

Article

Franz Rosenzweig on Divine Love and on the Love of Enemies: Complications of Agape in the Secularized World

Nadav S. Berman

Faculty of Law, University of Haifa, Mount Carmel, Haifa 3498838, Israel; nsb@law.haifa.ac.il

Abstract: Love is a keystone in Franz Rosenzweig’s philosophy, which reaffirmed Judaism’s emphasis on vital, relational love. What “love” exactly means, however, is controversial. In the Christian context, love is often denoted by *Agape*—which implies (1) that “God is Love”, (2) that love is universal, impartial, and rather endorses the sinner; and (3) that humans should practice and emulate such love. The ultimate expression of *Agape* is the commandment to love one’s enemy, which is rooted in the *Sermon on the Mount* (Matthew 5:44). This essay considers Rosenzweig’s understanding of *Agape*, at the implicit level (since the coining by Anders Nygren of Christian love as “*Agape*” became widespread only after Rosenzweig’s death). This essay opens by contextualizing Rosenzweig within political theology, in particular vis-à-vis Schmitt. Secondly, it considers Rosenzweig’s approach to *Agape* in the sense of divine love, and in the sense of the love of enemy. Concerning divine love, Rosenzweig criticized theological *Agapism* (“God is love”) which equates God with love, and hence makes love into a dogma or noun, rather than an action or verb, thus depriving divinity’s personal loving agency. Concerning the *agapic* love of enemy, Rosenzweig discredits its Christian version (for being imperialistic), and advocates its Jewish version of accepting divine judgement. His surprising advocacy of the love of enemies may result from Rosenzweig’s opposition to Gnosticism, which excludes the ‘good God’ from involvement in the physical world. The essay’s conclusion reflects on the role of *Agape* and its pragmatist versions in the post-secular world of the 21st century and conveys Rosenzweig’s pragmatist contribution in this regard, of recognizing the significance of worldliness and togetherness.



Citation: Berman, Nadav S.. 2024. Franz Rosenzweig on Divine Love and on the Love of Enemies: Complications of *Agape* in the Secularized World. *Religions* 15: 806. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15070806>

Academic Editors: Ronen Pinkas and Elad Lapidot

Received: 15 May 2024
Revised: 21 June 2024
Accepted: 25 June 2024
Published: 2 July 2024



Copyright: © 2024 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Keywords: Franz Rosenzweig; divine love; human love; love of enemy; *Agape*; Anders Nygren; secularization; Carl Schmitt; political theology

1. Introduction

This essay explores the approach of Franz Rosenzweig (Kassel, Germany 1886—Frankfurt, 1929) to divine love with a special emphasis on its Christian context (*Agape*) and its notion of the love of enemy.¹ We shall see that Rosenzweig thought that strict *Agapism*, which identifies God with love in a propositional or dogmatic manner, might deprive the vitality of God, humans, and love itself. At the same time, Rosenzweig remarks upon a poem written by the medieval Jewish thinker and poet Judah HaLevi (Toledo 1075—Jerusalem, 1141) on divine love as involving enmity, in a surprising way that might seem *agapic*, but ultimately predicates on old Jewish motifs. This observation will invite a comparison between Rosenzweig and the German jurist Carl Schmitt, who seemingly walked an opposite path—from Christian love to a binary division (a la Joshua 5:13) between friends and foes. However, Schmitt’s views on Jews and on Judaism are marked by intense negative prejudices.² To account for this complicated and perhaps surprising juxtaposition, we will start by remarking on political theology.

1.1. Political Theology and the Transformations of Virtues and Vices

The discipline of Political Theology examines complicated processes of how ideas migrate from religious traditions into the secularized world, and on several meanings of secu-

larization (Casanova 1994). The term political theology is associated predominantly with Carl Schmitt (Plettenberg, Germany 1888–1985), to whom we turn soon. A good way to present the complications of secularization is by citing the following paragraph from the essayist Gilbert Keith Chesterton, who traced the origins of the modern crisis in the Reformation:

The modern world is not evil; in some ways the modern world is far too good. It is full of wild and wasted virtues. When a religious scheme is shattered (as Christianity was shattered at the Reformation), it is not merely the vices that are let loose. The vices are, indeed, let loose, and they wander and do damage. But the virtues are let loose also; and the virtues wander more wildly, and [inflict their] damage. The modern world is full of the old Christian virtues gone mad. The virtues have gone mad because they have been isolated from each other and are wandering alone. (Chesterton 1908, pp. 38–39)

According to Chesterton, the modern project is full of good intentions, but it often ignores the ideational force of traditional virtues and vices as well as their fragile holistic textures. Paradoxically, Chesterton asserts, it is not necessarily the *vices* whose wandering in secularized societies is most hazardous, but the virtues. When they travel unleashed in the modern world, most people are not aware that these virtues have a history and religious contexts, and might be distorted. The more powerful an idea is, the more important it is to mediate it and open it to pragmatic public reasoning (Berman 2022b).³ Steven Kepnes illuminates another aspect of the religious–secular predicament:

Modernity was and continues to be, in its transformed postmodern stage, an age of revolutions with promised utopias. [...] The lesson of the political and philosophical revolutions of modernity and postmodernity is that it is impossible to move forward without taking the past with you. Taking the past into the future for the sake of the future, however, requires creative strategies—strategies of repetition, interpretation, and mediation—that sublimate and re-present the past as a usable past. (Kepnes 2007, p. 9)

“The Past [...] Stuck like Glue [...] and Caused an Excess Weight”

This problematic (or perhaps supersessionist) approach in modernism toward the religious past, was addressed by Rosenzweig himself, who contends that Friedrich Schleiermacher played a pivotal role in developing a secularization system that was dedicated “to denying the permanent value of the past and to anchoring the always present experience of the feeling of belief in the eternal future of the moral world” (Rosenzweig 2005, p. 110, which translates Rosenzweig [1921] 1988, p. 111; the references to *The Star* are henceforth abbreviated: *The Star* 110/*Der Stern* 111). The religious past, insists Rosenzweig,

[W]hich was overly encumbered with miracles and now suspicious, could be thrown overboard, and it could be imagined that the ship of faith, already dangerously shaken without this ballast, yet could still safely cross the sea of the present. But this does not say that what was sunk also really—sank. Far from pleasing theology by really sinking, the past stuck like glue to the exterior of the vessel from which it had been thrown and caused an excess weight, worse than previously when it had been stowed inside, which is the proper nature of things. (*The Star* 110–11/*Der Stern* 111–12)

To Rosenzweig’s mind, the modern secularization project, Schleiermacher being one of its pioneers, tried to dispose of an intuitive sense of tradition, and gave birth to unintended matters. This essay suggest that one such virtue, which in Chesterton’s words was “let loose” in the modern world, and in Rosenzweig’s words survived the attempts to throw it to the sea, is the Christian *Agape*.

Despite its foundational role in Christian theology (Nygren 1953), *Agape* is not often discussed in scholarly engagements with political theology, virtue epistemology, and related discussions. *Agape*, to put it briefly, is the threefold assertion that (1) *God is love*

(1 John 4:8); that (2) this *love is universal*, impartial, and endorses the sinner; and (3) that the *supreme human vocation is practicing and emulating agapic love*. Agape has its basis in the Hebraic instruction of neighbor love (Leviticus 18:19, see [Mendes-Flohr 2007](#)), though its radical or ultimate expression is the commandment to love one's enemy, in the *Sermon on the Mount* (Matthew 5:44). As we shall see below, Agape and its implications are disputed among and appropriated by Christians, but also by Jews, and at an implicit level Agape is relevant for every human being, Abrahamic or other. In what follows, we consider these issues in the context of Rosenzweig's philosophy of love.

1.2. Rosenzweig within the Thicket of Political Theology, War and Love

Rosenzweig was not a political theologian in the sense this term received following Carl Schmitt's 1922 book *Politische Theologie* (political theology). Schmitt had famously claimed in this book ([Schmitt 2005](#), p. 36) that all our pregnant or significant political concepts, despite modernity's presumption of complete novelty, are secularized and eventually imported from the theological domain. Modern sovereignty discourses are thus recapitulating old patterns of authority. As Samuel Hayim Brody writes, "For Schmitt, 'political theology' meant that no matter how modern and secular a political concept might seem, if we analyze its intellectual history and trajectory, we will discover that it is a transformed version of a theological concept. Schmitt thought this was especially true of concepts related to the legitimation of authority." ([Brody 2018](#), p. 3). Schmitt famously defined sovereignty as the ability to declare war and the state of emergency. He thus defined in his *The Concept of the Political* ([Schmitt 1996](#)) the inner realm of the political by sharply dividing between a friend and an enemy. Schmitt thus suspends or annuls the agapic dictate, by restricting love to the private rather than the public domain (see Schwab's remark in [Schmitt 1996](#), p. 29).

On Schmitt's side, I am not aware of any intellectual engagement he had with Rosenzweig; Raphael Gross, in his work on Schmitt and the Jews ([Gross 2007](#), p. 121) mentions Rosenzweig only in passing. As for Rosenzweig, I do not know of any explicit remark he made on Schmitt; it also plausible to assume that Rosenzweig would endorse Buber's democratic ethos of *Theopolitics*. What can be said of Rosenzweig vis-a-vis Schmitt? Among many oppositions to Schmitt's conceptualization of political theology, we may mention that of Rosenzweig's close friend and colleague, Martin Buber. Brody makes the following observation: "Buber rarely uses the term 'political theology,' but he frequently uses the term *Theopolitik* (theopolitics), a word that seems at first as though it might mean the same thing. However, I follow Christoph Schmidt's belief that for Buber, the term 'theopolitics' is intended to function as a deep inversion of 'political theology,' a conceptual attack on Schmitt and what he stands for." ([Brody 2018](#), p. 3)

Rosenzweig, for his part, addressed religious tradition without secularizing it (see [Bensussan 2013](#), p. 130); at the same time, he was not a conservative political thinker in the sense of ascribing divine properties to human rulers. Rosenzweig, however, was not free of the modern vicissitudes of secularization. His approach to both philosophy and religion is thus a subject of recent scholarly discussions in political theology and implicit juxtapositions between him and Schmitt in the context of WWI and its aftermath ([Cotesta 2015](#); [Alonso 2021](#)). Rosenzweig should of course be contextualized within the theological battles of the Weimar Republic (see [Lazier 2008](#)), and within broader schemes of political theology. Through the influence of his combat experience in WWI, Rosenzweig indeed wrote ([Rosenzweig 1984](#), pp. 61–124, 313–68) about war as part of a dialectical and even prophetic process of world-unification ([Alonso 2021](#)), which has a redemptive potential (see [Pollock 2004](#); [Herskowitz 2024](#)). However, Bruce [Rosenstock](#) (2010, p. 262) contended that "Rosenzweig is clear that redemption will not be achieved through war", whereas "Schmitt insists that only war can defend the hope of redemption against the hubristic drive of a sinful, atheistic humanity." (In Section 2.3, below, we return to a comparison of Rosenzweig and Schmitt). As in the case of Rosenzweig's approach to death, which is ultimately pro-life (see [Turner and Berman 2022](#)) and thus very different from, say, that

of Schopenhauer and Heidegger, Rosenzweig's approach to war was not a mere celebration of bloodshed; his life-affirming approach—similar to that of Hans Jonas and many others—emphasizes world preservation and repair. When Rosenzweig wrote about the love of enemies, he was by no means charmed—as were other WWI-era thinkers such as Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak HaCohen Kook—by the phenomenon of war. Against this background, let us consider Rosenzweig's approach to Agape in its senses of divine love and of the love of enemies.

2. Rosenzweig on Divine Love and on the Love of Enemies

Love is a keystone in Rosenzweig's philosophy. It binds together his conceptual triad of God, the human creature, and the world, through the relational triad of revelation, creation, and redemption. Love played a pivotal role in Rosenzweig's philosophical attempt in *The Star* to revitalize Jewish tradition within and against the totalitarian trajectory found in German Idealism (esp. in Hegel) and against the stark secularization waves of early 20th century modernism. In short, Rosenzweig strived to reaffirm Judaism's emphasis on a relational and ever-renewing covenant with God.

The concept of *Agape*, or divine love, is central in Christian theology, and became foundational in the 20th century due to Anders Nygren's *Agape and Eros*, which portrayed a sharp distinction between these two motifs. To Nygren's mind, Christianity is predicated on *Agape*, which is categorically different from *Eros*, "heavenly" as it may be: "there is no way, even not that of sublimation, which leads from *Eros* to *Agape*" (Nygren 1953, p. 52). To Nygren's mind, *Agape* is universal, impartial, disinterested, self-giving (as in Jesus Christ) and ultimately moves top-down: "it must be spontaneous and unmotivated, uncalculating, unlimited and unconditional [...] *Agape* is God's way to man" (Nygren 1953, pp. 91, 118).

Nygren's work was originally published in Swedish in the early 1930s and has been translated into English by the late 1930s, so Rosenzweig, who died in 1929, was not aware of Nygren's coining "Agape" for what has been previously called "Christian love" or *Christliche liebe* (e.g., by Nietzsche). Juxtaposing Rosenzweig with *Agape*, then, is only at the *implicit* level. Yet this exploration is important, since the signified phenomenon behind the signifier "Agape" clearly existed before Nygren. We start (Section 2.1) with a brief of Rosenzweig's critique of agapic, divine love as formulated in the idiom "God is love", then (Section 2.2) narrow down the particular sense of *Agape* as the "love of enemy" and consider Rosenzweig's commentary on one poem by Halevi, then (Section 2.3) discuss the ideational relationship between Rosenzweig and Schmitt concerning the love of enemies, and then propose a conclusion (Section 2.4).

2.1. Rosenzweig on/against Agapic Love

Love, as it is said, is central to Rosenzweig's dialogical thinking. This emotion is also pivotal in Western civilization. Simon May (2011, p. 4) writes: "In the wasteland of Western idols, only love survives intact". But love remains a highly complex concept, often mutated, secularized, used and abused. Agapic love, thus, merits close attention.

Rosenzweig expounds on love especially in Part II, Books I–II, of his magnum opus *The Star of Redemption* (*Der Stern* 123–28/*The Star* 103–220). He presents love as attentive, ever-present and ever-exposed to life, and hence vulnerable to refusal, disappointment, and failure.⁴ In accordance with biblical theology, Rosenzweig assumes a connection between God's love and human love; humans ought to emulate the divine flow of love and plenitude love.⁵ But what kind of love exactly is God's love? Rosenzweig insists that "Love knows only the present, it lives only out of the present, aspires only to the present" (*Der Stern* 174/*The Star* 169). Love is erotic and particular, not universal in the ex-personal sense; it is passionate, not disinterested.

That is why Rosenzweig emphasizes the *Song of Songs* and views it as a summit of the Jewish work of love, as "*Kernbuch der Offenbarung*" (*Der Stern* 225/*The Star* 217), namely, the "focal-book of revelation" (Mendes-Flohr 2015, pp. 95–96). The *Song of Songs* (*Hohe*

Lied, literally: the high/sublime song) is for Rosenzweig a text which is the “most eloquent statement in the Hebrew Bible on the meaning of revelation, of the divine-relation” (Mendes-Flohr 2015, p. 95; see also Greenberg 1996; Turner 2014). Rosenzweig’s attraction to the *Song of Songs* coheres with his interest in Judah Halevi’s poems, which often express friendship, passion (*heshek*), and longing.⁶ In Nygren’s terms, Halevi highlights *eros* rather than *agape*. Halevi enabled Rosenzweig to return to the ancient Hebraic Scripture and to its vivid or Dionysian ethos (Benjamin 2009, pp. 65–102). Motivated by the need to mediate *agape* with *eros*, Rosenzweig criticizes the Johannine, agapic principle that “God is love”, in the third part of *The Star*, toward its conclusion, where Rosenzweig states:

What we experience is that God loves, not that God is love [*Daß Gott liebt, erfahren wir, nicht daß Gott die Liebe ist*]. In the love, he draws too near to us for us still to say: he is this or that. In his love, we experience only that he is [...] but not what he is. The what, the essence, remains hidden. It hides precisely by revealing itself.
(*Der Stern* 424/*The Star* 403–4)

Love, then, is an *attribute* of God, and more so an *action attribute*, and should not be equated with divinity, as in the agapic formula “God is love”. Rosenzweig is possibly concerned that the agapic description of God is turning divinity into a dogmatic object, rather than a relational persona, at the expense of God’s agency. It should be noted that Christian theologians are well acquainted with this issue about the *strict* versions of Agape. Pragmatist Christian theologians since St. Origen, Paul Tillich, Martin Cyril D’Arcy, Nicholas Wolterstorff, Jean-Luc Marion, and many others, hold (contra Nygren and Kierkegaard) that Agape must be mediated with Eros and with Nomos: not only at the human normative level, but at the theological level (since our aim here is Rosenzweig, space is limited for engaging in an in-depth exploration of Christian responses to Rosenzweig or to the normative lessons of the Sermon on the Mount).

Strict agapism has its influence on the normative sphere. Non-erotic images of divine love tend to create a God-idea which is full in Himself, and thus works top-down. Such visions of Agape emphasize divine grace, and leaves the human creature scarce room for agency (on Luther’s version of agapic love as characterized by such passivity, see Simon May 2011, pp. 87–91).⁷ The risk goes further: even God risks losing His personhood once squeezed too tight with Love, or in other words, once love is deified. In such constellation, God seems like yet another component of the pantheistic All or universe. This may be the source of Rosenzweig’s discomfort with Spinoza’s Pantheism, and with some conceptions of divine love, e.g., Hegel’s idea of the Oneness of divine love and the complete immersion of the human self “in the All of life limitless in the infinite” (see the citation and remark by (Pollock 2014, p. 169, n. 44)). Rosenzweig’s pragmatist insistence on freedom and on the idea of the *possible*⁸ made him worry about making divine love into the great chain—or handcuffs—of being. Rosenzweig’s pragmatist trajectories were highlighted by Hilary Putnam (Putnam 1999, p. 33), Benjamin Pollock (2021), and Cass Fisher (Fisher 2016, p. 353, regarding pragmatists such as Nicholas Rescher), who highlighted his worldly and anti-dogmatic approach, which is yet metaphysically rooted and driven.

Rosenzweig further problematizes the universal resonance of Agape when writing that “God always loves only whom and what he loves; but what separates his love from an “all-love” [*Allliebe*] is only a “not-yet” [*Noch-nicht*]; it is only “not yet” that God loves everything besides what he already loves” (*Der Stern* 183/*The Star* 178). This hovering component, of the “not-yet” and of future tense, is vital for Rosenzweig in order to defend the idea of possibility. A full realization of anything is, by definition, beyond human reach, and beyond the conditions of this world.

In passing, we note that Rosenzweig was, for the same reason, worried about the identification of God with truth. Namely, to save the living cosmos from rigidity (or ‘freezing’), to save the human mind from the tyranny of hyper-rationalistic (rather than pragmatist) Idealism, and to save God from the atomist or pagan worldview. Rosenzweig insisted: “Truth is not God. God is truth [*Die Wahrheit ist nicht Gott. Gott ist die Wahrheit*]. [...] Not

truth itself is enthroned above reality, but God, because he is truth. Because truth is his seal, he can be One above the All and One of reality. Truth is the scepter of his reign.” (*Der Stern* 429/*The Star* 408; see the comments by Elliot R. Wolfson 2014, pp. 45–47).

Loyal to his praxis-orientedness, Rosenzweig amends or takes the sting out of strict agapism, and emphasizes that “neighbor love” as we know it from Leviticus 18:19, which pertains to flesh-and-blood human beings: it necessitates an egalitarian vision of humanity, as mandated by the biblical principle of *imago Dei* (or the createdness of all human beings in God’s image, see Rosenzweig’s remarks in *The Star* 234, 252–8, 278). In this crucial sense, God’s impartial care for humanity (and not only for the people of Israel) is constitutive of the very becoming into a person out of the otherwise chaotic surrounding world (*Der Stern* 267/*The Star* 257; cf. with Gordon 2003, p. 216). For Rosenzweig, a pragmatist universalism was not conceived as foreign to Judaism.

2.2. Rosenzweig on the (Agapic) Love of Enemies

In the previous section we saw that Rosenzweig was critical about theological Agape. What did he think of the normative agapic precept of the love of enemies, which (as said above) has its origin in the Sermon on the Mount? As Wayne Cristaudo remarks in the context of Rosenzweig and war, “Perhaps the most anti-natural injunction of the New Testament [...] is the commandment to love one’s enemies. Enemies are naturally those who threaten our very existence—the extinction of the enemy is thus the most natural thing in the world [...] the injunction to love the enemy [...] awakens us to a reality that is contrary to what appears to be the case” (Cristaudo 2014, pp. 77–78). However, as Barry Dov Walfish observes, “Love of enemies is not something that is specifically mandated in the HB/OT [Hebrew Bible/Old Testament] and consequently is not a commandment in Judaism” (Allington et al. 2019). As we shall see below, Rosenzweig thought a bit differently.

To Rosenzweig’s mind, the Sermon on the Mount deserves serious consideration rather than ridicule, lest Christianity would be depicted narrowly (similarly to a prevalent simplistic caricature of Judaism as merely ‘legalistic’).⁹ Agape, thus, need not be simply excluded from Judaism’s axiological horizon. By considering agapic ideas, Rosenzweig followed his teacher, Hermann Cohen, who thought that “hatred is always wanton hatred” (or *sinn’at hinnam*). Cohen insisted, in a clear reference to the New Testament, that “the Old Testament does not contain this command” (Cohen 1995, p. 451), but he believed hate and hatred could be abolished (Cohen 1995, p. 452). Motivated by Spinoza’s contention in chapter 17 of the *Tractatus Theologico Politicus* concerning the Hebrews’ hatred of other nations, Cohen sought to free Judaism from this charge (see the discussion by Myriam Bienenstock 2018). Cohen, in his last years, witnessed WW1, and so did Rosenzweig. But both of them did not experience WW2 and the Holocaust, and both ‘were privileged by God not to see the atrocities of the Shoah’ (as Aviezer Ravitzky used to say of Rabbi A.Y.H. Kook). As we turn to consider Rosenzweig’s address of the love of enemy, this alleged evil-blindness should be taken into consideration.

A fascinating case study for Rosenzweig’s approach to the agapic love of enemies, is found in his translation of Rabbi Judah Halevi’s poem “מֵאֵזוּ מְעוֹן הָאֱלֹהִים הָיִיתָ” (Thou hast been our dwelling-place, in allusion to Psalms 90:1). Here is Halevi’s Hebrew poem, and its German translation by Rosenzweig, as well as an English translation of it:

<p>Loving One’s Enemies Of old you’ve been the heavenly vest of love, my loving settled with you in the nest. Angry words of my enemy, I enjoy them, for Your sake; Leave him—he will pressure him whom you have long pressured. Your enemy learned Your anger: that’s why I love him; for his fist meets Your blow head on. If You would cast me away, on that day I would cast myself away, how could I wish the best for him, whom You cast away! Until some day Your anger disappears and You send salvation to the remnant of the heirs redeemed by You. (Rosenzweig 2000a, p. 196)</p>	<p>Feindesliebe Von eh warst Du der Liebe Himmelsveste/mein Lieben nistete bei Dir im Neste. Scheltworte meines Feinds, sie freun mich, Deinethalb/laß ihn—sein Druck preßt, den dein Druck längst preßte. Es lernte Deinen Grimm der Feind: drum lieb ich ihn/den seine Faust trifft Deines Schlags Gebreste. Verwarfst du mich, den Tag verwarf ich selber mich/wie gönnt’ ich dem, den du verwarfst, das Beste! Bis einst dein Groll vergeht und Du Erlösung schickst/des einst von Dir erlösten Erbes Reste. (Rosenzweig 1927, pp. 108/233)</p>	<p>מֵאָז מֵעוֹן הָאֱהָבָה הָיִיתָ מֵאָז מֵעוֹן הָאֱהָבָה הָיִיתָ תְּנוּ אֶהְיֶה בְּאִשְׁרֵי תְּנִיתָ תּוֹכְחוֹת מְרִיבֵי עֲרְבוּ לִי עַל-שְׁמִי עֲזַבְתֶּם יָעֲנוּ אֶת-אִשְׁרֵי עֲנִיתָ לְמַדוּ תְּרוֹנָה אוֹיְבֵי נֶאֱהָבְתֶּם כִּי רָדְפוּ חֲלָל אִשְׁרֵי הַכִּיתָ מִיּוֹם בְּזִיתִנִּי בְּזִיתִנִּי אָנִי כִּי לֹא אֶכְבֵּד אֶת-אִשְׁרֵי בְּזִיתָ עַד יַעֲבֹר-נָעַם וְתִשְׁלַח עוֹד קְדוּת אֶל-גְּתֻלְתֶּךָ זֹאת אִשְׁרֵי פְדִיתָ. (cited in Rosenzweig 2011, p. 272)</p>
---	--	---

We cannot discuss here the poetic qualities of Helavi’s poem, nor expound on Rosenzweig’s translation of this poem vis-a-vis its biblical allusions (see Schwarz’s notes in Rosenzweig 2011, pp. 272–73). Our focus here is Rosenzweig’s remarks on this poem. Here is an English translation of his commentary, with references to the German original:

One does as little justice to the dictum “Love your enemies”, [*Liebet eure Feinde*] from the Sermon on the Mount [*Bergpredigt*], as one does to other great realities if one views it as an ethical demand and thus from the point of view of unreality. The Christian’s love for his enemies [*Die christliche Feindesliebe*] is a reality [*Wirklichkeit*]—wherever it cannot be anything else. And it enters this state of not being able to be anything else wherever the church or an individual obeys Christianity’s original command: to missionize [*zu missionieren*; (Glatzer 1972, p. 348), translates: “the proselytize”]. Loving one’s enemies here becomes the most powerful weapon for world conquest: the enemy is loved as a future brother [*künftige Bruder*].

So Jewish love for an enemy must be something totally different [*ganz anders*¹⁰] if it is to be real. For here the reality is a community that has been granted not the blessings of victory [*Gnaden des Siegens*] but instead those of defeat [*Unterliegens begnadeten*]. Thus love for one’s enemies arises here at the point that Yehuda Halevy reveals in this poem, for what we have here is truly a revealing. The real is rarely that which is spontaneously expressed, and a word easily falls into unreality when it attempts to become objective. But what is here revealed is the objective truth, precisely because it is expressed in an entirely subjective manner. The Jew loved in his enemy, the executor of divine judgment [*Der Jude liebt im Feind den Vollstrecker des göttlichen Gerichts*], a judgment he accepts. In contrast to all other people, he has no other choice since he alone does not have at his disposal the Jews whose fault it is—and therefore makes his own [*und es bleibt ihm im Gegensatz zu allen andern Menschen nichts andres übrig, denn er als einziger hat nicht die Juden zur Verfügung, die daran schuld sind*]. A man’s love for God becomes the law of life for all the love with which he can love other people [*Die Liebe, mit der ein Mensch Gott liebt, wird zum Lebensgesetz aller Liebe, mit der er Menschen*

lieben kann], even, to take it to the extreme (but is there an extreme for love?), his enemies. “Of old you’ve been the heavenly vest of love.”

(Rosenzweig 2000a, p. 197, [see also Galli 1995, pp. 252–53]; the bracketed German sentences are cited from Rosenzweig 1927, p. 233)

What interests us here the most is Rosenzweig’s engagement with the Christian precept of love for the enemy (*Gebot der Feindesliebe*). In an essay concentrating on this particular poem and Rosenzweig’s commentary of it, Galili Shahar remarks:

The Christian, Rosenzweig argues, demands *Feindesliebe* as a means of imperialistic love, that of a mission. With his love the Christian occupies the world. The Jewish *Feindesliebe* is, however, different, for it expresses the being of the occupied, the experience of destruction, defeat, and loss, which is related to and justified as the judgement of God. The Jewish love for the enemy is not a gesture of religious mission; its task is not an opening toward the world. It is not a gesture of Reformation, nor is it an attempt to enter *Weltgeschichte* [...] it is rather a gesture of acceptance.

(Shahar 2014, p. 169, see until 171)

Joseph Yahalom (2009, p. 3) remarks that Rabbi Shmuel David Luzzato (ShaDaL), the 19th century Italian Jewish sage who first compiled this poem of Halevi in a collection (*Diwan*; see Luzzato 1864), conjectured that this motif of self-contempt or self-despising while endorsing the foe, was possibly borrowed from an Arab or Muslim (Ishmaelite) poet. Israel Levin, in a study on the influence of Arab passion poetry on Hebrew medieval poetry in Spain (Levin 2009, pp. 251–353), argues that the specific source for Halevi’s motif was a poem by the eighth century poet Abu al-Shiṣ al-Khuza’i (Levin 2009, pp. 191–96). Beyond the genealogical question of intellectual influence, the seeming deeper theological puzzle remains: is it true that enemy love is genuinely Christian? How could Rosenzweig claim that it actually has a Jewish aspect that far exceeds the “imperial” and much-less-demanding Christian love? Why did Rosenzweig title this poem as “love of enemy”, whereas Halevi’s title emphasizes God’s love?

One response would be to accuse Rosenzweig of being a ‘diasporic’ (or even masochistic) Jew, who “turns the other cheek” to the enemy. Yet a diametrically opposed response would suggest that such an “agapic” stance, in fact, has its sources in the moral ethos of the Hebrew Bible: “It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. [...] Let him give his cheek to him that smiteth him, let him be filled full with reproach.” (Lamentations 3:27,30); and in the ethos of the Sages (*HaZaL*), which manifests the conclusion of the 18th Blessings (*Amidah*) prayer, which instructs the pious Jew to remain silent in the face of another’s cursing of her or him. At the theological level, Rosenzweig stands here on a solid biblical ground: the Pentateuch teaches that history and worldly occurrences (including suffering) are an indispensable expression of God’s providence. According to the speeches of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, worldly events, and success as well as suffering, should in some way indicate or communicate something profound about God’s satisfaction with, or anger caused by, human behavior (see also Berman 2022b). This is indicative at the *collective* level, namely, without presuming to say that the destiny of suffering of any *individual* testifies for their flawed morality or piety. This trajectory coheres with biblical statements such as Isaiah’s prophecy, which makes a connection between sin, suffering, and destruction:

Ha! Those who write out evil writs, and compose iniquitous documents. To subvert the cause of the poor, to rob of their rights the needy of my people; that widows may be their spoil, and fatherless children their booty! [...] Ha! Assyria, rod of my anger, in whose hand, as a staff, is my fury! I send him against an ungodly nation, I charge him against a people that provokes me, to take its spoil and to seize its booty, and to make it a thing trampled, like the mire of the streets. (Isaiah 10:1–2, 5–6, trans. NJPS)

A similar trajectory is found in later verses by Isaiah (12:1): “In that day, you shall say: ‘I give thanks to You, O God, although you were wrath with me (*odekha Hashem ki anafta bi*), your wrath has turned back and you comfort me’”. How could anyone, then, blame God for his wrath? In the Hebrew Bible [HB] that was the case for Isaiah, who in the same breath pleads for redemption and comfort. But when looking back, at a *past* event, the HB urges human beings to harness evil for promoting the unending task of self-criticism and improvement (or in other words *Teshuvah*, repentance).

2.2.1. The Jew Does Not Have the Other “At His Disposal”

The biblical vision of ‘evil as rebuke’ might seem incomprehensible for moderns who inhabit a world that is said to be disenchanted, and nature which is allegedly mute. Moderns thus tend to make a sharp distinction between God and humanity. However, this disenchanted vision was foreign to Rosenzweig, who rather insists that “In contrast to all other people, he [the Jew] has no other choice since he alone does not have at his disposal the Jews whose fault it is—and therefore makes his own”. Jews have, or should have, a humble sense of dis-ownership: other Jews, or even The Other, is not (so to speak) in their pocket; not their fellow Jews, let alone the rest of humanity. At this point there is an implicit agreement between Rosenzweig, who leans toward the rabbinic approach (see Fisher 2012, pp. 153–206) and between Emmanuel Levinas (for example, in his *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*) concerning the radical alterity of the other, which is deeply contrasted with an imperial ownership of the world—or even an idolatrous appropriation of God (and, in this sense, of a *god*).

The biblical notion of taking worldly events seriously was interestingly endorsed by Sigmund Freud, who (despite his secularism) conjectured in his *Culture and its Discontents* on the mentality of the ancient Hebrews, who faced the destruction of the First Temple, and reacted to it by accepting upon them the prophets’ rebuke and by establishing the priestly rites, thus assuming responsibility for the divine wrath they experienced.¹¹ Regardless of Freud’s historical assumptions about Bible Criticism (or his conjecture about the patricide urge), he seems to convey a non-fetishist or reality-attentive consciousness message, which is akin to Rosenzweig’s.

2.2.2. Accepting Divine Judgment as a Theological Safeguard against Gnosticism

For Rosenzweig, we may speculate, receiving from God not only the good but also the evil could have been an important way of *contending with Gnosticism, which allocated goodness to the wholly other God*, while leaving evil to lowly and satanic, demonic authorities (see Lazier 2008, pp. 29–33; Pollock 2014). One way of reconstructing this latent Rosenzweigian assertion is by elimination: if the meaning of Jewish reaction to the agapic enemy-love mandate would be to remove God’s presence completely from this world, while leaving the mundane world mute and blocked from revelation, and in this sense non-redeemed or even non-redeemable, this Gnostic outcome could hardly be reconciled with the traditional Jewish *weltanschauung* (on Judaism vis-à-vis Gnosticism, see Dan 2009, pp. 319–61, esp. 349).

Exploring the occurrences of the love of enemy in Rosenzweig’s work, we may trace another source for his (otherwise surprising) inclusive approach toward the fruits of enmity. In a letter Rosenzweig sent to Gertrud Oppenheim in 1907, he described how he “objectivized” himself, thus feeling reluctant and critical toward his own subjectivity which appeared to him as “an enemy which I don’t know” (cited in Pollock 2014, pp. 25–26). The attitude toward the enemy is thus correlative, in some sense, toward the enemy-within of the self itself. In this regard, tolerance and suspension may be a very utilitarian (or even egoistic?) way of self-preservation. This self-questioning or partial self-alienation was—in the above case—pivotal in Rosenzweig’s decision to remain Jewish, and possibly contributed to the developing of his approach as more tolerant toward concrete, external enemies. In addition to this ‘mental interiorizing’ of enmity, Rosenzweig made a relevant distinction between space and time when he wrote to his friend Eugen Rosenstock “who

never stopped trying to convert him to Christianity" (in the words of Ephraim Meir 2006, p. 53) that he is "my enemy in space, my friend in time" ("*mein Feind im raum, mein Freund in der Zeit*"; see Meir 2006, p. 43). The ability to view enmity in a modal way—enemy in this regard, but not otherwise—reveals a pragmatist quality, of discerning complexity and avoiding simplistic binaries (on Rosenzweig's pragmatism, see more below). And, in the case of Jewish–Christian relations, Rosenzweig did not deny the tensions between them, but provided some lenses to identify certain continuities (or an 'overlapping ideational consensus', to paraphrase John Rawls).

To sum up this section: on the one hand, Rosenzweig criticized theological agapism ('God is love'), which equates God with love and hence makes love into a dogma or a noun, rather than an action or verb, thus depriving divinity's personal agency of loving. On the other hand, Rosenzweig surprisingly defends the agapic love of enemy, while debunking its Christian version (as being imperialistic), and advocating its Jewish form of accepting divine judgement. This is not love of enemy per se, but an acknowledgment of the evil that already happened. This is no surprise, since for Rosenzweig, as Leora F. Batnitzky remarks, "Love is commanding and judgmental: Love demands that I change, that I be different" (Batnitzky 2000, p. 162). Rosenzweig did not straightforwardly reject the love of enemy, which is a central facet of Christian gospel (as did Elia Benamozegh (1873, pp. 65–103) and others), but challenged it and even subverted the standard universalistic view of agape, while contending that Jewish love of enemies is far more challenging than the love of the other-who-is-not-yet-brother. The Jewish love, according to Rosenzweig, requires the more challenging brotherly love of all human creatures, who are ultimately all God's children (as in Malachi 2:10).

This surprising advocacy may result, as I speculated above, from Rosenzweig's opposition to Gnosticism, which excludes the 'good God' from being involved in the physical, created world. Similar to Rosenzweig's idea of love, which is dynamic and modular, enmity too was not for him a simple, bedrock concept. The way Schmitt divides humanity into friends and foes, which seems Gnostic at the social level ('sons of light' vs. 'sons of darkness'), is contrasted with Rosenzweig's way of thinking, and this is where we turn to discuss the differences between them.

2.3. Between Rosenzweig and Schmitt on the Love of Enemies

For Schmitt, it is quite clear, enemies should be fought against. In this regard, Schmitt can be viewed as an explicit rebel against strict Agape.¹² But does that make Schmitt "Jewish"?¹³ This question exceeds our discussion, but we may note that Schmitt's implied opposition to Christian universal love makes him a relevant candidate to examine Rosenzweig's engagement with Agape.

Rosenzweig did not preach some idyllic love; he participated in a very concrete war—WWI. But he nevertheless asserted that, from a Jewish perspective, the enmity of enemies should in some sense be perceived as a divine judgement. Several questions come to mind about Rosenzweig's worldview, and concerning the conceptual relationship between him and Schmitt. There were some scholars who argued that there indeed *is* a large common ground between the two. Peter Eli Gordon, for instance, makes the following comparison: "Rosenzweig's claim that a religious community first appears upon the basis of an unprecedented "decision" (*Entscheidung*), which first singles out the We from the You (those "enemies of God"). Rosenzweig admits that such a decision is "dreadful" (*grauenhaft*) [...] But he also assures the reader of its necessity, especially for a community that creates its boundaries without the benefit of statehood or land." (Gordon 2003, p. 215). Gordon contends that Rosenzweig's idea of 'decisionist' and dreadful revelation results in an a-rational (or even anti-rational) moment of polity founding; and that this gloomy conception of the We-formation has much in common with Schmitt's anti-liberal stance (Gordon 2003, p. 216).

From another angle, Mark Lilla compares Rosenzweig and Karl Barth, and states that neither of them "thought of redemption in political terms. But once the theological discourse they helped to shape took an eschatological and apocalyptic turn following the First

World War, it was only a matter of time before those inspired by it began speaking of the political crises of Weimar in the very same language” (Lilla 2007, p. 260, see further 251–95). Lilla’s argument implies that Rosenzweig’s approach to miracles (which amounts to what we might call ‘miraculous ontology’) is tantamount to Schmitt’s ‘decisionism’, namely that Rosenzweig had a share in sowing the seeds of what enabled the rise of Nazi authoritarianism.

It seems, however, that the comparison with Schmitt might stretch Rosenzweig too much. As for Gordon’s claim, recall that in conjunction with the immediate European “other”, namely the Christian, Rosenzweig dedicated much effort to strengthening and widening the interreligious bridge (it is not ‘by blood alone’). The building blocks of this inter-human association, for Rosenzweig, were love and openness, not hate and dread. The fact that both Rosenzweig and Schmitt had these and other critiques of the liberal German society they knew does not mean that they shared the vision of the ideal society.

As for Lilla’s claim, we may mention Bruce Rosenstock (2010, pp. 244–63) and Bonnie Honig (2009, pp. 87–111), who read Rosenzweig as rather endorsing a worldly and democratic political scheme which prefers dialogue over tyranny. Whereas for Schmitt the miracle is a fertile ground for the ruler’s determination, which is then imposed politically top–down, Honig claims that for Rosenzweig the “miracle is an ambiguous sign that thrusts upon humans the responsibility to receive it. That responsibility presupposes and requires a readiness and preparation provided by community membership, neighborliness, liturgical practice, material preparation, and study” (Honig 2009, p. 95). Rosenzweig’s idea of miraculousness, then, stems from a completely different political theology (and philosophical anthropology) than that of Schmitt, and intends to give rise to a very different kind of society.

As a Jewish thinker leaning toward an open-minded conservatism or moderate orthodoxy, Rosenzweig appreciated pragmatic *lawfulness* rather than *lawlessness* (or Gnosticism and messianic Sabbateanism in this regard; see Lazier 2008, pp. 146–60; Pollock 2014, p. 105). This positions Rosenzweig in an intellectual place very different from that of Schmitt. This distinction provides an important context for Rosenzweig’s commentary on the love of enemies: similar to Maimonides (and Spinoza), Rosenzweig believed in the significance of the worldly (rather than the otherworldly) realm. For this reason, the ability to identify evil and suffering *within* this world is a crucial element of being a citizen of the planet: life’s predicaments are not an exclusive product of blind historical forces, but rather ought to be viewed—at least retrospectively—as authored by a benevolent divine sender.

2.4. Conclusion: Rosenzweig, Agape, and Political Theology

Up until now we have seen that Rosenzweig was critical of strict Agapism at the theological level (not “God is love”, but “God loves”), and also at the moral, normative level. Rosenzweig distinguished between the Christian love of enemy (which is, inherently speaking, the ideal of normative or applied agape) and between the Jewish love of enemy, which is to his mind more demanding—because it forces the Jews to recognize the deep alterity of the enemy, of the other person, and to accept worldly evil and suffering as a genuine, and indeed awful, manifestation of the real God—rather than a fruit of Satan or some cosmic accident.

As remarked above (Section 1.2), Rosenzweig was not a political theologian in the standard sense. He truly lived and believed in an enchanted world, in which God’s love is revealed eternally and constantly. Rosenzweig’s world, and his *weltanschauung*, are not secularized in a bold sense. Yet, when considering his philosophy against his contemporaries and, in particular, with Schmitt, as juxtaposed here, we may draw some conclusions about Rosenzweig and about the vicissitudes of Agape in the secularized world. First, it seems that Conservation Laws apply also in the ideational world: the profound energy of Agape persists in the modern world, despite the eulogies over the “death of God” and the prophecies concerning the disappearance of Religion. In fact, Nietzsche, who was a key player in the secularization of the modern world, was a fervent critic of the Agapic ethic

(as said above in Section 2), without using the word Agape. But the secularization of the modern, industrialized and urbanized world did not eliminate the forcefulness of Agape, and it is maybe the case—if Chesterton’s assertion is correct—that ignoring the potential explosiveness of Agape made the secularization project less stable than it could have been. Neither Rosenzweig nor this study gives us final answers about the proper form of Agape in the Christian, Jewish, or other context. It only aimed to raise some questions, and to seek to refine some existing questions, while providing some conjectures, distinctions, and observations, and highlighting the potential contribution on pragmatism in this regard. In the next section, we will engage with the latter challenge, of navigating pragmatism and agapism in a world and within societies that are often polarized and radicalized, and unaware of the religious ideas which still motivate them.

3. Agape in the 21st Century—Some Reflections following Rosenzweig

What may this dialectical exploration of Rosenzweig’s commentary on divine love and on the love of enemy mean for Jews, Christians, Muslims, and others in the post-secular conditions of the 21st century? Surprisingly perhaps, it could be argued that we live in an agapic age, which is marked by the 1967 song by the Beatles, “all you need is love”; the late modern era is saturated with messianic hopes and failures, religious and secularized. For the sake of our discussion of the agapic “love of enemy”, it should be noted that the current period is one of a war between Iran-Hamas and Israel, between Russia and Ukraine, and other global conflicts. This surely reminds us of the urgency of the topic and of what is at stake. Do enemies deserve love or hate? Can any sustainable reconciliation and peace be achieved without the engine of love, and at least some degree of agapic love of enemies? We end this study by remarking on (Section 3.1), The Significance of Political Theology and its Secularizations, on (Section 3.2), Rosenzweig’s Thought and the Task of Fostering of Humanist, Caring Approaches, and on (Section 3.3), Emotional Theology and the Covenant of Being-with.

3.1. The Significance of Political Theology and Its Secularizations

This essay examined Rosenzweig in conjunction with two umbrella terms: political theology and Agape. A first lesson I wish to draw is acknowledging and considering their dominance, and to take political theology seriously (as did Paul W. Kahn 2011), including its intersections with Jewish tradition and its halakhic branches (see Rothschild 2022). This, however, does not mean subscribing to Schmitt’s specific axiology and political philosophy, which advocated firm binaries of the political sphere, and rigid or dictatorial sovereignty. Rather, a constructive approach would ask what are the ideational conditions for a democratic liberal order (see Vatter 2021), and how can theopolitics promote such an ethos.

This task can benefit from Rosenzweig’s implicit engagement with Schmitt, and, in particular, with Rosenzweig’s insistence (in the spirit of Hermann Cohen’s ethical monotheism and its robust Jewish sources) on the universal extension of *imago Dei*, which opposes Schmitt’s friend/enemy division, as well as racist, pseudo-scientific (or scientific) ideologies that became powerful in the modern era. Rosenzweig did not deny the idea of enmity, but he clearly thought that it should not become into the only or first lens one employs. Martin Buber (1993, pp. 86–89) provides further critique of Schmitt’s tenacious division: “The radical distinction which Schmitt supposes appears in times in which the common life is threatened, not in times in which it experiences its stability as self-evident and assured. The distinction, therefore, is not adequate to yield the principle of “the political.”” (Buber 1993, p. 87; see also Brody 2018, pp. 67–80; Lesch 2019).

To do so, post-secular societies (see Casanova 1994), surely within such conditions of bloody conflict, may ask what kinds of political theology support and foster the refinement of discursive tools for engaging with religious traditions in a dialogical and pragmatist way. When thinking about religious traditions of the West in this regard, Agape is a crucial concept, and yet an under-discussed one. Agape is influential not only as a religious concept,

but also as a secularized one. In particular, the strict agapic trajectory of a boundaryless love, which supersedes every familial, tribal, national, and even biological distinction, is forceful in the modern world, and is traceable, for example, in Karl Marx's universalism, in Peter Singer's 'Pan-Species' Utilitarianism (Berman 2022a, pp. 85–97), and elsewhere.

From a Jewish perspective, the Christian dispute over the proper balance between Agape, Eros, and Nomos (Nygren 1953) raises the challenge of mediating between the Catholic emphasis on embodiment (the collective and the individual body) and the Protestant inclination toward spiritualism. As I suggest elsewhere (Berman 2022b, p. 451), pragmatism could be seen as a mediation between Catholicism and Protestantism; Rosenzweig's middle path may serve as a pragmatist beacon in this regard. In this context, an important question concerns Islam, and Rosenzweig's seemingly biased approach to Islam in *The Star*; another question pertains to the ability of the Arabic language (and Islam in this regard) to be the "third element" which redeems the Jewish–Christian relationship from its complexities (this direction is evoked by Shahar 2014, p. 172). Given the basic predicaments of human existence, it makes sense to consider such hopes with a grain of salt. However, it seems necessary to take Islam into consideration; the Jewish–Christian couple should foster not only their dialogue, but also the dialogue with their younger Abrahamic brother, and surely with pragmatist or humanist Muslim branches.

3.2. Rosenzweig's Thought and the Quest for Humanist, Caring Approaches

Rosenzweig's critique of theological agapism studied here, as well as his surprising commentary on the agapic precept of the love of enemies, is a fascinating example of how 'interpretive walls' between religions and communities (Judaism and Christianity, in this case) can be viewed dialectically, and how such walls may be softened or lowered, while promoting human empathy, care, and solidarity. A central question, at least for those endorsing pragmatism, is its relationship with fanaticism(s) and fundamentalism(s).

Among many possible outlooks on the relationship between pragmatism and fundamentalism, we deal here with agapic love. Peter Ochs, for instance, challenges—similarly to Rosenzweig—the proposition "God is love". To Ochs's mind (Ochs 2011, p. 8), it represents a non-pragmatist, "dyadic thinking", which is seemingly problematic for Christianity itself. This Johannine idiom, in itself, might not be inherently fanatic, and surely neither are its wide range of multifaceted interpretations, but there may be something problematic with *identifying* God with love. There is a need, then, for pragmatist engagements with religious traditions, and, in particular, with 'explosive' religious concepts, such as Agape, whose override of *eros* is allegedly problematic (as D'Arcy and various others held).

This pragmatism is evasive. As Ronen Pinkas observes in the context of Rosenzweig and the need to defend open-mindedness: "revelation means allowing myself to take the risk of being open to God's love, hearing His words, and following His demands for bringing redemption to the world—that is, accepting that my moral responsibilities (whether in the personal, social, political, or environmental sphere) are necessities because they are divine demands" (Pinkas 2023, p. 125). As Eric Santner claims, Rosenzweig thought that a significant portion of the human predicament results from inner mental complexes. Contending with them religiously requires attentiveness to what Santner (2001) calls *The Psychotheology of Everyday Life*, or a sense of spiritual worldliness absorbed with metaphysical meanings that call for constant, contrite reflection, longing and moral perfection (Santner 2001, p. 25). This attunement suggests that worldly pain, enmity, and suffering need not be ignored or ascribed dogmatically to some satanic or impersonal forces. Worldly afflictions should rather be addressed (but not necessarily blessed), with hope for worldly redemption, rather than an apocalyptic doomsday vision.

3.3. Emotional Theology and the Covenant of Being-With

Our discussion of religious emotions and the dialectics of Agapic love relates to broader questions about the 'emotional theology' between Judaism and Christianity. Strict agapism holds that God is love, and only love. The Hebrew or biblical God, who is involved in the crea-

turely world, is consequently accused by Marcionites as being wrathful (Jonas 1963, p. 93); it is eventually easier to despise hate, than to hate love.

Interestingly, biblical Judaism, or the Hebraic God, similarly accuses the ancient gods of being furious and non-predictable (see the remark by Hermann Cohen 1995, p. 170); the Hebrew Bible rather displays a deed-based retribution, which channels hate toward proper objects (e.g., “O you who love the Lord, hate evil”, *Psalms* 97:10). This complexity invites an exploration of virtue ethics, and of the role that sublimated negative sentiments may play in attaining human perfection. Rosenzweig’s partial endorsement of the agapic love of enemy may suggest such dialectical or therapeutic processes of negative emotions. Rosenzweig’s insistence on God’s unity on the one hand, and on God’s relatedness to the created world, entails that nothing worldly should be simply dismissed; enmity or its consequences, too, should not be excluded from this eco-system of ‘emotional theology’, nor from emotional *anthropology*.

One way to address the tenacious dualist urge, which constantly divides or dissects ontology and anthropology into (respectively) spirit and matter, and body and mind, is to rethink the very idea of togetherness. The Hebrew language is instructive here. When reflecting on Menachem Fisch’s book *Covenant of Confrontation* (בְּרִית עִימוּת, *brit immut*; Fisch 2019), I pondered on the etymology of the Hebrew word עִימוּת. This word, which is a verbal noun, is usually pictured negatively by Hebrew speakers as denoting conflict, or aggressive confrontation. But according to the *Even Shoshan* Hebrew dictionary, this word is derived from the preposition “עִם” (literally: “with,” or “being with”¹⁴). To express this idea of interrelation, and make it explicit, the word עִימוּת can be transcribed as עִימ-וּת (*imm-ut*), or ‘con-front-ation’, or ‘fronting each other together’, or mutually *facing* each other. This framing of עִימ-וּת is proximal to Emmanuel Levinas’s idea of compassion and to what Michael Fagenblat (2016) conceptualizes as “com-passion”. By doing this, *imm-ut* is perceived as the mutual or inter-personal conscious decision to *face* one another, to *be with* one another, despite possible disputes.

This philosophical anthropology, of facing your human friend, interlocutor, or even enemy, underlies the dialogical assumptions of normative-oriented thought, be it Jewish, Christian, or other. The key for ‘seeking the face’ (as elaborated in the works of Menachem Lorberbaum, Melila Hellner-Eshed, and others) is insisting on not restricting reality to its present appearances, and being open to potentiality. In the case of Rosenzweig and his vision of divine and human love, such openness seeks to avoid the suffocation of the present by letting in some fresh future air: “By conceiving of the All as future [...] Rosenzweig presents system once again as a *task*, as the program human beings are called upon to carry out” (Pollock 2009, p. 234). Divine and human love are, in this regard, an indispensable oxygen.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Data are contained within the article.

Acknowledgments: This essay benefited from a seminar I gave in 7 March 2024 at the Institute of Jewish Studies (IJS), University of Antwerp, in collaboration with its University Centre Saint Ignatius (UCSIA). I thank Vivian Liska, Director of the IJS, for her feedback on that seminar. I also thank Ronen Pinkas, the anonymous reviewers of *Religions*, Paul Mendes-Flohr, Samuel Hayim Brody, and Barbara Loerzer for their constructive remarks. Any error remaining is my own (N.S.B.).

Conflicts of Interest: The author declare no conflict of interest.

Notes

¹ This essay is a part of a broader research project on intersections between Jewish Thought, Pragmatism and Agape.

² Jacob Taubes wrote in his book *Ad [To] Carl Schmitt* (p. 25) that “For Schmitt Christianity was ‘Judaism for the Gentiles’, he always longed to stand up against its power” (cited in Gross 2007, p. 18). Raphael Gross remarks (Gross 2007, p. 17) that Schmitt

in his public writing described himself *Judenkritisch* (critical of the Jews), but in the “notebooks, however, Schmitt refers to the Jews as ‘the true enemy’”.

³ This paragraph and the citation from Chesterton are borrowed from (Berman 2022a, p. 89).

⁴ See also (Rosenzweig 2000a, p. 25), and the remark by Yehoyada Amir in (Rosenzweig 2011, pp. 26–27).

⁵ On Rosenzweig’s understanding of divine love as expressed in Jewish liturgy, see the discussion by Steven Kepnes (2007, pp. 79–129).

⁶ See, e.g., the poems “The City on High” and “The Pilgrim”, in (Rosenzweig 2000a, pp. 232, 240).

⁷ Erich Fromm (1941, p. 81) viewed Luther’s approach of human submission to divine authority as one of the sources of the human “escape from freedom” in the modern era.

⁸ The category of the Possible has its basis and outcome in the psychological phenomenon of the unconscious (*das Unbewußte*); see (Santner 2001) and (Pinkas 2023). The latter states (121) that, for Rosenzweig, “the unconscious implies a spiritual potential”, of liberation from Idealist Absolutism on the one hand, and from idolatry on the other.

⁹ Rosenzweig wrote: “One could not do a greater injustice [to Christianity] than to present it in terms of its own catechism. [...] These legalistic machines, lacking humor and soul, whom the Christian so gladly represents under the [name] “Pharisees”, would be incapable of living; just as little as those pale lilies of heaven, whom the Jew, on the basis of reading the Sermon on the Mount, would recognize as the only “true Christians.” If one wants to understand a spirit, then one must not abstract it from the body that belongs to it” (Rosenzweig 2000b, pp. 100–1).

¹⁰ This is the spelling in the original. The capitalizations in the cited texts are according to the original.

¹¹ In Freud’s own words: “The people of Israel had believed themselves to be the favourite child of God, and when the great Father caused misfortune after misfortune to rain down upon this people of his, they were never shaken in their belief in his relationship to them or questioned his power or righteousness. Instead, they produced the prophets, who held up their sinfulness before them; and out of their sense of guilt they created the overstrict commandments of their priestly religion. It is remarkable how differently a primitive man behaves. If he has met with a misfortune, he does not throw the blame on himself but on his fetish, which has obviously not done its duty, and he gives it a thrashing instead of punishing himself” (Freud 1961, p. 126; see also his elaborated remarks in *Moses and Monotheism*).

¹² Exploring how Schmitt could run counter to Agape and the divine dictate of universal love, exceeds our discussion here (see Gross 2007, p. 311; Nirenberg 2014). On Schmitt’s critique of Christianity, and in particular its idea of *Katechon*, or “restrainer”, see (Lapidot 2020, pp. 41–43). Schmitt’s stance vis-à-vis Christianity is a mirror-picture of Rosenzweig, a Jewish philosopher who endorsed the agapic love of enemies, as we saw above.

¹³ Any proponent of such a conjecture would have to address David Nirenberg’s claim that Schmitt’s concept of the political, and more broadly the Christian image of the political, was heavily influenced by its negative approach to Judaism and used “figures of Judaism to think about Christian politics and law” (Nirenberg 2014, p. 2).

¹⁴ A similar grammatical form is found in the Hebrew words *מְהוּת* (lit. essence) which is derived from *מהו* (what), *כְּמַוּת* (quantity) which is derived from *כַּמַּהוּ* (how many), and *אֵיכוּת* (quality), which is derived from *אֵיךְ* (what).

References

- Allington, Richard, Clyde R. Forsberg, Jr., Mohammed Girma, Christina Hoegen-Rohls, Candace Kohli, Hans-Peter Mathys, David Neville, Gaye W. Ortiz, Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, Kristin Rygg, and et al. 2019. Love of Enemies. In *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*. Berlin: De Gruyter, vol. 17.
- Alonso, Roberto Navarrete. 2021. Franz Rosenzweig’s Writings on War: Politics, History, and the Globalization of the World. In *“Into Life.” Franz Rosenzweig on Knowledge, Aesthetics, and Politics*. Edited by Antonios Kalatzis and Enrico Lucca. Leiden: Brill, pp. 240–57.
- Batnitzky, Leora. 2000. *Idolatry and Representation: The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig Reconsidered*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Benamozegh, Elia. 1873. *Jewish and Christian Ethics, with a Criticism on Mahomedism*. San Francisco: Emanuel Blochman.
- Benjamin, Mara H. 2009. *Rosenzweig’s Bible: Reinventing Scripture for Jewish Modernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bensussan, Gérard. 2013. Rosenzweig and War. A Question of ‘Point of View’: Between Creation, Revelation, and Redemption. *The New Centennial Review* 13: 115–36.
- Berman, Nadav S. 2022a. Interest, Disinterestedness, and Pragmatic Interestedness: Jewish Contributions to the Search for a Moral Economic Vision. In *The Spirit of Conscious Capitalism: Contributions of World Religions and Spiritualities*. Edited by Moses Pava and Michel Dion. Cham: Springer, pp. 85–108.
- Berman, Nadav S. 2022b. The Application of the ‘Pragmatic Maxim’ in Jewish Tradition: The Case of R. Hayyim Hirschensohn. *The Journal of Religion* 102: 441–81. [CrossRef]
- Bienstock, Myriam. 2018. A Hatred “Required by Religion”? Spinoza and Cohen on Hatred. *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 25: 121–38. [CrossRef]
- Brody, Samuel Hayim. 2018. *Martin Buber’s Theopolitics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Buber, Martin. 1993. The Question to the Single One. In *Between Man and Man*. Translated by Ronald Gregor-Smith. Introduction by Maurice Friedman. London: Routledge, pp. 46–97.

- Casanova, José. 1994. *Public Religions in the Modern World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Chesterton, Gilbert Keith. 1908. *Orthodoxy*. New York: Garden City.
- Cohen, Hermann. 1995. *Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism*. Translated with an Introduction by Simon Kaplan. Introduction by Leo Strauss. Atlanta: Scholars Press.
- Cotesta, Vittorio. 2015. Rosenzweig, Schmitt, and the Concept of Europe. In *Europe in Crisis: Intellectuals and the European Idea, 1917–1957*. Edited by Mark Hewitson and Matthew D’Auria. New York: Berghahn, pp. 169–82.
- Cristaudo, Wayne. 2014. Inimical Friendships? Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, Franz Rosenzweig, and Dialogue between the West and Islam. In *Judaism, Christianity and Islam: Collaboration and Conflict in the Age of Diaspora*. Edited by Sander L. Gilman. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Dan, Joseph. 2009. *The History of Jewish Mysticism and Esotericism: Ancient Times*. Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center.
- Fagenblat, Michael. 2016. ‘Fraternal Existence’: On a Phenomenological Double-Crossing of Judaeo-Christianity. In *Is There a Judeo-Christian Tradition? A European Perspective*. Edited by Emmanuel Nathan and Anya Topolski. Berlin: De Gruyter, pp. 185–207.
- Fisch, Menachem. 2019. *Covenant of Confrontation: A Study in Non-Submissive Religiosity in Rabbinic Literature*. Ramat Gan and Jerusalem: Bar-Ilan University and Shalom Hartman Institute. (In Hebrew)
- Fisher, Cass. 2012. *Contemplative Nation: A Philosophical Account of Jewish Theological Language*. Redwood City: Stanford University Press.
- Fisher, Cass. 2016. Absolute Factuality, Common Sense, and Theological Reference in the Thought of Franz Rosenzweig. *Harvard Theological Review* 109: 342–70. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Freud, Sigmund. 1961. Civilization and its Discontents [1930]. In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Translated from the German under the general editorship of James Strachey, with Anna Freud, assisted by Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson. London: Hogarth, vol. 21 (1927–31), pp. 57–146.
- Fromm, Erich. 1941. *Escape from Freedom*. New York: Rinehart.
- Galli, Barbara Ellen. 1995. *Franz Rosenzweig and Jehuda Halevi: Translating, Translations, and Translators*. Foreword by Paul Mendes-Flohr. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press.
- Glatzer, Nahum N. 1972. *Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought*. New York: Schocken.
- Gordon, Peter Eli. 2003. *Rosenzweig and Heidegger: Between Judaism and German Philosophy*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Greenberg, Yudit Kornberg. 1996. *Better than Wine: Love, Poetry, and Prayer in the Thought of Franz Rosenzweig*. Atlanta: Scholars Press.
- Gross, Raphael. 2007. *Carl Schmitt and the Jews: The “Jewish Question, the Holocaust, and German Legal Theory*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Herskowitz, Daniel M. 2024. Empire, Mission, and Messianism: Franz Rosenzweig’s Understanding of the Relation between Judaism and Christianity. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 20: 1–22. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Honig, Bonnie. 2009. *Emergency Politics: Paradox, Law, Democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Jonas, Hans. 1963. *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Kahn, Paul W. 2011. *Political Theology: Four New Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Keplnes, Steven. 2007. *Jewish Liturgical Reasoning*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lapidot, Elad. 2020. Schmitt’s Warring Wars: On the Political Epistemology of Political Theology. *The Philosophical Journal of Conflict and Violence* 4: 37–53. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Lazier, Benjamin. 2008. *God Interrupted: Heresy and the European Imagination Between the World Wars*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Lesch, Charles H. T. 2019. Theopolitics Contra Political Theology: Martin Buber’s Biblical Critique of Carl Schmitt. *American Political Science Review* 113: 195–208. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Levin, Israel. 2009. *Poetry Woven by Wisdom: Studies in Hebrew Poetry in Spain and the Influence of Old Piyutim and Chronicles on Modern Hebrew Poetry*. Lod: HaKibbutz HaMeuhad. (In Hebrew)
- Lilla, Mark. 2007. *The Stillborn God: Religion, Politics, and the Modern West*. New York: Vintage.
- Luzzato, Shmuel David. 1864. *Diwan Yehuda Halevi*. Lyck: Mekizei Nirdamim.
- May, Simon. 2011. *Love: A History*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Meir, Ephraim. 2006. *Letters of Love: Franz Rosenzweig’s Spiritual Biography and Oeuvre in Light of the Gritli Letters*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Mendes-Flohr, Paul. 2007. *Love, Accusative and Dative: Reflections on Leviticus 19:18*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.
- Mendes-Flohr, Paul. 2015. Between Sensual and Heavenly Love: Franz Rosenzweig’s Reading of the Song of Songs. In *Images of the Divine and Cultural Orientations: Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Voices*. Edited by Michael Welker and William Schweiker. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, pp. 95–102.
- Nirenberg, David. 2014. Judaism” as Political Concept: Toward a Critique of Political Theology. *Representations* 128: 1–29. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Nygren, Anders. 1953. *Agape and Eros*. Translated by Philip S. Watson. Philadelphia: Westminster Press.
- Ochs, Peter W. 2011. *Another Reformation: Postliberal Christianity and the Jews*. Michigan: Baker.
- Pinkas, Ronen. 2023. The Unconscious in Rosenzweig’s The Star of Redemption: On the Threshold of a Possible Revelation. *Journal of Jewish Thought & Philosophy* 31: 102–26.
- Pollock, Benjamin. 2004. From Nation State to World Empire: Franz Rosenzweig’s Redemptive Imperialism. *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 11: 332–53. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

- Pollock, Benjamin. 2009. *Franz Rosenzweig and the Systematic Task of Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pollock, Benjamin. 2014. *Franz Rosenzweig's Conversions: World Denial and World Redemption*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Pollock, Benjamin. 2021. 'The All and the Everyday': Franz Rosenzweig and Ordinary Language Philosophy. *Iyyun: The Jerusalem Philosophical Quarterly* 69: 249–79.
- Putnam, Hilary. 1999. Introduction. In *Understanding the Sick and the Healthy*. Translated by Nahum N. Glatzer. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp. 1–21.
- Rosenstock, Bruce. 2010. *Philosophy and the Jewish Question: Mendelssohn, Rosenzweig, and Beyond*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Rosenzweig, Franz. 1927. *Jehuda Halevi: Zweiundneunzig Hymnen und Gedichte*. Berlin: Lambert Schneider, rep. in Galli 1995, pp. 1–167.
- Rosenzweig, Franz. 1984. *Zweistromland: Kleiner Schriften zu Glauben und Denken*. Edited by Annemarie Mayer and Reinhold Mayer. Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Rosenzweig, Franz. 1988. *Der Stern der Erlösung*. Frankfurt am Main: Surhkamp Verlag. First published 1921.
- Rosenzweig, Franz. 2000a. *Ninety-Two Poems and Hymns of Yehuda Halevi*. Edited by Richard A. Cohen. Translated by Thomas Kovach, Eva Jospe, and Gilya Gerda Schmidt. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Rosenzweig, Franz. 2000b. *Philosophical and Theological Writings*. Edited and Translated by with Notes and Commentary by Michael L. Morgan and Paul W. Franks. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- Rosenzweig, Franz. 2005. *The Star of Redemption*. Translated by Barbara Galli. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Rosenzweig, Franz. 2011. *The Commentaries of Franz Rosenzweig to Ninety-Five Poems of Judah Halevi*. Translated and added Notes: Michael Schwarz. Introduction by Yehoyada Amir. Jerusalem: Magnes. (In Hebrew)
- Rothschild, Zalman. 2022. Sovereignty, Reason, and Will: Carl Schmitt and Hasidic Legal Thought. *Journal of Law and Religion* 37: 317–31. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Santner, Eric L. 2001. *On the Psychotheology of Everyday Life: Reflections on Freud and Rosenzweig*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Schmitt, Carl. 1996. *The Concept of the Political*. Translation with an Introduction by George Schwab. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Schmitt, Carl. 2005. *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*. Translated by George Schwab. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Shahar, Galili. 2014. The Silent Syllable: Franz Rosenzweig's Translation of Yehuda Halevi's Liturgical Poems. In *Lament in Jewish Thought: Philosophical, Theological, and Literary Perspectives*. Edited by Ilit Ferber and Paula Schwebel. Berlin: De Gruyter, pp. 153–72.
- Turner, Yossi (Joseph). 2014. Prayer and Love in Franz Rosenzweig's Star of Redemption. *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 8: 173–93. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Turner, Yossi, and Nadav S. Berman. 2022. Franz Rosenzweig's Concept of Redemption as a Vehicle for Confronting the Philosophical Problematic of Contemporary Transhumanism. *Naharaim* 16: 29–52. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Vatter, Miguel. 2021. *Divine Democracy: Political Theology after Carl Schmitt*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wolfson, Elliot R. 2014. *Giving Beyond the Gift: Apophysis and Overcoming Theomania*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Yahalom, Joseph. 2009. *Yehuda Halevi: Poetry and Pilgrimage*. Translated by Gabriel Levin. Jerusalem: Magnes.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.