Redeeming Liturgy

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A Eulogist's Perspective on Rosenzweig's Concept of Liturgy[1]

„Gebräuche her! wir haben nicht genug Gebräuche. Alles geht und wird verredet."[2]

Introduction:

In Germany today, if someone has died after a long illness, people often say, "Es war eine Erlösung. [*It has been a redemption*.]" But, can death redeem? As far as Rosenzweig is concerned, certainly all his work on redemption[3] goes against such compliance with death. In this paper, I present some thoughts on liturgy that have developed based both on my professional work as a secular eulogist in Berlin, and on my ongoing reading of Rosenzweig. I'll argue that the very work of liturgy is meant to lead away from helpless compliance with death, and, as in Rosenzweig, toward a more helpful notion of redemption. I have divided this paper into three sections: 1. *Love's Liturgy Lost – on the present "Nichts" of liturgy*. 2. *Back to Liturgy – the danger of a fundamentalist turn in "total re-religion-ification."* 3. *Redeeming the Redemptive Powers of Liturgy – on the "Ichts" of liturgy*.[4]

Love's Liturgy Lost – On the Present 'Nichts' of Liturgy

Rosenzweig's magnum opus has been described as a philosophical outcry against death. Literally from the first to last word, the *Star of Redemption* is intended to serve as an earnest guide from death to life: "Vom Tode….*Star*…ins Leben." To begin a book with death means to begin with one of those problems that cannot be solved. Both natality and mortality point to aspects of the *condition humaine* that have simply to be borne ("ertragen" in German). Traditionally, liturgy helps people through the often-painful passages between different stages of human life, especially through that passage from a life *with* somebody, to a life *without* somebody. Yet, how do people manage who are no longer imbedded in religious communities? The dead still have to be buried (a legal obligation in Germany), and most still wish that transition to be accompanied by something, and someone.

In the anti-religious world of the former GDR (the largest territory with least religious population worldwide), reduced funeral rites were performed by professional speakers. Today, a service by such eulogists can be booked throughout Germany.[5] All of us who do this work try to establish some sort of liturgy in the original meaning of the word. Composed from the Greek *laos*, "people," and *ergon*, "work" or "service," liturgy means "public service."[6] The absence of any liturgy would leave an uncomfortable void.

I often wonder if some family discomforts, even conflicts that may erupt after certain funerals might be due to a lack of a common ritual and liturgical order that could have given comfort and orientation in the process of this passage. If mourning is confined to privacy, does that not risk an added stress in the very moments when *acknowledgement* of one's mourning might provide such solace?

Yet without doubt, liturgy as an integral part of religious culture has undergone a shrinking role. I see two principle narratives as explaining this decline. First, the sociological. Beginning with

Judaism as the initial “rational” religion, and not ending with Protestantism, rationalization, secularization and individualism are viewed as continuous, and unstoppable. Hence, fewer ask, “What is the *meaning* of it all?” The urban Western individual of our time, well organized in what Weber called the “methodische Lebensführung,” is generally supposed to be engaged in a problem-solving “self-optimization” that follows a path of de-religion-ification. Beginning with the opaque problem of death, Rosenzweig of course dismisses this entire Weberian description of progress.[7]

The second narrative explaining the general decline of liturgical competence, that is the practiced ability to speak words in a ritual and meaningful way, argues both on ethical and at times religious grounds. Critical toward an empty process of economic, physical and social rationalization, it is a widespread psycho-moralistic discourse regarding morals and values in the individual, as well as in the wider community.[8]

When both psychological and pedagogical theories insist on a need to *internalize* values and virtues, it is an almost-natural consequence that *outward* signs of communion, social bonds, and virtue are less appreciated. The “liturgical” protocol is less honoured as an integral part of public service. It is perceived instead as an “outward” (“äußerlich” in German) remnant, contributing little to the substantial values of society. Emmanuel Lévinas has gone so far as to write that it can even put at risk real, immediate and “ethical” encounters between human beings:

> *“Das Von-Angesicht-zu-Angesicht ist verschieden von jeder Beziehung … in der die Rede Beschwörung wird wie das zu Ritus und Liturgie werdende Gebet.”*[9]

Even if contempt for liturgy and rite is balanced by other strains of thought in the great Rosenzweig-reader’s work, it is matched by a contemporary inclination to appraise a situation in which liturgy is “overcome.” Followers of the first narrative, i.e., progress of rationalization, believe people have learned to avoid problems that cannot be solved rationally. They focus instead on things that can be done rationally. Followers of the second narrative, namely that internalization renders external exercises and liturgy superfluous, focus more on the encounter between the “I” and the “thou,” believing external liturgy does not affect the inward journey of people engaged in such an encounter.

The work of a eulogist, however, offers abundant evidence of original liturgical desire when it comes to *existential* problems that have to be suffered rather than solved. Where the liturgical impulse is suppressed, it may appear in disguise elsewhere. Even in mundane life. Could it be due to this liturgical impulse when, for instance, at some academic conference a scholar might read with great ceremonial voice a very well-known Walter Benjamin or other quotation, as if he or she had discovered it for the first time?[10] And exactly because it is so widely known, the audience can hardly fail but to repeat it? If this is more than a random observation, it points to a void left by the decline of liturgy in our Western lives. Even beyond such a soulful situation as a funeral ceremony.

Back to Liturgy – the Danger of a Fundamentalist Turn in ‘Total Re-Religion-ification’

If loss of liturgy poses a problem, what then might be the alternative?

A simple return to liturgy, to redeem people in mourning (and other critical situations) as they face the uncanny void? This is *not* Rosenzweig’s answer. Yet, it was the liturgical experience of the famous Yom Kippur service in 1913 that redeemed him from the promise to be baptised (given to Eugen Rosenstock in the famous Leipziger Nachtgesprach), and convinced him to remain Jewish.

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No wonder then that in the *Star,* Rosenzweig, like his teacher Hermann Cohen in his *Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums*, makes the *liturgy* of Yom Ha-Kippurim the central point of his interpretation of Judaism. But distinct from Cohen, who stresses the *standing* of the community before the Lord when confessing sin[11], Rosenzweig underlines the *kneeling* of the community in the moment of commemorating redemption "im Schauen der unmittelbaren Gottesnähe." "Die gewaltigen Tage' … sind ausgezeichnet vor allen andern Festen dadurch, dass hier und nur hier der Jude kniet."[12] Did Rosenzweig sink to his knees in order to fall back into an outdated religious and more liturgically-orientated way of life? I don't believe so. If not, what then was his intent?

The third part of the Star deals expressly with liturgy.[13] The relationship between Christianity and Judaism, the main religious traditions of his time and place,[14] is built around the concepts of a circular time in Judaism, a linear time for nations, and a kind of spiral time for Christianity. His use of liturgy helps Rosenzweig transcend mere apologetics. Claiming *universal* relevance for the *particular* service of "the eternal people," he uses his well-known technique of turning prejudice against Judaism into an advantage. Where liturgy to the modern mind appears an element of older times, in danger of stupefying spiritual development with its endless repetitions and stiff rules, Rosenzweig applies what he describes in his essay on apologetics. He starts with this weakest point, and declares it the central achievement of the matter to be defended.[15]

This, however, comes with a price. The peoples of the world live in a process of permanent renewal, which leads to "the sea." They thus leave a growing past behind them, continuously turning future into past. The Jewish people – the eternal people – freeze the moment and let it stand steadily between an "unvermehrbarer Vergangenheit" and an unmoveable future. This eternity of the "liturgical" moment creates an unbridgeable distance between participation in a people's eternity, and the life of nations. Even life itself. "Und wieder erkauft sich das ewige Volk seine Ewigkeit um den Preis des zeitlichen Lebens. … So hört der Augenblick auf zu verfliegen. Aber so wird der Augenblick freilich dem Strom der Zeit enthoben, und indem das Leben geheiligt wird, ist es nicht mehr lebendig."[16]

While nations live in revolution, their laws permanently changing their skin, Jewish law will never be abolished by revolution. One can run from it, but one cannot change it.[17] Pace modern Judaism, pace reform and liberal Judaism, Rosenzweig claims here an unchanging mode for Jewish law, and Jewish practice. Some offer Judaism as the boogeyman for everything stiffened, inflexible, unchangeable, authoritarian and "legalistic." And yes, says Rosenzweig, those are elements of Judaism. But for a great reason.

He makes the point that other peoples of the world have their death *before* them. Their love is even increased as they know they are (still) mortal.[18] And there will be a day when their "language will be buried in books," and their habits and laws will have lost living power. The Jewish people cannot conceive of such a thing for one reason: "Denn alles, worin die Völker der Welt ihr Leben verankerten, uns ist es schon vorlängst geraubt; Land Sprache Sitte und Gesetz ist uns schon lang aus dem Kreise des Lebendigen geschieden und ist uns aus Lebendigem zu Heiligem gehoben; wir aber leben immer und leben ewig…."[19]

A modern thinker might be tempted to believe Rosenzweig regards Judaism as a sort of "zombie," i.e., a faith that has survived its own death. Anti-Semites might respond, "that's what we always knew. It has refused to grow with time, outdated by later developments." Many modern Jews, refusing to adhere to stricter religious practice, may share the view that an inflexible liturgy could signify the dead-end of any religion whose practitioners refuse to consider insights of modern science. Is religious Judaism à la Rosenzweig, therefore, a fundamentalist version of it? Resisting assimilation to a hostile environment; driven back from modernity into a stubborn remoteness? Some so-called orthodoxy may appear so. But this, of course, is *not* Rosenzweig's belief. *Kal vachomer*, he would as much have mocked more extreme Christian variants of fundamentalism,

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with their court-trials regarding Darwin's theory, also resistant to the insights of modern science.

What Rosenzweig *does* is point to the contribution of liturgical order to those who have survived the death of anything, or anyone, dear to them.

Redeeming the Redemptive Powers of Liturgy – on the "Icht" of Liturgy.

Throughout the history of both religion and culture, there has been tension between a ritualistic, circular attitude toward conditions of human life, and a development-orientated linear approach in which spiritual internalization plays a major part. Rosenzweig knows there has been no *solution* to this permanent tension.[20]

In many Western views of culture, concepts like "legalism," meaning ritual and law – (often identified with Jewish tradition) – are seen as *outward actions*. By the same token, belief, attitude and internalization – (often identified with Christian tradition) – are at times regarded as "superior" values. Rosenzweig rearranges this order in favour of liturgy and law. With him, liturgy becomes a force reminding those who have lost any immediate affiliation of their interior strength, and an abiding sense of belonging.[21] It is not that Jews, as is often suggested, do not internalize values. Neither is it true that liturgy is standing against internalization. It is only that through liturgy and a system of "legalist" ideas about rites and everyday life that the otherwise unlimited (and hence, "excessive") consequence of internalization becomes balanced and limited. This may become understandable in short examples:

The community and its manifold endless dialogue within, and with the sacred texts, and with God, are silenced in liturgical reading of the Tora.[22] The eternal element of liturgy, the Holiest of Holy, the kneeling in the presence of God once a year, does not change.

These and other elements may look authoritarian to the viewer from outside. Ismar Elbogen, however, is right to stress, "Der jüdische Gottesdienst […] war der erste, der, völlig losgelöst vom Opfer, als Gottesdienst mit dem Herzen, Avodah sh'balev, bezeichnet werden durfte."[23] Rosenzweig supports his view.

Instead of hailing "the Christian way" as a step forward in internalization, Rosenzweig turns the limits of Jewish liturgy into a strength, arguing it *limits* the otherwise endless work of the heart, and puts a full stop to the unlimited demands evoked by Lévinas (who later, in his *Talmudic Readings*, made greater sense of liturgy). Immediateness and total internalization of faith and values are in need of being limited in order not to become destructive. This is what liturgy does.

It is *once* a year Jews kneel in the presence of God. No more. It is once a year they gather in a moment beyond any temporal and geographic reality. Having this moment of unquestionable stability, the congregation and individuals within it are free to be creative in shaping all the other things surrounding it. It is the same with the Shabbat as weekly reminder. The Shabbat as the small holiday is fixed. But how exactly it is to be celebrated, with readings, music, commentaries and poems in Hebrew or other language – this is left to the congregation. Are Jews therefore in Rosenzweig's scheme "better off" than Christians, whose task according to Rosenzweig is to spread across the world and believe in everything, endlessly, boundlessly, without rhythm, but with coercion instead to prove their heartfelt authenticity in every single moment?[24] Had they only this aspect of permanent development and linear time, it would be hard for Christians. But Rosenzweig concedes that thanks to Jewish tradition still being accepted as their backbone, thanks to a rhythm secured by the Hebrew Bible, Christians have at least a little share in Jewish liturgy. Their time is, therefore, what I have called "spiral time".

Nevertheless, the general direction should be clear by now. Rosenzweig translates the idea of

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necessary development into unlimited belief. In fact, unlimited processes of examination, coupled with a demand to go on with the mission, characterize Christian history. This trend is unbroken in religious scholarship, à la Weber and Freud, still displaying the structure of unlimited progress. In describing religion and its liturgy as belonging to "an earlier stage" of development, assuming it to be replaced by a more appropriate world view and behavior in the never-ending process of rationalization, they adhere to the path prescribed by "Christian" religious structure.

The *Star* argues another point. In order to describe the inner circle of Jewish liturgy, Rosenzweig employs a metaphor taken from the land of Israel, that of *Yam Hamelach*, which presents another idea of the "eternal people."[25] To understand this comparison which Rosenzweig draws between Judaism and Christianity in the Third Part, we have to go back to the beginning of the *Star*.

Much has been written of the "something" out of "nothing" in Rosenzweig's *Meta-Metaphysik*, and its relation to Cohen's *Logik des Ursprungs*. With Rosenzweig, the "Etwas" of which the Jew, in contradistinction to the Christian, is so sure in himself, is an "Icht[s]." A Nicht-nichts. He introduces this expression almost as a Hapaxlegomenon: it appears three times in that paragraph that bares the side-title "Zur Methode." It appears again in the same paragraph a fourth time as "Nicht-Icht[s]." In each case, as a genitive of a negation, or accompanied by a negation. Its negation is used to mark a concrete nothing, even void, which presupposes anything can grow. Empty as it may be, it is not the general Nichts that must be accepted and / or desired. The *Nichts Gottes* grammatically follows the conditional "Wenn Gott ist, so gilt von seinem Nichts das folgende. Indem wir also das Nichts nur als das Nichts Gottes voraussetzen, führen auch alle Folgen dieser Voraussetzung nicht über den Rahmen dieses Gegenstandes hinaus."(27f). The "Ichts" of negative theology is God. Negative theological sentences, therefore, are achieved through the process of "Entwesung" – of the positive notions that have been established as theology. The "Mystikerwort Entwesung" with Rosenzweig nearly equals the more "natural" word "Verwesung".[26]

Given that only this means of negation leads to the reality of realities, the consequence of the process of "innerer Umkehrung" throughout the book, it appears necessary that Judaism *can* transcend natural time which rules life. Jewish liturgy achieves this by converting total loss in its beginning: "Land Sprache Sitte und Gesetz." (Here written, against all rules of German grammar, without comma, and with "law" in special position.) These are the Ichts of normal national and cultural lives of the peoples in the world. After having lost these, the Jewish people have preserved them as spiritual entities, and brought them back to life via liturgy. Thus, Jews did not achieve their "eternity" in spite of liturgy – but through it. And their liturgy does not separate them from life, but helps to preserve life.

Therefore, liturgical Judaism as described by Rosenzweig does not live the non-life of a Zombie. Hence, he is more courageous than, e.g., Gershom Scholem, when it comes to translating liturgical prayers into a ceremonial German. He is also more confident as far as establishment of the Holy language in everyday-life in Palestine is concerned. His point is the opposite of a fundamentalist one. That having already lost all, and having learned to live *after all*, it is fruitless to teach the Jewish people how to be "spiritual." If any culture "has already been there" (*beim* Vater is another formula for this), it is the Jewish culture. To recall this through liturgy does not render one immortal. But it creates a *concept* of eternity, not affected by worldly fate. Nor does it claim to hold in its inner Holiest of Holies a concept of worldly affairs. It happens, however, that some of Rosenzweig's students and followers have claimed they were able to survive spiritually the horrible onslaught of the Holocaust thanks to the riches of their own culture – to which Rosenzweig had opened their eyes.

Conclusion

Modern cities are often a desert when it comes to ritual. The absence of liturgical practice seems to create all sorts of insecure judgement surrounding the facts of death, mourning, and the soulful labour of memory. All too quickly, people following the development pattern wish to “look ahead” and step forward. All too often, they wonder why this does not really work. Liturgy and memory, as explained in Rosenzweig’s philosophy, are means to resist the frightening fact of mortality, without flight into illusion, or resignation to an *amor fati.* Liturgy, as the craft of memory, does not *solve* the problem of mortality (as most “ideologies” pretend to do), but rather helps society and community *bear* it. To stand facing it. Instead of assuming that it redeems humanity from the problem of death, liturgy – and the memory it protects – offers hope for redemption.

No false promise is given. No true hope is abandoned.

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[1] This essay has first been published in Irene Kajon/Luca Bertolino (Eds.) *Rosenzweig Yearbook 12. Prayeer, Practice, Redemption*, Freiburg i.Br. (Alber) 2021, 46-59.
[2] Rainer Maria Rilke, *Requiem für eine Freundin* (Paula Modersohn-Becker).
[3] The translation of „Erlösung“ as „redemption“ is still common in the English reception of Rosenzweig’s work.
[4] I wish to thank Michael Lederer for his careful editing and very useful advice in all questions of phrasing.
[5] This struggle might still resemble Rosenzweig’s observation about the life of the nations: „So sind auch die Völker lebendig, indem sie immerfort ihr Heute in neue Sitte, neues Ewig-Gestriges, verwandeln und gleichzeitig aus ihrem Heute heraus neues Gesetz für das Morgen setzen.“ *SE*, 336.
[6] For a more general, „untheological“ definition of liturgy cf. Thomas Bagatzky, *Mythos, Weg und Welthaus: Erfahrungsreligion als Kultus und Alltag*, LIT Verlag, 2007, 142f: „Das Wort ‚Liturgie‘ […] ist offenbar geeignet […], die in unserem nachaufklärungszeitlich geprägtem Verständnis eher getrennten Bereiche des politischen Handelns und des Gottesdienstes zusammenzufügen…. Liturgisches Handeln soll […] als ein Handeln verstanden werden, das mythische Substanz in Kultus und Weltgeschehen gegenwärtig setzt. Liturgisches Handeln umschließt auch die liturgische Arbeit als eine ‚Teilmenge‘, so dass jegliche liturgische Arbeit auch liturgisches Handeln ist, aber liturgisches Handeln nicht immer auch liturgische Arbeit.“
[7] In a letter from Heidelberg, where he met Weber and Rickert in spring 1919, he wrote to Gritli:*„Hans hatte wirklich einfach simpel recht, Max Weber abzuschreiben“*. „Gestern bei Rickert – ich merkte wieder wie grundunsittlich (Hans hatte wirklich einfach simpel recht, Max Weber abzuschreiben) auch schon ein bloßes Gespräch mit so jemandem mit dem man nicht sprechen kann wirkt. Man müsste ganz frei sein, um wieder sprechen zu können auch mit solchen.“ Letter May 1st, 1919 (Inken Rühle/ Reinhold Mayer Franz Rosenzweig (Eds.), *Franz Rosenzweig, Die „Gritli“-Briefe,* Tübingen: Bilam 2001, 288) this had to do with Rosenzweig’s general distancing from a mere sociological approach to matters of culture, religion, and philosophy.
[8] Cf. all sorts of theories in the wake of Lawrence Kohlberg’s model of moral development.
[9] Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totalität und Unendlichkeit. Versuch über die Exteriorität*, Aus dem Französischen von Wolfgang Nikolaus Krewani, Alber 1987, 42004, 291.
[10] Cf. FR 20.11.1906, GS I, 65: “Der Privatgelehrte – der Eremit der Wissenschaft – wird mitleidig belächelt, der Ordinarius – der Abt im Kloster – bestaunt und bewundert! […] Die […] Überschätzung des […] Werts der gelehrten Beschäftigung, der Gelehrtenstolz […]: nur durch diese gepanzerte Überzeugung vom Wert der Gelehrtenarbeit ist es zu erreichen, dass, wenn draußen vor dem Kloster einer fragt: ‚Was tuen sie denn dadrin?‘ der andere mit tief respektvollem Ernst ihm erklärt: ‚Sie beten!‘.“
[11] „Die Auszeichnung des Menschen vor dem Tiere […] besteht in dem aufrechten Gang, und demgemäß bezeugt sich die Würdigkeit des Menschen für seine Erlösung von der Sünde in dem zwar demütigen, aber auch ebenso aufrechten Stehen vor Gott.“ Hermann Cohen, *RdV* 256.
[12]*SE* 359.
[13] This part of his work has recently gained attention, cf., e.g., Ephraim Meir, „Rosenzweig’s Contribution to a Dialogical Approach of Identity“, in: Yearbook 11, *The „And“ in Franz Rosenzweig’s Work*, Freiburg/ München (Alber), 2018, 38-50, where he writes: „The First Part has a descriptive and epic language, the second Part contains a prescriptive and lyric language and the third Part has hymnal language. In the ‚proto-cosmos‘ silence or monologue reign. The ‚cosmos‘ has the living language of love. The language of the ‚hyper-cosmos‘ is that of the liturgical community.” (42). So, liturgy belongs to more than cosmos, belongs to ‘hyper-cosmos’? This is in fact an appraisal.
[14] This restriction has always disturbed modern and postmodern minds, cf. e.g. Bob Gibb’s remark: „The whole grand scheme of the work depends on this eternity of life, an eternal life that is emplanted within the Jewish community. No idea is more disturbing because it seems blatantly dogmatic, exclusionary, metaphysical, and ethically dangerous.“ Robert Gibbs, „Rolling a Scroll: Jewish History“, in: Wolfdietrich Schmied-Kowarzik, Ed., *Franz Rosenzweigs ‚neues Denken*‘, Bd. II, *Erfahrene Offenbarung – in theologos*, 982-987, 982f.
[15] „Aber trotzdem kann Verteidigen eine der edelsten menschlichen Beschäftigungen sein. Nämlich wenn es bis auf den Grund der Dinge und der Seelen geht und, auf die kleinen Mittel der Lüge verzichtend, mit der Wahrheit selbst, der ganzen Wahrheit nämlich, ent-schuldigt. In diesem großen Sinn kann auch literarische Apologetik verteidigen. Sie würde dann nichts beschönigen, noch weniger einen angreifbaren Punkt umgehen, sondern gerade die bedrohtesten Punkte zur Basis der Verteidigung machen“. *Franz Rosenzweig. Zweistromland. Kleine Schriften zu Religion und Philosophie,* Berlin/ Wien 2001, 63-73, 72f.
[16] *SE*, 337.
[17] *SE*, 337.
[18] “Ja ihre Liebe zum eigenen Volkstum ist süß und schwer von diesem Vorgefühl des Todes.” *SE*, 338.
[19] *SE*, 338f.
[20] Inasmuch as time is concerned, this problem has been dealt with a lot, cf. e.g., Hans-Christoph Askani, who exposes the dilemma of talking about Rosenzweig’s concept of liturgy in the following way: „Die liturgisch gestaltete Zeit …ist eine unvergleichliche, unvordenkbare Erfahrung von Zeit, die das philosophische System in einen Horizont führt, den es einerseits nur empfängt und der andrerseits doch eben sein eigener ist. Ist es möglich, dies in der bekannten philosophischen Begrifflichkeit zu sagen? Evidenterweise nicht. Ist es möglich, dies zu sagen, indem man nur die Erfahrungen dieser gelebten Zeit nachformuliert? Wiederum eben nicht.“ (H.-C. Askani, „Die Gestaltung der Zeit durch die Liturgie im Judentum und Christentum“, in: Wolfdietrich Schmied-Kowarzik, Ed., Franz Rosenzweigs ‚neues Denken‘, Bd. II, Erfahrene Offenbarung – in theologos, 956-981, 956f.
[21] In fact, the piece quoted in note 17 (SE 338f), proceeds with an elevation of the Jew being after all rooted entirely in his inner life. This has become part of an Anti-Zionists reading of Rosenzweig, as in Judith Butler’s *Parting Ways. Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism*, New York, 2012.
[22] Bruckstein points to the importance of that which is silenced in the liturgical moment: „Im lauten Verlesen des Textes, der Tora, der fünf Bücher, inmitten der hörenden Gemeinde schweigt die Rhetorik des Widerspruchs und der Wechselrede, die Rosenzweig sonst unter dem Stichwort des Sprachdenkens oder auch des ‚neuen Denkens‘ ins Zentrum seiner philosophischen Aussage stellt. Kommentartradition, Dialogdenken, Widerrede, die für Rosenzweig sowohl neues Denken als auch lebendige mündliche Lehre und Lehrhaustradition charakterisiert, schweigen im Hören des verlesenen Wortes im liturgischen Kontext. … Im Schweigen angesichts des laut verlesenen Textes knüpfen die Hörenden an einen Anfang an, dessen Anbeginn wir nicht erinnern können.“ Almut Sh. Bruckstein, „Zur Phänomenologie der jüdischen Liturgie in Rosenzweigs Stern der Erlösung“, in: Martin Brasser (Hg.), *Rosenzweig als Leser. Kontextuelle Kommentare zum ‚Stern der Erlösung‘,* Tübingen, Niemeyer 2004, 357-368, 363f.
[23] Ismar Elbogen, *Der jüdische Gottesdienst in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, 31931 (Reprint Olms 1995), 1.

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[24] “Das Christentum als ewiger Weg muss sich immer weiter ausbreiten (379)…Er darf nicht auf Worte verzichten…das Etwas, woran er glaubt, [muss] kein Etwas, sondern Alles sein. Und eben darum ist er der Glaube an den Weg. Indem er an den Weg glaubt, bahnt er ihn in die Welt. So ist der zeugnisablegende christliche Glaube erst der Erzeuger des ewigen Wegs in die Welt, während der jüdische Glaube dem ewigen Leben des Volks nachfolgt als Erzeugnis.“ (380).
[25] „Nur ein einziges Gewässer auf Erden steht ewig kreisend in sich selbst, ohne Zufluss scheinbar und ohne Abfluss, nämlich ohne irdischen Zufluss und Abfluss – ein Wunder und ein Anstoß allen, die es sehen; denn es entzieht sich der Aufgabe aller Wässer, ins Meer zu laufen.“ *SE*, 421.
[26] „Beim Wesen fragt man nach dem Ursprung, bei der Tat nach dem Anfang. … Das Gesagte wird sich … schon etwas erhellen, wenn wir, nur zum Vergleich, den umgekehrten Vorgang, das Werden zum Nichts, betrachten. Hier sind ebenfalls zwei Möglichkeiten gegeben: die Verneinung des, um nun einmal den heute zu stark verengten Ausdruck ‚Etwas‘ durch einen unbelasteten zu ersetzen, - also die Verneinung des Ichts und die Bejahung des Nicht-Ichts, des Nichts. Die Umkehrung ist so genau, dass dort, wo auf dem Hinweg das Ja erschien, jetzt das Nein erscheint und umgekehrt. Für die Entstehung des Nichts durch Verneinung des Ichts hat die deutsche Sprache einen Ausdruck, den wir nur von seiner engeren Bedeutung befreien müssen, um ihn hier einsetzen zu können: Verwesung bezeichnet (genau wie das Mystikerwort Entwesung) die Verneinung des Ichts. Für die Bejahung des Nichts aber hat die Sprache das Wort Vernichtung. In der Verwesung, der Entwesung entsteht das Nichts in seiner unendlichen Unbestimmtheit; der verwesende Leib so wenig wie die entwesende Seele streben nach dem Nichts als einem Positiven, sondern einzig nach Auflösung ihres positiven Wesens; aber indem ihnen die geschieht, münden sie in die gestaltlose Nacht des Nichts.“ *SE* 26f.

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