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Athens, Jerusalem, and the Orient Express of Philosophy

Athens and Jerusalem mark sites on the Western imaginary that have been inscribed and cathected with an abundance of claims, desires, and fantasies. They have become the scene for narratives of origin but their history has been a history of overdetermined archeological speculation. They are both cities built on top of cities. The very concept of origin appears to be challenged, as the excavation of these sites exposes all claims for origin as groundless. They have become fortresses of cultural and religious beliefs, common places that serve to ground the project of the West, which as Gandhi famously quipped, “would be a great idea.” The narratives attached to these sites complicate the view of a simple juxtaposition between Athens and Jerusalem. Considered the birthplace of philosophy and reason and, respectively, of religion and faith, closer examination of the narratives and claims that pit the two cities in opposition to one another, if as occasionally complementary and thus interlinked cultural construction sites, suggests that we rethink these story lines.

Historically, the topos of the distinction between Athens and Jerusalem is introduced early on by Tertullian, one of the first church fathers:

Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis? Quid academiae at ecclesiae? Quid haereticis et Christianis? Nostra institutio de porticu Salomonis est, qui ipse tradiderat dominum in simplicitate cordis esse quaerendum. Uiderint qui Stoicum et Platonicum et dialecticum Christianismum protulerunt. Nobis curiositate opus non est post Christum Iesum, nec inquisitione post euangelium. Cum credimus, nihil desideramus ultra credere. hoc enim prius credimus, non esse, quod ultra credere debeamus.¹

What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? What between heretics and Christians? Our instruction comes from “the porch of Solomon” [Acts III, 5], who had himself taught that “the Lord should be sought in simplicity of heart” [Wisdom of Solomon I, 1]. Away with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic composition! We want no curious disputation after possessing Christ Jesus, no inquisition after enjoying the gospel! With our faith we desire no further belief. For this is our palmary faith, that there is nothing which we ought to believe besides.²

From the start the distinction operates as a central topos of Christian theology that positions itself over and against Greek thought, which however plays a seminal role in its formation, and on the other hand, a “Jerusalem” it claims as its own property in dispute with the Jewish tradition it seeks to replace. If patristic theology fights a two front battle, one against “Athens” and one for a “Jerusalem” of its own, it operates under the assumption of two “Jeruselems”: the one it claims and another one it rebuts. It is as if the dual of the Hebrew rendering of the name of the city the Hebrews had once taken over – “Yerushalayim” – had left a trace in Hebrew, which the Latin was eager to mute. With Lactantius and Augustine the distinction was firmly cemented, though Augustine sought to steer a middle course by acknowledging truth wherever it would be found.³ But that only corroborated the split. If Jewish tradition related to Greek philosophy with a similarly heightened wariness and concern, the issue assumed a different and crucially formative significance for the construction of Christian theology. The theological urgency was further intensified by the geo-theological situation, which presented itself with an edge for Tertullian, Lactantius, and Augustine, who found themselves in a particular situation with regard to Athens and Jerusalem no matter the map on which they relied. From among these Northwest Africans, who made their career in the Roman Empire, only Lactantius ended up geographically “in between” Athens and Jerusalem during his final days in Constantinople. For the Jewish tradition on the other hand, Athens may have been up in the Northwest, but Jerusalem remained the unquestioned and theologically secure base. Christian theology, on the other hand, found itself in the precarious situation of claiming tenaciously as its own, a city that was already occupied. To proceed to a doubling into heavenly and terrestrial sections seemed the logical conclusion. Whereas it denied Athens’ importance, it confirmed it at the same time in appropriating the philosophic tradition that assumed a formative role in the emergence of Christianity. The appropriation of Jerusalem was accomplished by a splitting into two that would openly lay hand on the property, and selectively plunder the host tradition. In other words, the distinction between Athens and Jerusalem represents a patristic move fundamental to the formation of Christian theology. Its return in modernity signals a curious instance of the problematic of secularization and, for some Jewish philosophers, internalization of the very impulse of Christian theology they sought to confront.

Following a Biblical cue, a more promising distinction might return to the figure of Noah and his children. In the context of such a return to

Biblical narrative, the challenge of Jewish philosophers suggests itself in terms of a family relation rather than metaphysical opposition. Sons of Noah, Shem, Yaphet, and Ham become the ancestors of the post-diluvian world. The notion of the ensuing topography between the brothers can be helpful in rethinking the relationship between Jewish tradition and philosophy “out of the sources of Judaism” rather than a patristic paradigm. The topography of the genealogical relationship between Shem (the Jewish people) and Yaphet (the Greeks) is laid out as one of family relation. “God enlarge Yaphet. And he shall dwell in the tents of Shem” (*Genesis* 9, 27), on which the Midrash comments: “Let the words of the Torah be uttered in the language of Yaphet [i.e. Greek] in the tents of Shem.”⁴ But if we suggest rethinking “Athens and Jerusalem” from the Jewish point of view, we cannot do so without remembering the tents of Ham and beyond these three sons of Noah, also his daughters: the nameless daughter-in-laws, unnamed but of no less importance to life in, between, and beyond the tents.⁵

My argument is that the juxtaposition of Athens and Jerusalem and its attendant topographical discourse rest on assumptions that not only problematically obfuscate the projects of Jewish philosophers, but also the project of philosophy in general. My claim is that the discourse most prominently associated with Leo Strauss⁶ but shared by a slate of critics and philosophers from the Enlightenment to the present, is a phenomenon of a particular moment in modernity.⁷ It is not until the Enlightenment and the beginning of secularization that philosophy and theology, reason and religion, undergo a transformation as they turn into the modern concepts we know. In other words, the hypotyposis of the names of the two cities that are supposed to distinguish a specific form of Greek thought from Hebrew thought, can only be critically understood if seen in the context of the project of defining modernity.

As a result, the hypotyposis of Athens and Jerusalem takes place in a situation whose political significance, interestingly, bears on the conceptualization of the discourse on Athens and Jerusalem. At a moment of a pan-European movement towards opening up the world, this development is accompanied by a need to secure borders. As Athens is claimed as the quintessential symbol of modern rationality and its narrative becomes that of the origin of modern Europe, all that does not fit such a vision comes to represent its other. Distinguished as what stands outside and over and against it as its other, the non-European assumes a problematic role as the facilitator of the European desire of making the world accessible. The

ambiguous attitude that defines the period's geopolitical approach of both opening and securing the borders at the same time, also registers in the discourse on philosophy.

The phenomenon of the Orient Express illustrates this attitude in all its complexities. If the German project of the Orient Express initially included plans to run the railway to Baghdad, the prospect of including Jerusalem as a stop on the way presented an attractive prospect. But the Orient Express remained mainly a European railway experience between Paris and Vienna, the line on which the train took its inaugural journey. If Jerusalem was a destination that had been eyed at some point, it was never realized; Athens however became an actual destination.⁸ The irony of the Orient Express running to Athens should not be lost. It highlights that the Orient Express is after all very much a European affair. While also continuously serving Istanbul, this was not exactly the train Turkish migrant workers boarded on their way to Germany. Rather, it was European and American tourists who famously populated the train.⁹ The history of the Orient Express thus illustrates the conflicted dynamics that come to the fore in the distinction between Athens and Jerusalem.¹⁰

Heinrich Heine suggestively noted that in modernity the secular Messiah will arrive not on a donkey but riding a train.¹¹ In the wake of the Industrial Revolution and European modernization, a signal transformation was heralded by a new system of transportation, the train, as Heine noted with other critics of the 19th century. As the railways made the world accessible new opportunities were created. The new experience resulted in a profound reconfiguration of time and space. The world became at the same time smaller and bigger, disenchanted, and a place that promised an experience of adventure, a mere train ride away. As Heine commented in a newspaper article from Paris on May 5, 1843:

The railways are again such a providential event that imparts humanity with a new upswing that changes the color and shape of life; a new chapter of the world history begins and our generation may praise itself to have been part of it. What kinds of changes must now take place in our modes of intuition and in our ideas! Even the basic concepts of space and time have begun to waver. The railways kill space, and time alone remains. If only we had enough money to kill the latter in a decent way as well!¹²

As space and time undergo this profound transformation in the 19th century, the discourse on Athens and Jerusalem maps onto the new topography in a manner that betrays some sort of anachronism. Athens and Jerusalem

are no longer distinct entities closed off against each other, but figure as points on a line that has become part of a larger grid. As “Athens” and “Jerusalem” come to represent obsolete marks of distinction, the peculiar anachronism of this distinction highlights the conflicted nature of the discourse. At a moment when the cities of Athens and Jerusalem have assumed fundamentally changed positions on the geopolitical grid of 19th century European power politics, their names assume a symbolic function oddly disconnected from the political topography. The consequence is a curious effect of authentication. Turned into markers on the game board of modern world politics, Athens and Jerusalem are reduced to a symbolism that – abstracted from any foothold on the ground – is both subject to speculation and, at the same, subject to reinscription by the powers that be. Reduced to topographical coordinates on the political map, the names of these cities are reinvented as speculatively charged signifiers of a cultural constellation. The scheme of Athens versus Jerusalem is, oddly, both at the same time a product of a geopolitical constellation on the game board of 19th century European and world politics pitting the cities against one another in the role of mere proxies, and on the other hand, its speculative mirror reflection identifying them as powerfully contending exponents of opposite world views in a culture war.

To enter any discussion of the issue of the distinction between Athens and Jerusalem is thus already defined by a conceptual framework that is overdetermined yet at the same time curiously vacuous with regard to the concerns of Jewish philosophers. To enter it means to ride that shuttle of diplomacy, which runs only within a Europe defined by its Christian exigencies, that nonetheless desperately argues for an other it can only invoke in terms of a phantasmagoric placeholder for the kind of alterity it desires to claim. Changing trains might be one way out, getting off the grid of problematic distinctions another. In other words, the philosophically interesting aspect of this phenomenon is that however one examines it, the discourse on Athens versus Jerusalem emerges as profoundly problematic and conflicted. If the temptation is great to choose sides, simply for the reason that the ‘choice’ seems so simple, straightforward, and obvious, the problem presents itself, today maybe more obviously than previously, as a false dilemma.¹³ In the wake of postmodern altercations and in an age marked by its post-colonial condition, the alternatives of Athens and Jerusalem have simply become obsolete, if not disturbingly simplistic. For critical travelers of the 19th century, the destiny of the Orient Express

and its destinations had already suggested that much. But at a moment of worldwide renegotiation of the claims of reason and religion, the old patterns of parsing the concepts no longer hold.

Yaacov Shavit concludes his study of modern secular Jewish identity in Israel on a note that spells the consequences with unforgiving succinctness. Provocatively replacing the contrastive conjunction “and” with the locative “in,” his *Athens in Jerusalem: Classical Antiquity and Hellenism in the Making of the Modern Secular Jew* ends:

‘Quid Athenis et Hierosolymis?’, asked Tertullian. We can answer this question in three ways. First, Athens served as an inverted image of Jerusalem. Second, Athens served as a model for Jerusalem, and third, as I hope to have demonstrated in this study, Athens is an integral part of Jerusalem. Without it, Jerusalem, namely the modern secular Jew and modern secular Jewish life in Israel, would not be what they are today.¹⁴

As a consequence, we simply cannot return to this discourse uncritically, we can no longer go there, neither to an Athens nor a Jerusalem. The symbolism of these signifiers is no longer stable. It has long fallen apart. And maybe the clinging to the distinction as one of canonic significance betrays the melancholy admission that, ultimately, it is no longer tenable, a fact that confronts us every day with renewed intensity. We can therefore read the constellation of the discourse of Athens versus Jerusalem as the discourse of a lack, a melancholy, and the reminder of the difficulty if not impossibility of objecting to, and overcoming what seems to be an age-old juxtaposition. Since the distinction of ‘Athens versus Jerusalem’ hinges on a European problematic whose Eurocentric fixation calls for examination, its validity can no longer remain unquestioned.

As a central part of 19th and 20th century philosophical discourse, the distinction has to be made legible as a feature of the wider challenge to rethink and redefine the principal terms of philosophy, and philosophy in principal terms. The anxiety about Jerusalem is profoundly intertwined with the anxiety about Athens but it has become an anxiety that showcases in paradigmatic manner the problem of rethinking philosophy, and not just in disciplinary terms. If we thus understand the distinction as a product of modernity rather than the ancient trope it never was – the way it has been operative since the Enlightenment as the shorthand for two distinct ways of negotiating universality that relate to the particular rather differently – this juxtaposition becomes legible as one of the paradoxes at the heart of the

project of philosophy. It constellates the problem of grounding universality in terms of locality, or more precisely, figures the problem as that of two conflicting visions of universality. In either case, the universal is imagined as grounded in a particularity that claims universal significance. Following Heine's observation on the transformative powers of the railway, we can say that the paradox of the co-temporality of the universal and the particular is transposed onto the topographical conundrum, the spatial arrangement that pits Athens against Jerusalem.

In order to render this imaginary map legible we need to attend both to what it brings to light as well as what it obfuscates.

The Acropolis and the Gates of Jerusalem

Freud's experience on top of the acropolis and Herzl's photo-op encounter with the Emperor Wilhelm at the gates of Jerusalem both illustrate what is at stake in visiting symbolically overdetermined sites of cultural memory. These visits provide an instructive lesson in the attempt at touching, treading, and thus grasping the grounds, which releases a dynamics whose vertigo undermines the very desire to take hold of any kind of ground.

Freud's 1936 letter to Romain Rolland literally gives a moving account of the problem of setting foot on the grounds of the acropolis, precisely because, as Freud notes, this experience constitutes one of his greatest wish fulfillments. But setting foot on the grounds of the acropolis comes at the cost of distorting its memory and the construction of the past, as Freud concludes.¹⁵ The perception itself, as well as the experience is shot through with interferences that highlight how profoundly the transference nature of taking hold determines a seemingly simple and straightforward act, such as visiting the site of one's imagination. The dialectics of the affective overload illustrate the powerful dynamics at work when it comes to visiting a place like Athens or Jerusalem. Upon closer examination, Freud's memory of the acropolis reminds us that the presumed simplicity of a geographic place emerges as site of conflicted negotiations of one's own identity construction. In other words, as Freud notes: "Alienations and depersonalizations are intimately linked."¹⁶

Freud's trip to Athens took place in 1904. Herzl had died in the same year on July 3rd. Two months later to the day, Freud arrived in Athens.¹⁷ In 1898, Herzl had in turn undertaken a trip to Jerusalem to welcome Emperor

Wilhelm at its gates. Intended as a publicity stunt, the trip was meant to energize diplomatic talks concerning the granting of a Jewish State. But staging this “state” visit became a double-sided affair that brought home the complexities of the conflicted memories connecting the various sections of the city. Political claims and aspirations inseparably linked to visions of a cultural mission, and the whole arrangement resembled a parody of British imperialism’s treatment of its politics as an exclusively domestic affair. The 1898 Jerusalem handshake demonstrated, almost comically, that the question “whose Jerusalem?” would remain one for some time.

If this touristic digression seems a far shot from the concerns of philosophers about Athens and Jerusalem, my argument is that if this were indeed the case, this in itself, too, would mark a critical point: the simultaneity of the non-simultaneous, of these different ways to appropriate Athens and Jerusalem, are not to be theorized in a vacuum but through the cultural space in which they operate, which links them critically. It is precisely in the nature of this symbol-centered discourse that it rests on conceptual premises that prove to be problematically ‘groundless,’ if the pun may be permitted.

Back ‘home’?

The curious gap between the historical and the philosophical, or the ‘empirical’ and the ‘theoretical’ approach to Athens and Jerusalem highlights an interesting correlation. There is a certain reactive quality that informs the desire to cling to a philosophically constructed distinction that holds out the promise of a kind of purity that any empirical consideration so forcefully challenges. Contextualizing the elements of the construction of the discourse helps attend to its particular political dimension. Rather than redrawing the map of philosophy from ground zero, attending to the particulars of its context helps us address the specific political aspects that inform the apparent purity of the philosophical discourse.

There is thus a startling complicity in underwriting the same politics on whichever side one takes on the question of Athens and Jerusalem. The recognition of this problem has led some philosophers to avoid the discourse altogether, be it on explicit or implicit terms. The astounding popularity the distinction nevertheless continues to enjoy, poses the question of its function with some urgency. One of the probable answers is that the distinction is conceptually so deeply inscribed in the imaginary

of Western culture that to ignore it would mean to deprive one of a critical entry point into this discourse. For, how could one critically intervene if not by addressing the issues head on? However great the promise of solving the predicament by direct answer might have been, none of the answers to the problem indicated by the distinction between Athens and Jerusalem has led to any resolution.

The history of this discourse then suggests that it be understood as a symptomatic expression of philosophy's aporia of grounding its origin in general. Read in terms of this problem, the discourse on Athens and Jerusalem becomes legible as discourse with a specific date and purpose, and a specific institutional context. In other words, we can only grasp its philosophical significance if we read it historically. Its purchase for systematic thought is therefore limited. But as symptom, it is a critical indicator of the historical determination of philosophic reasoning. We can only examine it critically through careful attention to case studies, or to what Adorno would call "critical models."

While Leo Strauss' 1967 essay on Athens and Jerusalem plays a central role as a text of reference, rather than examining the essay in detail, I will confront it by addressing some of its lacunae.¹⁸

The Case of Spinoza

If Leo Strauss' engagement with Spinoza is well recognized, the startling fact remains that his attitude with regard to Spinoza continues to be anything but clear. Spinoza approaches the question of traditions, philosophical as well as religious, such as Judaism and Christianity, in a manner that seems to challenge the very idea of the Athens-versus-Jerusalem line of argument. The way Spinoza theorizes tradition and his views concerning the history of philosophy suggest a critical reserve towards narratives of origin. Such reserve informs the critical impulse of Spinoza's view concerning the inadequacy of any assumption of foundational origin in epistemology. And this view is continuous with his critique of historical determinism Hegel style whereby each nation – if lucky – could have a world historical mission. It is continuous with Spinoza's view that the book of books and the book of nature pose in principle the same questions and require the same kind of hermeneutics.¹⁹ And this view assumes explicit expression in the way Spinoza addresses Greek philosophy and Jewish traditional wisdom. Spinoza's critical stance

with regard to Plato and Aristotle and their schools of thought is well known. Indicative are his more sympathetic views of the Stoics and Epicurus, his preferred sources when it comes to Greek philosophy.

It is no coincidence that Spinoza is the first Jewish philosopher wary of the emerging secularized narratives that would juxtapose Greek and Hebrew wisdom. Up until the 17th century, for instance, Maimonides or “rabbi Moses” as the scholastic tradition would call him, represented a source of authority that Christian and Jewish thinkers would equally respect. Leibniz is one of the last philosophers to refer to Maimonides as a philosopher in this way. During Spinoza’s time, however, the attitude began to shift and Spinoza became one of the first philosophers whose “Judaism” became a liability for the way his philosophic thought would be considered. In theologically secure contexts such as patristic and later medieval philosophy, Greek and Hebrew thought did not figure as essentially different sources of thought. Rather, the corpus of texts represented a discursive continuum, satellites of a consistent universe of textual traditions. Religious difference would thus not necessarily produce philosophical anxiety. It could even be argued that patristic and medieval philosophy relied on neutralizing religious difference in order to appropriate Greek philosophy. In the post-Reformatory age and with the rise of secular philosophy, this changed radically as philosophers experienced an acute form of fear of contact with the religious traditions, and often with good reason. As a consequence, Spinoza faced the challenge of securing a place as Jewish philosopher in the face of a canon that seemed on the one hand radically secular but on the other hand continued to rely on a frame of reference that excluded the very critical concerns that Spinoza brought to philosophy. Athens, in Spinoza’s view, was not so different from constructions of Jerusalem. As political entities they were simply placed on different sides of religious and confessional divides. What was required, therefore, was a critical departure from any kind of foundational narrative that would privilege one particular story line over another, one particular claim to primacy to another. Spinoza’s turn to the “theological-political” was precisely a move beyond such an impasse.

Instead, Spinoza offered a trajectory of critical reasoning that would bring Ecclesiastes, i.e. King Salomon and Epicurus into illuminating proximity.²⁰ Just as Spinoza did not view Jewish tradition as homogenous he resisted the conflation of Greek thought into one self-contained category. Spinoza’s conception of tradition serves to highlight the fact that tradition represents

a collective effort that cannot be shielded from cross-cultural influence but rather consists of such cross-fertilization. Tradition is alive because it is living transmission and thus always to a certain degree a transposition. To hypostatize tradition as self-identical enclosure, unchangeable and perennial, would mean to misrecognize the very nature of tradition, which in the final analysis is nothing but the product of the social relations it embodies. Spinoza's accentuation of the affinity of certain thinkers like Epicurus and the Ecclesiastes, his taking sides with particular authorities in rabbinic tradition over and against others attests to Spinoza's open yet critical commitment to tradition. Rather than a monolithic understanding, Spinoza's is informed by a concept of tradition devoid of any normative hold.

Whether, in an ironic turn, he points out the recognition of false prophetic divination of destiny in Alexander or a philosophically well-taken view in Ecclesiastes, Spinoza's examination of the theological-political complex demonstrates a carefully articulated rebuttal against any attempts at hypostatizing any categorical distinction between Greek and Hebrew thought. This is no coincidence but remains continuous with Spinoza's rethinking of the task and function of philosophy as such. Taking a resolutely non-academic stance, Spinoza theorizes philosophy as a project that rethinks the distinction between theory and practice along resolutely different lines than do the conventions that define 'classic', i.e. Greek thought. For Spinoza, theoretical vision – as the *Ethics* concludes so suggestively – is to be comprehended as an eminently practical, i.e. practice-grounded activity. As a consequence, Spinoza's project can only be fully grasped if its critique of philosophy comes into view as a resolute departure from the frame of reference that informs the distinction between Athens and Jerusalem.

Raised in what was hailed as the "new Jerusalem" – Amsterdam – Spinoza's analysis of the Hebrew State (a centerpiece in his *Theological-Political Treatise*) reminded his contemporaries that there was no way for the Dutch Republic to claim succession to the Hebrew State whose statutes rested on the rationale of isolation and lack of commercial contact, the very *raison d'être* of the Netherlands.²¹ But no less was it possible to return to the culture, which had laid claim to being seen as the cradle of democracy, Greece. The function of Spinoza's discussion of the Hebrew State is twofold. On the one hand, the argument on the uniqueness of the Hebrew State stresses the impossibility of emulating it under changed circumstances. On the other, the historic uniqueness of the existence of the Hebrew State stands as

reminder of the de facto possibility of a democratic state and highlights the fact that the Biblical narrative carries politically crucial significance, albeit in a different way from that which is often ascribed to it. For Spinoza, the structure and organization of the Hebrew State prior to its corruption into an oligarchy run by the priest class showcases the conditions necessary for the realization of a democratic government. The Hebrew State's recognition of God as Sovereign and Moses and Aaron as mediator between God and the people of Israel who as a whole constitute, on Spinoza's account, their state via God as Sovereign make it clear that precisely because God is so central to the constitution of the Hebrew State he does not play any role other than the one the people of Israel ascribe to him. In other words, because the Hebrew State is a theocracy grounded in the Biblical concept of God it is the democracy of its citizens that constitutes this state. If the historic Hebrew State cannot be emulated, Spinoza's account suggests, it stands as critical reminder of the possibility of political democracy per se. By examining the implicit political theory of the Hebrew State as one that is radically opposed to the claims of political theology, Spinoza inverts the distinction of Athens and Jerusalem and posits Jerusalem, as it were, as the realization of Athens' claims to being a state of freedom and self-determination.²²

Mendelssohn's "Jerusalem"

If Mendelssohn is the classic that modern Jewish philosophy never had, the course of his reception history is an object lesson in the often dialectically ironic play between the projective power of the schema Athens-versus-Jerusalem and a philosopher's attempts at self-determination. If at every turn of his intellectual and philosophic career, Mendelssohn sought to address this conundrum with strategic sophistication and tactical aplomb, his audience often projected the critique that his interventions would articulate back onto its messenger. In ironic twists, Mendelssohn was accused of the very views he meant to highlight, challenge, question, and change. While he was "simply" content to lead the life of a philosopher, the history of his reception continues to be conflicted with regard to granting him this title, and remains rather preoccupied with debating whether he is to be categorized as a philosopher of Judaism or a Jewish philosopher; issues that in Mendelssohn's eyes would be rather pointless. For after all, Mendelssohn's line of argument out of its

way to present his work in terms of a philosophy free of any confessional or school affiliation, rather than as a sub-category or topical application of universals to the eternal particular, the Jew.

It is of some telling significance that Mendelssohn's first big international success that would endure and occasionally shadow his other work was his *Phaidon or on the Immortality of the Soul*. The book put German Enlightenment back on the European scene with a signal text that would command popular currency well into the 19th century. The book's stress on the argument of continuity to prove the enduring existence of the human soul is more than an update on Greek thought with the help of Leibniz and Wolff. Such a variant would have barely captivated the enthusiasm of 18th century Europe. The critical impetus that drives this modern version of Plato's *Phaidon* is its ethos of rethinking human nature as universal in an age of continuing religious conflict. To top the argument off, Mendelssohn's Socrates reflects features of his author and not without purpose. The success of the book earned Mendelssohn the attribute of "the German Socrates." Here a philosopher had ventured above and beyond the parochial borderlines of the religious and confessional conflict zones and reached the plane of philosophic argument that would draw from both Greek and Hebrew thought and was unafraid of doing so. In an appendix to the third edition, Mendelssohn argued this point with undeniable clarity. It is worthwhile to cite the full length of the passage to highlight the point he sought to make with such subtle eloquence:

Generally, my Socrates is not the Socrates of history. The historic Socrates lived in Athens, among a people who were the first to be concerned about true philosophy, and indeed at a time not for very long yet. Neither the language, nor cognitive minds [denkende Köpfe], were developed for philosophy yet. He was a student of philosophers who seldom glanced into their souls, who made everything, rather than themselves, the subject of their observations. Hence, the greatest darkness still must have reigned with respect to the doctrine of the human soul and its determinations. The brightest truths could merely be seen glimmering in the distance, without knowing the paths which led to them. A Socrates himself in such a time could do nothing more than direct his eyes steadily to these unique truths, and be guided in his moral conduct by them. The evidence of philosophical conceptions and their rational connection is an effect of time and the persistent efforts of many cognitive minds [nachdenkenden Köpfen], which look at the truth from different viewpoints, and thereby shed light on it from all angles.

After so many barbaric centuries, which followed on that beautiful dawn of philosophy, centuries, in which human reason must have been a slave to superstition and tyranny, philosophy has finally experienced better days. All areas of human knowledge have made considerable

progress through a successful observation of nature. We have learned to know our soul itself better on this path. Through a precise observation of the soul's actions and sufferings, more data have been gathered, and from it, it was possible to draw more correct conclusions, by means of a proven method. Through this improvement of philosophy, the noblest truths of natural religion have attained an evidence, which obscures all the insights of the ancients and throws them, as it were, back into the shadows. Philosophy has not yet reached its bright midday, which our grandchildren perhaps will catch sight of some day; but one must be very jealous of the achievements of his contemporaries, if one does not want to concede great merits to the moderns in respect to philosophy. I have never been able to compare Plato with the moderns, and to compare both with the muddled thinking of the Middle Ages, without giving thanks to the providence that I had been born during these happier days.

As I had to re-examine the immortality of the soul, and it caused me some trouble to differentiate faith from conviction, the thought occurred to me: by which arguments would a Socrates be able to prove immortality in our time to himself and his friends? A friend of reason, as he was, would most certainly have gratefully accepted from other philosophers, what in their doctrine is founded on reason, regardless of what country, or religious party they might belong to. In regard to the truths of reason, one can agree with someone, and nevertheless find various things unbelievable, which that person accepts on faith. Since the brotherly tolerance of the political world is commended so much today; the friends of truths must first foster brotherly tolerance among themselves. What concerns faith, we want to leave to the conscience and peace of mind of each individual, without appointing ourselves as judges on that point. Out of true charity we do not want to argue, where the heart speaks louder than reason and wants to have confidence in the All-Merciful God, that He will justify all of us, if our conscience justifies us. But we want to share in the truths of reason in a more than fraternal fashion, we want to enjoy them collectively, like the light of the sun. If it has, brother!, illuminated you, rather than me; be pleased, but not proud of it, and what would be even more inhuman, do not try to block the light from me.—

Who has brought this or that truth to light, was he of your fatherland, of your faith? Well! It is agreeable to stand in closer relationship with the benefactors of humanity. But, nevertheless, what your fellow citizens, your co-religionists created is not less than a benefit which is bestowed to us all. Greek wisdom benefited also the barbarians, and helped you, who only since recent times no longer deserve this name, to be freed from barbarity. Wisdom knows a universal fatherland, a universal religion, and even if it tolerates different forms of it [Abteilungen], it does not sanction the hostility and misanthropy of these differences, which you have laid as the foundations of your political institutions.— Thus I think, a man like Socrates would think in our days, and seen from viewpoint, the mantle of modern philosophy, which I hang on him, may not appear so unseemly.²³

The point was not lost on Mendelssohn's readers. While some could not agree more with the author, explaining the book's resounding popularity, others might have objected to the kind of bold advance Mendelssohn advocated. His dubbing as the German Socrates indicates not just agree-

ment but also the double-edged ambivalence this modern day gadfly provoked. The “German Socrates” remained at one and the same time the “juif de Berlin,” the Jew from Berlin.²⁴ The curious clash between the two epithets marks the conflicted situation Mendelssohn faced, as his move of advancing an alternative approach to the universal met with the opposition of those who sought to put such aspirations ‘in their place.’ As Mendelssohn sought to challenge the divide between Athens and Jerusalem the response often seemed an anxious shoring up of the very distinction he was questioning. Moreover, as a reactive response it would only inscribe the divide deeper whatever Mendelssohn would do to counter it. If Mendelssohn was recognized as a fixture in German culture and philosophy, philosophy continues to be challenged with placing him in its narrative. A casualty of the process of disciplinary differentiation that left his contribution out in the cold, Mendelssohn sought to leave the invidious distinctions between Athens and Jerusalem behind only to find himself perceived and judged on the basis of the categorical distinction he had questioned in the first place.

If contemporaries considered his preface to the German translation of Manasseh Ben Israel’s *Vindication of the Jews* and his *Jerusalem or on Religious Power and Judaism* as texts that addressed the general public rather than a coterie concerned with the emancipation of the Jews, these texts have now squarely fallen onto the side of the category “Jerusalem” despite the fact that both texts forcefully argue issues of a general concern. The scope of both texts is indeed far reaching with consequences that point well beyond issues of Jewish emancipation and civil equality. Readers like Kant and Hegel recognized the critical significance of Mendelssohn’s political writings. Kant commented on several occasions on points of disagreement. That Kant’s critical engagement, by the same token, also represented a sign of recognition was often overlooked.²⁵ In a similar way, Hegel read Mendelssohn attentively and with an interest that left significant traces.²⁶ In the eyes of Goethe who like Kant and Hegel was also cognizant of Mendelssohn’s literary criticism and his writings on aesthetics, Mendelssohn was a philosopher who did not warrant any qualifying epithet.²⁷ Amos Funkenstein has rightly pointed out the striking affinity of Mendelssohn’s to Marx’s line of argumentation in “On the Jewish Question,” a fact that suggests that the larger critical significance of Mendelssohn’s thought was not entirely lost on succeeding generations.²⁸

This makes it difficult to ignore the concern for the universal that drives Mendelssohn's thought and that rebuts any disjunctive logic on which an opposition between Athens and Jerusalem is constructed. Indeed, Mendelssohn's thought solicits its readers to rethink the problems that it poses in philosophical terms and thus requires us to revisit the project of philosophy in principal terms. Mendelssohn's argument aims at nothing less than that. But it also offers the attentive reader critical openings that delimit the philosophical perspective precisely where Mendelssohn seems to get the most particular. For Mendelssohn does not just demand or postulate freedom of thought and religion. Tolerance, we should not forget, represents the concern least on his mind.²⁹ Rather, Mendelssohn's approach engages in a critical examination of the principal terms that inform philosophical forms of legitimation of the social and political order. And on this level, his "Jewish writings" are pointedly philosophic interventions with a non-particularist agenda and outlook.

With his preface to Manasseh Ben Israel's *Vindication of Israel* Mendelssohn had meant to redress the main objections to Jewish emancipation and the granting of civil liberties as constituting a false argument that would not just affect the rights of repressed Jews but undermine the very constitution of the state, in principle.³⁰ Such a position was in Mendelssohn's eyes a variation on the spurious logic along which all forms of colonialism, abroad as well as domestically, were constituted.³¹ However, Mendelssohn's claim that his argument addressed a universal rather than merely parochial concern was challenged by a contemporary critic in a pamphlet that called Mendelssohn forth to explain himself in more detail.³² Called forth to respond, Mendelssohn composed his book-length answer *Jerusalem or on Religious Power and Judaism*. There has been remarkably little attention given to the meaning of the title that so suggestively positions its argument. If it playfully echoes *Phaidon or on the Immortality of the Soul*, one might instead detect a pair, pitted against each other in opposition. Read together, the two titles insinuate the possibility of imagining a road on which travel between Athens and Jerusalem assumes the importance of an imperative with regard to both faith and philosophy. And indeed, the final send up of the concluding words from Zechariah might suggest as much. Such a reading would not only suggest an inversion of the Athens-versus-Jerusalem distinction but its ultimate discharge.

Jerusalem or on Religious Power and Judaism confronts the reader with a title whose apparent simplicity leaves the attentive reader not

without puzzlement, an effect hardly incidental for an author celebrated for his stylistic accomplishments. The title points directly to the issue of the theological-political complex that stands at the center of the book but that the title reconfigures in an interesting manner. Depending on how we read the ‘and’ – as conjunctive or disjunctive particle – Judaism is either viewed as continuous with religious power or opposed to it. Thus, the title implies not “what is Judaism?” but, rather, the question of the meaning of religious power. And together, they constitute one side of the syntagmatic equation indicated by the ‘or.’ Jerusalem is posited as the comprehensive title that contains as its subordinates, religious power and Judaism.

It is a stylistic feature of Mendelssohn’s writing that he does not prescribe what to think to his readers, but instead prompts them to think for themselves. This is not just good Enlightenment practice but part of the ethics that informs the very core of Mendelssohn’s critical attitude. As a consequence, it is not until the concluding words of *Jerusalem* that Mendelssohn provides the clue for the book’s title. Not until having given the reader the opportunity to follow the whole of the book’s argument does Mendelssohn conclude on the note of the coda: “Love truth! Love peace!” – a direct quote from Zechariah 8, 19 that addresses Jerusalem as the city where one day the peoples of the world will join the Jewish people while each realizing the prophecy by preserving their particularity. Mendelssohn’s coy reference to Jerusalem, obvious to his contemporaries, signals a provocative reclaiming of Jerusalem but in a form that does not simply invert their claim. Rather, Mendelssohn’s coda suggests an alternative vision of universalism, a universalism that *Jerusalem* outlines in terms of its theoretical framework and grounding, as one that resists the compulsion of erasing particularity but recognizes it as the very condition and grounds that make the universal possible. Jerusalem, as a figure of speech and a concept, symbolizes in its prophetic anticipation the rich and complex process of negotiating both the particular, and a universal out of reach of any one particular’s hold and control. Its anticipatory vision embraces a Messianic weak force that was nonetheless often criticized as lacking in Mendelssohn’s “assimilationist” thought.

As a consequence, religious power comes into view as a variant of power that forces us to rethink the notion of power itself as a complex which, as Mendelssohn’s argument suggests, operates only in particular constellations. Power as an ontological substrate does not exist. Religious power then is a form of power that represents a particular instance of power but

in a way that highlights the incommensurability of actual power formations. Religious power stands for a power that calls for a different kind of theorizing than what the readings of the exponents of modern philosophic thought such as Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau had made current but one that Spinoza had so challengingly opposed and sought to rethink. Conceptually, Mendelssohn's implicit approach to theorizing power reconfigures the particular and universal in such a way that a top-down distinction no longer holds. Rather than conceptualizing power in terms of a form of entity or *dispositif*, Mendelssohn's emphasis on the functional aspect – what does not exist by itself but only in the context of specific forms of manifestation – serves as critical reminder that power as such does not exist but can only be described functionally as instantiation of particular relations, or as Spinoza would say “geometrically.” This argument unseats the hold of the categorical distinction between universal and particular as one whose validity must ultimately remain problematic.³³

As a consequence, Mendelssohn's conception of Judaism serves as part of an overall systematic approach that does not seek a state of exception for Judaism but figures it as a centerpiece of the project of rethinking the universal in an alternative way.³⁴ What has often been misdiagnosed as an apologetic or assimilationist attitude is, on a critical view, Mendelssohn's bold answer to received ideas of how to do philosophy. This may sit uncomfortably with the legend of Mendelssohn's attachment to the Leibniz-Wolffian school of thought which, despite the fact that the latter never existed, has not spared Mendelssohn from a view that continues to be dominant. If Mendelssohn meant to communicate his approach via a sophisticated negotiation with the Leibnizian conceptual framework and the Wolffian terminology as the period's *lingua franca*, which Kant acknowledged as Wolff's most significant contribution to modern philosophy as it prepared the grounds for Kant's intervention, its critical move yet awaits full recognition.

In this constellation, Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem* reclaims the Messianic moment in the name of a vision of Jewish tradition that – in the wake of centuries of invidious juxtapositions and comparisons – no longer allows that its message be construed in terms of a spurious either/or. Rather, and with a philosophically critical impetus, Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem* argues that universalism in modernity is only an option if it is conceived as open ended towards the future. Its messianic quality refuses any control or determination by any one particular over another, be it in the disguise of the

claim of the universal or an elected and “exemplary” particular. Instead, Mendelssohn’s concept of universality rests on relating the particular and the universal in terms of a continuous reciprocity, or more precisely in terms of their fundamental correlation.

Mendelssohn’s Jerusalem therefore does not replace one theologically charged vision with another, or exchange the heavenly for an earthly one, but moves beyond such oppositions to re-imagine an open, dialogic relationship where the universal is no longer predicated by any sort of abstraction from the particular but by its emancipation. Athens no longer lurks on the horizon as the other, opposite, or adversary, and vice versa neither does Jerusalem. From Mendelssohn’s vantage point, any such juxtaposition is grounded on false premises. Instead of a theory and practice of mutual exclusion, his Jerusalem – as allegory and title – imagines a more encompassing community of nations and peoples united in a vision of universality they can all claim individually as their own, realized on the basis of mutual recognition of one another as fully co-equal constituents of a cosmopolitan universe.

Hermann Cohen and Franz Rosenzweig

For Hermann Cohen and Franz Rosenzweig, the pressing issues were a far cry from any Athens or Jerusalem. The operational distinction they faced posed itself rather in terms of the opposition between the “German” and the “Jewish” as the grounds shifted from a theological to a political problematic often couched in cultural and national terms. The substitution of the opposition between German and Jewish identity for the one between Athens and Jerusalem brought home the point that it was less a question of juxtaposing a universal over and against a particular, than of an affair of negotiating two forms of particularities – or two different visions of universality. If the old patristic distinction divided the world into a superior sphere of faith and an inferior sphere of rationality, this distinction rested on a division of labor between the human cognitive faculties that conceded only limited validity to each. But the distinction between “German” and “Jewish” was achieved in framing difference by assigning normative validity to one side over the other, thus exposing the spurious grounds of the distinction. But unlike the patristic distinction that was topically limited, its secular counterpart cut across all aspects of

life. Culturally, politically, and nationally coded, the religious undertones assumed an eerie presence as they could no longer be openly addressed but were simply contained in cultural ciphers. If Hermann Cohen's bold move was to turn the tables and highlight the profound elective affinity between Germans and Jews as no coincidence, since the modernity of German culture owed its momentum to the reformatory impetus to tap the sources of Jewish tradition, Franz Rosenzweig recognized it as a conflict of the heart that would exert irresolvable but creative tension. Both saw the exemplarity of German culture and Jewish tradition as complementary where any choice of one over the other would mean to submit to what could only be a false alternative.

Just as Jewish tradition's historical origins were always already plural, as Cohen argued in *Religion of Reason of the Sources of Judaism*, German culture had multiple historical origins. The fact that one decisive one was Judaism not only made the two compatible but also crucially interconnected. Cohen's rethinking of origin was directly grounded in his philosophical approach to origin as a process and project rather than a fact. For Cohen, origin designates an anticipatory point in the movement of thought and conceptual construction. Greek and Jewish thought thus represent for Cohen not irreconcilable opposites but particular forms of thought that complement each other in the task of thinking the origin, i.e. the universal, as an open ended and future oriented project. For Cohen, in other words, it is "Athens" that needs "Jerusalem" and "Jerusalem" that needs "Athens." If for Cohen the prophetic and Messianic tradition contributes with its universal openness, Greek thought contributes with the terms of reason and its discourse of rationality. It is through their productive cross-fertilization that the concept of universality springs forth.

It is telling that Cohen does not employ the names of Athens and Jerusalem in addressing specific aspects of Greek culture and Jewish tradition. At no point is he willing to characterize them as monoliths pitted against each other. Instead he accentuates the aspects in which they interface and complement each other. Therefore the way Cohen conceives of it, the universal can never derive from just one historical origin and no historical origin can serve any form of instituting a universal claim, because origin is a result of the function of thought, not of history. There is an obvious tension in Cohen's fervent nationalism but it is kept in check conceptually with the non-unitary origin of the way he imagines any such nationalism and the way he distinguishes between nation and nationality.³⁵ Terminology

logically precarious, this distinction nevertheless signals a difference in Cohen's approach that is central to his critical argument. Unlike Freud, Cohen never felt an urge to visit Athens because Greek thought for him was no foreign territory. It is a place where he moved comfortably because rather than the false promise of a historical origin it provided him with the space for rethinking the origin philosophically.

In the case of Rosenzweig, Athens and Jerusalem are mapped in different dimensions. The very structure of *The Star of Redemption* can be addressed as a scheme to remap Athens and Jerusalem in a new way that overcomes the patristic deadlock. As Rosenzweig rethinks philosophy as a project that is grounded in a deep interface that taps into the traditions of Jewish thought and Greek, but also German philosophy, Athens and Jerusalem are neither options nor opposites but sites belonging to a topography that, unlike Cohen's, is a discontinuous one. But it is, on the other hand, this discontinuity that constellates them as reciprocally constitutive moments of Rosenzweig's project. Cohen, on the one hand, addressed the fallacy of the seemingly static spatial opposition of Athens to Jerusalem by highlighting the undercurrents that correlate the two in creatively formative ways. On the other hand, Rosenzweig's complexly multidimensional approach centering on a scheme of differences between Judaism, Christianity, and paganism resituated philosophic thought in ways that made the opposition between Athens and Jerusalem obsolete. In a way, Rosenzweig may well have been responding to the patristic challenge of the distinction with a deliberate refutation. If Judaism and Christianity were to be directly opposed but also therefore complementary in many ways, Christianity betrayed on Rosenzweig's view a link to paganism too intimate to effectively maintain a Christian opposition between Athens and Jerusalem. Judaism, on the other hand, lacking the fear of contact that would arise only later during the period of Christianization by internalization of patristic anxieties, had no intrinsic urge for such a distinction, an opposition that would run against the historical realities it experienced. For Rosenzweig, then, Athens and Jerusalem simply represented requisites of an old thinking that no longer had any purchase in modernity. Upholding this distinction would be tantamount to continuing exposure to an antiquarian passion that, ultimately, would be the hobbyhorse of paganism, i.e. an unreconstructed desire for an all-consuming universalism.

Zion, Messianic Symbol of Exile

If Christian theology had juxtaposed a terrestrial Jerusalem to the heavenly city, it seemed difficult for a post-Christian philosophy to understand that the prophetic and Messianic vision of Jerusalem was a vision that pointed beyond any opposition between heaven and earth. As a symbol for exilic hope, Jerusalem is not the place of origin that it never was. It is with pointed clarity that the origins of Jewish tradition are, as it were, “bamidbar,” in the desert, i.e. in exile and underway, or as Hermann Levin Goldschmidt notes: “Holy Land is everywhere.”³⁶ In other words, Jewish traditions’ origins are to be understood as in the making, “underway,” rather than as holdings of cultural possession. As point of orientation, the Messianic force of Zion consists precisely in its forward moving pull: it is no point of reference to which we could ever return, no stone to be uncovered, no point to stand or sit on, to possess and hold on to. If the old scenario had Athens dominate over Jerusalem, which was simply the theological transliteration of the real political relations sublimated into religious resentment, as Nietzsche would observe, Athens remained blissfully unaware of this. In fact it remained so unaware that its reincarnation in the German academic institution of the university and its successors throughout the Western world was unable to acknowledge Jerusalem as it was unable to acknowledge the existence of anything beyond its ken. The opposition of Athens versus Jerusalem is in the final analysis one that a particular vision of Jerusalem generated as it sought access to the polis. But that vision of Jerusalem came with the cost of ignoring crucially critical aspects of the discourse on Jerusalem in modern Jewish thought as it posited a conception curiously at odds with the line of argument that runs from Spinoza to Mendelssohn, Cohen, and Rosenzweig. Their argument was less anxious about recognition by a university that it could not help seeing in a dark light – an aspiration profoundly alien to these philosophers – as theirs was an argument about rethinking philosophy from the bottom up, an argument that for the sake of philosophy and not just religious diversity, the false distinction of the binary fixation of Athens and Jerusalem should no longer block the road to modernity. Maybe Heine had a critical point after all, when he surmised that the Messiah would arrive by train. But this probably would not be the Orient Express.

Notes

- 1 TERTULLIAN: *De præscriptione haereticorum*, ed. Erwin Preuschen, Tübingen: Mohr, 1910, rpt. Frankfurt: Minerva, 1968, 7: 9–13, 7.
- 2 TERTULLIAN: “On the Prescription against Heretics” in *The Writings of Quintus Sept. Flor. Tertullianus*, vol. 2 [Ante-Nicene Christian Library, vol. XV], trans. Peter Holmes, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1870, 9–10. For a critical discussion of the topos see also Martin KAVKA: *Jewish Messianism and the History of Philosophy*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- 3 LACTANTIUS: *Divine Institutes*, ed. Anthony Bowen and Peter Garnsey, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003. For Augustine see Floyd D. ANDERSON: “De Doctrina Christiana 2. 18. 28: The Convergence of Athens and Jerusalem” in *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 15.3/4 (1985):102–104.
- 4 Midrash Rabbah: *Genesis*, trans. H. Freedman, vol. 1, XXXVI, sec. 8, London: Soncino, 3ed, 1961, 294.
- 5 For a incisive discussion of the theme of Shem and Yafet see Orietta Ombrosi’s introduction to Orietta OMBROSI and Petar BOJANIC: *Tra Torah e Sophia. Orizzonti e frontiere della Filosofia ebraica*, Milano: Marietti, 2010. Ze’ev LEVY: *Between Yafeth and Shem: On the Relationship between Jewish and General Philosophy*, New York: Peter Lang, 1987, does not address the meaning of its title. See also Fackenheim’s suggestive comments in Emil L. FACKENHEIM: *Encounters between Judaism and Modern Philosophy*, New York: Basic Books, 1973, 3–6.
- 6 For the locus classicus see Leo Strauss’ 1967 text “Jerusalem and Athens: Some Preliminary Reflections” in Leo STRAUSS: *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy*, with an intro. by Thomas L. Pangle, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1983, 147–173. See also the contributions in David NOVAK (ed.): *Leo Strauss and Judaism: Jerusalem and Athens Critically Revisited*, Lanham, Maryland and London: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996.
- 7 Emil Fackenheim speaks tellingly of “the theme appearing on the scene” and of “the appearance of the theme ‘Athens and Jerusalem’ on the scene,” a phrase illuminating in its own terms. Cf. Emil FACKENHEIM, “Jewish Philosophy and the Academy” in Emil FACKENHEIM and Raphael JOSPE (eds.): *Jewish Philosophy and the Academy Madison*, Teaneck, and London: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press and Associated University Presses, 1996, 23–47, 27, and 29. The genealogy of the modern return of the distinction between Athens and Jerusalem still remains unclear. The publication of Moses HESS’ *Rome and Jerusalem* in 1862 represents a significant moment in the development of this “scene.” Lev SHESTOV’s *Athens and Jerusalem* (published 1938) indicates another corner moment. Shestov’s radically existentialist approach however takes the conception of a “Judaean-Christian philosophy” at face value and does not attend to the problem of the internal division of Jerusalem into Christian and Jewish sections. Shestov’s numerous references to the New Testament seem to complicate his argument further. Cf. Lev SHESTOV: *Athens and Jerusalem*, trans. with an introduction by Bernard Martin, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1966, 269 and 370–372. This period demarcates crucial developments in modern Jewish intellectual history where the

- grounds are laid for the modern distinction of Athens and Jerusalem. Thorleif BOMAN made a decisive contribution with his influential 1954 *Hebrew Thought compared with Greek* that appeared first in German and 1960 in English translation. These and other texts offer only a partial sense of the rich and continuing discussion of the place of Jews and Jewish tradition that defines the discourse on culture in the century from 1860–1960 that also served as defining constellation for Leo Strauss’ approach to the issue.
- 8 Athens was served by the Arlsberg-Orient-Express between 1930–1939 and 1945–1962.
 - 9 Since 1989 there even exists a company that runs its “American Orient Express.”
 - 10 For an illustrative account of the history of the Orient Express and some of its mundane passengers see Anthony BURTON: *The Orient Express: the History of the Orient Express Service from 1883 to 1950*, Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 2001.
 - 11 Heinrich HEINE: *Sämtliche Schriften*, ed. Klaus Briegleb, Munich: Hanser and Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2nd ed., 1975–1995, vol. 6.1, 648.
 - 12 “Die Eisenbahnen sind wieder ein solches providenciellles Ereignis, das der Menschheit einen neuen Umschwung gibt, das die Farbe und Gestalt des Lebens verändert; es beginnt ein neuer Abschnitt in der Weltgeschichte, und unsere Generation darf sich rühmen, daß sie dabei gewesen. Welche Veränderungen müssen jetzt eintreten in unserer Anschauungsweise und in unseren Vorstellungen! Sogar die Elementarbegriffe von Zeit und Raum sind schwankend geworden. Durch die Eisenbahnen wird der Raum getötet, und es bleibt uns nur noch die Zeit übrig. Hätten wir nur Geld genug, um auch letztere anständig zu töten!” HEINE: *Sämtliche Schriften*, vol. 5, 449.
 - 13 If Leo Shestov was unambiguous concerning his decision for Jerusalem and against Athens, Leo Strauss remained more conflicted. While Strauss like other historians of Jewish philosophy trained in the German academe followed German scholarship and its construction of Athens as the normative representative of Western rationality and cultural creativity, his relationship to both Athens and Jerusalem remained ambiguous throughout his life. Cf. David JANSSENS: *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Philosophy, Prophecy, and Politics in Leo Strauss’s Early Thought*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008.
 - 14 Yaacov SHAVIT: *Athens in Jerusalem: Classical Antiquity and Hellenism in the Making of the Modern Secular Jew*, trans. Chaya Naor and Niki Werner, London and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1997, 480.
 - 15 Sigmund Freud, „Brief an Romain Rolland (Eine Erinnerungsstörung auf der Akropolis)“ in FREUD: *Gesammelte Werke*, London: Imago, 1950 vol. 16, 250–257, 256.
 - 16 “Entfremdungen und Depersonalisationen gehören innig zusammen,” FREUD, 255.
 - 17 Ernest JONES: *Sigmund Freud: Life and Work*, London: Hogarth, 1955, vol. 2, 26f.
 - 18 For a critically incisive discussion of the essay and its claims see Nancy LEVENE: “Athens and Jerusalem: Myths and Mirrors in Strauss’ Vision of the West” in *Hebraic Political Studies* 3.2 (2008): 113–154.
 - 19 For a discussion of this issue see the chapter “Spinoza’s Smart Worm and the Interplay of Ethics, Politics, and Interpretation” in Willi GOETSCHEL: *Modern Jewish Philosophy: An Introduction*, New York: Fordham University Press, forthcoming.
 - 20 See Warren MONTAG: “Lucretius Hebraizant: Spinoza’s Reading of Ecclesiastes” in *European Journal of Philosophy* (forthcoming).

- 21 For a thoughtful discussion of the Dutch discourse of succession of the Hebrew State of the period and the significance of Spinoza's intervention in that discussion cf. Michael ROSENTHAL: "Why Spinoza Chose the Hebrews: The Exemplary Function of Prophecy in the *Theological-Political Treatise*," in *Jewish Themes in Spinoza's Philosophy*, eds. Lenn Goodman and Heidi Ravven, State University of New York Press, 2002, 225-260.
- 22 For a remarkably similar argument in Philo who argues that while the Greeks dreamt of a philosopher-king, the Jews had actually one, i.e. Moses, see PHILO: *De Vita Mosis*, book 2, 2–7, and Hindy NAJMAN's discussion in *Seconding Sinai: The development of Mosaic Discourse in Second Temple Judaism*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003, chapt.3, esp. 94-95.
- 23 Moses MENDELSSOHN: *Phädon, or on the Immortality of the Soul*, trans. Patricia Noble, New York: Peter Lang, 2007, 152–154. I have slightly changed the translation according to the German original. Cf. Moses MENDELSSOHN: *Phädon oder über die Unsterblichkeit der Seele*, Hamburg: Meiner, 1979, 150–152. The passage is from the appendix to the third edition that has not been translated in the contemporary English translation: *Phaedon; or, the Death of Socrates*, London: J. Cooper, 1789; rpt. New York: Arno, 1973.
- 24 Cf. also Miriam LEONARD: "Greeks, Jews, and the Enlightenment: Moses Mendelssohn's Socrates" in *Cultural Critique* 74 (2010): 183–199.
- 25 For the point that *Jerusalem* is one of the very few books Kant let stand in parts in his 1797 *Doctrine of Law*, see Hermann KLENNER: "Rechtsphilosophisches zur Kant: Mendelssohn-Kontroverse über das Völkerrecht," in *Moses Mendelssohn im Spannungsfeld der Aufklärung*, eds. Michael Albrecht and Eva J. Engel, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: F. Frommann, 2000, 101–18. Kant also shows his respect for Mendelssohn on numerous other occasions including in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, "What is Orientation in Thinking?"; "An Answer to the Question: 'What is Enlightenment?';" and "On the Common Saying: 'This May Be True in Theory, but It Does Not Apply in Practice.'" For a discussion of the enduring dialogue between Kant and Mendelssohn see the chapter "'An experiment of how coincidence may produce unanimity of thoughts': Enlightenment Trajectories in Kant and Mendelssohn" in Willi GOETSCHEL: *Modern Jewish Philosophy*.
- 26 As Derrida aptly notes: "Hegel holds a dialogue with Mendelssohn", or more precisely as the French has it "Hegel dialogue avec Mendelssohn." Jacques DERRIDA: *Glas*, trans. John P. Leavy, Jr. and Richard Rand, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1986, 51 and Jacques Derrida: *Glas*, Paris: Galilée, 1974, 61.
- 27 Cf. Abraham Mendelssohn's appreciation of Goethe's show of respect for his father in Abraham Mendelssohn's letter to Zelter, in Johann Wolfgang GOETHE: *Werke*, ed. Ernst Beutler, Zürich: Artemis, 1949, vol. 22: *Goethes Gespräche*, part 1, 256.
- 28 Amos FUNKENSTEIN: *Perceptions of Jewish History*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993. See also Heine's eloquent praise of Mendelssohn that became paradigmatic for the way Mendelssohn would be viewed, HEINE: *Sämtliche Schriften*, vol.3, 583-585
- 29 See Mendelssohn's letter written at the time of the composition of *Jerusalem*: "Great thanks for any form of tolerance so long as one still works towards the unification

- of belief.” See Mendelssohn’s letter to Herz Homberg, 4 October 1873, Moses MENDELSSOHN: *Gesammelte Schriften: Jubiläumsausgabe*, eds. Ismar Elbogen, Julius Guttman, Eugen Mittwoch in association with Fritz Bamberger, Haim Borodianski, Simon Rawidowicz, Bruno Strauß, and Leo Strauß, continued by Alexander Altmann in association with Haim Bar-Dayan, Eva J. Engel, Leo Strauß, Werner Weinberg, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1929–32; Breslau: S. Münzs, 1938; Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: F. Frommann, 1971ff, vol. 13, 83. Cf. also Mendelssohn’s letter to Homberg after publication of *Jerusalem* where he calls the phenomenon of “Toleranzgleißnerei” or “the the glittering display of tolerance” more dangerous than “open persecution.” (Mendelssohn to Homberg 1 March 1784, *ibid.*, 179).
- 30 As Mendelssohn puts this point so eloquently: “And fortunate will it be for us, if that cause become at once ours; if there be no such thing as urging the rights of mankind, without at once claiming ours.” Preface to Manasseh BEN ISRAEL’s *Vindiciae Judaearum* in Moses MENDELSSOHN: *Jerusalem: A Treatise on Ecclesiastical Authority and Judaism*, trans. M[oses] Samuels [recte: Samuel], London: Longman, Orme, Brown, and Longmans, 1838 and reprinted Bristol: Thoemmes, 2002, vol. 1, 80; cf. MENDELSSOHN: *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 8, 5.
- 31 For Mendelssohn’s argument on the “Jewish colony” see Willi GOETSCHEL: “Voices from the ‘Jewish Colony’: Sovereignty, Power, Secularization, and the Outside Within” in *International Relations and Non-Western Thought*, ed. Robbie SHILLIAM, New York and London: Routledge, 2010, 64–84.
- 32 The author August Friedrich CRANZ remained anonymous: *Das Forschen nach Licht und Recht in einem Schreiben an Herrn Moses Mendelssohn auf Veranlassung seiner merkwürdigen Vorrede zu Manasseh Ben Israel*, 1782, reprinted in MENDELSSOHN: *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 8, 73–87. For Samuel’s translation see his edition, 117–145.
- 33 See for a detailed discussion of Spinoza’s and Mendelssohn’s rethinking of power, Willi GOETSCHEL, “Mendelssohn and the State” in *Modern Language Notes* 122:3 (April 2007): 472–92.
- 34 Cf. also the chapter “An Alternative Universalism: Jerusalem or on Religious Power and Judaism” in Willi GOETSCHEL: *Spinoza’s Modernity: Mendelssohn, Lessing, and Heine*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004, 147–169.
- 35 Hermann COHEN: *Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums*, Cologne: Joseph Melzer, 2nd ed. 1959, 421.
- 36 Hermann Levin GOLDSCHMIDT: “*Der Rest bleibt*”: *Aufsätze zum Judentum, Werke* vol. 4, Vienna: Passagen, 1997, 21–22 and Goldschmidt, “Heiliges Land ist überall” in: *Weil wir Brüder sind: Jüdische Besinnung für Juden und Christen*, Stuttgart: Katholisches Biblewerk, 1975, 185–198.