

Rosenzweig Jahrbuch / Rosenzweig Yearbook 3

Die Idee Europa / The Notion of Europe

Rosenzweig Jahrbuch / Rosenzweig Yearbook

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Einführung / Introduction

Franz Rosenzweig renewed his Jewishness after a long and hard process – but his roots in the Europe of his days had always been deep and strong. To leave Europe was never a possibility and in fact, on the brink of the Shoah, it was difficult to convince his wife Edith to leave the country. Like many others, she could not imagine that such a catastrophe would happen in the country of Goethe and Schiller. Rosenzweig’s thinking was quite similar to this. His rootedness in the best of European traditions was part of his life – and it became part of his arguments against Zionists. For him, Europe was a homeland for Jews unlike any other in the entire world. Until the very end of his life, he remained faithful to his hope that Europe would become the heartpiece of a global evolution towards humanism and tolerance. In this sense Europe was the best place to live for the Jews.

In the last 80 years, much of the world has changed, and today Europe has become a great player in world politics. But the question still remains as it did for Rosenzweig at the beginning of the 20th century: does Europe have the special role of establishing humanism and tolerance all over the world? And even more relevant for readers of the Rosenzweig Yearbook: what is the role of Europe from a Jewish perspective? And still more deeply: what is the true notion of Europe today? The following texts will provide several perspectives addressing these questions from standpoints such as that of a politician from Poland, Władysław Bartoszewski, or a politician from Germany and Israel, Avi Primor, or of an Israeli intellectual, Fania Oz-Salzberger, and an Israeli historian, Guy Miron. There are also insights into the ethical tradition that originated with Rosenzweig from scholars in the USA and Europe, Dan Breslauer

and Eveline Goodman-Thau. Rosenzweig's own notion of Europe is directly explored by an Italian academic, Francesco P. Ciglia. Completing this issue's set of essays are two texts which compare Rosenzweig to the life of Georg Lukács, co-written by Zoltán Tarr and Judith T. Marcus as well as a critical commentary comparing Rosenzweig's »New thinking« to that of Walter Benjamin's by Ezra Tzfadia. A contribution to the current postmodern discussion about St. Paul as political thinker by Gesine Palmer, a set of unpublished letters and texts published and introduced by Wolfgang D. Herzfeld, and several reviews on recently published works about Rosenzweig help to make this third Yearbook of the International Rosenzweig Society a stimulating and timely contribution to the contemporary debate on the meaning of Europe at the beginning of the 21st century.

Martin Brassler

Inhaltsangaben / Abstracts

Władysław Bartoszewski (Warschau)

Europe at a Cultural Junction. Some Thoughts on European Heritage and Future

In his paper, Władysław Bartoszewski develops a values-based and spiritual notion of Europe. Describing it as a »zone of civilization« not necessarily identical with the strict geographic contours of continent, he extends the zone of »Europe« to all places where »liberty, human dignity, respect for life, an aversion to all forms of overwhelming power and violence, a solidarity with the persecuted and a sense of care for the weak and defenceless are self understood.« He describes these qualities as essentially rooted in the Jewish-Christian tradition and its universalist aspirations to open-mindedness. While advocating the advancement of these values, he dreams of a Europe where integration and responsibility are able to tame the self-glorifying nationalist tendencies that have caused so much damage throughout European history.

Avi Primor (Herzlyia)

The Relations between Israel and Europe

After first outlining the nature of the tensions existing between Europe and Israel, Primor goes on to envision a future of close cooperation between Europe and Israel. Such cooperation, however, is only possible after a successful peace treaty is achieved. This peace treaty, in his view, has to be mediated by the USA. Yet a future commitment to the development of a flourishing Middle East including

Israel and the Arab Countries is unthinkable without the active cooperation of Europe. For understandable reasons, Europe has been underestimated as a possible partner for Israel. But the changes in the European Union and the close neighbourhood should no longer be ignored. Indeed, despite the more than difficult history of Europe's relationship with the Jewish people, Israel should in fact belong to this new Europe.

Fania Oz-Salzberger (Haifa / Monash)

On Rosenzweig, Israelis and Europe Today

Franz Rosenzweig is not a relevant figure for current intellectual discourse in Israel due to his religiosity, his meta-historical view of Jewish existence, and his keen interest in Jewish-Christian relations. Yet despite this inherent strangeness to secular Israeli minds, his thought is capable of kindling interesting dialogues between Jewish Israelis and Europeans today.

Eveline Goodman-Thau (Jerusalem / Kassel)

Truth, Time and the Other in Europe.

Levinas' Ethical Theory of Knowledge from the Sources of Judaism

The question of the connection between knowledge and ethics touches on the very core of the Western tradition steeped in Hellenism and Hebraism. Emmanuel Levinas' intention is not to find a synthesis between the two but rather to confront the one with the other. My article closely follows Levinas' reading of Jewish and philosophical sources, showing how the question of revelation in both modes of thought is the watershed for an in-depth understanding of knowledge, from the perspective of the relationship between Truth, Time and the Other. The confrontation between Hellenism and Hebraism as expounded by Levinas has influenced, among others, thinkers like Walter Benjamin and in particular Jacques Derrida and has contributed greatly towards an understanding of

the Jewish contribution to Western thought in terms of the connection between knowledge and ethics. This contribution can be particularly fruitful for the New Europe, struggling to find its identity by returning to its spiritual and cultural roots in search for an ethos which bears witness to the notion of difference – a particular universalism – in the confrontation with Truth, Time and the Other in the light of the atrocities of the 20th century on this continent, where morality and mortality are inscribed.

S. Daniel Breslauer (University of Kansas)

Franz Rosenzweig and the Development of Postmodern Jewish Ethics

This essay places postmodern European ethics within the context of the history of European Philosophy from Kant through the Present. It shows how contemporary Jewish thinkers have drawn on the European tradition while creating their own postmodern Jewish moral reflections. These newer efforts embody a rejection of Kantian secularism and the universalizing of ethics but also a continuity with the recognition of the interplay of faith and reason in that ethics. The essay traces the influence of Franz Rosenzweig in both the critical and constructive aspects of postmodern European ethics and the Jewish appropriation of that ethics. It considers how his view of Jewish history and of Jewish ritual shape postmodern Jewish moral thinking even when the postmodern thinkers reject some of his conclusions.

Zoltan Tarr / Judith Marcus (New York)

Georg Lukács – Philosoph und Jude im Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts. Notizen zu einer exemplarischen Biographie

Historically, the problem of the relation of Jews living among the non-Jewish populace, the so-called »Jewish Question,« has elicited different, indeed widely divergent responses and/or solutions. Looking at the responses at the beginning of 20th century Europe,

East and West, the situation is still the same: Franz Rosenzweig, and Martin Buber, for example, opted for a return to, i. e., a renewal of Judaism, while their contemporary, the Hungarian philosopher Georg Lukács, after a period of ambivalence and hesitation, embraced Bolshevism in theory and praxis and joined the Communist revolution. In the essay, we present a detailed account of Lukács's answer to the »Jewish Question,« with hitherto little known facts and writings both of Lukács and his peers.

Ezra Tzfadya (Hanover, New Hampshire)

Living the Truth of a Free Europe. Community, Philosophy, and Responsibility in the Writings of Franz Rosenzweig and Walter Benjamin

This article builds upon my honors thesis »The Political Language of Community: Linguistic Theology and Aesthetics in the thought of Franz Rosenzweig and Walter Benjamin.« It seeks to discern the European quality of their thinking by focusing on their respective notions of Freedom and Messianism. Distinguishing between Rosenzweig's concept of potential messianism and Benjamin's formulation of messianic possibility, the article claims that Benjamin's thought solves many of the inherent tensions plaguing Rosenzweig's philosophy and frees it from its remaining Hegelian shackles. Benjamin is capable of fully reorienting philosophy to the realm of experience by permeating fallen communal language and profane art with the husk of revelatory truth emerging from the post-lapsarian rupture with Origin.

Francesco Paolo Ciglia (Chieti-Pescara)

Between Homeric and Biblical Worldviews. Rosenzweig's notion of Europe

In this contribution, Franz Rosenzweig's European thought is examined. The basis for this is the short text, »Globus. Studies to the world-historical space teachings«, written in 1917 while he was in

the Balkans. Its European understanding arose in the context of a »sketch« outline about the whole history of worldhumanism. The latter is thought as the result of two polar and complementary forces. In this connection Europe is thought substantially as the idea and the political-cultural draft of a planetary universalizing process and spreading mental values, which were developed in the ancient mediterranean cultures. Europe is the tension, which makes it possible to develop fruitful relations between different and sometimes also opposite cultures. Europe is the production of a transcultural horizon, in whose context different humans, peoples, languages, and cultures can talk with one another and understand themselves.

Gesine Palmer (Berlin)

Thinking to Stay. Franz Rosenzweig's Anti-Conversion and the New Pauliners

If Paulinian theology is being built on conversion, Rosenzweig's philosophy is being built on something like »anti-conversion«. His move to remain Jewish provides one of the strongest Jewish answers to Paul. Hence it is not by chance that in almost every work on Paul that appears in the context of more or less postmodern philosophy Rosenzweig is at least being hinted at.