentiates them as fluid and constructed as opposed to hard and natural. However, Jewish philosophy—as we shall see in the coming chapters—has been and continues to be responsible for creating firm boundaries between Judaism and non-Judaism and, thus, raising a set of issues that are potentially hostile to our contemporary world.

2

Irreconcilability

JEWISH PHILOSOPHY, AS we have witnessed, represents the peculiar confrontation of the universal and the particular. Philosophy, which has as its objective the study of truth purely for truth's sake and is presumably open to all regardless of religion or ethnicity, is forced to cohabit with the study of truth for Judaism's sake—namely, for identifying what is good and unique in Judaism (such as chosenness or the *halakhah* or law), and is thus, by its very nature, exclusive. Too often, however, we tend to presuppose without ever interrogating the separation of these two terms and their epistemological groupings, choosing to see them as polarized identities for which we have created hermetically distinct histories. The result is to imbue each with a false stability that both conceals their fragility and avoids any consideration of the consequences of their collision. The present chapter examines this intersection and some of its fallout. How, for instance, does the particular become inscribed as the particular, and the universal as the universal? How is the latter imagined within the alterity of the former and vice versa? The opposition between these two categories, whether constructed or natural, has produced and continues to produce a potentially violent collision as each category seeks to maintain its distance from the other, just as each seeks to enfold the other in its perceived distinctiveness. The distance between the two becomes perceived as one of ontological difference, and numerous markers—political, cultural, religious, intellectual—are subsequently marshaled to maintain it. The exteriority of this intersection must be undone and its complexity attended to. We must attune ourselves, in other words, to the paradoxes, frailties, and ultimate impossibilities of the potential configurations of various and overlapping species of Judaism and philosophy. The alterity of the universal and the particular—if, indeed, it is their alterity that is at

stake—presents the very possibility of the other's becoming. Their integrity and congruousness become a matter of framing, such that their place in common, the very act or possibility of philosophizing, marks the site of their ultimate separation and potential reconciliation. It is at the space between that I ultimately want to arrive. Before doing this, however, it is first necessary to pry the two apart, to explore the consequences of their cohabitation. For it is only beyond such artificial and overly essentialized pairings, as we shall see in the final chapter, that the space or ground exists where one can address pressing concerns. Neither Greek nor Jew, both Greek and Jew—it is the delicate space between that marks the cite of possibility, the imaginative act whereby the other is envisaged though the semblance of the same.

Before arriving at this space, however, it is first necessary to tell the history—perhaps one of many possible histories—of Jewish philosophy. This will enable reflection upon both the logic of this tradition's separation and estrangements and the paradox of its simultaneous possibility and impossibility. All of these issues evolve around that of the intersection of the particular and the universal. The particular is assumed to make the universal possible and vice versa, because each draws its identity from the other precisely as each is constructed by the other's nonidentity with itself. The exclusion of the one makes the other possible. In their mutual avowal and in the name of their exclusion, each simultaneously includes and excludes the other. The result is an excluded inclusion, in which each paradoxically names itself and in so doing constructs an identity for itself precisely as it un-names the other, seeking to divest it of its perceived autonomy.

Particular and Universal: A Brief History of the Other

The particularist/universalist binary cuts to the heart of the paradox, indeed impossibility, of the task of Jewish philosophy. The issue, as we have just witnessed, cannot simply be the matter of "either/or," but the actual identity of each of the two terms—the way each moves to occupy the other—when they inhabit the same intellectual or ontological space. All Jewish philosophy, be it from Philo until today, must wrestle, in one way or another, with this problem. Can the particular claims of Judaism be rationalized using the universalist categories of non-Judaism? Certainly the two are implicit in each other; the universal claims of philosophy are, after all, necessarily made by particular individuals in particular

contexts. As Dana Hollander poignantly remarks, "How may we account for the possibility of philosophy, of universalism in thinking, without denying that all thinking is also idiomatic and particular?"[1] If the universal can only be thought particularly, what does this say about its existence? The universal, it would seem, cannot exist outside the particular.

Yet, even if all thinking is particularly located, this need not mean that all thinking is by nature *particularist*. The problem with revelation, not to mention related concepts—such as chosenness, halakhah, or why a particular life is justified over others—is that they are all claims that impinge upon the freedom of thinking as envisioned by universalism, which by its nature is mistrustful of and seeks to level difference. Although the tendency in much of medieval Jewish philosophy was to try to absorb the particular into the universal, much of modern Jewish philosophy claims that the particular has the responsibility of articulating the inclusive claims of the universal. By its very nature, as witnessed, for example, in the thought of Rosenzweig, the particular signals that it cannot or will not be absorbed into a set of claims that others have provided. We return to the double bind: Is it the case, as many want to claim, that the universal—that which is knowable and applicable to all—can either grow out of or be articulated by the particular—that which is the provenance of the few?

Given the facts that the universal and the particular are implicit in each other and that each needs the other to articulate and fully recognize itself, simple taxonomies must be eschewed. To label Jewish philosophy as either particularist or universalist, according to Martin Kavka, is to overstate a binary opposition.[2] We must avoid, in other words, making general claims about the centrifugal or centripetal claims of the Jewish philosophical tradition. The question, then, presents itself rhetorically: Can the particular ever extract itself from universalist discourses? If it could, then so-called autochthonous works of Judaism (e.g., the Bible and Talmud) would become the sole provenance of some inner-focused hermeneutic. But this, of course, is impossible, since hermeneutical strategies do not exist in hermetically sealed environments. Various modes of reading, in other words, naturally interact with and cross-pollinate one another. It is not our job to unravel them from one another, to arrive at some natural and authentic Ur-thinking in the manner that Rosenzweig attempted, but to listen to the tensions and fractures that are created—tensions and fractures that ultimately produce a set of mutually overlapping and contradictory Judaisms.

Framed somewhat differently, can the universal ever be as inclusive as it claims? Since the universal seeks to impose its will on others, to flatten or level the idiosyncrasies of the particular, it both promotes and justifies violence over that which it occupies. Here we would do well to consider Derrida's remark that philosophy "has always lived knowing itself to be dying" because it "has always fed on its own agony, on the violent way it opens history by opposing itself to nonphilosophy [*qu'elle ait toujours vécu d'agonie et d'ouvrir violemment l'histoire en enlevant sa possibilité contre la non-philosophie*]."[3] Using nonphilosophy as a metonym for the particular, we might claim that philosophy, as a universalizing and totalitarian discourse, has situated itself in violent opposition to numerous species of minority constructions, all of which threaten or impinge upon its hegemony.

Jewish philosophy, as such a minority construction, faces—as witnessed in the previous chapter—major problems. On the one hand, it subscribes to this totalizing vision; yet, on the other, it questions philosophy's legitimacy because it filters it through particularist sources. This means that Jewish philosophy risks becoming too universal for the particular voices within Judaism and too particularist for the universal ones external to it. Pulled in radically and often diametrically different directions, Jewish philosophy exists in a fragile and a dislocated space where it risks being co-opted, as we shall see in the following chapter, for various ideological projects.

Those who envisage Judaism insularly, such as Rosenzweig, regard philosophy as tangential to Judaism because the former proclaims itself to have universal significance. Jewish philosophy's future for him, as we shall encounter in chapter 5, is a redirection inward, a removal of the mutually occupying forces. Yet, even such a removal will prove difficult precisely because each has become so embedded in the other. For Rosenzweig, philosophy's death assures and sustains Judaism's life. The Jewish people, the Hebraic, represent the redemption of the universal—not by succumbing to it, but by making it possible from within on account of their ontological difference. Without the particular, the universal can be neither articulated nor redeemed. The particularism and uniqueness of Jewish peoplehood, for Rosenzweig, must be situated firmly and solely within their own collective experience.

Rosenzweig may well be one of the few Jewish philosophers attuned to the hostility and violence of the juxtaposition of Judaism and philosophy. But his solution, to overthrow the latter and concentrate on the former—is

but one solution to the impasse. In this, he differs little from, say, Spinoza, one of the great "heretics" of the Jewish philosophical tradition, who attempted the same feat, but who inversed the chronology of the terms in question.

The universal and the particular, to return to one of the themes of this study, threaten each other with occupation. Rather than ask whether Jewish philosophy is universalist or particularist, it becomes necessary to be cognizant of the totalitarian and exclusionary forces at work in both terms. In this respect, Jewish philosophy is *both* universalist and particularist because the claims of each of its constituent parts cannot be neatly extricated from one another. Such involvement, rather than solve the problem of Jewish philosophy's raison d'être, creates a further set of issues to be explored in detail below.

The Universal and Particular in Medieval Jewish Philosophy

One could quite easily say that the history of Judaism is the history of the struggle between the universal and the particular, between centripetal and centrifugal forces. Because the medieval Jewish philosophers looked to and were largely influenced by the intellectual currents of philosophy produced by non-Jews, they were naturally in conversation (literary if not actual literal conversation) with their Muslim and eventually Christian neighbors. Muslims such as al-Kindi, Alfarabi, and Avicenna produced original works of philosophy, much of it not even interested in the question of religion, let alone Islam. But Isaac Israeli, Abraham ibn Ezra, Maimonides, and other Jewish thinkers absorbed those ideas, introduced them into Judaism, and gave them a distinctly Hebraic idiom (even if they tended, for the most part, to write in Arabic). Because these individuals largely took the themes provided by philosophers from majority cultures, they are regarded as "universalists," even though what they did to those themes was essentially particularize them.

Two brief examples will, I trust, illustrate the ambiguity of this complexity. Judah Halevi (d. 1141) and Moses Maimonides (d. 1204) are frequently held up as the best representatives of the particularist and the universalist visions, respectively, within medieval Jewish rationalism.[4] Whereas Maimonides emphasized the unaided human intellect as the best path toward God, Halevi located this path in the biological

and religious superiority of the Jewish people.[5] Halevi's *Kitab al-Kuzari*, one of the most articulate pleas for Jewish particularity and chosenness, was—as should be evident from the book's title—written in Arabic. Note the paradox that a plea for Jewish particularity would be written in Arabic as opposed to Hebrew, especially when we know that Halevi also wrote in Hebrew—indeed, he is one of the most celebrated Hebrew poets of Muslim Spain. Even the term that Halevi uses for Jewish "chosenness" (*safwa*) has a lengthy religio-literary history within Islamic—particularly Shī`i —theological texts. Halevi, in other words, articulates Jewish particularity in the universal language of Arabic by using a set of technical terms, as the late Israeli intellectual historian Shlomo Pines showed, that were derived from minority Shī`i groups, who in turn had used them to define themselves in light of Sunni majorities.[6] So although Halevi uses a universal language to argue for the superiority of the particular, he does so in a way that is little different from what other Islamicate subcultures were doing to posture themselves against a Sunni majority. This, again, calls into question the fluidity of borders between these groups.

If Halevi, the great "particularist," is perhaps more universalist than we might think, we could also argue that the great universalist, Maimonides, is no less particularist. Although I shall discuss Maimonides at length in chapter 4, it suffices to mention here that Maimonides's appropriation of the universal claims of philosophy to articulate the particular claims of Judaism—Mosaic prophecy, the reasons for the commandments (*ta`ammei mitzvot*), and so on—is no less problematic. If Halevi's "particularism" includes all Jews, Maimonides's "universalism" excludes most because they lack the proper knowledge that forms the prerequisite for true human felicity. If Halevi celebrates Judaism in the name of the particular, Maimonides seeks to transform the particulars of the tradition in the name of universalism.

Although the medieval philosophers never reflected on the universal and the particular as distinct terms of reference, their intersection is always just below the surface in their writings. Their existence, as witnessed briefly in this section, both threatens to unravel their intellectual tapestries, just as it undermines the task of something commonly referred to as "medieval Jewish philosophy." The remaining sections of this chapter will now examine how these terms play out in modern Jewish philosophy, which is my primary concern in this chapter.

Rosenzweig's Rejection

The thought of Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929) rejects the universal tendencies of philosophy in favor of the inherent structure and dynamic of the particular. Jews, he claims, "must be rooted in themselves [*Verwurzelung im eigenen Selbst*]."[7] For only such a rootedness, that which closes them off from the rest of the world, enables them to anticipate ultimate redemption and, in so doing, permits them to represent to the rest of the world (the universal) the goal that it must pursue. The Jewish people, a theme we shall see repeated time and again in this chapter, makes the universal possible because of, not in spite of, their particularity.

Rosenzweig, although he might not frame it in such terms, creates a philosophy of particularism. He juxtaposes his own concerns with those of traditional philosophy, which grounded in the perspective of universalism, has sought to understand all that is in its unifying and totalizing vision. Whether in the guise of medieval Neoplatonism or German idealism, there has been a tendency in philosophy, he argues, to ignore the temporal and relational contexts in which human beings experience the world around them in the chimerical desire to grasp what is universally and essentially true. The result is the traditional philosophical assumption that phenomena cannot be known as they are in their particularity. As he elaborates in his *Das Büchlein vom gesunden und kranken Menschenverstand* (*The Little Book of Healthy and Sick Understanding*), this preoccupation with universality means that the traditional philosopher "separates his experience of wonder from the continuous stream of life, isolating it."[8] As he understands it, this leads to the current impasse in which traditional systems of philosophy have made due with subsuming singleness and particularity within the leveling nature of abstract essences. Rosenzweig writes,

> The terms of life are not "essential" but "real"; they concern not "essence" but "fact." In spite of this, the philosopher's word remains, "essential." By giving in to wonder, by halting in his tracks and neglecting the operations of reality, he forces himself into retreat and is restricted to facing essence.[9]

In response to such universalizing tendencies within traditional philosophy, Rosenzweig manages to create what I have just called a philosophy of particularity. Although as we will see in chapter 5 below, Rosenzweig's

criticisms of essences, in for example, the above passage, in no way prevents him from paradoxically creating an essential and authentic Judaism that he imagines to exist somewhere, distantly and pristinely, in a transmogrified past.

The eternity of the holy people, for Rosenzweig, means the "absence of relationship" (*Beziehungslosigkeit*) with others.[10] This means that the Jewish people are rooted in themselves and not in the world or even in relationships that they may form with other peoples or social groups.[11] This, for him, is what secures their eternal, atemporal existence. Their particularity (*Eigenart*) is what guarantees their universality (*Universalität*) because, in the case of Jews, and only them, the whole or the All—that is, God, man, and world—is located within them in a way that is uniquely theirs. According to Rosenzweig,

> The Jewish people gathers within its own particularity [*in seinem eigenen Innern*] the elements God world man of which of course the All exists. The God, the man, the world of a people are a people's God man world only by the fact that they are just as differentiated and separated from other Gods, men, worlds, as the people itself. Precisely in this self-separating of the singular people from other singular peoples it is connected with them [*Eben in diesem Sichabscheiden des einzelnen Volks von andern einzelnen hängt es mit ihnen zusammen*].[12]

Within the Jewish people, in other words, there exist all of the elements that exist within any other people. However, what makes the Jewish people unique is that, rather than just live as a people alongside other collective peoples, they possess an autonomous existence in which the borders [*Grenzen*] that separate them from other peoples are absorbed within their being.[13] This means that Jews do not border other peoples but rather subsume them, by pointing the way to the path that they must ultimately follow. Their task is redemptive, the showing-of-the way. Unlike other peoples and nations, the Jewish people must simultaneously be particular and universal:

> They must conceal the polar oppositions in themselves in order to be able to be singular, definite, something particular, a God, a human, a world, and yet simultaneously [*doch zugleich*] everything, God, man, the whole world.[14]

This simultaneity is what enables the Jewish people to exist in the midst of other peoples while, at the same time, existing beyond them. Judaism's particularity incorporates within itself the three elements (God, man, world) that compose not only itself, but at the same time the entire universe. In order to appreciate Rosenzweig's distinction here, it is important to contextualize it within certain trajectories of modern Jewish philosophizing. In fact, Rosenzweig's discussion of the simultaneity between universality and particularity is certainly not new, but draws upon a genealogy of this distinction in Jewish thinking since at least the time of Moses Mendelssohn. It is to this distinction that I now turn.

Mendelssohn's Creation

This is neither the time nor place to get into the biography of Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786), generally considered to represent the origins of modern Jewish philosophizing. However, it is certainly worth commenting that because of his historical situation—he was a Jew who could philosophize as a non-Jew, yet one who could never escape his Jewishness—he personally embodied the collision of the universal and the particular. On the one hand, an able philosopher in the field of metaphysics and aesthetics, he was initially uninterested in matters religious or ethnic. Drawn toward the universalizing tendencies of Enlightenment thinkers such as Leibniz and Wolff, he was quite content to write as a philosopher whose religious affiliation should have no bearing on his ability to form an argument. On the other hand, however, his success as a philosopher attracted the ire of many of his non-Jewish colleagues. How could a Jew (the symbol par excellence of particularism), many reasoned, engage in such rationalizing (and, by definition, universal) activities?[15] To rebut such claims, Mendelssohn became increasingly involved in defending Judaism and articulating an answer to the question of how a Jew could philosophize and remain a Jew committed to the traditions of his ancestors. Framing the question somewhat differently, how could the particular enter the totalizing discourses of the universal without being wholly consumed by them?

As a Jew with a strong belief in the harmony of rational analysis and religious discourse, Mendelssohn epitomizes the struggle of the particular (the Jew) within the universal (Christian Europe). For Mendelssohn, the universal and the particular were reconcilable because they were two sides of the same philosophical coin. In this, he was certainly an heir to

the medieval Jewish philosophical tradition. For Mendelssohn, not unlike Maimonides and his disciples, both Judaism and philosophy were firmly grounded in eternal and rational truths that are accessible to the unaided human intellect (e.g., there is a God, and killing is wrong). We do not need revelation to tell us how to behave morally—in this, both philosophy and Judaism are kindred spirits. The Jew and the non-Jew occupy the same ground of rationality and, as such, are no different than each other. Here, the universal reigns supreme. But if this is the case, as Mendelssohn so wants it to be, what need is there for the particular? Why do we need to have difference if everyone is essentially the same?

Mendelssohn must, then, confront head-on the paradox of how the particular differs from the universal *nonessentially*. This is where things get complicated for him. Having staked his claim in the universal, he must subsequently justify how the particular makes it possible. He must argue, as we shall witness presently, that Jews need their own particular ceremonial law in order to better access universally accessible truths. Jews are unique in that they alone have a set of commandments and ordinances that enable them to stay committed to the universal principles of religion. In claiming this, though, Mendelssohn can never quite answer why Jews either need or have a set of particular and particularizing commandments that promote reflection on universal truths necessary for human felicity. Why do others nations not need these commandments? If God has given all nations and peoples access to a set of universal truths, what need is there for particularism?

Mendelssohn will subsequently go to great pains to try to articulate an answer to this question. The very paradox in which he finds himself, however, will militate against a successful answer.[16] His argument is that the particular and the universal are one and the same, *except* insofar as the former possesses a set of commandments and ordinances that the latter does not need. Mendelssohn's claim is based less on reason and rationality than on a need to justify religious difference. The truths that the universal and the particular allow entry to are, on his reading, qualitatively identical to one another. In this there is no essential difference between German and Jew. However, Jews possess a ceremonial law that, while on the surface may make them different from Germans, does nothing more than aid Jews to further reflect on the same universal and universalizing truths that non-Jews possess. Jews need the particular, in other words, to reflect better upon the universal. Whether they need the particular to reflect upon the universal differently or more deeply is unclear.

In his magnum opus, *Jerusalem*, Mendelssohn argues that Judaism is not only a natural religion, but *the* natural religion par excellence. Unlike Christianity and its claims of Jesus's death and resurrection, for example, Judaism contains no revealed truths that are inaccessible to unaided reason.[17] Instead, Mendelssohn argues, Judaism is accessible to all: it does not remove Jews from European society but in fact makes them an intimate part of it, indeed the essential part. Yet Mendelssohn's construction of Judaism is no less fanciful and wistful than Rosenzweig's. Both imagine a pristine Judaism that exists somewhere in Judaism's ancient history and that functions as an antidote to contemporaneous problems. For Mendelssohn, the original, ancient (and by extension, authentic) faith confirmed nothing other than rational truths. This pristine faith was subsequently sullied—and here Mendelssohn follows in the footsteps of Maimonides[18]—by numerous historical and sociological forces that impeded this original monotheism, which is something that must be returned to in the present.

Near the end of the first section of *Jerusalem*, Mendelssohn paints an ideal portrait of what he calls "divine religion" (*die göttliche Religionen*), a form of natural religion that undergirds all positive faiths as their essence.[19] He writes of this divine religion in the following terms:

> It does not prod men with an iron rod; it guides them with the bands of love. It draws no avenging sword, dispenses no temporal goods, assumes no right to any earthly possessions, and claims no external power over the mind. Its weapons are reason and persuasion; its strength is the divine power of truth. The punishments it threatens, just like the rewards it promises, are the *effects of love*—salutary and beneficial for the very person who has to endure them. By these signs I recognize thee, daughter of Divinity! Religion! Who alone, in truth, are all-saving on earth as well as in heaven.[20]

The concept of a divine or natural religion was certainly not unique to Mendelssohn; rather it played a commanding role among Enlightenment thinkers. What is unique to Mendelssohn's vision of this divine religion, however, is that he locates it in Judaism.[21] As universal as this divine religion is, perceived imprecisely only by its absence or traces in other religions, its clearest manifestation is in the distinctiveness and particularity of Judaism, at least in the Judaism of Mendelssohn's own making.

Mendelssohn combines Enlightenment rationalist principles with a conception of revelation that emphasizes the distinctiveness of Judaism and secures for Jewish believers their destiny as God's chosen people. For him, revelation does not contain supernatural truths, but prescribes a way of life that stands to benefit all humanity. Judaism, in other words, is a religion whose eternal truths are universal and, as such, do not derive from revelation, even though its ceremonial laws do. In the second part of *Jerusalem*, Mendelssohn seeks to define Judaism as a revealed legislation as opposed to a revealed religion. In a famous and oft-quoted passage, he writes,

> I believe that Judaism knows of no revealed religion in the sense in which Christians understand this term. The Israelites possess a divine *legislation*—laws, commandments, ordinances, rules of life, instruction in the will of God as to how they should conduct themselves in order to attain temporal and eternal felicity. Propositions and prescriptions of this kind were revealed to them by Moses in a miraculous and supernatural manner, but no doctrinal opinions, no saving truths, no universal propositions of reason. These the Eternal reveals to us and to all other men, at all times, through *nature* and *thing*, but never through *word* and *script*.[22]

For Mendelssohn, as this passage clearly shows, the doctrinal aspects of Judaism coincide perfectly with Judaism as a manifestation of the "divine religion." Whereas Judaism added commandments to this religion, Mendelssohn argues, Christianity added dogma. Although, as others have argued, this is certainly a problematic claim because it fails to answer the question of why God did not reveal the ceremonial law to other peoples. Why did he reveal it only to the Jews? If the ceremonial law serves a necessary function, why is it exclusionary?[23] How, using the terms of this chapter, can the universal be universal when it is, at the same time, particular? Although Mendelssohn himself would have no problem with this reconciliation, it is one, as we have witnessed throughout this chapter, that is potentially problematic.

Mendelssohn would seem to imply—as is still customarily done today[24]—that the particular and the universal are no different from each other for the reason that they both provide access to the same truths. Juxtaposed against this claim, and potentially threatening to undermine it, is his assertion that the particular is actually superior

to the universal because the former possesses an exclusive and exclusionary ceremonial law that the latter does not.[25] Yet, and this is the paradox, if the ability to achieve felicity is a natural ability grounded in human autonomy, why do the Jews possess a set of rituals and ceremonies imposed upon them by miraculous intervention thousands of years in the past?[26]

It is this tension between the universalism of the Enlightenment and the particularism of Judaism that Mendelssohn attempts to gloss over. In many ways, Mendelssohn uses the universal to apologize for the particular and vice versa. On the one hand, Judaism, the particular par excellence, provides the clearest and most direct access into the truths of the universal; on the other hand, the universal is needed to define that to which the particular points the way. Each needs the other; but, even though they both claim to provide access to the same end—that is, human felicity—they must ultimately cancel each other out or, at the very least, contradict each other.

The tense relationship in which Mendelssohn held the universal and the particular is something—as we see even in Rosenzweig—that he would bequeath to all Jewish philosophers who came after him. In the subsequent Jewish philosophical tradition, however, the emphasis would be put not on the sameness of the universal and the particular but on their difference. Now the focus of argument will be that it is the particular in its very particularity that makes the universal possible.

Hermann Cohen and the Gift of the Jews

If the greatest contribution of Mendelssohn lies in his effort to smooth over the tension between particular and universal—which can be said to have laid the foundation for modern Jewish philosophizing—then the importance of Hermann Cohen (1842–1918)—especially in his late writings on the philosophy of Judaism and religion—resides in his articulation and development of Jewish ethics. Indeed, his discussion would function as the point of departure for many subsequent elaborations of this topic, the most important of which may be found in the writings of Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas. Until Cohen, much of Jewish philosophy, especially in the medieval period, had focused on virtue ethics, which puts pride of place on the agent's development of virtues that would result in moral behavior or good character.[27] The Enlightenment, largely indebted to Kant, signaled a change in focus from such virtue ethics to a

general and abstract set of universal rules that were universally applicable to specific issues.

For Cohen, ethics forms the bedrock of Judaism. It is the universal moral order that functions as the common origin and dignity of all. This moral ideal is held together by God and is accessible through the "religion of reason" (*die Religion der Vernunft*). This religion, he writes, "cannot recognize a methodical distinction in content between religion and morals, between Jewish religion and Jewish morals, with the exception of the methodological distinction [*methodischen Unterscheidung*] between ethics and religion."[28] In this sentence, Cohen immediately alerts us not only to the intersection of religion and the moral order, but also to that of the universal and the particular. Inspired by Kant, Cohen held that universality was not just *a* mark of truth, but *the* mark of truth.[29] Because of this, Cohen—like Mendelssohn before him—had to make Judaism into a universal religion, one that provided a beacon to all peoples.

The "religion of reason," according to Cohen, is that which is universal; it is as necessary as pure reason. It is that which, to use Cohen's own words, "turns religion into a general function of human consciousness; it makes consciousness human [*die Religion der Vernunft macht die Religion zu einer allgemeinen Funktion des menschlichen Bewußtseins, des Bewußtseins, als eines menschlichen*]."[30] Central to his conceptualization of this religion of reason is ethics. God becomes known to us not as the premodern Jewish philosophical tradition would claim, through metaphysics, but through the ethical life, that which provides individuals with their full humanity. Whereas ethics is concerned with ideals and is interested in individuals only as part of a universal humanity, the religion of reason restores to particular individuals their individuality.[31] Although it is not unique to Judaism, this religion "could and should be crystallized from Judaism."[32] The sources of Judaism (*die Quellen des Judentums*) provide, in other words, the best articulation of universal ethics and, thus, of universal humanity.

For Cohen, the particular (i.e., Judaism) provides the world with its universalism. Since it represents the origins of monotheism, his self-constructed Jewish tradition now provides the origins of the religion of reason. Cohen subsequently argues that this "religion of reason cannot be the religion of a single people [*nicht die Religionen eines einzelnen Volkes*], or the bastard offspring of a single age; reason must be uniform in all those men and peoples who have become conversant with science and philosophy."[33] Judaism, in other words, is not the religion of a singular

or particular people, but something of universal significance to all of humankind. Since only monotheistic religions can, in the imagination of Cohen, be religions of reason, and since Judaism is the original monotheistic religion, it follows that Judaism, the particular par excellence, now becomes the universal. As such, Cohen argues that Judaism offers the world "the original imprint of universal humanity [*das Urgepräge der allgemeinen Menschlichkeit*]."[34]

Polytheistic religions, in contrast to Judaism, posit a plethora of gods, with distinct personalities and attributes to be called upon at will. Monotheism, by contrast, cannot acknowledge different gods and instead recognizes a single, unique God—one that is relevant for and binding upon all humanity. Since the idea of such a God first emerged to historical consciousness with Judaism, this particular tradition necessarily becomes the original source of this religion of reason. Consequently, the investigation of a religion of reason must simultaneously uncover and recover that origin by interpreting Judaism's scriptures and practices in a new light, the light provided by the universalizing torch of morality.

When Greek philosophy posited an essential unity between the world and the universe, it led to pantheism, an undifferentiated system in which the world becomes nothing more than an extension of the nonworld and vice versa.[35] Judaism, by contrast, posits a stark, ontological separation between the two.[36] To signal this, Cohen argues that the biblical notion of creation is primarily ethical, as opposed to material, in that the creative act both symbolizes and establishes the ontological difference between God and the world. Greek and Jew, pantheism and monotheism, provide mutually exclusive worldviews that present humanity with a set of stark choices. Breaking with the medieval discussion of whether the universe was eternal or created temporally, Cohen switches focus and writes,

> In monotheism the problem of creation is not exhausted [*nicht erschöpft*] in the creation of the world; in Greek philosophy the question concerns only the origins of the cosmos. Here in monotheism, however, man as the carrier of reason and as the rational being of morality occupies a privileged position [*als Träger der Vernunft und als Vernunftwesen der Sittlichkeit*].[37]

As the font of monotheism, Judaism has a special role to play for all humanity. As we have just seen, Cohen conceives of Judaism as the

original historical and literary source of monotheism. Since monotheism represents the highest form of religion by providing the ethical standards for *all* humanity, Judaism provides the ethical teaching for the universal. For this reason, Judaism's particularity ultimately aims at an ethical ideal that includes all humanity.

For Cohen, monotheism represents the gift of the Jews. Monotheism, on his reading, "claims that not every people may have its own peculiar God, but that there is one God for all peoples [*sondern ein Gott muß für alle Völker sein*], just as there is only one mathematics for all peoples."[38] The spiritual and ethical power of the particular provides the exemplar that makes the universal possible. The particularism of Jewish monotheism, again paradoxically, succeeds in unifying the world in a way that Greek universalism could not. Cohen writes,

> Thus Israel, as a nation, is nothing other than the mere symbol for the desired unity of humankind [*das Symbol für das Desiderat der Menschheit*]. The Greek people could not present such a symbol; for it did not know the concept of humankind. The idea of one humankind could only arise under one God. The one God, however, arose in the one people. Therefore this one people had to endure [*Daher mußte dieses eine Volk fortbestehen*].[39]

Once again, the role of the particular is to sustain and nourish the universal, to remind it of its very universality. Whereas the Greek worldview made a sharp ontological division between Greek and non-Greek (i.e., barbarian), Judaism unites all of humankind under its ethical monotheistic canopy. The endurance of the Jewish people is thus necessary for the endurance of this ideal within the heart of the universal. Differing radically from Rosenzweig's portrayal of the eternity of the Jewish people on strictly ontological or genetic lines, Cohen believes that the Jews, and their ethical religion, must endure so they can point the way for the rest of humanity:

> This explains the duality of Israel's political fate. That the state declined, while the people were preserved, is a providential symbol of Messianism; it is the sign of the truth of monotheism [*das Wahrzeichen des Monotheismus*]. Not state, but yet a people. But this people is less for the sake of its own nation than as a symbol of humankind. A unique symbol for the unique idea [*Ein einziges*

> *Symbol für den einzigen Gedanken*]; the individuality [*Individualitäten*] of [this] people strives for the unique unity [*einzigen Einheit*] of humankind.[40]

The world needs the Jews, in other words, to remind them of their task. The spiritual power of Jewish particularism was liberated from the Jewish nation-state with the destruction of the Second Temple. The result is that Jewish political sovereignty became mutated into universal ethical sovereignty for the rest of the world—that is, for the universal. Judaism, and the Jewish people then become charged with the ethical task of presenting to the rest of the world the "religion of reason." Moreover, the continued presence of the Jewish people in the midst of various nation-states serves as an eternal flame of remembrance of this ideal and as vigilance against polytheism in all of its many forms. For this reason, on Cohen's reading, Judaism must by necessity be a diasporic religion in order to fulfill its redemptive task.

Yet in all of Cohen's fascinations, it is important to realize that his portrait of Judaism is as constructed, artificial, and embedded in the rhetoric of authenticity as that of any other philosopher we have seen in this study. For Cohen, the ideal is not the legal codes of rabbinic literature, but the messianic vitality of prophetic Judaism. Cohen admits the problem of his task when he writes that,

> even if I am referred to the literary sources of the prophets for the concept of religion, those sources remain mute and blind if I do not approach them with a concept [*mit einem Begriffe*], which I myself lay out as a foundation in order to be instructed by them and not simply guided by their authority.[41]

The result is a highly idiosyncratic and idealistic reading of the sources of Judaism. In his deft reading, these sources become the prime matter out of which he constructs his universal method that is or will become of universal relevance for all humanity.[42] He thus reads *into* these sources as much as he reads *out of* them a view of Judaism as a profoundly ethical system of belief and practice that possesses a unique and universalizing message. This is what permitted him to argue that monotheism was the historical source of the idea of universal ethical laws, and that Judaism offered the world its first model of a universalist morality.

It might be worthwhile to look briefly at the historical context of this argument. Abraham Geiger (1810–1874), Cohen's older contemporary and the father of Reform Judaism, had likewise desired to disentangle Judaism from what he considered to be outmoded notions such as peoplehood, ethnicity, and legalism. To do this, he redefined Judaism as enlightened, pure, even rational, and argued that only those aspects of Judaism that correspond to such features constitute its true meaning. Not surprising, Geiger locates Judaism's essence in its refined concept of ethical monotheism, the "idea of the unity and sanctity of God."[43]

Cohen, Geiger, and many other reformers were involved in the task of redefining Judaism along rationalist lines. Many of their constructions involved recalibrating Judaism not only as a religion, but as a religion of ethical monotheism that would lead to political emancipation for Jews in Europe by showing the universal significance of the tradition.[44] This is certainly a new interpretation of Judaism, one that—to paraphrase the preceding quotation from Cohen—finds very little precedent in the traditional sources. Indeed, it is this construction of Judaism that Rosenzweig, as we saw in the previous chapter, reacted strongly against.[45] Yet, in the final analysis, Cohen's construction, like Rosenzweig's and Mendelssohn's, proves to be highly imaginative and self-interested.

Cohen's Disciple: Emmanuel Levinas

Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995) is, arguably, one of the best-known philosophers of the latter half of the twentieth century. His philosophy is predicated on the notion of ethics as first philosophy (*éthique comme philosophie premier*)—that is, the idea that the other cannot be made into an object of the self—something, he argues, that is done by traditional metaphysics.[46] "One has to respond to one's right to be," according to Levinas, "not by referring to some abstract and anonymous law, or judicial entity, but because of one's fear for the Other [*mais dans la crainte pour autrui*]."[47] The responsibility for the other thus precedes any objective searching after truth. This means that—following the likes of Cohen and even Rosenzweig—recognizing the uniqueness and particularity of the other is the process by which the self acknowledges his or her universality.

The traditional philosophical interests of philosophy—metaphysics (what he calls ontology) and epistemology—have produced impediments to our ability to understand the world in all its complexity and diversity

and our place within it. In their stead, Levinas focuses on what he considers the higher priorities of ethics—our obligations and responsibilities for others in our face-to-face encounters with them—which simultaneously enable us to care for all humanity.[48] Knowledge of the universal, in other words, is contingent on knowledge of concrete particulars.

But if Levinas presents us with a philosophy of ethics, he also presents us with one of Judaism.[49] His, however, is a Judaism that is universally relevant precisely on account of its particularity. "A truth is universal when it applies to every reasonable being," he writes; a "religion is universal when it is open to all [*Une religion est universelle quand elle est ouverte à tous*]. In this sense, the Judaism that links the Divine to the moral has always aspired to be universal [*toujours voulu universel*]."[50] In its singularity, the universal is both encountered and sustained. The individual, in all of his or her individuality, only arises out of particularity by encountering the face of the other. To put this somewhat differently, it is Judaism's particularity that "conditions universality [*qui conditionne l'universalité*]."[51]

To elucidate this further, Levinas draws upon—like so many before him—the age-old Greek/Jew, Athens/Jerusalem, binary. Whereas philosophy aims for a universal mode of thought that is implied to be "Greek," Jews encounter such modes only in their particularity. Where there is particularity, there is always the threat of chosenness. To deal with this issue, Levinas argues that as a "chosen people," Jews—because of and not despite their religious particularity—provide a lesson for all. In an essay titled "Jewish Thought Today," he writes that "Jewish universalism has always revealed itself in its particularism [*L'universalisme juif se manifestait toujours dans le particularisme*]."[52] Writing about the formation of the State of Israel in the same essay, he notes that it is the place where the individual "is uprooted from his recent past for the sake of an ancient and prophetic past, where he seeks his authenticity."[53] This authenticity, grounded in a past as illusory as it is imagined, roots Judaism, making it a pillar beacon to others:

> Judaism has the consciousness to possess, through its permanence, a function in the general economy of Being. No one can replace it. Someone has to exist in the world who is as old as the world [*Il faut qu'il existe dans le monde quelqu'un d'aussi vieux que le monde*]. . . . Judaism has traversed history without taking up history's causes. It has the power to judge, alone against all, the victory of visible and

> organized forces—if need be in order to reject them. Its head may be held high or its head may be down, but it is always stiff-necked. This temerity and this patience, which are as long as eternity itself, will perhaps be more necessary to humanity tomorrow or the day after tomorrow than they were yesterday or the day before.[54]

Universal traditions, including the ethical traditions of the Western world, always have to be encountered through particular—meaning culturally specific—pathways. Israel, as the epitome of the particular, takes its place "in the time of nations":

> Israel, in its soul and conscience, i.e., Israel studying the Torah is, from its own point of view, already in alliance with the whole universe of nations [*déjà en alliance avec tout l'univers des nations*] . . . these rabbinic interpretations should doubtless be considered in conjunction with the prophetic theme of universalism [*thèmes prophetiques de l'universalisme*], in which the diaspora of Israel itself is assigned the mission of monotheism the bearer of justice, in which monotheism takes on meaning in relation to the nations.[55]

Whether Israel is signified as the Jewish people, as a metaphysical concept, or even as the modern nation-state, it is the particular par excellence. Following Cohen, and reflecting a theme that functions fugue-like in so much of Jewish philosophy, but especially in the modern period, this ideal of the particular becomes responsible for sustaining the rest of the world; that is, it becomes conceived of as the universal.

Conclusions

The universal and particular, the nations and the self-perceived elect nation, do not exist except in the gaze of each other. Yet, in requiring the other for its own existence, each one also undermines that other and, in the process, undermines itself. If the universal can only be glimpsed from the perspective of the particular, neither exists except insofar as each constructs the other as its obverse. If this is the case, then the "universal morality and justice" that some perceive to define as "Judaism's unique experience and [that which connects it] to the highest hopes of a pluralist humanity"[56] becomes a chimera. The so-called universalizing discourses of Jewish philosophy are ultimately another form of particularizing. They

are predicated, not surprisingly, on the need for a particular kind of Judaism, a particular kind of chosenness. In their desire not to have Judaism absorbed into the universalizing tendencies of non-Jewish philosophy, modern Jewish philosophers, from Mendelssohn onward, have created a Judaism that they argue (non-Jewish) philosophy requires for both its perfection and its fulfillment.

Such an argument is difficult to sustain, especially when non-Jewish philosophy tends to take little or no notice of Jewish philosophy. A non-Jewish philosopher, for example, would find the claim that Judaism reminds the rest of the world of its mission, whether ethical or otherwise, as nonsensical. As this chapter comes to a close, it is necessary to reiterate that such claims of Judaism's superiority, its election, its chosenness, or whatever we want to call it, are ultimately grounded in apologetics, in the need of the particular to both justify and legitimate its particularity in universalizing language. The so-called universal, the rest of the world, does not need the particular to remind it of its task, but the particular needs an imagined universal to define itself, to articulate simultaneously both what it is and what it is not.

For all the individuals discussed in this chapter, Jewish particularity becomes necessary for the world's existence and redemption. Yet, as I have tried to demonstrate, the many attempts to justify this position create as many problems as they attempt to solve. Is it truly the case that what we possess is a particular community pointing beyond itself, invoking the universal as an illusory idea, but all the while invoking it in its own idiom? This is the true paradox of Jewish philosophy, that which sustains it and that which, ultimately, limits it.

As the following chapter says Kaddish over a traditional concept of Jewish philosophy, it simultaneously points the way to a future, postmodern way of thinking. To do this, Shlomo ibn Gabirol and Judah Abravanel, two outliers who embody both the difficulties and the impossibilities of a particular narrative of Jewish philosophy, will join me by way of Gershom Scholem and the tradition of Wissenschaft des Judentums.

3

Kaddish

MUCH OF JEWISH philosophy—from Philo to Levinas—has sought to uncover Judaism in its pristine, timeless, or originary form. Today, more skeptical of the ideological constraints and monotony of such projects, we might well acknowledge the naiveté of such a task. Terms such as "pristine," "timeless," and "originary" are not value neutral, as we have witnessed in the previous chapters, but emerge from a host of nonhistorical claims associated with the rhetoric of authenticity and its concomitant politics of nostalgia. That which is constructed or imagined as ancient becomes valued in the present as somehow essential, the exemplar against which contemporary social and intellectual formations are judged and ultimately found wanting. Indeed, we might even go so far as to remark that the history of something that is problematically called "Jewish philosophizing" is little more than a series of attempts to create, disseminate, and enforce a particular wistful and rationalist agenda imagined to have existed in a nonexistent past, something that is perceived to hold out hope for future regeneration.

The result is that the existence, let alone the possibility, of something we today call "Jewish philosophy" raises serious doubts and concerns. Unfortunately, these concerns are often marginalized or overlooked in the service of some cosmopolitan or emancipatory end that seeks to normalize Judaism by holding it up to the standard of something else (e.g., liberalism or democracy). In emphasizing these concerns here, however, I want to suggest that the various historical intersections between Judaism, or perhaps better, the selective reading of certain Jewish sources through the light of certain universally inspired categories has not necessarily produced "Jewish philosophy," even though we have become habituated to call it by this name. What it has produced, on the contrary, is a set

of constructive theological readings in which the particular masquerades as the universal, and the universal gravitates toward and dominates the particular, for its own project of rehabilitation.

Despite such ideologically charged encounters, this intersection—as witnessed in the previous chapter—is often framed, using the language of the particular, to argue that the particular needs the universal for its fulfillment or that the universal finds its fullest expression in the particular. Opposed to such tidy integrationist arguments, I have suggested that the universal and the particular, philosophy and Judaism, represent such distinct and potentially irreconcilable worldviews that all they can do is collide and skirmish over a thinly patched fault line. This does not mean that this collision will not on occasion produce an individual such as a Maimonides or a Rosenzweig. However, even these individuals, despite the subtleties of their arguments, ultimately remain constructive theologians as opposed to philosophers, because they must continually wrestle with the divine status of a set of texts that they perceive to be sacred. For them, Jewishness, as capital "T" Truth, must always be a "given" and is something that can never be acknowledged as imagined or constructed in general terms, let alone in their own imaginations.

Only a systematic reevaluation of the historical and ideological processes that have gone into the formation of the rubric "Jewish philosophy" will, I believe, permit us to break with its traditional categories. These categories, as we shall see in this chapter, have been defined by a host of ideological agendas, virtually all of which revolve around the issue of normalizing the tradition by critiquing that which is infelicitous and emphasizing that which is rational. There becomes, in other words, both a proper Judaism and a proper way to study it. This dialectic, however, has further succeeded in essentializing Judaism by offering *the* Jewish response to whatever topic might be pressing. In the present, this has made Jewish philosophy into an object of occupation—not just one in which the two constituent terms seek to wrest control from each other, but also one in which various institutional forces try to mold the tradition in their own images and for their own endeavors.[1] Only by relinquishing Jewish philosophy's past will it be possible to liberate it and set a course for its future. This chapter seeks to accomplish those aims by reciting Kaddish over Jewish philosophy's memory, invoking its terms and categories with the aim of exposing its numerous fractures. Only by paying tribute to this past will it be possible, I hope, to imagine a future unencumbered by it. After an examination of how "Jewish philosophy" was invented in the

nineteenth-century, I turn to the eleventh-century Ibn Gabirol and the sixteenth-century Judah Abravanel. These two individuals, outliers to the tradition of something frequently referred to as "medieval Jewish philosophy," begin the process of unraveling some of its assumptions.

At this stage in my analysis, I think it important to be clear that I do not present this study as another faith-based criticism of Jewish philosophy. Although my approach may, at least in certain instances, appear phenomenologically similar to that of faith-based critics, my methods and my goals diverge sharply from theirs. Many of these latter critics, from the fourteenth-century Shlomo ben Adret to the contemporary Arthur Green, decry Jewish philosophy's inauthenticity, opposed as they are to using so-called foreign wisdom to justify Judaism. In the stead of philosophy, they are quite content to set up their own rival version of Judaism as somehow more authentic to a particular set of sources that they deem as authoritative (halakhah in the case of Shlomo ben Adret, and neo-Hasidism in that of Green).[2] Their versions, however, are just as constructed and just as grounded in the rhetoric of authenticity as that which they seek to undermine. My goal, on the contrary, is to contribute to Jewish philosophizing by calling for its overhaul.

The Invention of Jewish Philosophy

The invention of Jewish philosophy as both an object of study and as an academic discipline began, for all intents and purposes, in the nineteenth century and was largely associated with the movement known as Wissenschaft des Judentums (the Science of Judaism).[3] From its beginnings, the academic study of Judaism has largely been bound up with the apologetic desire to show that Jews and Judaism possess normalizing tendencies. At the epicenter of this imagining was the perceived rationalist agenda of what has now come to be called "Jewish philosophy" or the "Jewish philosophical tradition." What better way to show filiations between a monolithic Europe and a monolithic Judaism than in articulating their mutual investment in the Enlightenment project? From its inception in the nineteenth century until today, the study of Jewish philosophy has been heavily invested in the existential, the apologetic, and the political; but it has not necessarily always been an academic enterprise.

The overwhelming majority of scholarship in these formative years of the academic study of Judaism was concerned with improving the lot of Jews. If Jews could be made to be more "European" in the sense

that they, too, were seen to possess an essence and a history, it followed for these scholars that Jews could be emancipated. The history of something called "the Jews," retrofitted from the vantage point of the present, was now brought into existence. The tradition was subsequently reified, studied, periodized, and taxonomized and its defining elements were extracted by means of a set of technical skills borrowed from the German university curriculum (e.g., philology, text criticism, and historiography).[4] Once brought into existence, Jewish philosophy began to do real ontological work. Those aspects, as we have seen, that were deemed as enlightened, aesthetic, and rational took pride of place in shaping the contours of the past, and those aspects considered to be infelicitous, such as the mystical and the obscurantist, were largely, as Scholem would later argue, ignored and subsequently left out of the authoritative canon of the Jewish past.[5]

Despite the cloak of scientific objectivity, giving Jews and Judaism a history was largely motivated by both the necessity and the urgency of political emancipation.[6] Although it would certainly be mistaken to assume that the ever-expanding circle of Wissenschaft scholars represented a monolithic school or program of research, the overwhelming majority did share the belief that the secular study of religious texts—making critical editions of them, translating them, contextualizing them—could facilitate such emancipation. Their use of history and other scholarly methods was both chronistic in the sense that they desired to produce a past, and anachronistic in that they sought to uncover a latent present—the seeds for future renewal—in that past.

The academic study of Judaism thus had its origins in a highly charged political environment and consequently emerged as an apologetic enterprise. Scholarship was used to discover and unlock, or alternatively to unlock and discover, an essence of Judaism that fitted well with the larger European context in which these scholars found themselves. Since the essence of Judaism was located in the historical record, not in a timeless and authoritative set of religious texts, it was the job of the historian or philosopher to manipulate the disciplines of history and philology in order to bring this essence to light. Once unlocked, this essence could be used to articulate a path toward future renewal. This idea of a Jewish "essence" played a crucial role in some of the earliest attempts to write something that came to be referred to as "Jewish history." The discovery of this essence, after all, permitted the perception of continuity in Jewish history.[7]

Philosophy, as mentioned, fit into this framework on account of its ability to arbitrate "good" Judaism. Jewish philosophers were imagined to fit along a chronological continuum from Saadya Gaon to Moses Mendelssohn and beyond.[8] The desire to locate meaning in history along with the necessity of finding in history Jews "like us" contributed to the formation of a tradition of medieval Jewish philosophy comprising select individuals and texts that were interlocked by a series of perceived influences and anticipations. Certainly, many of these individuals and texts were important to earlier generations, but what is new in the nineteenth century is the *historical* study of such texts and the various ways in which they were perceived to stand *historically* in relationship to one another.[9]

A set of conceptual and taxonomic categories into which these thinkers could be placed was developed. Interestingly, these classifications—which included Kalamic, Platonic, Neoplatonic, Aristotelian, and Averroistic—were not specifically Jewish but were derived from Oriental studies and general philosophy; and hence, they could be used to further demonstrate the kinship between Jewish and non-Jewish thought. According to the basic narrative that was constructed, Jews started to engage in rational theology (*kalām*) in the eighth and ninth centuries through their contact with Muslims; this was replaced in al-Andalus by a more philosophical (yet, for the most part, unoriginal and potentially pantheistic) Neoplatonism; and finally, after an initial attempt by Ibn Daud, the commanding figure Maimonides introduced Aristotelianism into Judaism.[10] Although Maimonides's synthesis received a torrent of criticism (the so-called Maimonidean Controversies), his epigonic supporters attempted to defend his ideas. In addition to this general schema, one still largely in force today,[11] neat and tidy distinctions between rationality and numerous species of irrationality (e.g., mysticism and pantheism) were introduced as a further way to arrange, include, or occlude these individuals as appropriate.

Location, Dislocation, Relocation

The great orientalist and father of the modern academic study of Judaism, Moritz Steinschneider, was once reported to have remarked that "the task of Jewish studies is to provide the remnants of Judaism with a decent burial."[12] Whether or not the comment can be accurately attributed to him, it would play a major role in Gershom Scholem's damning

indictment of an earlier generation of Wissenschaft scholars.[13] For Scholem, Steinschneider's purported necrology had disastrous consequences: "The old books, once they came close [to this earlier generation], had their brilliance taken away, and that which was translucent and shining became opaque and cold."[14] Steinschneider's remarks, whether real or apocryphal, now began to function as a metonym of an entire orientation toward Jewish data—one that revolved around Jewish emancipation and the reduction of difference from non-Jews. In its stead, Scholem sought to replace this "orgy of mediocrity" by drawing "a renewed power from the roots of national renewal, from the Zionist awakening, and from the constant contact with the atmosphere of rebuilding a nation."[15]

For Scholem, scholarship on Jewish data had to remove itself from the philological and historical necrophilia of Wissenschaft.[16] Such scholarship, following the personal trajectory of his own life story, was in dire need of dislocation and relocation. Just as he had left the comforts of his own assimilated life in Germany to take up the dream of a renewed Jewish-Zionist consciousness in the land of Israel, so, too, he believed that secular Jewish scholarship must overcome the illusory dreams of earlier generations—dreams that were ultimately based on the bourgeoisie desire to Germanize, something he thought was based on the myth of self-deception.[17] Traditional scholarship on Judaism, grounded in the chimerical concerns of assimilation and desire for political emancipation, had created an intellectual atmosphere of stagnation, something he refers to as a form of self-censorship,[18] leading to the formation of a false consciousness among German Jews.[19] To ward off such stagnation, something he perceived to be grounded in cultural and intellectual inauthenticity, Scholem wrote articulately about how during his "search for the tradition that had been lost to my circle, a tradition that had a great magical attraction for me, the writings of the ancient Jews seemed infinitely rich and alive."[20] To return to this tradition, Scholem called for a revolution that turned on relocation: from Germany to Israel, from German to Hebrew, from disinterest to engagement, and from death to renaissance.[21]

To facilitate this translocation, to cement firmly his break from the rationalist proclivities of his predecessors, Scholem located the essence of the tradition in the mystical. The mystical strains of Judaism, it will be recalled, had embarrassed his predecessors because they did not fit with their rationalist vision of what Judaism was or should be. As a result, the

so-called mystical, or the irrational, risked revealing the disjuncture between Jew and European precisely at the moment when, for some Jewish intellectuals at least, they had been brought together in fragility. If reason revealed points of contact between German and Jew, mysticism showed their potential rupture, thereby tearing the dream of a shared and utopian German culture asunder. Behind this tear, however, Scholem located freedom of a different sort.

Rather than abnegate the anomic tendencies of the mystical, Scholem gravitated toward them, recognizing their potential to lead to Jewish spiritual renewal in a new homeland. The result, he hoped, proffered a renaissance of peoplehood far beyond the shackles of European comfort. It was in the mystical, now using Rosenzweig's language, where Jews would be kept together by collectively withstanding the onslaught of history.[22] Seeking comfort in the abode of this no less romanticized collectivity, Jews and Judaism could exist uncontaminated by the demands of historical consciousness. The scholarship associated with this new consciousness was to be grounded in the construction of a new essence that, in the words of Asher Biemann, could endure "both philosophical eternity and historical transience."[23]

Despite appeals to the contrary, Scholem did not follow Rosenzweig's lead of escaping from history. Instead, he gravitated to its record and began what would be a lifetime of sound historical and philological work. There, amid the blowing sands of temporality, Judaism's core could be uncovered and, despite Scholem's reservations about an earlier generation of scholarship, subjected to historical scrutiny.[24] The difference, though, was that Scholem had a lifelong interest in anarchism and nihilism, symbolized par excellence in Judaism by the Sabbatian movement, which he believed subsequently gave birth to Enlightenment forms of Judaism (e.g., *haskalah* and Reform Judaism) once their original religious impulse had been exhausted.[25] Scholem writes that

> an understanding of the Sabbatian movement, in my opinion, depends on whether the attempt to link the earthly realm, the sphere of history, to the heavenly realm, the sphere of the Kabbalah, is successful and to explain the one in light of the other. For "the worldly is like the heavenly realm." Both truly form a single "realm"—a realm of motion through which human experience ultimately unfolds. This cannot be understood merely as "intellectual" or "social" but rather reveals itself through many primary movements.[26]

There was, paradoxically, very little difference between Scholem and his predecessors: both used the tools of philology and history to produce Judaisms crafted in their own image. The result is that the two major competing visions of secular Jewish scholarship to emerge in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—that of Wissenschaft des Judentums and that of Scholem—were both grounded in the regeneration of Jewish peoplehood. Both Scholem and the earlier generation of Wissenschaft scholars created Judaisms—rival Judaisms—that fitted their vision of the tradition's place within the modern world. For the latter, it was a liberal Judaism that would lead to emancipation in Europe; for Scholem, it was a sound historical, philological, and taxonomical reading of Kabbalah that would sow the seeds for contemporary renewal in the land of Israel.[27]

Despite Scholem's scathing criticism of an earlier generation of Jewish scholars working in Germany, his work was, on one level, very similar to theirs. As they had, he too sought to uncover the fundament of Jewish peoplehood, that which kept and sustained them throughout the millennia. The common enterprise, for Scholem as it was for those associated with Wissenschaft des Judenthums, took place against the backdrop of history. The crucial difference between Scholem and those of whom he was critical was that whereas the latter argued that the meaning of Judaism—its essence (e.g., ethical monotheism)—could be found in history but not reduced to it, Scholem thought that it could not because, for him, all experience is ultimately mediated in and through language.[28] There cannot, at least on Scholem's reading, be an essential Jewish experience because the specific languages that Jews speak historically and culturally condition all such experiences.

Yet, despite his use of meticulous historical scholarship to bring about the dislocation of Jewish essence, Scholem nonetheless engaged in his own mythopoeia.[29] According to his famous tripartite schema, Judaism, in the biblical period, struggles to free itself of pure myth and, while partially successful, is never quite able to sever itself from the mythic world of its natural surroundings. The rabbinic period, by contrast, becomes associated with the institutionalization of religion. This period represents the rationalization and legalization of the tradition, and thereby witnesses the formulation of an impersonal God (seen, for example, in the rationalism of the emerging Jewish philosophical tradition, and perhaps best epitomized in structures associated with Maimonidean rationalism). This, in turn, produces a mystical countercurrent, symbolized by the Kabbalah, which seeks to return to and resuscitate the biblical myth in order

to develop a mystical cosmology, what Scholem calls "the revenge of myth upon its conqueror."[30] In Hegelian fashion, this mystical period then results in a renewal of rationalism in the Enlightenment, where mysticism is again suppressed, at which point it again resurges in a period of Jewish self-assertion and reconnection to land and power in Zionism.[31] Scholem thus sees himself as intimately involved in the unfolding and rehabilitation of Jewish history.

For Scholem, critical historical scholarship simultaneously helped understand the past and aided in the reconstruction of the present. However, as much as Scholem appealed to the claims of historical and objective scholarship, his Zionism, in both its cultural and political manifestations, served as the necessary frame for his project of reconstructing Jewish history. In this respect, his project differed little from those of his emancipation-obsessed predecessors. The desire to make the particular stand for or embody the universal, as we have already witnessed numerous times in this study, has dangerous consequences. In his desire to rewrite the Wissenschaft myth of Jewish messianism, Scholem introduced the apocalyptic. In putting the apocalyptic, and its handmaiden, the anomic, at the center of his interpretation of Judaism, Scholem sought to upend his predecessors' obsession with reason and rationality. Yet, in critiquing the structure that they located in the annals of Jewish history, he relocated, both literally and metaphorically, this structure elsewhere—in the subterranean depths of mysticism, a current whose history Scholem single-handedly traced and articulated from his study in Jerusalem.

Scholem's critique of his predecessors is highly complicated. In the theories and methods produced by Wissenschaft, he saw reflected himself, his life in Germany, and his complex relationship to his father.[32] Wissenschaft's adumbration represented Scholem's greatest political fear. His break with the movement was as much existential as it was scholarly. Despite all his efforts to differentiate his type of scholarship from theirs, they are, as already noted, remarkably similar. Both are grounded in the historical and philological record, and both seek to uncover the structure of Jewish history for the sake of contemporary renewal. Where they differ, of course, is in the meaning of this renewal. For Wissenschaft, it is located in political emancipation in Europe; for Scholem, in the difference supplied by Zionism.

Perhaps no less than the views he criticized, Scholem's vision of Judaism—his overarching philosophy of history—risks being consumed

by overarching ideological concerns. The dialectic of Wissenschaft's location and Scholem's relocation has largely created the impasse in which we now find ourselves. The hope for the future, as the remaining chapters in this study suggest, must be in the complex space, the nonspace, associated with the confusion and dissonance of dislocation. Only through such a fracture from the past—from its occupations, preoccupations, and investments with various ideological claims—will it be possible to reconfigure the intersection and relationship between Judaism and philosophy.

Wissenschaft's Bastards

Whether we like it or not, we all live with the ghosts of Wissenschaft's creation. Their categories, their taxonomies, and their canons, for the most part remain ours. Rather than take them for what they are—various constructions produced in the workshops of ideology—we continue to assume that they exist naturally in the world. Rather than interrogate them, we have largely taken them over en masse. A quick perusal of any given program for the Annual Meeting of the Association for Jewish Studies (AJS), for example, bears this out. There we witness all the taxonomic divisions developed in the second half of the nineteenth century: Kabbalah, medieval Jewish philosophy, medieval Jewish history, medieval literature, modern Jewish philosophy, and so on. These divisions have been and continue to be responsible for slicing up Jewish intellectual life into distinct, often hermetically sealed, categories that are taken for granted as opposed to queried. Our intellectual capital, in other words, is largely derived from the problematic bequest of our predecessors.

This legacy, despite its large and influential endowment, functions as an impediment to both understanding and appreciating the actual fluidity of such categories. When we assume, for example, that "philosophy" and "Kabbalah" represent two different worldviews, we automatically reproduce the Wissenschaft arguments that marginalize philosophy at the expense of mysticism and those of Scholem that do the opposite. In repeating their productions, however, we lose sight of the manifold ways in which Kabbalah and philosophy not only actively produced each other, but often sat together quite comfortably in the minds of many medievals.[33] The fact that they exist as antagonistic units in institutions such as the AJS, where they fight for limited and shrinking institutional space,

reveals less about the history of the development and dynamic interaction of these two "systems" than it does about modern apologia on the nature and structure of Judaism, including its place within both the modern nation-state and the contemporary university.

Another example of the ways in which Wissenschaft categories have infiltrated modern study is in the periodization of Jewish history and intellectual life. The structures and termini of ancient, rabbinic, medieval, early-modern, and modern Judaism all date to the nineteenth century and mirrored the periodic taxonomies of European history. It was, as mentioned in the previous pages, a further way in which the academic study of Jews and Judaism could be grafted onto the categories that Europeans used to create themselves and invest their modern nation-states with meaning, and thus it became yet another point of contact and cross-pollination between the Jews and Europe. Despite their extreme artificiality, such periodizations and taxonomies are subsequently imagined as watertight, even though they are ultimately retroactive impositions, and would have been completely foreign to those who lived in them.

Wissenschaft des Judentums was obsessed with history and the historicization of Judaism.[34] It arose in the period of empire when German and French historians fed the fuel of nationalist causes by both creating and contributing to romantic notions of peoplehood.[35] If other nations possessed a national history, so the claim went, then Jews must also do so. In this respect, Jews were no different than other Europeans: a magnificent past was imagined and subsequently constructed. It was a past from which all infelicities were neatly excised and one that would in turn provide the seeds for contemporary renewal and the creation of a future nationalist redemption. This led to the creation of the modern university and the programmatic creation of all the modern sciences to make the past accessible.[36] Jewish fascination with the tools of creating national histories was certainly connected to an emancipatory need: the desire to show Germans and other Europeans that the Jews, like them, possessed a rich history and thus qualified for equality. The creation of something now referred to as Jewish history could also show others the important role Judaism played in history, functioning, for example, as the midwife that produced Christianity and Islam.[37]

This obsession with history and historicization led naturally to both the creation and the periodization of Jewish philosophy. This meant that primary attention was focused on producing a set of canonical thinkers (e.g., the now well-established chronological continuum from Saadya

Gaon to Mendelssohn), the canonical texts produced by such individuals (e.g., *The Book of Duties and Beliefs, The Guide of the Perplexed, The Wars of the Lord*), and the formulation of a hermeneutic that traced a series of influences and anticipations through these individuals and texts. Saadya's rationalist theology, for example, was picked up by the more rationalist, if less systematic, "Neoplatonism" of Abraham bar Hiyya or Ibn Ezra, whose thought led directly into the arch-rationalism of Maimonides, which was perceived to represent the epitome of Jewish rationalism and the most important historical iteration of Jewish philosophy. Maimonides's thought was then received by a set of epigonic commentators who were unable to hold Judaism and philosophy in the same creative tension, at least until the time of Gersonides. There then followed a series of informed critics of philosophy (e.g., Nahmanides and Hasdai Crescas) that culminated in the thought of Isaac Abravanel. And so ended the medieval Jewish philosophical world.[38] This subsequently led into the world of "modern Jewish philosophy"—conceived of from the vantage point of today—as beginning with Moses Mendelssohn and the Haskalah before "evolving" into Wissenschaft des Judentums, Hermann Cohen, and Franz Rosenzweig, and ending with Emmanuel Levinas.

Today, wrestling with historicism is seen as one of the most productive aspects of the Jewish philosophical canon.[39] This is one way that it is possible to avoid the search for a pristine or authentic Judaism, an activity that has formed the right hand of not only Jewish philosophy since its inception, but the academic study of Jewish philosophy since its beginnings in the nineteenth century. Yet, despite this movement toward and struggle against historicism, the study of Jewish philosophy—whether in its medieval or modern guises—still tends to follow the models and taxonomies supplied by our Wissenschaft predecessors. Jewish philosophical texts are appreciated as historical contributions that Jews made to the particular times, places, and cultures in which they lived; a set of counterpoints is often set up between Jewish and non-Jewish thinkers (e.g., Ghazali and Halevi, Alfarabi and Maimonides, Heidegger and Rosenzweig), and the application of universal ideas to specific Jewish concerns is often articulated and underscored in the process.

We return again to the trope of occupation. Jewish thinkers are made to occupy a set of historical and historicized philosophical "schools," from Neoplatonic to Aristotelian to Kantian, in which they function as tokens of perceived universal applicability. A chapter in a history of philosophy textbook dealing with medieval Aristotelianism, for example, might cite

near its end the work of the Jew Maimonides (and the Muslim Averroes) in order to show that this "school" was not simply the product of Euro-Christianity. Having a Jew in the mix shows that these philosophical schools are of universal significance and that their categories can be used to articulate particularist cases. Within this context, albeit from the other side, these larger universal schools are subsequently contorted and made to occupy Judaism, where such contortions are held up to be proper articulations of what Judaism is or should be.

In all these configurations, Jewish philosophy—whatever it may mean or however it is constructed—is largely caught up with a set of larger intellectual and ideological forces. In this, we in the present differ little from our Wissenschaft forbearers.

The Ibn Gabirol / Judah Abravanel Paradox

Those who engage in the study of Jewish philosophy are often obsessed with defining both the quiddity and the parameters of the topic. For example, it is clear that Maimonides represents a "Jewish philosopher" because he obviously read Jewish sources through a philosophical (i.e., Aristotelian) lens—although paradoxically, and perhaps tellingly, he nowhere refers to himself as a "Jewish philosopher." Occupying the other end of the continuum is someone like Edmund Husserl. Certainly he was a Jew and someone who engaged in philosophical activity, but does that make him either a practitioner of or part of the canon of Jewish philosophy? The customary response is that it does not, because he was not interested in reading philosophy and Jewish sources together. Indeed, Husserl considered himself to be a freethinker in the sense that his ideas were not confined to or by religious dogma. The great paradox, of course, is that even though Husserl was baptized as a Lutheran in his late twenties, he was nonetheless suspended from his professorial duties at the University of Freiburg in 1933 because of his Jewish heritage.

Maimonides and Husserl clearly represent two different sides of the so-called Jewish philosophy continuum. Less clear, however, is the case of individuals such as Shlomo ibn Gabirol (1021–1058) and Judah Abravanel (1465–after 1521). Although such individuals are today grouped within the canon of Jewish philosophy, their existence within it has been problematic and contentious. They thus provide two instances that threaten such a canon, exposing its artificiality. Ibn Gabirol's *yanbūʿ al-hayāh* (translated into Latin in the twelfth century as *Fons Vitae*, both meaning the "fountain

of life") and Abravanel's *Dialoghi d'Amore*, for example, make very few or no references to traditional Jewish sources. Because of this—that neither attempts to reconcile Judaism and philosophy—their intended readership would seem to have primarily been non-Jews. In fact, Ibn Gabirol was long thought to have been either an Arabo-Muslim thinker or an Augustinian Christian, known by the Latinized name of Avicebron or Avencebrol.[40] In like manner, it was long believed by many that Abravanel, who mentions only biblical references and does not engage later rabbinic sources, had converted to Christianity.[41] What, then, does the Jewish philosophical canon do with such individuals?

Ibn Gabirol's *Yanbūʿ al-hayāh* is one of the most original works of medieval Neoplatonism.[42] Largely devoted to the topic of elucidating the concept of uniformity throughout the cosmos, the work concerns itself in particular with arguing that everything in the universe is constituted of matter and form. These qualities are manifested throughout the universe, from the highest limits of the spiritual world to the lowest limits of the physical one. Although all levels of the universe possess this distinction between spiritual and material, the farther they are removed from the universe's first source the less spiritual they become. From this argument, we see that Ibn Gabirol's thought is heavily indebted to the intellectualized quasi theology of Neoplatonsim, which imagines God as the ultimate reality that infuses all things. In order for the individual to contemplate the universe (and, by extension, God) he or she must engage in scientific observation and live an ethical life. This permits the individual to return to her or his source and to reclaim "being" in the fullest and truest sense of the term.

Because of the novelty and originality of his thought, Ibn Gabirol kept his philosophical speculation free from dogmatic theology, not citing verses from rabbinic literature or from the Bible. *Yanbūʿ al-hayāh* was embraced by Christians and Muslims; but despite the originality of Ibn Gabirol's thought, the absence of any reference to Jewish texts largely meant that this important philosophical work was overlooked by something that we today call "Jewish philosophy." Only in the mid-nineteenth century, when Solomon Munk "discovered" that the text had been written by a Jew, did the *Fons Vitae* become, retrospectively, imagined as a work of "Jewish philosophy." Until this time, the so-called world of Jewish philosophy had to make do with Ibn Gabirol's religious poetry (such as *Keter Malkhut*) or less original philosophical works (e.g., *The Improvement of the Moral Qualities*).

A similar case is found in Judah Abravanel, the son of the famous diplomat, biblical commentator, and informed critic of philosophy Isaac Abravanel.[43] Like his father, Judah fled Spain in 1492 and ended up in Naples, where he began a lifetime of itinerancy throughout the country. Sometime during the course of his travels in Italy, he wrote the *Dialoghi d'Amore*, belonging to the genre of the *trattato d'amore* (treatise on love), which was intimately connected to both the Renaissance and the development of the Italian vernacular. Despite the fact that some think Judah converted to Christianity (which seems unlikely), his relationship to the intellectual luminaries of the Italian Renaissance tradition is extremely problematic.[44] Because he wrote it in the vernacular,[45] because he wrote it in the highly stylized form of the literary dialogue, and because he did not deal with what were considered to be traditional themes of "Jewish philosophy," the *Dialoghi* was, like Ibn Gabirol's work, primarily picked up by non-Jews.[46]

This is particularly evident in Judah Abravanel's discussion of love as a philosophical principle. The traditional philosophical notion of love, going back at least to the time of Plato, is that love results from the imperfection and privation of the one that loves. One loves, in other words, what one does not possess.[47] Accordingly, what is imperfect loves what is perfect, and what is perfect (i.e., God) neither loves nor desires. The predominant philosophical theory from late antiquity to the Middle Ages was that the First Cause of the universe (i.e., God) is loved but does not love. Judah Abrvanel's theory of love, by contrast, was intimately connected to the literary interests of humanism and the aesthetic sensibilities of Renaissance artists.[48] As a consequence, Judah faulted previous thinkers for (1) not ascribing love to God and (2) confining their discussion of love primarily to that between humans, thereby ignoring the dynamic role of God in relationships based on love.

One of the most surprising features of the *Dialoghi*'s history is that a work that is today included within the canon of Jewish philosophy started out as the equivalent of a European bestseller among non-Jews.[49] In the years immediately following its Italian publication, the *Dialoghi* was translated into virtually every European vernacular. This popularity might have been a result of the prominent role that grace (*grazia*) plays in the *Dialoghi* or of the fact that Judah frequently stresses the interlocking relationship between the corporeal and the spiritual, something that seems to have resonated with contemporaneous Christian treatments of the incarnation in literary fiction.[50]

Especially enigmatic, from our point of view, are the last years of Judah's life, from 1521 when he was requested to give medical attention to Cardinal Raffaele Riario in Naples until his death sometime before 1535—which was the year Mariano Lenzi discovered the *Dialoghi* and published it in Rome. There is some evidence that Judah moved to Rome near the end of his life and even a suggestion that he fell in with a Christian group of Neoplatonists. Indeed, the 1541 edition of the work claims that Judah converted to Christianity (*dipoi fatto christiano*). His conversion, however, seems highly unlikely because (1) it is not mentioned in the first edition, on which all subsequent editions and translations were based, and (2) there is no internal evidence in the *Dialoghi* to suggest it. In fact, one of the characters in the work implies the exact opposite, stating that "all of us believe in the sacred Mosaic law" (*noi tutti che crediamo la sacre legge mosaica*).[51] It seems, then, that either a careless or overzealous editor inserted the phrase "*dipoi fatto christiano*" into a later edition of the *Dialoghi*.[52]

Without wading further into their ideas and philosophical systems, suffice it to say that both Ibn Gabirol and Judah Abravanel test the viability of something constructed—from the vantage point of the nineteenth century—as "Jewish philosophy." In their very incongruity, these two individuals expose the tear in the fragility of the medieval Jewish philosophical canon and, by extension, in Jewish philosophy. Their work was excluded from the canon as long as they were believed to be either non-Jews (in the case of Avicebron/Ibn Gabirol) or apostates (as in the case of Judah Abravanel), because it was thought to have nothing of quality to add.[53] But when Ibn Gabirol and Judah Abravanel were found to be "ethnically" and "religiously" Jewish, their thinking was subsumed within the canon, even though their major works contained nothing one would consider "Jewish." That is, neither Ibn Gabirol's *Fons Vitae* nor Abravanel's *Dialoghi d'Amore* makes mention of or contributes to biblical interpretation, halakhah, or the interface between Judaism and philosophy. The negative, however, could then become neatly framed as a positive. Their very lack of reference to Jewish sources can now be made to reveal to just what extent they resisted the "particularist" urge and, instead, chose to be "universalists."

It may come as no surprise that the so-called ethnic component of Jewish philosophy (regardless of whether we attach "medieval" or "modern" to it) seems to trump all else. Traditionally outside the Jewish philosophical canon, the author of *Fons Vitae* was included once it was clear that he was the Jew Ibn Gabirol. Similarly, Judah Abravanel was

rejected from the canon until there was agreement that he had not converted to Christianity, but in fact had remained a Jew. What does this say about the nature of Jewish philosophy? It would seem, then, that the sole criterion for inclusion into the field is circumstance of birth and identity politics.

Conclusions

The cases of Shlomo ibn Gabirol and Judah Abravanel reveal both the complexity and the artificiality of Jewish philosophy. Rather than show Jewish philosophy as a natural activity, these two individuals display it as a nineteenth-century construct, one imagined retroactively by a set of German-Jewish intellectuals with the aim of political emancipation and religious improvement. Although those two goals have largely receded into the background, the categories and terms of reference that went with them remain to this day. They still largely define the way we talk about Jewish thought both in the medieval period and in the present. The result is distortion—a distortion of both what Judaism is and what Jewish philosophy is. The following chapter will explore this in further detail by providing a reexamination of the construct that is customarily referred to as "medieval Jewish philosophy." Rather than emphasize the rational and the universal dimensions of this thought, which is often epitomized by Maimonides, I instead focus on the totalitarian aspects of this tradition.

4

Authoritarianism

IN 1865 HEINRICH Steiner published a work in which he declared that anyone affiliated with the Mutazilite branch of Islamic theology (*kalām*) was a freethinker.[1] The individuals associated with this school, he opined, represented the creative intersection of Greek philosophy and Muslim thought. The result, according to him, was a genuinely liberal and rationalist discourse that subsequently paved the way for the great Islamic rationalists, such as Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes. Arguing against this position, Ignaz Goldziher claimed that the Mutazilites "were intolerant in the extreme. A tendency to intolerance lies in the nature of the endeavor to frame religious belief in dogma."[2] My goal here is not to wade into the debate on the rationalizing or irrationalizing tendencies of medieval Islamic theology. Rather, I mention it in the present context because it seems to me that, not unlike our perception of medieval Jewish philosophy, it is ultimately a matter of framing. Just as those who want to imagine a rationalist dimension in medieval Islam tend to gravitate toward the Mutazilites and the philosophical tradition that grew out of them, one can easily point to the medieval Jewish philosophers as upholding the virtues of liberalism and rationalism in Judaism.[3] However, in each case, the same school can be examined from the opposite perspective with potentially different results.

As we have already seen in this study, the construction of a rationalist genealogy in Judaism that stretches unbroken from Saadya Gaon to Hermann Cohen and Emmanuel Levinas cannot be separated from the rationalist sensibilities of nineteenth-century Wissenschaft des Judentums. This movement, it will be recalled from the previous chapter, essentially created the field of what we today refer to as "Jewish philosophy." Its adherents did so, moreover, in their desire to modernize Judaism, thereby

emancipating Jews and ultimately setting them on a path to make them fully European. This is certainly not to imply that Jewish philosophy has to be simply assimilationist; however, in stressing the universalist dimension of the tradition, the tendency to emphasize filiations between Jew and European is certainly strong. In their quest to find medieval antecedents for their program, those associated with this movement gravitated toward those historical Jewish figures that were believed to uphold their ideals. This led them, as we have seen, to the figures associated with rationalism—a rationalism that they largely imagined and framed in their own terms. Representing the perceived synthesis between Athens and Jerusalem, medieval thinkers were subsequently modernized and liberalized, and became the keys to unlock Jewish emancipation in Europe. And thus was born the medieval Jewish philosophical canon, out of which would gradually emerge something that we can today refer to as a canon of modern Jewish philosophy.

But this construction, indeed like any construction, is potentially one-dimensional and perspectival. It is, moreover, one that is built upon the emancipatory needs of a certain group of German Jews and filtered through their presentist concerns. Although those emancipatory needs have largely been transcended, we still—consciously or not—implicitly buy into their vision and methods by taking on their terms, categories, and modes of analysis. The medieval Jewish philosophical tradition is, in many ways, built upon a fiction, one based more on nineteenth-century desire than it is on anything inherently "medieval."[4] Just as every Jewish philosopher—from Saadya Gaon to Emmanuel Levinas—has been guilty of constructing a pristine Judaism using the rhetoric of authenticity, the scholars of Wissenschaft des Judentums did something similar: they established an unbroken line of premodern and modern thinkers reflecting their own understanding of what proper Judaism should be. Within this canon could be found the seeds for contemporary rejuvenation. For these nineteenth-century scholars, as for the philosophers who were made to cohabit with one another in this canon, a past could be unlocked—even though it was a past that existed nowhere except in the specter of their own present.

The goal of this chapter is to try to deconstruct our inherited narrative of the history of medieval Jewish philosophy by shifting focus and retelling the story from a slightly different perspective. In keeping with the major focus of this study, I prefer to see reason as an ideological construct and to see the rational understanding of Judaism as an authoritarian impulse to force Jews to submit to reason, often using the threat that if they

refuse, they will have "no place in the world to come." Or, to quote from Maimonides's Thirteen Articles of Faith found in his commentary to the Mishnah, tractate Sanhedrin:

> If a man gives up one of these foundational principles, he has removed himself from the Jewish community. He is an atheist, a heretic, an unbeliever who "cuts among the plantings." We are commanded to hate him and destroy him. Of him it is said: Shall I not hate those who hate you, O Lord?[5]

Although they claimed that rationalism was their standard of legitimacy, the medieval Jewish philosophers ultimately produced a totalitarian version of Judaism that was predicated on what they considered to be an authentic and uncontaminated past. Certain aspects of their vision would appeal to a generation of rationalists in the nineteenth century who likewise upheld rationality as the authentic and true form of Judaism. For them, as for the canon of medieval Jewish philosophers that they largely created in their own images, anything that did not fit their reading of Judaism could be written off as legal, obscurantist, or mystical.

If philosophy has always possessed a totalitarian streak threatened by diversity (whether ethnic, religious, or intellectual), we should not be surprised that this streak remains even when we append the adjective "Jewish" to it. In the medieval period, no less than in the contemporary period, philosophy creates an exclusive vision—one that manufactures a particular type of Judaism that gains legitimacy from its proximity and occupation. Philosophy, in other words, has the potential to tease out from Judaism something that is no less proscriptive and totalitarian and frame it in a new light, that of Greek-inflected rationalism. The result is that Jewish philosophy sees as its main responsibility the production of a set of truth claims that are articulated where Judaism and philosophy meet on uncertain terrain, and where a Judaism that is imagined as "proper" or "good" can be performed.

Medieval Jewish Philosophy: The Traditional View

According to the majority of our modern textbooks, all produced sharing the same basic vision of Wissenschaft des Judentums, medieval Jewish philosophy represents one of the high points of Jewish civilization. Rationalism, that which is signified as good, represents Judaism at its most

cosmopolitan and becomes, not surprisingly, a sign that the tradition is developing for the better or, at least, along lines that can be interpreted as "modern." Not unlike their modern counterparts, medieval Jewish philosophers are imagined to represent the universal tendency within the tradition. The Judaism that they produced was envisioned as opening the tradition up to neighboring civilizations as opposed to making it more insular (something that halakhists and mystics were perceived to do). As a result, Jewish philosophers are seen as taking the best that non-Jews or non-Judaism had to offer (i.e., rationalism) and applying it to their own tradition. The result is the problematic and artificial terms that we witnessed in the previous chapter: "Jewish kalām," "Jewish Neoplatonism," "Jewish Aristotelianism," "Jewish Platonism," and so on. Jewish philosophy, on this reading, emerges as a synthesis between the Judaic and the non-Judaic, or framed in another way, between Jerusalem and Athens. Both the falsity and the fragility of this synthesis are rarely noted; instead, the overwhelming tendency is to stress the multiculturalism and the creativity of the endeavor. Philosophy, in other words, makes Judaism look good by rationalizing it, and concomitantly, Judaism makes philosophy look good because it shows its non-European application.

This, of course, is not to assume that the opposite of rationalism—irrationalism or obscurantism, if these are, in fact, the antonyms of rationalism—is to be desired. My argument here is not one of authenticity; namely, that Judaism is at its purest when it remains untouched by other civilizations, if such could even or ever be the case. Rather, my claim is that we need to be aware of how and for what purposes the tradition that we have imagined as "Jewish philosophy" came to be and what sort of intellectual heavy lifting it is perceived to do. If the previous chapter sought to dismantle the term by showing its investment in a particular genealogy, the present chapter and the following one seek to show these processes at work with two case studies, one premodern and one modern. Only then will we be in a position to reenvision the task and claims of Jewish philosophy.

Let me now articulate some of the attempts to account for medieval Jewish philosophy in relevant secondary literature. Heinrich Graetz, the great Wissenschaft historian, writes in his *History of the Jews* that philosophy and Judaism are natural bedfellows. According to him,

> Philosophy recognizes as the principal of all essences one indivisible God, the governor of the world. Judaism likewise teaches with

> emphatic assertion the unity of God, and abhors nothing more thoroughly than polytheism. Metaphysics knows no higher aim for man than that he should perfect himself intellectually, and work his way up to the highest knowledge. Judaism also, even Talmudical Judaism, places understanding and knowledge, the understanding of God, at the head of its precepts. . . . Judaism cannot be in contradiction with philosophy, as both are emanations from the divine spirit.[6]

Graetz here implies that, at its most basic level, philosophy and Judaism have much in common since they represent two torches on the same unlit path. When a Jewish thinker interprets both *properly*, Graetz maintains, a wondrous symbiosis can be created and, ideally, maintained. Monotheism and philosophy represent two sides of the same European coin. Because of this, the great thinkers of Judaism had no problem reconciling these two systems of thought with each other. The fruits of these synthesizing efforts, according to Graetz, were most visible in a generation of Iberian thinkers in which "philosophers strove to become thoroughly versed in the Talmud, and in many instances rabbis were at the same time teachers of philosophy."[7] These thinkers—which included the likes of Shlomo ibn Gabirol, Abraham ibn Ezra, Abraham bar Hiyya, and Judah Halevi—were subsequently characterized, as indeed they largely are to this day, as representing a distinct literary-philosophical "school" of "Jewish Neoplatonism" Despite its potential pantheism, however, this "school" nevertheless paved the way for the towering and systematic thought of Maimonides.

Although Graetz acknowledges that Judaism and philosophy represent different sets of commitments, it is important to note that he nonetheless recognizes that they are not completely incompatible with each other. Europe is the heir to two great and ancient civilizations. The Greek needs the Hebraic for its fulfillment and vice versa. His optimism, reflected in many of his Wissenschaft contemporaries, is certainly shared by many later scholars of medieval Jewish philosophy. In his *History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, Isaak Husik claims that

> the fact of the matter is the Bible is not a systematic book, and principles and problems are not clearly and strictly formulated even in the domain of ethics which is its strong point. It was not therefore a question here of opposition between the Bible and philosophy,

> or authority and reason. What was required was rather a rational analysis of the problem on its own merits and then an endeavor to show that the conflicting passages in the Scriptures are capable of interpretation so as to harmonize with each other and with the results of rational speculation. To be sure, it was felt that the doctrine of freedom is fundamental to the spirit of Judaism, and the philosophic analyses led to the same result though in differing form.[8]

Once again, we see the pride of place on the potential synthesis of these two worldviews. Read in one particular way, Judaism is about ethics, a philosophical discipline, and its concept of freedom is not antithetical to the intellectual freedom posited by philosophy. Following Graetz, this means that Judaism and philosophy are, at their common root, similar to each other. What is needed is interpretation to uncover the commonalities between them. This spirit of freedom defines the essence of Judaism just as it defines the so-called essence of philosophy. The task of the Jewish philosopher, on Husik's reading, becomes that of reconciliation or of uncovering this spirit. For him, the collision of the universal and the particular does not cause dissonance or impossibility but again—and this is certainly a trope that appears time and again in this literature—gives way to creative works of *synthesis*. It is this synthesis that is perceived to establish Judaism at its most rational and, concomitantly, at its most authentic.

Perhaps one of the most interesting proclamations on the constructive or rehabilitative nature of Jewish philosophy comes by way of Harry Austryn Wolfson. Writing in the *Menorah Journal* in 1921, he argues that philosophy is what unites Jews and non-Jews. In a passage that I already mentioned in a slightly different context in chapter 1, Wolfson boldly proclaims,

> For I believe, just as our pious ancestors believed, though for different reasons, that the Talmud with its literature is the most promising field of study, the most fertile field of original research and investigation. But I believe that medieval Jewish philosophy is the only branch of Jewish literature, next to the Bible, which binds us to the rest of the literary world. In it we meet on common ground with civilized Europe and with part of civilized Asia and civilized Africa. Medieval philosophy is one philosophy written in three languages, Arabic, Hebrew, and Latin, and among these Hebrew holds

> the central and most important position. In it we have the full efflorescence of Arabic thought and the bud of much of scholasticism.[9]

Here Wolfson argues that although other aspects of the tradition may well be of more interest to scholars (e.g., rabbinics or law), it is philosophy that fully connects Jews, and their history, to larger intellectual worlds. Philosophy, in other words, is part of an intellectual heritage that Jews share with other peoples, both in other periods and in different geographic locations. Even more than this, however, Wolfson also makes an apologetic claim when he writes that medieval philosophy—in all its constituent forms—is ultimately derived from an original Jewish synthesis. According to his reading, medieval Jewish philosophy ultimately cannot be differentiated from its medieval Christian and Islamic cousins, because all three are grounded in the original synthesis supplied by the Jew, Philo.[10] For Wolfson, then, both medieval Islamic and medieval Christian philosophy have their origins in Jewish thought, as opposed to the other way around. It is this origin, moreover, that simultaneously points to and upholds the rational and rationalizing tendencies within Judaism.

More recently, Colette Sirat, in her *History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, writes that

> one can say that the history of Jewish philosophy in the Middle Ages is the history of the effort of Jews to reconcile philosophy (or a system of rationalist thought) and Scripture. According to various philosophers, this effort was more or less successful; the different elements, philosophical or religious, assumed greater or lesser importance, but the harmonizing of these two systems of thought in one unique verity was the theme of almost all Jewish medieval philosophy. And when the accepted philosophy was called in doubt, this was in the name of reason.[11]

Medieval Jewish philosophy becomes that which synthesizes two worldviews. Sirat is not interested in the tensions that this synthesis produced, but in the end product that she, and the philosophers that inhabit the pages of her book, regard as a largely successful endeavor. In like manner, Raphael Jospe argues, again in fairly typical fashion, that the medieval Jewish philosophers were engaged in a project of reconciliation: between the universal claims of philosophy and the particularistic ones of Judaism. According to him,

> Jewish philosophers in the Middle Ages did not, and could not, restrict their philosophizing to Jewish sources, by the very universal nature of philosophy. To the contrary, their task was to defend their right, indeed their duty, to learn the philosophic truth from any source, since the truth respects no national or religious boundaries.[12]

Jospe, like many of those surveyed in this section, seems to maintain that philosophy does in fact represent some universalizing trend, a system of thought whose first principles are open to all those with the natural ability to engage in it, irrespective of race or religion. Once the adjective "Jewish" is attached to it, the former term somehow occupies it and pulls the latter in its wake, thereby making Judaism more respectable and more universal in the process.

What do all these pronouncements about the quiddity of medieval Jewish philosophy share? For one thing, all their authors hold the belief that philosophy, at least when attached to a particular ethnos (i.e., Judaism), somehow comes to represent *the* universalizing—and, by extension, overwhelmingly positive—tendencies within that tradition. It is philosophy, for instance, to quote Wolfson, that "binds us to the rest of the literary world." Second, all these secondary studies regard the medieval Jewish philosophers (individually and taken collectively as a school) as responsible for simultaneously creating and disseminating the myth of "good Judaism." And by "good Judaism," of course, they mean a tradition that is rational, liberal, and based on the principles of intellectual freedom—all of which are concepts in accord, not surprisingly, with modern intellectual values. Finally, in their spirit of optimism, none of these secondary studies is willing to entertain the idea that what they construct as "medieval Jewish philosophy" might actually be other than they imagine. In what follows, I wish to provide an alternative reading that, if for no other reason, might encourage us to rethink the dominant narrative of medieval Jewish philosophy. Since this section has presented a series of representative quotations from modern scholars who are responsible for the construction and maintenance of medieval Jewish philosophy, it might be worthwhile to leave it with the words of Alexander Altmann, one of the most astute contemporary interpreters of Jewish thought, which would seem to throw the whole enterprise into jeopardy:

> It would be futile to attempt a presentation of Judaism as a philosophical system, or to speak of Jewish philosophy in the same sense

> as one speaks of American, English, French, or German philosophy. Judaism is a religion, and the truths it teaches are religious truths. They spring from the source of religious experience, not from pure reason.[13]

Medieval Jewish Philosophy: A Nontraditional View

A question that has arisen at several junctures thus far is whether philosophy can be as universal and as universalist as it claims. In other words, can there be such a thing as a pure and abstract quest for philosophic truth? I have suggested that there cannot. Rather, what we consider to be philosophy is forever embedded within the production of larger claims in the service of various nationalist and, in the case of Jewish philosophers, religious causes. The danger of universalist claims—from a sociological as opposed to a philosophical perspective, though it is admittedly difficult if not impossible to separate the two—is that they can quickly become both totalitarian and tyrannical. In the words of Robert Eisen, universalism "may become uncompromising in assuming that there is one truth for all human beings, and therefore it can easily lead to intolerance and violence against those who are unwilling to adopt that truth."[14] With its grand and totalizing vision, philosophy—whether in its Jewish or non-Jewish iterations—has the potential to marginalize, ostracize, and persecute all who do not subscribe to its rationalist vision.

It is for this reason that we must resist the urge, unlike our Wissenschaft predecessors, to proclaim unproblematically that medieval Jewish philosophy represents the best that Judaism has to offer on account of its universalism, a trait that—as we witnessed in the previous section—often translates into the desire to read Jewish sources in the light of philosophical (i.e., non-Jewish) categories. In their gravitation toward a medieval version of their contemporary selves, an earlier generation of European scholars manufactured, as we have seen, a tradition—complete with a set of canonical thinkers and texts—in their own rationalist images. In their production and promotion of medieval Jewish philosophy, however, they largely ignored, marginalized, or redirected the potentially totalitarian and tyrannical aspects of this tradition (and not just the anomian mysticism as Scholem suggested). This tradition, as we shall see presently, developed ideas of Judaism that could potentially and violently exclude all those Jews who did not subscribe to them.

Since many Wissenschaft scholars regarded Maimonides as the epitome of rationalism within medieval Judaism, my focus here will primarily be on him and on certain aspects of his thought.[15] This is certainly not to imply that he represents the only voice in the so-called canon, but that his is surely the major one. Indeed, he remains the sole focus in much contemporary writing on medieval Jewish philosophy. I do not intend to regard him, as is customarily done, as the shining exemplar of Jewish universalism. Rather, I here prefer to use him as a symbol of the entire medieval Jewish philosophical tradition and to read him as intolerant of difference. In particular, I wish to argue that this tradition sought to impose its rationalist vision on all of Judaism, such that those who did not subscribe to that vision could be neatly written off as obscurantist, illiterate, or obtuse. Such Jews know nothing of proper belief and worship and represent little more than internal polytheists and idolaters. In fact, Maimonides warns all those who are inclined to matters philosophical to avoid the ignoramuses—the majority of Jews within the tradition. He writes that whoever does not engage in the pursuit of philosophy

> is not a man, but an animal having the shape and configuration of man [*al-ṣura al-insaniyya*]. Such a being, however, has a faculty to cause various kinds of harm and to produce evils that are not possessed by other animals. For he applies the capacities for thought and perception, which were to prepare him to achieve a perfection that he has not achieved, to all kinds of machinations, entailing evils and occasioning and engendering all kinds of harm. Accordingly, he is, as it were, a thing resembling man or imitating him.[16]

In this passage, Maimonides states that those who do not engage in philosophical activities are mere shadows of humans, creatures that occupy a lower rung on the great chain of being than animals.[17] Although Maimonides may well hold, in theory, that anyone is capable of actualizing the potential power of one's intellect,[18] he acknowledges that, in many instances, the intellect "remains in its defective state either because of certain obstacles or because of paucity in training [*immā mawāni aw qilla irtiyyaḍ*] in what transforms that potentiality into actuality."[19] Most individuals, on Maimonides's account, are quite simply incapable of engaging the higher states of thinking that are required for theoretical or philosophical analysis. This is especially the case when it comes to women, who according to Maimonides, "are prone to anger, [are] easily affected,

and have weak souls [*ka-inna al-nisāʾ yusaraʿ al-jadb li-suhūla infiʿalahunna wa-daʿif anfusahunna*]."[20] Such a position, it is not difficult to point out, is neither liberal nor egalitarian.

Maimonides's Judaism is rationalist, masculine, and highly exclusive. And though he may be praised in the modern period for his universalism because he invokes non-Jewish philosophers (e.g., Plato, Aristotle, and Alfarabi), his vision is no less totalitarian than theirs.[21] Although the medieval Jewish philosophers have been celebrated for their reliance on non-Jews in order to develop and articulate their perceived universalism, it is worth pointing out that many of the these philosophers did not see themselves as "relying" on anyone. On the contrary, they believed that philosophy was not a Greek invention at all, but rather a Jewish birthright that was subsequently plagiarized by the Greek tradition.[22] This trope of "Greek theft" is problematic. Do we pass over it as a Straussian fiction, something that Jewish philosophers mentioned in order to protect their endeavors but did not really believe?[23] Or, do we assume that Jewish philosophers actually believed it in some act of religious or ethnic pride? If the latter is the case, then the so-called universalism of the medieval Jewish philosophers was in many ways a fiction, because these thinkers saw themselves *not* as borrowing "universal" principles from the Greeks or the Arabs, but as re-particularizing that which had been stolen from them and subsequently corrupted.

For Maimonides, this means that philosophy is originally a Jewish tradition that is intimately connected to the ongoing, albeit illusory, quest for pure monotheism—which is tantamount to philosophical thinking—in Judaism. This philosophical tradition, on Maimonides's reading, is the source of all that is good and pure about Judaism. Maimonides's goal, then, as it is the goal of every other thinker in the Jewish philosophical canon past and present, is to re-create this pristine yet illusory past. For Maimonides, this involves removing all traces of polytheism's corrupting influences. Indeed, God's oneness, for Maimonides, represents the core and eternal belief of Judaism. In his *Foundations of the Torah* (*Hilchot Yesodei ha-Torah*), which functions as the first part of his massive legal compendium, the *Mishneh Torah*, he attempts to make this a foundation of tradition:

> To acknowledge this truth [that God alone is real and nothing resembles God] is an affirmative precept, as it is said, "I am the Lord your God." And whoever permits the thought to enter his mind

> that there is another deity besides God, s/he violates a prohibition. As it is said, "You shall have no other gods before Me." This person violates the essence of the religion, since this doctrine is the great principle on which everything depends.[24]

By polytheism, Maimonides does not refer to the worship of other deities in a quasi pantheon, but the improper and misinformed worship of the one God of Israel. For him, the overwhelming majority of his fellows Jews worship God incorrectly, and he is quick to label them as polytheists. In *Guide* I.56, for example he writes,

> Know that likeness is a certain relation between two things and that in cases where no relation can be supposed to exist between two things, no likeness between them can be represented to oneself. Similarly in all cases in which there is no likeness between two things, there is no relation between them. . . . Accordingly, in view of the fact that the relation between us and Him, may He be exalted, is considered as nonexistent—I mean the relation between Him and that which is other than He—it follows necessarily that likeness between Him and us should also be considered nonexistent.[25]

For Maimonides, there can be no likeness between humans and God, for such a likeness would imply some sort of unity on the level of ontology or epistemology. Such a degree of unity would jeopardize God's absolute transcendence, making him little more than an extension of us and vice versa.[26] This means that Maimonides spent much of his career trying both to correct and to eradicate the improper beliefs about the deity that had made their way into Judaism.[27] Most pernicious to him was the human desire to make God into larger versions of ourselves, to ascribe qualities to him that we do to ourselves (e.g., anger or contentment). "You must not believe," writes Maimonides, "that there exist in Him notions superadded to His essence that are like the attributes that are superadded to our essence, because the name is common."[28]

The result is that Maimonides must go to great lengths to expurgate from the tradition, including from the Bible itself, all those instances in which God is described in what he considers to be improper ways. A proper reading of the Bible, for Maimonides, is ultimately a misreading, one in which the reader translates the beauty of the text's or

tradition's literal level for the silent contemplation of philosophy.[29] According to Maimonides, all those who lack the proper attitude toward and understanding of God are guilty of idolatry (*kufr*). In *Guide* I.36, for example, he writes,

> In spite of the fact that those infidels [*al-kāfirūn*] believe in the existence of the deity, their idolatrous worship [*kufrahum*] entails their deserving destruction. . . . For the multitude grasp only the actions of worships, not their meanings or the true reality of the Being worshipped through them. Consequently the idolatrous worship of the infidels entails their deserving destruction; just as the text has it: *Thou shalt not save alive a soul*. And it explains the reason for this, which is to put an end to this false opinion so that others should not be corrupted through it.[30]

The danger of "idolatry" according to Maimonides is that it can spread and infect the proper worship of others, the worship of those who are informed by the principles of philosophy. Such incorrect beliefs and worship must be eradicated, and those who possess the wherewithal to function as the arbiters of "good" (i.e., rational) Judaism are, perhaps not surprisingly, those like Maimonides himself: the philosophers:

> *Accordingly there is no excuse for one who does not accept the authority of men who inquire into the truth and are engaged in speculation if he himself is incapable of engaging in such speculation.* I do not consider as an infidel one who cannot demonstrate that the corporeality of God should be negated. But I do consider an infidel one who does not believe in its negation [*bal akfalu min la yiʿtaqadu nafyihâ*].[31]

According to this passage, Maimonides contends that the majority of Jews must submit to the will of the philosopher.[32] For only the philosophers are "engaged in speculation," and thus they are the ones who are responsible for articulating the proper meaning of the tradition for nonphilosophers. The latter must, in other words, submit to the will of the philosophers—the ones who, on Maimonides's reading, imagine Judaism in the "proper" way and are responsible for defining what constitutes "proper" worship and belief.

To reiterate: the majority of Jews, according to Maimonides, have improper beliefs about God, and as a result, they do not know how to worship

him properly. In the place of an anthropomorphic God who invites petitions for one's needs and wants, Maimonides creates a silent God who is largely unresponsive to human supplications. Moreover, according to this Maimonidean framework, all those who do not subscribe to the proper notions of God and worship place themselves at risk for punishment and even the threat of death. In *Guide* I.54, for example, Maimonides proclaims,

> Do you not see in the texts of the Torah, when it commanded the extermination of the seven nations and said *thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth*, that it immediately follows this by saying: *That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods and so ye sin against the Lord your God*? Thus it says: do not think that this is hard-heartedness or desire for vengeance. It is rather an act required by human opinion, which considers that everyone who deviates from the ways of truth should be put an end to and that all the obstacles impeding the achievement of the perfection of the apprehension of Him, may He be exalted, should be interdicted.[33]

Here we see the tyranny of the philosopher and his totalitarian vision. In this bold passage, Maimonides actually implies that all those who do not abide by the tenets of the philosophers—here symbolized by the "seven nations" that threatened ancient Israel—should be exterminated.[34] Such collectivities, indeed like individuals, threaten the well-being of the philosophers and those who live according to the principles set down by them.[35] All who deviate from the way of truth, according to Maimonides, deserve to be put to death because they have the potential to lead others astray. This view, of course, is a far cry from those of the commentators with which this chapter began.

Although his is upheld as the great rationalist and universalist in Judaism, the role model for the founders of Wissenschaft des Judentums and their heirs,[36] Maimonides is a much more complicated figure than first meets the eye. All those who are incapable of achieving intellectual perfection infringe upon and become an impediment to those who either have or can achieve intellectual perfection. The goal of the philosopher is to create a body of laws that enable those who are not capable of rationalism to live in such a way as to not get in the way of those who are. Violation of such laws, as we have just seen, is punishable by death because it

threatens the philosophers, who created those laws in their own rationalist images.

In his totalitarian and authoritarian vision of Judaism, Maimonides put an end to the syncretistic literary, mystical, and philosophical tradition of the earlier medieval Jewish philosophical tradition, which is often given the imprecise name of "Neoplatonism."[37] For Maimonides, the syncretism of that vision—rationalism composed in poetic form, which culminated in a quasi-mystical vision—threatened to undermine the Aristotelian vision of pure rationality.[38] Maimonides's vision sought to make philosophy—a philosophy unblemished by poetic license or mystical flights of fancy—the key to unlock Judaism.[39] Those who did not agree with him or who violated his terms of definition were now to be regarded as infidels (*kuffār*).

Maimonidean Controversies

Even during Maimonides's lifetime, it became quickly apparent that not all religious authorities agreed with either Maimonides's vision or his desire to impose it on others. Many, for example, objected to his use of Greek philosophy (i.e., "foreign wisdom") to elucidate the tenets of Judaism.[40] This culminated in his own lifetime with a controversy about whether Maimonides believed in the traditional Jewish tenet concerning the resurrection of the dead and the subsequent notion of *olam ha-ba* (the "world-to-come"). The primary objection was that Maimonides's Aristotelianism put pride of place on the eternality of the disembodied intellect (i.e., of the philosopher, but not the individual Jew) at the expense of the corporeal body.[41]

In addition to calling into question many of his beliefs, the more traditional rabbinic authorities objected to Maimonides's attempt to disseminate this vision to all Jews and make it binding on them all through his massive legal code, the *Mishneh Torah*. In this compendium, Maimonides sought to produce a work that would function as the single reference point for anyone wishing to understand the meaning of the Oral Torah. Many, especially in the more conservative circles associated with Provençe,[42] criticized him for refusing to cite any of his sources, for doing away with the Talmudic order and instead introducing an arrangement of the Law that was of his own design, and for making legal decisions based on the Jerusalem Talmud instead of the Babylonian Talmud, which had been the legal standard until that period.

Most problematic for his critics was the first treatise of the *Mishneh Torah*, the aforementioned *Hilchot Yesodei ha-Torah* (*Foundations of the Torah*). In that treatise, Maimonides laid out his understanding of Judaism as based on the principles of philosophy and, as noted before, attempted to make it binding upon all Jews. The very first line of the work, for example, invokes the Avicennian (i.e., philosophical) distinction between necessary and contingent existence:

> The foundation of all foundations [*yesod ha-yesodot*] and the support of sciences [*ha-hochmot*]: To know that there exists a first existent that causes all what exists. All that exists in the heavens, on the earth, and everything in between does not exist except through this [necessary] existent.[43]

Note that nowhere in this passage does Maimonides refer to this Necessary Existent as the personal God of monotheism. Instead, this Necessary Existent is that which sustains and supports—again note that Maimonides does not use the verb "creates"—the universe and all that exists within it. By drawing a distinction between the personal creator-God of monotheism and the Necessary Existent of philosophy, Maimonides introduces not just rationality but also Greek-inflected philosophy into the heart of Judaism. He does so, moreover, using nontechnical language. Once again, in the fifth paragraph of the work, Maimonides begins the process of transforming this Necessary Existent into the God of Judaism:

> This existent is the God of the world and the Lord of all the earth. He controls the sphere [*gilgal*] with a strength that is without diminution, end, and that never stops. The sphere rotates perpetually and it could not do this unless something rotated it. [God], blessed be He, rotates it without having either a hand or a body.

Here Maimonides moves from the perceived existence of a Necessary Existent to the role that this being plays in the universe. Using Aristotelian science, Maimonides implies that the movement of the outermost celestial sphere is both perpetual and eternal. With such a position, Maimonides subverts the traditional Jewish concept that the world is created from nothing. From now on, Maimonides would seem to imply, based on the passages we saw in the *Guide*, Judaism can only be understood properly through Greco-Arabic philosophy. This means that if a Jew does not

believe in the distinction between necessary and contingent existence—or even in Aristotelian science, which is premised on an eternally existing universe—he or she fails to understand the Jewish tradition. An individual like this, as we also saw in the previous section, is guilty of idolatry or polytheism. Not only does such a person misunderstand the tradition, he or she actually threatens the good of the collective.

It is perhaps easy to see how such a position would bring to Maimonides both censure and criticism. The resulting conflict, which is often called the Maimonidean Controversies, revolved around the reception, role, and function of Maimonides's writings in a number of Jewish cultures. Of especial bitterness in this conflict was the so-called Second Phase, which focused primarily on what constituted authentic Jewish education—in particular, what role, if any, philosophy should play in this curriculum.[44] Maimonides's position thus came to inform a position on what Judaism was and should be. And once it came into conflict with the more traditional position, moreover, it would wreak havoc on Jewish communities, especially those of Northern Spain and Provençe.

This is not the place to articulate further the historical dimensions of the Maimonidean Controversies, but to examine them within the context of the major theme of this chapter. In this regard, the Controversies reflect the authoritarian impulse on the part of those influenced by Maimonidean philosophy to impose their will on all Jews, and the equally ideological response by so-called traditionalists to deny a Maimonidean reading. Maimonides's acolytes felt compelled to translate and disseminate his esotericism to as large an audience as possible. Individuals such as Samuel ibn Tibbon, who translated the *Guide* from Arabic into Hebrew in the generation after Maimonides's death, took Maimonides to his logical conclusion. If Maimonides had sought to translate select terms from the biblical narrative into Greco-Arabic philosophy, commentators such as Ibn Tibbon went a step further and translated the entire biblical narrative into the often-technical language of philosophy.[45] In the following passage from his *Commentary to Ecclesiastes*, for example, Ibn Tibbon takes an innocuous verse ("Wisdom gives more strength to the wise man than ten rulers who were in the city") and claims,

> As for "more than ten rulers who were in the city," it seems to me that it relates to the "little city with few people in it" which he will introduce later. It is possible that the psychic faculties, excluding the rational faculty's theoretical part, comprise "ten" in number,

> including the nutritive faculty, the faculty common to the five sense; the five senses; the appetitive faculty, which is the locus of good and evil dispositions; and the imaginative faculty. This makes nine. The rational faculty is divided into two primary parts: theoretical and practical. This makes eleven: the theoretical part with the other ten.[46]

Without getting into the technical details of this brief excerpt, it becomes readily apparent that Ibn Tibbon regards the biblical narrative as little more than an Aristotelian treatise, and that, for whatever reason, he has an obligation to point this out to all Jews. Whereas Maimonides sought to keep the majority of noneducated Jews away from philosophy, post-Maimonideans see it as their duty to introduce such Jews to philosophy. Ibn Tibbon and other such thinkers are so convinced of the truths of philosophy and the ease with which they might be found within the pages of scripture, that they insist there is only one authentic reading of scripture: that supplied by rationalism imported from the Greeks and Arabs.

Philosophy thus introduced into medieval Judaism a quest for normativity and authenticity grounded in the distant and irretrievable past. This past was one in which philosophy, even though it may not have been known by that name, ruled supreme as well as one that could be ideally reconstituted in the contemporaneous period. The medieval philosophers, with Maimonides at their head, sought to recreate this pristine past in the present, and the way they went about this was to create a rationally infused system of Judaism that was binding on all Jews, whether they understood it or not.

Conclusions

This chapter, breaking with scholarly consensus, has opted to read the medieval Jewish philosophical tradition against the grain. My reason for so doing was to show that our customary way of understanding this tradition—with the caveat that that it was, for all intents and purposes, only invented in the nineteenth century—is based more on the status quo than it is on the texts themselves. In our desire to see the medieval Jewish philosophers as just like us, we have potentially distorted both the means and the ends of these thinkers. A universalist tradition of Jewish philosopher predicated on liberalism, egalitarianism, and inclusivity is often difficult to see reflected in these sources. Instead, what we encounter is

exclusivity, potential totalitarianism, and the desire to create a Judaism devoid of artistic, literary, and imaginative interpretation.

Admittedly, my reading of Maimonides has been selective. I have not tried to provide a sustained interpretation of his vision of Judaism as it meanders through the *Guide* and the *Mishneh Torah*. This, however, has not been my goal. On the contrary, I have tried to find select passages in both works that undermine the received opinion that Maimonides is a particular kind of thinker. This tradition, a survival of Wissenschaft des Judentums, still performs a great deal of intellectual work in today's world.

What if, I suggested, such a portrait is inaccurate? Rather than appreciate the multivocality that emerges from the work of, say, Maimonides, we instead encounter an interpretive agenda based on a host of political and ideological desiderata. For various reasons, most of which revolve around the desire to emphasize universality at the expense of particularity, the traditional portrait of Maimonides and the medieval Jewish philosophers remains in force to this day. As I tried to demonstrate, however, this can and ought to be challenged because, if for no other reason, it demonstrates the artificiality of the categories and terms of reference that have been bequeathed to us. Moreover, it also begins to show, returning us to the theme of this study, the fracture and ultimate impossibility that resides at the heart of the enterprise of Jewish philosophy. The translation of Judaism into the universal terms of philosophy and/or of philosophy into the particularist ones of Judaism is not without cost or fallout.

Medieval Jewish philosophy, on this reading, is not what we have been accustomed to think it is. Rather than based solely on reason and intellect, it is just as easily based on dissatisfaction with variety and multivocality. I now want to explore a similar set of issues, albeit in the modern period. To help me shed light on them, I focus on the individual who is generally regarded as the most important Jewish thinker in the modern period, Franz Rosenzweig. He is to modern Jewish thought what Maimonides is to the medieval period. Rosenzweig's system reveals, no less than Maimonides's did, the essentializing and totalitarian dimensions inherent to Jewish philosophy.

5

Rosenzweig's Patient

IF MAIMONIDES REPRESENTS the high point of Jewish philosophical thinking in the Middle Ages, it is probably safe to say that this pride of place goes to Franz Rosenzweig in the modern period. Yet, whereas Maimonides is generally believed (not unproblematically as I argued in the previous chapter) to be the exemplar of the universal strain within Judaism, Rosenzweig both revels in and epitomizes the particularistic. Although trained in philosophy, he subsequently turned down a promising academic career to devote himself to reconnecting adults to Judaism through education.[1] Unimpressed with what he considered to be the impersonal style and curriculum of the traditional academy, he instead established a private, independent Jewish school based on the principle of dialogue between humans beings. Such a dialogic approach to the Jewish tradition and its texts, he believed, would counter the mere passive accumulation of knowledge, thereby getting modern and alienated Jews to establish an "authentic horizon"—to use the language of his day—that could exist against the backdrop of a highly romanticized ancient past.[2] This "ancient modernizing" would focus particularly on the inner workings of Jewish spirituality[3] and its intimate relationship to the inner structure of Jewish community. Moreover, it would form an alternative to the historicizing and emancipatory obsession of those associated, for example, with Wissenschaft des Judentums.[4]

The movement from form to spirit, from an objective presentation of brute facts to the silent contemplation associated with religious life, became the centerpiece of his life's work.[5] If German Jews stood on the margins of Judaism, he desired to create a program and a mode of being that would bring them into its center. And if an earlier generation of German intellectuals had imagined that history provided the means to

normalize Jews, Rosenzweig sought to redirect this trajectory both by emphasizing Jewish *différance* and by removing Jews from the shackles of history in order to locate or embed them within eternity.

Rosenzweig's Frankfurt-based *Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus*, or Free House of Jewish Studies, was designed to establish a renaissance of Judaism among a generation of assimilated German Jews. This return mirrored Rosenzweig's own life story, especially his so-called last-minute refusal to convert to Christianity and his return, instead, to what he considered to be an authentic Judaism, one that was nourished by its particularism.[6] What Rosenzweig wanted to do was to show both Jews and non-Jews the vital role that Judaism had to play in the world's redemption. Maimonides had sought to imagine and subsequently force Judaism's connection to what he considered to be the universal principles of philosophy. In contrast, Rosenzweig used contemporaneous philosophical trends to articulate an anachronistic Judaism—one that used modern notions of dislocation and inauthenticity perceived in the present to retrieve an authentic past full of being, in which all contemporary experience would find its true meaning. This led him to develop what he considered to be an authentic Jewish expression of revelatory experience, something into which modern and alienated Jews, themselves the products of a dislocated existence, could tap.[7]

On Rosenzweig's view, the Jewish people live, in large part, closed off from the rest of the world, abiding instead in their insular communal life and their liturgical calendar. Such features, he argues, remove Jews from the historical ebb and flow of other peoples and nations. Bereft of their own spoken language, their own homeland, and their own historical consciousness, Jews lack the basic principles that define other peoples and their nation-states. But because of their organic insularity and their ability to exist outside of historical time, Rosenzweig claims, Jews anticipate the ultimate redemption of the world, thereby representing to others the goal they must ultimately pursue. The medieval Jewish philosophical tradition was premised on the notion that Jews need philosophy. In Rosenzweig's deft hands, however, Jewish philosophy now begins with the premise that the end of universalism (i.e., philosophy) is hegemony unless it is reminded of its task by Judaism's particularism.

Rosenzweig's magnum opus, *The Star of Redemption*, presents a system of philosophy that seeks to give a comprehensive account of the universe—what he calls the "All"—including the individual's place and role within it.[8] Critical of his predecessors, Rosenzweig argues that this

"All" is largely unknowable except insofar as the individual exists within its midst. Difference is crucial to this system because it is what enables the individual to grasp the "All" in his or her idiosyncratic particularity. Whereas previous systems of thought—from medieval Aristotelianism to German idealism—flattened such particularity and the difference in which it was grounded by positing abstract universal forms, Rosenzweig locates the ability to grasp the "All" in the individual's particularity and finitude. The individual discerns the "All" by means of the relationships that he or she enters into with others; the result is a philosophical system grounded in particularity.[9]

Rosenzweig's *Star* is arguably the greatest work of modern Jewish philosophy. However, in our encomium of its breadth and vision we must not lose sight of its problematic elevation of authenticity, of Jewishness, and of chosenness. If we witnessed the dangers of universalism in Maimonides's thought, in Rosenzweig's we encounter those of particularism. His reification of *the* Jewish people, as I shall argue in this chapter, potentially risks nourishing a proto-racist and atavistic nationalism. To establish the superiority of Judaism is to set up a highly problematic (and faulty) comparison that is powered by a dubious juxtaposition between an essentialized "eternal people" (*das ewige Volk*) and an equally essentialized "peoples of the world" (*die Völker der Welt*). An early twentieth-century philosophical system that is grounded in racial and religious superiority, and that seeks rejuvenation based on an acknowledgment of shared ancestry, culture, and blood should immediately alert us to its implicit and explicit fascism.[10] For, ultimately, Rosenzweig's philosophy of Judaism is one that is predicated on Jewish difference and, as such, is highly exclusive. Moreover, it is a philosophy of Judaism, albeit in a diluted form, that has become increasingly in vogue among many religious Zionists in the modern State of Israel to demonize others and deprive them of their basic human rights. When translated into a nationalist register, it is a philosophical system that aids and abets the force of occupation.

For both Rosenzweig and many of his modern interpreters, Judaism becomes necessary to the successful practice of philosophy because it is the embodiment of the particular. If Maimonides and the medieval Jewish philosophical tradition had sought to universalize the particular, Rosenzweig now argues that the universal needs the particular to sustain it and to dislodge it from its own universalizing tendencies. In examining Rosenzweig's thought, we again encounter the apologetic claim: Judaism

makes philosophy possible—not just Jewish philosophy in particular, but philosophy in general.

Rosenzweig turns Jewish philosophy on its head. If the history of Jewish philosophy until him strived for the universal, he turns to the particular. If the former gravitated to systematization, he takes pleasure in idiosyncrasy. Yet, as with Maimonides, we again see the particular and the universal in collision. In the aftermath of this collision, we encounter silence and reconfiguration. Whereas Maimonides had made the universal occupy the particular, Rosenzweig now does the opposite.

On Jewish Learning

In 1920, the same year that he published his *Hegel und der Staat*, Rosenzweig published a small essay titled "Bildung und Kein End."[11] Written as an open letter to the chemist Eduard Strauss, the essay begins with the statement that "what we need more than ever, or at least as much as ever, are human beings—Jewish human beings, to use a catchword that should be cleansed of the partisan associations that still cling to it."[12] Implicit in this statement, as Rosenzweig will go on to elaborate in greater detail, is that the survival of Judaism rests not on the political aspirations of Zionism, but depends instead upon pedagogy, through which Jews can reconnect to their tradition. To accomplish this, Rosenzweig seeks to emancipate the "Jewishness of the Jew" (*der Jüdischkeit des jüdischen Menschen*), that which he considers to be the essence of the Jewish human being:

> One is a Jewish Child [*jüdisch Kind*] with every breath. It is something that courses through the arteries of our life, strongly or weakly, but at any rate to our very fingertips. It may course very weakly indeed. But one feels that the Jew in oneself is not a circumscribed territory bounded by other circumscribed territories, but a greater or lesser force flooding one's whole being.[13]

In this passage, Rosenzweig contends that there exists some innate and inchoate Jewish spirit that both informs and defines "the Jew," a spirit that connects him or her to other Jews and that simultaneously dislocates him or her from "the non-Jew." Although he will subsequently argue that this Jewishness opens Jews to their larger surroundings rather than limiting them, Rosenzweig nonetheless sees it as an intuited feeling

that—when recognized—permeates a Jew's very being. In articulating this position, Rosenzweig subverts the dominant trend of German-Jewish philosophy, beginning with Mendelssohn, which had sought to transform Judaism into a creed or a religion.[14] Juxtaposed against this trend, Jewishness

> is something inside the individual that makes him a Jew, something infinitesimally small yet immeasurably large, his most impenetrable secret, yet evident in every gesture and every word—especially in the most spontaneous of them. The Jewishness I mean is not "literature." It can be grasped neither in the writing nor reading of books. It is not even—may all the contemporary-minded forgive me—"undergone." It is only lived—and perhaps not even that. One *is* it [Man *ist es*].[15]

Rosenzweig's goal in this essay is to resuscitate Jewish study among his contemporaries, and he does so by using the language of alienation then in vogue among late Weimar intellectuals.[16] For him, revelation and ritual emerge as the antidote to what he considers a destructive impulse of the rationalist tendencies within nineteenth-century bourgeois Judaism, tendencies that he located in the ethical monotheism of Reform and the faux-juridical observance of Orthodoxy. In order to articulate his philosophy of revelation, however, he first had to peel away the layers of modernity and subsequently "locate" and rehabilitate an ancient "Jewishness." This core quality or essence is what defines "the Jew" and what differentiates him or her from, alternatively, "the Christian," "the pagan," or "the Muslim." Whereas several generations of Jewish thinkers had sought to normalize Jews by connecting them to German culture, Rosenzweig argues that this has muted individual Jews to their own tradition. The result is that the forces of modernity have encouraged Jews to occupy themselves and their tradition with German-ness.[17] The "dizziness of Emancipation" (*Rausch der Emanzipation*), according to Rosenzweig, has forced Jews to create the wrong kind of ghetto, one that is surrounded by the impermeable, if self-constructed, walls of inauthenticity.[18]

This essentialist argument now becomes part of a rhetoric of authenticity. If Judaism has been occupied by the heady smells of emancipation, Rosenzweig seeks to dissipate them by returning to a pristine Judaism—but it is one that is no less constructed or imagined than that which he criticizes as inauthentic. Rosenzweig laments that

> just as the Law [*das Gesetz*], wrenched from its unity with the home and worship, is no longer what it once was, so the two other planks of the platform are not what they used to be. And thus the Jewish home [*das jüdische Haus*], wherever it is still maintained intact, is no longer the heart from which the bloodstream of all Jewish life is pumped, and to which it returns. Slowly but surely the home has lost its dominating position in Jewish existence.[19]

Juxtaposed against this situation, Rosenzweig imagines an "ancient Judaism" (*das Altjudentum*), in which the Torah and the outside world knew no opposition and were never in conflict with each other. My goal is not to show that Rosenzweig is wrong here and then marshal a set of counterexamples that clearly demonstrate how these two "spheres" were kept separate in the premodern period. On the contrary, my goal is much simpler: to argue that Rosenzweig imagines a pristine past in which the Jewish essence he seeks to revive in the modern period existed fully and authentically. This authentic past can be brought back, according to him, neither through political emancipation nor through the nationalism associated with Zionism, but only through the actualization of this original Jewishness within each and every Jew. This actualization must take place not in the mindless repetition of slogans, whether nationalist or religious, but in the living dialogic encounters between Jews and each other and between Jews and this authentic past.[20]

The beauty of dialogue, in Rosenzweig's schema, is that it is neither static nor fixed. Rather, dialogue represents the dynamic path on which individuals actively shape and actualize their Jewishness by encountering a self-constructed and self-perceived authenticity, an *Altjudentum*, that is of decidedly modern provenance. This actualization creates a return to a period in which the "religious" and the "sacred," or perhaps better, "the Law" and "life," existed in perfect harmony.

In another short treatise, this time addressed to Martin Buber and titled *Die Baulete: Über das Gesetz* (*The Builders: On the Law*),[21] Rosenzweig argues that it is the Law that must actualize this amorphous conception of Jewishness. He is highly critical of Buber's mischaracterization of the halakhah as a rigid system that potentially stifles a universal experiential dimension of freedom that is located in biblical revelation.[22] Juxtaposed against Buber, Rosenzweig argues that Jewish religious life is *not* universal, but is grounded in a particularism that can only reach its ultimate expression and fulfillment in *halakhic* observance. He writes that

Buber creates nineteenth-century shackles (*Fesseln*) for the Law because he misunderstands its purpose in Jewish life:

> Is that really Jewish Law, the law of the millennia, studied and lived, analyzed and rhapsodized, the law of everyday and the day of death, petty and yet sublime, sober and yet woven in legend . . . the law that always rises beyond itself, that can never be reached—and yet has always the possibility of becoming Jewish life, of being expressed in Jewish faces [*zu jüdischem Leben zu warden und zu jüdischen Gesichtern*]?[23]

Rosenzweig succumbs neither to Buber's experiential philosophy of freedom nor to the contemporaneous Orthodox position that seeks to carve out—inauthentically, he believes—a space for the Law in the modern world. Rather, Rosenzweig seeks a natural and organic place for the Law. This space, from the vantage point of the *Lehrhaus*, will ideally inform and redefine contemporary Jewish existence. His vision, however, is decidedly exclusive. Its very claim to authenticity, to a holistic and romanticized past, by its very nature makes such a past inauthentic. Instead, Rosenzweig paradoxically seeks to make authenticity emerge from a refusal to take the mundane sense of the world, of the word, and of Judaism, at face value.[24]

Rosenzweig's goal is extremely problematic because it is based on a series of essentialisms that emerge from a particularist rhetoric. His vision of an organic and dynamic Judaism does not, indeed cannot, exist outside the space that he creates for it. It is a Judaism that is diametrically opposed to, and thus defined by, the world that he inhabits. Because of this it functions as a pathway, an escape, out of the modern ills that characterize contemporaneous Jewish existence. Zionist, Reform, and Orthodox thinkers all misconstrue the Law, according to him, because they seek a Judaism that is compatible with the modern world. For Rosenzweig, the problem is not with Judaism, but with the modern world. In his desire to abnegate the latter, however, he paradoxically defines the former in its light.

Rosenzweig's desire to create an authentic Judaism in the present—one that knows no separation between law and life or between an individual Jew and an organic community to which he or she belongs—resides at the heart of his vision. It is, to reiterate, an exclusive vision that makes little or no room for that which exists outside. As we shall see throughout this chapter, anything signified as "non-Jewish" is dangerous to Jewish well-being and, as a result, must be kept at a considerable distance lest it

corrupt by mesmerizing Jews with the promises of historicity. Juxtaposed against the so-called non-Jewish, Rosenzweig seeks a living and dynamic engagement with this past—on display in the *Lehrhaus*, in his translation of the Bible into an un-German German, and in his *Star of Redemption*. This engagement will subsequently create the conditions for revelation, a situation in which the individual fulfills him- or herself in relation to (Jewish) others.

Rosenzweig's emphasis on an uncorrupted and incorruptible Jewish essence, however, is not without problems. All that is bad or worrisome in Rosenzweig's world—Zionism, Reform, assimilation—arise when Jews look to the outside world for political solutions to their problems. Political solutions cannot eradicate these problems, according to Rosenzweig, because they ignore the core of Jewishness and overlook the fact that Jews are essentially—in the very core of their beings—not like others. The Jewish people, whom he frequently refers to as "the eternal people," are distinct from all others, and they must maintain this distinction at all costs, for their existence is ultimately predicated on it. Despite his criticism of one form of political nationalism, then, Rosenzweig was very much a religious nationalist—an ardent and zealous one—albeit of a different stripe. This type of nationalism, to use the words of Ernst Geller writing in a different context, "is not the awakening of nation to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist."[25]

Despite Rosenzweig's explicit avowal of a particular kind of political nationalism, he gravitates toward a different form of nationalism—one that is potentially more dangerous, one that is romantically infused, and one that defines peoplehood based on an inner and irreducible core of perceived shared experience. Perhaps nowhere is this vision more on display than in the German translation of the Bible, an activity he undertook with Martin Buber[26] and one that was not without its critics. Rosenzweig's desire to articulate a pristine and authentic community that exists outside the bonds of history in the ahistorical domains of eternal chosenness reminded Scholem, who was reflecting on the translation of the first volume many years after its initial appearance, of "fanaticism."[27] Another critic of the translation enterprise, and the ideology that informed, it was the literary critic Siegfried Kracauer, who wrote that

> the problem raised by the translation is that of *religious renewal* [*der religiösen Erneuerung*] in general. Spellbound by the word of such renewal, movements, circles, and groups have arisen and, out of a

> sometimes tenuous, sometimes closer contact with extant faiths, have endeavored to proclaim a shift in Being. The rendering of scripture into German, which cannot be separated from the current state of religious renewal, provides an indication of the dangers to which such movements are subject.[28]

The Star of Redemption

In *The Star of Redemption*, considered his greatest work, Rosenzweig provides the details of his inner-focused philosophy of Judaism. His overarching goal is to signal a break with the universalizing tendencies that characterized the thought of his predecessors from Maimonides to Hermann Cohen, from medieval Aristotelianism to German idealism. The absolutism and totalitarianism of earlier thinking, Rosenzweig argues, prevents us from knowing and appreciating things as they are. Earlier thought, what he pejoratively characterizes as the "old thinking," emphasized the atemporal nature of human existence, overlooked the particularism of things by focusing on essences, and sought ultimate refuge in the eternal functioning of the disembodied intellect. Juxtaposed against such absolutism, Rosenzweig seeks to develop a "new thinking" (*das neue Denken*) that acquires knowledge of God, world, and self in their dynamic and personal interrelations. This thinking can only occur from the individual and particular standpoint of the human being in time.[29] Even reason itself, he argues, must be tempered by the idiosyncrasies associated with the temporality of human experience. Our goal must be to grasp "things" in the nexus of the temporal relations in which we experience them.

Rosenzweig, read on one level, seeks to shift the axis of philosophical thinking from the universalizing tendencies of Europe to the particularizing impulse of Judaism. One grasps the complexity of the "All" simultaneously by means of identity and difference, both as a single unity and as a dynamic diversity of particulars. Whereas Maimonides and other medieval philosophers sought to read the universal into the particular using strategies such as *allegoresis*, Rosenzweig now desires to strip the particular bare, removing from it all traces of such external and universal corruption. Rather than reduce the world or humans to God or vice versa, Rosenzweig argues that it is necessary to understand how these three separate and distinct elements—world, humans, and God—relate to one another *in time*.

At the heart of understanding this nexus of relationships is revelation (*die Offenbarung*). The aforementioned three elements interact with one another from creation to redemption, and revelation is what connects and sustains them through both the temporal and the temporalizing order. Revelation, then, is what enables the new thinker to orient him- or herself to and within these relationships. For Rosenzweig, revelation plays an important conceptual and methodological role by providing the narrative clearing in which the individualized and particularized Jew catches temporary glimpses of the universal, what Rosenzweig calls "the Star of Redemption." Even the universal, in other words, is only apparent through the particularizing gaze.

In book 2, part 3, of the *Star*, Rosenzweig provides a portrait of the Jewish people that is grounded in religious nationalism. He defines the Jews as the only people that possess "a connection to eternal life" (*Zusammenhang ewigen Lebens*).[30] What makes this connection possible is that the same blood "runs warmly through [the eternal people's] veins" (*warm durch die Adern rollen*).[31] This blood, the defining element of the Jewish people, is what makes them eternal and thus removes them from history's shackles. Jews, on Rosenzweig's reading, are ontologically different than all other peoples:

> Whereas every other community [*jede andre Gemeinschaft*] that lays claim to eternity must make arrangement in order to pass the torch of the present on to the future, only the community of the same blood [*Blutsgemeinschaft*; literally, "blood community"] does not have need of making such arrangements for the tradition; it does not need to trouble its mind; in the natural propagation of the body it has the guarantee of its eternity [*die Gewähr ihrer Ewigkeit*].[32]

Whereas Christianity comes together spiritually in the *future* hope of redemption, Jews share the same genetic relationship with one another, which makes redemption always potentially present in the here and now, the eternal present. In making this claim, however, Rosenzweig dangerously transfers Romantic notions of modern, secular nations onto a religious register. His argument for the eternity of the Jewish people would seem to differ little from contemporaneous German nationalism, itself grounded in racial theory and "blood" purity.[33] Although Rosenzweig sought to differentiate between Jews and Christians by making the case that they had different roles to play in the redemptive process,[34] his

rhetoric of particularism is nevertheless clearly grounded in contemporaneous non-Jewish rhetoric of "blood community." This is particularly evident when he argues that what differentiates Jews from the nations they currently inhabit resides in three features: land (*das Land*), language (*die Sprache*), and law (*das Gesetz*). Let me take up each one of these features in turn.

Land figures highly in Rosenzweig's juxtaposition between Jews and non-Jews. Whereas the latter lack the permanence of eternal existence, they must invest their energies in other phenomena to try and attain it. They do so, however, in the wrong places and with the incorrect intensity. One such place that the so-called other nations try to locate their energies is in physical land, upon which they develop nationalist sentiments that by their very nature, their very attachment to the corporeality of land, are bound to fail. Jews, by contrast, do not need such attachments because they intrinsically possess eternity through blood (*das Blut*). Since Jews form a "blood community" (*der Blutsgemeinschaft*), they have relinquished the connection to mundane or quotidian phenomena that only ephemerally unite other nations. Because they lack such a blood community, Rosenzweig reasons that other nations—though they are unnamed, we can assume that he means German, French, and other European nation-states—need the land to guarantee their own permanence. Rosenzweig writes that

> we alone have put our trust in the blood and parted with the land; in this way we saved the precious life fluid [*also sparten wir den kostbaren Lebenssaft*] that offers us a guarantee of our own eternity and alone among all the peoples of the earth we have awakened out of every community our living with the dead. For the earth nourishes, but it also binds; and when a people loves the soil of the homeland more than its own life, then the danger hangs over it [*und woe ein Volk den Boden der Heimat mehr liebt als das eigene Leben, da hängt stets die Gefahr über ihm*]. . . . In this way the earth betrays the people that entrusts to the permanence of the earth its own permanence; the earth itself persists, but the people on it perish [*sie selbst dauert wohl, aber das Volk auf ihr vergeht*].[35]

Juxtaposed against the temporal existence and thus impermanence of others, Rosenzweig locates the Jews, the only people (*Volk*) grounded in the blood of eternity. Their very landlessness ensures their noncorporeal

permanence. Building his case on the patriarch Abraham, Rosenzweig argues that God required him to emigrate from the land of his birth, and so, to this day, Jews have lacked autochthonous existence (*Autochthonie*) in a particular land.[36] This admixture of mythopoeia and contemporary statelessness leads Rosenzweig to elevate the principle of "the holy land" (*das heilege Land*)—a dislocated land, a land that ceases to be a land in the technical sense of this term.

Much like the Jews, the land of Israel exists on a different ontological level than the modern nation-state. Its land is holy, and this sacrality ensures that Jews can neither own it as a possession nor invest it with the quotidian trappings of jingoistic nationalism. Whereas other nations go to war to keep their lands, Jews are content to abide in their stateless, eternal existence. Even in antiquity, according to Rosenzweig's reading, Jews existed in Israel differently from the way other nations existed in their homelands. Other nations, in the past and in the present, believe that they own their lands.[37] However, because the holy land is perceived to be nothing more than a gift from God, "for the eternal people the homeland never becomes its own in that sense" (*dem ewigen Volk wird sie nie in solchem Sinn eigen*).[38]

Jews do not feel the patriotism that other nations feel for their homelands because, unlike other nations, their relationship to their land is grounded in the dialectic of hope and remembrance. According to Rosenzweig,

> The holiness of the land [*die Heiligkeit des Landes*] removes the land from its natural hold as long as it could take hold of it; the holiness infinitely increases its longing for the lost land and henceforward no longer lets it feel entirely at home in any other land; it forces it to gather the full weight of its will to be a people into that one point which for the peoples of the world is only one among others, into the real and pure vital point, into the community of blood [*der Blutsgemeinschaft*]; the will to be a people cannot cling here to any dead means; this can be realized only by means of the people itself; the people is a people only through the people [*das Volk ist Volk nur durch das Volk*].[39]

Rosenzweig argues apologetically that other nations love their land more than they love their own people. Because of this, they are paradoxically bound to their lands by death and bloodshed. Jews, by contrast, have

evolved beyond such a visceral connection and instead are connected to their land through their holiness and eternity. It should perhaps come as no surprise that Rosenzweig was extremely critical of political Zionism because it was a movement that, according to him, sought to normalize Jews by putting them firmly within the folds of history. To exist in history was to exist outside eternity. The movement to give the Jews a physical land was tantamount to spiritual death. Of course, Rosenzweig was writing before the horrors of mid-century. Had he lived to see them, he might well have gravitated—as I suggested above—to a form of religious Zionism, one that regarded the physical land of Israel as spiritually and morally superior to other nations.

The second feature that singles Jews out from other nations is language. Buying into the romantic notion that every people has a language that defines it, that expresses its will and life spirit, Rosenzweig further affirms essential and ontological differences between Jews and non-Jews. The languages of other nations and peoples are mundane and used solely for quotidian purposes. According to him,

> The languages of the peoples follows with utmost subtlety the vital changing of destinies of the peoples, but this following of the living also pulls language into the destiny of the living, to die. Language is alive because it—can even die [*Sie ist lebendig, weil sie – sogar sterben kann*]. Eternity [*Ewigkeit*] would be a bad gift for it; only because language is not eternal, only because it faithfully mirrors the changing times of the people growing through its ages.[40]

The languages that most people speak are intimately connected to their tasks of daily existence. As such, their languages do not strive, as Rosenzweig here intimates, for "eternity," that which exists above or beyond the mundane desires of those who speak them. Because the languages of most people are so accustomed to speaking about the quotidian, they lack vocabularies that transcend such concerns. They have corporeal life, in other words, but no spiritual life. The result is that they have become little more than various forms of historical patois. When the nations who speak them perish, their languages necessarily perish with them.

The eternal people, by contrast, possess an eternal language that, like them—and like their land—is holy (*die heilige Sprache*). Since Hebrew is not spoken, and because it is reserved primarily for liturgical purposes, it must by necessity exist on a level that is qualitatively different than the

other languages of the world. While the eternal language is reserved for the eternal people, Jews nevertheless use the dying languages of the nations in which they find themselves for their nonspiritual existence:

> And so it happens that the eternal people lost its own language [*daß das ewige Volk seine eigne Sprache verloren hat*] and everywhere speaks the language of its external destinies [*überall die Sprache seiner äußern Schicksale spricht*], the language of the people with whom it perchance dwells as a guest.[41]

Rosenzweig, following racial theorists of his day, connects language with blood and land. Since the Jews speak the languages of others and dwell in the lands of others, they lack their basic concerns. They are the quintessential other. Whereas anti-Semites had used this otherness to disparage Jews,[42] Rosenzweig uses it to elevate them. This is the genius of the eternal people, according to him: their otherness permits Jews to exist in the word and in the world, but at the same time, far beyond the rigid and ephemeral confines that both create:

> [The eternal people] never possesses this language in its own right, it never possesses it on the basis of its belonging to the same blood [*nie bloß auf Grund des eigenen blutmäßigen Zusammenhangs*]. . . . Whereas all other peoples are consequently identified with their own language and whereas the language withers in their mouth the day they cease to be a people, the Jewish people never identifies itself entirely with the language it speaks.[43]

Within the context of their own continued existence, as Rosenzweig sees it, Jews have preserved a language of their own that is not bound by historical, temporal, or geographic fluctuation. Since they possess this language within themselves, not sharing it with other nations, Jews are prevented from settling fully into larger cultural contexts; or, in Rosenzweig's formulation, the existence of this holy language "prevents the eternal people from ever living entirely at one with the times [*sie hindert da ewige Volk, jemel ganz einig mit der Zeit du leben*]."[44]

Rosenzweig argues that the holy language is reserved for prayer, for a type of communication that is as internal as it is centrifugal, a form of communication between the eternal community and its God. Whereas other nations pray and speak in the same mundane languages, the Jews

are unique in that they reserve for their prayer and other holy activities a language that has been conditioned solely for that purpose. This results, once again, in denying the Jew an entrance into history:

> The holiness of the holy language [*Die Heiligkeit der heiligen Sprache*], in which alone he can only pray, does not allow his life to take root in the sol of a language of his own; evidence for the fact that his linguistic life always senses itself far away and knows its real linguistic homeland is elsewhere, in the domain of the holy language that is inaccessible to everyday speech, lies in the remarkable circumstance that the language of the everyday, at least in the mute vowel signs of scripture [*in den stummen Zeichen der Schrift*], seeks to preserve contact with the old holy language long ago lost to the everyday.[45]

Rosenzweig here connects the Jews' dearth of a land to its dearth of a spoken language. Instead of either, Jews possess an eternal land that is a non-land and an eternal language that is a non-language. Both of these exist as cherubs blocking access into historical existence. Here Rosenzweig reacts strongly to the claims of Wissenschaft scholars who believed that political emancipation would follow the Jew's normalization—their ability to exist, as any other people, historically.[46] Instead, Rosenzweig emphasizes the uniqueness of both Jews and Judaism, showing that they are unlike the other nations of the earth because they lack what those nations possess: the desire for historical perseverance. *The* holy people, the Jews, "purchases its eternity at the price of temporal life [*erkauft . . . seine Ewigkeit um den Preis des zeitlichen Lebens*]."[47]

Rosenzweig next turns his attention to the holy law (*das heilige Gesetz*), another feature that enables him to differentiate essentially between Jew and non-Jew. All the peoples of the earth, with the exception of the Jews, conceive of a temporal order in which today follows yesterday to produce an accumulated set of traditions that revolve around customs, shared inheritance (*Erbteil*), and the ploughed land (*Acker*). This ebb and flow of time creates a set of agreed-upon laws that various living individuals—chieftains and kings (*Vorsteher und Könige*)—preside over before these nations. These laws, like their lands and languages, will ultimately dissipate.

Jews, however, are not shackled by the accumulation of such temporality. For them,

> time is not time [*die Zeit nicht seine Zeit*], not a field it cultivates and a share in its inheritance. . . . Custom and law, having become non-augmentable and unchangeable, flow into the one basin of that which is valid now and forever; a unique form of life that unites custom and law fills the moment and makes it eternal [*Sitte und Gesetz in eines schließende Lebensform erfüllt den Augenblick und macht ihn ewig*].[48]

Whereas the laws of non-Jews are temporally specific and, as such, can be promulgated or repealed on a ruler's whim, Rosenzweig here argues that Jewish law (*halakhah*) is eternal and, thus, immutable. This law does not shackle, but paves the path toward freedom:

> But in this way the moment is certainly released from the river of time, and since life is kept holy, it is no longer alive. Whereas the myth of peoples [*der Mythos der Völker*] is continuously changing, parts of the past are continuously forgotten, and others are memorialized into myth, here the myth becomes eternal and does not change any longer; and whereas the peoples live in revolution in which the law continuously sheds it skin, here reigns the law that no revolution could repeal, and that can probably be evaded but not changed.[49]

Although other nations create their myths, implies Rosenzweig, Jews are created by theirs. Jews do not calculate their own time, but rather possess their own calendar that enables them to mark time uniquely and in their own specific way. Once again, this is what permits Jews to live unlike other nations, outside the flow of history. At the end of this section devoted to the uniqueness of the Jewish people, Rosenzweig concludes that the Jewish people

> does not live like the peoples of the world in a national life placed visibly in the world, in a popular language that expresses its soul resoundingly, in a territory of the people's own firmly grounded and bounded upon the earth, but uniquely and only in that which ensures the continuance of the people across time, the immortality of its life: in the creating of its own eternity out of the obscure sources of blood [*in Schöpfen der eigenen Ewigkeit aus den dunkeln Quellen des Bluts*].[50]

Non-Jews again become a straw man against which Rosenzweig can foreground imagined categories of blood and religion that are subsequently reified as natural categories. Jews become constructed as unique in ways that exaggerate not only their eternality but also the quotidian dimension of non-Jews. Read on one level, this is racialism in the guise of philosophy. And, once again, the juxtaposition of "Judaism" and "philosophy" is highly problematic, used as it is to serve potentially ideological or political ends.

Again, it is worth pointing out the tremendous paradox here. Rosenzweig's conception of "blood community" derives from the German Romantic tradition responsible for the creation of a reified and pure-of-blood German people. In like manner, his philosophical methodology that seeks to locate this Jewish blood community in a distant past draws on the archaic modernizing trend of his non-Jewish contemporaries.[51] Rosenzweig's attempt to articulate a notion of Jewish superiority, it should perhaps not surprise us, is powered by non-Jewish categories.[52] In this, he is no different than Maimonides. This similarity, however, neither excuses nor defangs the exclusionary nature of Rosenzweig's thought. He uses an idiosyncratic and racially-charged definition of Judaism to occupy philosophy. His system, especially that involving the artificial construction of Jewish peoplehood, is grounded in ideology, is highly exclusionary, and potentially leads to dangerous consequences. It is a position that in certain modern hands—most directly, in the hands of certain religious Zionists—easily lends itself to its own set of racist and xenophobic attitudes toward non-Jews in the modern State of Israel.

Others

Rosenzweig, as we have just seen, spends a considerable amount of time creating a highly stylized and essentialized category, "the Jews," alternatively referred to as the "eternal people" or the "holy people," and then differentiating it from an equally artificially constructed category, "the nations of the earth" (*die Völker der Welt*). Whereas the latter is transitory, the former is eternal; whereas the latter is focused on temporal greatness, the former lives beyond time and is thus protected from historical decay. The Jewish "body and blood" (*Leib und Blut*) is what secures this eternal permanence, for "this rooting in ourselves and only in ourselves guarantees our eternity for us [*diese Verwurzelung in uns selbst und allein in uns selbst verbürgt uns unsre Ewigkeit*]".[53]

From a historical or even a sociological perspective, Rosenzweig's argument is very difficult to maintain. It is impossible to ascertain what he means by these "other peoples," because he never provides us with any concrete examples. His comments would seem to imply a set of godless and irreligious peoples who desire nothing other than their own greatness. Do these "other peoples" have religions? Are they really so tied to plowing their own land that they lack the tools for a self-perceived eternal renewal? Are their religions tied simply to various national and nationalist aspirations?

Rosenzweig overlooks that fact that many peoples have languages that are reserved solely for liturgical purposes. Catholicism has Latin; Islam has Koranic Arabic. Many religions, moreover, imagine lands that they construct as holy, but in which they do not dwell. Malaysian Muslims, for example, think of and include in their prayers the holy cities of Arabia and Jerusalem. Because Rosenzweig seeks to flee from history, he also flees from the nuance it can supply, and he instead presents us with a highly essentialist set of readings based on what we would today refer to as identity politics. The Jewish people anticipate the ultimate redemption of the world within the closed, communal life they forge out of their intimate experience of relation with the divine. This communal life is both racially and religiously constructed by Rosenzweig to be at odds with the modern nation-state, its non-Jewish inhabitants, and even world history (*Weltgeschichte*).[54]

The Jewish people, returning to the language of the universal and the particular, serve as a reminder to the world of the task of redemption. It is at this point, however, that Rosenzweig now begins to speak of Christianity. Like Judaism, Christianity also serves as a guarantee of future redemption. If the Jewish people anticipate the world's redemption in their particularity and insularity, Christianity advances a similar cause in its desire to unite the globe through its message of divine love. As Christianity thus takes up the historical task of guiding the world toward redemption, Rosenzweig argues that it would lose its way if the Jewish people did not perpetually serve as reminder of that task through their own communal anticipation of redemption.[55]

Perhaps reflecting his own near-conversion to Christianity, Rosenzweig argues that Christianity needs Judaism because the latter represents the goal toward which both Christianity and the rest of the world must move. His reading of Islam, however, is not nearly as positive.[56] Many seem to follow in the charitable footsteps of Shlomo Pines's reading and

argue that Rosenzweig's highly critical comments on Islam, while insulting, should be contextualized as Rosenzweig's attempt to detangle Judaism from Islam after Hegel had lumped the two together.[57] It is certainly unclear which Muslim sources Rosenzweig was familiar with, but he seems to characterize Islam as a religion that misunderstands the relationship of revelation to creation and, because of this, is fundamentally based on the principles of "paganism" (*Heidentum*).[58] In remarking upon this, Rosenzweig invokes centuries of well-worn polemics against the Islamic tradition:

> From predictions veiled in themselves, they did not become Revelations that step forth; their closed eyes did not open to shine out; on the contrary they kept their glances mutely turned inwards, even when they turned them outwards toward one another. What was Yes stayed Yes, what was No stayed No. And in this remarkable case of world historical plagiarism [*an diesen merkwürdigen Fall weltgeschichtlichen Plagiats*], we can place before our eyes—and we shall continue to do so—what a belief in Revelation would necessarily look like when springing directly from paganism [*Heidentum*] so to speak without God's will, without the plan of his providence, that is, in "purely natural" causality.[59]

Here Rosenzweig argues that the three trajectories—creation, revelation, and redemption—by which humans, God, and the world enter into relationship with one another are largely muted in Islam. Instead, he characterizes Muhammad's god as an "oriental despot" (*orientalischen Gewaltherrschers*).[60] Because the god of Islam is hidden, *all* the Muslim can do is confess that there is "no god but God," an utterance that, on Rosenzweig's reading, any pagan or atheist could make.[61] Whereas—as witnessed in the previous section—Rosenzweig went out of his way to valorize Jewish scripture, ritual, and community, he subsequently undermines similar features in Islam:

> "Islam" is not a permanent attitude of the soul, but an uninterrupted succession of duties to be performed [*"Islam" ist keine zuständliche Haltung der Seele, sondern eine unaufhörliche Folge von Pflichterfüllungen*]. And not in such a way that these duties to be performed would be understood. . . . [Islam] remains stuck at the unchanged figures bequeathed to it by the pagan world [*die heidnische Welt*],

> and thinks it can put them in motion just as they are, owing to the concept of Revelation. Muhammad was proud of having made his faith easy for his followers. He made it too easy [*Er hat ihn zu leicht gemacht*].[62]

Unlike Judaism or even Christianity, Islam—Rosenzweig implies—actually impedes world redemption. Muhammad encouraged his followers in a simple faith not for the task of redemption, but for the sake of worldly power.

In a recent attempt to defend Rosenzweig's reading of Islam, Wayne Cristaudo has argued that Rosenzweig's criticisms were directed at the Islam of his day, whereas medieval Islam might have received a more charitable reading. Rather than reduce his comments to an embarrassing misreading of Islam, Cristaudo argues that we need to compare what Rosenzweig says either with the Koran and the Hadith or with Islamic history.[63] As a result, he looks at those few verses in the Koran that were subsequently interpreted by certain trajectories of Muslim interpretation to kill infidels (e.g., 5:51; 5:57). Cristaudo subsequently moves to a discussion of Muhammad's purported murder of the Jewish tribe of Banu Qurayza in Medina and implies that Islam subsequently spread by the sword throughout the Mediterranean Basin and beyond.[64]

Cristaudo argues that we must look at the "real" Islam—the one that is anti-Semitic, jihadi, and determined to rid the world of unbelief wherever it may be found—in order to understand that Rosenzweig's pronouncements on this religion are correct.[65] Yet even if this were the so-called real and authentic Islam, as opposed to one interpretive lens, it still makes little sense that Cristaudo (or Rosenzweig) would compare the "real" Islam with highly idealized versions of Judaism and Christianity. Instead, it seems much more likely that Rosenzweig's woefully inaccurate understanding and representation of Islam is based on his need to have a foil for his equally problematic and racially charged reading of Judaism.

In *The Jew, The Arab: A History of the Enemy*, Gil Anidjar highlights the issue of war in *The Star of Redemption*.[66] Bellicosity, he argues, is predicated on the same distinction as love, that of a relationship between self and other. For Rosenzweig, Judaism abolishes this distinction on account of its atemporal existence. In a similar vein, Christianity, although it is located temporally, seeks to mitigate the fault lines between self and other by invoking the virtue of "love thy neighbor." This temporal existence,

however, means that Christianity can and does engage in warfare that can be both religiously and politically motivated.

Rosenzweig locates Islam, as we have already witnessed, in opposition to both Christianity and Judaism. Whereas the latter two religions are predicated on love, Rosenzweig argues that Islam is predicated on war, more precisely "holy war" (*Glaubenskrieg*): "To walk in the way of Allah means, in the strictest sense, to spread Islam by means of holy war."[67] Islam is thus held up as the inverse of religion and faith. For Anidjar, this exclusion of Islam represents Rosenzweig's political theology: "Judaism is with God, Christianity is on its way to God, Islam is the war of the world."[68] Rosenzweig, whether intuitively or coincidentally, has set up Islam as the enemy, both religious and political, of Judaism.[69] In bifurcating the Judeo-Christian from the Islamic, Rosenzweig has created, at least from the vantage point of today, a reading of Islam that plays into the hands of militancy. Jewish philosophy, as I noted earlier, risks both informing and legitimating national and nationalist agendas. Religio-ethnic essentialization draws artificial boundaries and, in the contemporary world, the repercussions are major.

Philosophy's Occupation

Rosenzweig's use of race, of chosenness, and of essentialism produces a reading of Judaism that is highly insular and inner focused. He will subsequently argue in his *Das Buchlein vom Gesunden und Kranken Menschenverstand* (The Little Book of Sick and Healthy Understanding) that the best philosophy must be a form of anti-philosophy because philosophy is removed from wonder and common sense.[70] In his break with philosophy, however, Rosenzweig occupies it in order to make the case for Judaism's eternality, chosenness, and particularist form of world redemption. This occupation is based on a set of polarized identities, between Jew and non-Jew, and between Judaism and philosophy. In each of these binaries, the former term seeks to naturalize what it is not, to inscribe its essence on the other—an essence that paradoxically can only be articulated by what the other brings into existence: the self.

Rosenzweig's system, if my reading is correct here, needs an enemy, one that can be racially and theologically delineated from "the eternal people." To set a group apart as an enemy is to take imagined traits and reify them as existing naturally in the world. It is to set up a fixed border of difference in places where there is much ambiguity. Rosenzweig's

essentialist characterization of Judaism and the Jewish people inscribes both with a set of highly problematic traits grounded in racial and nationalistic politics. Rather than exist outside history, Rosenzweig's imaginings clearly betray their Weimar origins.[71]

The simultaneity of Rosenzweig's restoration and estrangement creates a sense of Jewish peoplehood precisely as it dislocates them from history and from the quotidian desperations of Germany. This is a romantic nostalgia that is predicated upon the ontological and cultural difference of *the* Jews. Rosenzweig's notion of Jewish difference is, as Gordon has shown, not unlike Heidegger's search for authenticity in the modern world.[72] Perhaps more forcefully than Gordon, I wish to suggest that, read in certain ways, both thinkers betray a fascist impulse in their systems that is grounded in their respective commitments to an organic national community.

Rosenzweig's thought occupies contemporary trends within philosophy—especially those that look longingly to the ancient past to find arguments for the racial and religious superiority of the Jewish people as an antidote to the ills of modern degeneration. He seeks the rejuvenation of this people based on a common and deep-rooted connection of ancestry, culture, and blood. Any ideas, peoples, systems, and so on that threaten the purity of this people must be removed, because they permit decadence and degeneration to exist in their midst.

Read on one level, Rosenzweig's thought reveals a troubling dimension. The creation of a philosophy of Jewish peoplehood grounded in racial and religious superiority has dangerous repercussions. The creation of a political aesthetic grounded in the authenticity of the past articulates a path toward contemporary renewal. However, this antiquity, its shape and form of revelation, is nothing more than a projection of the present. It is a projection, moreover, of exclusion and insularity. Rosenzweig's is a Judaism that has little use for the pluralism of the modern age, preferring the heavily romanticized era of an organic and holistic community that remains closed to outside forces.

As potentially troubling as some of Rosenzweig's comments are, his exclusionary and racialist language sets a dangerous precedent. Although he was opposed to Zionism on account of its desire to normalize Jews by returning to them what he had taken away—land and history—his atavistic "un-national" nationalism would certainly echo in later strains of religious Zionism. His philosophy of peoplehood, when applied to a modern nation-state grounded in the historical order, both justifies and legitimates a set of constructed enemies that serve as a foil to "the Jewish people."

In one sense the opposite of Maimonides, who permitted philosophy to occupy Judaism, Rosenzweig lets his own idiosyncratic and exclusivist readings of Judaism occupy the potential universalism of philosophy. For Rosenzweig, the particularity of the Jewish people must not be coopted or corrupted by universalism. In the following chapter, the final one, I now wish to examine the "beyond." How, in other words, is it possible to imagine Jewish philosophy in the present in ways that neither buy into nor are nourished by the binary of universalism and particularism?

6

Beyond

THIS FINAL CHAPTER seeks to begin the process of moving Jewish philosophy beyond the traditional discourse of the universal and the particular, where it has largely been confined and where it risks potential stagnation or ossification. The previous two chapters tried to demonstrate the repercussions and ramifications of trying to define the particular universally (in the case of Maimonides) and the universal particularly (in the case of Rosenzweig). In wrestling with the particular and the universal, Judaism and philosophy, both Maimonides and Rosenzweig—now seen as symbols for medieval and modern Jewish philosophy, respectively—succeed in creating authoritarian Judaisms based on a self-constructed rhetoric of authenticity and what amounts to a rather problematic reification of Jewish peoplehood. Both try to construct an originary Judaism grounded in a variously defined pristine past; both desire to renew Jewish peoplehood by tapping into this past; and, in so doing, both seek to stabilize the ontology of Jewishness in a world of increasing instability.

For Maimonides, philosophy controls the meaning of Jewishness; whereas, for Rosenzweig, Jewishness controls the meaning of philosophy. The universality of the one confronts and is confronted by, undermines and is undermined by, the particularity of the other. "To be effective," writes Judith Butler, "a tradition must be able to depart from the particular historical circumstances of its legitimation and prove applicability to new occasions of time and space."[1] Jewish philosophy, however, risks being ineffective precisely because its tendency is to offer a perspective that is backward looking and is grounded, in a potentially ostrich-like fashion, in an Ur-Judaism. This creates a past-looking forward that is largely closed off from the demands and vagaries of the present, and one that poses numerous pitfalls for the survival of various Judaisms, especially those not

grounded in halakhic observance.[2] This imagining of a veritable Judaism in a distant and unreachable past imprints the practices and discourses associated with Jewish philosophy onto a mirror in which the original subject no longer recognizes its reflection. This is because the activity that Jewish philosophy is supposed to carry out does not ultimately produce philosophy, but instead creates what it deems to be authentically "Jewish" responses to philosophical issues that arise in contemporaneous non-Jewish cultures (from Aristotelian science in the medieval period to, say, bioethics today). In seeking to revalorize an authentic past, a variously defined pristine Judaism is reified in such a manner that contemporary forms of the tradition can never compete because, in comparison, they are largely found wanting.

The discipline of Jewish philosophy has traditionally been informed by the philosophical attempt to deal with the Jewish question, that is, to determine the place accorded the Jew within larger cultural contexts. Historically, the Jew as the proverbial other has raised the question of identity and difference, the role of ethics and religion, the place of revelation and the possible subversion of the idolatry of politics. All the while, Jewish philosophy has sought to uncover an uncontaminated Judaism that can only be got at through a contaminated, that is, non-Jewish, other. Even Levinas, the great ethical philosopher of the other, remarks that one of the greatest threats to Jewish thought today is "non-Judaism" or, as he prefers to call it, "non-Judaic-Christian": "the arrival on the historical scene of those underdeveloped Afro-Asiatic masses who are strangers to the Sacred History that forms the heart of the Judaic-Christian World [*La venue sur l'avant-scène de l'histoire des masses sous-développées afro-asiatiques étrangères à l'Histoire Sainte dont est issu le monde judéo-chrétien*]."[3] It is precisely in the confrontation and confusion between "history" and "Sacred History," I submit, that the problem of Jewish philosophy resides.

The universal and particular antipodes have certainly served their purpose over the years—in, for example, Mendelssohn's apologetic account for Jewish inclusion. Although, even in his thought, as we saw in chapter 2, the inescapable and omnipresent opposition of universal and particular created a tremendous fracture in his work, from which he could not ultimately escape. I wish to argue in this chapter that these antipodes are ultimately false, because they are based on a set of reifications that have largely become meaningless in today's world. A Jewish philosophy that essentializes philosophy, Judaism, a "Judeo-Christian" ethic, or the like is one that will prove largely unresponsive to the various concerns in a

world that has become increasingly cosmopolitan and fluid. It is for this reason, as I have suggested throughout this study, that Jewish philosophy needs to move beyond the paradox of the particular/universal binary. The displacement that I am calling for requires that we rethink the cultural meaning of Jewishness in ways that many philosophers—both premodern and modern—were, for various reasons, unwilling to do. Regimes of universalization and of particularization, when viewed against the backdrop of the *longue durée* of Jewish philosophical writing, risk becoming hegemonic.

So how to proceed? In the remaining pages of this study, I prefer to focus on instability as opposed to stability, on margins rather than the center, on construction instead of essence, and on imagination in lieu of a strict rationality. An emphasis on the former terms as opposed to the latter will ideally afford me an opportunity to reflect on Jewish philosophy in ways that move beyond either sentimentality or an inherently conservative framework that is indebted to a particular orientation of what constitutes Judaism and what constitutes non-Judaism. This is not meant to reify Jewishness or Judaism as a trope of indeterminacy, however. Rather, it is to make the claim that if there is to be such a thing as Jewish philosophy, it must be able to account for and embrace this indeterminacy.

The Construction of Jewish Identity

In several recent studies, I have examined how the scope, aims, and goals of Jewish philosophy are heavily invested in both the creation and maintenance of Jewish identity.[4] Rather than proceed along similar lines here, I wish to switch focus slightly and instead refract the construction of identity as it relates specifically to the binary of the universal and the particular. Identity, as witnessed in chapter 1, is traditionally thought to be a stable phenomenon, something to which membership is passively accepted as opposed to actively created. Such a model, however, is grounded in a response to changing social conditions: group identity and an originary past become posited as stable markers in a world fraught with perceived chaos and instability. The past, the imagined locus of pure philosophizing—as we see in the thought of Maimonides and Rosenzweig, not to mention pretty much every other Jewish philosopher past, present, and future—becomes the vehicle both to rehabilitate Judaism (on rationalist grounds) and to regenerate Jewishness (in terms of religion, ethnicity, or the like).

Such a model, however, assumes that something called "Jew," "Jewishness," or "Judaism" can be neatly isolated from "non-Jew," "non-Jewishness," or "non-Judaism"—and subsequently articulated as an independent and internal entity that is closed off from various "external" stimuli. The problem, once again, returns us to the issue of boundaries. How are we to understand that which is perceived to separate "Jewish" from "non-Jewish"? If we assume, as is customarily done in Jewish philosophizing past and present, that they can be neatly separated—that a Jewish response to non-Jewish ideas can be developed and sustained—then the universal and the particular can be easily and readily differentiated because what separates them is perceived to be a natural boundary marker. Judaism is the particular, philosophy the universal, and something called Jewish philosophy seeks to reconcile them. This, returning us all the way to the introduction, is the standard account of what Jewish philosophy is and what it is supposed to be.

For me, however, boundaries are never natural markers, even though they are usually thought of and portrayed as such.[5] Boundaries between religions, like those between countries, are constructed and imposed, and because of this, they are ultimately artificial, even though to practitioners they seem to be anything but. Despite this, we continue—whether as practitioners of religion, as scholars of religion, or as individuals trying to reconcile philosophy and Judaism—with the notion that we can neatly separate groups, peoples, religions, and ideas into neat and hermetically sealed containers. One scholar of religion, David Chidester, argues that the very discipline of religious studies—not unlike cognate disciplines in the humanities—is "committed to identifying and reifying the many languages, cultures, peoples, and religions of the world as if they were separate and distinct regions."[6] The way in which we are conditioned to think about religions and religious ideas, in other words, is one of sealed containers into which human beings can be neatly classified and divided. "X," for example, can be signified as somehow uniquely Jewish, "y" as uniquely Christian, and "z" as uniquely Muslim. While they all have a common set of origins (often traced mythologically back to the patriarch Abraham), so the master narrative goes, they gradually went their own ways and now define themselves in stark opposition to one another.

Such a view, however, returns us to the center, a place from where boundaries appear as certain and as fixed as lines on a map. This is perhaps natural because it is from the center, after all, that stable cores or essences

are produced. In the center, the messiness of margins—and the complex interactions and skirmishes that take place on and around them—are far removed from sight. The result is the production or creation of a stable core that is based on the formation of an identity that is often regarded as sui generis and natural. Such an identity can then be exported from the center and used to impose order on the messiness of the borders. "X" is authentic and "in," for example, whereas "y" and "z" can be signified as inauthentic and cast aside. Such a view, however, tends to overlook the fluidity of border space between juridical and abstract entities. In terms of rethinking Jewish philosophy, however, it is important that we attune ourselves to the manifold religious ideas, practices, and innovations that permeate the self-imposed and self-constructed borders between groups, crossing in both directions. To arrive at a pure Jewish thinking will, on this reading, prove to be quite impossible precisely because such a thinking cannot exist, no matter how much we may want it to.

The porosity of the borders between what is constructed as "Judaism" and as "non-Judaism," particularly the way the former uses the language of the latter to articulate itself, makes it difficult, if not impossible, to separate them neatly from each other. Yet, and this is my problem, this is precisely something that the overwhelming majority of Jewish philosophers—and, as a result, Jewish philosophy writ large—are quite content to do. But how can we maintain that there exists a uniquely Jewish contribution to world civilization any more than we can isolate a uniquely Greek, German, or Muslim one. Even monotheism, what some consider to be the great gift of the Jews, was—at least on one reading—little more than a political invention under the Deuteronomic reforms in the First Temple Period.

In my *The Invention of Jewish Identity*, for example, I argue that Jewish philosophers—through the activity of translating the Bible into different languages (e.g., Arabic and German) and idioms (e.g., Aristotelianism and Renaissance Humanism)—actively produced Judaism in ways that were dependent upon the category of the "non-Jewish." Too often the distinction between the two is portrayed in Hegelian terms, in which "the Jew" derives its meaning by opposition to the "non-Jew." I suggest, on the contrary, that the very techniques, methods, and languages used to imagine and manufacture diverse Jewish identities have been (and continue to be) ultimately derived from non-Jewish contexts. Rather than uphold reified borders between "Jewish" and "non-Jewish"—borders that are often constructed and projected retroactively—I instead prefer to examine

their fluidity. The result is that the desire to produce a particular type of Judaism, a "rational" Judaism as it were, ultimately makes Judaism an other to itself, so that the very goal of maintaining Jewish distinctiveness ends up collapsing upon itself. This is certainly not to proclaim that Judaism is simply conjured into existence using other languages that are produced from more stable social groups. It is, on the contrary, to claim that all cultures are fluid and that, too often, this fluidity and instability masquerades—in texts past and present, in thinkers premodern and modern—as a set of essential traits.

But if identity is constructed as opposed to inherited, what does it mean to speak from a Jewish perspective? Derrida tries to get to the paradox of "being Jewish" in an interview with Elisabeth Weber,

> Once the self-identity of a Jew or of Judaism consist*ed* in this exemplarity—in other words in a certain non-self-identity [*en une certaine non-identité à soi*], "I am this," meaning "I am this and the universal"—well, the more you break up self-identity, the more you are saying "My self-identity consists in not being identical to myself, in being foreign, the non-self-coincident one," etc., the more you are Jewish! And at that point, the word, the attribute "Jewish," the qualities of "Jewish" and "Judaism" are caught up in a bidding war. It makes it possible to say that the less you are what you are, the more you are Jewish and, as a result, the less you are Jewish the more you are Jewish. . . . [*Elle permet de dire que moins on est ce qu'on est, plus on est juif, et, par conséquent, moins on est juif, plus on est juif*. . . .] The logical proposition "I am Jewish" then loses all certainty; it is carried off into an ambition, a claim, a bidding-up of value with no basis![7]

Derrida's complicated relationship to Judaism—the simultaneity of alienation and estrangement—is captured here, as indeed it is in some of his other writings.[8] Following the lead of Elliot R. Wolfson, it would seem that Jewishness is, for Derrida, less a marker of religio-ethnic identity than it is a literary trope "that signified what cannot be signified . . . the sense of being in place by having no place."[9] Rather than have "the Jew" or "Judaism" mark a past that cannot be past for the very reason that the past is beyond reach, Wolfson argues that such terms denote "the inherent homelessness of the human condition, the exilic nature of having no nature, an essential indeterminacy that is without any determinate essence."[10]

While I certainly do not want to argue that Derrida's idiosyncratic notion of Jewish identity should be the norm, based as it is on its own potential reification of Jewishness, I nevertheless draw attention to it because it highlights the amorphousness of what otherwise tends to be accepted as *de rigeur*. In Derrida we encounter the betrayal of dogma. Instead, he offers a new perspective on how to engage in Jewish thought that denounces investiture in various political and ideological commitments that—especially in the contemporary period—exclude in the name of concepts such as purity or chosenness. I am attracted to Derrida's thought precisely because it struggles against and ultimately refuses the tidiness of traditional essentialist intellectual, religious, or ethnic demarcation on account of the fact that such demarcation signals a fragility and displacement that betrays—as we have seen throughout this study—various nationalist or proto-nationalist constructions of Judaism that are grounded in fictive pasts that are imagined and yet masquerade as real.

Being a Jew, for Derrida, involves vigilance and resistance against authenticity and identity politics. "In order to say 'I am Jewish,' " he writes, "you perhaps have to say how difficult it is to say 'I am Jewish.' "[11] Authenticity now becomes a chimera, that which proclaims the security of locality in a place that ultimately proves to be no-place. In his own words,

> The being-jew, the "I am jew [or jewish]," of which one can never decide whether it is or is not authentic, one can either take as a case, an example among others of an originary contamination of the authentic by the inauthentic; or, inversely, one can consider that the experience one calls being-jew, whether it be the so-called or alleged Jew or the other, is exemplarily what deconstructs this distinction, squanders the credit granted to it and with it to so many others—in truth, to all conceptual oppositions.[12]

Antipodes—such as jew/greek, authentic/inauthentic, particular/universal—now become hybrids, mongrels that, despite the best efforts of sentinels (e.g., philosophers, theologians, heresiologists), cannot be separated as distinct ontologies. One cannot, appeals to the contrary, get to an authentically and particularly Jewish place any more than one can get to an authentically universalist philosophical (i.e., "Greek") one. These antipodes have become so invested in each other, in their mutual inclusion and exclusion, that separation becomes impossible, if in fact it ever existed.

Despite this, paradoxically, Derrida remains as "a jew" (without the capital "J"): "I insist on presenting myself as a Jew, on saying and declaring myself [*à dire et à me dire*] 'I am jew,' neither authentic nor inauthentic nor quasi-authentic, given that I do not know what I mean, that I could criticize, disavow, 'deconstruct' everything that I might mean."[13]

What are the repercussions of this for the practice of Jewish philosophy? The intellectual task of Jewish philosophy, as it is customarily defined, is to carve out a set of overlapping spaces—intellectual, cultural, and religious—to reflect upon pressing issues that impinge upon the human condition from a so-called Jewish perspective. The question immediately arises, however, as to what constitutes "Jewish." How, in other words, do we differentiate the so-called Jewish from the so-called non-Jewish, and just as important, who gets to decide on the criteria? These are, not surprisingly, politically and ideologically loaded questions. The quest for an authentic Judaism—determining what Judaism really is, what its true teachings consist of, and so on—has become highly contentious in our present anti-essentialist world. Yet, in many ways, this is potentially the problem with Jewish philosophy. In its desire to put together a certain reading of Judaism and a certain reading of rationalism, it has ultimately produced something that cannot exist in reality and, perhaps, should not.

My worry is that if Jewish philosophy continues to reify Jewishness (e.g., this is the "Jewish" take on ethics, the natural world, and so on), it will be unable or unwilling to either account for or accept the complex interrelations between what is considered to be Judaism and what is considered not to be. Jewish philosophy, in other words, risks becoming little more than a state or ethnic philosophy that upholds a set of constructed values that are thought to exist naturally in the world. There can, however, be no such thing as authentic "Jewishness." As a result, there can be no such thing, *pace* Rosenzweig, as authentic Jewish thinking. Rather than expend so much energy clarifying the parameters and ends of the concept, it might be more productive to examine the term—and by extension, the phenomenon—in its mutual investiture.

This is not simply a deconstructive agenda. On the contrary, it seeks to expose the dialogical encounter as a way to counter traditional communitarian moorings. This means struggling, as I have in the previous five chapters, with the Jewish philosophical tradition as a way to nudge it beyond a concern only with the articulation and protection of Jewishness and of Jewish peoplehood. Call this "beyond" cosmopolitanism,[14]

a nonegological ethic,[15] or some form of globalism. However, in invoking these terms, *we must still be cautious of not reverting to the universal/particular binary in which the universal elides the particular.* The key is to arrive at a thinking, à la Derrida, that is mongrel. Although this may appear as a form of detachment and estrangement, it is also a facticity that, when realized, appreciates the instability of universal and particular, and their involvement in each other.

Greekjew as Jewgreek: The Space-in-Between

As I discussed in chapter 1 above, Derrida invoked the terms "greekjew" and "jewgreek" to attempt to destabilize the dichotomy between Hebraism and Hellenism, between revelation and logocentrism. At the beginning of the essay in which he uses these two terms, he cites the following from Malcolm Arnold, the late nineteenth-century cultural critic, as his epigraph:

> Hebraism and Hellenism—between these two points of influence moves our world. At one time it feels more powerfully the attraction of one of them, at another time of the other; and it ought to be, though it never is, evenly and happily balanced between them.[16]

Rather than see these terms as two points that influence our world, Derrida will spend the rest of the essay seeking to destabilize them. Derrida uses this quotation from Arnold as a way to segue into a critical examination of the thought of Levinas, who sought to put Greek and Jew, philosophy and Judaism, together in some form of universalism informed by Jewish particularity. Since Levinas's sources (e.g., Husserl and Heidegger) are ultimately Greek because they are philosophers, and since, as Derrida will show, Levinas presupposes them at the same time that he opposes them, his thought also presupposes that of the Greeks. This is inevitable, Derrida intimates, given the fact that because Levinas is trying to engage in the performance of philosophy, his language must necessarily be Greek. The result is that Levinas, the Jew, become Greek. Such a movement, Derrida proclaims, ought to "make us tremble" [*nous ferait trembler*].[17] He writes that,

> In Greek, in our language, in a language rich with all the alluvia of its history—and our question takes shape already—in a language

> that admits to its powers of seduction while playing on them unceasingly, this thought summons us to a dislocation of the Greek logos, to a dislocation of our identity, and perhaps of identity in general [*elle nous appelle à la dislocation du logos grec; à la dislocation de notre identité, et peut-être de l'idenité en general*]; it summons us to dislocate from the Greek site and perhaps from every other site in general, and to move toward what is no longer a source or site (too welcoming to the gods), but toward an *exhalation*, toward a prophetic speech already emitted not only nearer to the source than Plato or the pre-Socratics, but inside the Greek origin, close to the other of the Greek [*mais en-deçà de toute origine grecque, vers l'autre du Grec*].[18]

This mutual occupation buries the site of the between, that which is prior, albeit not necessarily in the chronistic sense of the term, to the bifurcation of Greek and Jew. Breaking with Arnold, and breaking with Levinas, Derrida seeks this space in the "greekjew" and the "jewgreek." It is only in the conjunction of such antipodes—the universal and the particular, Judaism and philosophy—that these extremes meet, confront each other, and ultimately destabilize each other. According to Wolfson's astute reading of this phrase, "We can assume that 'Jew' and 'Greek' denote respectively the particular and the universal, we are right in characterizing that space as the chasm in which the singularity of the individual is both particular and universal and therefore neither particular nor universal in any absolute sense."[19] Seen this way, the separation between Greek and Jew can never be absolute, nor can their differences, the claims of the Jewish philosophical canon to the contrary, be reconciled. Derrida continues, "We live in and of the difference between Jew and Greek, which is perhaps the unity of what is called history. We live in and of difference [*Nous vivons dans et de la différence*], that is, in hypocrisy."[20] This state of deception—the promotion of beliefs or existence that one does not actually have—rests upon a fiction, a lie.

On Derrida's reading, and I am certainly inclined to agree with his assessment, there can be no authentic existence—no authentic Jewish facticity, no authentic logocentrism. Authenticity is belied by mutual investiture that masquerades as the hardened and reified categories *the* Jew and *the* Greek. Jewgreek and greekjew reinforce the instability of those two terms, revealing that authenticity is invoked to cover up ambiguity.

Derrida compares the between, the in-betweenness, of Jew and Greek to architecture in his *Psyche: Inventions of the Other, Volume II*. There he writes that "the without-ground of a 'deconstructive' and affirmative architecture can cause vertigo, but it is not the void, it is not the gaping and chaotic remainder, the hiatus of destruction [*le hiatus de la destruction*]."[21] The space of the between, framed slightly differently, is not complete aporia; it is about occupying a space beyond hypocrisy, beyond universalism and particularism. It is in this dislocated space, to return us to the essay in *L'Écriture et la différence*, where extremes meet.

It is now important to try to tease out some of the implications of Derrida's suggestive comments for Jewish philosophy. In the pages that remain in this chapter, I wish to show how the previous discussion can illumine a Jewish philosophizing that seeks to chart a course between the Scylla of particularism and the Charybdis of universalism.

Remapping

If Jewish philosophy teaches us anything, it is that it constantly redefines, redescribes—perhaps one could even say *invents*—Judaism using the languages and categories of other cultures. Jewish philosophers have used and continue to use putative non-Jewish categories and vernaculars to particularize and reify that which is signified as uniquely Jewish. The boundaries *between* are kept fluid as ideas move freely back and forth between them, but they can be and frequently are reinscribed after the fact. The result is that indeterminacy appears as the determinate, and the marginal takes on the guise of the center. How, we need to ask ourselves, do the various discourses of Jewish philosophy contribute to this? My interest in this study has not necessarily been in the fruits of the endeavor, the various "systems" that these philosophers produced, but in what makes the endeavor possible in the first place; that is, my interest has largely, though not solely, resided in what I earlier dubbed "Jewish metaphilosophy." Such an interest revolves around how something amorphously and monolithically referred to as Jewish philosophy—both in the past and in the present—constructs its narrative: for whom, for what purposes, and with what consequences?

Jewish philosophy provides us with an eyewitness account of the boundaries—and especially their fluidity—between groups that have otherwise been constructed as legally, religiously, and socially very different than one another. The task of Jewish philosophy in the present cannot be

to assent to Philo's claim that his Hellenophone and Platonic–inflected reading represents veritable Judaism, or to Maimonides's belief that his Arabophone Aristotelian–inspired reading is akin to Judaism in its originary form, or to Rosenzweig's desire to tap the wellsprings of authentic Judaism with his archaic modernizing. The practice of Jewish philosophy ought not to be about apologizing for Jewish particularism in the past or re-imaging it in the present.

All the diverse discourses associated with Jewish philosophy share one feature: they all attempt to account for Jewish difference or particularity while paradoxically using the language of universalism. In so doing, there is an explicit tendency to essentialize Judaism, neatly differentiating it from anything that is marked as either "non-Jewish" or "non-philosophical." This, however, sets up an artificial binary or boundary between the so-called Jewish and non-Jewish or, to use the language I have been attempting to dismantle here, between particularism and universalism. My interest is not in the binary per se, but in the boundary marker that separates them, what Derrida called the "between." How does this border keep the two terms on either side of it apart? Or, perhaps better, how is it *perceived* to keep the two sides apart? What sorts of intellectual work, in other words, does it perform?

Boundaries, as we have seen, are artificial and ultimately arbitrary lines used for a variety of political, social, and religious reasons. Their main task is to classify, taxonomize, and separate. In religions, boundaries play such an important role because they are necessary in simultaneously differentiating and defining self and other, creating an often arbitrary line that determines who is "in" and who is "out." Such boundaries thereby function as a catalyst for the emergence and sustenance of a set of discourses that are responsible for further separating various social and cultural groups from one another. They establish a set of defining traits—"a," "b," and "c," for example, are in and "d," "e," and "f" are out—that can be and often are sublimated into metaphysical differences. Such boundaries are, not surprisingly, heavily invested in the creation and maintenance of identity. And in scriptures deemed sacred by believers, these discourses that establish identities of self and not-self have been, can be, and often are elevated to the level of ontology.

One of the major problems of Jewish philosophy is that it must, by nature, buy into this discourse of self and other. Indeed, one could make the case that the rationalization of this boundary is one of its primary objectives. As a result, many Jewish philosophers—from Philo to

Maimonides to Rosenzweig to Levinas, and beyond—reify "Judaism" and essentialize an amorphous quality that they are willing to call "Jewishness." Rather than perceive either "Judaism" or "Jewishness" as fixed or eternal qualities that move effortlessly through time and to which individuals passively subscribe, I prefer to see both as actively constructed and under constant maintenance.[22]

Unfortunately, one of the major features of religious philosophy, sometimes referred to as theology, is to sanction such formations as opposed to querying them. The past—or, perhaps better, the memory of the past—provides a basic map against which different interpretations of the present are charted and understood. This act of imagination or interpretation creates various religious identities, which include a variety of political, social, gendered, economic, and intellectual forces. If we ignore these forces and simply assume that religious identity is strictly "religious" and inherited, we risk overlooking how and why such identities form. Such concepts as, for example, Jews introducing ethical monotheism to the world, functioning as a holy nation of priests, or being a light unto the nations (*or ha-goyim*) are ultimately little more than rhetorical devices that function apologetically—as Mordecai Kaplan called attention to years ago, albeit for somewhat different reasons.[23]

Unfortunately, the history of Jewish philosophy has simultaneously ignored and contributed to these problems. It has taken this sui generis core of Jewish identity as its defining mark and, in the process, contributed to the creation of a pristine Ur-Judaism. A shift of the boundaries between a constructed "Judaism" and a constructed "non-Judaism," between particularism and universalism, toward the idea that the real action was at the margins and not in the center historically, calls into question our own notion of collective identity in the present. Rather than uphold reified borders between "Jewish" and "non-Jewish"—borders that are often constructed and projected retroactively—we must examine their fluidity. The result is that the desire to produce a particular type of Judaism using the language of universalism creates major problems because it means that the goal of maintaining Jewish particularity ultimately ends up collapsing upon itself. Jewish philosophy, in the past and the present, I submit, has largely been unresponsive to the amorphousness and fluidity of both ideas and social groups.

But to examine various iterations of such activity—as was done for example, in chapters 4 and 5—risks reducing my study to a historical argument. And I do not want this study to be just a contribution to historicism,

something that—as I argued in chapters 1 and 3 above—has had negative influences on Jewish philosophy. Historicism has succeeded in classifying, taxonomizing, defining, and contextualizing the various chapters of Jewish philosophy; in so doing, it has helped us understand the *historical* development of Jewish philosophy and has articulated a series of so-called non-Jewish influences and anticipations. What it has not done, however, is to provide a great deal of insight into the paradoxes and fractures inherent to the very concept and practice of Jewish philosophy.

To steer clear of the traps of historicism, I have tried to avoid simply localizing the individuals I studied to their immediate and relevant contexts. To evade the double bind of universalism and particularism that surrounds so many of the discourses devoted to Jewish philosophy, I have attempted to move beyond such antipodes, to the in-between space, to the borderlines, where reifications of the center appear anything but certain or stable. This indeterminacy, I suggest, defines the practice of Jewish philosophy. Although the tradition has largely ignored or avoided this indeterminacy, I have opted to put it front and center.

Jewish Philosophy in a Time of Crisis

One could, I think, make the point that every era of Jewish philosophy is a time of crisis. This view functions as a trope, one that all Jewish thinkers invoke—in one way or another—to break with the perceived trauma of the present in order to return to a clearer, more authentic past. We witness it, for example, in Maimonides's attempt to come to grips with the Arab thought of his day. We also encounter it among those like Isaac and Judah Abravanel, writing in the aftermath of the expulsion from Spain in 1492,[24] among philosophers coming to terms with the horrors of the Holocaust in the middle of the previous century,[25] and even today as Jewish philosophers wrestle with the pressing issues that concern both the planet in general (e.g., ecology and materialism) and Judaism in particular (e.g., the crisis in the Middle East). These times of crisis return us to a set of boundaries between that which is signified as uniquely "Jewish" and that which is signified as "non-Jewish." The two can come together; that is, the border marker between them can be temporarily dismantled to allow for the transference of ideas. But it can just as swiftly be put back up.

But the boundary has now changed or expanded. What was once outside is now inside and vice versa. Yet, rather than focus on any of

these issues here, I instead wish to adumbrate the crisis that I have been alluding to in the previous chapters. How does Jewish philosophy, or even the study of Jewish philosophy, confront the modern world, a time in which boundaries are simultaneously both more rigid and more fluid? That is, how does Jewish philosophy, to switch metaphors—find a mooring within the shifting waters of the contemporary world? We can offer "Jewish" responses to science, to bioethics, to abortion, to euthanasia, to same-sex marriage—but are these *authentically* Jewish? I suggest that such responses are not "authentic" precisely because authenticity is such a problematic term, one that is always just out of reach and is always constructed. Yet, problematically, Jewish philosophy—throughout its long and winding history—has been and continues to be invested in manufacturing such an authentically Jewish response. Rather than subscribe to this notion of authenticity, I have instead tried to suggest another possible model for the boundaries separating Judaism and non-Judaism, one that is perhaps more literary and that draws its energy and inspiration from forces that both electrify and destabilize boundaries.

As this study winds its way to the end, something I hope will function as a beginning, let me explore some of the challenges that currently confront Jewish philosophy in the present moment. One could quite easily claim that the study of Jewish philosophy in America has hit a crossroads. Once the shining light of Jewish studies in this country, Jewish philosophy was in the ascendant position, showing Jews to be rational and cosmopolitan, and thus just like "them," that is, non-Jews.[26] Philosophy, in other words, was often perceived as the place where Jews met non-Jews on equal ground. It was a place of privilege and denial, a place of commonality, a place where Jew and non-Jew could take up a common cause in the Enlightenment project of rationality and other species of rationalism. Today, however, Jewish philosophy—especially medieval Jewish philosophy—is one of the most underrepresented fields in the discipline. Students no longer want to study Maimonides, but now turn for inspiration to the Zohar, or to newly conceived of and trendy topics that involve issues of relevance to contemporary Jews, such as Jews and film or Jews and food—topics that also have the potential to creak under the weight of unexamined assumptions about Jews and Jewishness.

Although we might want to separate Jewish philosophy from the academic study of Jewish philosophy, I would argue that it is not quite so easy to do this. Jewish philosophy, again on my reading, needs the theories and

methods presented by cognate disciplines such as critical theory and religious studies in order to resist some of the temptations that have plagued the tradition in the past. Just as the boundaries that all too neatly separate Jew and non-Jew, Judaism and non-Judaism, need to be interrogated, so to do the disciplinary boundaries that have been used—and continue to be used—to bring such objects into clearer focus.

How is it possible to remap or reinscribe Jewish philosophy, including the academic study of Jewish philosophy, within the shared cultural universe of Europe, of America, of the Levant?[27] Perhaps there is another way of seeing or imagining various Jewish cultures than just taking them to be ontologically or taxonomically distinct from the spaces and places they share with their neighbors. Too much time has been invested in showing Jewish distinctiveness as opposed to Jewishness's inherent sameness with other social groups. The tendency has been to envisage a bifurcated existence of "jew" and "non-jew," through the positing of strict boundaries whose goal is the establishment of separate entities that are believed to possess definite and identifiable essential characteristics.[28] A shift in focus to the boundaries themselves, I have tried to suggest here, permits and fosters a greater sensitivity to contiguities and even fluidities between collective identities, without necessarily falling back upon notions of either cultural universals or simple cultural diffusion.

But this comes with a cost. This emphasis on the constructed nature of all boundaries and identities—whether personal or collective—poses a real challenge to the maintenance of Jewish and other collectives. Can Jewish philosophy respond to this? Can Jewish philosophy produce a narrative or set of narratives that refuses to reify or essentially apologize for Jewishness? Perhaps another way of framing this is to ask what happens when Jewish philosophy confronts the complexity of modernity. Does the boundary between them shift or even disappear in this confrontation?

Beyond an Ontology of Jewishness

Jewishness, like Jewish philosophy, cannot simply be about reifying or upholding a sentimental notion of identity that is grounded in the rhetoric of authenticity. On the contrary, it needs to uphold an anti-identitarian possibility, one that follows from the traditionally diasporic condition of Jewishness. Such a condition, based as it is on a plurality of social, cultural, and intellectual worlds has the potential to chart an

open course that appreciates Judaism's fluidity as opposed to locking it into a set of characteristics that can be neatly and passively assented to. Such a position affirms the displacement inherent to Jewishness, the tear that opens a space in which Judaism and non-Judaism, particularism and universalism, are revealed in all their fragility and indeterminacy. This involves avoiding the situation in which the ontology of "the Jews" is elevated over, against, and beyond some other religious or social group.

The purpose of Jewish philosophy in all of this is not to reify terms such as particularism and universalism, but to show their artificiality, their investment in ideology, and their ultimate instability. The rethinking that I am calling for is one that sees Jewish philosophy reflect upon displacement, upon exile, and upon—in the contemporary period—what Jewish sovereignty means in the land of Israel. This reflection cannot be about protectionism, about xenophobia, about neat lines (or, quite literally, walls) separating differences that have become transubstantiated as ontologies.

Beyond universalism and particularism resides a commitment to plurality and equality as opposed to homogeneity, either on the grand (universal) or small (particular) scale. In her *Parting Ways*, Judith Butler articulates this dilemma on the basis of political judgment and ethics, especially as they play out in the Palestinian–Israeli conflict. She writes,

> Indeed, this is the one point I have been underscoring about the problem of Jewishness. It may be that the sense of belonging to this group entails taking up a relation to the non-Jew that requires departing from a communitarian basis for political judgment and responsibility alike. It is not that "one" (over here) approaches the "other" (over there), but that these two modes of existence are radically implicated in one another, for good and bad reasons. "Here" and "there" as well as "then" and "now" become internally complicated modalities of space and time that correspond to this notion of cohabitation. Moreover, if Jewishness mandates this departure from communitarian belonging, then "to belong" is to undergo a dispossession from the category Jewishness, a formulation as promising as it is paradoxical.[29]

Here, Butler encourages us to reflect upon what it means to exist within various, indeed overlapping, modes of national, religious, and intellectual

belonging. Only by engaging such issues is it possible, I submit, to rethink Jewish philosophy in ways that move beyond the particular/universal impasse. Such an engagement has become the pressing task of Jewish philosophy at the present moment.

Conclusions

This chapter has sought to chart the beginnings of a path beyond—beyond the antipodes of the universal and the particular, beyond the fault lines of philosophy and Judaism, and beyond the overused discourse of reconciliation. I have used the language of Derrida, as imprecise as it is suggestive, as the light to illumine the way. As I tried to argue, Derrida suggestively dismantles binary thinking by showing that traditionally constructed antipodes are ultimately embroiled in each other's history. There is, quite literally, no beyond, no place of authentic Hellenic or Hebraic thought.

Much of the previous study has examined the traditional framing of Jewish philosophy in the language of universalism and particularism. This framing, I argued, has produced a series of irreconcilabilities and impossibilities that have plagued Jewish philosophy, and indeed continue to plague it. It has, for the most part, made the various discourses associated with Jewish philosophy into a set of passive and largely conservative responses to non-Jewish ideas and contexts. This responsive nature of Jewish philosophy means that it is usually caught up in finding so-called authentically "Jewish" claims. The result is that Jewish philosophy, perhaps more than other discourses associated with the tradition, is responsible for imagining, creating, and maintaining Jewishness. This reification of Jewishness, of Judaism, I suggested in this chapter, is potentially ill-equipped to deal with the hybridity and cosmopolitanism of the contemporary period.

This study, on the contrary, has started from the position that there is something the matter with Jewish philosophy, a problem or a paradox that is inherent to the juxtaposition and mutual occupation of the two terms that make up the phrase. This occupation has made the universal and the particular collide in ways that are potentially pernicious for Jewish life both in Israel and in the diaspora precisely because it reifies and protects what it should be in the habit of querying and interrogating. The consequences of this confusion are potentially great.

The future of Jewish philosophizing must take its task seriously. In order to do this, I have argued, we need to return to a set of meta-questions, what I earlier called "Jewish metaphilosophy," that permit reflection on the task, means, and ends of the activity. Only then will it be possible to arrive at a type of thinking, even Jewish thinking, that avoids the perils of universalism and particularism.

Notes

PREFACE

1. Jacques Derrida, "Cinquante-deux aphorismes pour un avant-propos," in *Psyché: Inventions de l'autre* (Paris: Galilée, 1987), 511. English translation: Jacques Derrida, "Fifty-Two Aphorisms for a Foreword," trans. Andrew Benjamin, in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other*, vol. 2, ed. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford, CA: Stanford, University Press, 2008), 119.
2. See, for example, the informative historical studies found in Ismar Schorsch, *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1994); Christian Wiese, *Challenging Colonial Discourse: Jewish Studies and Protestant Theology in Wilhelmine German* (Leiden: Brill, 2005). A recent example of philosophy as that which can, ideally, bring Judaism into conversation with the modern nation-state is the work of David Novak. See, for example, *Tradition in the Public Square: A David Novak Reader*, ed. Randi Rashkover and Martin Kavka (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008).
3. I say this based on my involvement with a collection of volumes I am coediting with my colleague Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, titled *The Library of Contemporary Jewish Philosophy*. For a description of the project, see http://www.brill.com/publications/library-contemporary-jewish-philosophers. In many ways, it is my involvement with that project that has inspired my thoughts in the present study.
4. See, for example, Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope* (London: Penguin, 1999), xvi–xvii.
5. This distinction between "thinking from within" and "thinking about" comes from Franz Rosenzweig, "Apologetisches Denken," in *Zweistromland: Kleinere Schriften zu Glauben und Denken*, ed. Reinhold and Annemarie Mayer (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1984), 679. English translation: "Apologetical Thinking," in Franz Rosenzweig, *Philosophical and Theological Writings*, trans. Paul W. Franks and Michael Morgan (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2000), 97–98.

6. Charges of anti-Semitism, of course, cannot excuse us from engaging in a critical dialogue with either traditional Jewish sources or the modern State of Israel.

INTRODUCTION

1. Because of the overwhelming number of studies, I offer only a modest list here. Needless to say, all present different methodological and substantive perspectives: Julius Guttmann, *Philosophies of Judaism: A History of Jewish Philosophy from Biblical Times to Franz Rosenzweig*, trans. David W. Silverman, intro. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky (New York: Schocken, 1973), 1–18; Collette Sirat, *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1–5; Daniel H. Frank, "What Is Jewish Philosophy?," in *History of Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Daniel H. Frank and Oliver Leaman (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 1–6; Oliver Leaman, "Introduction to the Study of Medieval Jewish Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Daniel H. Frank and Oliver Leaman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3–9; Michael L. Morgan and Peter Eli Gordon, "Introduction: Modern Jewish Philosophy, Modern Philosophy, and Modern Judaism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Michael L. Morgan and Peter Eli Gordon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1–13; Raphael Jospe, "What is Jewish Philosophy," in his *Jewish Philosophy: Foundations and Extensions*, vol. 1: *General Questions and Considerations* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2008), 5–53; Aaron W. Hughes and Elliot R. Wolfson, "Introduction: Charting an Alternative Course for the Study of Jewish Philosophy," in *New Directions in Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Aaron W. Hughes and Elliot R. Wolfson (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010), 1–5; Martin Kavka, introduction to *The Cambridge History of Jewish Philosophy: The Modern Era*, ed. Martin Kavka, Zachary Braiterman, and David Novak (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
2. It is probably worth mentioning the rather curious fact that the one place in which Jewish philosophy is *not* taught is departments of philosophy. Instead, such activity tends to take place in departments of religious studies and in various language departments, such as French and German. This means that the discourses of Jewish philosophy tend, for the most part, to develop independently of the discourses of philosophy. This further supports the claim that my colleague Elliot R. Wolfson and I have made, namely that even institutionally, the discipline of philosophy is not interested in what is customarily referred to as Jewish philosophy. See Hughes and Wolfson, "Introduction: Charting an Alternative Course for the Study of Jewish Philosophy," 1–2.
3. See the discussion in Dana Hollander and Aaron W. Hughes, "Re-Imagining the Historical in Jewish Philosophy: Beyond Historicization," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 20.1 (2012): vii–ix.

4. There are certainly exceptions to this. See, for example, Randi Rashkover, *Revelation and Theopolitics: Barth, Rosenzweig, and the Politics of Praise* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 9–53; Martin Kavka, *Jewish Messianism and the History of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Benjamin Pollock, *Franz Rosenzweig and the Systematic Task of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Elliot R. Wolfson, "Echo of the Otherwise: Ethics of Transcendence and the Lure of Theolatry," in *Encountering the Medieval in Modern Jewish Thought*, ed. James A. Diamond and Aaron W. Hughes (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 261–324.
5. This may well support Yerushalmi's claim that history has become the faith of the modern Jew. See Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), 85–87.
6. Yet, for some strange reason, those who today engage in the reconciliation or intersection of Judaism and philosophy tend not to be called "philosophers" but "theologians." This is despite the fact that what they are doing is phenomenologically little different than what their premodern "philosophical" predecessors engaged in.
7. In this regard, see Norbert M. Samuelson, *Jewish Faith and Modern Science: On the Death and Rebirth of Jewish Philosophy* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008), 3–10.
8. Witness, for example Strauss's assessment that Maimonides's *Guide of the Perplexed* is perhaps one of the most important and successful works of something called "Jewish philosophy" ever written. He claims that one "begins to understand the *Guide* once one sees that it is not a philosophic book—a book written by a philosopher for philosophers—but a Jewish book: a book written by a Jew for Jews." See Leo Strauss, "How to Begin to Study *The Guide of the Perplexed*," in *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), xiv. Modern iterations of this may be found, for example, in J. David Bleich, *Bioethical Dilemmas: A Jewish Perspective*, vol. 1 (New York: Ktav, 1998); vol. 2 (New York: Targum Press, 2006).
9. See, for example, David Novak, *Natural Law in Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Elliot Dorff, *Love Your Neighbor and Yourself: A Jewish Approach to Modern Personal Ethics* (New York: Jewish Publication Society of America, 2006).
10. E.g., the collections of essays in *Women and Gender in Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Hava Tirosh-Samuelson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004); *Gender and Judaism: Tradition and Transformation*, ed. Tamar Rudavsky (New York: New York University Press, 1995).
11. E.g., Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid a Clash of Civilizations* (London: Continuum, 2003); *Sacks, To Heal a Fractured World: The Ethics of Responsibility* (New York: Schocken, 2007).
12. E.g., Elliot R. Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004); Elliot R. Wolfson,

Open Secret: Postmessianic Messianism and the Mystical Revision of Menahem Mendel Schneerson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009); and Elliot R. Wolfson, *A Dream Interpreted Within a Dream: Oneiropoiesis and the Prism of Imagination* (New York: Zone Books, 2011).

13. It is important to note that the universalist/particularist binary is not confined only to Judaism, but applies to any ethnic or minority group. See, for example the debates between Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 40–55; and Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: Norton, 2006), 1–12.
14. David R. Blumenthal, *Facing the Abusing God: A Theology of Protest* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 4.
15. Blumenthal, *Facing the Abusing God*, 4.
16. A good example of what I have in mind here is the thought of Maimonides. He may redefine the notion of prophecy, but—accusations by his critics to the contrary—he never abnegates the concept. On Maimonides on prophecy, see Howard Kreisel, *Prophecy: The History of an Idea in Medieval Jewish Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2001), 148–156.
17. David Novak, "Noahide Law: A Foundation for Jewish Philosophy, in *Tradition in the Public Square: A David Novak Reader*, ed. Randi Rashkover and Martin Kavka (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008), 120.
18. See, for example, Jacques Derrida, "Un témoignage donné . . . ," in *Questions au judaïsme: Entretiens avec Elisabeth Weber* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1996), 73–104, at 76–80. English translation: "A Testimony Given . . . ," in *Questioning Judaism: Interviews by Elisabeth Weber*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 39–58, at 41–43.
19. See Elliot R. Wolfson, *Giving Beyond the Gift: Apophasis and Overcoming Theomania* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 154–158. See also Dana Hollander, *Exemplarity and Chosenness: Rosenzweig and Derrida on the Nation of Philosophy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 51–57; Sarah Hammerschlag, *The Figural Jew: Politics and Identity in Postwar French Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 201–206.
20. See, for example, Emmanuel Levinas, *À l'heure des nations* (Paris: Les Éditions des Minuit, 1988), 167–168. English translation: *In the Time of Nations*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 144–145. This theme has been picked up by many of Levinas's interpreters. See, for example, Richard A. Cohen, *Levinasian Meditations: Ethics, Philosophy, and Religion* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2010), 268–272.
21. Levinas, *À l'heure des nations*, 167/144.
22. Ibid., 198/167–168.
23. Ibid., 199/169.
24. This, despite the claims of Yitzhak Baer, who believed that philosophy had a negative influence on medieval Spanish Jews that made them more likely to

convert to Christianity. See Israel Jacob Yuval, "Yitzhak Baer and the Search for Authentic Judaism," in *The Jewish Past Revisited: Reflections on Modern Jewish Historians*, ed. David N. Myers and David B. Ruderman (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 77–87.

25. And as we shall see below, Jewish philosophers in the medieval period did not even regard themselves as introducing foreign ideas into Judaism. Instead, as they saw it, they were reclaiming their birthright, since the Jews—not the Greeks—had originally developed philosophy, and others stole it from them.
26. The pristine past is certainly a common trope in the history of religions. See, for example, the discussion in Armin Geertz and Jeppe Sinding Jensen, "Tradition and Renewal in the Histories of Religions: Some Observations and Reflections," in *Religion, Tradition, and Renewal*, ed. Armin Geertz and Jeppe Sinding Jensen (Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 1991), 11–27. See also Russell T. McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 27–50.
27. McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion*, 34–35.
28. I discuss this process in greater detail in my *Invention of Jewish Identity: Bible, Philosophy, and the Art of Translation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), e.g., ix–xvii.
29. Bruce Lincoln, "The (Un)Discipline of Religious Studies," in his *Gods and Demons, Priests and Scholars: Critical Explorations in the History of Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 131–136, at 135.
30. Cass Fischer, *Contemplative Nation: A Philosophical Account of Jewish Theological Language* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 1. I must confess, however, that I am not certain about this. It seems to me that there is much theologizing in contemporary Jewish Studies, whether of an earlier generation (e.g., Kass and Fackenheim) or in the contemporary period (e.g., Novak and Blumenthal).
31. Fischer, *Contemplative Nation*, 16–17.
32. Rosenzweig, "Apologetisches Denken," 679/97–98.

CHAPTER 1

1. See, for example, the survey of studies listed in the previous chapter, n.1.
2. See the comments in Wolfson, *Giving Beyond the Gift: Apophasis and Overcoming Theomania*, 161–162.
3. This paragraph was worked out in conversation with Martin Kavka, whose vision of Jewish philosophy has taught me a lot over the years.
4. Guttmann, *Philosophies of Judaism*, 3.
5. See the comments in Hughes and Wolfson, "Introduction: Charting an Alternative Course for the Study of Jewish Philosophy," 3.
6. Harry A. Wolfson, "The Needs of Jewish Scholarship in America," *The Menorah Journal* 7.1 (1921): 32–33.

7. For a critique of the term "Abrahamic religions," see my *Abrahamic Religions: On the Uses and Abuses of History* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), esp. 34–56.
8. See my *Study of Judaism: Authenticity, Identity, Scholarship* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014), 42–51.
9. I am not sure if this is because these scholars no longer desire such inclusion or because Jewish studies is now so firmly entrenched with the American academy that it no longer needs such justification.
10. Once again, this formulation was greatly aided by Martin Kavka.
11. See, most notably, Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalité et infini. Essai sur l'extériorité* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1968). English translation: *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969); Levinas, *Autrement qu'être; ou, Au-delà de l'essence* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1974). English translation: *Otherwise Than Being, or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1981).
12. See, for example, the collection of essays in David Novak, *The Sanctity of Human Life* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2007).
13. The best example of the totalitarian dimension of ancient philosophy may be found in Plato's *Republic*. See, in this regard, Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, vol. 1: *The Spell of Plato*, 5th ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), e.g., 1–4. In addition, see my comments in chapter 4 below.
14. See, for example, Michael Mack, *German Idealism and the Jew: The Inner Anti-Semitism of Philosophy and the German Jewish Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 2–7.
15. E.g., Immanuel Kant, *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, trans. T. M. Greene and H. H. Hudson (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960 [1934]), 110–116; *Kant, Lectures in Philosophical Theology*, trans. Allen M. Wood (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 161. For a relevant secondary study, see Paul Lawrence Rose, *German Question, Jewish Question: Revolutionary Antisemitism from Kant to Wagner* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 91–116. On the practical implications of Kant's reading, see Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, new ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1973), 267–290.
16. See, for example, Hughes, *The Invention of Jewish Identity*, 93–110.
17. One of the most famous iterations or articulations of this binary may be found in Leo Strauss, "Jerusalem and Athens: Some Introductory Reflections," *Commentary* 43 (1967): 45–57; reprinted in *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy*, ed. Thomas Pangle (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 147–173. See also Strauss, "The Mutual Influence of Theology and Philosophy," *Independent Journal of Philosophy* 3 (1979): 111–118. See further Lev Shestov, *Athens and Jerusalem* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968).
18. Jacques Derrida, "Violence et métaphysique: Essai sur la pensée d'Emmanuel Levinas," in *L'Écriture et la différence* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967), 117–228.

English translation: "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas,"in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 79–153.

19. See, for example, "An Interview with Jacques Derrida (from *Le nouvel observateur*)," trans. David Allison et al., in *Derrida and Différance*, ed. David Wood and Robert Bernasconi (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 71–82, esp. 74–75; Jacques Derrida and Maurizio Ferraris, *A Taste for the Secret*, trans. Giacomo Donis, ed. Giacomo Donis and David Webb (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), 37–40.
20. Derrida, *Violence et métaphysique*, 227/153.
21. Derrida, *Violence et métaphysique*, 227/153.
22. See, for example, Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem: Or, On Religious Power and Judaism*, trans. Alan Arkush (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1983), 95–115. See my discussion of this and related passages in the following chapter.
23. See Samuel Sandmel, "Scholar or Apologist?," in *The Teaching of Judaica in American Universities: The Proceedings of a Colloquium*, ed. Leon Jick (New York: Ktav, 1970), 101–111; and Paul Ritterbrand and Harold S. Wechsler, *Jewish Learning in American Universities: The First Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 45–76.
24. Harry A. Wolfson, "The Needs of Jewish Scholarship in America," 32.
25. See Nahum N. Glatzer, *Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought* (New York: Schocken, 1953); Will Herberg, *Judaism and Modern Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Young, 1951); Emil L. Fackenheim, *Quest for Past and Future: Essays in Jewish Theology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968), collecting essays from the previous fifteen years, as well as the articles contained in the first two parts of Michael L. Morgan, ed. *The Jewish Thought of Emil Fackenheim: A Reader* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987).
26. The difference between "teaching religion" and "teaching about religion" goes back, at least, to Justice Goldberg's concurring opinion in *School District of Abington Township, Pennsylvania v. Schempp*. See, for example, Lincoln, "The (Un)Discipline of Religious Studies," in *Gods and Demons, Priests and Scholars*, 131–136.
27. See Fischer, *Contemplative Nation*, 3–5.
28. Strauss, "How to Begin to Study *The Guide of the Perplexed*," xiv.
29. This, of course, does not mean that such an approach cannot provide both interesting and valuable insights. See, for example, Joshua Parens, *Maimonides and Spinoza: Their Conflicting Views of Human Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), e.g., 1–18.
30. Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, in *Gesammelte Schriften: Der Mensch und sein Werk*, vol. 2., ed. Reinhold Mayer (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1976), 334. English translation: *The Star of Redemption*, trans. Barbara Galli (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 320.

31. On the shared philosophical worldview of Rosenzweig and Heidegger, for example, see Peter Eli Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger: Between Judaism and German Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).
32. I have in mind specifically Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 2006 [1983]), 1–6; Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 25–40; Jean-François Bayart, *The Illusion of Cultural Identity*, trans. Steven Rendall, Janet Roitman, Cynthia Schoch, and Jonathan Derrick (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 1–12.
33. See, for example, Robert Darnton, *George Washington's False Teeth: An Unconventional Guide to the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Norton, 2003), 60–67.
34. One of the most eloquent examples of this may be found in Miriam Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 96–131.
35. See chapter 3 below.

CHAPTER 2

1. See Hollander, *Exemplarity and Chosenness*, 2.
2. Kavka, Introduction to *The Cambridge History of Jewish Philosophy*, 3.
3. Derrida, "Violence et métaphysique," 117/79.
4. See, for example, Harry Austryn Wolfson, "Maimonides and Halevi: A Study in Typical Jewish Attitudes Toward Greek Philosophy in the Middle Ages," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 2 (1911) 297–337; Harry A. Wolfson "Halevi and Maimonides on Prophecy," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 32 (1942): 345–370; Warren Zev Harvey, "The First Commandment and the God of History: Halevi and Crescas versus Ibn Ezra and Maimonides," (Hebrew) *Tarbiz* 57.2 (1988): 203–216.
5. For a typical passage from Maimonides, see his *Moreh Nevukhim: Dalālāt al-Ḥā'irīn*, ed. and trans. Joseph Kafiḥ (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1972), I.31, 67–69. English translation: *Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), I.31, 65–67. For a typical passage from Halevi, see his *Kitāb al-radd wa-'l-dalīl fī'l-dīn al-dhalīl (al-Kitāb al-khazarī)*, ed. D. H. Baneth (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1977), I.95, 27–29. English translation: *Kuzari: An Argument for the Faith of Israel*, trans. Hartwig Hirschfeld (New York: Schocken, 1964), 64–67.
6. See, for example, the discussion in Shlomo Pines, "Shi`ite Terms and Conceptions in Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 2 (1980): 165–251; Diana Lobel, *Between Mysticism and Philosophy: Sufi Language of Religious Experience in Judah Ha-Levi's Kuzari* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 38–39.
7. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 339/324.

8. Translated into English as Franz Rosenzweig, *Understanding the Sick and Healthy: A View of World, Man, and God*, trans. Nahum Glatzer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 40.
9. Ibid., 42.
10. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 339/324.
11. On this theme more generally, see the pioneering studies of Elliot R. Wolfson, "Facing the Effaced: Mystical Eschatology and the Idealistic Orientation in the Thought of Franz Rosenzweig," *Zeitschrift für Neuere Theologiegeschichte* 4.1 (1997): 39–81, esp. 51–55; and "Light Does Not Talk but Shines: Apophasis and Vision in Rosenzweig's Theopoetic Temporality," in *New Directions in Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Aaron W. Hughes and Elliot R. Wolfson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 107–110.
12. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 339/324–325.
13. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 339/324–325. See in this regard, Stéphane-Mosès, *System and Revelation: The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig*, trans. Catherine Tihany (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1982), 186–187.
14. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 339/325.
15. See the comments and relevant secondary literature in my *Art of Dialogue in Jewish Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 138–150.
16. See, for example, the comments in Allan Arkush, *Moses Mendelssohn and the Enlightenment* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 177–180.
17. Although, as Alexander Altmann notes, Mendelssohn occasionally restricts this claim to certain "essentials" of Judaism. See his introduction to Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem: Or On Religious Power and Judaism*, trans. and intro. by Allan Arkush and intro. and comm. by Alexander Altmann (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1983), 20.
18. See chapter 4 below.
19. See the comments in Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1973; London: Littman, 1998), 531.
20. Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem: Oder über religiose Macht und Judentum* (Brussels: Culture et Civilization, 1968 [reprint of original 1783 edition]), 91/73.
21. See the comments in Batnitzky, *How Judaism Became a Religion*, 13–17.
22. Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem*, 89–90 (in the English translation).
23. See, for example, Kenneth Seeskin, *Autonomy in Jewish Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 142–143.
24. See the comments of Hollander above.
25. See the comments in Arnold Eisen, "Divine Legislation as 'Ceremonial Script': Mendelssohn on the Commandments," *AJS Review* 15.2 (1990): 239–267.
26. Seeskin, *Autonomy in Jewish Philosophy*, 146. In this regard, see also Michael L. Morgan, *Dilemmas in Modern Jewish Thought* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 32–36.

27. See the exhaustive discussion in Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, *Happiness in Premodern Judaism: Virtue, Knowledge, and Well-Being* (Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College Press, 2003).
28. Hermann Cohen, *Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums* (Leipzig: Gustav Fock, 1919), 38. English translation: *Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism*, trans. Simon Kaplan (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 32.
29. Seeskin, *Autonomy in Jewish Philosophy*, 160.
30. Cohen, *Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums*, 8/7. See, in this regard, Myriam Bienenstock, *Cohen Face à Rosenzweig: Débat sur la Pensée Allemande* (Paris: Vrin, 2009), 125–129.
31. Cohen, *Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums*, 15/13.
32. See the comments in Steven S. Schwarzschild's introductory essay to the English translation in "The Title of Hermann Cohen's 'Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism," in *Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism*, 8.
33. Cohen, *Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums*, 9/7–8.
34. Cohen, *Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums*, 9/8.
35. Cohen was extremely disdainful of the problems associated with pantheism (*Pantheismus*). His (mis)reading of the entire Jewish philosophical canon is filtered through precisely this prism. See my "Maimonides and the Pre-Maimonidean Jewish Philosophical Tradition According to Hermann Cohen," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 18.1 (2010): 1–26.
36. Cohen, *Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums*, 74–81/65–70. See in this regard, Andrea Poma, *The Critical Philosophy of Hermann Cohen*, trans. John Denton (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 171–174.
37. Cohen, *Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums*, 81/70. See further my "Maimonides and the Pre-Maimonidean Jewish Philosophical Tradition According to Hermann Cohen," 1–4.
38. Cohen, *Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums*, 297/252.
39. Cohen, *Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums*, 297–298/253.
40. Cohen, *Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums*, 297/253.
41. Cohen, *Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums*, 5/4.
42. Seeskin, *Autonomy in Jewish Philosophy*, 160.
43. Abraham Geiger, *Judaism and Its History in Two Parts* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 211. On this theme more generally in Geiger's thought, see Kenneth Koltun-Fromm, *Abraham Geiger's Liberal Judaism: Personal Meaning and Religious Authority* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 7–11; Michael Brenner, *Prophets of the Past: Interpreters of Jewish History*, trans. Steven Rendall (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 36–43.
44. See the discussion in Leora Batnitzky, *How Judaism Became a Religion*, 13–28.
45. See Bienenstock, *Cohen Face à Rosenzweig*, 149–152.
46. See, for example, "Éthique comme philosophie premier," in *Justifications de l'ethique* (Bruxelles: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1984), 41–51. English

translation: "Ethics as First Philosophy," by Seán Hand and Michael Temple, in *The Levinas Reader*, ed. Seán Hand (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 76–87.

47. Levinas, "Éthique comme philosophie premier," 47/82.
48. See, for example, Richard A. Cohen, *Elevations: The Height of the Good in Rosenzweig and Levinas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 120–122. For a more nuanced reading, see Elliot R. Wolfson, "Echo of the Otherwise: Ethics of Transcendence and the Lure of Theolatry," in *Encountering the Medieval in Modern Jewish Thought*, 276–285.
49. See Elliot R. Wolfson, "Echo of the Otherwise," 309–315; also Michael Fagenblat, *A Covenant of Creatures: Levinas's Philosophy of Judaism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 1–32.
50. Emmanuel Levinas, "Une religion d'adultes," in *Difficile Liberté: Essais sur le judaïsme*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Albin Michel, 1976), 38. English translation: "Religion for Adults," in *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*, trans. Seán Hand (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 21.
51. Levinas, "Une religion d'adultes," 39/22.
52. Emmanuel Levinas, "La pensée juive aujourd'hui," in *Difficile Liberté*, 216. English translation: "Jewish Thought Today," in *Difficult Freedom*, 164.
53. Levinas, "La pensée juive aujourd'hui," 216/164.
54. Levinas, "La pensée juive aujourd'hui," 217–218/166. For relevant comments, see Martin Kavka, "Screening the Canon: Levinas and Medieval Jewish Philosophy", in *New Directions in Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Hughes and Wolfson, 23–25.
55. Emmanuel Levinas, "Avant-propos," in *À l'heure des nations*, 11–12. English Translation: "Author's Forward," *In the Time of Nations*, 3–4.
56. This apologetics may be found, perhaps most forcefully, in Richard A. Cohen's reading of Levinas. See, in particular, his "Singularity: The Universality of Jewish Particularism", in *Levinasian Meditations*, 258.

CHAPTER 3

1. I refer particularly to numerous private foundations that seek to set the course for the study of Jewish thought and philosophy in the contemporary period. See my *Study of Judaism: Identity, Authenticity, Scholarship* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014), 101–118.
2. On Adret (1235–1310; aka the Rashba)—who imposed a ban (*herem*) on the study of philosophy for those under the age of twenty five—see, for example, Marc Saperstein, "The Conflict over the Rashba's *Herem* on Philosophical Study: A Political Perspective," *Jewish History* 1.2 (1986): 27–38; Bernard Septimus, "'Open Rebuke and Concealed Love': Nahmanides and the Andalusian Tradition," in *Rabbi Moses Nahmanides (Ramban): Explorations in His Religious and Literary Virtuosity*, ed. Isadore Twersky (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 11–34. Green opposes the use of philosophy to examine Judaism

because it means using another culture's tools to mine the particularity of Judaism. See Arthur Green, "New Directions in Jewish Theology in America," in *Contemporary Jewish Theology*, ed. Elliot N. Dorff and Louis E. Newman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 486–493.

3. There is no need to document this history here, because others have already done this so well. I refer the interested reader to Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 81–103; the collection of essays in Schorsch, *From Text to Context*; David N. Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past: European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Wiese, *Challenging Colonial Discourse*, 77–106; Brenner, *Prophets of the Past*, 17–50.
4. Nowhere, perhaps, is this more apparent than in Leopold Zunz's pathbreaking manifesto from 1875 titled, "Etwas über die rabbinische Literatur," *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1 (Berlin: n.p., 1875), 1–31, translated as "On Rabbinical Literature," in *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, 2nd., edited by Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 221–230. In this regard, see also the important study by Schorsch, "From Wolfenbüttel to *Wissenschaft*: The Divergent Paths of Issak Markus Jost and Leopold Zunz," in his *From Text to Context*, 233–254.
5. E.g., Gershom Scholem, "The Science of Judaism—Then and Now," in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* (New York: Schocken, 1971), 304–313; Scholem, "Reflections on Modern Jewish Studies," in *On the Possibility of Jewish Mysticism in Our Time and Other Essays*, ed. Avraham Shapira, trans. Jonathan Chipman (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1997), 51–71.
6. See, for example, Schorsch, "The Ethos of Modern Jewish Scholarship," in his *From Text to Context*, 163; Brenner, *Prophets of the Past*, 27–36.
7. Schorsch, "Ideology and History in an Age of Emancipation," in his *From Text to Context*, 268.
8. See my "'Medieval' and the Politics of Nostalgia: Ideology, Scholarship, and the Creation of the Rational Jew," in *Encountering the Medieval in Modern Jewish Thought*, ed. James A. Diamond and Aaron W. Hughes (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 17–39.
9. Adam Shear, *The Kuzari and the Shaping of Jewish Identity, 1167–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1–20.
10. See, for example, my "Maimonides and the Pre-Maimonidean Jewish Philosophical Tradition According to Hermann Cohen," 1–26.
11. Witness, for example, the breakdown in traditional surveys, such as Guttmann, *Philosophies of Judaism*; Isaac Husik, *A History of Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1916); Sirat, *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages*; and Daniel H. Frank and Oliver Leaman, eds., *History of Jewish Philosophy* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997). For an initial corrective, see Hughes and Wolfson, "Charting an Alternative Course for the Study of Jewish Philosophy," 1–16.

12. The remark was apparently made in a letter to Albert Löwy in 1898. See Alexander Marx, "Moritz Steinschneider," in his *Essays in Jewish Biography*, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1947), 123. However, I can find no mention of it in the letter, which is, nevertheless, critical of Zionism. According to Charles Manekin, the saying derives from Steinschneider's obituary. See his "Steinschneider's 'Decent Burial': A Reappraisal," in *Study and Knowledge in Jewish Thought*, vol. 1., ed. Howard Kreisel (Beer-Sheva, Israel: Ben Gurion University of the Negev Press, 2006), 239–251.
13. See, for example, Scholem, "The Science of Judaism—Then and Now," 304–313; Scholem, "Reflections on Modern Jewish Studies," 51–71.
14. Scholem, "Reflections on Modern Jewish Studies," 61.
15. Scholem, "Reflections on Modern Jewish Studies," 68.
16. See Asher D. Biemann, *Inventing New Beginnings: On the Idea of Renaissance in Modern Judaism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 201–205.
17. Witness his comments in Gershom Scholem, *From Berlin to Jerusalem: Memories of My Youth*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1980), 25–35. He writes, for example, "But one thing is clear: the large segments of German Jewry, and their intellectual and political representatives, *wanted* to believe in assimilation with, and integration into, an environment that by and large viewed the Jews at best with indifference and at worst with malevolence" (27; his italics).
18. Scholem, *From Berlin to Jerusalem*, 27.
19. See, for example, Scholem's highly critical post-WWII essay "Against the Myth of the German-Jewish Dialogue," in *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis: Selected Essays*, ed. Werner J. Dannhauser (New York: Schocken, 1976), 61–64.
20. Scholem, *From Berlin to Jerusalem*, 50.
21. Scholem would go on to write very articulately about the creativity inherent to the category of "tradition" and how it functions in Judaism. See, in particular, his "Revelation and Tradition as Religious Categories in Judaism," in his *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 282–303.
22. Franz Rosenzweig, "Das Wesen des Judentums," in Franz Rosenzweig, *Zweistromland: Kleinere Schriften zu Glauben und Denken*, ed. Reinhold and Annemarie Mayer (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1984), 521–527, at 526. Even the very title of his essay is a play on and subversion of Wissenschaft des Judentums. Writing to Ernst Simon from Jerusalem on September 2, 1925, Scholem ironically remarked that "we are in God's hand on this boat—and we surely have no other. We can no longer expect much help from history." See Gershom Scholem, *A Life in Letters, 1914–1982*, ed. and trans. Anthony David Skinner (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 145.
23. Biemann, *Inventing New Beginnings*, 206.
24. See Eric Jacobson, *Metaphysics of the Profane: The Political Theology of Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 52–54.

25. Jacobson, *Metaphysics of the Profane*, 75.
26. Quoted in Jacobson, *Metaphysics of the Profane*, 76.
27. See, for example, Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past*, 170–172; David Biale, *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 133–137.
28. Gershom, Scholem, "On the Name of God and Linguistic Theory in Kabbalah," Diogenes 79 (1972): 29–80 and 80 (1972): 164–194. See also his *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1946), 14–18. See the comments in Biale, *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History*, 135–142.
29. Scholem, *Major Trends*, 7–10.
30. Scholem, *Major Trend*s, 35.
31. For criticisms of Scholem's model, see Eliezer Schweid, *Judaism and Mysticism According to Gershom Scholem*, trans. David A. Weiner (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 1–18; Elliot R. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 121–125. For a general overview, see Peter Schäfer, *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 9–17.
32. See Scholem's comments in his *From Berlin to Jerusalem*, 15–17.
33. Here the pioneering work of Elliot R. Wolfson deserves especial mention. See, for example, his *Through a Speculum that Shines* and his *Language, Eros, Being*. In this regard, see also Jonathan Dauber, *"Glorying in the Understanding of God": Knowledge of God and the Development of Early Kabbalah* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).
34. See the excellent studies recounted in n. 3 above.
35. Suzanne Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 95–101.
36. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire*, xxi–xxix.
37. See, for example, Susannah Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 52–57.
38. See, for example, Ismar Schorsch, "Breakthrough into the Past: The *Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden*," in his *From Text to Context*, 205–232. In this regard, see also Ivan G. Marcus, "Beyond the Sephardic Mystique," *Orim: A Jewish Journal at Yale* 1 (1985): 35–53; Aaron W. Hughes, "The Golden Age of Muslim Spain: Religious Identity and the Invention of a Tradition in Modern Jewish Studies," in *Historicizing "Tradition" in the Study of Religion*, ed. Steven Engler and Greg Greive (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 51–74.
39. See Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 143f; David N. Myers, *Resisting History: Historicism and Its Discontents in German-Jewish Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger*; and more recently Hollander and Hughes, "Preface: Re-Imagining the Historical in Jewish Philosophy: Beyond Historicization."

40. On Ibn Gabirol's life in general, see Jacques Schlanger, *La Philosophie de Salomon Ibn Gabirol: Étude d'un néoplatonisme* (Leiden: Brill, 1968); see also Sarah Pessin, "Solomon Ibn Gabirol [Avicebron]," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (spring 2013 ed.), accessed August 17, 2013, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ibn-gabirol/.
41. On Judah Abravanel's life in general, see my entry on "Judah Abrabanel" in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (fall 2012 ed.), accessed August 17, 2013, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/abrabanel/; in addition to my comments in *The Art of Dialogue in Jewish Philosophy*, 107–115.
42. I here use the term "Neoplatonism," although I am well aware that it is anachronistic. See my *Texture of the Divine: Imagination in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Thought* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 51–55.
43. On his life and time more generally, see Eric Lawee, *Isaac Abrabanel's Stance Toward Tradition: Defense, Dissent, and Dialogue* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001).
44. In his poem *Telunah `al ha-zeman* ("The Travails of Time"), which, significantly, was written in Hebrew rather than Italian, Abravanel tells of his son who was kidnapped and forcefully converted to Christianity:

> *For you, my son, my heart is thirsting, burning;*
> *in you I quell my hunger and my thirst.*
> *My splendid skills are yours by right, my knowledge,*
> *and the science that has gotten fame for me.*
> *Some of it my mentor, my own father bequeathed*
> *to me—a scholar's scholar he.*
> *The rest I gained by struggling on my own, subduing wisdom*
> *with my bow and sword, plumbing it with my mind.*
> *Christian scholars are grasshoppers next to me;*
> *I've seen their colleges—they've no one who can best me*
> *in the dual of words.*

Translation from Raymond Scheindlin, "Judah Abrabanel to His Son," *Judaism* 41 (1992): 198. See the comments in Giuseppe Veltri, " 'Philo and Sophia': Leone Ebreo's Concept of Jewish Philosophy," in *Cultural Intermediaries*, ed. David B. Ruderman and Giuseppe Veltri (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 60–62.

45. However, the original language of composition is by no means clear. See the comments in Barbara Garvin, "The Language of Leone Ebreo's *Dialoghi d'Amore*," *Italia* 13–15 (2001): 181–210. My own opinion is that he did, in fact, compose the work in Italian as opposed to some other language (Latin, Spanish vernacular). See my comments in my *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

entry "Judah Abrabanel," under the subheading "*Dialoghi d'amore* and the Question of Language."

46. Colette Sirat, for example, writes that the *Dialoghi* was "written in a secular language and represent[s] a work of profane philosophy." See her *History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, 408.
47. See, e.g., Plato, *Symposium* 200a–201e.
48. See the important comments in Hava Tirosh-Rothschild, "Jewish Philosophy on the Eve of Modernity," in *History of Jewish Philosophy*, eds. Frank and Leaman, 522–523.
49. On its reception, see Menachem Dorman's introduction in Judah Abravanel, *Sihot `al ha-Ahavah*, ed. and trans. Menachem Dorman (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1983), 13–95.
50. For contemporaneous or near-contemporaneous ideas of the incarnation in Christian letters and philosophy, see Guy P. Raffa, *Divine Dialectic: Dante's Incarnational Poetry* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 67–125; Richard Cross, *The Metaphysics of Incarnation: Thomas Aquinas to Duns Scotus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 29–51; Alexandre Leupin, *Fiction and Incarnation: Rhetoric, Theology, and Literature in the Middle Ages*, trans. David Laatsch (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 1–24.
51. Judah Abravanel, *Dialoghi d'amore*, ed. Santino Caramella (Bari: Gius. Laterza and Figli, 1929), III, 239. For a somewhat outdated English translation, especially in terms of its unwillingness to capture the erotic nature of the Italian, see *The Philosophy of Love* (*Dialoghi d'Amore*), trans. F. Friedeberg-Seeley and Jean H. Barnes (London: Soncino Press, 1937), 280. Also, see the comments of Philo in *Dialoghi* III, 351/418.
52. See my *Art of Dialogue in Jewish Philosophy*, 107–110.
53. Interestingly, Zeev Levy remarks that the reason for the unpopularity of these two individuals has nothing whatsoever to do with their tenuous connections to Judaism, but is the result of the fact that they were both Platonists, as opposed to Aristotelians. See his, "On the Concept of Beauty in the Philosophy of Judah Abravanel," (in Hebrew), in *The Philosophy of Judah Abravanel: Four Lectures*, ed. M. Dorman and Z. Levy (Haifa: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1985), 27–29.

CHAPTER 4

1. See Heinrich Steiner, *Die Mu'taziliten als Vorläufer der islāmischen Dogmatiker und Philosophen: nebst Anhang, enthaltend kritische Ammerkungen zu Gazālī's Munkid* (Heidelburg: n.p., 1865), 1–15.
2. Ignaz Goldziher, "The Growth and Development of Dogmatic Theology" in his *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, trans. Andras Hamori and Ruth Hamori (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 101.

3. Especially in the aftermath of the attacks of September 11, 2001, the medieval rationalists offered an alternative to contemporary zealous radicals. See, for example, John Walbridge, *God and Logic in Islam: The Caliphate of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 9–14. Needless to say, this desire is virtually identical to Wissenschaft scholars who sought to emphasize the rationalist tendencies within Judaism at the expense of all those rival Judaisms that threatened it.
4. Hughes, "'Medieval' and the Politics of Nostalgia," 19–24.
5. English translation in *A Maimonides Reader*, ed. Isadore Twersky (New York: Schocken, 1972), 422. Requisite secondary literature can be found in Menachem Kellner, *Dogma in Medieval Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the Littman Library, 1985) 10–65; Marc B. Shapiro, *The Limits of Orthodox Theology: Maimonides' Thirteen Principles Reappraised*, new ed. (Oxford: Littman, 2011), 1–16.
6. Heinrich Graetz, *The History of the Jews*, vol. 3 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1894), 478.
7. Graetz, *The History of the Jews*, vol. 3, 325.
8. Husik, *A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, xv.
9. Harry A. Wolfson, "The Needs of Jewish Scholarship in America," 32–33.
10. See Harry A. Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975). This synthesis, according to him, would subsequently be shattered by another Jew, Spinoza. See Harry A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza: Unfolding the Latent Processes of His Reasoning*, 2 vols. (New York: Schocken, 1969 [1934]).
11. Sirat, *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, 5.
12. Jospe, *Jewish Philosophy: Foundations and Extensions*, 12.
13. Alexander Altmann, "Judaism and World Philosophy," in *The Jews: Their History, Culture, and Religion*, vol. 2, ed. Louis Finkelstein (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1949), 954.
14. Robert Eisen, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism: From the Bible to Modern Zionism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 73.
15. In honor of the 800-year annivesary of Maimonides's death in 1204, two excellent biographies appeared. Most telling of his rationalism (from the subtitle) is Joel L. Kraemer, *Maimonides: The Life and World of One of Civilization's Greatest Minds* (New York: Doubleday, 2010). The other is Herbert A. Davidson, *Moses Maimonides: The Man and His Works* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
16. Maimonides, *Moreh Nevukhim* I.7 (35/33). In this regard, see also I.36 (85–88/82–85). See the study in Hannah Kasher, "Beloved Is Man Who Is Created in the Image [of God]: Conditional Humanism (According to Maimonides) vs. Unintentional Humanism (According to Leibowitz)," [in Hebrew] *Da `at* 41 (1998): 19–29.

17. See the comments in Kasher, "Beloved Is Man Who Is Created in the Image [of God]," 24–25.
18. A good discussion of the processes involved in the Arabo-Muslim philosophical tradition, the tradition out of which Maimonides largely wrote, may be found in Fazlur Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1958), 1–18. See also Herbert Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect: Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, and Theories of Human Intellect* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 44–69.
19. Maimonides, *Moreh Nevukhim*, I.34 (74/73). See the discussion in Eisen, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism*, 121–122.
20. Maimonides, *Moreh Nevukhim*, III.48 (654/600).
21. See my discussion in chapter One below.
22. The classic study remains Norman Roth, "The 'Theft of Philosophy' by the Greeks from the Jews," *Classical Folio* 32 (1978): 52–67. See, also my "A Case of Twelfth-Century Plagiarism? Abraham ibn Ezra's *Hay ben Meqitz* and Avicenna's *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 55.2 (2004): 306–331.
23. Strauss claims that the medeival Islamic and Jewish philosophers, under threat of constant persecution and with the fate of Socrates in the background, frequently engaged in styles of writing to protect themselves. See Leo Strauss, "The Literary Character of the *Guide of the Perplexed*," in his *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), 38–94.
24. Maimonides, *Hilchot Yesodei ha-Torah* 1.6.
25. Maimonides, *Moreh Nevukhim*, I.56 (135/130). See the comments in James A. Diamond, *Maimonides and the Hermeneutics of Concealment: Deciphering Scripture and Midrash in* The Guide of the Perplexed (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 2–8; Diamond, "Forming a New Righteous Nation: Maimonides' Interweave of Verse and Text," in *New Directions in Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Aaron W. Hughes and Elliot R. Wolfson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 286–325.
26. See Kenneth Seeskin, *Searching for a Distant God: The Legacy of Maimonides* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 6–10. On the implications of this in subsequent Jewish thought, see Elliot R. Wolfson, "Via Negativa in Maimonides and Its Impact on Thirteenth-Century Kabbalah," *Maimonidean Studies* 5 (2008): 393–442, esp. 397–415.
27. For example, through an elaborate system of negative theology. See, in this regard, Seeskin, *Searching for a Distant God*, 23–42.
28. Maimonides, *Moreh Nevukhim* I.56 (137/131). See Ehud Z. Benor, "Meaning and Reference in Maimonides' Negative Theology," *Harvard Theological Review* 88.3 (1995): 339–360.
29. See my *Invention of Jewish Identity*, 64–67.
30. Maimonides, *Moreh Nevukhim*, I.36 (87/84).
31. Maimonides, *Moreh Nevukhim* I.36 (88/85), my italics.

32. In this regard, I disagree with the more irenic reading found in Ralph Lerner, *Maimonides' Empire of Light: Popular Enlightenment in an Age of Unbelief* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1–4.
33. Maimonides, *Moreh Nevukhim* I.54 (132/126–127).
34. It is worth pointing out that in his *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides argues that the Israelites were required by law to offer terms of peace to the Canaanites. See Eisen, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism*, 116–118.
35. The idea of the philosopher in society was an important topic among Maimonides's Arabo-Muslim contemporaries, most notably Ibn Bajja, Ibn Tufayl, and Ibn Rushd. See the collection of essays in *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Charles E. Butterworth (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Center for Middle Eastern Studies, 1992).
36. Witness, for example, the title of Kraemer's biography mentioned above: *Maimonides: The Life and World of One of Civilization's Greatest Minds*.
37. In *Guide* 1:59, for example, Maimonides writes that the utterances of some poets, and here he has in mind the likes of Ibn Gabirol, "contain such rubbish and such perverse imaginings as to make men laugh when they hear them, on account of the nature of these utterances, and to make them weep when they consider that these utterances are applied to God, may He be magnified and glorified" (Pines, vol. 1, 141). This theme is also picked up in his "Book of Commandments." For an English translation of the passage in question, see Isadore Twersky, *A Maimonides Reader* (New York: Behrman, 1972), 427–428.
38. On the telos of the individual, see the controversial reading of Shlomo Pines, "The Limits of Human Knowledge According to al-Farabi, Ibn Bajja, and Maimonides," in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, ed. Isadore Twersky (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 82–109. For a refutation, see Herbert A. Davidson, "Maimonides on Metaphysical Knowledge," *Maimonidean Studies* 3 (1992–1993): 49–103; Alexander Altmann, "Maimonides on the Intellect and the Scope of Metaphysics," in his *Von der mittelalterlichen zur modernen Aufklärung* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1987), 60–129.
39. However, this is certainly not to deny the quasi-mystical passages that appear near the end of the *Guide*. See the close reading of Maimonides's final lines in Diamond, *Maimonides and the Hermeneutics of Concealment*, 151–157.
40. The classic study remains Joseph Sarachek, *Faith and Reason: The Conflict Over the Rationalism of Maimonides* (New York: Hermon Press, 1970 [1935]), 66–103. See more recently, Tirosh-Samuelson, *Happiness in Premodern Judaism*, 246–290.
41. Maimonides's response to this was his *Iggeret Tehiyat ha-Metim* (*Epistle on Resurrection*), in which he affirmed his belief publicly in the miracle of bodily resurrection. He did argue there, however, that the precise nature of resurrection is unknowable. For an English transaltion, see "The Essay on Resurrection," in *Epistles of Maimonides: Crisis and Leadership*, trans. Abraham Halkin (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1985), 211–233.

42. See Bernard Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition: The Career and Controversies of the Ramah* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 60–65; Septimus, "Piety and Power in Thirteenth-Century Catalonia," in *Studies in Medieval History and Literature*, ed. Isadore Twersky (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 206–211.
43. Standard edition, my translation.
44. See Tirosh-Samuelson, *Happiness in Premodern Judaism*, 267–268; More generally, see Gregg Stern, *Philosophy and Rabbinic Culture: Jewish Interpretation and Controversy in Medieval Languedoc* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 1–22. See also in this regard Moshe Halbertal, *Between Torah and Wisdom: Menahem ha-Me'iri and the Maimonidean Halakhists in Provence* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2000), 1–15.
45. See, for example, my *Invention of Jewish Identity*, 97–99; James T. Robinson, "Secondary Forms of Transmission: Teaching and Preaching Philosophy in Thirteenth-Century Provence," in *Exchange and Transmission Across Cultural Boundaries: Philosophy, Mysticism, and Science in the Mediterranean World*, ed. H. Ben-Shammai, S. Stroumsa, and S. Shaked (Jerusalem, Magnes Press, forthcoming).
46. *Samuel ibn Tibbon's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, ed. James T. Robinson (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 509.

CHAPTER 5

1. His doctoral dissertation, for example, would form the nucleus of his *Hegel und der Staat* (Munich and Berlin: R. Oldenbourg, 1920; Aalen: Scientia, 1962). See the comments in Pollock, *Franz Rosenzweig and the Systematic Task of Philosophy*, 14–16.
2. See my *The Art of Dialogue in Jewish Philosophy*, 170–176.
3. On the concept of "ancient modernizing," see Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger*, 238–248.
4. For general background, see the comments in Myers, *Resisting History*, 68–105.
5. Elliot R. Wolfson, "Facing the Effaced," 74–81; Elliot R. Wolfson, "Light Does Not Talk but Shines," 107–115.
6. On Rosenzweig's near conversion, including the hagiographic presentation of the details, see the comments in Nahum N. Glatzer, "Franz Rosenzweig: The Story of a Conversion," in his *Essays in Jewish Thought* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1978), 230–243.
7. Mosès, *System and Revelation*, 283–286.
8. Here I follow the masterful study in Pollock, *Franz Rosenzweig and the Systematic Task of Philosophy*, 1–13. However, as will be clear in the course of this chapter, I think that Pollock has a tendency to emphasize the universal aspects of Rosenzweig's thought at the expense of a highly particularistic reading.

9. On Rosenzweig's systematic thought, see the important study in Pollock, *Franz Rosenzweig and the Systematic Task of Philosophy*, 120–180.
10. In his memoir, Gershom Scholem remarks of Rosenzweig, "Every encounter with him furnished evidence that he was a man of genius . . . and also that he had equally marked dictatorial inclinations." See Scholem, *From Berlin to Jerusalem*, 140.
11. Franz Rosenzweig, "Bildung und kein Ende," in *Der Mensch und sein Werk. Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 3: *Zweistromland. Kleinere Schriften zu Glauben und Denken*, ed. Reinhold and Annemarie Mayer (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1984), 491–504. Translated into English as "Towards a Renaissance of Jewish Learning," trans. Nahum N. Glatzer, in *Franz Rosenzweig: On Jewish Learning* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1955), 55–71.
12. Rosenzweig, "Bildung und kein Ende," 492/55.
13. Rosenzweig, "Bildung und kein Ende," 492/55
14. On this trend, see Leora Batnitzky, *How Judaism Became a Religion: An Introduction to Modern Jewish Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 13–31.
15. Rosenzweig, "Bildung und kein Ende," 493/58.
16. See the comments in Zachary Braiterman, *The Shape of Revelation: Aesthetics and Modern Jewish Thought* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 1–8.
17. Rosenzweig, "Bildung und kein Ende," 495/60.
18. Rosenzweig, "Bildung und kein Ende," 495/60.
19. Rosenzweig, "Bildung und kein Ende," 496/61.
20. See my *Invention of Jewish Identity*, 24–32.
21. Franz Rosenzweig, "Die Baulete: Über das Gesetz," in *Zweistromland*, 699–712. Translated into English as "The Builders: Concerning the Law," trans. Nahum N. Glatzer, in *Franz Rosenzweig: On Jewish Learning* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1955), 72–92.
22. On Buber's conception of experiential philosophy, see Claire Sufrin, "On Myth, History, and the Study of Hasidism: Martin Buber and Gershom Scholem," in *Encountering the Medieval in Modern Jewish Thought*, ed. James A. Diamond and Aaron W. Hughes (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 129–152. See also, in this regard, Martina Urban, *Aesthetics of Renewal: Martin Buber's Early Representation of Hasidism as Kulturkritik* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 16–25; Steven Kepnes, *The Text as Thou: Martin Buber's Dialogical Hermeneutics and Narrative Theology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 20–23.
23. Rosenzweig, "Die Baulete," 702–701/77.
24. See, for example, Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger*, 22–24.
25. Ernst Geller, *Thought and Change* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), 169.
26. See my *Invention of Jewish Identity*, 93–109; Leora Batnitzky, *Idolatry and Representation: The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig Reconsidered* (Princeton, NJ: Princ-

eton University Press, 2000), 105–141; Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger*, 237–274; Mara H. Benjamin, *Rosenzweig's Bible: Reinventing Scripture for Jewish Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 103–134.

27. Gershom Scholem, "At the Completion of Buber's Bible Translation," in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism: And Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality*, trans. Michael A. Meyer (New York: Schocken, 1971), 316–317.
28. Siegfried Kracauer, "Die Bibel auf Deutsch: Zur Übersetzung von Martin Buber und Franz Rosenzweig," in *Das Ornament der Masse* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag 1963 [1926]), 186. English translation: "The Bible in German: On the Translation by Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig," in the *Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans. and ed, Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 200–201 (italics in original). See Martin Jay, "Politics of Translation: Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin on the Buber-Rosenzweig Bible," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 21.1 (1976): 3–24.
29. He articulates this position most forcefully in his "*Das Neue Denken*" in *Zweistromland*, 139–161. English translation: "The New Thinking," in *Franz Rosenzweig's "The New Thinking,"* ed. and trans. Alan Udoff and Barbara E. Galli (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 67–102.
30. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 331/317.
31. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 332/317.
32. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 332/318.
33. See, for example, John M. Efron, *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin-de-Siècle* Europe (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 123–130.
34. See, for example, Mosès, *System and Revelation*, 271–282; David Novak, *Jewish-Christian Dialogue: A Jewish Justification* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 98–113.
35. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 332–333/318–319.
36. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 333/319.
37. Of course, Rosenzweig ignores the fact that all nations, both past and present, argue that they have a divine right to exist in their lands, which are often described both patriotically and religiously.
38. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 333/319.
39. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 333/319.
40. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 334/320.
41. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 334/320.
42. Efron, *Defenders of the Race*, 1–12.
43. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 334–335/320.
44. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 335/321.
45. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 334–335/321.
46. See the comments in Myers, *Resisting History*, 68, 105, esp. 85–93. Myers shows the phenomenological relationship between what Rosenzweig was trying to

do—flee from history and ground his understanding of religion in revelation—and what his contemporary, the Protestant theologian Karl Barth (1886–1968) was trying to do. In this regard, see also Rashkover, *Revelation and Theopolitics*, 78–86.

47. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 337/322.
48. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 337/322.
49. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 337/322–323.
50. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 338/323.
51. Again, see the comments in Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger*, 21–24.
52. On this trend more generally in Jewish philosophy, see my *Invention of Jewish Identity*, ix–xi.
53. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 339/324.
54. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 371/354.
55. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 457–459/434–435.
56. In his introduction to Franz Rosenzweig, *Understanding the Sick and the Healthy*, Hilary Putnam writes: "The most unfortunate aspects of *The Star of Redemption* are, in fact, its polemical remarks about religions other than [Judaism and Christianity]—its scorn for Islam, for Hinduism, and so on" (18).
57. Shlomo Pines, "Der Islam im 'Stern der Erlösung': Eine Untersuchung zu Tendenzen und Quellen Franz Rosenzweigs," in *Hebräische Beiträge zur Wissenschaft des Judentums*, 3–5 (1987–89): 138–148. See, for example, Putnam, Introduction, 18; and Gesine Palmer's introductory essay to Franz Rosenzweig, *Innerlich bleibt die Welt eine: Ausgewählte Schriften zum Islam* (Berlin: Philo Verlag, 2003).
58. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 129/128.
59. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 129–130/128.
60. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 130/128.
61. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, /196.
62. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 191–193/185–187.
63. Wayne Cristaudo, "Rosenzweig's Stance Toward Islam: The 'Troubling' Matter of Theopolitics in the *Star of Redemption*," *Rosenzweig Jahrbuch/Rosenzweig Yearbook* 2 (2007): 43–86, at 46. If Cristaudo's piece had not appeared in the pages of the esteemed *Rosenzweig Jahrbuch*, its highly dubious reading of Islam (in which individuals like Ibn Warraq and books bearing titles such as *While Europe Slept: How Radical Islam is Destroying the West from Within* function as valid secondary sources) could be written off as little more than a Rosenzweigian-inflected Islamophobia.
64. Cristaudo, "Rosenzweig's Stance Toward Islam," 47–48. It might be worth pointing out that other sources mention the existence of Jewish-Arab tribes in Medina long after the Banu Qurayza's alleged treason. Sources also tell us that the sanction imposed upon the Banu Qurayza was decided on in consultation with Jewish-Arab tribal leaders. Finally, there is no corroborating evidence of the historicity of these events outside of Muslim sources; as a consequence, we are on no firmer

historical ground when discussing these events than when discussing anything else alleged to have transpired during the early period. See my *Muslim Identities: An Introduction to Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), ch. 2.

65. Cristaudo, "Rosenzweig's Stance Toward Islam," 49.
66. Gil Anidjar, *The Jew, The Arab: A History of the Enemy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 87–98.
67. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 240/231.
68. Anidjar, *The Jew, The Arab*, 97.
69. This is also what Cristaudo has done with his tendentious reading. Moreover, Cristaudo also succeeds where Rosenzweig could not: he draws the line between Rosenzweig's comments and militant Islam of the post–9/11 variety.
70. English translation in *Understanding the Sick and Healthy*, 42.
71. See, for example, Braiterman, *The Shape of Revelation*, 8–21; Peter Gordon also argues that this flight from history as historically conditioned may be found in the translation project of Buber and Rosenzweig. See his *Rosenzweig and Heidegger*, 238–274.
72. Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger*, 3–5.

CHAPTER 6

1. Judith Butler, *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 8.
2. An attempt to deal with this, at least in the American context, is Shaul Magid, *American Post-Judaism: Identity and Renewal in a Postethnic Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013). Magid's suggestive goal is to argue "that when the ethnic bond is broken or dissolves into a multi-ethnic/multi-racial mix, the age-old strategies Jews deployed to meet the challenges of survival of both Jewishness and Judaism become largely inoperative, since those strategies assume an 'ethnic' root of Jewish identity as its foundation" (1).
3. Levinas, "La pensée juive aujourd'hui," in *Difficile Liberté*, 210/160. In this regard, see also his comment that the Palestinians are essentially faceless because they are the Jews' enemy: "The other is the neighbor, who is not necessarily kin, but who can be. And in that sense, if you're for the other, you're for the other. But if your neighbor attacks another neighbor or treats him unjustly, what can you do? Then alterity takes on another character, in alterity we can find an enemy, or at least then we know who is right and who is wrong, who is just and who is unjust. There are people who are wrong." See Emmanuel Levinas, "Ethics and Politics," in *The Levinas Reader*, ed. Seán Hand (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 294.
4. E.g., *The Invention of Jewish Identity*; *Abrahamic Religions;* "Transgressing Boundaries: Jewish Philosophy and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict," in *Jewish Philosophy for the Twenty-First Century: Personal Reflections*, ed. Aaron W. Hughes and Hava Tirosh-Samuelson (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

5. Here I follow the lead of the Boyarins. For a wonderful theoretical overview, see Jonathan Boyarin, "Responsive Thinking: Cultural Studies and Jewish Historiography," in his *Jewishness and the Human Dimension* (New York: Fordham, 2008), 25–44. For an extended elaboration on the artificiality of boundaries in the late antique period, see Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). See more recently Daniel Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels* (New York: The Free Press, 2012).
6. David Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996), 4. In his *Border Lines*, a work that examines the fluidity between Judaism and Christianity in the late antique period, Daniel Boyarin writes that "the question that I pose is a theoretical one, or at least an interpretive one: Even if we grant statistical dominance (and perhaps a certain power dominance, although, once more, I don't know how we would show or know this) of the separatists, in terms of the semantics of the cultural language, the discourse of the time, are there sets of features that absolutely define who is a Jew and who is a Christian in such wise that the two categories will not seriously overlap, irrespective of the numbers of members of the luring sets? I think not" (21).
7. Derrida, "Un témoignage donné . . . ," in *Questions au judaïsme*, 76/41.
8. E.g., Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, "Circumfession," in *Jacques Derrida*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 292–297; Jacques Derrida, "Shibboleth: For Paul Celan," in *Wordtraces: Reading Paul Celan*, ed. Aris Fioretos, trans. Joshua Wilner (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 3–73; Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, ed. with intro. Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2002).
9. Elliot R. Wolfson, *Giving Beyond the Gift*, 157.
10. Ibid.
11. Derrida, "Un témoignage donné . . . ," 78/42.
12. Jacques Derrida, "Abraham, the Other," trans. Gil Anidjar, in Bettina Bergo, Joseph D. Cohen, and Raphael Zagury-Orly, *Judeities: Questions for Jacques Derrida* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 1–35 at 29.
13. Ibid., 30.
14. See, for example, Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism*, 1–12.
15. Butler, *Parting Ways*, 14–27.
16. Derrida, "Violence et métaphysique," in *L'Écriture et la différence*, 117/79. The Arnold quotation comes from his *Culture and Anarchy*.
17. Derrida, "Violence et métaphysique," 122/82.
18. Derrida, "Violence et métaphysique," 122/82.
19. Wolfson, *Giving Beyond the Gift*, 162.
20. Derrida, "Violence et métaphysique," 227/153.
21. Derrida, "Cinquante-deux aphorismes pour un avant-propos," in *Psyché: Inventions de l'autre*, 518/126.

22. It is here that my training in religious studies—informed especially by the work of contemporary scholars such as Jonathan Z. Smith, Bruce Lincoln, and Russell McCutcheon—informs my methodology. This training permits me to think about Jewish philosophy within the disciplinary context of religious studies. See, for example, Jonathan Z. Smith, *Map Is Not Territory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978); Russell T. McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion*; Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking About Religion After September 11* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press); Lincoln, *Gods and Demons, Priests and Scholars: Critical Explorations in the History of Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).
23. Mordecai Kaplan, *Judaism as a Civilization: Toward a Reconstruction of American-Jewish Life* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1994 [1934]), 43.
24. Witness the title of Seymour Feldman, *Philosophy in a Time of Crisis: Don Isaac Abravanel: The Defender of the Faith* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).
25. As but one example, see David R. Blumenthal, *The Banality of Good and Evil: Moral Lessons from the Shoah and the Jewish Tradition* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1999), 27–32.
26. See my *Study of Judaism*, 57–76.
27. Ammiel Alcalay, *After Jews and Arabs: The Remaking of Levantine Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).
28. Here I am indebted to the language of Jonathan Boyarin, "Responsive Thinking," 40–42.
29. Butler, *Parting Ways*, 127.

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