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Silence Inscribed: Derrida Reading Rosenzweig, While Reading Kierkegaard

Kierkegaard's distinction between the tragic hero as an ethical figure and the knight of faith who goes beyond the realm of ethics and language has been challenged by a number of thinkers rooted in the Jewish tradition, such as Buber, Levinas and – most elaborately – Rosenzweig, all of whom assumed that ethics, religion and language cannot be separated. My suggestion is that Derrida's analysis of Kierkegaard as expounded in *The Gift of Death* should be read against the background of this tradition. Namely, his reading shows its full potential only when we see it as the result of a mutual deconstruction of Kierkegaard and Rosenzweig. In particular, Derrida inscribes the moment of silence, characteristic of true religious existence for Kierkegaard, *into* the dense texture of the linguistic and communal order of religious life as envisioned by Rosenzweig. In other words, while belonging to the tradition of Jewish criticism of Kierkegaard, Derrida uses Kierkegaard to balance certain inadequacies and dangers inherent in this criticism that are best exemplified by Rosenzweig. The result is yet another vision of our philosophically abused father Abraham and yet another vision of religious community: a deconstructed – which does not mean destroyed – synagogue.