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Clandestine Transmission: Rosenzweig and Arendt¹

Gott spricht allenthalben mit den Worten des Menschen. Und der Geist ist dies, daß der Übersetzende, der Vernehmende und Weitergebende, sich dem Ersten, der das Wort sprach und empfing, gleich weiß. Der Geist leitet so den Menschen und gibt ihm das Zutrauen, auf seinen eignen Füßen zu stehn. Grade als Geist der Überlieferung und Übersetzung ist er des Menschen eigner Geist.

Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*²

What guides my own attempt at translating between two German-Jewish thinkers, Franz Rosenzweig and Hannah Arendt, and what gives this attempt the confidence to stand on its own two feet is a conviction that the Spirit lives off and in transmission. Moreover, if this transmission seems to be clandestine, the whole process becomes much more obscure, even though it occurs exclusively “with the words of man”. But if we agreed on the schema of clandestine transmission that would have occurred between Rosenzweig’s *Der Stern der Erlösung* (1921) and Arendt’s *Der Liebesbegriff bei Augustin* (1929), then these two books could

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- ² Rosenzweig 1921: 460. For English translation see Rosenzweig [2005: 388 (hereafter as SR)].

surprisingly mirror each other. My confidence is also supported by Hannah Arendt's own words in her paper about Martin Buber written in French in 1935. There, she stated that translation could prepare – as Marie Luise Knott put it – “a new home for an alien spirit” [Knott 2013: 32], going through an “oddly circuitous path” [Arendt 2007: 32]³.

Before entering the kingdom of ghosts and spirits, one has to prepare a short account of historical relations between both thinkers. Neither in Arendt's books nor in her correspondence, nor in her biography [Young-Bruehl 2004], can any essential remark about Franz Rosenzweig be found. Only *Dans le pas de Hannah Arendt* by Laure Adler contains a brief hint that Arendt had read *Der Stern der Erlösung* before she wrote her doctoral dissertation [Adler 2005: 34], implying a possible impact that *Der Stern* could have exercised on the mind of the young Hannah Arendt. In my opinion, some facts make this possibility less unlikely: 1. Arendt belonged to a group of the most outstanding young intellectuals and at the time of her youth, the academic circles were narrower than today. For that reason, it was easier for a great publication to affect the whole philosophical society, at least to the extent that the majority of the professional circles knew about it; 2. Her first husband was a colleague of Gershom Scholem and a cousin of Walter Benjamin. Both Benjamin and Scholem regarded *Der Stern* as a masterpiece and were under its influence in the 1920s; 3. Arendt could have been aware of Rosenzweig since she knew and was impressed by Martin Buber's work, with whom Rosenzweig translated the Bible⁴; 4. Studying theology, she could have heard about the book from theologians; 5) As well as from Leo Strauss whom she got to know in the inter-war period and who was himself impressed by Rosenzweig's endeavour.

- 3 A belief in translation as the secular act of a potentially messianic resonance could have haunted Hannah Arendt who wanted to edit a volume about translation in Schocken, collecting texts of, for instance, Rosenzweig, Benjamin, and Broch [see Knott 2013: 42].
- 4 However, one may still insist that the text where Arendt mentioned Rosenzweig as the co-translator of the Bible [Arendt 2007: 32], namely *Un guide de le jeunesse: Martin Buber*, appeared in 1935, meaning after completing *Der Liebesbegriff*.

The above notwithstanding, even if any direct influence was excluded as historically possible but unauthenticated, some scholars have already emphasized structural similarities between both thinkers, as well as many affined motives they discussed [see Bensusan 1998; Leibovici 2003; Young-ah Gottlieb 2003; Brandes 2010]. I will follow this path, proposing here the Arendtian reading of Rosenzweig, which means that I am going to imagine what reactions *Der Stern* could have provoked in a young student preparing materials for her doctoral dissertation and looking for resources to criticise her famous teacher, Martin Heidegger⁵. Although written under auspices of Karl Jaspers as the supervisor, the dissertation was visibly influenced by Heidegger and constituted an attempt to contest his conceptual language while using it and by detaching it from its original context.

To put it succinctly, Arendt analysed the concept of love in the writings of Augustine of Hippo in order to find internal contradictions in his thought which had been developed between two poles of inspiration, Greek philosophy and the Judeo-Christian Bible. In the first chapter, Arendt presented the conception of subjectivity which starts from an isolated individual as futile. This conception very much resembles the Heideggerian *Dasein* confronted with death (and also, incidentally, the barricaded *Selbst* of Rosenzweig). A certain resolution appeared in the next two chapters of Arendt's dissertation, which depict the individual as indebted to the world – the phenomenon created by and com-

5 Margaret Canovan's well-known interpretation of Arendt constitutes an example of this omission: she claims that the concept of the world was rooted in Arendt's thinking thanks to Augustine and Heidegger, whose impacts counterbalanced each other [Canovan 1992: 8]. However, if one only accepts Harold Bloom's theory of creativity – which teaches that the most important influences could be the ones which the author hides and/or represses [Bloom 1973] – then it would be more obvious why Arendt may have needed Rosenzweig – namely to combat her teacher's overwhelming way of thinking. Nevertheless, she was independent enough to also distance herself from Rosenzweig. As for Heidegger's importance, I agree with Mavis Louise Biss that although his influence on Arendt's dissertation is indubitable, overemphasizing it – whether one thinks she questioned it or not – “do[es] not say anything about who she was thinking with” [Biss 2012: 762]. This lacuna I intend to fill.

posed of others. In her method of criticising Augustine one can decipher the “strong Hebraic resonances” [Celermajer 2011: 3] in a double sense: not only did she emphasise fragments where the Church Father abandoned the Biblical perspective [Arendt 1996: 12 (hereafter as LA)], but she also pointed allusively to the problem of the exclusion of the Jews from the Christian definition of the neighbour⁶.

This could have been derived from Franz Rosenzweig, who insisted on an indissoluble bond relating Christians to the persistence of the Jews in their faith. Of course, it could have also had different provenances, but a hypothesis of Rosenzweigian shadow behind Arendt’s *crypto-Judaic reading of the Christian dogmas* is tempting for various reasons; it is not limited to an abstract comparative exercise. Both thinkers belong to a certain ephemeral epoch when philosophy and theology formed a difficult coalition because of the deep historical crisis. Rosenzweig called the hybrid discipline born between two speculative languages “the new thinking” (*das neue Denken*). I claim that if he still represented the theological pole, Hannah Arendt as Rosenzweig’s critical follower shifted more to the philosophical register, preserving everything that could be saved after secularisation or even a double secu-

- 6 For this reason alone, it is hard to agree with Hans Jonas, who wrote in his memories: “My dissertation topic, gnosticism, was potentially a thousand times more political than Hannah Arendt’s, the concept of love in Augustine” [Jonas 2008: 70]. It is apart from the fact that she was, like many other fellow students whom Jonas described, deeply apolitical and sought in philosophy a refuge from the contemporary pressing political issues [Jonas 2008: 69-70]. “A comparable example might be the early Christians, who turned their backs on the world or went into the desert to escape the world and to seek to perfect themselves in direct contact with God – that was philosophy for Hannah Arendt” [Jonas 2008: 69]. In my opinion, which stands in contradiction to Jonas’ claim, Arendt’s reflection on the negligence of singularity, which was legitimised on the basis of ontotheology of hierarchy and order, as well as her interest in the universal origin of social bond, made her a *meta-political, cryptotheological thinker* from her earliest years as an intellectual. By the way, Jonas left an interesting memory which could correct the general vision that Arendt was “politicised” by Kurt Blumenfeld and, later, by Heinrich Blücher. Initially, it was her first husband, Günther Stern, who involved her with politics; Jonas characterised him as “developing into a leftist social critic” [Jonas 2008: 68].

larisation. In other words, she rescued from the flaming house of theology the most precious phenomena which could later be smuggled into a seemingly pure philosophy. Her doctorate was the point at which this contraband was moved.

My analytic procedure will, however, consist in showing “Arendtian” places in Rosenzweig. I am going to present two of the most characteristic topics – the world and birth – exposing the points of convergence and divergence of both thinkers. The final part of this chapter will be devoted to the prospective relations between theology and philosophy resulting from the process of translation and transmission.

1. The world

[...] we [...] are creatures just on this account that we do not see the whole truth. Just for this reason we remain within the limits of mortality. Just for this reason – we remain. And we of course want to remain. We of course want to live. God does for us what we want as long as we want it. As long as we hang onto life, he gives us life. He gives us only as much of the truth as we can bear as living creatures, namely our share. If he gave us more, if he gave us his share, the whole truth, then he would lift us out of the bounds of humanity. But just as long as he does not do this, just so long we have no desire for it. We hang onto our creatureliness. We do not readily leave it. And our creatureliness is conditioned by ou[r] having only a share, are only a share. [SR: 439]

To explain this extremely dense and original quotation one needs to turn back to the motto opening this article, because both fragments of *Der Stern* are complementary. First, the spirit of transmission does not guarantee truth but the coherence of the person who currently occupies the place of the translator. Second, although it is God who speaks through human languages, his speech is limited according to the earthly reality. The same occurs in the passage cited above. Behind God’s self-limitation stood the intention to meet men *in the middle of the road* and protect them from truth

which is incompatible with the world – created, mortal, human, finite. God is the possessor of truth and this guarantees that nobody on Earth will be able to possess it. It is a divine ban on sovereignty altogether. What is more, this fact discourages man and his theologies from a desire to reach the truth. This time it is not a ban, but precisely a discouragement.

Nothing else than that explains more aptly why Arendt fiercely opposed the metaphysical tradition and its nostalgic longing for the Wholeness. She demystified the pious wish of unification with God and the desire for being redeemed as soon as it is only possible as “pseudo-Christian” [LA: 30] and thanatic. According to her speculative provocations, it contradicts the goodness of Creation and the very condition of creatureliness. By contrast, in the Christian tradition, as Rosenzweig pointed out, because of its pagan or apocalyptic components, there is a tendency to push for salvation “too much”, immediately: a pagan tends towards fulfilment in unity and an apocalyptic towards fulfilment in destruction, but both paganism and apocalypticism disregard the limits of the individual and its fragile temporality.

The quotation which I am discussing here transmits a wisdom that appears strange from the Christian point of view, namely, that a modest and honest relation towards God means first and foremost keeping distance from God. There is nothing blasphemous in this statement since it is the Other who protects our desires to keep them alive within certain boundaries. Confronted with infinity of time and space, life could lose its appetite for living, but “we of course want to live. God does for us what we want as long as we want it”. His lesson is not that we should not want “too much”, as traditionalist interpretation immediately understands the function of limitation. Instead, we should not strive for something which is out of our reach for the time being, like truth and salvation, if we want to live a happy and good life. In Benjamin Lazier’s wording:

Only out of some irreducible distance from God can meaningful life emerge. Or as Jonas wrote toward the end of his life, God deserves praise not for his providence, but first for his

absence, as it is the condition for human mortality, for an emphatically human life. [Lazier 2008: 170]

Once again, the message that truth is unreachable does not prompt us to either seek it more strongly or regard humans as pathetic creatures. It is just due to our incompleteness that the world remains still open and plural. Plurality as a precondition for action and action itself is, as Arendt later would say, ontologically rooted in the fact of birth, which for early Arendt still radiated with the light of Creation, albeit a reflected one, far from the fullness of glory. For Rosenzweig, this relation between birth and the Creator was more straightforward, but by no means direct. Just like Arendt asked in her dissertation, opposing ascetic negation of the world, “why should we make a desert out of this world?” [LA: 19], Franz Rosenzweig opens his discussion of the world by posing a question: “Why wasn’t the world understood as a multiplicity for example? Why precisely as a totality?” [SR: 18]. The world for him is “non-absolute” [SR: 22], not a unity since unity is only possible in logic. It does not imply that the world is a-logical, but “metalogical” in its plurality [SR: 20]. “The world itself is not the All: it is a homeland” [SR: 20], and in order to be a homeland for various peoples and different individuals, it had to spring from the original and irreducible plurality.

Rosenzweig’s ontological proof of this foundational plurality rests on the “identity between thinking and being” which “presupposes an internal non-identity” [SR: 19]. He wrote:

Because it is at the same time related to itself, thinking, which is of course totally related to being, is simultaneously a multiplicity in itself. So thinking, moreover, which is itself the unity of its own internal multiplicity, establishes the unity of being, and certainly, it is not in the degree where it is a unity, but a multiplicity. [SR: 19]

The author suggested that honest searching for unity leads unavoidably to the *unity-in-multiplicity*. Since the movement of going back to the origin – God the Creator – must necessarily pass

through a nebula of creatures which cannot be disregarded as contingent, their contingency is a discreet mark of divine chosenness. By going to salvation as an extraterrestrial reality, the world loses its gravity. On the contrary, by returning to creation in one's imagination, the materiality of the world is being reinforced⁷. Consequently, if thinking wants to be at home in the world, it needs to transcend its overwhelming unity in order to concentrate on diversity, which is co-existent with this unity, thus preventing thinking from neglecting any element of this pair. Cryptotheological thought never forgets about its own Adamite origin, disseminated ("secularised") into the multiplicity of human languages.

Arendt's famous definition of the world, positing that the world is nothing but action (*praxis*) and speech (*lexis*), could have been preceded, again, by Rosenzweig and not only derived from Greek philosophy. Rosenzweig claimed that the world is something "common to all, but such that each has his individual share in it, and his particular point of view" [SR: 89]. To this spatial dimension, Rosenzweig also added a linguistic one, defining the world as "a real lively to and fro connection of a conversation that goes back and forth" [SR: 90]. For him, the world does not exist without the word [SR: 312]; its reality depends on speaking, which of course implies plurality of voices⁸.

2. Birth

Closely related to the description of the world is the topic of birth. It is already present in the second chapter of Arendt's doctoral dissertation, where she analysed the self's return to its own origin, which involves birth, all generations of ancestors, going back to Adam, the first man, and finally going into the nothingness of Cre-

7 This is where Eric Santner's postulate concerning the aim of the new thinking initiated by Rosenzweig concretises. Namely, Santner states that materialism must encompass the dimension of Creation, that historical materialism has to overcome historicism with the help of theology [Santner 2005: 82].

8 Adriana Cavarero elaborated and extended Arendtian reflection about audible dimension of appearance, also referring to the works by Rosenzweig and Scholem [Cavarero 2005].

ation. There is no agreement among the scholars upon the source of Arendtian natalism. François Collin, for instance, indicated multi-faceted inspirations, not only Biblical, but also philosophical and mythological [Collin 1999: 188; cited in: Bárcena 2002: 110]. Nonetheless, this reorientation of the philosophical attention from one angle of finitude, namely death, to another – birth – is regarded as Hannah Arendt's *Kehre* [Lütkehaus 2006: 27]. I would add that it was not, however, a turn in and of her thinking. Quite the contrary, her thinking erupted from the turn she made within philosophy.

Strangely enough, Rosenzweig is not mentioned as the precursor of Arendt on this score, although his reflection on *creatio ex nihilo*, origins, different types of nothingness preceding creation, newness, and birth itself is quite impressive. There is also the topic of “the second birth” in *Der Stern*, which appeared in Arendt's book on Rahel Varnhagen on a different level – not so much seen as rebirth of the conscious soul (which was Rosenzweig's concern), but rather as a possibility of changing social status. However, Arendt used the term “second birth” in the after-war period also for action, which to her seemed to be the renewal of the potential promised in the naked fact of birth. Until today, the status of the concept of natality has ignited controversies which, in my opinion, eventuate from its cryptotheological character. It is paradigmatic that a secular interpreter of Arendt, Samuel Moyn, blames her dissertation for being much too theological, especially concerning the conception of birth discussed within the context of Biblical Creation [Moyn 2008: 96].

But Moyn and others do not see the critical stance Arendt adopted when she allowed her language to be, so to speak, theologically pigmented. First of all, as a general rule, throughout her writings she criticised theology at the same moment when she evoked it. Moreover, her *appropriation of theology*, like in the case of Rosenzweig, was selective and had a strong *secularising effect*. Most importantly, the final effect of her cryptotheological excursions to the alien discursive areas resulted in an *almost* complete annihilation of theological traces. And because of that, one must sometimes resort to her private *Denktagebuch*, to her correspond-

ence or to the memories of the people who knew her to see the bottom layer of this palimpsest.

An example of particular importance would help to understand the complex game Arendt conducted with her readers, leaving allusions in the fragments most dear to her heart. She could not uncover a smuggled message in those fragments, because its resonance is stronger, providing that it is invisible at first glance. Thus, action – discussed in *The Human Condition* as ontologically rooted in the act of birth – finds its full explanation only through a simultaneous reading of her “notebook”. In the entry from the 17th of April 1951, we encounter the phrase “sanctity of the human spontaneity [*die Heiligkeit menschlicher Spontaneität*]” [Arendt 2002: 66], which for her was, as Ludger Lütkehaus stated, “literally sacrosanct” [Lütkehaus 2006: 37].

Nevertheless, we have to be aware that this was one of a few instances where Arendt called a spade a spade. What is more, it is as if she preserved only this one point as a link to theology from Rosenzweig’s whole system. It takes the form of the eye of the needle for theological motives. If they enter into the secular realm, their importance can be justly called metaethical, since Arendtian natalism does not evolve into ethics with univocal “pro-” or “anti-” suffix: “For metaethical was not in any case intended to mean a-ethical. It was not meant to express the absence of ethos, but only its unusual status, hence that passive position instead of the imperative position that is usually assigned to it” [SR: 20]⁹.

Rosenzweig’s view on birth is very close to the Arendtian one. He spoke about “the boundless surprise of birth” [SR: 238], “the mystery of the birth” [SR: 368], in constant reference to “the miracle of individuality” [SR: 61], since for him factuality as such is miraculous [SR: 58]. Of course, this language is still much more theological¹⁰, whereas the passages about *novitas* gathered below

9 This passive position of ethics could be translated into Arendt’s emphasis on persuasion in the public mode of discussing common issues.

10 As Daniel Brandes observed, what in Rosenzweig had still remained in the form of imperative through which the voice of God was audible, in Arendt – after *secular translation* – was transmitted as a promise [Brandes 2010: 19], or rather many promises, related to action, forgiveness, oath, covenants, and new political

sound often as they could have been written by Arendt herself – for example, when Rosenzweig wrote that “every earthly phenomenon is a new victory over the nothing, an event as glorious as on the first day” [SR: 54]. This sentence reveals an ontological structure, which also interested Arendt in her dissertation, where she reflected upon the double nothingness surrounding human life and distinguished between the two variants of nothingness [LA: 76].

Compared to Arendt, Rosenzweig remained less coherent in his reflection on birth, sometimes poisoned by deep pessimism, especially in the last part of *Der Stern*, where he seemed to abandon the formerly defended positions in order to flee and glide towards salvation. He started his book – mobilised by “a defiance of death” [SR: 346] – with a famous tirade against philosophy depicted as an ally of the forces explaining to the living human being that she is nothing while facing death. Yet in the first pages there is also an ambivalent image of coming into the world which already contains Schopenhauerian overtones:

[...] every new birth multiplies the fear for a new reason, for it multiplies that which is mortal. The womb of the inexhaustible earth ceaselessly gives birth to what is new, and each one is subject to death; each newly born waits with fear and trembling for the day of its passage into the dark. [SR: 9]

On the other hand, in the whole first part of *Der Stern*, Rosenzweig fought against the sad wisdom of *nihil novi sub sole*, claiming that “each new thing is a renewed negation of the nothing, something that has never been, a beginning for itself, something unheard of, something ‘new under the sun’” [SR: 53]. Additionally, he defended the “full miracle” of birth from the accusation that it is an endlessly repeatable effect of coupling, just a banal natural

foundations. One may explain the difference by referring to Arendt’s essay from 1930 on Rilke (co-authored with Günther Stern): for if the religious world of Judaism in particular (as well as of Christianity to a certain extent) is acoustic [Arendt 2007b: 3], as it was for Rosenzweig, in Arendt’s case one can’t even talk about an echo, but “the absence of an echo” [Arendt 2007b: 1].

event. For Rosenzweig – who was interested in “life beyond the limits of the species” [SR: 81] and who found “a purely natural view of life” [SR: 79] insufficient to understand “another independent reality: the living human being” [SR: 15] as analogous to the “living God of life” [SR: 46] – the opposite was true, namely that birth contains the germs of “the unforeseen, of the unforeseeable”, which makes that “each birth is something absolutely new” [SR: 57]. Like Arendt, Rosenzweig was aware that in order to break with the “cyclical process” [SR: 58] and end with the “dark violence [exercised – RZ] by the power of its species”, an individual needs a kind of *earthly transcendence*, which “concentrated entirely in the moment of birth” [SR: 57]. This is the only condition under which birth gets truly distinguished from death¹¹. Consequently,

the faculty of bringing about new beginning, of creating new worlds, requires a cosmology not found in Greek thought. The shift to modal conceptions of action, then, required a shift in cosmology, [...] which forms the basis of Arendt’s earliest systematic theory. [Clarke and Quill 2009: 258]

This shift would be one of the greatest achievements of the Jewish intervention into modern philosophy, as Agata Bielik-Robson insistently argues [Bielik-Robson 2014].

Nonetheless, in the last part of his *Der Stern*, Rosenzweig returned to the vision of the world as a growing necropolis: “The mere inexhaustibility of begetting changes nothing in the perishability of the world, indeed even increases it. [...] The new thing that we are seeking must be a *nunc stans*, not a moment that flies away, but a ‘fixed moment’” [SR: 307]. It shows that even in Rosenzweig, who began with a defence of the finite being, at the end of the day the subject cannot stand the tensions of being mortal. As a consequence, the third part of *Der Stern* is full of practical

11 Danielle Celermajer notes that one can find the same objection towards Greek metaphysics in Jewish thinkers as different as Maimonides and Rosenzweig. Greek tradition does not know a beginning and an end, thus leaving no space for true singularity which is creative, free and responsible for this freedom [Celermajer 2011: 6–7].

measures which serve to “protect” the individual from “disorientation”: religious community, unity achieved in liturgy, higher order, and even revenge of nature. Conversely, in the third part of her dissertation, Arendt built the foundations for a secular community of believers, who already rely not on common belief, but common descent. The roads of both thinkers very much diverged in the end, precisely because of the apolitical character of Rosenzweig’s thinking [Gordon 2007: 855-878], which dismisses action, while Arendt was politically aware even in her reflections about God and the neighbour – not political topics *per se*. Paradoxically as it may sound, one could start tracing their divergence starting from the visions of God they were inclined to prefer.

3. New thinking

I have already collected some characteristics of birth from *Der Stern* that one may also find in Hannah Arendt: the ontological foundation of human freedom, unpredictability, being its own beginning, uniqueness, antinaturalism. They are not general, but highly original and specific, which could suggest that Arendt read Rosenzweig’s masterpiece in the 1920s. As stated earlier, this does not exclude different sources of her conception of natalism, but still, she shared a lot with Rosenzweig when it comes to the ontological grounding of worldly plurality emerging from the act of birth, each time new.

Most importantly, “the illumination extends beyond Arendt herself to the transmission and trends of thought through the history of the West, and to the often hidden continuities in critical possibilities” [Celermajer 2011: 16]. Arendt was perfectly aware that what she was doing in her dissertation exceeded the case of one author. There had been many divergent currents of the tradition shaping the civilization that developed on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, which had found its condensed and reformulated form in Augustine. He made himself a crossroads of them all, which is why his person and intellectual legacy appealed so much to Hannah Arendt, who was a figure from the crossroads as well. Absorbing German philosophy and Jewish secular sensi-

tivity derived from Judaic religious heritage, she decided to introduce her own difference through idiosyncratic re-readings of the well-known motives. Since I did not want to settle for a vague indication of “strong Hebraic resonances” [Celermajer 2011: 3], I decided to link Arendt’s name with Rosenzweig’s, to turn the transmission of the hidden tradition into a more personalised drama – the drama of two Jews who gave their non-normative Jewishness a meaning within their deep engagement with Christian theology, which for them partook of the main philosophical tradition of the West. Hence their own confusing style of writing reflecting confusions already accumulated throughout numerous historical processes of reception.

Respecting Artemy Magun’s prudent warning against labelling certain theological motives as “Jewish” (in Arendt as well as in the case of other Jewish writers) if they can be found in Christian tradition as well [Magun 2012: 559, 566], I will insist on the validity of searching for peculiarities linked exclusively with Jewish historical condition, especially with two-ply texture of the Marranic writings. A Marranic possibility is what Magun completely misses¹². Thus, he finds specific satisfaction in pointing out that Buber and Rosenzweig were the readers of Hegel and Feuerbach, as if this fact could diminish the *Jewish dimension* of their *response to German idealism*. The complex transmissions I am trying to grasp following Jewish thinkers do not fit in a sandpit where Jewish and Christian children quarrel over (theological) toys and territory. Magun is therefore right to protest against overly strict divisions between the two traditions. Nonetheless, relying on the conviction that all the sources are impure, one could and should ask how much Jewish spirit remained within the Christian tradition (in Hegel and Feuerbach too) if one does not want to end up being unaware of *la dette impensée* [Zarader 1990].

- 12 Thus, he prefers staging a pulling the rope: “Richard Bernstein even uses Arendt’s insistence on the Other’s point of view as a proof of her unconscious sympathy for Judaism. But, as we’ve just seen, Arendt explicitly attributes this approach to Christianity, thus continuing in the footsteps of Feuerbach rather than Rosenzweig and Buber” [Magun 2012: 566]. Why not all of them together and – as always in Arendt – selectively? The reference concerns Bernstein’s *Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Question* [Bernstein 1996].

Thinking within solidified frames, we would not be able to notice that despite the shared theoretical moments, Arendt and Rosenzweig represent polarised views regarding the boundary between philosophy and theology. In the Western tradition, these two discourses have been interconnected for centuries. It was precisely at the time of German idealism that philosophy was meant to “re-translate” theology and religion into a secular conceptual language. Rosenzweig’s protest against this absorption led towards the “new thinking” which was a “re-introduction” of Biblical theology into the philosophical domain enclosed within the immanent frame. He did not want to start a war again – on the contrary, his vision implied a peaceful exchange between the theologian and the philosopher: “They complete each other, and together they bring about a new type of philosopher or theologian, situated between theology and philosophy” [SR: 116]. Rosenzweig tried his best to avoid temptation of the domination of one discourse over another:

From the theological point of view, what philosophy must accomplish for it is not a sort of re-construction of theological content, but its anticipation or, more accurately, its foundation, the exhibiting of the pre-conditions on which this content rests. [SR: 117]

Rosenzweig’s intention was to prevent the return of the model *philosophia ancilla theologiae*. Yet the question is delicate, because he located himself in the area of theology [SR: 151] and was motivated to “convert” philosophy to “new thinking”. Even in the fragment quoted above we read that philosophy “must accomplish” its task. But this imperative tone is unnecessary, and the whole project could still be defended if we accept a different style of discussion, as well as some restrictions. Some of them were invented by Rosenzweig himself, although it seems that Arendt applied them better.

Rosenzweig’s tone was exaggerated because he vehemently attacked idealism for its anti-theism. That is also why the theological pretence is so strong. However, he admired Goethe’s

guardedness and was willing to appreciate “the arid silence of the unbelieving members” [SR: 314] as better guardians of enigma than garrulous believers. If this perspective is valid, then Arendt’s adaptation of the “narrowness” of the philosophical horizon could give religious content a new spirit – not necessarily and not directly, but it could prepare “the pre-conditions on which this content rests”. Nonetheless, in order for the secularity of the world separated from any cosmic sanctity to be guaranteed by a certain highly-speculative conception of God, and in order for human freedom to be defended theologically through the spark of the true sanctity deposited in natality, the pre-condition for this subtle operation must remain irrevocably enigmatic:

God obviously wants only those who are free for his own. [...] So he has no choice: he must tempt man; not only must he hide his ruling from him, he must even deceive him about it; he must make it difficult for him and even impossible to see it, so that man may have the opportunity to believe in him and to trust in him truly, that is, in freedom. [SR: 284]

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Clandestine Transmission: Rosenzweig and Arendt

The text deals with the question whether Hannah Arendt was influenced by Franz Rosenzweig's *Der Stern der Erlösung* (1921) before writing *Der Liebesbegriff bei Augustin* (1929). Instead of building general analogies, I studied two very specific topics – the world and birth – to demonstrate that Arendt repeated almost verbatim Rosenzweig's entire peculiar argumentation which played the notions of God and nature against each other to combat their overwhelming power and to make room for the contingency of the world and the novelty of each birth.

Facing the helplessness of a philosophy which ignored mortality, Rosenzweig cried out the lament of the finite being. Philosophy, with its predilection for totality, lost adequate proportions to reflect on life. Arendt revived this paradigmatic reorientation, but with a significant twist: for her, birth and the world meant more than God for Rosenzweig. Both thinkers projected a language between philosophy and theology, inciting the two idioms to a fruitful debate.

Keywords: Hannah Arendt; Franz Rosenzweig; birth; post-secularism; new thinking.

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