

of the Church is not the Synagogue, but the Jewish people. I think that this is the correct understanding of Judaism. After all, the non-religious Jews who never go to synagogue can always be included in the minyan; they can potentially perform religious acts and get everything the most religious do; an atheist or anti-religious son of a Cohen is still asked to perform the priestly blessings, etc. The situation was well grasped by Polish theologian Fr. Michał Czajkowski who said that Jewish people are a people in an »ecclesiastical sense.« I believe that Jews as a group are neither a nation nor a people in a standard sociological sense, but a group entity of special character.<sup>5</sup> To be sure, many Jewish secularists and Zionists reject this approach, and want to see Jews as a people, a nation, or perhaps religion, in the normal sense. Rosenzweig rejected the ideology of normalization, and to approve his position one does not have to follow him in opposing Zionism.

While Rosenzweig was correct with regard to the role of peoplehood, there is also something deeply incorrect in his presentation of Judaism. In the *Star*, he never mentions conversions to Judaism. As is well known, they have always been possible, even if not easy – from Biblical Ruth to Herod, to the era of Rambam who told a convert to be proud to be called a child of Abraham, to our generation in which conversions are common. True, their meaning is not the same as in Christianity or Islam. They are closer to adoption, entering into a family. Yet, whatever they are, Rosenzweig ignores the issue completely. This omission distorts the Jewish concept of the Jewish people. It makes it biological, indeed racial.

This poses the problem whether Rosenzweig was a racial thinker, perhaps even a racist. Those of us who admire him and have modern sensibilities would like to say »No.« Even if the answer seems to be more of a »Yes« than of a »No,« one should notice two attenuating circumstances – one relating to the context, the other to an essential aspect of the system. First, during Rosenzweig's lifetime and in the whole interwar period, especially in German-speaking countries, race was a dominant element of dis-

<sup>5</sup> An additional remark on this topic is made below, in Section 6.

course. It was seen as scientific, modern, progressive. For example, eugenics was considered a proper option nearly everywhere. Interestingly, it was the Catholic Church that was more inclined to oppose eugenics and racism than the Protestant churches which were the main point of reference for Rosenzweig. The extent of the racist approach to issues is well documented by John Connelly.<sup>6</sup>

The other observation that weakens the alleged racism of Rosenzweig is based on the way he perceives the nature of the Jewish people. Although Jewishness is transmitted by birth, the Jewish community is not established by race in his system, but ultimately by a common relation to God. This relation is more important than blood. And in real life the conflicts opposing Jews to others are not racial conflicts. Still, a threat of racial thinking remains in Jewish life, and an element of racism remains in Rosenzweig's system, more than it needs to do. In general, Jewishness is transmitted from parents, or mother, to child, that is, by blood. Rosenzweig assumed that only by blood, whereas this is true without the »only.« I believe this is one of the main weaknesses of Rosenzweig's picture of Judaism. The problem is, how crucial is this assumption in his system?

I believe the system could be developed with the weaker assumption, without the »only«. The system would be less clear-cut, but it seems to me that everything would work much as it does now. I think that ignoring the possibility of conversion was a move that shows us, his readers, that for Rosenzweig the purity of his system's principles was more important than their adequacy. Rosenzweig seems to have been aware of the problem; this is how one can interpret his remark that his picture of the two traditions is »not quite fair to either of them.«<sup>7</sup> There are other questionable aspects of Rosenzweig's presentation of Judaism, for example, the underestimation of the role of the historical Sinaitic Revelation.

<sup>6</sup> *From Enemy to Brother*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012.

<sup>7</sup> Nahum Glatzer, *Franz Rosenzweig: his Life and Thought*, New York: Schocken Books, 1961, p. 204. (In *New Thinking*, *Das neue Denken*, partially translated in Glatzer, 190–208.)

One could also ponder flaws of *The Star's* presentation of Christianity.

## 2. Partnership and the Issue of Synthesis

For Rosenzweig complementarity is a crucial feature of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. Another consequence of the emphasis on complementarity is worth mentioning – the emergence of a partnership of the two traditions. Partnership means that the partner is needed, indeed necessary, for the job. The job is understood by Rosenzweig as involvement in the work of Redemption. We are on the way. Neither Judaism nor Christianity can do the job alone.

Both partners are needed because each one is insufficiently strong and inappropriately positioned to complete the task. We could ask, however, if it is possible to have a more powerful third party that would be able to do the whole job. If there existed a religion that would unite the virtues of both, Judaism and Christianity, then it would be preferable to each of them – at least from the point of view of the goal, Redemption. In Rosenzweig's system no such synthesis is possible. The assumption is that no religion combining all the virtues of Judaism and Christianity is possible. In real life, Jews usually agree with this statement while Christians have usually been convinced that Christianity provides such a synthesis. Nowadays there are more and more Christians who are ready to reject the theology of replacement. Whether one does this or not, the fact is that in Rosenzweig's system the impossibility of synthesis results from the positions of the two entities, Judaism and Christianity, which are never called religions. Each of the two distinguished entities is *sui generis*: Judaism is a fact, Christianity an event. They function on distinct planes, in different regions of the Star of Redemption, their roles cannot be absorbed by the other, and no synthesis is possible.

Having stated this, we cannot avoid the question whether Rosenzweig's own system constitutes such a synthesis. The simple answer is that even if it can be seen as such, it is on another level,

by no means is it a third religion. In real life either one or the other religion (and only one of the two according to Rosenzweig) is needed. On a more philosophical level the answer is not so simple. If we think about religions, or at least Judaism and Christianity, as involving the whole religious truth, and this can naturally be claimed also about such philosophical systems as Hegel's philosophy, then the message of *The Star* comes close to the proclamation that it constitutes an even better grasp of the totality of Truth.<sup>8</sup> Levinas put the point of Rosenzweig's construction as follows: »Christianity and Judaism, the two adventures of the spirit, both, for the same reason, necessary for the truth of the True.«<sup>9</sup> And, presumably, no other »adventure« is possible.

## 3. An Ignored Historical Connection

It is well known that there has been a special historical relationship between Judaism and Christianity. They share common sources and roots. The long drama of »the parting of the ways« remains for many an essential point of reference. This is much less the case with Islam, even though it also shares some source material and historical links to Judaism and Christianity. In contrast, hardly any significant historical connection is known between Judaism and Hinduism or Buddhism, or even between Christianity and the Indian traditions. This difference is ignored in *The Star*, and, interestingly enough, Rosenzweig completely disregards the common roots and sources. The problem is why.

The most obvious answer is that even though he is also a historian he hardly considers real historical developments. Each part of Rosenzweig's account results from conceptual developments, which are like those of German idealism, despite his opposition to it. I think that this approach is his weakness, but also his strength. *The Star's* method reveals a philosophical strength:

<sup>8</sup> This claim was suggested by Stéphane Mosès. (Stéphane Mosès, *Système et révélation*, Paris: Seuil, 1982, ch. IX, p. 287n.)

<sup>9</sup> Mosès, p. 7.

Stanisław Krajewski

## Franz Rosenzweig, the Jewish people, »and« Christianity in Dialogue

### 0. The »and«

There are several meanings of the »and«. Juxtaposition, or mere juxtaposition, is one possibility: no particular connection is seen between the juxtaposed entities. Opposition is another possibility, better expressed as a disjunction, an »either/or«, and a stressing of the incompatibility of the entities. Furthermore, it is possible to postulate union, or a synthesis of the two entities, say A and B. Within this option we can say that either A or B dominates. We could mean something less extreme, namely only the fact that A influences B or vice versa or both.

The above possibilities can be applied to Rosenzweig's masterpiece<sup>1</sup>, but it is clear that they do not express his vision properly. It is better to use another interpretation, that of polar connection – that is, of a field with two poles. Another geometric visualization is helpful – an ellipse that has two foci; A and B are located in these focal points. Each point in the area is dependent on both foci, even if it is close to one of them. These mathematical models provide an illustration of interdependence, complementarity.

Still another meaning of the »and«, namely oscillation between two approaches, is illustrated below, in Section 6.

<sup>1</sup> *The Star of Redemption* will be quoted in the English translation by William Hallo, from the 1985 edition by Notre Dame University Press.

### 1. Complementarity and the Jewish People

As is well known, *The Star* presents Judaism and Christianity as complementary. They are both valid, even if completely different, answers to Revelation. It is essential for Rosenzweig's vision that they fulfill different roles: one is the fire of the star, the other its rays. The fire provides light to the nations, and the rays accompany the Christian conquering march through the world. Thus Judaism and Christianity function as two different modes of being. They are both necessary for the work of Redemption, and their ultimate goal is common.

Commentators have discussed the problem of the positioning, within Rosenzweig's system, of the two religions with respect to the ultimate (religious) truth. Judaism appears to be closer to the goal. For example, according to the Jewish tradition approved by Rosenzweig and incorporated as essential element of his system, the foretaste of Redemption is somehow accessible to Jews practicing Judaism, especially observing Shabbat. Equally important, the Church spreads Biblical categories among pagans, and Christians retain aspects of their pagan past and must constantly oppose them, while Jews are supposedly free of them.<sup>2</sup> Rosenzweig's approach seems to mean that Judaism is privileged with respect to Christianity: »Rosenzweig's two-way theory (...) is in fact a one way-theory (since only Christians have not arrived),«<sup>3</sup> and he »begins by portraying a certain superiority of Judaism in comparison with Christianity.«<sup>4</sup> Yet, in real life, there is no privilege. And in the conceptual framework of *The Star* the apologetic message is sent not only in defense of Judaism but equally in defense of Christianity.

Speaking about Judaism and Christianity, Rosenzweig refers to the Church and to Jews as a people. In his system the counterpart

<sup>2</sup> *The Star*, p. 407–8.

<sup>3</sup> Ephraim Meir, *Interreligious Theology. Its Value and Mooring in Jewish Philosophy*, Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter; and Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2015, p. 125.

<sup>4</sup> Ephraim Meir, *Becoming Interreligious*, Münster, New York: Waxmann Verlag, 2017, p. 162.



everything fits a larger whole. For example, he presents Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Reform Christianity as natural aspects of Christian conceptual approaches, and each of them is linked to one of the »founding fathers« – Peter, John, and Paul. Rosenzweig attempts, in a Hegelian manner, to present each as necessary. At the same time, his method shows a definite weakness. After all, real developments are not so necessary. We can imagine Christianity without Reformation.

How accurate and how realistic are Rosenzweig's descriptions of the two »nonreligions« in *The Star*? The descriptions agree with seemingly typical approaches of average believers. In real life the connection caused by common roots is not seen as vital among most believers. Certainly, Jews can disregard Christianity as inessential. Even those who agree that Christianity has been historically important for the existence of Jews and was influencing Judaism would not see such influence as central. It is felt that, even if Christianity had not existed, Judaism, its core message and fundamental practice would have remained essentially the same. Christians may feel unhappy because of this statement, but they feel the same about Islam. And in fact the overwhelming majority of Christians have tended to ignore living Judaism as opposed to the Biblical Judaism. This has changed to some extent only in recent decades. In circles of interreligious dialogue there is a feeling of partnership. Among Jews, an appreciation of Christianity is present, for example, in the declarations »Dabru emet« of 2000<sup>10</sup> and »To do the Will of Our Father in Heaven« of 2015<sup>11</sup>.

Despite the accuracy of some insights contained in Rosenzweig's descriptions, his selective reading of history remains problematic. Is there any other explanation for Rosenzweig's disregard of the genuine history than the intended supremacy of his system? Perhaps another justification could be based on the fact that while each tradition involves historical accounts they are

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., <http://ccjr.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/jewish/319-dabru-emet>.

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., <http://ccjr.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/jewish/1359-orthodox-2015dec4>.

meant as source of meaning rather than precise rendering of events. Rosenzweig himself advocates this approach in his concept of a miracle.<sup>12</sup>

#### 4. Deep Interfaith Dialogue

Some people are involved in genuine, or deep, interreligious dialogue. The depth comes from the attitude of absolute respect for the dialogue partner, from recognition of the otherness of the Other. Martin Buber talked about perceiving the other as a Thou. Abraham Joshua Heschel talked about »reverence« for the person of another religiosity. I believe that deep dialogue can be characterized as one devoid of expectations regarding the religious behavior of the dialogue partner. No goal whatsoever is set.<sup>13</sup>

To be sure, not every dialogue can be deep in this sense. Most meetings are much more superficial, even if they are called »dialogue«. And in each real-life encounter this dimension of depth can hardly last for more than a short period time. Inevitably, many expectations exist and often remain implicit, even if they could always surface. They can disappear only at rare moments. No wonder that most often dialogue is not genuinely deep in the sense presented here. Debates, negotiations, quarrels, exchanges of information – all these are more common and often useful. What is noteworthy is the fact that »deep« dialogue can happen.

Some dialogical philosophers offer remarks leading to a theory of interfaith dialogue. Thus, according to Buber, a genuine dialogue is conducted when we »make the other present as a whole and as a unique being.« Genuine dialogue means turning to the partner, and affirming him (although not necessarily his views). Turning to each other in truth, the partners can achieve unex-

<sup>12</sup> *The Star*, pp. 94–97.

<sup>13</sup> See S. Krajewski, *What I Owe to Interreligious Dialogue and Christianity*, Cracow: The Judaica Foundation, 2017, where some other papers elaborating the idea of the »intentionally aimless« dialogue are mentioned.

pected things. »The interhuman opens out what otherwise remains unopened.«<sup>14</sup>

Raimundo Panikkar opposed »dialogical dialogue« to »dialectical dialogue,« understood as rational dialogue based on logic, a preliminary stage. At the next, dialogical stage one is to refer »to you and not only to your thought.« Dialogical dialogue is not about something. The parties of the encounter »dialogue about themselves: they dialogue themselves.« Thus, »with dialectical dialogue, we may discuss religious doctrines once we have clarified the context, but we need dialogical dialogue to discuss beliefs ...«<sup>15</sup>

Heschel introduced so-called Depth Theology, which precedes each dogmatic formulation and even all conceptualizations. It refers directly to religious experience and is supposed to avoid doctrinal or verbal frameworks. As he says, this »experience is to be found not in books, but in the heart. Such an »anti-theological« approach to faith puts Judaism and Christianity and possibly other religious traditions on equal footing. Heschel's vision provides unique inspiration: as the very act of faith is the topic of Depth Theology, the reality of genuine inter-religious dialogue would be the topic of »depth dialogic.«

The dialogical philosophers who have contributed to our understanding of dialogue were often referring to religion. They have not developed, however, philosophies of interreligious dialogue. True, Buber presented the concept of dialogue free of intention to achieve a specific aim. Levinas spoke about the appeal of one's face, or ethical relationship being a foundation of properly understood dialogue. The concepts of the two thinkers are visionary, but they are not sufficient: they concern inter-human, rather than specifically inter-religious dialogue. The latter requires the treatment of its participants not just as generic humans, but as

<sup>14</sup> Martin Buber, *Elements of the Interhuman*. In: *The Knowledge of Man*. Ed. by M. Friedman, New York: Harper and Row, 1965.

<sup>15</sup> See Raimundo Panikkar, *The Dialogical Dialogue*. In: *The World's Religious Traditions. Current Perspectives in Religious Studies. Essays in Honour of Wilfred Cantwell Smith*. Ed. by Frank Whaling, London: T & T Clark, 1984, pp. 201–221. See also his *Intra-religious Dialogue*. Mahwah, NJ, Paulist Press, 1999.

humans whose faith is a constitutive part of the dialogical relationship.

In order to extend the theory of dialogue, we should consider, I believe, not only »Thou«, or »You« (singular), but also »Ye,« or »You« (plural), as a fundamental reality. In interreligious dialogue, it is necessary to present the Ye not as a social structure, but rather as an original reality in which transcendence is manifested. To summarize, the attitude needed for the deep interfaith dialogue involves respect expressed as an acceptance of otherness, treating the partner as a »Thou,« abandoning expectations, and being ready to acknowledge the dimension of the »Ye«.

## 5. Rosenzweig and dialogue

How is Rosenzweig's system affecting deep Jewish-Christian dialogue and other dialogues between Jews and various religions? It is of special interest to consider the features of deep dialogue in relation to *The Star*, and especially the motives mentioned in Sections 1 to 3: complementarity, partnership, ignoring history. One could consider also dialogues between Christianity and other religions, but this topic is not pursued here.

The picture of Jewish-Christian complementarity contained in *The Star* is certainly helpful for dialogue practitioners. It makes possible genuine acceptance of the otherness of dialogue partner. It is possible to treat him as a »Thou« and actually it becomes natural to approach him also as a »Ye«: to consider Christian partner as a Christian means that his (or her) position is related to the mission of Christianity symbolized by the rays of the Star. This makes the dialogue partner related to the whole tradition. Even the possibly privileged position of Judaism does not need to be really harmful for the dialogue since the Christian mission is fully acknowledged and the message is sent that it can be understood by the Christian partner in his own way. He is needed in a most fundamental way because the full truth can be revealed only by the activities of both. They do not need to cooperate directly, but each must be aware of the partner's presence, and accept her

role. This provides a solid basis for respect and even reverence for the other tradition.

Assuming Rosenzweig's approach, it is relatively easy to have no expectations concerning the dialogue partner's religious involvement because he functions on a completely different plane. The matter is, however, more complex because the system of *The Star* assumes distinct ways for Jews and Christians, and this implies an expectation that one accepts the other and does not contemplate conversion. This far reaching expectation is easy for Jews but contrary to the centuries old hope of the Church. Isn't this contradiction between the Jewish need to retain Judaism and the Christian need to convert the Jews a most fundamental obstacle to dialogue? And, moreover, doesn't this contradiction prove that the concept of dialogue without expectations is unrealistic? The first problem is one of practice: even though not easily<sup>16</sup> acceptable by the Church, the idea that Jews should stand outside any missionary activities is increasingly present among Christians. Their motivations may vary but I suspect that the most profound reason was best expressed by Rosenzweig himself in his famous dictum that no one can reach the Father save through Jesus except the Jews who are already with the Father.<sup>16</sup> Regarding the theoretical problem of the definition of deep dialogue as one without expectations it should be noticed that the Rosenzweigian expectation of the acceptance of distinct paths does not restrict Christian religious expression other than the traditional attitude toward Jews. And even this limitation is not absolute: there is no reason, as implied by *The Star*, why Christians may not believe that, in the ultimate future, the Jewish and Christian paths merge. Only the present day acceptance of the Jewish distinctiveness is required. I believe that the Rosenzweigian assumption is in complete accordance with the idea of deep dialogue. We adopt a meta-expectation that the partner does not expect us to change religion.

To conclude, *The Star* provides an extremely strong support for deep Jewish-Christian dialogue. And yet, if the descriptions in *The Star* are retained, the Jewish dialogue with other religions

<sup>16</sup> Glatzer, op. cit., p. 341.

is impaired. Islam as well as Indian and Chinese traditions are seen by Rosenzweig as deficient. This problem cannot be overcome within Rosenzweig's system, but let us see how his approach can be inspiring even in relation to other religions.

Rosenzweig's system is sometimes called a dual covenant system. But can only Judaism and Christianity be covenantal religions? For Rosenzweig, on the face of it, yes. I believe, however, that we can go beyond the limitation to the two »nonreligions« and still remain to some extent in accordance with Rosenzweig. There are at least two reasons for this belief: his own development and possible interpretations Biblical verses.

In *The Star* the human response to Revelation is basically either according to Judaism or to Christianity. Neither Islam nor Far Eastern religions are suitable, since they lack some essential insights needed to respond in a germane manner to the commandment of love. However, according to Meir, a little later, in 1919, Rosenzweig modified his view: humans are more than just Jews or Christians; they are first and above all human (as Lessing had it in *Nathan der Weise*).<sup>17</sup> They live their religious truths. This opens the prospect of accepting other grand religions as equal partners.

The second reason for acceptance of other religions can be related to some Biblical verses. As we know from the famous Buber-Rosenzweig translation of the Bible, which was done later than *The Star*, the phrase »ehieh asher ehieh« in Exodus 3:14 is translated as »Ich werde dasein als der ich dasein werde,« – that is, »God said to Moshe: I will be-there howsoever I will be-there.«<sup>18</sup> This rendering suggests that God can appear in totally unexpected ways. If we truly accept this meaning, we can agree that God can appear in ways that are recorded in the sources of other religions. And this opens the prospect of seeing more religions as covenantal systems. This development can be illustrated by modern Jewish thought, but it also has ancient predecessors. The verse from

<sup>17</sup> Ephraim Meir, *Dialogical Thought and Identity*, Berlin and Jerusalem: Walter de Gruyter and Magnes Press, 2013, p. 196.

<sup>18</sup> See for example, [buber.de/de/bible](http://buber.de/de/bible).



Malachi 1:11 »... My name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to My name ...« clearly means that they »all worship one God,« which Rosenzweig would approve wholeheartedly. This quote was used by the twelfth century Yemenite authority Netanel ibn al-Fayyumi who advocated religious pluralism, saying that God gives each people a different set of laws as »the skilled physician understands his patients« and gives instructions best suited to individual needs.<sup>19</sup> The multiplicity of revelations is also contained, according to a midrashic interpretation, in the Torah verse »all the people saw the voices.« According to Rabbi Yochanan, the phrase means that the divine voice was divided into seventy languages, so that all the nations could hear. My conclusion is that we may consider other grand religions as covenantal, and still be in the vicinity of Rosenzweig.

It remains to refer to the fact that Rosenzweig's system reflects his instrumental uses of history. How does this affect interreligious dialogue? A more general problem can be posed: How does history impact dialogue? The short answer is that history can either help or harm. What is relevant for the present topic is that Rosenzweig's approach helps. If we ignore, as does *The Star*, the common roots and the historical process of separation of two traditions, dialogue becomes easier. We can face the worldview of the dialogue partner, his practice, theology and values, without the need to refer to the historical, or rather mythic-historical, events that are supposedly common but set us against each other. Rosenzweig did not create his system to make dialogue easier. He did it, however, having deeply and empathically understood both Judaism and Christianity, so no wonder the result supports the mutual openness and acceptance.

Does this mean that ignoring common history is actually possible? Only to some extent. If two narratives about the same event conflict with each other this can be ignored, but it is hardly a lasting solution. To put it more generally: if the conflict of narratives

<sup>19</sup> Netanel ibn al Fayyumi, *Garden of the Intellectuals*. Quote after Raphael Jospe, Pluralism out of the Sources of Judaism: Religious Pluralism Without Relativism, *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 2, 2 (2007), 105.

becomes real what are possible solutions? If none, clash, or even a war, is imminent. This also happens when an internal conflict of interpretations leads to a split, and consequently may result in the creation of a new sect or religion. Quite often, however, there are possible ways out and, indeed, there are at least two such possibilities. First, when contradictory stories are alive in the respective traditions it is the result of a long development. Thus, even if the source event is the same, the stories are separate. They can perhaps refer to different characters, as is the case with the attempted sacrifice of Isaac in Judaism and Ishmael in Islam. One can say that we have two distinct stories, and ignore the historical process of their emergence. Secondly, if the story is marginal in one tradition, while central in the other, it can be practically ignored in the former. The story of Jesus is a perfect example. The critical, derisive accounts of Yeshu, or presumably Jesus, are marginal in the Jewish tradition and can safely be ignored – as they in reality are by most Jews – or abandoned with no harm for Judaism. The real history (what did really happen to Jesus) is of little importance to one party and has been long ago transformed into a mythic story, or saga, to use Buber's terminology, by the other. The clash is not necessary, even though a certain tension will always remain.<sup>20</sup> Less stress on history seems beneficial for dialogue.

Openness to other religions is also suggested by Rosenzweig's well-known phrase form »The New Thinking«; extending it we can say that presumably each serious religion can use its own »old words« to talk about fundamental human and religious problems. Together with Ephraim Meir, I believe that the dialogical uses of the »and« by Rosenzweig can be extended: »one may refer to Rosenzweig in order to extend this »and« to all other religions.«<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> The problem of the importance of history for religion and the consequences for dialogue is discussed in more detail in my forthcoming paper »History and Truth in Religion«.

<sup>21</sup> Ephraim Meir, *Becoming Interreligious*, p. 163.

## 6. The oscillation model

I show now that it is possible to have a general view of religions in a way that reveals another meaning of the »and«. Two basic approaches to the plurality of religions are possible.<sup>22</sup> According to the first, which we can call objective or universal or supra-religious, different religions are considered from above. This first approach is natural for the scientific study of religions. Psychological, sociological or cultural approaches provide insights about general human characteristics rather than specific properties of a religion. In fact, any experience of religion can be only particular. One cannot be religious »in general.« The second basic approach assumes that perceiving religions one is located inside one of the religions. This second approach can be called subjective, particularistic, religion-specific.

I believe that both approaches are significant and useful. Moreover, they are inevitable. The very term »religion« makes sense only if we assume that there exist various religions that have sufficiently much in common to be seen as exemplifying one concept, religion. So the first approach is unavoidable. To see the unavoidability of the second approach let us note that reducing religion to its general aspects can be lethal to its object, a particular religion.

Dialogue practitioners seem to adopt the following two »commandments«:

*Principle of Respect:* Respect the dialogue partner, do not distort his religiosity, try to understand him in a sympathetic way, avoid caricaturing his religion and strive to look at it through his eyes.

*Principle of Faithfulness:* Be true to your religious identity, do not compromise or water down your own religion. (You may be

<sup>22</sup> Most of this section is taken from S. Krajewski, Oscillation: interreligious dialogue between objective and subjective approaches, in: Nathanael Riemer (ed.), *Jewish Lifeworlds and Jewish Thought. Festschrift presented to Karl E. Grözinger on the Occasion of his 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday*, Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 2012, 381–388.

critical and selective, but you must be aware that you represent your religious tradition in its entirety.)

The principles imply contradictory suggestions concerning the plethora of religions. Assuming the first principle, if no distortion of the dialogue partner's religion is to be made, one should look at it from the partner's perspective. One should reject any attempt to treat one's own religion as normative. And this religiously neutral view of the other religion amounts to something close to the first approach. Assuming the second principle, the other religions must be perceived from the particular vantage point of one's own religious tradition. Something akin to the second approach emerges as the natural position. This may be a difficult exercise, since within a given tradition often the received view of another religion is not only unsympathetic but also full of distortions. For example, the traditional Jewish perception of Christianity is a misrepresentation. In contrast, insights provided by one's own religion can help understand another religion. To give a personal illustration, many of the Christian statements about Jesus that had seemed to me virtually meaningless became perfectly understandable when I made a certain translation into Judaism. According to it, Jesus »is« Torah. Jesus can be understood from the Jewish perspective as possessing the qualities that the Torah has in the Jewish tradition. To say that Jesus is »the way, the truth, and the life« (John 14:6) is saying the words we commonly use – as did the Jews during the time in which the Gospels were written – to describe the Torah.

As a consequence of the above discussion, the first as well as the second approach emerge as inevitable, natural, useful, and contradictory. Rather than attempting a dialectical synthesis we can retain both approaches as necessary moments of the situation. What is actually happening is a movement from one to the other and back.

Let us imagine an interfaith encounter. Even if I were familiar with the dialogue partner's religion I still could begin with a universal common ground. But, in order to understand them deeper, I would naturally connect them with my own religious experiences. In this way a step would be made from the first approach



to the second approach. I could begin with the particularistic, second approach. However good approach can be, one will soon feel that it is one-sided, and should not be maintained indefinitely. After all, we have a lot in common with dialogue partners as human beings, members of a common civilization, etc. So one makes a transition to the first approach. Making this move is, however, not the end of story. There remain all the reasons to take the step back. What has emerged is a process. Each of the two approaches is not only natural, useful, and inevitable, but each actually engenders the other. Oscillation takes place: from the first approach to the second approach and then back to the first, and again to the second, and to the first, etc.

Rather than assuming timeless conceptual positions, we envisage a process. Time is taken seriously into consideration, which is a very Rosenzweigian approach. Thus we get the »supra-religious« and the »religious-specific« approaches combined by the »and« in a new role, that of an indicator of oscillation. This result leads to the conclusion that two sophisticated interpretations of the »and« have emerged. One, polar complementarity, has been well-known from, among others, the writings by Rosenzweig. The other, oscillation, is a process occurring in time.

An additional example shall show the fruitfulness of the oscillation model. There are many attempts to say who Jews are as a group. Most proposals belong to the first approach and apply a sociological category: a religion, a people, a nation, a tribe. Each category is useful, and, at the same time, each is inadequate. The second approach would mean here that Jews constitute a unique group, a *sui generis* entity. Much can be said in favor of this view. Still, it is often important to compare Jews to other groups, and then the general sociological categories must be used, so back to the first approach. The Jewish »mission« can be explained either from within (the second approach), as a unique covenant with the Creator, or from outside (the first approach), as a conviction born from Jewish experiences, but not dissimilar to other such convictions. Thus, in the attempts to define Jews, as much as in inter-religious dialogue, some oscillation between the two approaches seems both unavoidable and fruitful.

## »Die Verjudung hat aus mir (...) einen besseren Deutschen gemacht«: Franz Rosenzweig and the German-Jewish Dialogue

»Seien wir also Deutsche und Juden. Beides, ohne uns um das »und« zu sorgen, ja ohne viel davon zu reden – aber wirklich beides. Wie, das ist im Grunde eine – Taktfrage. Allgemeine Vorschriften lassen sich darüber kaum geben«<sup>1</sup>.

### 1.

In fin-de-siècle Germany, at a time when the Orient was being reconceptualized in European culture, there was a reassessment of the relationship between assimilated Western Jewry and more tradition-bound *Ostjuden*. During this era the contradictions between the modernity embodied in German Judaism and the cultural roots represented by *Yiddishkeit* became a living cultural experience. As Claudia Sonino observed, »for a limited yet significant part of Jewish intellectuals in Germany it was possible as they had reached the threshold of assimilation and wanted – or had to – stop there«<sup>2</sup>. A comparison can be made by focusing on the spiritual world embodied in the *shtetl* through travelogues written by Western European Jewish visitors to the predominantly Jewish villages of Eastern Europe. Foremost among these German Jewish chroniclers of *shtetl* life was Heinrich Heine. According to the Düsseldorf poet, the Polish Jew represented a warning for a Western European Jewish elite oriented toward assimila-

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Franz Rosenzweig to Helene Sommer on 18<sup>th</sup> January 1918.

<sup>2</sup> Sonino C., *Exil, Diaspora, Gelobtes Land? Deutsche Juden blicken nach Osten*, Berlin: Jüdische Verlagsanstalt, 2002, p. 7.