

Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung, Band 43, 1989, S. 618–640

THE LIMITS OF THOUGHT: ROSENZWEIG, SCHELLING, AND COHEN

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In our time, Philosophy's humility is announced by claims that we don't know. We do not know what humanity is. We do not know God. We do not know what our world should be. We do not even know what philosophy is. If we once had to learn to ask, 'How can we know?', when capital 'P' Philosophy was still proud, then in our time the question we are learning is 'How can we not know?' But this is to lapse back into the very error of proud Philosophy. For today's question truly should be 'How can we know – that we do not know?' Our humility, our professions of ignorance, may after all be too confident – the confidence of skepticism. The ignorance of philosophy itself requires a critical turn.

The problem is all too familiar. Ever since Hegel announced his system, philosophy has been in a sort of joyous retreat. All stripes of thinkers have abandoned the identity of being and thinking. It has become commonplace to insist that there is something utterly incomprehensible about existence or reality. Philosophy takes its cue from these incomprehensible realities, and reason submits to the dominion of irrefusable experience. This submission, however, has only rarely been an abandonment of philosophy. Reason and Philosophy remain, benighted, humbled, but they remain. Philosophy seems incapable of forgetting its past hopes of knowing all reality. The existentialists, most of all, seem perennially entangled with idealism, indeed, with Hegel. This need for recourse to idealism's speculative moves is an odd obverse for the sometimes arbitrary assumption of epistemological humility.

In the following, I will examine one of the great existentialist adventures with speculation. At the front during the first World War, Franz Rosenzweig wrote part of *The Star of Redemption*, a much too big book of existential Jewish theology. In the midst of that self-destruction of European culture, Rosenzweig announced a turn from the totalizing systems of Hegel and Philosophy to a non-dogmatic theological thinking based on sociological reflection on the Jewish and Christian communities coupled with the lived experience found in spoken language. Despite his rejection of Idealism's attempt to grasp all reality in

thought alone, Rosenzweig begins this work with one of the purest speculative constructions imaginable. That construction can serve as representative for contemporary philosophy's entanglement with speculative idealism. What is all the more striking is that Rosenzweig's construction is the most rigorous critical reflection on knowing we do not know. Thus he provides not only insight into our lingering involvement with speculative Philosophy but also a constructive exposition of the conditions for our epistemological humility, for knowing we do not know.

This paper has three main parts. The first is an introduction to Rosenzweig's break with Philosophy. That break occurs through a reflection on the incomprehensibility of death. Rosenzweig rejects Hegel's dialectic of the limit and the infinite, committing himself to protecting the unknowable from the tentacles of speculation. I will also briefly discuss Rosenzweig's subsequent move to the experience of spoken speech, in order to indicate the positive method for reflecting on what eludes speculative Philosophy.

The second part is an exploration of the motivation for the philosophical construction which prepares that jump to spoken speech. To safeguard the incomprehensible from dialectical snares is to isolate what cannot be known. In a sort of short-hand, we can say that we may know *what* exists, but that the *that* of existence is incomprehensible, arising from radical freedom. A comparison with Schelling's *Weltalter* will help, since Schelling pioneered an existential dialectic, exploring not knowing the *that* of an existing being. He develops an introverted image of what exists in order to isolate the free action of existence. Rosenzweig imitates Schelling, undergirding his empirical reflection on lived experience with an introverted construction.

The third part explores Rosenzweig's method of construction. Unlike Schelling, Rosenzweig insists on a pure, critical construction, so that what lies beyond the limits of thought be in no way dependent on what lies within the limits. Hermann Cohen's *Logic* provides valuable tools. Cohen insisted on an utterly pure rational construction of the actual world of scientific knowledge – for him the only 'real world'. Rosenzweig borrows Cohen's mathematical reasoning to make an antithetical construction. Cohen claimed to construct an actual something from nothing. Rosenzweig, instead, uses the pure construction to found the hypothetical reality of what lies beyond the limits. In this way, while Cohen is still pursuing Kant's question of how can we know something, and Schelling is asking how can we not know something, Rosenzweig is pursuing the critical question of how can we know that we do not know something.

I. Death and Philosophy

„From death, from the fear of death, all knowledge of the all commences.“ (3/3)¹ This very first sentence, with its arresting hesitation („... the fear of ...“), has more than rhetorical import for Rosenzweig. Philosophy has always been up to its neck in the fear of death, but has never admitted it. The Philosopher, the one who fears and thinks, refuses to face his own death. But in order to deny his death – that „unthinkable annihilation“ of himself which he can only fear – the philosopher insists that reality is identical with thought. What he cannot think (death) cannot be. In a grand evasion of his own fear, the philosopher denies the object of fear: death is absolutely nothing. But in order to accomplish this denial he must undertake the totalizing Philosophic project: knowing it all. If he can only think everything, can know it all, can complete the system, then in that moment of completion he will have proven that death is absolutely nothing (since it will have no place in the system).

Philosophy, for Rosenzweig, is this passionate desire to know it all. Modern Philosophy has thought it all in self-reflective new ways. If the project of knowing it all itself is real, the project itself must be knowable. A system which merely states what everything in the world is, would not be knowing it all. Nor would one which encompassed the origins and transcendent dimensions of everything. We now ask how is our knowing it all possible, and so encompass our own efforts. Rosenzweig identifies Hegel as the culmination of the original evasive Philosophical passion to know it all. Hegel's project brings the history of the project of knowing it all (Philosophy) into the all. (6/6) With that inclusion in the system, Philosophy reaches its outer limit, its perfection. The I which thinks, which can know it all, is the ultimate object, the last piece in the totality.

What justifies Rosenzweig's identification of Hegel as the end of philosophy is his interpretation of all Philosophical speculation as ultimately bound to the goal of knowing it all – all Philosophy proceeds under the equation of being and thinking. Even if we attempt to ele-

¹ References are to the recent collected works of Rosenzweig published by Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague. All translations are my own. Volume I includes letters and journal entries, and citations thereto will give the number and date where possible (#100, 1 Jan 1901). Volume II contains the fourth edition of *Der Stern der Erlösung*, which was translated as *The Star of Redemption* by William W. Hallo (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971). References will be in the text and include the English for convenience, preceded by the German and a slash (German/Corresponding English). Volume III (*Zweistromland*) contains various essays and will be cited by volume and page (III, 148).

vate Kant's critical thought as the true goal of philosophy, we are left with Hegel's question: how is critical thought possible – What allows reason to critique itself? If we sever thinking from being, and confine ourselves to reality [*Wirklichkeit*], we still desire to know that critical move itself. We still assert that the thinker, at least, truly is. So at least, runs the justification for asserting Hegelian priority even over a non-ontological mode of philosophical thinking. Even after Hegel, Philosophy's pretention to arbitrate reality according to its rationality forces the admission that the project can only be completed along the lines of Hegel. Thus Hegel represents the dividing point: either one agrees that thinking is equivalent to being, including the being of the history of thinking, or one asserts that being is irrational.

To assert that reason cannot grasp the totality of some particular experience, or entity, or relationship, etc. is hardly uncommon today. Even philosophers accept what could be called the death of Philosophy, the abandonment of the claim that all reality is thinkable. And yet, there are two false forms of humility possible here. One is a mere unrealized potential for knowing. We don't now know how many moons Pluto has, but there is nothing inherently unknowable, nothing which cannot eventually be brought within the circle of the all.

The second false form of humility allows only for an irrationality which dialectics ultimately recovers. This for Rosenzweig is the distinctive move of the Hegelian dialectics of limit and the infinite. Hegel expressly denies that there are limits to thought, by claiming that the very process of limitation displays the overcoming of that limit². This is much the same as the bad infinity, which for Hegel is the impossible attempt to separate the infinite from the finite³. Thus whenever we place a limit on thought, and assert that beyond that limit lies the infinite, Hegel challenges us, claiming that in doing that thinking, we have already re-appropriated that infinite and transcended the limit. Hegel's true infinity is one which is present in the finite. This dialectical move is the main point of Rosenzweig's interpretation of Philosophy in general, and of Hegel in particular: the wilfull desire to know it all cannot tolerate anything beyond the limits of thought. Rosenzweig denies this re-appropriation emphatically, claiming that he has to shatter Hegel's genuine infinity in order to make the 'bad' infinity visible (284/254). The spurious irrational (which can be captured in thought) is the child

² *Wissenschaft der Logik*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1969), vol. V, p. 145. English translation as *Hegel's Science of Logic*, by A. V. Miller (New York: Humanities Press), p. 134.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 155; Eng. p. 142.

of Hegel's ,genuine' infinity – and thus the true irrational (which does lie beyond the limits of thought) requires the destruction of the all – Hegel's infinite containing everything.

To dash that all into irrational pieces, Rosenzweig must insist on radical irrationality, unintelligibility – that we don't know something. The dialectic does not arrive at its limit only to scale its walls. Rosenzweig found that irrational ,x' at the very origin of that project to know it all. Death, or rather deaths, are the irrational ,somethings', and Rosenzweig begins his work with haunting, terrifying images of the front. „Let a person crawl like a worm into the folds in the naked earth before the bullets of the blind, inexorable Death whizzing toward him . . .“ (3/3). Philosophy had reduced death to an absolute nothing, but Rosenzweig focuses on the something, rather somethings, which death is. „In the dark background of the world stand a thousand nothings, as its inexhaustible presupposition – in place of the one nothing, which would be really nothing, a thousand nothings, which just because they are many, are something“ (5/5). My death stands outside any system, as the un-acknowledged spur to thought. Rosenzweig writes of the person, a totally determinate person, as an Ersatz, and identifies the uniqueness of each person by referring to the „first and last name“ (10/10) of a person. Because death strikes each unique person, there are many deaths – the deaths of each first and last name. Several years before Heidegger was to find, and several decades after Kierkegaard had already written, Rosenzweig found the individual's fear of death to be the ultimate refutation of Philosophy, of the claim that thought is identical to being.

My death is not an absolute nothing (which philosophy always wanted to pretend), but is a relative nothing, my nothing. Death is the exhaustion of the all. We arrive at a relative nothing, a residue of human reality which can never be known. This points the way to what I will call a negative anthropology (Rosenzweig called it negative psychology). No matter how much I know about myself, or about man *per se*, I can never know this aspect of reality. Indeed, the door is now open to a re-iterative process of negation. No matter what properties x, y, or z, I choose, I cannot know all of a person, because we can never know the individual's death. Moreover, we can repeat this analysis with God and with the world, producing negative theology and negative cosmology. The cosmos is now set free from the rule of pan-logicism, and appears as an upsurge of three unencompassable entities. God is separated now from the world and from human subjectivity, free to retain a separate existence, a hidden nature and a radically free will. Each element (God, world, and man) can be determined as an

unknown, a relative nothing of knowledge. One could aspire to that ignorance itself. In an incomplete critical move, we could demonstrate that we cannot know God (or man, or the world). Negative theology, for Rosenzweig, is the demonstration that each thing we know doesn't fit God. It takes a something of knowledge (of love, or of the rock) and reduces it to a nothing of knowledge of God (not like love, not like the rock, etc.). This move produces the relative nothing, the starting point of Rosenzweig's reflection. Rosenzweig displays that Philosophy has now made this negative move in each of the three spheres. But, the whole *Star* becomes a motion away from this three-fold ignorance.

Given pure thought's impotence in knowing these three realities, Rosenzweig must discover an impure or experiential access to reality. This is a generic problem for post-Philosophical thought, and usually involves some sort of nod towards empiricism. Rosenzweig's discovery happens in Part II of the *Star*, through a study of grammar. I will pause here briefly to indicate the way that Rosenzweig transgresses the bounds of Philosophy and its pure thought. This indication will aid in the evaluation of his lingering entanglement with pure thought in Part I.

To frame the problem, we need only consider the unique person and her death. Rosenzweig calls a philosopher who begins with her uniqueness and unique death a „viewpoint philosopher“ (117/105). After Hegel (= Philosophy) the subjectivity of the individual's life and passions are the substance of ‚philosophical‘ reflection. For Rosenzweig, Nietzsche best represents this sort of personal philosophy⁴ (21/18). Had Rosenzweig been ‚fed up‘ with philosophy (small as well as capital ‚p‘), with the hope to know, he might have fashioned a sort of Jewish Nietzschean work. But Rosenzweig asks of Nietzschean thought whether this is still Science [*Wissenschaft*] (117/105)? Rosenzweig requires more than radical subjectivity. The thought of radical subjectivity disperses into myriads of individual philosophies, worse, with the fragmentation of the self, into myriads of myriads as my own subjectivity can then spawn its own myriad of thoughts. Rosenzweig's

⁴ It is a recurring weakness in Rosenzweig that he underestimates the appeal of the uglier side of Nietzsche (and Heidegger). This is most graphic in his comment that Nietzsche was both poet and philosopher and that his personal style was the most important thing about his philosophy. „Even now what he philosophized is all but a matter of indifference. The Dionysian, and the Superman, the blond beast, the eternal Recurrence – where are they now?“ (10/9) Rosenzweig's lack of foresight is not the central point; rather, the appeal to the irrational, as Nietzsche so well illustrates, is fraught with deeper political significance than Rosenzweig acknowledges.

commitment to philosophy requires the possibility of unity and objectivity.

How does one meet those requirements having shattered the All of knowledge? He demands that philosophy retain for its origin the subjectivity of the existing person. That irrational fact cannot be compromised. But from that subjectivity he seeks a bridge to the „lucid clarity of infinite Objectivity“ (117/106). The bridge for Rosenzweig comes from theology, which itself stands in need of philosophy. The method of thinking in this bridging provides for us the contrast with speculation, and we will overlook here the theological issues. Rosenzweig's method is reflection on the grammar of living speech. Philosophy, as idealism, seeks to comprehend everything through logic. In logic the unique person is rendered anonymous. Bound to the *a priori*, stipulating only what things may and may not be, but not what they are, logic reaches only mute essences, an individual in a genus and not the existing person. Indeed, the abstraction of logic from language is Idealism's way to overcome language and its grammatical categories (156/140). For Rosenzweig, to turn from logic to language, language as spoken, is to turn to lived event [*Erlebnis*]. „And speech as organon is at the same time the thread which runs through everything human, which takes shelter under the miraculous appearance of revelation and its ever renewing presentness of living event.“ (123/110)

The ‚empirical‘ evidence which reason cannot provide for itself, the step beyond the limits of thought, is accomplished by language itself, by reflection on the grammar of language as actually spoken. In this respect, Rosenzweig is not unlike many other 20th Century thinkers. For many the break with idealism is accomplished through reflection on language, by trading in the formalism of logic for the speedier access to existence through spoken language.

II. The Star: inside-out

That emergence into the sphere of language and its grammar stands a long way off from the relative nothing of my death. A simple turn to the empirical evidence of language will fail to yield grounded knowledge, according to Rosenzweig. In his explanatory essay, „The New Thinking“, Rosenzweig refers to his method as „absolute empiricism.“⁵ That *absolute* refers to the philosophical, logical, pure reflec-

⁵ See „Das Neue Denken“ (III, 161). Emil Fackenheim calls attention to this very distinction in *To Mend the World*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1982) p. 68.

tion which undergirds the recourse to lived experience. Part I of the *Star*, is the preparatory, philosophical construction of three irrational/unknowable, hypothetical somethings (God, world, man) from the three corresponding relative nothings. That construction, and even the need for it, has always been recognized as a most difficult aspect of Rosenzweig's thought.

Rosenzweig's greatest philosophical resource for principles of this reconstruction was Schelling. Schelling, too, had faced the collapse of the Hegelian system and of the project to know it all. Indeed, Schelling is truly the first post-Hegelian philosopher, the first person to require an augmentation from experience in the wake of the vanity of Idealism – the first philosopher to claim the humility of ignorance. In his use of Schelling, Rosenzweig is again a typical existentialist. Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Jaspers, Marcel, Tillich (to say nothing of other philosophers such as Feuerbach, Engels, Bakunin and Habermas) all came to Schelling to hear the radical pronouncement of the death of Philosophy.

Rosenzweig was closely involved with two books when he conceived and wrote the *Star*. The first book was Schelling's *Weltalter* (*Ages of the World*). Rosenzweig had a copy of the 1913 Reclam edition with him at the front and refers to it in correspondence of that time⁶. In a later letter Rosenzweig declares: „It is a great book to the last. Had it been completed, nobody except for Jews would give two hoots for the *Star*”.⁷

⁶ Letters to and fro Rosestock-Hussey (#320, 11 Nov. 1916, #330) and to Rudolph Ehrenberg (#507, 14 April 1918). Rosenzweig did not, however likely know the ‚late‘ Schelling, the lectures which were published as *Philosophy of Mythology and Philosophy of Revelation*. He writes to Rudolph Stahl (#1156, 2 June 1927) „At that time [1911] I still knew nothing of the late Schelling.“ But on 18 March 1921, he writes to Hans Ehrenberg „I'm reading the Philosophical Empiricism of 1827. It is surely worse than the *Weltalter*.“ (#655) Despite Else Freund's heavy reliance on the later lectures, it seems clear that Rosenzweig was deeply conversant only with the *Weltalter* and what preceded it, while at the front and writing the *Star* (Else Freund, *Franz Rosenzweig's Philosophy of Existence*, trans. by S. Weinstein and R. Israel, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979) (original German 1933). Freund's work rarely refers to the *Weltalter*, and so does not show the intimacy of several ideas and even passages of Rosenzweig's work with the *Weltalter*.

Schelling, *Weltalter, Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. 8, ed. by K. F. A. Schelling (Stuttgart and Augsburg: 1861), pp. 195–344. There is an English translation by Frederick de Wolfe Bolman, Jr. (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1967). However, all translation are my own. Bolman's text includes the German pagination.

⁷ #655, 18 March 1921.

What did Rosenzweig find so compelling in the *Weltalter*? First and foremost is Schelling's rejection of Hegel's thought, and that of idealism in general, concerning existence. For Schelling, as for Rosenzweig, idealism meant the denial of the irrationality (and the freedom) at the heart of human existence. Schelling saw the idealistic project as an attempt to make a person his own Ground, the source of himself. For Schelling, as Christian thinker, this is tantamount to deifying oneself and produces many disastrous results⁸. The core inadequacy was the reduction of freedom to necessity – both in the divine free act of creation and in subsequent human free actions. In order to dissolve freedom into necessity, Idealism ignored the negative, contractive, dark aspect of reality⁹. By reducing all to light and affirmation, Philosophy made everything thinkable and ignored the tensions of existence. In opposition, Schelling now creates a project which will protect freedom from *a priori* reason and its necessity. In its most basic sense, the fact of creation lies beyond the limits of knowledge. But all freedom must arise from a similar irrationality, a similar incomprehensible source. Even for the non-theological followers of Schelling, interest centers on that human freedom, freed from the chains of rational necessity (even be they dialectical) of the System.

Freedom must be made unknowable in the *a priori*, necessary sense of knowing, but because freedom occurs in time, it can be known *a posteriori*. All knowledge of existence, of free action; therefore, is known only through history, through a discourse which follows after the fact. What we cannot know *a priori*, then, is the transition, the continuity of temporal existence. Schelling grants to pure, *a priori* reflection the ability to know what is, to know essences in their atemporality, but he proves that existence, the temporal order, cannot be similarly known. To explore our not knowing, Schelling must resort to history, and the *Weltalter* itself is a history. It is this history which Rosenzweig found particularly enticing¹⁰.

In order to isolate the incomprehensible free act, Schelling claims that what is prior to the free transition (the before) must be an introversion of what is made extroverted by the action (the after)¹¹. The

⁸ *Weltalter*, p. 212 f., and p. 343 f.

⁹ *Weltalter*, p. 212.

¹⁰ „Das Neue Denken“ (III, 148). „Schelling foretold a narrative philosophy in the preface to his ingenious fragments, the *Weltalter*.“ Cf. the opening sentences of Schelling for an obvious case of Rosenzweig's wit: „The past is known, the present is recognized, the future is anticipated. The known is narrated, the recognized is exhibited, the anticipated is foretold.“ *Weltalter*, p. 199.

¹¹ *Weltalter*, p. 223, cf. also p. 235, 253, and 309.

before cannot determine that the action will occur. Nonetheless, if there were no relation of the after to the before, we would not recognize the act. That there should be a free action is radically indeterminate, but what sort of action is possible is determined. Schelling holds that the only possible relation between the before and after is introversion/extroversion. The most plausible explanation for this relation is that the alternatives are inadequate. An after completely dissimilar to the before is unrecognizable; a mere repetition of the before in the after would mean no free action; and finally, if the after were a development that emerged from the before we would have slipped back into a necessary (unfree) process. The extroversion of one form provides radical discontinuity and the possibility of full re-cognition in a narrating of the event.

In the *Weltalter*, Schelling portrays this introverting/extroverting discontinuity between God before creation and after in order to make creation unknowable and hence free. Like most philosophers, Schelling is unwilling to abandon the unchangeableness of God's nature. But, he argues, if we reason from this to a God who is „eternally still, completely absorbed in itself, consumed by itself“¹², then we are forced to make God undergo an essential change when creating. An Aristotelean thought thinking itself must be completely changed in order to create a world. Schelling comments that „no sort of thinking whatsoever can make this conceivable [*begreiflich*].“¹³ (This comment is worthy of considerable reflection, since Schelling in most other ways is willing to tolerate the coincidence of contradictories in God's nature. Moreover, it is not merely that this is inconceivable, but the qualification „no sort of thinking, whatsoever“ would serve as a fine point of departure in exploring what different ‚sorts‘ of thinking Schelling considers possible.) We are left, at core, with a simple principle: in order to think of Creation as free act, we must posit a God who is alive, a God who is inwardly in eternal action. Then, as Schelling comments regularly, the internal can become outward without changing its nature – we can retain intelligibility of the *what* in the extroversion of free action¹⁴.

The history which Schelling must narrate is, therefore, not merely the history of the world, or of world-historical events. In short, Schelling is forced, along this line of reasoning, into a theosophy. He must narrate the happenings within God prior to creation in order to

¹² *Weltalter*, p. 255.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 309.

be ignorant of why God created the world¹⁵. Following Boehme and other German mystics, Schelling reasons that prior to creation, God has an inner-life much like ours. Just as there is a succession of states in our life, so there is in God's internal life. „In divine life also as in all others, there is movement, progress.“¹⁶ The difference is that in God's there is no threat of halting the circular cycles of always sublating lower states with higher. This cycling cannot be the temporal past, but is the eternal past in God. This past is a past which was never a present, an unrepresentable past – thus not prior *in present time*. „The past time is no sublated time; the past can not truly be as a present, but must be as a past simultaneous with the present . . .“¹⁷. Schelling discusses a series of Eternities in place of one eternity. It is into the past eternity that he places the development in God prior to creation.

For all that, it would be hard to imagine something less to the taste of contemporary thought than theosophy. Whether Schelling expected assent to his various moves in constructing this deep past is open to question. Rosenzweig himself, found reluctantly that he had a need for just such reflection. In order to provide a foundation for not knowing the free relations of God, World and Man, Rosenzweig was forced into this bizarre kind of historical reflection, constructing introverted elements prior to experience. While thinking out the *Star*, Rosenzweig in a letter proposed a triad that describes the thought of the Part I, for „In addition to *theology* and *philosophy*, it now appears that the definitive third corner of sciences – I myself am still astonished by and reluctant at this thought – is theosophy.“¹⁸ This he equates with „the eternal happening (*Geschehen*) in God“. The theosophy (as Rosenzweig himself calls it) of Part I is, as in Schelling, the key to a narration of the present and the future. Moreover, Rosenzweig imitates Schelling, by naming the three parts of the *Star*, three kinds of eternity („The Elements or the Everbecoming pre-World“, „The Way or the All-time-renewed World“, and „The Configuration or the Eternal Su-

¹⁵ This is the *tsimtsum* of the Kabbalists. See Gershom Scholem's discussion of the primordial contraction in Lurianic Kabbalah, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, trans. by Ralph Manheim (New York: Schocken Books, 1969) p. 110 ff. Also of interest is Jürgen Habermas discussion of Schelling and the Kabbalah in „Dialektischer Idealismus im Übergang zum Materialismus – Geschichtsphilosophische Folgerungen aus Schellings Idee einer Contraction Gottes“ in *Theorie und Praxis* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1971) pp. 172–228 (not included in the English translation).

¹⁶ *Weltalter*, p. 261.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 302.

¹⁸ In the letter to Rudolf Ehrenberg called the *Urzelle* of the *Star* (III, 137).

per-world“).¹⁹ Rosenzweig characterizes his Parts II and III, as the completion to Schelling's *Weltalter*, „the second book he tried to give.“²⁰

This theosophical move, the discontinuity over the introversion/extroversion, borrowed from Schelling guides Rosenzweig's construction in Part I of the *Star*. In each of the three books of Part I of the *Star*, Rosenzweig constructs an element that is an introverted, hypothetical entity. The first is God, and like Schelling, Rosenzweig also sees this proto-God as an equation of nature and freedom²¹. Schelling constructs the nature first using the tension between God's love and God's being, dialectically knitting them into a contraction of Himself followed by an expansion – again following his principle that the negative must be considered and that internalization precedes externalization. This continues two more steps in Schelling – the unity with the will makes for the proper internal creation in God; and then, finally, we step out in the free act of creation. I will show below how Rosenzweig, for his part, arrives at his equation of God's freedom with God's nature, which he symbolizes as $A = A$. But what is significant here is how both use the inversion of the constitutive elements as the form of the extroversion. Schelling writes:

„We are content to note, that the general course of events is the same as in nature, with the single difference, which arises in that the negating power, which in nature is outward, in the spiritual essence is inward. One can say, therefore, that in nature the negating power is elevated and lead inward; in the spiritual world it is drawn outward and lowered. . . . What is contraction in that, is expansion in this and vice versa.“²²

Rosenzweig writes:

„What flowed in as Yes, steps forth as No, and what as No, as Yes, just as one unpacks the contents of a suitcase in the opposite order as one had packed them in. As farcical as the metaphor seems to be, still we may use it seriously.“ (124/112–13)

Rosenzweig's major constructive impulse in the *Star* is directly dependent on Schelling's *Weltalter*. The motivation, moreover, is the need for a turning inside-out, an introversion/extroversion, in order to

¹⁹ As early as 4 Sept. 1918, Rosenzweig presents the three parts as three kinds of eternity (#566).

²⁰ (III, 148).

²¹ *Weltalter*, p. 209. Cf. *Star* (33/30).

²² *Ibid.*, p. 334.

preserve the intelligibility of what happens in freedom while perserving the unintelligibility, the radical freedom of whether the free act will be done. The free relations which occur in lived experience in spoken language require a logical foundation in order to yield rigorous knowledge. We move from Hegel's denial of the limits of thought, not to simple empiricism, but to a way of making the action of freedom unknowable, beyond the limit. Rosenzweig and Schelling insist on the indifference to existence of their introversions. Rosenzweig distinguishes between factuality [*Tatsächlichkeit*] and reality [*Wirklichkeit*].

But there is a further application of the notion of limit here. The elements, constructed in their inner turning, are inaccessible to each other and so, of course, to human experience. We 'know' of them only as hypotheses, as factualities deprived of all reality. The missing externality of the elements rests on their inward turning, while their extroversion is the key to Rosenzweig's Part II, where each element turns inside out. Thus the elements secure the experience provided *a posteriori*, but those elements are only thought and cannot be known.

A final observation of these dialectics of introversion/extroversion in the *Star*, focuses on the ultimate image of the work: the star of David composed of the overlapping triangles of the Parts I and II, with a fire burning in the middle and light streaming out in rays. This image represents the eternal form of redemption, as the kingdom of God advances like rays of light to illuminate the whole cosmos. A bright star shines its light outward while its burns within. But the foundation in thought of this ultimate star must be an introversion. The very motion of light outward would be introverted with a motion of light inward, and the brilliant fire would be introverted into a stillness, an absence of all energy. This star turned insideout we now know as a black hole (although in Rosenzweig's time the theory had not yet been developed). If the star of redemption is the positive product, the result of exploration beyond pure thought, then in pure thought Rosenzweig must construct its opposite, the black hole.

And indeed, although not noticed as such, there is a discussion of the hidden God in Part I that closely approximates the black hole. When Rosenzweig discusses this interaction of freedom and nature, he discovers that their equality resembles a hyperbolic curve – that if God is all freedom, he has no nature, and vice versa. Rosenzweig's representation of the introverted God, 'A = A', equates Freedom with Nature. He argues that God's freedom seeks its nature, and hence he chooses to identify that side of God as A =, and not just as A. God's essence, on the other hand seeks nothing. It rests in infinite silence of pure existence [*Dasein*]. As the freedom nears essence, it comes into

the jurisdiction of essence's inertia. As that freedom nears the stillness it loses its power, so that when it finally reaches pure essence it is extinguished (33/31). Thus, God's hidden nature is, as it were, a black hole, sucking freedom into its stillness. Only after the extroversions in Part II, will God become a constructive part of the star of redemption, a star which shines forth from its own inner blaze of light.

III. Getting something from nothing

What strikes any reader of Schelling's *Weltalter*, is the questionable nature of the construction of the introverted God. If it is a foundation for understanding the incomprehensible act of freedom in creation, it is a twisted and obscure foundation. One cannot help but suspect that the whole construction is simply and irremediably arbitrary. Principles like „love is forever expanding“ or „God must be the oldest of beings“ are not nonsensical, but they are hardly indubitable²³. What one suspects is that Schelling has imported into the introverted God just what he hoped to get out – or rather, just what he had experienced in the created world. But that makes his theosophical reflection nothing short of an intellectual game where a game of mirrors makes empirically derived concepts look like they provide *a priori* intelligibility for the empirical evidence which they presuppose. The project of defining a limit for our thinking has only transgressed the limit, thereby expanding what we can know (or, if one has a severer judgement on Schelling, conjuring up some nonsense).

Rosenzweig acknowledges that the introversion/extroversion scheme is the best means of preserving the freedom in the interactions of the elements – but he requires a pure construction of those introverted elements. Rosenzweig claims that Schelling borrowed the chaos, the dark ground from experience. Hegelian idealism had pretended that there was no darker side to reality, as mentioned above. Schelling made this repression visible, and insisted that contraction, negation, etc. are always the first moment in love and generation²⁴. Schelling's brings this negative moment clearly to the fore: insisting at one point that love is forced to become hate, and culminating in his hymn to pain and suffering as the way to holiness²⁵.

²³ *Weltalter*, p. 209, 211, etc.

²⁴ *Weltalter*, p. 225.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 319, 335.

On the basis of Schelling's exposé of this darkness, Rosenzweig criticizes all of idealistic thought as depending on chaos, the dark ground (153 ff.)²⁶. Rosenzweig emphatically distances himself from Schelling (and the mystical tradition) with its godhead and the sort of theosophy based upon the darkness at the beginning of God. „It is no ‚dark ground‘ nor anything else which can be named with Eckhart's, Böhme's or Schelling's words.“ (28/26) Rosenzweig requires a purer construction of the hypothetical, unknowable elements. He takes the introversion itself more seriously, struggling to think of what cannot be known without the pre-supposition of something given, something unintelligible, evil, etc. His existential dialectic thereby preserves the limits of thought²⁷.

The *Star* was written with two books under Rosenzweig's elbows. The second was Hermann Cohen's *Logic of Pure Cognition (Logik der reinen Erkenntnis)*²⁸. Despite Rosenzweig's patronizing view of Cohen's thought, he clearly was moved by Cohen's personal presence. The *Logic*, moreover, has decisive impact on the construction in Part I. At the conclusion of the introduction, Rosenzweig extolls Cohen for

²⁶ Rosenzweig himself does dare once to refer to his relative nothing from which he generates God as the dark ground (99/90).

²⁷ For this reason, when Rosenzweig speaks of believing in the elements he is not referring to a realm of faith as opposed to reason. At times he even puts scare quotes around the word [„Glaube“] (45/42) in order to alert us to his unusual use of the word. Mosès focuses heavily upon the notion that Rosenzweig consigns the elements to faith as a deficient mode of knowledge, as a sort of intuition (Stéphane Mosès, *Système et Révélation*, Éditions de Seuil: Paris, 1982, p. 55 ff.); whereas Rosenzweig is focussing only upon a purely hypothetical assent to the elements in their introversion.

²⁸ The evidence is unmistakable, in a letter to his mother (#553, 15 August 1918), only one week before setting down to write the *Star*, he writes:

„Cohen is insanely hard; I would never have believed that a philosophical book could still hold such difficulties for me. Moreover – whether understanding him is accordingly worthy, is not yet certain for me; I almost believe it is not. But now I have begun it and I am reading it through.“

The story is complicated. Rosenzweig had studied and visited with Cohen in Berlin, but he owned no works by Cohen as late as September 1917 (#430, 20 Sept. 1917). Indeed, he resolved to familiarize himself with the system and asked his mother to send him the *Logic*, repeatedly (#509, 16 April 1918, #530, 23 May, 1918). But Casper (Bernhard Casper, *Das Dialogische Denken*, Freiburg: Herder, 1967, p. 174 f.) and Mosès ignore the letter quoted above, and similarly fail to note the distinctive imprint of Cohen (*Op. cit.* pp. 41–45). Mosès, moreover, seems to rely on Rosenzweig's critical judgements for his interpretation of Cohen.

Citations to Cohen will be to Volume Six of the critical edition (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1977), a reprint of the second edition (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer Verlag, 1922).

discovering how mathematics is an organon for thought, particularly through the Logic of Origins (23/21) – the point of departure for Cohen's *Logic*. Most of all, Rosenzweig appropriates the infinitesimal method, which Cohen had applied to generate something from nothing²⁹. Indeed, even some of the most Schellingian passages describing the structure of the *Star* are oddly qualified with terms of critical epistemology [*Erkenntniskritik*], leaving the unmistakable flavour of Cohen's Marburg Neo-Kantian thought in one's mouth. (96–97/88, 31/28, 45/42, 435/391).

In order to see how Cohen's pure cognition was valuable for Rosenzweig, a brief consideration of Cohen's overall project is in line. Cohen argues emphatically for a radical Idealism. Indeed, so strong is his claim for Idealism that he can claim „Idealism is the true realism. Realism which is not based [*gegründet*] on the idealism of pure cognition is eclecticism.“³⁰ By taking a critical epistemological turn, Cohen argues for the actuality of the objects of modern science. More critical still, he denies the given. Whereas Kant proved that the categories of the understanding are transcendental but must be applied to the manifold of sense intuition („Concepts without intuition are empty“); Cohen argues that there is no given manifold or influx of sensible intuition. The pure forms of intuition, space and time, become categories for him. It is pure reason which generates [*erzeugt*] perception. Such a radical idealism asserts the stunning independence of knowledge from perception, and refuses to accept the existential claims made for perceptible objects. „The stars are not given in Heaven, but we term ‚given‘ the objects in the science of astronomy – in distinction even against the definitive opinion that the generation and treatment of thought is founded in sensibility.“³¹ Here, as in the *Logic*, Cohen draws upon an intellectual tradition running back to Book VII of Plato's *Republic* (529b), where the ‚real‘ star is the one given in the mathematical science, and transcendent thought is not just looking up at the ceiling³².

The general structure of the argument in the *Logic* is a four step construction from nothing to actuality. Cohen begins with the judgements

²⁹ Cohen laid the foundation for his own system with a short work called, *The Principle of the Infinitesimal Method and its History*, which pre-saged his complete system. He used that method in the *Logic*, but it is not clear where Rosenzweig first encountered it. *Das Prinzip der Infinitesimalmethode und seine Geschichte*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1968) edited by Werner Flach.

³⁰ *Logic*, p. 599.

³¹ *Infinite*, § 88, p. 189.

³² *Logic*, p. 459.

of laws of thought where he presents the basic structure of thought which produces something out of nothing; in the second step he produces reality [*Realität*] out of nothing; in the third reality becomes substance; and finally, in the fourth the substances gain actuality [*Wirklichkeit*]. Actuality is known purely, with no recourse to any given, any sensible experience. This pure knowledge of actuality strikes most people as unreasonable. One must ask how the mathematical scientist knows the actual world? But the remarkable solution to the seemingly unconquerable problem of getting from the 'empty concepts' of reason to the objects of reality is found in the infinitesimal method. Calculus, with its generation of quantity from the infinitesimally small, accomplishes the production of something (the objects of reality, of science) from nothing.

Cohen claims that the infinitesimal method can generate quantity from quality³³. Integration is a kind of reflection which generates a discrete variable (x) from an infinitesimal unit (dx). One integrates over a continuous line, most easily grasped as the axis joining 0 and 1. dx is the mathematical judgement of that continuity. As infinitesimally small, it is both something (> 0) and nothing ($= 0$), but through integration it yields the real something: x – where reality [*Realität*] is the weaker claim of determinate definition in contrast to objective actuality [*Wirklichkeit*]. The finite number which x represents is produced from the infinitely small number, and since the infinitesimal can never be given in sensation, we can demonstrate the purity of the thought of number³⁴.

That thought of number is the thought of reality, which functions as an anticipation of actuality in a way directly linked to Kant's anticipations of experience³⁵. But what is real is still 'hypothetical', even for Cohen. Nonetheless to generate the finite from the infinite without recourse to sensible intuition is a major accomplishment for pure cogni-

³³ The contrast with Hegel is illuminating. While Cohen uses the infinitesimal to move from quality to quantity, Hegel uses the infinitesimal to recoup the qualitative within quantity. (Cf. *Wissenschaft der Logik*, 260 ff., (Eng. 225 ff.)). Though their interpretations of infinitesimal calculus have many similarities, the functions in the systems illuminate the difference between Hegel's dialectic and Cohen's *pure* idealism: for Hegel cannot generate quantity out of pure thought, and uses the infinitesimal to display how quantity *also* can be thought in terms of quality. Cohen, on the other hand, requires nothing but pure reason to think quantity, and so can first generate quantity from quality itself. For Cohen it is a bridge forward, for Hegel a way of bringing something external and alien back into the system.

³⁴ *Logic*, p. 134–36.

³⁵ *Inf.*, § 32.

tion. The infinitesimal method's first triumph is this generation of something (x) from nothing (dx). In Cohen's *Logic*, that real x is reflected through re-iterative processes of infinitesimal judgements until it achieves actuality. That generation of actuality from pure reason does not concern us directly. But before interpreting Rosenzweig's appropriation of this first step, we need to survey the first class of judgements, because they establish the continuity and the possibility of the reasoning used in integration: that is, getting something from nothing.

The judgement of origin is the first judgement in the *Logic*. Since nothing can be given, the origin will have to be nothing, but Cohen claims that it is a relative nothing, not absolute nothing. The relative nothing is relative to something: It is the nothing of knowledge. The concept of continuity, discerns that this relative nothing borders on something. „Being itself should receive its origin through the not-being. The not-being is not some correlate concept to being; rather the relative nothing designates only the springboard, with which the cleft working towards continuity should be completed.“³⁶ Through the thought of continuity, reason overcomes the separation of being from nothing.

The judgement of identity is second. This is affirmation (A is A), but what is affirmed through identity is judgement itself³⁷. Identity is not equality or comparison of something with itself; rather, it lies before all such relationships. Identity makes possible the judgement of a thing as comparable with itself or another. Identity precedes all representation.

The first set of judgements is completed in the judgement of contradiction. Cohen distinguishes between that ordinary relative nothing [*Nichts*] and the not of negation [*nicht der Vernichtung*]. While the relative nothing was an origin for thought, the not of negation is a reflection upon judgement which solidifies the judgement of identity. When we explore the non-A opposed to some A, we think the fact of the judgement of A³⁸. Only by excluding or denying certain forms of judgement can identity be preserved, and hence can judgement itself proceed. The three judgements provide a pure origin for thought; establish the possibility of judgements of identity; and then secure the factuality of such judgements by excluding what is not-identical.

³⁶ *Logic*, p. 93.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

Despite Cohen's claims to construct all the way to actuality from nothing, Rosenzweig was attracted to this method, and especially to the first three forms of judgement. Here was the antidote to Schelling's romantic dependence on the dark side, for Cohen refuses to borrow the chaos in his construction. There are echoes of Cohen's more radical idealism in Rosenzweig's critique of idealism's 'thing in itself', 'manifold of sensibility', and 'the given'. (153/138) With the purity of Cohen's *Logic*, Rosenzweig could rid the introversion/extroversion construction of its arbitrary nature. Given the goal of an introverted element, the God who is constructed can not have actuality [*Wirklichkeit*] (what we normally call God's existence), but only factuality [*Tatsächlichkeit*]. But Cohen's infinitesimal method produces just that sort of reality in its first moments.

Rosenzweig constructs with critical epistemology. The problem was as old as Socrates: I know that I don't know something. We then ask what sort of thing would that something be in order for me to be unable to know it. What is the nature of the unknowable? This is the turn Schelling makes in exploring the contraction and dark ground, the abyss and the godhead. Critical epistemology always asked: what are the conditions of knowing something? Now we don't ask what are the conditions of not knowing something – rather, we ask what are the conditions of knowing that we do not know something?

This sort of reflection seems like a hall of mirrors. But if we are interested in constructing an hypothetical element which in its introverted nature cannot be known in actuality, then at least we are not constructing a rabbit out of a hat. Since we construct something we cannot know, the strongest claim is that we hypothesize what that something would have to be, if it did exist and we were unable to know it. Its existence will have to be provided from some alternate source than pure reason.

Rosenzweig begins with nothing – a relative nothing, the result of negative theology. Rosenzweig is clear that we are not presupposing the existence of God. We presuppose, rather, only our ignorance, our knowing nothing about God (27/25). We seek a pure knowledge of a factuality: a hypothetical without existence because with reasoning alone we cannot find a real, acting God. We will not presuppose anything nor borrow any intuitions from sensation.

Following Cohen, Rosenzweig sets out two paths from this knowing nothing. The first is a path of affirmation (Identity); the second of negation (Contradiction) (a Yes and a No, respectively). Because of the continuity of something and nothing, there is a neighborhood about the nothing of knowledge which is something. Along the first way,

God is the affirmation of that neighborhood (which at all times is not known by us). Because there is no boundary within the zone of that which we do not know, the affirmation of our ignorance of God is an infinite affirmation (29/26–7). God's nature, what God is, must be this infinite essence of what we do not know. This is the 'something' which we cannot know, the area beyond our capacities to know.

The second way is a No to the nothing, the denial of our knowing. It breaks with our knowing without presupposing any 'something' which we do know, any Yes. But it does require an affirmation of the something we do not know. While the Yes affirmed a district surrounding our ignorance, the No is bound with our not knowing. The No emerges from nothing as a refusal, a negation of our knowing. Like Cohen's third judgement, this is a judgement about judgement which allows for meaning. It is no affirmation of something we know, but always a 'not otherwise' – a denial that what we don't know could become known. It is the freedom of denying, of negating (31/28–29). This is the freedom of the hidden God to deny any claim, any knowledge of God. God becomes an ever evasive motion away from our attempts to know.

Rosenzweig makes use of geometric imagery for this construction, describing a boundary zone around the nothing generated through the infinitesimal method. When he refers to the two forms of proceeding as the Yes and the No, he draws on both Schelling and Cohen, but when he links these words with the neighbor and the escapee, respectively, he opts for Cohen and the infinitesimal. We are thinking in „the hypothesized boundary zone of the nothing“ (28/26). That boundary zone (of neighbourhood and path of escape) is in fact a Magic circle of God's hidden factuality (*Ibid.*). To determine what happens within that zone or circle is not to have advanced our knowing about God, but to have explored the conditions for our knowledge that we don't know God.

In an inversion of Cohen who found the conditions for knowing reality, Rosenzweig finds the two conditions for knowing we do not know: 1) the affirmation of an x which lies beyond our capacities to know, and 2) the denial of our capacities to know x. The two are related, and when bound together, define each of the three hypothetical elements, but they are not tautological. The epistemological transcendence is found in a positing of something ('thus') and a denial of our competence ('not otherwise').

To pause for just a moment, we can see that these are very strong conditions. To be epistemologically humble in a rigorous manner requires both conditions be met. To state that God (or man or the

world) is an irrational reality goes well beyond the claim that we do not yet know God (or . . .). It means that God (or . . .) would have to be something beyond our limits of reasoning, and that each attempt to know God (or . . .) would be refuted or denied. If we have only one of the two conditions (as Rosenzweig discusses with interpretations of China and India), then we will collapse into an all which we cannot know or a nothing of ourselves and our knowledge. Either the sphere of affirmation will envelop everything, and so we will not know everything, or the denial will advance unabated, so that we will know nothing.

When Rosenzweig brings these two ways together in an equation he arrives at the symbol for God as $A = A$, which appeared earlier in the context of the black hole. At this point, the two results undergo transformation through their equation. The goal of this construction remains both introverted and critical: that we are inquiring after the conditions for knowing that we do not know God. In order for us to know we know nothing of God, God must be a binding together of essence (the neighborhood of our not knowing) and freedom (the denying that we know God). And as foci, these two points generate a hyperbolic curve (roughly of the form $y = 1/x$). The ,endpoints‘ do not quite exist $[(x, y) = (0, \infty), (\infty, 0)]$, but the measurable points of that curve will be transformations of these ,endpoints‘. God becomes a fated, arbitrary being. As the freedom approaches towards essence, it becomes arbitrary choice [*Willkür*]. As arbitrary choice, God prevents any knowledge of Him. What at first was incessant denial of all claims, becomes the arbitrariness which refuses all attempts to discern what God wills. God’s essence similarly becomes bound as fate and necessity. God must not simply reside in the neighbourhood beyond the limits of our knowledge, God cannot change to become something we do know. Rosenzweig interprets God’s life as the exercise of that fated choice – that necessary arbitrariness. In order for us to know that we cannot know God, God would have to be arbitrarily choosing to negate our knowledge while a fated resident in the neighbourhood beyond the limits of our knowledge (33–34/31)³⁹.

³⁹ Once again, it is important to note that the two other elements (Man and World) have a parallel construction, proceeding by the same moves of infinitesimal calculus and arriving at similar equations in Books II and III of Part I.

Conclusions

Both the motivation and the method of construction now stand before us. Rosenzweig constructs introverted elements, elements without actuality, in order to lay a foundation for the empirical resources he will lay hold of. In this he follows Schelling, exploring what we cannot know in order to preserve, within discourse, the irrationality of freedom and of creation. But Schelling was unwilling to conduct a pure philosophical construction. He smuggled what was known from experience into his construction of the *a priori* introversion. Rosenzweig avails himself of Cohen. He makes Cohen's infinitesimal method into a critical turn for reflecting about our ignorance, for determining the conditions of knowing that we do not know. Through Rosenzweig's construction, we have seen both the need for entanglement with speculative thought and the rigorous exploration of what Philosophy's humiliation requires.

Nonetheless, there are several key issues which remain unresolved. The first is the question of the use (or abuse?) of Cohen. For Cohen, the infinitesimal method serves as the cornerstone for a positive (not introverted) construction, for the generation of what we do know. Reality soon leads to actuality in a non-dialectical manner. Cohen might well ask why Rosenzweig is so convinced that thinking can produce only reality (or as Rosenzweig calls it, factuality) but cannot produce actuality. Rosenzweig's response is the break with idealism and its equation of knowing and being. This question then forces Rosenzweig, and indeed all philosophy after the death of Philosophy back to the fundamental question: is there an irrational actuality?

While Cohen would insist that we must ask what would the conditions be for knowing such an irrational actuality, be it death, or a hidden God, etc., Rosenzweig and his crowd claim living experience [*Erlebnis*] of that irrationality. However, the strength of the construction in Part I of the *Star*, is the rigour with which it stipulates the conditions for knowing that there is something irrational. The conditions themselves, of course, do not offer up such an entity. Ultimately, we go around the circle of experience and criticism of experience, because we then ask whether the very construction has not assimilated the irrational to the rational. On this score, at least, Rosenzweig seems most valiant and successful. The hypothetical constructions display the ability of reason to delimit itself, and through the denial, to enforce its own limitation.

This brings us back to Schelling. The need for an introversion/extroversion schema is at least as troublesome as the insistence on breaking

the equation of thinking and being. Although reason must abandon its pretense to determine what happens (creation, free action), those very happenings remain mute or utterly ambiguous (devoid of any specific meaning), without a rational construction such as an inversion. We do not discover experience with no preparation; rather, rationality can prepare us to understand experience in every respect, *except* for the actuality of the happening. Existentialism never tires of Schelling, nor of idealism's reflections and speculations because without these, it would cease to think or reason. Philosophy continues to reason, even in the presence (or absence) of the irrational, the incomprehensible. Only the *discontinuity* of actuality, the radical freedom in time, (contra Cohen and Hegel) allows for the irrational. It may be that to know that we do not know we must make use of Philosophy's pure, rigorous logic, for only with such logic can we prevent Philosophy from assimilating the discontinuity of actuality to the sphere of reason's dominion. The exercise in topology of Rosenzweig's construction, displays that pure thought can achieve true critique, asserting a region beyond its limits while at the same time negating its own pretensions to reach beyond those limits. To ask pure reason to do more is preposterous, to allow it to do less is to lose all hope of speaking of existence.