

Rosenzweig Jahrbuch / Rosenzweig Yearbook 4

Paulus und die Politik / Paul and Politics

Rosenzweig Jahrbuch / Rosenzweig Yearbook

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**Paulus und die Politik /
Paul and Politics**

Gedruckt mit Unterstützung folgender Institutionen:
Harold and Jean Grossman Chair of Jewish Studies,
Arizona State University
Alfred & Ilse Stammer-Mayer Stiftung

Gedruckt auf alterungsbeständigem Papier (säurefrei)
Printed on acid-free paper

Originalausgabe

Alle Rechte vorbehalten – Printed in Germany
© Verlag Karl Alber GmbH Freiburg/München 2009
www.verlag-alber.de
Satz: SatzWeise, Föhren
Druck und Bindung: AZ Druck und Datentechnik, Kempten
www.az-druck.de
ISBN 978-3-495-46404-5

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Einführung / Introduction

»Paul« is not really a theme for the field of Rosenzweig Studies. One could hold that opinion if one only attended to how often and to what extent Rosenzweig spoke about Paul. In fact, he rarely did so and if he did, he did so within the context of the usual framework of Pauline studies formed by the Christian Church. Working from that context, Paul was for Rosenzweig that one who best accentuated interiority as well as that one who emphasized the ongoing election of Israel. Additionally, from this perspective, Paul appears as the founder of a certain type of belief and as a theoretician of election.

Hence, Rosenzweig's image of Paul, in itself, is nothing spectacular. However, this changes, when one looks into the *Gritli Letters*. In October 1916, a troubling conflict arose between Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy and Franz Rosenzweig. The point of contention was how to ascertain the »personal experiences of Paul«. Rosenzweig concurred with Rosenstock's conception that Paul completely stood on the side of the Church – and then he positioned himself and his entire way of thinking in total opposition to Paul and the church. Rosenzweig's own »personal experience« of his return to Judaism was also included in this opposition.

In the *Gritli Letters* and in the correspondence between Rosenstock and Rosenzweig, one finds that the entire duel between the two men always had its motivation in Rosenstock's idea that Rosenzweig »desired« to eventually be baptized. For Eugen Rosenstock, this idea was not resolved either in 1911 or in 1916 and not even in 1920. This being the case, it should be no surprise that one of Rosenzweig's last letters contains the sentence, »Baptism is no longer necessary.« In this respect, Rosenzweig offers again and again historical contextualizations of the conversion narrative and other aspects of Paulinian theology which remained within the patterns

mentioned above. But what he *de facto* does, what he does with his words and with his relationship to Rosenstock's wife Gritli and his constant addressing of Eugen through Gritli (directly on this question), is to declare that his own existence was part of a non-convertible community that is not even willing to be converted, and that as a vulnerable, isolated human he was simply remaining true to his idea of Judaism over the course of several years. On the one hand, this behavior displays significant similarities to what had been Paul's relationship towards the Jerusalem community. But on the other hand, Rosenzweig plays on his own existential involvement in the dogmatic struggle and thereby adopts a gesture towards Christianity which is, albeit utterly opposed to Christianity, a gesture entirely different than the curse that we know from Nietzsche: Rosenzweig represents himself as the individual Jewish human who demands to be loved as he is. Rosenzweig demands from Rosenstock that he should wish for him (Rosenzweig) to only ever remain a Jew, just as he, Rosenzweig, only wished for his friend to ever become a Christian.

This assertion, Rosenzweig's gesture in this duel, corresponds in such an intricate way to Paul's gesture *vis à vis* Judaism and even more intricately *vis à vis* the »pillars« of the primal community, that numerous contemporary discussions were provoked; indeed, so many that they have become this entire current issue of the *Rosenzweig Yearbook*. In essence, this question about conversion and non-conversion elicits a discourse which, above all, has been going on for years in that domain of English-speaking postmodern thinkers who are interested in political philosophy (in the broadest sense). Out of that discourse, several important questions have emerged, such as: How can one appropriately construe the »personal experience« of Paul? Is this not the self-discovery of the *homo politicus*? Isn't there something totally essential within that discovery for understanding the contemporary human or even the Western subject?

In this *Yearbook*, this postmodern discussion about Paul is taken up and continued and, in doing so, it will become clear that Rosenzweig has more to offer for this debate than first meets the eye. In his conflict with Rosenstock, for example, he anticipates much of what could be objected to and perhaps very well should be objected to about the »new Pauliners«.

This discussion is related to Rosenzweig in the articles of both of the undersigned editors. The contribution of Kenneth Reinhard draws special attention to Alain Badiou who actually initiated the current debate about Paul. Dominik Finkelde, who, like Kenneth Reinhard, has participated for quite some time in associated discussions of Pauline theology in America, takes on the position of Slavoj Žižek by confronting it with considerations from Jürgen Habermas. The final two contributions on the theme of Paul discuss the contexts through which the postmodern debate about Paul has led to their becoming inconsequential: the current exegetical discussion about Paul, by Lukas Bormann, and the dimension of Paulinian belief in the history of Islamic thought by Georges Tamar.

Sonia Goldblum's contribution, under the rubric of »Discussion,« addresses the situation of contemporary research into and publication of the *Gritli Letters* and formulates the desiderata for the next step in that line of research.

Under the rubric of »Documents,« this edition of the *Yearbook* makes what could be an especially valuable contribution to research in general intellectual history by printing, for the first time, two discourses by Rosenzweig about the Baroque. The first is a longish entry into his diary written in June 1908 and the second is an essay that he composed precisely one hundred years ago, in the spring of 1909. Wolfgang D. Herzfeld has worked his way through these writings with meticulous care and has likewise provided an extensive and richly detailed introduction. The writings reveal Rosenzweig as a theoretician of culture who, in affiliation with the philosophies and theories of culture of his Berlin friends, endeavored to develop a theory about the development of culture from the 17th through the 18th to the 19th centuries.

The current *Yearbook* is introduced with a presidential address by the current President of the International Rosenzweig Society, Prof. Dr. Myriam Bienenstock. This reports on recent activities of the Society, within whose mandate this *Yearbook* is also published, and opens up new research perspectives for the future of the Society.

Lucerne and Berlin, July 2009

Martin Brassler
Gesine Palmer

Inhaltsangaben / Abstracts

Gesine Palmer (Berlin)

»We'd do it again«. Some Thoughts on Rosenzweig's Anti-Conversion in the Context of the Newer Philosophical Debate on Paul

The seven letters of Paul have been the foundation of a religious movement which Rosenzweig – unlike most other thinkers engaging philosophically or theologically in Christianity – defines by its historical victory over and against Judaism. If the essence of Paul's teaching is »conversion«, Rosenzweig's personal and almost lifelong duel with his converted friend Rosenstock can be characterized as »anti-conversion«. Rosenzweig's emphasis on the idea of ›remaining‹ – as the effort to resist conversion at all costs – meant that almost everything in the standard description of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity had to be converted. With respect to the new philosophical reception of Pauline theology, the struggle between Rosenzweig and Rosenstock brings to light how even the most *avant garde* interpretation of Paul leaves us with an idea of the Jewish law as a kind of »bogyman«. This interpretation is – knowingly or unwittingly – depicted at some places in the texts of the »new Pauliners« with utter coarseness in contradistinction to a ›theology in seven letters‹ portrayed as utterly refined. The article suggests some corrections to this philosophical reception.

Martin Brassler (Lucerne)

Being Self-Political. Badiou, Agamben, Žižek, and Rosenzweig on Paul

In this essay Martin Brassler reconstructs the positions of Alain Badiou, Giorgio Agamben, and Slavoj Žižek by following the central theme of the question: »what does it mean to be a political self?« The three authors lay out their respective answers through interpreting the character and statements of Paul. These interpretations of Paul contain often explicit, but almost always mostly implicit intimations from Franz Rosenzweig. This essay works through these intimations and comes to the conclusion that Rosenzweig had clearly seen a specificity of political existence as none of his postmodern descendents had: The ambivalence of private/personal and public/anonymous realms without which there can be no political engagement at all.

Kenneth Reinhard (University of California / Los Angeles)

Forcing the Messiah. Paul, Rosenzweig, and Badiou

This essay examines the concept of »forcing« in the work of Alain Badiou, and its relationship to the Jewish notion of »forcing the end« or »hastening« the coming of the Messiah and the advent of redemption, as elaborated by Franz Rosenzweig. Badiou borrows the concept of forcing from the mathematician Paul Cohen, for whom it is a way of producing knowledge to which we have no direct access, on the condition of the expansion of a currently incomplete truth. For both Badiou and the Jewish messianic tradition, »forcing« involves serious risks – it is always at the edge of a »disaster«. But for both, it is a risk worth taking, a necessary supplement to its other side, which is mere waiting. The essay examines Alain Badiou's play from 1981, »The Incident at Antioch«, and its relationship to his later book, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, in order to argue that what Badiou produces in »Incident at Antioch« is of the order of a *truth*, or an act of *forcing*, which results in the *knowledge* presented in his 1997 book on Saint Paul.

Indeed, Saint Paul is an original thinker of forcing, and redemption is its original goal: Paul *forces* Jesus to have been the messiah, thereby anticipating the messianic era that he believed to be imminent. Forcing is a way to produce the logic of messianic transformation, both within a religious context and in the secular world. As such, it constitutes a fundamental tool of political theology.

Dominik Finkelde (Munich)

»Appropriating Paul and the Political Subject: Slavoj Žižek
Critique of Jürgen Habermas«

With their writings, both Slavoj Žižek and Jürgen Habermas engage in the »religious turn« of contemporary political philosophy. However, their perspectives on religion are incompatible. Habermas attempts to integrate religious world-views into the rational discourse of modern, post-metaphysical society conditioned on the willingness of the individuals of the former to submit their religious dogmas to the transformative criticism of individuals representing the latter. Habermas acknowledges the value of religious traditions and their impact on the evolutionary developments of social life and individual moral behavior. But he claims that the premises of an ethics of communicative discourse cannot be merely endured by the faithful. Rather the premises of communicative reason entail that they have to be accepted by inner conviction – even if this conviction stands in conflict with fundamental religious beliefs. Žižek, on the contrary, focuses on the non-discursive hard core of religion, especially in his defense of the Christian legacy. He sees a political gesture in Paul's rejection of Hellenism and traditional Judaism that eliminates itself from the dominant episteme and proclaims a truth that cannot be understood because the established horizon of communicative reason provides no compelling argument for its integration. Paul – the political subject *par excellence* for Žižek – emerges out of the gap between the symbolic orders of Hellenism and Judaism.

Lukas Bormann (Bayreuth)

The radicality of Paul. The recent philosophical interpretations of Paul and New Testament scholarship

This contribution at first deals with ancient conversions to philosophy and in particular with the conversion of Paul. The interpretations of Paul by the »new Pauliners« are aligned and critically analyzed within the context of international New Testament research. In closing, a historical-exegetical interpretation of the political dimensions of Pauline theology is presented.

Georges Tamer (Ohio State University / Columbus)

Faith and Knowledge Revisited

Faith and knowledge, individually as well as in their relationship to each other, still continue to be relevant subjects of philosophy and theology. The article presents an interdisciplinary and cross-cultural approach to the subject, which apart from philosophical – medieval and modern – views, also includes biblical, especially Pauline, and qur’anic ideas that mainly reflect upon the topic in a general and abstract way.

Sonia Goldblum (Strasbourg)

The Gritli Letters. Perspectives on Research and Editing

Published in 2002, the *Gritli Letters* contain letters from Franz Rosenzweig to his friend Margrit and Eugen Rosenstock. Although this publication offered new possibilities for Rosenzweig research, for instance concerning the genesis of *The Star of Redemption*, it had a rather cool reception. The aim of this paper is to show what researchers of Rosenzweig’s work can learn from studying the *Gritli Letters*. It also explains the controversy about the volume and its editors which is in some ways legitimate but not entirely factual. After a brief review on the history of the publication of Rosenzweig’s letters, it appears that its present state does not entirely meet

the needs of research. The intent of this paper is to make clear that one of the current challenges for Rosenzweig studies should be to provide the reader with a new, complete and reliable edition of Rosenzweig's correspondence as a whole.

Wolfgang D. Herzfeld (Ahrensburg)

Franz Rosenzweig's Treatises on the Baroque in the context of his studies on the history of art and culture with Wölfflin, Brey-sig, and Simmel in Berlin from 1907 to 1908

Rosenzweig's studies on the Baroque are, in essence, an attempt at a history of culture of the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. This essay reconstructs the inspirations that Rosenzweig had during his student days in Berlin in 1907 and 1908. Among his teachers were the Swiss art historian Heinrich Wölfflin, the historian Kurt Brey-sig, and the sociologist Georg Simmel. The influence on Rosenzweig's methodological approach is worked out here with special attention. At the conclusion, the author situates Rosenzweig's lecture in Baden-Baden within the historical course of treatises on the cultural history of the Baroque.