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FORWARD
Dear Network Members,

We are eager to see you, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18, 9:30-11:00 am in the Forum Room of the COPLEY PLAZA in Boston. The event is the great Academy of Jewish Philosophy review of Robert Gibbs' book, CORRELATIONS IN ROSENZWEIG AND LEVINAS. With reviewers Almut Bruckstein, Martin Srajek, and Michael Zank; with a response from Mr. Gibbs; chairperson Peter Ochs; and convened by Norbert Samuelson.

Rosenzweig and Levinas (along with Buber and Cohen) are the principle parents of the founding members of this Network, and Gibbs' book brings them into close dialogue with each other, with their peers in late modern/early postmodern thought, and with us. This is therefore a very important book and a very important occasion, for both the Academy and the Postmodern Jewish Philosophy Network. All are welcome. So please come!

For a warmup, to get you ready, we enclose a preliminary review of Gibbs' book, by Martin Srajek (he'll be offering different words at the Boston event). In a future issue, we'll review the Boston Gibbs event as a whole.

Aryeh Botwinick also announces: Sunday night, 9:15pm, in Robert Gibbs very own room at the Copley, Aryeh B. is hosting a Talmud and Postmodernism study session for Network members and others. Please review Aryeh's contribution to our Network Vol. 3.2 (on "Overdetermination") – but this session will be on new textual material. (If you need details ahead of time, please call Aryeh at ____.)

Meanwhile, for a warmdown, we complete this special issue with a reprint of a longer version of a remarkable paper Nobert Samuelson delivered at the AAR conference in Chicago. While the paper is not about postmodern thought, its importance for a number of us who were there lies in its success in overviewing the stages of Jewish philosophy that lead up to the one we presume to think we occupy! We hope that someday some member of this Network will send us an epilogue on postmodern Jewish philosophy worthy of the rest of Norbert's paper.

Before we say l'hitraot, here is a reminiscence and announcement about the Talmud Study Session we held at the Octber 1994 AAR Conference in Chicago.

REMINISCENCE: It was a delightful session: about two hours of study l'shma, led by Aryeh Cohen's reading of Gittin, with a mix of scholars from a variety of disciplines attending to the texts, lifting off proto-theoretical observations, and in the process setting a foundation for the kind of close-text reading and eclectic theorizing we would like to continue in the future. The theoretical part of this work has just begun. Our very warm thanks to Aryeh C. for leading us so insightfully, to R. Gibbs for helping organize the session (along with P. Ochs), and the following additional contributors-to-the-conversation (in the order of the signup sheet we sent around): Alan Krinsky, Nancy Levene, Gail Labovitz, Oona Ajzenstat, Barry Mesch, Shaul Magid, Steven Kepnes, Rick Sarason, Steven Fine, Michael Signer, Andrew Rubin, Aaron Mackler, Jonathan Seidel, Michael Carasik, Charlotte Fonrobert, Larry Silbertstein, Leila Bronner.

ANNOUNCEMENT: Peter Ochs is putting together part of an issue of SH'MA about the performances of reading that are beginning to emerge in our Network, with the Aryeh Cohen session as one illustration. Most of the content of the issue will be excerpts from responses to Cohen's papers including responses in Volume 3 of our Network, and responses presented in the AAR discussion.

HERE IS WHERE THE ANNOUNCEMENT COMES IN: PETER NEEDS SOME OF THE RESPONSES OFFERED AT THE SESSION TO BE FLESHED OUT A LITTLE MORE. AND HE NEEDS IT FAAAAST — for a Dec. 30 copy deadline. WOULD THE AFOREMENTIONED CONTRIBUTORS PLEASE CONSIDER SENDING PETER (c/o the Network) WRITTEN VERSIONS OF THEIR ORAL COMMENTS ON ARYEH'S PAPER OR ON OUR DISCUSSION? BETWEEN ONE TO THREE PAGES TOPS (to be edited down in conversation with you– please send your phone numbers along with the email or express mail text). THE ISSUES RAISED BUT NOT FLESHED OUT INCLUDED FEMINIST RESPONSES TO TALMUD-READING, STRUCTURALIST RESPONSES, CONCERNS ABOUT LATENT STRUCTURALIST TENDENCIES, THEORY VS PERFORMATIVE READING, CRITICAL THEORY AND TALMUDIC READING.

By the way, one of the foci of the SH'MA discussion will be the performative dimension of "postmodern" reading: on ways the reading shapes relations among readers and among the methods they bring to the text, as well as on the way community formation shapes any reading; here, the concern is not only on what is observed in, or lifted up from the text, but also on what forms of human interaction are gathered around the text and on what forms of dialogue emerge among text and readers. COMMENTS ARE WELCOME ON THESE ASPECTS OF OUR STUDY.

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THE REVIEW
A review of Robert Gibbs, CORRELATIONS IN ROSENZWEIG AND LEVINAS, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992). by Martin Srajek, Illinois Wesleyan University

This book is a long missing link in many respects. First, it connects some of the most important Jewish neo-Kantian philosophers (Franz Rosenzweig, Hermann Cohen) with the thought of one of the foremost Jewish philosophers of our time: Emmanuel Levinas. The influence of Jewish neo-Kantian thought on the project of Western philosophy since the middle of the last century has still not been fully acknowledged. It can be seen in thinkers that range as far as Marx, Cassirer, Husserl, and Kaplan. Gibbs, although his book is not a study of neo-Kantianism, deserves credit for having done his part to establish this lineage. It, secondly, focuses on the ethics contained in the thought of Rosenzweig and Levinas; and though that has been done quite extensively for Levinas already, never had somebody tried to do it in conjunction with the thought of Rossenzweig. This oftentimes led to a certain distortion, for the thought of Levinas, though ethical, never really seemed to look quite Jewish.

Third, the book attempts the interpretative work that needs to be done from a methodologically angle that is new and innovative; it seeks to open up the thought of Rosenzweig and Levinas through its juxtaposition with speech-act theory and social theory. Fourth, Gibbs brings to light the central importance that both thinkers have in that in them not only their own thought comes to fruition but also the thought of many other seminal thinkers, such as Hegel, Kant, Schelling, Cohen, Marx, Marcel, Troeltsch and many others. Gibbs succeeds in showing that both Rosenzweig and

Levinas stand at the intersection of multiple intellectual currents which enable them to construct an equally multiple philosophico-ethical image of the world. Fifth, Gibbs ends the book with a summary of those elements in his text which implicitly move the reader towards a better understanding of the scope and direction of a Jewish philosophy at the turn of the millenium. Perhaps the most significant and, at the same, most controversial, point in this epilogual summary is that Gibbs challenges the reader with the thought that from within the boundaries of postmodern Jewish thought comes a call for a messianic type of universalism; a universalism which means that "someday we all will agree and worship the same God." This universalism stands in stark contrast with the universalism so critically targeted by postmodernity. Whereas traditional philosophical universalism attempts to forged the details and particularities of reality into one coherent systematic picture, thereby distorting the details, messianic universalism, presents itself as a universalism of particulars. Its message is no one will be excluded. It is a universalism that announces the end of marginal existences and promises full participation in the community for everybody.

I will begin with a description and summary of the book. For reasons of space, I will not be able to focus on all the details of the book. Gibbs does indeed draw together the thought of a fairly eclectic number of thinkers only some of which will I have the space to mention in this summary. For those who are interested in the details of the book I recommend reading it. Some of the most obvious audiences for the book are modern Jewish philosophers, Rosenzweig and Levinas scholars, postmodern philosophers and religion scholars, those with an interest in philosophical renewal of Judaism from within its own boundaries,. and many others. The book is divided into an introduction, ten chapters, and an epilogue. The first six chapter are devoted to the work of Franz Rosenzweig. Chapters seven through ten deal with the work of Emmanuel Levinas.

SYNPOSIS OF THE BOOK

Gibbs' intent in this book is to bring to light the function of Judaism as the other of traditional philosophy. According to him this function as the other can be formulated in two interrelated ways: 1. Judaism's radical focus on ethics rather than on epistemology; and 2. Judaism's relentless struggle with the question of God's transcendence. Given this description, Gibbs expects that "this Judaism can again reorient philosophy." However, Gibbs points out that the relationship between philosophy and Judaism as its other is not that of a simple antagonism or opposition but rather that of correlation. This, it seems, is a correlationship that Gibbs presupposes as existing already, his book, in other words will not bring about this relationship but rather describe it as it shows itself in the work of Rosenzweig and Levinas. This will happen by way of an approach that will bring out the Jewishness of Levinas as a philosopher and the postmodernism of the Jewish philosopher Rosenzweig. Gibbs' leaves somewhat unanswered the question as to how one would have to define the terms "Jewish" and "postmodern." However, instead of defining these somewhat ambiguous terms, it is his suggestion that both thinkers can be read as social theorists who, through a multiple interpretative pattern of logic, speech, theological speech, and time and eternity, redefine theologically the notions of society and community. The implication of this approach is that it meets both the criteria for a definition of Judaism as philosophy's other as well as the criteria for a definition of postmodernism as philosophy's other. This patterned reading, in Gibbs' understanding, will bring out some parallels in Rosenzweig's and Levinas' thinking, and it will direct us towards an understanding of the locus of "community" in the thought of both thinkers. Gibbs is suggesting, in other words, that the thematic locus of Judaism and, in addition, the thematic focus of postmodernism as well can be found in the complex questions that relate to the community and to social theory.

In chapter I, Gibbs introduces us to the basic connections that exist between Rosenzweig and Levinas. Both are dealing with the question of the boundary between philosophy and theology and both are, furthermore moving towards theology. Rosenzweig does so by applying

his theory of speech to philosophy, Levinas can do so by pointing to theology as philosophy's other. Yet, both thinkers claim that they are still operating within the realm of philosophy. It is important to understand that Gibbs is precisely not suggesting that there are correlations between Levinas and Rosenzweig, but that their relationship might be best understood through the term "adaptation." This formulation leaves it open whether the adaptation takes place with respect to each other which would only work from the perspective of Levinas or whether is an adaptation with respect to an issue on which they are both working.

Chapter II is the actual beginning of the book. Gibbs begins by outlining the stakes of Rosenzweig's logic by highlighting his critique of philosophy as an all-embracing, all-knowing science. Gibbs points out that Rosenzweig's reliance on death as the category that explodes Hegel's claim to absolute knowledge is misunderstood if understood in existentialist terms. Rather, it should be read as an epistemological limit with which the particular subject approaches philosophy. This does not erase philosophy from the scene but it questions its validity as a discourse descriptive of human beings. Gibbs underlines Rosenzweig's insight that, by focusing on death, i.e., nothing, Rosenzweig suggests a beginning which, he hopes, can only end in life (something). The gap between philosophy and the individual, however, requires theological discourse for its explication.

This discourse can be entertained only by free agents. Gibbs therefore emphasizes that, for Rosenzweig, the problem of philosophy did not end with its wrong beginning but lay, furthermore, with the absence of freedom from it. This insight, Gibbs points out, Rosenzweig derived from his reception of the philosophy of Schelling. Like Schelling, he wants to show that the way from the nothingness of the beginning to the somethingness of the world is marked by the human capacity for freedom. For Schelling, this capacity functions by understanding human actions as an extrovertive force through which previously introvertedly existing content materializes. Two consequences of this type of thinking are that 1.

in counterdistinction to Hegel, Rosenzweig thinks of human actions and thought not as "vernichten" but as "schaffen" and 2. humans are free because the time of their actions is chosen by them alone.

Gibbs shows how Rosenzweig, despite his attraction to Schelling's conception of freedom, moves away from the latter. Schelling's system is based on a type of speculation about beginnings which are alien to Rosenzweig. Although it is Schelling's merit to have understood that the flaw of Hegel's system lay with the fact that he begins his system of philosophy with being rather than with nothing, Gibbs underlines that Schelling's theosophist theory of an intial mystical chaos was a turn-off for Rosenzweig. Rather than through an act of mystical emanation as in Schelling, Rosenzweig gains his intial elements through his adaptation of Cohen's infinitesimal method.

Gibbs can show elegantly how Cohen's thought parallels Schelling's logic of introversion and extroversion by way of a logic of nothing and something. The presupposition of a pure nothing avoids the messiness of an intial mystical chaos and allow us to think the beginning in solely logical terms. Gibbs is careful to point out further that Rosenzweig's adaptation of Cohen ends up being somewhat of a distortion of the latter's thought. For Cohen the logical categorie of nothing and something led directly to the reality/actuality of the world itself, while for Rosenzweig they can only lead to the three logical elements of that world (God, man, world). Philosophy, in Gibbs' words, is thus not so much a tool that helps to assimilate the world into thought, but rather it is a means through which we understand the limits of philosophy itself with respect to the world. This is a marvelous chapter, not only for its thought on Rosenzweig but especially also for its detailed analysis of one of the most difficult issues in the thought of Hermann Cohen.

Chapters III and IV introduce us to a further investigation of Gibbs' notion that it is theological discourse that will close the gap between philosophy and the individual. (Chapter IV focuses on the theological qualities of that

discourse.) Gibbs shows that the philosophy of Rosenzweig contains in it a theory of speech. The chapter focuses on Austin's theory of speech and his assertion that ultimately all constative utterances can also be read as performatives. It furthermore draws on the linguistic theory of Rosenzweig's cousin, Eugen Rosenstock-Hussey, which includes the discovery of the soul and the categories of speech and grammar. It ends by showing that Rosenzweig, not unlike Austin, understands language through its performative rather than through its constative quality. As language and grammar for Rosenstock-Hussey became the key to an understanding of the soul, Rosenzweig now uses language, in particular the three moods of the indicative, the imperative and the cohortative, to make understandable, i.e., audible the concepts of creation, revelation and redemption.

Chapter IV brings into focus how the words of speech can have actual theological, i.e., eternal, meaning. Rosenzweig's prime example is prophetic speech. Prophetic speech has meaning which is supplied by Rosenzweig's logic and which finds theological application in that it explicates the relationship between the three elements God, man and world which Rosenzweig had gained through his logic. Theological meaning is distinct from regular meaning in that it will not let itself be temporalized or historically contextualized. Theological meaning in that sense is eternal. Gibbs demonstrates how Rosenzweig develops a theory of speech that moves from logic to the speech of prophecy. He shows that Rosenzweig believed that through his logic he had found an experientially inaccessible foundation which turns into an eternal matrix out of which prophecy can arise. The theological significance of speech for Rosenzweig is further highlighted by Gibbs' focus on the written word. Although the written word in and of itself is not speech, it causes speech as interpretation, i.e., as a midrashic communal event. Speech as interpretation thus advances to being the connecting link between God and the community. Gibbs argues that Rosenzweig thought that his speech-theory was in agreement with the work of Cohen who, he thought, in his Religion of Reason, had moved beyond the frame of a pure logic

towards the inclusion of theological speech. Gibbs hesitates to confirm Rosenzweig's reading of Cohen but indicates that Cohen's treatment of the Day of Atonement does indeed suggest that Cohen might have been in the process of reevaluating speech theologically.

A further element in Rosenzweig's social theory is introduced in Chapter V. Gibbs refers to it as the "deformalization of time." He shows that Rosenzweig, in order to let eternity enter in to the regular time of the community, focuses on the absolute sameness of the temporal units the Jewish religions calendar. The sameness, of the units, Gibbs suggests, lets the encounter with eternity happen not as something that is unending or that is at the end alone. Eternity, experienced in this way, is a social experience (through the ritual celebration of the Jewish Holy Year) and it can happen at any point in the present. Gibbs concludes, that Rosenzweig's analysis of time and the community, though historical at times, is not motivated by the expectations of a historian but by those of a theologian.

Chapter VI explores further in what ways the community that has now formed through religious speech and the celebration of a cyclical ritual can ensure its own eternity. Gibbs does that by an exploration of the concepts of politics and aesthetics in Rosenzweig's work. He points out that Judaism has chosen the political way, but it has chosen it while simultaneously abdicating the medium of violence (Gewalt) through which politics usually emerges. Judaism tries to go its way "gewaltlos." Christianity on the other hand, through a stronger focus on the aesthetic, has created a new theological art as its own expression.

Chapter VII marks the beginning of the second part of the book that deals with Emmanuel Levinas. Gibbs begins by introducing another distinction (for Rosenzweig it had been that of philosophy and theology): that between Greek and Hebrew thinking. He points out that Levinas thinks of the Greek/Hebrew relationship as translation and asks, if this understanding is adequate for both sides. Gibbs conceives of the

relationship between Greek and Hebrew thought as three Greek features that ask for a Hebrew response. The features are: politics and power through universalism, knowing, and language. The Hebrew responses to these three are: universal particularism, Torah and wisdom. Gibbs believes that Levinas' notion of Greek thought is that of a necessary heuristic tool for the introduction of Hebrew thought to a wider community. Levinas' readings of the Talmud are a good example of this understanding. Levinas here proposes an aggadic philosophical reading which responds to the universal intent of all Hebrew thought.

Chapter VIII looks at Levinas' attempt to bring forth the other as an ethical criterion for philosophy. Gibbs points out that at the beginning is for Levinas the realization of phenomenology's inability to be a philosophy that could recognize the other. Levinas, on the other hand, is interested in the encounter with the other as the moment of ethical responsibility. Gibbs shows how Levinas defines responsibility as the impossibility of experiencing the other for whom instead we need to substitute the notion of the "trace," i.e., that of a sign of the other. Gibbs works this chapter out with a Cohennian framework. He points to some of the parallels between Cohen and Levinas, especially with respect to the asymmetrical character of the relationship with the other. At the same time Gibbs rejects the understanding that Levinas' work could be likened to that of Martin Buber.

Chapter IX is the longest chapter in the whole book. It is a quasi-synoptic reading of the texts of Levinas, Gabriel Marcel, and Gibbs and contains the main claim that between the thought of Levinas and Marcel there exist similarities in as far as the connections between thinking the other and thinking God are concerned. However, while Marcel emphasizes the freedom as part of the human condition, Levinas emphasizes responsibility or a form of heteronomy that is absolutely determined by the other. Both thinkers reject the notion of autonomy as outside the scope of the ethical. Gibbs ends this chapter by asking a crucial question. How Jewish is the idea of substitution that is developed in Levinas and that can

be found in the writings of Marcel as well. He offers an interesting reading of the idea of substitution through incarnation in Christianity not as God substituting Godself for us but as the sign that we are socially incarnate for each other, that, in other words, expiation has to take place horizontally and not vertically.

Chapter X attempts to move Levinas more into the sphere of the social away from the merely epistemological sphere marked by the question of how one can conceive of the other. Gibbs proposes that one can read Marx and Levinas as mutual commentary on the question of liberation that takes place within society. This is an interesting approach, for despite the common theme of liberation which can be conceded easily, it is not easy to see how the ideal epistemological direction of Levinas could be seen to match the historical materialism of Marx. Gibbs shows that Levinas' thought moves beyond the diadic responsibility that I have for the one other in front of me and emphasizes instead that responsibility, qua responsibility for the other, becomes a responsibility for the many others in the world. Furthermore, he emphasizes that the responsibility for the other which I understand through the command coming from the face of the other goes beyond rationality and reason and thus might be read as coming close to the material other in the thought of Marx.

The book ends with an epilogue that picks up on the theme from the beginning–the relationship between Jewish thought and traditional philosophy by introducing seven categories of specific criteria for a Jewish Philosophy. The categories are: 1. universality of accessibility; Gibbs understands this to mean telos of a "messianic universalism" which implies that "someday we all will agree and worship the true God;" 2. the primacy of ethics; Gibbs understands this to shift our focus to ethical praxis rather than onto logical thought. 3. Sociality not Individuality; this categorie emphasizes the social genesis of both practice and thought. 4. Prophecy and Messianic Politics; prophecy as social criticism linked to a messianic vision of the well-fare of all. 5. Resurrection and the Material World; the vision of messianism might entail the genesis of a new body,

i.e., a new understanding of the notion of materiality, which will keep us from violating the material/physical rights of the other. 6. The Suspension of the State; the state as the possessor of "Gewalt" will be replaced by a state which serves only the goals of "social responsibility." Gibbs acknowledges that this state will not be a nation-state any longer. 7. Halakhah and Social Institutions; in this last category Gibbs iterates the paradox of the type of social thought that he is envisioning. It is supposed to be one that provides us with social forms, while at the same time being non-compulsory or non-coercive.

COMMENTS

Gibbs' book contains an interesting thesis. Not only does it tackle the task of bringing the thought of two of the most complex thinkers of our century together, but it also claims that the thought of these thinkers has significance far beyond the century of their appearance back into the past as well as into the future. The thesis that Judaism has something to contribute to philosophy cannot be read as a statement about the Judaism of this century only, but must be read as something that is part and parcel of what Judaism is and always has been. We are talking to some extent about the essence of Judaism. Gibbs' merit is to show how both Rosenzweig and Levinas in their own unique ways pick up part of this essence and confront with it the claims of traditional philosophy. Gibbs further deserves applause for bringing to Judaism the ideas of speech-act theory and of social theory, both of which have been used in other fields to challenge the essentialism of traditional philosophy. One of the most avid protagonists of this latter movement is the German sociologist and philosopher Jurgen Habermas. Habermas not only understood the critical value that social theory could ultimately have for a reevaluation of philosophy, but also understood earlier than many others the contribution that Jewish Philosophy could make to traditional philosophy. Habermas recognizes in the essay "Der Deutsche Idealismus der judischen Philosophen" "wie produktiv sich aus der Erfahrung der judischen Tradition zentrale Motive der wesentlich protestantisch bestimmten

Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus erschliessen lassen" ("how productively one can deduce from the experience of the Jewish tradition central motives of the essentially protestant philosophy of German idealism"). He can talk about the fertile consanguinity ("fruchtbare Verwandtschaft") between the Jews and German philosophy. "Der deutsche Idealismus der Juden produziert das Ferment einer kritischen Utopie" ("The German idealism of the Jews produced the ferment of a critical utopia). But to say that Gibbs does what Habermas does would be neglecting that he indeed finds in Judaism the seeds for what Habermas later came to claim his own theory, viz, that of a power-free social discourse and a social theory. In contrast to Habermas, however, the discourse of the Rosenzweigian/Levinasian type is not power-free. Rather, in it power comes absolutely from one source: the other. Gibbs adds to that the insight into an element missing in the approach of Rosenzweig and possibly also in Levinas. For the other as the source of power is matched by the question of the self for the other. Habermas, in other words, emphasizes power-balance and reciprocity, Gibbs, along with Rosenzweig and Levinas advocates non-reciprocity.

The questions about the book derive more from the details that it comprehends than from the book itself. I want to touch, here, only on a few of those.

ROSENZWEIG AND PHILOSOPHY: Despite Rosenzweig's avowed opposition to the philosophy of Hegel, he does not seem determined enough to move away from the idea of the system altogether. There is, first of all, the threefold division, only too reminiscent of Hegel's tripartite Encyclopedia.

What are the systematic dissimilarities between the latter's encyclopedic approach and the work of Rosenzweig. It seems that the crucial moment in both thinkers is that they employ the method of negation and double-negation in order to watch the progress of their systems. Both, not only Hegel, it would seem, should end up with the problem of a bad infinity.

Eternity can only be reached by way of a forced inclusion. In Hegel's case this inclusion is that of the philosopher himself, for he is the only thing left outside of the system. In Rosenzweig's case it is the inclusion of death itself which is sublated into the system by way of focusing on the birth of others. How can Rosenzweig move beyond the damaging universalism of Hegel's system, if his own philosophy, like that of Hegel begins with logic once again?

Rosenzweig's problematic relationship with traditional philosophy is also evident from his reception of Schelling. It seems that Rosenzweig's "yes-no-and" structure as the prelinguistic foundation of human existence diminishes the freedom of the individual decision. His rejection of Schelling's mysticism and the concomitant substitution of Cohen's differential calculus as well as the concept of prelinguistic foundations take the sharpness out Schelling's approach and liken it more to Hegel then the former would have liked. Schelling's freedom–the "that" of my free decision–emerges from a mystical chaos not from a pre-structured universe.

ROSENZWEIG AND SOCIOLOGY: How committed is Rosenzweig to sociology as an empirically founded science? It is hard to fend off the impression that Rosenzweig's empiricism is only his hand-maid for pointing towards certain forms to which both Judaism and Christianity seem to adhere. Did Rosenzweig attempt to contain Judaism in such social forms? If the answer is "yes" in how far is that genuine to Judaism? How can such formalism prevent Jewish philosophy from falling into the same trap(s) into which traditional philosophy has fallen repeatedly?

LEVINAS AND PHILOSOPHY: Levinas, more than he might want to admit, is indebted to phenomenology and its methods. What he is doing, in other words, is epistemology. In what ways can it be said that he has moved away from doing just that and closer towards an approach in which real communities become an issue? Despite the inclusion of the

"third" into his philosophy, one cannot help but think that, still, all he is doing is epistemology.

It seems difficult to see, also, how Levinas' approach can be sustained in comparison with Marx given the latter's prioritizing of material reality. When Levinas looks into the face of the other, he sees God; when Marx sees the other he sees poverty. Different from the socialism of Hermann Cohen, there really is no reception of Marxian thought in the philosophy of Levinas. That is not to say that they might not have similar concerns. But their approaches seem fundamentally different from each other. We have to ask in other words, what the material ramifications of a theory like that of Levinas might be.

POSTMODERNISM AND RELIGION: Gibbs mentions the postmodernists' disavowel of religion. Here some more explaining might help. In what ways does he see this disavowal take place? Is there a religious moment in postmodernism? What is it? What is the religious postmodern moment in the philosophies of Rosenzweig and Levinas?

A CASE STUDY IN JEWISH ETHICS — THREE JEWISH STRATEGIES FOR SOLVING THEODICY

Norbert M. Samuelson, Temple University

Prima facie the answer to the question, "Can there be a Jewish ethics" is — of course, why not? There are two parts to this answer — "of course", and "why not?". The "of course" part is that Jewish thought and life are filled with both prescribing moral behavior and thinking about moral issues, so much so that the judgment that there are Jewish ethics is as apparent to common sense as the judgment that there is a physical world. The "why not" part says that anyone who doubts that there are, either is ignorant, an anti-semite, or a philosopher, and these three categories are not mutually exclusive.

The "why not" reply question has two possible philosophic answers, neither of which strikes me as terribly interesting. First, no obligation can be called "moral" whose import is not universal; Jewish ethics are imperatives that arise from a particular entity (the deity of Abraham) making demands on another particular entity (the Jewish people); consequently, obligations in Judaism are not universal, and hence are not moral obligations. Second, the reasons that Jewish thinkers give to explain moral obligations in Judaism are the same reasons that all philosophers give for all moral obligations; ethics are about the reasons for imperatives and not about the imperatives themselves; hence, while some Jewish moral obligations may be distinctively Jewish, there are no distinctive Jewish ethics. Together, these two replies say that particular moral imperatives and/or moral arguments cannot admit distinctions between individuals and/or subgroups of collections of individuals within the human species; the Jewish people are a subgroup; Jewish ethics apply specifically to the Jewish people; hence, there are no Jewish ethics. Or, to say the same thing in different words, either Jewish ethics are not distinctively Jewish or they are not ethics.

There are two reasons why the question does not strike me as terribly interesting. First, it is not obvious why ethics to be ethics must have a universal domain. It seems to be perfectly reasonable, in fact common-sensical, that some individual or individuals in one time-space setting may have very different, but none-the-less absolute, moral obligations than the same individual or individuals in another time-space setting or other individuals in the same time-space setting. Second, there is no single thing that can be called "Jewish ethics". Rather, this is a general term that ranges over a variety of very different positions Jews have taken on moral and ethical questions from a variety of significantly different philosophical standpoints, and this diversity in no way disqualifies Jewish ethics from being both Jewish and ethics.

However, the question entails another question which to me is interesting, viz., is there anything in Jewish ethics that is philosophically interesting

in the sense that it suggests a fresh approach to doing ethics that is different from what we already find in other sources of Western civilization besides Judaism? Here, my answer is that there is at least one, and it is on that one that I want to focus, through example, in this paper. In this case I want to look at three different Jewish approaches to solving the so-called problem of theodicy. In all three cases the solutions are significantly different from the ones commonly recognized in our Christian biased heritage of philosophical ethics.

The so-called problem of theodicy (1) involves positing three propositions which appear to be mutually incoherent. They are: (A) God is perfectly good. (B) God is perfectly powerful. And (C) there is evil. Any two of these three may be asserted without contradiction, but one of the three must be denied. God may be (B) perfectly powerful and (A) good if (-C) there is no evil.
Conversely, there can be (C) evil if (-B) God has limited power and/or (-A) is not good. In general, the problem is resolved by denying any combination of the three propositions (2). Of course which of these options is chosen depends on what theologians mean when they say "God", "good", "evil", "power", and how the adverb "perfectly" modifies these affirmations. Throughout the course of the history of Jewish thought every possible move has been made to varying degrees, and several of them have been made in radically different ways. I will limit myself here to only three of what I consider to be the most interesting examples.

1. God is neither perfectly good nor powerful — The View of Genesis in the Torah

Whatever were the views of the different authors who wrote the different parts of the Pentateuch, a fairly consistent picture of the universe emerges from the text that the Jewish people inherited from its priestly editors in the sixth century B.C.E. That picture contains one fairly specific version of the problem of theodicy and poses a clear solution to it. (3) The problem focuses on a fairly specific event, viz. the destruction of the first Temple

and the exile of the people of Judea to Babylonia. According to this view God created the universe for a single primary purpose — to provide the space and time for sacrifices to be offered to Him. The successful fulfillment of these acts constitutes the end by which all actions are judged to be good or bad.

In this context moral values are applied both ontically and socially. Ontically the term "good" is associated with separation and order. At first the universe exists as a single, homogeneous whole that is judged to be chaos. Gradually God introduces a set of distinctions, all of which are understood to overcome chaos and are called "good." (4) The progression of separations function at two levels simultaneously, one involving the space of the universe and the other involving the occupants of that space. Light is separated from dark, sky from earth, dry land from the seas on the surface of the earth, the land of Israel from other lands, and eventually (5) Mt. Zion from other locals within the land of Israel, the space of the Temple from Mt. Zion, and the space of the Holy of Holies from the Temple mount. At the same time, the inhabitants of sphere of the earth are separated from the inhabitants of the sky, humanity from other living creatures on and in the sphere of the earth, the nations that descend from Abraham from the other nations that descend from Noah, Israel from the other families of Abraham, the Levites from other Israelites and eventually the Cohanim from the other Levites. The concluding ontic goods — a separate priest class who performs its defining function in a separate space — are themselves not mentioned in the Pentateuchal narrative. But their existence is always present throughout the narrative as the end towards which the biblical story points beyond itself. They are the paradigmatic references for the term "holy" (KADOSH), a term that functions within the narrative for what is of ultimate value. They are holy because they are separate, but they are separate because of the key role they play in making actual the purpose for which the universe was created — viz., the literal "service" of God. (6) Socially the term "good" is associated with obeying God's commandments. The differentiated regions of space are commanded to generate living occupants without limit, while the light

inhabitants are ordered to rule their celestial region and the human inhabitants are commanded to govern their terrestrial region. The nations of humanity are given a set of laws beyond procreation to govern their society, while Israel, in the middle book of the five book (7), is given an extensive law code to create a nation whose central purpose is to carry out the sacrificial laws described within the very heart of that middle book. Israel is constituted to be a nation whose primary task is to prepare meals where the holy people in their holy space dine with the holy God of the universe three times per day on weekdays and four times per day on the holy Sabbath. During the week there is labor as well as feast, but on the Sabbath there is only feast. More precisely, it is a day of continuous feast, for both God and humanity.

It is this day that provides the Torah's primary vision of the end of days. Sabbath is the goal towards which all of creation points. It is the paradigm by which all good and evil are to be judged. It is this cosmic schema that is the context of the biblical version of the problem of theodicy. There exists evil, viz., the Temple has been destroyed, so that the priests cannot perform the tasks for which Israel exists, for which the universe was created. Evil exists because Israel failed to obey God's commandments. Hence, the God of the Pentateuch is not perfectly powerful, for there is service that he needs that he cannot perform himself. Clearly he is more powerful than anything else in the universe. He and he alone, after all, is the force that can either create or destroy it. But that power has limits. Similarly, but less obviously, he is not perfectly good. He performs acts of which he must repent, i.e., acts that fail to bring about his desired ends, not the least of which is the creation of humanity. Certainly from this respect — viz., the human — he is not perfect. For humanity exists within the universe for God; neither God nor the universe exist for the sake of humanity. Clearly he is better than anything else in the universe. He and he alone, after all, define what is good and what is bad. But that goodness, like his power, has limits.(8)

2. While God is perfectly good and powerful, there really is no evil– The Views of Maimonides and Gersonides in Classical Rabbinic Philosophy

The solution to the pentateuchal problem of theodicy provided the framework for the development of the second Jewish polity under the policies of Ezra and Nehemiah. The new Judah became a state that remained faithful to its Toraitic constitution, viz., to serve God no matter what the human price. With the rise of Hellenism that price became enormous. Because Judah refused to reconstitute itself into an acceptable political model within the Hellenistic world, it became the poorest of nations within the empire, and because it believed that its deity was the ultimate power in the universe, it fought three disastrous wars against the pagan Romans.

Judah's failure to win those wars constituted a second, major occasion for the redefinition of theodicy with in the perspective of Jewish thought.

Scripture taught that the first Temple had been destroyed because Israel had failed to keep God's commandments. But the second Temple was destroyed precisely because the nation did obey God's law. Clearly, if God is the creator of the physical world, the universe should now come to an end, and, if it does not, then its continued survival must be for some other reasons than continual communal dining by a small portion of humanity with the creator God of the universe. In other words, it cannot be true that the destruction of the second Temple is really evil. Rather, it must serve some as yet unrecognized divine good. Furthermore, if even the destruction of the Temple is not really evil, then all the lesser evils from a human perspective must not really be evil. But what could that purpose be and why does it remain hidden from even the chosen people of God's humanity?

The second Moses — viz., Moses Maimonides — provides a second myth in his Guide of the Perplexed (9), to solve the second paradigm fact of evil. Again, the first paradigm was the destruction of the first Temple, whose

cosmic solution was presented in the name of the first Moses as the myth of creation. The second paradigm is the destruction of the second Temple, whose cosmic solution is hinted at by Moses Maimonides in his myth of the Sabians.(10)

Maimonides reports the following story: The universe as God created it was perfect, as was everything within it. More precisely, everything was created to be perfectly what it was supposed to be. That does not mean that anything created was absolutely perfect. If everything were absolutely perfect, then everything would have been God, and there would not have been world other than God.(11) Rather, the universe as a whole was perfectly a universe, and everything within it was perfectly what it had been created to be, including Adam, the first man. That Adam was perfectly a man entails that he was no less, but also no more, than a human male. With respect to knowledge, he knew perfectly everything that a human could know, but he knew nothing what was beyond human knowledge. In general that meant that he understood everything that he perceived through his senses and he had the mental ability to make valid logical inferences from that experience, but he had no views on any subject the knowledge of which was beyond the limits of experience. The topics of such trans-empirical based knowledge fall under the general heading of metaphysics. It includes cosmology, cosmogony, and theology. Angels are capable of such knowledge, but not human beings. At best people can have opinions, but they have no basis to know whether or not those opinions are in fact true. And Adam, being a perfect human, knew only what he knew he could know, viz., physics, and did not even think about what he could not know, viz., metaphysics.

However, humanity also had the ability to extend its powers beyond its original nature. Its first extension was to develop agriculture. By nature what grows are a mixture of plants, some of which are fit for human consumption and others of which are not. By the simplest act of farming, viz. weeding out what they could not eat, to leave more room for what he could, the first humans made nature (from a human perspective) better,

and by so doing made it unnatural. From this beginning developed a nation of farmers, known as the Sabians (12), who extended all of their abilities beyond the confines of the human species into the power domain of the angels. However, in so improving themselves, they introduced into the world error and sin. In other words, by improving the universe for humanity they in fact made it less perfect in itself than it had been. The problem was that while the original human was perfectly human, the improved human was imperfectly angelic. While humans limited their thought to what human could know, they reasoned without error, but when they improved themselves to reason about what only the angels and God could know, they reasoned badly, i.e., they made mistakes that had dire consequences for both humanity and the universe.

The Sabians drew an analogy between their farms and the universe. Their land lacked human order and value until they, the farmers, imposed structure upon it, transforming it from a wasteland into farms. Similarly, the universe as a whole exhibits order and value. Hence, by analogy, just as they had imposed structure on one segment of the space of the universe, so there must be an entity, who, like a farmer, imposed divine order and value on what had originally been the disordered, valueless space of the universe. That entity is the Creator of the Universe, the only being worthy of worship as a deity. But who would that God be?

The question was right. The order of the universe does suggest that it exists by intention and not by accident, and the existence of an intelligent product does suggest an intelligent producer. But, again, this is a question for divine entities to ponder, not for mere humans, who, in consequence of their limitations, gave false answers. They looked about them for what they could find to be the most excellent entities within the realm of their experience to worship as deity. Rightly their attention focused on the celestial beings — the sun, the moon, and the constellations, who they proclaimed to be their gods. Their reasoning was correct as far as it could go. What is most excellent is most worthy of worship, and of all that they

could experience the living entities of the sky are most excellent. But they are not the creator; they
are merely creatures. The true creator lay beyond anything that could be given within the domain of human experience. Hence, the first humans progressed from having no religion, like animals, to worshipping deity, like angels. But the religion they formed was profane. Having transcended the appropriate agnosticism of their origin where they knew nothing about deities, they became idolators, who worshipped false gods, the gravest form of sin, for the universe had been created to serve its creator, not creatures.

The human decline from human perfection in its advance beyond primordial human nature had equally dire consequences in ethics. Originally human beings did not think about what is right and what is wrong. They behaved naturally, without reflection. However, as they developed their ability to manipulate nature, they came to realize that humans need not always act in accord with their nature, that in fact they could deliberate and make choices that were counter-intuitive. They then began to think about what they ought and ought not to do, and in so doing, because of their limitations as human beings, they made bad decisions, often disastrous, decisions that eventually led to the corruption of the generation of Noah, corruption so profound that it threatened the survival of the universe as a whole. In consequence, God was forced to destroy humanity through a universal flood and to begin his universe a new. But this second beginning differed from the first.

Recognizing that humanity could not remain for ever within the confines of human nature, God provided a political model for humanity to develop a kind of society in which it could know the difference between metaphysical truth and error as well as moral right and wrong. That model is the Torah that God revealed to Moses at Sinai.

Torah is here understood to be a national constitution that has universal consequences. Through obedience to its law, Israel could in time develop

into a kingdom of angels, who, armed with celestial wisdom, could lead the rest of humanity to an end of days when all human beings would become divine.

So much for what Maimonides explicitly states in the text of the Guide. Of course the problem is that Israel, being very human, cannot understand adequately what the Torah says, including the reasons for its social legislation. Hence, Israel, like all of humanity, always has the option, through ignorance, to choose to disobey. To the extent that Israel disobeys, it prevents the coming the end of days; to the extent that Israel obeys, it hastens that coming. Maimonides believed that progress toward the messianic ideal of an end of days was more likely than decline towards the Noaitic flood limit of an end to the universe, and that the destruction of the second Jewish commonwealth itself contributed to that positive evolution. Furthermore, he believed that to whatever extent Israel obeyed God's law, it improved its moral and conceptual talents, and to the extent that Israel so improved, the possibility of even greater obedience to Toraitic law improved.

Increasingly Israel, and eventually the rest of humanity, would understand God's purpose in creation, and through that understanding the apparent evils that occur in the world would become intelligible and, in consequence, avoidable. But progress would be slow, slower than even Maimonides himself anticipated.

It is against the background of the myth of the Sabians that we should understand what explicitly Maimonides says about theodicy. From an absolute perspective, God is perfectly good and powerful and there really is no evil. To be sure from this perspective the created universe is not perfect. But it could not be and still be the world. It is, as Leibniz would later say, the best of all possible worlds. In other words, while the universe is not perfect, because it cannot be better than it is, its imperfection does not constitute real evil. In fact, the only evil is human ignorance, a defect that the Torah was created to overcome.

How ignorant are we? Prima facie Maimonides suggests that it is absolute. The distance between what we know of God and the universe as it is in itself is infinite, and, because it is infinite, it is unbridgeable. But this surface reading of Maimonides' words cannot be correct, for if it were, then, no matter how our wisdom improves, we would be no closer to the messianic ideal, and, if there can be no progress, then the legislation of the Torah would have no practical value. On one hand, it is clear that for Maimonides the actual world is infinitely remote from the divine ideal, but, on the other hand, it must be possible to progress towards it. The reconciliation of these apparent opposites is found in Maimonides' negative theology.(13)

The critical datum underlying Maimonides', and all subsequent Jewish philosophic, analysis of God-talk is that God and God alone is the creator while everything else is a creature. Hence, there is a fundamental difference between God and everything else, a difference so extreme that no positive human language can literally be applied to God. A general term can be predicated of any number of subjects in the same way (i.e., with the same meaning) only if in the relevant respects these subjects belong to the same species.

Where a single general term is predicated of two or more subjects from different species, the meaning of the subsequent sentences is radically different (e.g., "The boy is big" and "Government is big"). In such cases, the meaning of the stated general term is equivocal. In what way equivocal and how the different uses are related depends on the way the relevant subject species differ. Whatever these ways are, it is most extreme in the case where a single term is predicated of both God and anything else, for here there cannot even be a common genus, let alone a common species.

In subsequent centuries, Maimonides was understood to have been defending the claim that the difference is so radical that any attribution of anything to God is, from a human perspective, unintelligible. As an

alternative, Gersonides offered a less extreme, theologically more acceptable, account of the difference in meaning between predication of God and anything else.(14) Basing himself on the way that Aristotle in his Metaphysics applied the term "OUSIA" to a substance and any other kind of subject, Gersonides judged divine attributes to be PROS HEN equivocal, i.e., to apply primarily to God and secondarily to anything else so that the secondary usages are dependent on the primary usage in the following two ways: (a) The meaning of the predicate term when applied to something other than God contains a reference to its primary divine meaning, so that the truth of the secondary meaning is logically entailed by the truth of the primary meaning, and (b) the fact described in the sentence that contains the secondary predication is causally dependent on the state described in the sentence that contains the primary predication. For example, to say that certain persons are good states something about how those people are related to God, viz., that what it means to say that they are good involves a statement about how they are related to God's goodness, and that God is the ultimate cause of their goodness. In brief, statements about the Creator express ideals which, as such, are related to comparable statements about all and any creatures of God.

How the two classic Jewish interpretations of divine attributes, viz. those of Maimonides and Gersonides, are different is not obvious.(15) On final analysis Maimonides may have intended something like what Gersonides subsequently spelled out. In fact, given the way that Maimonides' theory of divine attributes was interpreted by Hermann Cohen's disciples, there is little difference.(16) For both Jewish philosophers divine attributes express ideals that are related, as a primary and a final cause, to what is actual. All divine attributes express God.(17) But the actual in principle never is God.(18) The term "Creator" expresses God's relationship to the world as its first cause. He is the source from which the universe unfolds. And the term "Redeemer" expresses God's relationship to the world as its final cause. He is the telos towards which it moves. The perceived universe of time and space persists between these two transcendent poles of origin and end.

3. While God is perfectly good, he is not perfectly powerful– The Views of Hermann Cohen, Martin Buber & Franz Rosenzweig in Modern Jewish Philosophy.

On Cohen's understanding of Maimonides (and through Maimonides, of authentic Judaism), divine attributes are to be understood as moral ideals.(19) In general, given any simple, affirmative predicate, P, what it means to say that God is P is that God is not Q, where Q is the complement of P. Hence, to say that God is good means that He is not bad, that He is powerful means that He is not weak, etc. The problem is, however, that to be able to predicate any P of God would render God-talk unintelligible, but why can we not say God is Q, which correctly means that literally God is not P, since no attribute literally understood can be predicated of God? Maimonides' answer is that we may predicate of God only those attributes that the Torah affirms of Him, and the reason why Scripture says what it says is because the affirmed attributes are all human excellences. In other words, all statements about God are in reality disguised moral imperatives, where a statement of the narrative form, "God is P" means the commandment, "Strive to become P". What links the declaration to the imperative is the principle of holiness, viz., "You shall be holy as I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev 19:2). In other words, the content of theological statements about God are entirely ethical, and the religion of the people of Israel who proclaim them is a political program to redeem the world. This Cohenian reading of Maimonides' theology has informed all subsequent Jewish theology.

From this perspective, the problem of theodicy dissolves.(20) As a moral ideal God is perfectly good. More accurately He is "the" good. But as an ideal He has power only to guide. The actual work of the transformation of the universe into something good is the obligation of human beings. They and they alone, in all of their imperfection, have the power to realize moral values in lived life. The nature of the world as God created it has order and structure, but that order is morally neutral. On this

understanding of the biblically based faith of Israel, what Genesis means when it says that God calls His creation "good" is that He has produced one kind of creature, the human, whose task is to create good, i.e., to transform what are ontically only things into something socially of value. In other words, God creates the human, but it is the human who creates value.

Cohenian Judaism posits two ways to view reality — narratively as it is viewed in natural science and history as something that is, and imperatively as it is viewed in religion and ethics as something that is not what it ought to be. The former way views the world in terms of objects subject to physical laws. The latter way views it in terms of personal relationships subject to moral rules. From the former perspective, there is no evil. There are only facts and fictions that are either intelligible or unintelligible.

From the latter perspective there are only occasions that create moral obligations which may or may not be obeyed. Buber called the former the I-It relationship and the latter the I-Thou. Within his language God is "I-Eternal Thou", by which he meant that God functions perfectly as the paradigm for human moral obligation.

Rosenzweig formed a picture of the reality where life is lived between these two perspectives. The former is the fore-world (Vorwelt) of things that he calls "elemens". The latter is the over-world (berwelt) of ideals that he calls "structure" (Gestalt).

Lived life in the world is an infinite set of movements from distinct nothings of things toward individual somethings of value. Infinitely remote at both ends of the flow of human and physical history is God, as an element at the creation the world, and as truth at its redemption. As such, God is not of the world, even though He is what makes it intelligible. He is never actual, but He is ultimately, ideally, all that really-truly is. There is a deep divide between what is actual and what is true that human

beings in the world bridge through God. To be sure there are important differences between the Jewish philosophies of Cohen, Buber and Rosenzweig. But they do not differ in the general guidelines that they inherited from Maimonides' expression of biblical theology.

Consequently, they share in common, albeit in different languages, the same reconciliation of the problem of theodicy. Only God is good, only what exists in the world has power, and only humanity has the power to make good a world that inherently is not.

Concluding Remarks

Our story of the history of what Jewish philosophy has to say about theodicy is now concluded. It is worth noting that the two main classical Jewish accounts of theodicy arose in response to specific events, viz. the destruction of the first Temple for the editors of the Torah and the destruction of the second Temple for the rabbinic philosophers. In contrast the modern Jewish philosophers presupposed no such paradigmatic event for their speculation. If there is one, it would have happened after they wrote their major works. It would have been the Holocaust.

Several contemporary Jewish theologians believe that this event requires a rethinking of Jewish theology no less radical than the changes required by the destruction of the second Temple. The most notable of these thinkers is Emil Fackenheim.(21) He argues that the Holocaust is so demonic and so distinct that it nullifies the truth value of all previous philosophy, including Jewish philosophy, impossible. Personally, I do not share this radical judgement. While the Holocaust was a great disaster for both the Jewish people and for the world, it does not merit a conceptual status that is qualitatively beyond the destruction of the first two Temples. Nor does it raise anything conceptually new beyond what the above accounts of theodicy, all other factors being equal, can handle.

None of this is intended to minimalize either the great evil of the Holocaust or its critical importance for contemporary Jewish history and life. It is only to say that in itself the Holocaust raises no special perspective for solving, or at least attempting to solve, the problem of theodicy.

In conclusion, there are a number of features of the above description of Jewish philosophic accounts of theodicy that I would like to highlight. First, the problem of evil is seen in terms of collectives rather than individuals. For Rosenzweig, as for the editors of the Torah, moral issues range primarily over nations and only secondarily over their citizens. In general, in marked contrast to most modern thought, individuals exist as parts of collectives; collectives are not mere mental groupings of individuals. Second, judgments of individual events as good or bad are based on teleology. No event in itself has moral value. The universe is either viewed ontologically from a scientific perspective, in which case moral judgments are inappropriate, or from a political perspective, in which case events are judged from the perspective of a revealed vision of both the origin (creation) and the end (redemption) of the universe. Third, neither standard of judgment, creation or redemption, are, ever were, or ever will be anything actual in the perceptible world of time and space. Rather, they are always ideals that function perpetually for humanity to know that what is is not good and can always become better. It is in this sense that all of the solutions to the problem of theodicy turn on positing myths. Here the term "myth" functions in much the same way that Plato used it in the Timaeus (22), viz., as a picture or story or model that is inherently something more than opinion but less than knowledge, that as such is somewhat, but not entirely, intelligible.

NOTES

1. The following is a development beyond an earlier piece I wrote on theodicy from a Jewish perspective entitled "Solutions to Theodicy out of the Sources of Judaism," Religious Education 84, 1 (Winter, 1989) 55-67.

An earlier version of this present paper was written for the Studies in Jewish Theology series that Dan Cohen-Sherbok edits for Edwin Mellon.

2. viz. (1) -A B C, (2) -A -B C, (3) A B -C, (4) A -B C, (5) -A B -C, (6) -A-B -C, and (7) A -B -C.

3. What follows in this section are conclusions based on what I believe to be a reasonably rigorous literary analysis of the Hebrew text, particularly the first chapter of Genesis, in my The First Seven Days: A Philosophical Commentary on the Creation of Genesis, Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1993. Other books particularly relevant to this interpretation are the following: Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative, New York, Basic Books, 1981; Umberto Cassuto, A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, translated into English by Israel Abrahams, Jerusalem, Magnes, 1961-1964; Michael Fishbane, Text and Texture: Close Readings of Selected Biblical Texts, New York, Schocken, 1979; Yehezkiel Kaufmann, The Religion of Israel: From Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile, translated into English by Moshe Greenberg, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1960; Jon D. Levenson, Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence, San Francisco, Harper and Row, 1988; Jon D. Levenson, Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible, San Francisco, Harper and Row, 1987; Nahum M. Sarna, The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis, translation and commentary by Nahum M. Sarna. Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1989.

4. The terms explicitly employed in the biblical narrative are "good" (TOV) and "chaos" (TOHU VAVOHU), which are understood to be opposites, which entails that "order" (SEDER) is associated with good while "evil" (RAT) is associated with chaos, even though these latter terms are not explicitly used in this way in the biblical text. However, the association of these sets of terms will be made explicit in subsequent (medieval) rabbinic, philosophic commentaries on the biblical text.

5. I.e., beyond the time line of the Pentateuchal narrative, which concludes as Israel begins to take possession of its land and create a nation, a nation whose destruction concludes the narratives of the Hebrew Scriptures. It is this concluding event that is the problem that biblical theodicy addresses.

6. The Hebrew term is "AVODAH", whose concrete referent is the sacrificial activity of the Temple cult. It is the detailed description of this literal divine service that occupies the central (and therefore most important) place within this literary composition by the exiled Babylonian priests who edited the Torah.

7. Viz., in Leviticus. On the judgment that the editors of the Pentateuch followed a onion-like, as opposed to a linear, structure in constructing the Torah, so that what is most important is set in the middle of otherwise parallel texts in the extreme, see Jacob Milgrom's commentary on the Book of Numbers, The JPS Torah Commentary: Numbers, Philadelphia/ New York, The Jewish Publication Society, 1990, especially pp. xvi-xxix of the Introduction.

8. How close Maimonides believed himself and his generation to be to the messianic age is a subject of scholarly debate. There have been several articles on this question in recent years, but none of them are decisive. Here and in what follows I accept the view of Steven Schwarzschild that the Messianic Age functioned for Maimonides as an asymptote, i.e., as an ideal limit intended to provide humanity with a model for moral judgments that can in actuality be approached but never realized. Cf. Schwarzschild, Steven S. "Moral Radicalism and 'Middlingness' in the Ethics of Maimonides," Studies in Medieval Culture 11 (1977) 65-94, reprinted in Menachem Kellner, ed., The Pursuit of the Ideal: Jewish Writings of Steven Schwarzschild. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990, pp. 137-160.

9. Moses Ibn Maimon (Maimonides). DALALAH ALCHA-IDIN (The Guide of the Perplexed) [MOREH NEVUKHIM]. Translated into Hebrew

by Judah Ibn Tibbon. Wilna, I. Funk, 1904. Translated into Hebrew by Joseph Bahir David Kapach. Jerusalem, MUSAD HA-RAV KOOK, 1972. Translated into French by Solomon Munk. Paris, A. Franck, 1856-1866. Translated into English by Shlomo Pines. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1963. Henceforth referred to as "Guide."

10. In the Guide Book III, chapter 29.

11. This explanation of why everything was not absolutely perfect is not explicitly stated by Maimonides in the passage in question. However, it is implied. My explicit statement is a summary of what Maimonides' predecessor, Abraham Ibn Daud, said in his The Exalted Faith, Book 2, Basic Principle 6, Chapter 2, 203b16-204b16 of the Mich 57 manuscript in Oxford University's Bodleian Library of Solomon Ibn Labi's Hebrew translation from the original Judeo-Arabic. Cf. Abraham Ben David Ha-Levi (Ibn Daud), The Exalted Faith (HA- EMUNAH HA-RAMAH), edited by Norbert M. Samuelson and Gershon Weiss; translated into English by Norbert M. Samuelson. Cranbury, N.J., Associated University Presses, 1986; pp. 242, 246-247, 251.

12. Who the Sabians of Maimonides' myth/story might be is a topic of scholarly debate. My personal guess is that they are the Chaldeans.

13. The secondary literature on Maimonides' theory of divine attributes is vast. While it is never perfectly clear what Maimonides in fact believed he was saying about any topic that is critical to his philosophy, some positions seem more coherent with the totality of his writings than others. In this article I accept the general guideline of Hermann Cohen and his disciples who understand Maimonides' negative theology to mean that divine attributes state moral, asymptotic ideals. Even confined to the Cohenian interpretation of divine attributes, the relevant bibliography would be too large to present in this article. Instead, I will limit my references to Zevi Diesendruck, "The Philosophy of Maimonides." Central Conference of American Rabbis Yearbook LXV (1935): pp. 355-

368, and the following three articles by me (the last of which bearing most directly on the interpretation presented here): "On Knowing God: Maimonides, Gersonides and the Philosophy of Religion," Judaism (Winter, 1969) pp. 64-77. "The Role of Politics in the Torah According to Maimonides, Spinoza and Buber," Community and Culture: Essays in Jewish Studies, edited by Nahum M. Waldman, Philadelphia, Gratz College Seth Press, 1987, pp. 193-208. "Divine Attributes as Moral Ideals in Maimonides' Theology," The Thought of Maimonides: Philosophical and Legal Studies, edited by Ira Robinson, Lawrence Kaplan and Julien Bauer, Studies in the History of Philosophy, Volume 17, Lewiston/ Queenston/Lampeter, Edwin Mellon Press, 1991, pp. 69-76.

14. In Levi Ben Gershon (Gersonides), MILCHAMOT ADONAI (The Wars of the Lord) III-IV, Riva di Trento, s.n., 1560 and Leipzig, K.B. Lark, 1866, translated into German by B. Kellerman, Die Kampfe Gott's von Lewi Ben Gerson, Berlin, Mayer and Muller, 1914. Book III is translated into English by Norbert M. Samuelson, Gersonides on God's Knowledge, Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1977. Book IV is translated into English by J. David Bleich, Providence in the Philosophy of Gersonides, New York, Yeshiva University Press, 1973. Books III and IV are translated into French by Charles Touati, Les Guerres du Seigneur, Livres 3 et 4 , Paris, Mouton, 1968. Also see Charles Touati, La Pense Philosophique et Theologique de Gersonides, Paris, Minuit, 1973, and the following works by me: "On Knowing God: Maimonides, Gersonides and the Philosophy of Religion," Judaism (Winter, 1969) pp. 64-77. "Gersonides' Account of God's Knowledge of Particulars," Journal of the History of Philosophy (Octber, 1972) pp. 399-416. "The Tenth Principle–Omniscience–Gersonides, Milhamot Ha-Shem , Third Treatise, chapters 1, 3-6," With Perfect Faith: The Foundations of Jewish Belief, J. David Bleiech (ed.). New York, Ktav, 1983. pp. 440-466.

15. This is a topic that should be, but has not as yet been, adequately discussed by contemporary students of medieval Jewish philosophy.

16. One other Jewish philosopher worthy of mention in this context with Maimonides and Gersonides is Baruch Spinoza. He has been omitted here from consideration only because of space limitations in this volume and because his influence on subsequent Jewish thought was mostly negative. Like his intellectual Jewish teachers, Maimonides and Gersonides, Spinoza affirms a God who is perfectly good and powerful and denies the reality of evil. However, his interpretation of these three claims stands in intentional and explicit opposition to their religious Jewish solutions of the problem of theodicy. What he objects to is their judgment that the world is good. Rather, Spinoza constructs a model for understanding where reality is morally neutral. The issue is not theodicy. It is science. And the source of the disagreement is how Spinoza interpreted what it meant for the Creator of the Universe to be perfect. The tradition of classical Jewish philosophy had argued that the universe and everything in it are perfectly what they are, which entails that they are not absolutely perfect. Spinoza understood this judgment to mean that everything is the way it is because it must be that way. An absolutely perfect God must always do what is absolutely perfect, and since there is nothing else that can influence or modify what an absolutely perfect agent does, this universe is a necessary one, i.e., the only one that is logically and causally possible. Hence, there are no genuine options in the universe, and, without options, it makes no sense to say that what happens in the universe happens for a purpose. God does what He does not to bring something about; God does what He does simply because He is God. This position also is a solution to the problem of theodicy. Like Maimonides Spinoza claims that what appears to be evil only appears so because of the inadequacy of human knowledge. However, Spinoza's solution — viz., to posit a non-moral universe JPPJ stands outside the dominant tradition of Jewish religious thought which, as we shall see, makes ethics primary over ontology. Spinoza had enormous influence on the subsequent, so-called "modern" attitudes of educated Western civilization. In this and many other respects Spinoza's philosophy was paradigmatic for the subsequent development of modern science, particularly in the humanities. However, his influence in Jewish thought was, rightly or wrongly, primarily

negative. Spinoza's ontologically primary, morally neutral, algebraic picture of the universe stands in marked contrast to the ethically primary, calculus-process picture of the universe that Cohen and his disciples in modern Jewish philosophy developed.

17. For both Maimonides and Gersonides this is a consequence of God's radical unity. No attribute can express part of God, because God can have no parts. Similarly, no attribute can express something that merely is true of God, because then God could be other than He is, which, if that were possible, would entail that God could be influenced by something other than His own nature, which would entail that God is not perfectly powerful. Consequently, every divine attribute is God.

18. Cohen will say that to affirm anything actual as good would constitute idolatry, which is a consequence of both the radical separation between God as Creator and the world as His creation, and the radical separation in principle between the is and the ought.

19. The following works by Cohen are relevant to this discussion: Das Prinzip der Infinitesimal-Method, Frankfurt a.M., Suhrkamp, 1968. Judische Schriften, edited by Franz Rosenzweig, Berlin, 1924, and Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen der Judentums, Frankfurt a.M., 1929, translated into English by Simon Kaplan, Religion of Reason, New York, Ungar, 1972. Also relevant are the following secondary works: J. Klatzkin, Hermann Cohen, Berlin, 1921. William Kluback, Hermann Cohen: The Challenge of a Religion of Reason, Chico, Scholars Press, 1984, and J. Melber, Hermann Cohen's Philosophy of Judaism, New York, Jonathan David, 1968.

20. The following application of the philosophies of Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig to theodicy are based on my discussion of these three philosophers in chapters 10-11 of my An Introduction to Modern Jewish Philosophy, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1989. The "Recommended Readings" listed at the end of each chapter are the works

upon which my interpretation is based. My reading of Buber is based primarily on his Ich und Du (Heidelberg, Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1977, translated into English by Walter Kaufmann, I and Thou, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), as my reading of Rosenzweig is based primarily on his Der Stern der Erlsung (Rosenzweig, Franz, Der Stern der Erlsung, Frankfurt a. M., J. Kaufmann, 1921, translated into English by William W. Hallo, The Star of Redemption , Boston, Beacon Press, 1971, translated into Hebrew by Yehoshua Amir, KOKHAV HA-GEULAH, Jerusalem, Bialik Institute, 1970). The interested reader can find a more detailed expression of my understanding of these works in the following essays: "Rosenzweig's Concept of (Jewish) Ethics," Joodse Filosofie Tussen Rede En Traditie: Feestbundelter ere van de tachtigste verjaardag van Prof. dr H. J. Herring, edited by Reinier Munk, Amsterdam, Kok Kampen, 1993, pp. 207-220. "The Concept of 'Nichts' in Rosenzweig's 'Star of Redemption'," Der Philosoph Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929), Band II, Das neue Denken und seine Dimensionen, edited by Wolfdietrich Schmied-Kowarzik, Freiburg, Verlag Karl Alber, 1988, pp. 643-656. "The Role of Politics in the Torah According to Maimonides, Spinoza and Buber," Community and Culture: Essays in Jewish Studies, edited by Nahum M. Waldman, Philadelphia, Gratz College Seth Press, 1987, pp. 193-208. "Halevi and Rosenzweig on Miracles," Approaches to Judaism in Medieval Times, edited by David R. Blumenthal, Brown Judaic Studies #54, Chico, CA, Scholars Press, 1984, pp. 157-172. "Ibn Daud and Franz Rosenzweig on Other Religions: A Contrast Between Medieval and Modern Jewish Philosophy," Poceedings of the Eighth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Division C: Talmud and Midrash, Philosophy and Mysticism, Hebrew and Yiddish Literature, Jerusalem, 1982, pp. 75-80.

21. One should read all of his writings to see the development of his most original and insightful analysis. However, clearly his most mature, and conclusive, work is To Mend the World: Foundations of Future Jewish Thought, New York, Schocken, 1982.

22. 52b. There Plato invokes mythology, which he calls "bastard reasoning" (LOGISMU TINI NOTHU), as the appropriate way to talk about space (CHORA). See Richard Dakre Archer-Hind, The Timaeus of Plato, New York, Arno Press, 1973, and Francis MacDonald Cornford, Plato's Cosmology. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966 (first published by Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1937).