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Elective Affinity: the *Geist* of Israel in Heidegger's Free Use of the German National

Michael Fagenblat | ORCID: 0000-0003-2321-2682

Department of Literature, Language, and the Arts, The Open University,
Raanaana, Israel

michaelfa@openu.ac.il

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Abstract

This article examines the way Heidegger's account of the unique spiritual mission of the German people is haunted by certain conceptions of the election of Israel. I argue that Heidegger's political ontology is informed by three conceptions of the mission of Israel: biblical salvation history, kabbalistic panentheism, and Germany literary Hebraism. To link these disparate historical phenomena to Heidegger's account of the mission of being German, I develop a methodological approach for understanding Heidegger's "free use of the national" that accounts for the way it binds different sources into a new figure that is haunted by the spirit of Israel.

Keywords

Heidegger – Jewish thought – election – panentheism – Herder – Hölderlin

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Every essential form of spirit is open to ambiguity. The more this form resists comparison with others, the more it is misinterpreted.

HEIDEGGER, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 1935

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Heidegger's way of configuring the unique political-spiritual vocation of German Dasein is haunted by the *Geist* of Israel. That is the central claim I want to explore in this paper. It is in the "middle period" of his thought (roughly 1930–1945), especially after his resignation as rector of the University of Freiburg in April 1934, that the ghost and spirit of Israel haunts Heidegger's way of configuring the mission of the German people. This mission consists in a proper way of hearkening to *Sein*, being, as Heidegger writes and thinks it, still audible among the clamor of beings but long forgotten in the occidental *Abendland*. It thereby attempts to retrieve another Orient, the earliest oriental *Morgenland* of archaic Greece where being was, is, and will be sent forth as an old-new way of thinking, older than ancient philosophy and newer than modern philosophy. Alone among European nations, Heidegger's Germans are uniquely called to a "metapolitical" mission in pursuit of the lost origin of the *Abendland* in the earliest morning of the *Morgenland*. This unique election is political in an eminent sense – "metapolitical," as Heidegger called it in his private notebooks in 1933, where he distinguishes between his own "spiritual National Socialism" and "vulgar National Socialism," with its "brainless appeal to Hitler's *Mein Kampf*" (GA 94, 141–142 [104]).¹ Apart yet within the West, the spiritual truth of German Dasein at this historical moment provides an immanent interruption to the history of metaphysics and thus a new way of thinking the political. "*The end of 'philosophy,'*" he writes in 1933, "– We must bring it to an end and thereby prepare what is wholly other – metapolitics" (GA 94, 115 [85]). This metapolitics consists in thinking and experiencing "the truth of a people," the German people, from the ground of their "being-historical" (GA 39, 143–144 [126]).² Heidegger thereby embarks on an interpretation of the space of experience opened through the German way of being-historical – as a people (*Volk*), in their own homeland (*Heimat*, interpreted as *nearness* to being) or Fatherland (*Vaterland*, interpreted as "being itself"), whose language (*Sprache*), in particular Hölderlin's "poetic Word," grants them proximity to the holy one of being. The claim here is that this metapolitical mythmaking is

1 Martin Heidegger, *Überlegungen 11–VI (Schwarze Hefte 1931–1938)*, ed. Peter Trawny, Martin Heidegger Gesamtausgabe 94 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2014), 141–142; translated by Richard Rojcewicz as *Ponderings 11–VI: Black Notebooks 1931–1938* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 104 (henceforth cited as GA 94). In general, in-text citations of GA volumes are accompanied by page citations, in brackets, of the associated English translation.

2 Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymnen "Germanien" und "Der Rhein,"* ed. Susanne Ziegler, rev. ed., Martin Heidegger Gesamtausgabe 39 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989), 143–144 (henceforth cited as GA 39); trans. William McNeill and Julia Ireland, *Hölderlin's Hymns "Germania" and "The Rhine"* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 126.

haunted by the *Geist* of Israel, which it evokes and resembles, mingling and at times seeming to unite with it. The aim of this article to contribute to an account of how this “hauntology” comes to be.

1 The *Geist* of Israel?

Heidegger’s retrieval of the earliest dawn of thinking does not amount to a return to what was thought and experienced in archaic Greece, since he also claims that the truth of being remained *unthought* even by the Greeks. This decisive point was emphasized by Mårlene Zarader:

Heidegger never stated that the first Greeks had *thought* being or truth better than their successors. Consequently, he never envisioned or encouraged any sort of *return* to the pre-Socratics. On the contrary, he unceasingly insisted on the fact that what he is commemorating, on the basis of a renewed meditation on the Greek language, had never been thought – and not even in the beginning. None the less, in his eyes, there is still a difference between the pre-Socratic beginning and what follows it. What does it consist of, then? This is a question too rarely asked and to which the texts offer only one answer in the final analysis: this difference consists of a greater or lesser *nearness* to the unthought, a nearness that finds its meaning completely in the *category* (which one can judge to be risky) of *experience*. What is not thought can in fact be experienced, thus constituting a sort of space where thought moves: this is the case of the first Greeks, and their privilege. It can thus no longer be the object of any experience, that is, it cannot only remain unthought, but even find itself, as such, covered over. It is this covering over which constitutes the long history of metaphysics. Thus, Heidegger’s interest, beyond Platonic ontology, for what he calls the “Greek morning” is not to be interpreted in the naive perspective of a return.³

Heidegger’s thought, then, rests on a *space of experience* that has been occluded by the history of metaphysics and *nearly* thought by the Greeks and Germans; the Greeks being nearest to its originary inception, the Germans nearest to its other inception at the end of metaphysics. Now, Zarader’s point is that this occluded experience, to which Heidegger presses us to draw near by invoking

³ Mårlene Zarader, “The Mirror with the Triple Reflection,” in *Critical Heidegger*, ed. Christopher Macann (London: Routledge, 1996), 12.

a certain Greco-German heritage, has *already in fact* been thought by the Jews. In her words:

I am not doubting the fact that such experiences *might* be attributed to the Greeks' unthought, to that which they had not thought. I have simply sought to show that these experiences were present elsewhere. In clear terms, I in no way assert that these experiences could not be found, between the lines, among the Greeks. I am simply recalling that they were set down, in letters black on white, among the Jews.⁴

Eminent experts – Emil Fackenheim, Leo Strauss, Paul Ricoeur, Jacques Derrida, Elliot Wolfson, and others – concur. As John Caputo puts it in his gloss on Zarader:

[T]he whole thing takes on a suspiciously Jewish ring. The repressed returns. [...] Heidegger was pitting a rival *Seinsvolk*, being's people, against the *Gottesvolk*, the people of God. The Germans were being's elect, the people summoned by being, the *Volk* and the *Sprache* which was alone fitted to respond to being's call from the Origin.⁵

Peter Gordon challenged this kind of claim by rejecting the ahistorical approach to “the Hebraic heritage” adopted by Zarader and Caputo.⁶ In a review of Zarader's book that commends her rigorous scholarship on Heidegger, Gordon cautions against imagining Judaism as “a signifying totality” and faults her for accepting the all too Heideggerian idea of “a people” with a heritage of its own, as though she, like Heidegger, was captivated by “an unthinking historical-philosophical romanticism according to which the world is organized into separable and coherent intellectual traditions.” This amounts to saying that Zarader's way of identifying “convergences” or “affinities” between Heidegger's thought and Judaism fails because there is in fact no

4 Mårlene Zarader, *The Unthought Debt: Heidegger and the Hebraic Heritage*, trans. Bettina Bergo (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 199.

5 John Caputo, “People of God, People of Being: The Theological Presuppositions of Heidegger's Path of Thought,” in *Appropriating Heidegger*, ed. James E. Falconer and Mark A. Wrathall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 90.

6 Peter E. Gordon, review of Mårlene Zarader, *The Unthought Debt: Heidegger and the Hebraic Heritage*, trans. Bettina Bergo (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, September 15, 2006, <https://ndpr.nd.edu/reviews/the-unthought-debt-heidegger-and-the-hebraic-heritage/>.

such coherent historical phenomenon as “Judaism” or “the Hebraic heritage.”⁷ This pitfall was deftly avoided by Elliot Wolfson. Renouncing generalizations, replacing the conclusions of secondary scholars with evidence from primary texts, and delimiting precise lines of historical transmission, Wolfson’s work shows exactly *where* and *how* Heidegger’s thought intersects with the Jewish tradition, without imagining this tradition as a “signifying totality.”

Taking Gordon’s critique into account and building on Wolfson’s more historically rigorous methodology, this paper seeks to analyze further the Hebraic or Judaic dimensions to Heidegger’s way of configuring the election of the Germans. Scholarship has so far identified two primary trajectories whereby the Hebraic or Judaic haunts Heidegger’s construal of the metapolitical mission of the Germans. The first consists of the biblical tradition of the election of Israel to a holy history (*Heilsgeschichte*) with a world-saving mission. In his metapolitical myth, it is the Germans who are ordained to “hearken” to being; it is German history (*Geschichte*) that errs and returns to the original claim of being; and it is the dispensation of the Germans that is essential to save Europe from itself. Caputo, like Leo Strauss before him, emphasized the biblical borrowings in Heidegger’s conception of the German mission. Nevertheless, the holy history of Israel only tracks Heidegger’s thought when the “metaphysics of the Bible” is reinterpreted according to the thinking of being. Wolfson identified precise kabbalistic texts and traditions that establish this convergence, in particular through panentheistic interpretations of being and God.⁸ There, biblical theism is reinterpreted in terms of the divinity of being as a whole, biblical dualism is resituated within divinity as a whole, and biblical personalism is (or can be) rethought in terms of the call or claim of being. By interpreting biblical holy history in light of kabbalistic panentheism, Wolfson thereby showed how Heidegger’s “metapolitical triangulation” of land, language, and peoplehood evinces concrete historical affinities with Jewish thought.⁹

7 Gordon’s critique appeals to the authority of Jewish historiography over Jewish historicity. Despite my reservations about this way of dismissing Zarader’s appeal to “the Hebraic,” in this article I follow a more historicist, though nevertheless broad approach to the concept of “the Hebraic.”

8 See Wolfson’s defense of interpreting particular kabbalistic texts in panentheistic fashion in Elliot R. Wolfson, *Heidegger and Kabbalah: Hidden Gnosis and the Path of Poiesis* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), 63–64, 215–216, 245 n. 150.

9 See Wolfson, *Heidegger and Kabbalah*, 336ff, and Elliot R. Wolfson, *The Duplicity of Philosophy’s Shadow: Heidegger, Nazism, and the Jewish Other* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018). Wolfson elucidates a trove of texts that evince uncanny yet unmistakable echoes of the Jewish mysteries in Heidegger’s *geheimen geistigen Deutschland*. He also exposes subterranean channels in the history of ideas that lead from Heidegger’s thought back to Christian Kabbalah and its significant impact on modern German philosophy, in particular

To these two trajectories, the biblical and the kabbalistic, I want to add a third, which consists of “the spirit of Hebraic poetry,” as Johann Gottfried Herder called it. Heidegger’s conception of the “free use of the national” is held together by biblical, kabbalistic, and German Hebraic threads that form a threefold cord.

It was from Friedrich Hölderlin that Heidegger derived his metapolitical mandate. “We learn nothing with greater difficulty than the free use of the national,” Hölderlin wrote in December 1804 to his friend Böhelndorff.¹⁰ Hölderlin is the central figure and unrivaled inspiration for Heidegger’s way of making free use of the German national. Hölderlin figures in Heidegger’s metapolitical imagination as a Moses-like figure, the constitutive prophet of German Dasein, “the poet of the Germans” (GA 39, 214 [195]), the one whose Word poeticizes the promised land of beyng and founds the “Greco-German mission” (GA 39, 151 [132]) of returning to beyng. Behind Heidegger’s reading of Hölderlin as a Moses of the German persuasion, however, there stands Johann Gottfried Herder, whose influence on Hölderlin is also profound, and whose poetics of the national spirit is more determinative of Heidegger’s thought than generally recognized. Decisively, for Herder it is “the spirit of Hebrew poetry” that provides the prototype for nascent German nationalism. The claim here is that the *Geist* of Israel enters Heidegger’s metapolitical conception of German Dasein in part through Herder and Hölderlin who, in very different ways, facilitate his turn from the formal and universal aspirations of *Being and Time* to the “history of beyng” and the unique dispensation it bestows upon the German people. Heidegger displayed far more ambivalence to Herder than to Hölderlin. Even so, this ambivalence enables us to catch sight of the *Geist* of Israel in Heidegger’s metapolitical poetics of the German national spirit. Somewhat like the influence of the Kabbalah on Heidegger’s thought via crucial figures such as Boehme, Schelling, and indeed Hölderlin, the claim here is that “German literary Hebraism” informs Heidegger’s poetics of the German national.¹¹ The “Israel” to which Heidegger’s Germans are bound is thus of the

via Boehme and Schelling, two important figures in Heidegger’s notion of the “authentic history” of German philosophy.

- 10 Cited and analyzed by Heidegger, GA 39, 290–291 (trans. McNeill and Ireland, *Hölderlin’s Hymns “Germania” and “The Rhine,”* 264–265), and reiterated in the final sentence of that volume; cited and analyzed again in Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymne der “Ister,”* ed. Walter Biemel, 2nd ed., Martin Heidegger Gesamtausgabe 53 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1993), 168; translated by William McNeill and Julia Davis as *Hölderlin’s Hymn “The Ister”* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 135.
- 11 Ofri Ilany, *In Search of the Hebrew Bible: Bible and Nation in the German Enlightenment* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018), 12.

flesh *and* of the spirit; it includes both an empirico-historiographical determination of the Hebraic national, as found for example in biblical and kabbalistic texts, and its cultural appropriation by German literary Hebraists. This is neither an essentialist nor an invented conception of Israel, as Gordon worried it was, but one that reflects its empirical refraction in history among Jews, of course, but also among Germans. At once of the spirit and of the flesh, this method allows us to account for the elective affinity between a certain Israel and Heidegger's Germans.

2 The Alchemical Topology of the *Geist* of Israel in Heidegger's Configuration of German Dasein

In a context closely related to ours, Michael Löwy developed the idea of elective affinity as a methodological concept in the sociology of culture.¹² The idea of an *attraction electiva* is first thought in medieval alchemy, though its roots go back as far as Hippocrates's idea that "like draws to like." It was from eighteenth-century chemistry that Goethe took the expression for the title of his 1809 novel *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, and it was from Goethe that Weber adapted the concept to the sociology of culture to account for the elective affinity between "the Protestant ethic" and "the spirit of capitalism." Goethe had drawn on pre-modern chemistry and alchemy to account for the way human spiritual qualities "seek each other out, attract each other and seize ... each other, and then suddenly reappear again out of this intimate union, and come forward in fresh, unexpected form."¹³ Goethe thus placed the alchemical concept of elective affinity in a romantic context, as "a special kind of bond between souls," which Weber then adapted to the sociology of spiritual or cultural forms. Building on this lineage, Löwy deploys elective affinity as a concept to explain the way different constellations of thought bind together to create new forms of thinking. "Starting from a certain structural analogy, the relationship consists of a convergence, a mutual attraction, an active confluence, a combination that can go as far as a fusion" or indeed the creation of a "*new figure*" through "the fusion of the component elements."¹⁴ This is pre-

12 Michael Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia: Jewish Libertarian Thought in Central Europe: A Study in Elective Affinity*, trans. Hope Heaney (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

13 J. W. Goethe, *Elective Affinities*, trans. James Anthony Froude and R. Dillon Boylan (New York: Frederick Unger, 1962), 32, 37; cited, with translation slightly amended, by Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia*, 8.

14 Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia*, 6, 12. Elsewhere he writes: "elective affinity is a process through which two cultural forms – religious, intellectual, political or economical – who

cisely what is at issue in the elective affinity between Heidegger's Germans and a conception of Israel whose component elements include, on the one hand, Heidegger's thought, in particular as it takes shape in the decade following his resignation from the rectorship in April 1934, and, on the other hand, biblical *Heilsgeschichte*, kabbalistic panentheism, and German literary-political Hebraism. From the alchemy of these spiritual compounds the ghost of Israel haunting Heidegger's Germans appears in unmistakable form, erring along the holy history of a mystical-political Hebraism that leads to the promised homeland of *beyng*.

An elective affinity is a kind of alchemized compound in which two spiritual configurations are alloyed as though they were one. There are many varieties, topologies and intensities of elective affinity – convergent parts, partial fusion of entire configurations, total fusion, the creation of a new figure. Like chemical compounds, alchemical compounds have topologies that account for their binding structure within three-dimensional space. I propose that the elective affinity between “Heidegger” and “the Jews” has the binding topological structure of a Möbius strip, a particularly robust form of elective affinity with countless iterations. A Möbius strip is a loop formed by attaching the ends of a strip to each other with a half-twist, resulting in a surface that has only one side and is therefore “non-orientable,” which means there is no consistent way of defining its direction. Moving clockwise along one side, one returns to the same point of the strip facing anti-clockwise on what appears to be the opposite side but is in truth the same side. So it is, I propose, for this elective affinity in the free use of the national, which slides time and again from a position that *appears* to be on the side of a German *Geschichte* to another position that *appears* to be on the side of the history of Israel, leading us to see how the two stories are in truth one. The *Geschichte* of one elected people, claimed by *beyng* itself, twists into another story of another people elected by Yhwh – the proper name of “God,” from the same root as the Hebrew word *hwyh*, being.

The Möbius-like topology of the elective affinity between Heidegger and the Jews explains why it can be equally traced from both sides, eluding the usual historical paradigm of “influence.” Just as some scholars have shown how Heidegger is indebted to Judaism (Wolfson, Zarader), others have shown how twentieth-century Jewish thinkers are indebted to Heidegger in their very

have certain analogies, intimate kinships or meaning affinities, enter in a relationship of reciprocal attraction and influence, mutual selection, active convergence and mutual reinforcement.” Michael Löwy, “The Concept of Elective Affinity According to Max Weber,” *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 127, no. 3 (2004): 100.

conceptions of Judaism (Fleischacker, Herskowitz). A prescient example is the intriguing case of Steven Schwarzschild.

Writing in the mid-1980s, Schwarzschild rallied against what he diagnosed as widespread “Jewish parallels to Heidegger’s German folkism.”¹⁵ Schwarzschild’s ultimate target was Jewish ethno-nationalism: “present-day Jewish proclamations of the centrality of Israel (people or land or both)” in Jewish thought, expressed in “the paradoxical coalition of Israel’s ‘Religious Parties’ (and *Gush Emunim*) with the Right-wing secular, militant nationalists of the former Likud government.”¹⁶ The burgeoning of this political development in the decades since would surely have confirmed his stance and the reasons why, in his view, it is necessary to effect a philosophical critique of the centrality of Israel (people or land or both) in the contemporary Jewish theopolitical imagination. But to do so, Schwarzschild argued, one must go back to the parting of the ways in modern Jewish thought, symbolized by Davos 1928, when the authority of reason was philosophically upended by the primacy of being. From the point of view of modern Jewish philosophy, the debate is between approaches to Jewish faith founded on the ultimate authority of reason, thereby determining the contents of Jewish faith in light of universal norms of validity, as neo-Kantianism allows modern Jews to think, and approaches that understand the ultimate significance of Jewish faith from the ways it is revealed in the concrete life of Israel’s historical existence.

Ground zero for the modern construal of this age-old debate concerning the relative priority of divine Will and divine Reason, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the God of the philosophers, is the Davos debate of 1929 between Heidegger and Cassirer, which Schwarzschild regards as a “historic caesura” in modern Jewish thought, for it has corrupted or at least embroiled most major Jewish philosophers since.¹⁷ Devoting most of his analysis to Rosenzweig who, stationed at the source of the issue, correctly understood the profound kinship between his own thought and Heidegger’s,¹⁸ Schwarzschild proceeds to canvass

15 Steven Schwarzschild, “Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Heidegger – The German and the Jewish Turn to Ethnicism.” Menachem Kellner provided me with a version of this unpublished article some years ago. It is currently being published in *Amsterdam Studies in Jewish Philosophy* (2024) in a volume of Schwarzschild’s writings, edited by George Kohler and Daniel Weiss. My thanks to all three for access to this fascinating document, which is today more timely than ever. The draft consists of 52 pages and more than 233 footnotes. References are to the page numbers in the Word document version provided to me by Kohler.

16 *Ibid.*, 31, 44.

17 *Ibid.*, 39.

18 See Franz Rosenzweig, “Transposed Fronts,” in *Philosophical and Theological Writings*, ed. and trans. Paul W. Franks and Michael Morgan (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000), 148–150; for

a slew of modern Jewish thinkers who, since Davos, followed the path cleared by Heidegger. The mark of this Jewish Heideggerianism, he proposes, is a way of finding “transcendence within immanence.” Though this gloss on Heidegger’s understanding of “the transcendence of being” is misleading, Schwarzschild was not wrong in prototyping “Davos” as the event through which modern Jewish thought consolidates its turn from the primacy of reason to the primacy of revelation. As Schwarzschild observed – and as Daniel Herskowitz’s more recent work has demonstrated – notable Jewish thinkers followed Heidegger by exposing the Jewish sense of transcendence *amid* Israel (people or land or both) rather than in ideas that can only be reached by faith or reason. Among such thinkers Schwarzschild counts Martin Buber, Emil Fackenheim, Yehezkel Kaufmann, Baruch Kurzweil, Hans-Joachim Schoeps, Michael Wyschogrod, and even A. J. Heschel and Jacob Klatzkin.¹⁹ Schwarzschild summarizes his claim at the end of his article:

a basic philosophical misstep was taken in the beginning of the present [twentieth] century by vitalists and other “realists” and by their Jewish compeers, due to their desire to overcome what they regarded as the abstractness, formalism, and empty universalism of Kantianism in general and of Marburg neo-Kantianism in particular. One of the results was that they stipulated the ethnos as a central operator in history and culture. We have seen how even the “ethnos-under-God” can turn into an “ethnos-without-God” and how such a Godless ethnos then assumes the role of a real, living God on earth: a Leviathan, a Moloch whose every need and wish may become an imperative and to which everything else – the people themselves, other nations, other values and institutions – must be sacrificed. Contrary to this tendency, I contend that the methodological, universalist, critical rationalism of neo-Kantianism defies these dangers. In a word, I have been pitting Hermann Cohen and Ernst Cassirer against both Rosenzweig and Heidegger.²⁰

a sustained treatment, see Peter Eli Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger: Between Judaism and German Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

19 Schwarzschild also mentions others who accepted Heidegger’s critique of western idealism from Plato to Kant but proceeded more cautiously by *separating* Jewish transcendence from existence, such as Emmanuel Levinas, Leo Strauss, and indeed the Jewish philosophers of the Frankfurt School, such as Adorno, Horkheimer, Bloch, and Marcuse. Conceding to Heidegger’s critique of western idealism is, according to Schwarzschild, already a misstep from which there is no safe return.

20 Schwarzschild, “Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Heidegger,” 48.

In Schwarzschild's reading of much modern academic *and* lay Jewish thought, Jewish Heideggerianism – whether anticipated by Rosenzweig or adopted by later thinkers – lends philosophical support to Judeo-ethno-nationalism, providing it with philosophical legitimacy through its “new concrete realism,” whose mantra he parodies: “where there had been reason, let there be the people.”²¹ Modern Jewish philosophy, insofar as it took the wrong turn at Davos, would be complicit in defending the notion of an “ethnos-under-God” and giving credence to its widespread traction among the people of Israel in the late twentieth century and, we can surely add, in the first quarter of the twenty-first century. Sounding a warning call and even an accusation across the field of modern Jewish philosophy, Schwarzschild argued that exalting the spiritual significance of the concrete life of Israel by locating the Jewish transcendence within the immanence of its collective historical existence is destined to repeat the terrible mistakes of the very philosopher who forged the path toward it, for “Heidegger and Heideggerianism are of one solid piece: he became a Nazi and remained a German ethnicist for reasons that are inherent in his basic philosophy.”²² From this perspective, the idea that the ghost of Israel haunts Heidegger's Germans, who in turn haunt contemporary Jewish thinking on Israel, is nothing but ghastly, as if Heidegger's “Nazification of philosophy” made *aliyah*.²³

Here, then, is how the alchemical topology of the Möbius strip binds Heidegger's spiritual politics and the political theology of being Israel. From one direction, the one Schwarzschild and Herskowitz follow, major trends in modern Jewish political theology appear to be influenced by or convergent with Heidegger's political ontology. From the other direction, analyzed by Wolfson and Zarader, it appears that Heidegger's thought is influenced or convergent with major trends in Jewish thought, to the point where, as Caputo ironically puts it, “when Heidegger executes this leap [from the history of metaphysics

21 Ibid., 15.

22 Ibid., 11. This view has become even more popular following the publication of Heidegger's *Black Notebooks* and other miscellanea (letters, university archives, manuscript variants). As an interpretation of Heidegger's philosophical thought, however, it lacks nuance and, in the final analysis, credibility. In no way does this exculpate Heidegger, whose dirty hands should be judged not only according to his philosophical ambitions (the focus of my interpretation) but also according to our standards of human justice, even with their liberal basis and bias.

23 For the claim that Heidegger Nazified philosophy, see Emmanuel Faye, *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy in Light of the Unpublished Seminars of 1933–1935*, trans. Michael B. Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

to the history of beyng] he seems to land, alas (for him), back in the holy land, back on Hebrew soil."²⁴

Schwarzschild may be right that modern Jewish thought has taken a "basic philosophical misstep" since Rosenzweig. But if so, this is not merely because of the ill-conceived cogitations of a cadre of professors but because the course of western intellectual history, no less than Jewish history, has led in that direction. Can we go "back to neo-Kant,"²⁵ as Schwarzschild urges? Are we really prepared to abstract from the sense of history, people, place, and language in order to understand ourselves as Jews? And is it only a *modern* turn in Jewish thought and experience that finds the ultimate horizon of the meaning of Jewish faith in the space opened by the liturgical life of the people – in prayers, daily rituals, collective memories, cyclical ceremonies, and veneration of the Torah – through which Jews are oriented toward the land of Zion?

The wager here is that a return to Jewish idealism is untenable, sociologically as much as philosophically, but that this need not foreshadow the decline of Jewish thought and life into idolatry, as Schwarzschild assumes. This wager is staked not only on negative answers to the questions just posed but also on a better, more accurate and more fruitful interpretation of the basis of Schwarzschild's diagnosis of the becoming-Heideggerian of modern Jewish thought. Contrary to Schwarzschild's interpretation, it is decisive to acknowledge that Heidegger's critique of metaphysical-political idealism amounted not only to an apology for the Nazi state, as indeed it did in 1933–1934, but also to an *immanent critique of Nazism* in the years that followed. Interpreting Heidegger as a critic rather than defender of National Socialism might, accordingly, provide resources for a Jewish critique of the idolatrous temptations of its own concrete spirituality. Instead of retreating from the elective affinity between Heidegger's Germans and a certain conception of Israel, the wager here is to follow it further, to the point where Heidegger's metapolitics affords a way of thinking the free use of the Jewish national that goes beyond the vulgar triangulation of language, land, and people in the form of ethnocratic statolatry.

There is no denying that Heidegger initially lent his philosophical voice to Nazism or that he perceived it as a spiritual-political movement that might lead Germany beyond the decline of the West. Following his resignation from the rectorship in April 1934, however, his thought begins to undergo an unmistakable *movement from adherence to opposition* to National Socialism. Despite occasional retrograde movement, the majority of the texts, the best of their

24 Caputo, "People of God," 94.

25 Schwarzschild, "Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Heidegger," 49.

interpretations, and the clear trajectory of Heidegger's thought move in "spiritual resistance" to Nazism, as he called it after the war (GA 16, 402 [65]).²⁶ This was not vocal resistance, much less heroic resistance. It was not waged for the sake of universal values, whether political or moral, nor for the sake of the Jews or the rights of others or the very idea of rights, whether of the citizen or the human being, but exclusively for the sake of the truth of being. Heidegger's "spiritual resistance" to Nazism in no way results from a change in heart concerning the essential complicity of liberalism in the decline of the West but from the "metapolitical" imperative to retrieve the truth of being. Even so, following his resignation from the rectorship, a critique of the National Socialist abuse of the significance of the truth of being-historical begins to emerge. Heidegger begins to articulate the difference between Nazi conceptions and his own. Central notions, like those of people, mission, destiny, homeland, language, state, science, volition, decision, and so on, are now interpreted in such a way that clearly distinguishes them from Nazi versions while inscribing them into his philosophical project of thinking the truth of being-historical. Much of this is performed in the lecture hall under the watchful eye of the regime, to which Heidegger remains loyal despite the increasing distance between its "vulgar National Socialism" and his own "spiritual National Socialism." Heidegger thus finds himself, as he put it in his private notebooks following his resignation from the rectorship, at "the invisible front of the secret [or esoteric] spiritual Germany" (*der unsichtbaren Front des geheimen geistigen Deutschland*; GA 94, 155 [114]). One sees the beginnings of this "spiritual resistance" to Nazism in the courses on *Logic* (summer 1934) and *Hölderlin's Hymns* (winter 1934–1935) that he delivered immediately following his resignation, where fundamental tenets of National Socialism – organicity, racialism, territorialism, imperialism, even statism, and thus by implication authoritarianism and dictatorship – are clearly problematized and alternative conceptions are provided, for example of people, homeland, and mission. This immanent critique grows increasingly pronounced over the course of the Third Reich. Already by 1936, or at the latest by 1938, Heidegger views the regime as the nihilistic expression of *Machenschaft* (machination) and *Will zur Macht* (will to power).

26 Martin Heidegger, *Reden und andere Zeugnisse eines Lebensweges (1910–1976)*, ed. Hermann Heidegger, Martin Heidegger Gesamtausgabe 16 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000), 402; translated as "Letter to the Rector of Freiburg University, November 4, 1945," in *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, ed. Richard Wolin (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1993), 65.

I assume this interpretation rather than defend it here, since the most judicious scholarship has already done so.²⁷ Again, in no way does this imply that Heidegger softened his critique of liberalism but only that he learned something about the free use of the national in service of the truth of being that was essentially different from what the Nazis were saying and doing about it. If Heidegger “remained a German ethnicist for reasons that are inherent in his basic philosophy,” as Schwarzschild plausibly maintains, there is good reason to understand *his* ethnicism as an immanent critique, rather than an endorsement of Nazi ideology. Such at least is the wager or hypothesis that guides this reflection on the elective affinity between Heidegger’s metapolitics and the metapolitical possibilities of Israel.

So far I have argued for two claims. First, the elective affinity between Heidegger’s Germans and a certain conception of Israel can be traced and twisted in either direction. Its bind is structured like a Möbius strip, which means that although it appears to have two sides (“Heidegger” and “the Jews”), in truth it has one side, whose conceptual unfolding (whether through influence of confluence) can be traced in either direction. Following it one way will appear to show the Jewish influence on Heidegger, following it the other way will appear to show Heidegger’s influence on modern Jewish thought. The interesting thing about it, though, is that the elective affinity is in truth a new figure, a new configuration of thought: Heidegger’s metapolitics of being Israel. Following its topography in one direction, we can identify the unthought ways that Heidegger’s work is indebted to the Hebraic heritage, as Wolfson and Zarader have shown across an impressive number of concepts. Pressing the point, this line of inquiry could vindicate Emil Fackenheim’s claim that Heidegger’s thought during this period amounts to “no less startling an enterprise than the Judaization of the entire history of Western philosophy.”²⁸ What Fackenheim means is that Heidegger’s revisionary history of the truth of Western philosophy as it unfolds from the earliest Greek thinkers, his account of the “authentic history” of Western philosophy that can be purged, insofar as it is possible, of the metaphysics of representation and power that runs from Plato to Nietzsche, “Judaizes philosophy.” Fackenheim therefore concludes that “the Jewish thinker is justified in being attracted to his [Heidegger’s]

27 Richard Polt, “Beyond Struggle and Power: Heidegger’s Spiritual Resistance,” *Interpretation* (2007): 11–40; Polt, *Time and Trauma: Thinking through Heidegger in the Thirties* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2019).

28 Emil L. Fackenheim, *Encounters between Judaism and Modern Philosophy: A Preface to Future Jewish Thought* (New York: Schocken, 1980), 218.

later thought.”²⁹ Following this mandate leads us in the other direction of the Möbius-like strip that binds Heidegger’s thought to Jewish thought. Instead of finding the Judaic in Heidegger, we now find the Heideggerian in the Judaic. This helps us account for the becoming-Heideggerian of modern Jewish thought and experience, its ways of locating Jewish spirituality in the immanence of being Israel. Following the topography of the elective affinity in this direction makes it possible to think the philosophical dimension of being Israel in Heideggerian terms. Schwarzschild, we saw, bemoaned this development, for reasons that are even more concerning today than they were when he formulated them. Where Fackenheim finds a mandate for the Jewish philosopher’s attraction to Heidegger’s thought, Schwarzschild finds a dire warning, for in his view the becoming-Heideggerian of Jewish thought amounts to its Nazification. His proposal, then, is for modern Jewish thought to reverse course by returning “back to neo-Kant.” The wager here is the opposite. Instead of reversing course, modern Jewish thought should intensify its twisted relation to Heidegger’s thought.

Hence the second claim, which is that the Möbius-like topography on which the *Geist* of Israel appears in Heidegger’s metapolitics of German Dasein does not imply its Nazification, as Schwarzschild maintains. On the contrary, taking seriously Heidegger’s immanent critique of National Socialism while holding fast to its elective affinity with the Judaic, it becomes possible to think with Heidegger about non-liberal, non-Marxist, anti-fascist metapolitical possibilities of being Israel. As I have been suggesting, the bond between Heidegger’s thought and Jewish thought is a kind of “elective affinity” that yields a new configuration of thought. It is not simply a matter of reciprocal influence between two separate bodies of thought but of the alchemization of a new figure – a new Israel, as it were – produced by spiritual compounds derived from different but related sources: biblical *Heilsgechichte*, kabbalistic panentheism, German literary Hebraism, and Heidegger’s unthought debt to related concepts, such as “*tzimtzum*” and even “*torah*”.

The remainder of this article will try to show how some of the spiritual compounds that constitute the elective affinity between Heidegger’s Germans and Israel are alchemized by Heidegger into a new account of the mission of being-historical. This new figure seeks to account for the singular ways through which being as a whole opens and conceals itself. Heidegger thinks the singular, non-universality of the openedness of being in terms of its historicity. Being-historical is an exposure to the truth of being in singular fashion.

29 Fackenheim, *Encounters between Judaism and Modern Philosophy*, 218; cf. Wolfson, *Heidegger and Kabbalah*, 3.

Indeed, the neologism *Seynsgeschichtliche*, beyng-historical, which Heidegger uses throughout this period, emphasizes that there is no separation between beyng and the historical. Beyng-historical opens in singular fashion onto the *a-lethic* truth of beyng as a whole, to the way the opening or clearing of beyng is unconcealed from the abyss of its concealment as a whole. This *a-lethic* reference to the way beyng as a whole is concealed within the unconcealment of beyng-historical is, I propose, a kind of *historical panentheism*. At issue in beyng-historical is the historical exposure to the concealment of beyng as a whole, to the holy, as Heidegger names it. Let us then conduct a brief experiment on this elective affinity to see if we can identify the spiritual compounds of the *Geist* of Israel in Heidegger's conception of the German way of being claimed by the truth of beyng-historical.

3 Of the Event of Historical Panentheism, or the Kabbalistic Story of Y

The structure of this Möbius-like topography whereby one *Geschichte* slides into what appears as the other but is "in truth" the same can be transcribed, in unpronounceable form, as follows: beyng/Yhwh = beYng. That is, the unpronounceable Name, Yhwh, *is* beyng, only concealed therein. This point (the point of the letter *yod*, a kabbalist might say) requires elaboration.

Although *Being and Time* had already emphasized the ontological priority of *Geschichtlichkeit*, historicity, over historiographical conceptions of time, the constraints of its transcendental and universal ambitions prevented Heidegger from exploring the implications of the claim that being discloses itself in the concrete singular ways of being historical. This becomes the basis of Heidegger's "turn" (*Kehre*) in the years following *Being and Time*. The historical, *the storied*, opens and sustains access to being as such. The term beyng-historical encapsulates this unity through which being as such, beyng, is unconcealed from itself. The truth of beyng *is* storied. This involves not only telling a story (*Geschichte*) "about" beyng; it requires beyng-storied oneself. Heidegger's entry into the political can only be understood against the background of this claim. Beyng-historical is the way the truth of beyng gives itself. Truth must then be thought as "unconcealment" (*a-letheia*) in order to recall the concealment that takes place throughout history but which, without history, would not be.

Beyng-historical, then, consists in an essential story of how beings as a whole come to be. This story is not chronological; it cannot be mapped onto the chronological time that we use in recounting events of the past or recalling

our own memories. It is an ontological story, but the ontological is here thought historically, not logically or formally, as philosophers have traditionally done, and not chronologically either. In this respect it belongs squarely in the realm of myth, as Heidegger himself seems to admit. This myth, I suggest, amounts to a kind of historical panentheism that speaks of the “emergence” (*Aufgehen*) of beyng-historical as a whole. Now, what is remarkable is that this myth, which coincides with “the truth of a people,” which Heidegger explicates as the people’s openedness to beyng as such, is not only that it is told by Heidegger *auf Deutsch* but that it can also be told in a kabbalistic idiom. This is not a matter of translating Heidegger’s story into Hebrew but of thinking in unison the concepts that he and certain kabbalists developed. And if we can really think the concepts of this story in unison, might we not be able to tell this story itself in unison? Here, then, is a brief attempt to do so.

Beyng-historical emerges from the Event (*das Ereignis*) – from the event of beyng’s own ex-propriation, its “en-owning” (*Er-eignis*), as some translators have rendered it. Like the kabbalistic concept of *tsimtsum*, the event of the en-owning of beyng unconceals the historical space-time within which ways of presencing and absencing take place. It initiates Da-sein’s historical exposure to beyng, creating the historical world within which nearness and distance to the holy One of beyng can be experienced. This is the space *within* which god might appear – in kabbalistic terms, it is the space that remains from the originary *tsimtsum* of *ein sof*. The *Er-eignis* – the event of the en-owning (of the *tsimtsum*) of beyng – means that beyng can never be identified with god, for it precedes (ontologically) the (ontic) determinations of the god, indeed it lends and sends its divinization to the god(s). “Beyng is the trembling of divinization. [...] beyng is never a determination of the god as god; rather, beyng is that which the divinization of the god needs so as to remain nevertheless completely distinct from it” (GA 65, 239 [189]).³⁰ Only through the *withdrawal* of beyng from every determination of the god can the truth of beyng be heard. The truth of beyng, like the kabbalistic *ein sof*, is concealed by the presence of god – even as this “trembling of divinization” opens the space, the world,

30 Martin Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)* (1936–1938), ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, rev. ed., Martin Heidegger Gesamtausgabe 65 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994), 239; translated by Richard Rojcewicz and Daniela Vallega-Neu as *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 189. The recusal of beyng from a determinate god also separates it from metaphysical theology. The text continues: “Neither is being (as is the beingness of metaphysics) the highest and purest determination of the θεῖον and *Deus* and of the ‘absolute,’ nor is it (as pertains to this interpretation) the most general and most vacuous roof covering everything of which it is not the case that it ‘is’ not” (ibid.).

the worlds, in which the encounter between gods and mortals, the encounter between a god and a people, takes place. Beyng itself is thus concealed through the Event from which it emerges. A kabbalist would express the same idea by saying that *ein sof* is never determinable as god, not even as *Yhwh*, though it is concealed *in* the Name, beginning with the tip of the letter *yod*, and can thereby be experienced in traces of spirit in the world, what the Lurianic Saruqian tradition calls *reshimu*.³¹

Einsof concealed in beyng (*hwyh*) as the Name (*yhwh*). This hopefully uncontroversial simplification of a fundamental tenet of post-Lurianic Jewish thought is a kind of *panentheism*, much like Heidegger's. Not only is *ein sof* – like “the trembling of divinization” – concealed in beYng, never given as such to experience, but so too all beings inhere in *ein sof* just by being. Beyng, like *ein sof*, is the Place (*Ort*, במקום) where all things abide but is itself not a place, the disappearing context for all contexts that is not itself a context.³² Transcribing this confluence as “beYng” is a way of bringing to mind the possibility of a concealment of the Lurianic doctrine of the *tsimtsum* of *einsof* in what Heidegger calls “beyng”. This thought presumably never occurred to Heidegger, who obviously never wrote *Seyn* with a capital Y. Even so, in saying that the Event (*Ereignis*) of beyng as such consists in withdrawing and thereby opening a clearing in which its traces can be experienced, Heidegger reiterates the Lurianic idea that the All-Infinite (*einsof*) has withdrawn (*tsimtsum*) in order to clear a place in which the traces (*reshimu*) of divinization can be detected, first and foremost in the tip of the *Yod* of the unpronounceable Name. The transcription “beYng” marks this inaudible trace of *einsof* concealed in beyng in the form of the *Yod* of the Name.

The kabbalistic resonances of Heidegger's discourse of the Event (of en-owning) of beyng are perhaps less surprising when we recall that they rest on a singular shared thought: the Name (*yhwh*) concealed in beyng (*hwyh*) is time. The Hebrew word for being or existence, *hwyh* (הויה), enfolds the unity of past (*hyh*, היה), present (*hwh*, הווה), and future (*hyh*, יהיה). The divine Name is, if not *the* “ecstatical unity of temporality,” as Heidegger calls his central concept in *Being and Time* (GA 2, 349 [400]), then surely the most canonical and consequential basis for its formal indication.³³ Heidegger came *close* to

31 On this, see Wolfson, *Heidegger and Kabbalah*, 150–159, 214–217.

32 In the final analysis, despite Heidegger's emphasis on the history of beyng, beyng as such withdraws from history.

33 Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (1927), ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, rev. ed., Martin Heidegger Gesamtausgabe 2 (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 2018), 349ff. (henceforth cited as GA 2); translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson as *Being and Time* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 400ff.

this thought when he discovered the significance of “compressed temporality” in the letters of the Apostle Paul (GA 60, 120 [85]).³⁴ Paul used the term *kairos* – which the Septuagint employs to translate the Hebrew עת and מועד – to refer to the “shortened” time that remains before the passing away of the form of this world (1 Corinthians 7:31) or the coming of “the day of the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 5:1–2). In his winter 1920–1921 course on *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, Heidegger links Paul’s experience of time to his expectation of the parousia, the second coming of Christ (GA 60, 96–111 [67–78]).³⁵ Breaking with Aristotelian and Augustinian (Neoplatonic) conceptions of time, Paul’s text provides the decisive breakthrough from chronological conceptions of being (*ousia*) to a kairological account of presencing (*parousia*). Although Heidegger maintains that Pauline eschatology is essentially different from contemporary Jewish versions, many of Paul’s notions and formulations suggest otherwise. The Septuagint regularly uses such “kairological” expressions as the “day of the Lord” or “the appointed time” (e.g., LXX Psalms 102:13), and even in some of Paul’s texts the parousia – the arrival, the coming, the presencing to come – of Christ is accompanied by the coming of Yhwh, or else it is difficult to know if the *kyrios* (Lord) who comes refers to Christ or Yhwh. Heidegger passes over this in silence, not admitting that the compressed temporality of the Name is intrinsic to the *kairos* of the *parousia*. And yet the “formally indicative” approach to the compressed temporality of being explicated in *Being and Time* is undergone not only on the basis of the presencing to come of Christ but also, if inadvertently, on the basis of the ecstatic unity of Yhwh. This despite the fact that Heidegger consistently places Jewish thought within the history of metaphysical monotheism, according to which God is a timeless principle of power, the Creator, corresponding to the metaphysical fantasy of total representation and technological production.³⁶ Even so, a completely different panentheistic sensibility has informed major trends in Jewish thought.

34 Martin Heidegger, *Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens*, ed. Matthias Jung, Thomas Regehly, and Claudius Strube, Martin Heidegger Gesamtausgabe 60 (Frankfurt: Klostermann 1995), 120; translated by Matthias Fritsch and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei as *The Phenomenology of Religious Life* (Bloomington: University of Indiana 2010), 85.

35 For a more detailed analysis, see Wolfson, *Duplicity of Philosophy’s Shadow*, 87–108.

36 Christoph Schmidt, “Monotheism as a Metapolitical Problem: Heidegger’s War against Jewish Christian Monotheism,” in *Heidegger’s Black Notebooks and the Future of Theology*, ed. Mårten Björk and Jayne Svenungsson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 131–157. More should be said about this, beginning with the curious reference to Isaac Israeli in *Being and Time*, who is effectively charged with importing, via Arabic Aristotelianism, the concept of God as “corresponding in truth” to objective reality and thereby, through Thomas Aquinas, setting the history of the West on the way of metaphysics. Let us only state the obvious. The so-called “metaphysical” conception of God/Creator as an external principle of absolute power, from which an array of metaphysical determinations

As Wolfson has shown, kabbalistic, especially post-Lurianic ways of configuring being as the (un)concealment of *Yhwh* from the event of *tsimtsum* anticipate Heidegger's account of the event of en-owning of being as (un)concealment (*a-letheia*).³⁷ Thought from the Event, the idea that "being is the trembling of divinization" can be put kabbalistically in terms of the *tsimtsum* of *ein sof*, the event through which divinity withdraws from itself in such a way that opens the space of (Jewish) experience.

An elective affinity thus takes shape at the intersection of Heidegger's idiosyncratic pantheism and Lurianic accounts of the withdrawal of the All-Infinite, whose traces of the holy are concentrated in the Name. The concealment of *Yhwh* in being alchemizes a new figure, beYng, prior to the distinction between being and God or the consignment of 'pantheism' to the history of metaphysics.

Consider Heidegger's occasional remarks on pantheism, which place the concept firmly within the history of metaphysics, where it is thought under homogenizing concepts like "substance," "nature," and "the absolute," all of which he dismisses on account of their failure to account for the temporality and historicity of being, its singularly diverse modalities, and the concealment proper to it (e.g., GA 39, 150–151 [132]). The 1936 course on *Schelling's Treatise "On the Essence of Human Freedom"* offers the most sustained discussion. From his commentary on Schelling's text, it is clear that the problem with pantheism is that its *systematic* elaboration leads to "fatalism," for if human freedom is "in God" and God is nature, then freedom risks dissolving into the laws of a divine nature. Like Schelling, however, Heidegger is concerned with the freedom that grounds nature. For Heidegger, this freedom emerges from the ground of being-historical. His rejection of the term "pantheism" ultimately rests on the observation that at issue in the question of pantheism is the meaning of the "is" at stake in the proposition that "everything is God." The "is" refers not to the constitutive elements but to the ground of being, to the way or how everything *is*. It is this that concerns Heidegger, which the term "pantheism" ultimately veils.³⁸

derive – "representation" and "production" ("technology"), but also "capitalism," and of course "political sovereignty"; and so too, we should not forget, the individualism at the root of humanism as much as of the Will to Power – is by no means essential or even central to most sophisticated examples of Jewish thought. Our concern, however, is not with Heidegger's unfamiliarity, evasions, denials, or mischaracterizations of Jewish thought but, on the contrary, with his unthought intimacy with *some* of its deepest mysteries.

37 For a fascinating elaboration of Zoharic and Lurianic (Saruqian) sources that support this comparison, see Wolfson, *Heidegger and Kabbalah*, 98–104.

38 Martin Heidegger, *Schelling: Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit (1809)*, ed. Ingrid Schüssler, Martin Heidegger Gesamtausgabe 42 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1988), 67–77.

Whatever reservations Heidegger might have about the word “pantheism,” it can hardly be doubted that *beyng*, *Seyn*, belongs to its history. “*Beyng is that One and the Same, thanks to which all beings as beings are,*” he told the audience to his 1936 lecture in Rome on “Europe and German Philosophy,” even as he argued that the unique historical mission of “German Philosophy” is to think this “One and the Same” which the rest of “Europe” has forgotten. It thus falls to “German philosophy” to say “the same” as the Greeks in order to bring about “the great shift of European history” that will save Europe from itself. The urgency and redemptive quality of this unique mission is reiterated in *Contributions* (1936–1938), which seeks to “clear a path for the original salvation, i.e., the justification of the West out of its history” (GA 65, 54 [44]; my emphases). But whatever metapolitical implications Heidegger draws from the distinctively historical pantheism he espouses, the *Seynsgeschichte* he tells *belongs* to the history of western pantheism. Whether one begins with Anaximander, Heraclitus, and Parmenides or works one’s way back from Hölderlin and Schelling through Boehme and Eckhart, the most important thinkers in Heidegger’s “authentic history” of *beyng*, Greek and German alike, are all pantheists who attest to “this One and the Same of which philosophy continually speaks.”³⁹

Hölderlin and Heraclitus form a special pair in Heidegger’s “authentic history” of Greco-German pantheism. In the winter of 1934, when Heidegger first begins to use the term *Seyn*, which he adopts from Hölderlin, we read:

Hölderlin’s entire thinking and understanding of *beyng* [*Seyn*] was subject to the power of Heraclitus, and remained so from his student years in Tübingen to the years of his greatest creativity and well beyond. The wisdom of Heraclitus was condensed in an almost formulaic manner into the words of Fragment 50: ἓν πάντα εἶναι – One is all. But “One” does not mean uniformity, empty sameness, and “all” does not mean the countless multitude of arbitrary things: rather, ἓν, “One” = harmony [*Einklang*], is all – that which arises in each case essentially constitutes beings as a whole as diverse and in conflict with one another. (GA 39, 128/115)

39 Martin Heidegger, *Europa und die Philosophie*, lecture at the Kaiser-Wihlem Institute, Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rome, April 8, 1936. Reprinted in Martin-Heidegger-Gesellschaft, ed., *Schriftenreihe*, vol. 2 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1993); translated by Andrew Haas as “Europe and German Philosophy,” *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* 6 (2006): 333.

Orchestrating the *Einklang* of beyng by hearkening to the sayings of the earliest Greek thinkers and the Word of Hölderlin aims at an experience of the truth of beyng-*historical*. This is a panentheism of particulars, of the singular ways that beYng-historical happens. Beyng as a whole is only given singularly. Beyng neither gives “all” of itself nor gives itself “universally” but manifests as a whole uniquely. Hence the role of a unique language, people, and place. For example: “the beyng of the fatherland – that is, of the historical Dasein of a people – is experienced as the authentic and singular beyng from which the fundamental orientation toward beings as a whole arises and attains its configuration” (GA 39, 122 [109]). The fatherland or homeland lets the people’s singular way of beyng as a whole take place. “Homeland – not as a mere birth place, nor as a mere landscape familiar to us, but *as the power of the Earth* upon which the human being ‘dwells poetically,’ in each case in accordance with his historical Dasein” (GA 39, 87 [80]).

Like the event of *tsimtsum*, the event of the en-owning of beyng amounts to a kind of historical panentheism in which the truth of the holy One of beyng remains concealed, withdrawn from every appearance of a god and every name given to the god, yet there to be *experienced historically*, where it is secreted in traces of a singular spirit released through the free use of the national – in the mysteries of the holy Word, the mysteries of dwelling as a people in nearness to the Place, in festival and song, in thankful contemplation and hearkening, in the historical homeland, amid the ruins of the temple, after the flight or exile of the god and before the return, waiting by “beyng-historical.” As noted, the German retrieval of early Greek panentheism is kabbalistically inflected, whether through indirect influence or convergence, yielding a conception of beYng as “that from which beings [*Seiende*] arise, and that to which they return – the ground and abyss of Beyng [*Abgrund des Seyns*].”⁴⁰

On the one hand, then, Heidegger distances himself from the term “pantheism,” which he confines to the history of metaphysics, but essentially rethinks it in terms of the way beings as a whole show forth from the abyss of beyng, and on the other hand he restricts Jewish thought to the same counter-essence of metaphysics, without suspecting that in kabbalistic panentheism beings as a whole likewise emerge from the abyss of an infinite divinization. Heidegger claims he is far from both Judaism and pantheism, but we have seen that in fact his thought can be parsed in Jewish pantheistic terms. For this reason, it is sometimes more useful to think of beYng in order to keep in mind this sameness of the history of beyng and the kabbalistic story of Yhwh. For it is far from clear that we are talking about two separate conceptions when we think

40 Heidegger, “Europe and German Philosophy,” 334–335.

the Event that conceals “the ground and abyss of beyng” from which beings emerge into the open. Imagining this elective affinity as having the structure of a Möbius strip enables us to see it as the same *Geschichte* that only seems to move from one side to the other. This in turn allows us to move toward a Judaeo-Heideggerian construal of the free use of the national that is grounded in the experience of beYng-historical. We will return to this below when we encounter Hölderlin, who is also the source and inspiration of Heidegger’s historical pantheism. But Hölderlin’s role as the Moses-like figure who leads Heidegger to the truth of beyng-historical takes shape against the background of other ghostly appearances of Israel in Heidegger’s relation to Herder, to which we therefore now turn.

4 The *Geist* of Hebraic Poetry in the Free Use of the German National

Almost invisible among the intellectual forerunners and antagonists named by Heidegger, Herder figures at three decisive stages in the development of his thought. Like an angel standing on the Möbius-like topography of this elective affinity, like the angel who appeared thrice to Balaam on his donkey as his cursed intentions turned into blessing Israel’s way of dwelling with Yhwh (Numbers 22:21–39), Herder is stationed thrice on Heidegger’s path – in 1919, in 1927, and in 1939. Herder appears as an almost invisible ghost of the Hebraic in the unthought passage Heidegger makes from Paul to Hölderlin. On his way from the apostle of the “compressed temporality” of the coming *parousia* to the one and only Moses-like poet whose Word founds German Dasein, Herder stands as the messenger-angel of the spirit of Hebraic poetry.

Heidegger draws very near to Herder, yet excludes him from the history of beyng. This double-gesture has the strange feeling of a magic trick or a sleight of hand. It can be unmasked by playing the cards backwards. Excluded from the history of beyng is Herder the author of the *Treatise on the Origin of Language* (1772), to which Heidegger devoted an entire seminar in 1939. The title no less than the timing of this seminar is revealing. Titled *On The Essence Of Language: The Metaphysics of Language and the Essencing of the Word; Concerning Herder’s “Treatise On the Origin of Language” (Vom Wesen der Sprache. Die Metaphysik der Sprache und die Wesung des Wortes. Zu Herders Abhandlung “Über den Ursprung der Sprache”)*, the seminar was delivered in the summer semester of 1939, at the height of the triumphant reunion of the German state with its German-speaking nationalists in Austria and Sudetenland, deep into the implementation of the Nuremberg laws against the Jews and other Aryanizing measures, a few months before the outbreak of

war in Poland. By this time, Heidegger had advanced deeply into his “turn” to beyng-historical thinking and into his most important works of the period, interlacing the novelty of “beyng-historical thinking” with an elaborate story of “the Greco-German mission” and an immanent critique of Nazism.⁴¹ In the middle of this sustained effort at philosophical mythmaking, in the midst of the tumult of thinking and war, the unexpected figure of Herder appears, only to be decisively excluded, even repressed.

The summer of 1939: when “historical consciousness” and the “spirit of the nation” – Herder’s signature concepts – brace for a second World War, while Heidegger conjures Hölderlin as “the poet of the German people” – of the fatherland, of the remembrance of beyng, of the historical crossing over from German calculative thinking to the “Greek” fire, freely using the German national to dwell poetically – at this very time, as the *Abgrund* of beyng is opening another inception of a new history, Heidegger conjures Herder. For at least two months he scrutinizes his thought only to exclude Herder from the great chain of German Dasein, to exclude from the proper “Greco-German mission” of beyng-historical this exemplary forefather of the historical consciousness of the German *Volksgeist* and of the poet as creator of his people. The main argument of the seminar, which is neither uncharitable nor inaccurate, goes to showing how Herder’s conception of language is metaphysical, chiefly in virtue of its reliance on the naturalism of “sensations” (*Empfindung*; feeling) and the power of “reflection” (*Besonnenheit*) to step back and map the sensed world. Heidegger thereby proposes that Herder does not adequately think “the essencing of the Word,” which, it goes without saying, marks the threshold of entry into the Greco-German remembrance-thinking of the event of the history of beyng. The binary subtitle to the seminar on “On the Essence of Language” makes clear the distinction between “The Metaphysics of Language” and “The Essencing of the Word.” In 1939, Herder (the young Herder, the twenty-five-year-old author of the *Treatise on the Origin of Language*) is thus

41 The “strictly philosophical” (as it were) approach to beyng-historical thinking is the focus of several volumes in Heidegger’s Gesamtausgabe: GA 65, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)* (1936–38) [*Contributions to Philosophy (from the Event)*]; GA 66, *Besinnung* (1938/39) [*Mindfulness*]; GA 69, *Die Geschichte des Seins* (1938–40) [*The History of Beyng*]; GA 70, *Über den Anfang* (1941) [*On Inception*]; GA 71, *Das Ereignis* (1941–42) [*The Event*]. The retrieval of the Greco-German mission runs from GA 39, *Hölderlins Hymnen “Germania” und “Der Rhine”* (1934/35), to GA 52, *Hölderlins Hymn “Andenken”* (1941/42), and GA 53, *Hölderlins Hymn “Der Ister”* (1942), before (re)turning to the earliest Greek thinkers in GA 78, *Der Spruch des Anaximander*; GA 54, *Parmenides* (1942–43); and GA 55 *Heraklit* (1943, 1944). The immanent critique of Nazism is best represented by the several seminars on Nietzsche between 1936 and 1939, published as GA 43, 44, 47, and 48 and revised for reprint as GA 6.1 and GA 6.2.

positioned in Heidegger's *Weg* as the precursor of *the wrong way*, the way of metaphysics, of a naturalistic reductivism about the origins of language.

This interpretation of Herder's metaphysics of language is surprising in view of Herder's previous appearances in Heidegger's work. For in 1927 and 1919 a different Herder had already appeared. The 1927 appearance is subtle and suggestive, the one in 1919 is clear and projective. In 1927 Herder appears at the very center, at the almost invisible *turning point of Being and Time*. It happens in section 42, tellingly titled "Confirmation of the existential Interpretation of Dasein as care in terms of Dasein's pre-ontological way of interpreting itself," positioned precisely in the middle of the eighty-three sections of *Being and Time*, having reached the main conclusion of Division One of the "existential analytic of Dasein" in section 41, "Dasein's Being as Care." The "confirmation" of section 42 – the *Bewährung*, a term Husserl had used extensively in the context of intersubjective agreement in establishing "objectivity" – is provided to *supplement* the rigorously sustained *analytic* that has preceded, from the beginning of the work until section 41, in which the pre-reflective, pre-theoretical ways of "Dasein's Being as Care" are comprehensively explicated. The confirmation comes in the form of "an old fable" through which Dasein's understanding of itself as "care" is illustrated – the Fable of Cura, Care. In a footnote, Heidegger calls this Fable of Cura a "pre-ontological illustration of the existential-ontological Interpretation of Dasein as care." But when introducing the old fable in the body of the text, Heidegger makes it clear that the fable not only "illustrates" the philosophical point he has been making through the analytic of Dasein's being as care but *speaks it forth from the elemental ways of historical existence*. The fable thus brings to the fore the very challenge that Heidegger already anticipates he will face *after Being and Time*, the one that soon enough led him to reject the still too formal method he employed in the 1920s in favor of "beyng-historical thinking." This challenge consists in *speaking from* a place or position prior to the sedimentation of being into beings; speaking *with, from, and to* care, as it were, *under the sway of care*, and not speaking "about" care. The formalism of philosophy, even as "fundamental ontology," is ultimately a peril for *thinking being*, since thinking "about" being is precisely the wrong way of *drawing near* to the truth of being, near enough to "experience" it. Speaking "about" being, as if standing apart from it, is the way of metaphysics and of the sciences that implement its metaphysical ambitions, including and in fact especially the science of history (*Historie*). But once an understanding of being *as time* becomes apparent, as Division One showed through its analysis of "Dasein's Being as Care," and since Dasein's being as care essentially means *being historical (geschichtlich)*, prior to a theoretical or

scientific approach to history (*Historie*), as Division Two *will* argue, then the truth of being (*Sein*), or at least the truth of Dasein, might be glimpsed, in a *Blick* or an *Augenblick*, through documents, texts, words, and images that *speak from* the primordial, historical, pre-theoretical sources of being – documents like “an old fable,” or, as Heidegger will emphasize in his middle period, archaic “sayings” in which lurk etymological “confirmation” of the sources of thinking in language,⁴² and, above all, of the sources of thinking-beyng through the *national* poetic spirit of an historical Da-sein.

From the mid-1930s, such documents consist, for Heidegger, principally in the poetic Word of Hölderlin and the archaic “sayings” of the earliest Greek thinking. Through Hölderlin and the Greeks, the elemental of the historical speaks as the still, silent, voice of beyng – *saying the Same and the One* – amid the chatter of beings, steering a way that neither resorts to subjective expressions of feeling and will nor to objective reifications of being, toward a genuine “hearkening” beyond yet within the history of metaphysics. The significance of Heidegger’s turn to a fable, in 1927, at the high point of the “existential *analytic*” thus consists in going beyond the limits of the formalism to which *Being and Time* is otherwise so methodologically committed, as if to admit that the work’s limits are already *in sight*. For if, as Heidegger says at the opening of section 42, “it was necessary from the outset to change the direction of our analysis from

42 To take an example, whose thematic is directly related to our case, from Heidegger’s summer 1944 seminar on Heraclitus’s *Logos*: “λέγειν is here clearly used as the opposite of κρύπτειν and thus means ‘revealing’ in contrast to ‘concealing.’ We have here the simple confirmation [*Bestätigung*] of our interpretation of the fundamental meaning of the word λέγειν in the sense of ‘to harvest’ and ‘to gather’; thought in a Greek way, ‘to gather’ means to let appear that One in whose oneness is gathered what is essentially together in itself and forgathered from itself.” Martin Heidegger, *Heraklit* (1943, 1944), ed. Manfred S. Frings, 2nd ed., Martin Heidegger Gesamtausgabe 55 (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1987, 177–178); translated by Julia Goesser Assaiante and Shane Ewegen as *Heraclitus: The Inception of Occidental Thinking and Logic: Heraclitus’ Doctrine of the Logos* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 132. Two brief comments concerning this passage to the elemental of history: (1) *Bestätigung*, a more ordinary word, has taken the place of *Bewährung*, which belonged to the dream of “phenomenology as a rigorous science,” the dream from which *history* awakens. (2) Does not the revealing *legen*, the *logos* thought *historically*, “thought in a Greek way” as the gathering that lets the One appear, not conceal the Torah thought *historically*, thought in a Jewish way as the gathering that lets Yhwh appear? An antho-logy, after all, is usually understood as a bundle of blossoms (*anthoi*), usually in the sense of a diversity of poetic or other voices. In Jewish tradition, Torah is collected in compilations that speak *the diversity of the One* that appears *in and with Yhwh*, compilations that are sometimes called *yalkut*, from the biblical word for *harvest* or *gathering*, *L.k.t.*, which appears – and by no means insignificantly – in the context of biblical obligations to the poor and the foreigner (Leviticus 19:9–10; 23:15–22).

the approach presented by the traditional definition of ‘man’” (GA 2, 197 [241]), which has gone astray in the West by giving priority to the rational animal’s representations of being instead of letting being *disclose itself*, it now becomes necessary – here by way of the fable as, again, from the mid-1930s, by way of Hölderlin and the Greeks – to speak and think *from* and *within* beyng-historical. Hence the “especial weight” given to “an ancient fable in which Dasein’s interpretation of itself as ‘care’ has been embedded [*niedergelegt*, ‘preserved’ in Stambaugh’s translation]” (GA 2, 197 [242]). For the fable, unlike the analytic language of “fundamental ontology” and indeed unlike “the language of metaphysics,” as Heidegger analyzes it in his 1939 seminar on Herder, “*comes from its history and goes back to it*” (*ibid.*, my emphasis), he tells us at *Being and Time*. Through such documents an understanding of being-there *speaks itself* (*spricht sich*) – “speaks itself ‘primordially,’” “speaks itself pre-ontologically,” from out of its *elemental historical* existence. Heidegger refers to this historical document, this fable, as an *Aussage*, which Macquarrie and Robinson translate as “deposition” and Stambaugh as “statement.” Later, in particular in his sustained engagement with the *logos* of ἐν πάντα εἶναι, All-Is-One, to which Heraclitus, in Fragment 50, enjoins us to hearken, Heidegger emphasizes that the archaic Greek *logos* is precisely not to be understood an *Aussage* in the sense of an assertion, a statement, or a logical proposition, but as an *Aus-sage*, a way of *speaking-from* beyng. The paragraph introducing the fable of *Cura* anticipates this decisive turn in Heidegger’s itinerary from the language of a formal analytic, and so too from the language of metaphysics, to a language of “elemental ways” that speaks from beyng-historical:

We must bear in mind, however, that in this document Dasein is expressing itself [*spricht sich*] ‘primordially’, unaffected by any theoretical Interpretation and without aiming to propose any. We must also note that Dasein’s Being is characterized by historicity [*Geschichtlichkeit*], though this must first be demonstrated ontologically [– as will be done in Division Two, though for now Heidegger proceeds *ex hypothesi*]. If Dasein is ‘historical’ in the very depths of its Being, then a deposition [*Aussage*] which comes from its history and goes back to it and which, moreover, is *prior* to any scientific knowledge, will have especial weight, even though its importance is never purely ontological. That understanding of Being which lies in Dasein itself, expresses itself [*spricht sich*] pre-ontologically. The document which we are about to cite should make plain that our existential Interpretation is not a mere fabrication, but that as an ontological ‘construction’ it is well grounded and has been sketched out beforehand in elemental ways. (GA 2, 197 [241])

Interesting as the fable of Cura is, we must here restrict ourselves to considering Herder's role in Heidegger's encounter with the *Geist* of Israel. In footnote v. to the same page, Heidegger credits Herder with the role of transmitting the "pre-ontological" fable: "The author ran across the following pre-ontological illustration of the existential-ontological Interpretation of Dasein as care in K. Burdach's article," which "has shown that the fable of *Cura* (which has come down to us as No. 220 of the Fables of Hyginus), was taken over from Herder by Goethe and worked up for the second part of his *Faust*" (GA 2, 197v. [492]). Slight as this reference is, almost invisible or ghost-like, Herder appears at the precise moment when *Being and Time* comes face to face with the necessity of turning from a formal analysis to *historical* thinking that *speaks-from* beyng. Rarely noticed, it supports the claim of several scholars that Heidegger's thought after his "turn" can be read as extending and expanding Herder's project.⁴³ This, as we saw, despite Heidegger's concerted effort to deliberately exclude Herder, effectively exorcising, in 1939, the one he relied upon in 1927 when announcing the need for language to *speak from* being-historical. In 1939, Herder's metaphysics of language is ill-equipped for the task of *hearken-ing* to beyng, for Herder only has a naturalistic conception of hearing, whereas the essencing of the Word, as Hölderlin's poetry evinces, or the hearkening to the *logos* that Heraclitus preaches, require attention to the way beyng as such emerges into unconcealment. Yet in ghostlier demarcations, keener sounds, the next footnote, from 1927, confirms that Herder not only transmits the fable, in his capacity as historian, but also poeticizes it, for Heidegger proceeds to cite Herder's poem "Das Kind der Sorge" in *Sein und Zeit* (GA 2, 197vi [492vi]). This is why we can now assert that Herder provides Heidegger with *his seminal example* of a thinker who precisely understands the pre-ontological significance of the "elemental ways" that beyng-historical *speaks itself forth* through fables, sayings, and poetry. This seminal example, from the very center of *Being and Time*, inseminated thereafter into the essential task of beyng-historical thinking as a way of hearkening to the speaking forth of beyng itself, is exorcised in 1939. It is Herder the historian and the poet whom we encounter here in 1927. But this historian and poet is inseparable from, indeed constituted by, the covenant of the Hebrew people with the poetic spirit of Yhwh. *The Spirit of*

43 Sonia Sikka and Charles Taylor are correct in finding much more in common between Herder and Heidegger on language than Heidegger avers. Indeed, Taylor places Heidegger within the "expressive" tradition that Herder founds. See Sonia Sikka, *Herder on Humanity and Cultural Difference: Enlightened Relativism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Charles Taylor, "Heidegger on Language," *A Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall (London: Blackwell, 2005), 433–455.

Hebraic Poetry (1782) informs and inspires Herder's conception of the German historical mission to be a free people in their own land.

Before returning to this point, let us establish that a sleight of hand has been played on Herder between 1927 and 1939. Confirmation comes from 1919, when Heidegger credits Herder with establishing the primacy of historical consciousness over the rational organization of reality, an achievement that consisted both in a critique of Enlightenment philosophies of history and a philosophico-cultural defense of the unique national spirit of every people. "With Herder," he wrote, in 1919,

historical consciousness arrived at a decisive insight. Herder effected the change [...] he saw historical reality [*geschichtliche Wirklichkeit*] in its manifold irrational fullness [*in ihrer mannigfaltigen irrationalen Fülle*], especially because he recognized the autonomous and unique value of each nation and age, each historical manifestation. Historical reality is no longer seen exclusively as a schematically regulated rationalist and linear direction of progress, which defines each stage only in so far as it overcomes barbarism and achieves rationality. In addition, the goal of progress is no longer an abstract rational happiness and virtuousness. Rather, "every nation has its inherent midpoint of happiness, as every sphere its centre of gravity!" Regard [*Blick*] for unique [*einzelnen*], qualitatively original centres and contexts of action. The category of "ownness" [*Eigenheit*] becomes meaningful and is related to all formations of life. (GA 56/57, 133–134 [104])⁴⁴

Heidegger thus admires in Herder what he is going to rediscover in Hölderlin in the 1930s, namely, the free use of the national as a way of dwelling in the fullness of life. Beginning here, numerous scholars have shown how Heidegger's turn to "beyng-historical thinking" in the 1930s picks up on Herder's decisive insight identified in 1919.⁴⁵

44 Martin Heidegger, *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie* (1919), ed. Bernd Heimbüchel, rev. ed., Martin Heidegger Gesamtausgabe 56/57 (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1999), 133–134; translated by Ted Sadler as *Towards a Definition of Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2000), 104. Heidegger cites Johann Gottfried Herder, *Auch eine Philosophic der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. B. Suphan (Berlin: Weidmann, 1891), 5:509.

45 See Jeffrey Andrew Barash, *Martin Heidegger and the Problem of Historical Meaning*, 2nd ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003), 4–6, 56–58; Charles Guignon, "The History of Being," in *A Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 399–400; George Kovacs, "Heidegger in Dialogue with Herder: Crossing the Language of Metaphysics Toward Be-ing Historical Language,"

Contributions (1936–1938), for example, announces the “transition from metaphysics to the thinking of beyng in its historicity [*das seynsgeschichtliche Denken*]” which is “equivalent to an essential transformation of the human being: from ‘rational animal’ (*animal rationale*) to Da-sein” (GA 65, 130 [102]). As noted, this transition was formally accomplished in *Being and Time*, but by the 1930s the universal, formal, and still too individualistic approach to the meaning of being was deemed a ruse of the metaphysics of representation that could only be overcome by thinking *within* the truth of beyng-historical. One cannot think history, nor think historically, by standing outside history, as the author of *Being and Time* attempted to do. Rather, as Heidegger now claims, thinking must be grounded in historical Da-sein, which places “the truth of a people” in the uniqueness of beyng-historical. In *Contributions* he writes: “A people first becomes a people when its most unique members appear and when they begin to experience a presentiment. In that way a people first becomes free for its law (to be achieved through struggle) as the last necessity of its highest moment. The philosophy of a people,” he adds, “grounds them historically in their Da-sein, and destines them to stewardship of the truth of beyng” (GA 65, 42–43 [35]). The people is the site in which the uniqueness of beyng takes place historically, where the uniqueness of beyng is grounded on earth. “In its origin and destiny this people is unique, in accord with the uniqueness of beyng itself, whose truth this people must ground once and for all in a unique site and a unique moment” (GA 65, 97 [77]).

It was thus Herder, deviating from Kant, who pointed the way, in 1919, toward Heidegger’s conception of history (*Geschichte*). The spirit of Herder’s *Volksgeist* is there again, in 1927, where the “elemental ways” of a “pre-ontological” “fable” *speaks forth* from Dasein’s historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*), *lent voice* by Herder the historian and Herder the poet. It is there again more conspicuously, though without being mentioned, throughout the 1930s, after the too formal, too universal concept of historicity has been overcome by “beyng-historical thinking,” with its constant reclamation of the *Geschichte* of *Seyn* and German Dasein, through which the German people are elected to their unique vocation to hear-ken to the Word of old. Until, in 1939, Herder is recalled, only to be excluded from the truth of the uniqueness of German history, that is, excluded from the history of the appointed task of the Germans, their spiritual election and endowment, which consists in crossing over to another way, from the metaphysics and the history of the forgetting of beyng which constitutes the West,

Heidegger Studies 17 (2001): 58–63; Taylor, “Heidegger on Language,” 441–442; Sikka, *Herder on Humanity*, 187–191.

das Abendland, to another morning beginning in the *non-western* archaic Greece, the true *Morgenland*.

So did Herder point the way truly, or did he not, on the contrary, point the wrong way? Looking back to 1919, we see that despite Herder's "decisive insight" concerning "historical consciousness," he pointed the wrong way. There we read that "Herder's intuitions receive, at one and the same time, their substantive broadening and philosophical grounding" in the nineteenth century, from Schlegel and Schleiermacher to Hegel and Ranke. The latter two figures show how Herder's patrimony belongs squarely in the domain of metaphysics. Hegel elaborated on Herder's historicism by thinking spirit as the unfolding of absolute self-reflection; Ranke located it in the factual. For Heidegger, Herder's reliance on the functions of "reflection" and "sensation," which made him a forefather of the modern disciplines of anthropology, history, and linguistics, place him at the font of the German tradition of *metaphysical historicism*, which amounts to precisely the *wrong way* of beyng-historical, for it confounds beyng-historical with factual presentness. Perhaps, then, Heidegger was justified, in 1939, in excluding Herder from the history of beyng, denying his intimacy with "the essencing of the Word," and excluding him from the Greco-German spiritual mission. But in so doing he was not only placing Herder within the history of metaphysics and separating him from the truth of beyng-historical; he was also exorcising Herder's ghost.

In *On the Spirit of Hebraic Poetry*, Herder notes how "the simple, moving poetic fables of ancient or unlearned peoples always stir us more than these mathematical-physical and metaphysical exactitudes."⁴⁶ By no means one of Herder's minor works, *On the Spirit of Hebraic Poetry* exemplifies "German literary Hebraism" with precision by figuring Moses and David as poets of the spirit of the Hebrew nation, thus very near to the Herder Heidegger draws near, the Herder of "historical consciousness" of the poets of the *Volksggeist*. And by the opposite token, *On the Spirit of Hebraic Poetry* exempts itself from the Herder that Heidegger deliberately excludes, for it does *not* rely on a naturalistic and therefore *not* on a metaphysical conception of language that would warrant its exclusion from beyng-historical thinking but on the contrary *founds the Hebrew nation on the poetic spirit of language, at once historical and divine*. In this way, with striking, invisible clarity – like the invisible angel who blocked the ass of Balaam and was thrice struck until Yhwh opened his prophetic eyes – the *Geist der ebräischen Poesie* hovers behind Heidegger's entire discussion of Herder. It hovers *inside* Heidegger's most elementary, primordial concerns – like "the

46 Johann Gottfried Herder, *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie* (1782–1783), Werke 5 (Frankfurt: Deutsche Klassiker Verlag, 1985–), 749–750, cited by Sikka, *Herder on Humanity*, 235.

voice of the friend whom [Heidegger's German] Dasein carries with it" – and never leaves, recurring along the Möbius-strip of its German *Geschichte*, sliding in steps (not) beyond, like *un pas au-delà*: one step (not) beyond the spirit of Hebraic poetry (Herder, invoked in 1919), followed by another step (not) beyond the kairological historicity of the Judaic apostle (Paul, encountered in 1920–1921), followed by a series of steps (not) beyond the Judaic in his middle period when, accompanied by the invisible "spirit of Hebraic poetry," he conceives the unique historical election of German Dasein as the task and endowment of dwelling, thinking, and commemorating the holy One of beYng on the basis of the covenant founded by Hölderlin's (Moses-like) Word and its intimacy with the ("kabbalistic") Greek morning of the *Abendland*.

Are we placing too much emphasis on *The Spirit of Hebraic Poetry*, which Heidegger after all does not mention? But it is here that Herder can be read as the first German thinker of language as the historical house of being for whom the poet opens the space for the people to dwell in proximity to the holy. It is here that Herder describes the poet as the one who "names everything, and arranges it or himself in line with his feeling, he becomes the imitator of divinity, the second creator, thus also *poiesis*, a poet (*Dichter*)."⁴⁷ *The Spirit of Hebraic Poetry* (1782–1783) points beyond the metaphysical origins of language as a human power to represent, rationalize, and manipulate beings, as Heidegger interprets Herder's "On the Origin of Language" (1770) in 1939. In his later work Herder explicitly denies that the poet is a maker, *homo faber*, whose inner thoughts and images construct a vision for the people; on the contrary, the poet *speaks forth* the divine spirit of the people: "the essence of the poetic art has been put in an imitation of nature, but should actually, in consequence of this origin [*Ursprung*], be put more boldly in an imitation of the creating, naming divinity."⁴⁸ As Sonia Sikka notes, Herder is being quite literal here; the *Geist* of Hebraic poetry speaks forth the world – it does not *make* a world but *speaks and sings the world forth*, like the word *poesis*, like the *saying* of the Hebrew god and the *shirim* of those Hebrews who have attunedly hearkened to beYng-historically. Accordingly, although one can hardly imagine Heidegger delivering a seminar on Herder in the winter of 1939 titled "On the Essencing of the Spirit of Hebraic Poetry" (*Vom Wesung der Geist der Ebräischen Poesie*)—Seyn forbid!—, circumstances and prejudices being otherwise, he might well have. If he had, the contrast he presents between Herder's metaphysics of language and the essencing of the Word could surely *not*, as George Kovacs says, "be described as a 'crossing-over' from the metaphysical to

47 Herder, *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie*, 963, cited by Sikka, *Herder on Humanity*, 183.

48 Ibid.

the hermeneutic, be-ing historical understanding of language (of the word).⁴⁹ For *On the Spirit of Hebraic Poetry* already crosses-over, as perhaps might have been seen if Heidegger had seen or even read about those Hebrews, those עבריים whose name means “those who cross-over” (as Herder of course knew). Accordingly, when Heidegger argues against Herder, in 1939, by proposing that sensory “hearing” is made possible by “hearkening obedience” to the sayings of beyng, further claiming that Germans must cross-over from naturalism and metaphysics to beyng-historical by hearkening to the essencing of the Word, who if not the *Geist* of Hebraic poetry is speaking?

Heidegger surely knew, even as he failed to note, how Herder’s departure from the metaphysics of subjectivist, constructivist language is marked by his investment in the “national hymns” (*Nationalgesänge*) of the Hebrews as a way of founding a spiritual-political alternative not only to Enlightenment rationalism but to Greco-Roman classicism as well. Ofri Ilany has recently emphasizes this point by showing how, for Herder, “the spirit of Hebraic poetry” is the inspired source of appropriate “national sentiments” (*Volks-Gefühl*) that can only be elicited under the authority of a “national god” (*Nationalgott*) – *Yhwh*, and precisely not the metaphysical “God” of Enlightenment deists and rationalists.⁵⁰ Moreover, Herder’s turn to the ancient Hebrews for thinking the ideal spiritual-political possibility of German Dasein is intentionally cultivated as an *alternative* to the dominant classicism that shaped German nationalism in the second half of the eighteenth century, from Winckelmann to Goethe and Schiller, which took ancient Greece as its source of inspiration and viewed Greek poetry and art as a model for German culture. This is a remarkable half-twist in the unthought structure of Heidegger’s debt to the Hebraic

49 Kovacs, “Heidegger in Dialogue with Herder,” 58. Sonia Sikka has convincingly made just such an argument. Noting the critique Heidegger makes of Herder in 1939, in particular of Herder’s founding of language on the natural sensory function of the human and its natural capacity for rational reflection, which according to Heidegger places Herder’s theory within a metaphysical tradition that views language as a human power and a tool of reason to be used to represent, fabricate, and manipulate the world, Sikka nevertheless finds “strong parallels between Herder’s and Heidegger’s understanding of the relation between language and the identity of a *Volk*, and these connect with *their shared view of language as revelatory rather than fictionalizing*” (Sikka, *Herder on Humanity*, 184, my emphasis). The latter point is decisive and has, in fact, led others (notably Taylor, “Heidegger on Language”) to argue that Heidegger’s account of the way language discloses being and of the revelatory power of the Word – the unique poetic Word of Hölderlin, for example, or the Sayings of the archaic thinkers – effectively extends the tradition inaugurated by Herder. Neither Sikka nor Taylor relies exclusively on *Of the Spirit of Hebraic Poetry* to make this argument, but this is consistent with their findings and, I suggest, exemplary of them.

50 Ilany, *In Search of the Hebrew People*, 101ff.

heritage. Heidegger places Herder on the wrong side of “historical consciousness,” among the metaphysicians of presence and the historicists, which is also where he places the traditions of classicism and romanticism, including Goethe and Schiller. But if Herder was indeed an important source and influence for this tradition of imagining modern Germany, the source Herder drank from was Hebraic.

For Herder, the Hebrews are the proper people of “the orient”; the Hebrews are the *Morgenländer*. Herder’s reading of the Hebrews denies their image as a coarse and disgruntled rabble of squabbling literalists, as many who preferred the ancient Greeks and Romans took them to be, and invokes, instead, their childlike intimacy with the divine poetic spirit that brought them into being-historical. For Herder, biblical Hebrew conveys a sacred and essentially poetic power – the power of “a poor but beautiful and pure country girl” (*schönes und reines Landmädchen*), and yet a power that creates the space in which the heterogeneity of the people can experience a “national sentiment” (*Volks-Gefühl*) by receiving and heeding the Word of its “national god” (*Nationalgott*), expressed in “national hymns” (*Nationalgesänge*). In Ilany’s words:

In his reading of the psalms, Herder posits the Hebrew state as a model of poetic religious politics, within which the nation coalesces around religious poetry. Herder marvels at the great influence that Moses’s poetry exerted on the souls and customs of his people, which equaled that of his law. Similarly, David’s glory was buttressed by his psalms just as much as by his military conquests. Contrary to other Enlightenment figures, Herder does not view ancient oriental poetry as an inferior phase in the development of human consciousness but rather finds in it the origin [*Ursprung*] of all of culture’s future development. He discerns in the ancient text a creative element that cannot be achieved through modern, cerebral writing. [...] Nor does Herder forgo the traditionally religious dimension of Hebraic poetry, which is “saturated with the spirit of God.” He goes on to claim that the Hebrews’ poetry enjoys a significant advantage over other “national poetries” [*Nationalpoesien*] in that it was a form of divine poetry sung in the temple.⁵¹

In short, Herder’s Israel provides a way of *thinking* and *poeticizing* a *prophetic constitution* for the German nation. Which is precisely how Heidegger views Hölderlin’s unique Word.

⁵¹ Ilany, *In Search of the Hebrew People*, 99.

For Herder, Israel provided a model for the free use of the German national founded on a poetic constitution and a mandate for poetically dwelling. Hölderlin, a generation younger and a keen admirer of Herder's German Hebraism, adopts this view in his approach to the Greeks, who are no longer figured as the classical model to be emulated but as a spirit coming from earlier whose fire can inspire contemporary Germans. The spirit of Herder thus points Heidegger to the metapolitical dimensions of Hölderlin's Word. This is not the Herder of science and metaphysics, not the philosopher of reflection, consciousness, and expression; not *just* the Herder of historical consciousness and the *Volksgeist* (whose decisive insight was noted in 1919), nor *just* the historian of elementary fables and poems that speak from the historicity of being (acknowledged in 1927), but precisely the thinker of the prophetic spirit of Hebraic poetry, of the psalms of David and the songs of Moses that constitute the covenant of the Hebrew polis and the open historical horizon of its place on earth. "Herder never ceased to be amazed at the way Moses was able to fashion an entire people through his poetry alone," writes Ilany in his analysis of how the *archaic* Hebraic served Herder as an alternative route toward the German nation, based neither on Roman and Greek classicism or Enlightenment rationalism.⁵²

In truth, the Herder of the *Geist der äbräische Poesie* does not so much *point* toward Heidegger's Hölderlin, but *stands there*. Barely seen and hardly heard, he is *Da*, on the *Weg*. Herder appears to Heidegger Balak-like, without being seen or heard, as the angel-messenger communicating Israel's "the truth of a people" as their endowment and appointed historical task to dwell prophetically in proximity and intimacy, through poetry, hymn, and remembrance, to the holy one of beyng. It is not only the messiah who rides a donkey! Even if Herder, unlike Hölderlin, is not a panentheist and indeed mixes theistic, naturalistic and metaphysical suppositions into his philosophy of history, Hölderlin inherits Herder's mandate, for which he had much sympathy. Of course it can hardly be expected that Heidegger, from the perspective of his "metapolitical" position at the "invisible front of the *geheimen geistigen Deutschland*" (GA 94, 155 [114]), should have seen or thought of Herder's account of the *Geist* of Hebrew poetry when he read, in Hölderlin's hymns, of the destiny of the Germans to dwell poetically in remembrance and intimacy with holy *Seyn*. He may not even have known, as Sonia Sikka explains, that Herder was an early advocate for "the possibility of a return of Jews to Palestine, as a place in which

52 Ilany, *In Search of the Hebrew People*, 98.

they could found a proper state and restore their full identity.”⁵³ Known or unknown to Heidegger, it hardly matters. There is no doubt that the spirit of free use of the Hebrew national is alive and well in Herder’s thinking generally, especially in *On the Spirit of Hebraic Poetry*, whose concern is the archaic Hebrews’ way of dwelling poetically in their homeland, the very mission that he and Heidegger sought to foster in the free use of the German national. It is therefore hard not to see a sleight of hand in Heidegger’s exclusive focus, in 1939, on a Herder who has no place in the authentic history of being because he is not poetic enough, too metaphysical, too naturalistic. For another Herder had already appeared to him, drawn near, like a card up a sleeve, the Herder who is more poetic, more historical, more *volkisch*, more *geistlich*, and yes, more *ëbraisch*, of the *Geist der ebraïschen Poesie*. As if, like magic, the Hebraic spirit of the German political, which was there on his way, is no longer, having been exchanged for the Greek.

But we should be more charitable. At issue is certainly not a deliberate sleight of hand, as if Heidegger rejects Herder in 1939 *because* of the intimacy of his poetic nationalism with the Hebraic. The matter is surely more akin to an alchemist’s sincere misunderstanding of the spiritual elements with which he is working. Or perhaps it is the slight smile of the goddess Alethia as she conceals the truth of being-historical from the philosopher’s *Geschichte*? In any case, the still, silent voice of the Spirit of Hebraic poetry, never mentioned by Heidegger, hovers behind his entire engagement with his eminent predecessor, intimately near to the Herder he draws near in 1919 and 1927 and excluded from the Herder he excludes in 1939.

53 Sikka explains how Herder combines a valorization of the Hebrews as exemplars of the spirit of the nation with a condemnation of the Jews: “In the *Ideas*, Herder says of the Jews: ‘in short, this is a people whose education was ruined, because they never achieved the ripeness of a political culture on their own soil, and thereby also never reached the full feeling of honour and freedom.’ Here he does blame Jews themselves for never having longed for a fatherland, for their own honor and home, in spite of the oppression they suffered. [See Herder, *Ideas for a Philosophy of the History of Mankind*, Werke 6 (Frankfurt: Deutsche Klassiker Verlag, 1985–), 492.] In ‘On the Conversion of Jews,’ by contrast, Herder seems to accept that Jews do long for a homeland. He cites and supports a number of points presented by another author as reasons in favor of a return of Jews to Palestine, including their distinctness within all nations, their constant mistreatment at the hands of those nations, their preservation of a language and character that could make their return easier, and the fact that they themselves wish for this return in a spirit of hope and expectation.” Sikka, *Herder on Humanity*, 244.

5 Heidegger's Hölderlin and the Jewish Moses

We have followed the half-twists binding Heidegger's metapolitics of the German historical mission to the *Geist* of Israel. Passing alongside the spirit of Hebraic poetry and the compressed temporality of late Judaic eschatology we now reach Hölderlin, Heidegger's Moses of the German persuasion, who points the way back to the fatherland of beYng, the panentheistic thinking of the earliest Greeks where dwelling and thinking in nearness to the holy of beYng can be experienced historically in the German language. This way of configuring Hölderlin as the "founder" of the "Greco-German mission" takes the shape of a Moses-like prophet whose unique Word constitutes the horizon in which German Dasein can draw near to the Holy One of beYng. This too is striking but not entirely surprising. Hölderlin himself did not distinguish the oracular orientalism of the Greeks, as he understood it, from the spirit of Hebrew prophecy. As Ian Balfour notes: "Like Herder's before him, Holderlin's disposition is to foreground the identities between Hebrew prophecy and Greek oracle, not their differences. Hölderlin was about as far away as possible from seeing the Hebraic and the Hellenic as opposed principles."⁵⁴ Indeed it is Holderlin's free prophetic pursuit of the national that leads Heidegger away from the classical to the "archaic" Greeks of the *Morgenland*. For Hölderlin himself, the prophetic orientalisms of the Hebrews and the Greeks were not alternative *classicisms* – aesthetic-political models to be emulated (like the Greeks or Romans) or rejected (like the Hebrews) – but one continuous *archaic* spirit. This difference between the classical and the archaic, which Heidegger adopts and indeed radicalizes throughout his appropriation of the early Greeks, does not merely point to a way of historiographically marking the development of ancient civilizations but of recovering "another inception." In Hölderlin, for example, Heidegger finds:

nothing of Humanism or Classicism, nothing of Romanticism or infatuation. The supreme freedom of the [poet-prophetic] creator places him in the most extreme oppositionality. Yet this is also the sole true way of being bound to the originality of that commencement with the Greeks.

Genuine repetition springs forth from originary transformation. Mere imitation or attempts at renewal only ever achieve the blind absolutizing of a dependency that has not been mastered.⁵⁵

54 Ian Balfour, *The Rhetoric of Romantic Prophecy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 201.

55 GA 39, 123 [216].

The archaic, unlike the classical, involves *the free use of the national* that is already opened up, held forth, poetically concealed within the sayings of old, like a prophecy. This archaic, including its manifest affinity with its unthought Hebraic next of kin (as Herder shows) and its Judaic next of kin (as Zarader and Wolfson show), informs Heidegger's idiosyncratic view, following Hölderlin, of *the Greeks as the other of the West*.

The Greeks are the other of the West? "For Hölderlin, Greece is the Other of the Western world," Heidegger indeed tells those attending his course on *Andenken, Remembrance*, in 1941–1942. The alchemical structure of this spirit is becoming familiar. Heidegger's Greeks, like the Greeks of Heidegger's Hölderlin, are not the forerunners of the heritage bequeathed to the West in the guise of logic, metaphysics, science, democracy, and aesthetics but the fore-sayers of the "other inception" concealed within their originary Sayings. Hölderlin is the German poet whose Word configures German Dasein through another inception in the archaic *Morgenland* that is other than the one invoked by Greco-Roman classicism, whose mistake was to regard the past as a presence to be imitated or dialectically realized. Yet this other archaic *Morgenland* is precisely where, just a half-twist away, Herder places the spirit of Hebraic poetry, namely, as the properly "oriental" other of the West, an immanent alternative to Greco-Roman classicism as much as to Enlightenment rationalism. Moreover, the *Morgenland* of "the Greek Morning," the "Other of the western World," is the animating spirit in "the free use of the national," as Hölderlin thinks it, whereby the Germans cross-over, like עבריים, to their own spiritual homeland, thus being-other than the Evening-Landers of the *Abendländisch* West, whose destiny is too metaphysical, too Christian or too classical, whether by appeal to the Romans or even the Greeks.⁵⁶

This archaic *Morgenland*, whether thought as Greek or unthought as Judaic, is not external to the history of the West. Its way of being other than the West consists in being an immanent interruption, an immanent disruption of western history, and not an external relation between two separate traditions. It thus takes place within western history. How? By disrupting it with another way of being in proximity to the holy, desedimentizing western history from its

56 Without attending to the genealogical role of Herder and Hölderlin, Leo Strauss made the same observation in a lecture given in 1956: "Within the west, the limitations of rationalism were always seen by the biblical tradition. (Here lies the justification for the biblical elements in Heidegger's earlier thought.) [...] Yet the Bible is the east within us, within western man. Not the Bible as Bible but the Bible as eastern can help us in overcoming Greek rationalism." Strauss, "Existentialism," in "Two Lectures by Leo Strauss," ed. David Bolotin, Christopher Bruell, and Thomas L. Pangle, *Interpretation* 22, no. 3 (1995): 303–320, at 317.

metaphysical grounds by providing another way of beYng-historically, of being thrown into a spiritual story, a Saga or Myth, that is attuned to beYng within the history of its own forgetting, a spiritual history of the unconcealment of beYng from out of its own concealment, whereby history is interrupted by the essential. This other *Geschichte*, this Saga or Myth, must not only be spoken forth so that the people of beYng might hearken to it – a task the thinker sets for himself in his commentaries on the earliest Greek thinkers; it must also *configure* (*gefügen*) the very historical space within which the people of beYng exist, providing them not only with the *heilige Worte* to be thought ever anew along their historical way but also with a horizon for historical *action*, a way of living together as the people of beYng, otherwise than as the peoples of the West yet within a singular history of the forgetting and concealment of beYng. The burden falls on Hölderlin, the glory is his poetic Word. It configures German Dasein in this mythic manner, steering a way of being-German that is other than the West within the West. Heidegger of course does not see how Hölderlin's archaic Word is continuous with the spirit of Hebraic poetry; he does not acknowledge the prophetic poet's debt to "German literary Hebraism"; he denies the prophetic inspiration of Hölderlin's Protestant Christian nationalism.

Admittedly, a half-twist of the Saga is required in order to move from being the people of Yhwh to the people of beYng. It is accomplished by Hölderlin's philosophical turn away from Herder's still too Aristotelian conception of the place of "love and selfhood" in the modulations of being (*Seyn*) toward a "unification philosophy" that he shared with the German idealists – indeed arguably founded it, as Dieter Heinrich has shown, on a post-Kantian "program of establishing a Spinozism of freedom." This of course includes "the Oldest System-Program of German Idealism," with its claim that "mythology must become philosophical [...] while philosophy must become mythological," for such is the vocation of the "higher spirit, sent from heaven" (*Ein höherer Geist vom Himmel gesandt*).⁵⁷ But we must leave aside this text, which as far as I know Heidegger does not mention, though he might have taken heed of Schelling's gloss on it as "a philosophy of the history of humanity" that provides "a counterpart to Spinoza."⁵⁸ For with Heidegger's Hölderlin we return to the *Geschichte* of the Greco-German mission of *historical panentheism* as

57 "The Oldest Program toward a System in German Idealism," trans. David Farrell Krell, in *The Tragic Absolute: German Idealism and the Languishing of God* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 25.

58 In a letter to the philosopher and publicist Immanuel Niethammer dated January 22, 1796, which formed the basis of Rosenzweig's attribution of the text to Schelling. On this, see David Farrell Krell, *The Tragic Absolute: German Idealism and the Languishing of God* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

the *raison d'être* of German Da-sein. This history unfolds from the famous “pantheistic controversy” of the late eighteenth century, including the perceived elective affinity between Spinozism and the Kabbalah, which was central to it. Suffice to note here that among the German idealists who were grappling with a common set of new questions that broke open when Kant’s critical philosophy collided with the pantheistic controversy of the late eighteenth century, “it was Hölderlin himself who led the path of freedom in the direction of pantheism.”⁵⁹ Through the figure of Hölderlin we thus arrive at the unthought “Mosaic moment” in Heidegger’s quasi-secularized historical pantheism and the free use he makes of it in pursuit of the German national.⁶⁰ For this pantheism, which imbibed the climate of post-Kantian German philosophy, is, among other things, a portal into the Kabbalah, or at least the Kabbalah as it was understood in Christian philosophical circles in Germany in the late eighteenth century. It was Hölderlin and Schelling, not Herder, who followed the path of freedom in the direction of (“kabbalistic”) pantheism, and it was Hölderlin and Schelling, not Herder, who sought to reconcile German nationalism with a pantheistic conception of “beyng,” *Seyn*. The gates of the (Christian) Kabbalah were wide open, then, when Heidegger, following Hölderlin, walked through the pantheism of post-Kantian “unification philosophy” to the history of beYng and its unique claim on German Da-sein. Again, then, Heidegger “forecloses” the Jews from the history of beyng as much as from the history of spirit, even as he *writes them into* this history in invisible ink. His free use of Hölderlin’s historical pantheism in pursuit of the “metapolitical” mission of the German national *anticipates* a kind of “metazionist” configuration of the mission of Jewish Dasein to return to its homeland in beYng-historically in Zion.

Hölderlin thus figures as Heidegger’s unthought Moses of the Germanic persuasion, in at least three ways.

(1) Heidegger’s Hölderlin “founds” the election of German Dasein, in the sense that he establishes its ultimate horizon for dwelling prophetically on earth. He is the one and only founding poet of German historical destiny, a

59 Dieter Henrich, *“The Course of Remembrance” and Other Essays on Hölderlin* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 89.

60 The notion of a “Mosaic moment” in several European nationalisms has been established, always in conjunction with an inventive, almost always Protestant, “new Israel” and “promised land.” A feature that distinguishes between Herder’s “Mosaic moment” and others is that Herder emphasizes the poetic rather than the military, as is the case with the figure of David too. See Philip S. Gorski, “The Mosaic Moment: An Early Modernist Critique of Modernist Theories of Nationalism,” *American Journal of Sociology* 105, no. 5 (2000): 1428–1468; Ofri Ilany, “Is Judah indeed the Teutonic Fatherland? The Debate over the Hebrew Legacy at the Turn of the 18th Century,” *Naharaim* 8, no. 2 (2014): 1–17; Ilany, *In Search of the Hebrew People*.

uniquely prophetic figure who stands in the breach between the people and the holy, opening the people's proximity to the holy and their historical capacity for dwelling poetically, which is to say, prophetically, by "hearkening" and "remembering" the Sayings (*Sagen*) of old. "*Speak to the people of Israel, Saying*" Hölderlin's unique Word orients the people to their proper endowment – the holy; it enjoins them to their proper task or mission – to renew their days in intimacy with the holy One, in proximity to the Fatherland and the Mother Tongue. This is not merely a matter of "national literature," as Herder, Goethe, Schiller and others understood it, but of an essential way of beYng, in proximity to the holy and exposure to the god(s), of understanding and attunement to beYng itself, the concealment from out of which emerges a clearing, like a homeland, like the Fatherland, in which German Dasein may dwell poetically, which is to say, prophetically. In 1934–1935, Heidegger puts it like this:

The poet is the founder of beyng. 'Founding' and 'to found' mean something intrinsically twofold here: On the one hand, 'to found' means to project in advance for the first time and in its essence that which is not yet. Insofar as such founding as poetizing is a telling [*Sagen*], it also means bringing this projection into the word – as a telling and as something said, to place it as a *myth* [*Sage*] into the Dasein of a people, and thus to bring this Dasein to a stand for the first time, to ground it. On the other hand, 'founding' means to deposit and save, as an enduring remembrance of the essence of beyng thus opened up, whatever has in this way been foretold and grounded, as it were – a remembrance to which a people must think its way ever anew. (GA 39, 195 [214–215])

As a founding, the poet's originary telling is not some whimsical inventing, but his placing himself under the thunderstorms of the gods, capturing in the word and in the becoming of the word their beckonings, the lightning flash, and so placing the word – together with its entire, concealed rupturing force – amidst the people. (GA 39, 217 [198])

The 1941–1942 seminar on *Andenken* opens with an even clearer Mosaic conception of Hölderlin's unique Word – *die Worte*, Heidegger emphasizes, essentially distinct from ordinary words, *Wörter*. This singular power of Hölderlin's unique Word explains why it took so long for his stature to become visible and also accounts for the now "inexhaustible abundance" of his Word, which "poeticizes over and beyond" – *überdichten* – the poet's own life and times, beyond his biography, beyond his historical context, all the way toward the

everlasting inception of German beYng-historical. This Moses-like authority places Hölderlin's Word outside the realm of historiography, beyond the pale of science, whose validity Heidegger does not deny but delineates within its proper rank under the authority of the truth of beYng, whose ways of concealment and unconcealment exceed the scope of "science" in the very measure that 'beYng' exceeds the scope of 'nature'. It was in fact from Holderlin and Schelling that Heidegger borrowed the faux archaic spelling of *Seyn*. Only by listening to Hölderlin's Word in this way might those attending his lectures "become hearers of this word," become "hearkeners." To enter into the realm of these *heilige Worte* is to enter into the abundance of a sacred language that goes beyond interpersonal communication and practical instrumentalization to the point of proximity with the holy, intimacy with beYng itself.⁶¹ Heidegger of course does not suspect that the unique destiny he envisages travels over a well-trodden path. "It is questionable," Heidegger says in 1941,

whether such a transformation [of words into the Word] may be ventured outside the domain of Hölderlin's word. For this word, as the word of his hymnal poetizing, is singular, in a sense that is itself singular in turn. This word is like a solitary mountain range that, rising from an exiguity that has emerged, first opens another space of truth around itself. Nothing in this poetizing is embellishment, and *there are no blank spaces*. This word is not a statement "about" something to someone who might assume power over the word. (GA 52, 38 [33], my emphasis)⁶²

The white fire on black fire of Hölderlin's Word.

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- 61 Heidegger indeed insists on separating Hölderlin's revelatory Word from anything associated with Christianity, which "think[s] of everything in terms of its relation to a first, supreme cause that providentially determines in advance the course of the world and of nature." Despite Hölderlin's reference in late hymns to Christ and the Madonna, Heidegger insists that "this Christian turn of Hölderlin's that is proclaimed for various reasons is an invention." Heidegger's characterization of Christianity – as no more than neo-Aristotelianism for the masses through which the idea of a first, supreme cause enters into world consciousness only to mutate into the will to power – is inseparable from his conception of Judaism. In *Being and Time* Heidegger proposed that the corruption of western ontology under the aegis of Aquinas was facilitated by the transmission of Arabic Aristotelianism through the work of Isaac Israeli, as Laurence Hemming reminds me.
- 62 Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymne "Andenken"* (1941–42), ed. Curd Ochwadt, Martin Heidegger Gesamtausgabe 52 (Frankfurt: Klostermann 1982), 134; translated by William McNeill and Julia Ireland as *Hölderlin's Hymn "Remembrance"* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018), 113–114.

(2) This Word, which provides Heidegger with a narrative of the Germans return and renewal of their days of old, also links contemporary German Dasein to the archaic Sayings of the earliest Greek thinkers. Although Heidegger had lectured on the pre-Socratics in 1932 prior to lecturing on Hölderlin in 1934, it is only through Hölderlin that German Dasein is invested with its task and mission to remember, as a people, the truth of early Greek thinking. Explicating this task and mission begins in earnest only in 1942 with the lectures on Anaximander, Parmenides, and Heraclitus, which come on the heels of detailed seminars on Hölderlin that establish the schema within which the free use of the German national is played and displayed in relation to archaic Greece. This nexus between Hölderlin and the early Greeks is decisive for Heidegger in his middle period. Hölderlin's way of transfiguring archaic Greece, not least through the translation of its archaic Sayings, into a German experience of *beyng*, paves the way for Heidegger to develop his own conception of the transformation, the transfiguration, that must take place in German Dasein if it is not to be lost amid the concealment of its contemporary enmeshment in the history of metaphysics. Hölderlin's other way of returning to the Greeks, neither through sublation nor emulation, seeks to disburden the Germans, through the free use of the national, of their complicity in, indeed their mastery of, the history of metaphysics. It amounts to the possibility of "an exchange of fronts" – to use Rosenzweig's expression, even an exchange of *invisible* fronts – between contemporary German Dasein and archaic Greece where, according to Heidegger, the pre-metaphysical truth of *beyng* was first spoken forth. The early Greek thinking of Anaximander, Heraclitus, and Parmenides thus figures *as the esoteric thought of the exoteric life of the Germans*, its mysteries if not its secrets. Heidegger's elaborate exegeses of the Sayings of the early Greek thinkers thereby replicates "the paradox of esotericism" as it has unfolded in the history of Jewish thought, whereby the oldest secrets concealed in the holy Word of the Torah, the very ones to which the esoteric thinker is *returning*, sound new and unfamiliar, have never been heard before, precisely because, qua secrets, they were concealed in the course of history.⁶³ In returning German Dasein to archaic Greece, Hölderlin's Moses-like Word thus provides Heidegger with a narrative of return to the esoteric meaning of Greek Sayings that not only comes as a great surprise to historians and philologists of ancient Greek thought but that, even according to Heidegger himself, no Greek eye saw and no Greek ear heard.

63 Moshe Halbertal, *Concealment and Revelation: Esotericism in Jewish Thought and Its Philosophical Implications*, trans. Jackie Feldman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

Through this schema, established as early as 1934–1935, Heidegger seeks to effect nothing less than a revolution in German thinking, indeed a revolution in German *experience*. According to his schema, the inceptual Greeks were *too exposed* to being for their own experiences to be thought properly, yet precisely this unthought excess of Greek exposure to the fire is what remains for the Germans to think and experience today. Indeed, this excess of the experience of being *split* the very legacy spoken forth by the archaic thinkers, which divides, along one trajectory, to the tradition begun with Plato, which rationalizes the primal *Logos* and in due course (the course of western metaphysics) determines the historical essence of the Germans as a people of logic, dialectics, and metaphysics; while along another, concealed trajectory, marked by subterranean etymologies, old fables, archaic sayings and poetic interruptions, the truth of archaic Greece remained unthought and remains to be thought. But by now – by the late 1930's, and as 'early' as 1934 – Heidegger maintains that the Germans have fallen prey to *their own* excess of thought as a people of logic, dialectic, and metaphysics. They now live and die by rationalizing, planning, organizing and calculating. For these Germans to undertake their proper return, an exchange of fronts must take place. If the Greeks bequeathed the unthought excess of being to the Germans, who mistook its wild incalculability for the mandate of metaphysics, the Germans must now return to the Greek experience of the incalculability of being which they, as the metaphysical people par excellence, especially in the form of National Socialism, have forgotten.

The Greeks are given as their endowment: a rousing proximity (*Nähe*) to the fire from the heavens, being struck by the violence of being. Given to them as a task (*Aufgabe*) is harnessing the unharnessed in the struggle for the work – grasping, bringing to a stand.

The Germans are given as their endowment: the ability to grasp, the preparation and planning of domains and calculating setting in order to the point of organization. It is given to them as a task to come to be struck by being. (GA 39, 293 [265])

It is as if Heidegger is depicting contemporary Germans as *goyische Yekkes*, masters of grasping, preparing, planning, calculating, and organizing. Their task is to create a space in which this endowment can be struck by lightning, which means to stand in the midst of the wildness of being, the ungraspable, incalculable truth of the ever-presencing of holy un/concealment. The lost cause that Heidegger pursues on behalf of German Dasein consists in overcoming this double limitation by transposing the unthought Greek experience of being into a task to be thought in German. It necessitates separating

Hölderlin from German metaphysics as much as from Christianity, no matter what the historians say about Hölderlin's profound role in the gestation of German Idealism, his late return to Christian faith, and his place in the history of German Christian nationalism (e.g., GA 52, 119 [140]). Metaphysics and Christian theology belong on the wrong side of the split that originates in archaic Greece.⁶⁴ For Heidegger, Hölderlin belongs on the other side, in the Greek morning, in the *Morgenland* that is Other than the western world, binding the concealed truth of archaic Greece to the German people, like Moses binding kabbalistic secrets into the crowns of the letters, mysteries that enable the incessant renewal of the day of old, whereby intimacy with the concealed Holy One of beYng can take place historically.

The two major trajectories of Heidegger's thought in his middle period thus come together in the Moses-like figure of Hölderlin. First, by founding the unique historical destiny of the elected German people on Hölderlin's Moses-like Word and Moses-like *Geschichte* of a return to the homeland as a way of dwelling prophetically; second, by finding the esoteric, Kabbalah-like traces of beYng concealed within the Sayings of archaic Greece, to which Hölderlin, Moses-like, leads the people. There is a third way, however.

(3) The truth of beYng – its Word, its Story, and its Mysteries – is the endowment and task of *the people*, not only its thinkers, poets, and prophets. The “truth of a people” must gather round this Word in order to sustain its historical way of beYng. Indeed, Hölderlin's Word is, Heidegger says, a “law” for the people and the origin of their “fate” – if only we could understand law without sovereignty and fate without the metaphysics of causality. The *space* for such a possibility is “the Fatherland,” its *time* is given by “the festival.” As the

64 Thus when Hölderlin professes that he wants “to sing the angels of the holy fatherland,” Heidegger comments: “This holy, however, is not simply the divine of some ‘religion’ likewise at hand, here, the Christian one. The holy cannot be ascertained ‘theologically’ at all, for all ‘theology’ already presupposes the *Θεός*, the god, and this is so emphatically the case that wherever theology arises, the god has already begun his flight.” By contrast: “The Greeks, in the great and authentic period of their history, were without ‘theology.’ Neither the theologians of the ‘German Christians,’ nor those of the Confessional Front, nor the Catholic theologians can find the holy of the fatherland. They are in the same trap as the biologists, the prehistorians, and the art historians; claiming to be close to reality, they engage in a kind of ‘intellectualism,’ one not even attained by the greatly maligned nineteenth century that they blindly continue. One's own is not to be procured so cheaply in an era when the world is threatening to get out of joint. Whoever thinks that it can be, is denigrating the concealed dignity of the ownmost essence of the fatherland, and, if he is thinking at all, is in any case not thinking in a German manner” (GA 52, 134; trans. McNeill and Ireland, *Hölderlin's Hymn “Remembrance,”* 113–114).

fatherland is to sacred space, so the festival is to sacred time. Here too the ghost of German literary Hebraism hovers.

In the *Andenken* seminar of 1941–1942, Heidegger claims that the horizon opened by Hölderlin's Word consists of an essentially singular, inexhaustible realm of "historical action" (sec. 2) – action that transcends the realm of politics, war, and economics, a kind of *liturgical action* through which the people hearken to the Word through the festival. In contrast to the dominant discourse of the day, Heidegger is at pains to invoke *die heilige Worte* as a *form of Lebensraum* that goes beyond the political, even as the festival is essentially bound to the fatherland.⁶⁵ The festival apportions the holy of the fatherland such that each shall have his or her portion of the holy.

The festival is an "event," *Ereignis*, that grounds "the history of the holy," displacing the people from the history of western nations and opening them, within that history, to another history, the history of beYng. The temporality of the festival is the temporality of the truth of the people, a way of "whiling" that founds history: "the festival" is not an occurrence within the framework and on the grounds of history; rather, "*the festival' is itself the ground and the essence of history.*" Liturgical time has ontological priority over chronology, it gives sense and orientation to the chronological sequence of *Historie*, it opens a way of dwelling prophetically in proximity to the holy. The way the festival whiles cannot be explicated by a metaphysical conception of time. Its way of desisting from work, letting the inhabitual appear, receiving the radiance or splendor, waiting suspended in fundamental attunements such as mourning and love, in a type of lucid *proximity* to the source of beYng – not a way of being *at the source*, Heidegger emphasizes, but of being in the vicinity, in nearness or proximity, in a place where one can hearken to the Word and allow the holy spirit to breeze through, which Heidegger analyzes in detail by combining the motif of the breeze with the time of transition, "March time," which elicits a harmony of being that is wholly transitory, thus incalculable, a singular fate that has nothing to do with causality or volition but with the reciprocal *greeting* of divinity and mortals. As Heidegger glosses Hölderlin: "fate is equalized [*ausgeglichen*] for a while." This reciprocal greeting of divinity and mortals

65 Levinas, in his reflections on "Revelation in the Jewish Tradition," speaks in similar terms: "The volume of the book as a form of living space! It is in this sense, too, that Israel is a people of the Book, and that its relation to the Revelation is unique of its kind. Its actual land is based on the Revelation. Its nostalgia for the land is fed on texts. It derives nothing from belonging in some organic way to a particular piece of soil. There is certainly in this a presence to the world where the paradox of transcendence is less unusual." Emmanuel Levinas, "Revelation in the Jewish Tradition," in *Beyond the Verse: Talmudic Readings and Lectures*, trans. Gary D. Mole (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 130.

takes place as a “bridal festival,” as if we were invited to *Shabbos bei* Heidegger and Hölderlin. “The festival as bridal festival is the event of the inceptual greeting.” Come, let us greet the bride! לך דודי לקראת כלה. The festival as the hearing and remembrance, *shamor* and *zachor*, of the inception of the history of beYng.

The bridal festival marks a moment – *kairos*, עת, מועד, – that Heidegger imagines can shelter the Germans in a while of remembrance that keeps them at bay from the decline of metaphysics, in particular its decline into National Socialism. By now, in 1941–1942, he understands that preserving and remembering the holy by dwelling poetically in the fatherland does not and cannot coincide with the task of the political, whose concern with the sovereignty of the state places it entirely in the service of metaphysics. The festival thus involves a retreat from the political to another way of dwelling together: the holy fraternity, the secret community of poetic or prophetic dwellers, whose joy and burden is to partake of the concealed history of beYng together. Heidegger describes this “recollective being entrusted with that which has been entrusted to them” as a secret mystical community, like the *hevrayah* of the holy *Zohar* wandering about the imaginary landscape of the homeland, freely unconcealing the mysteries of the Holy One of beYng.⁶⁶ In place of the political is the friendship of the *hevrayah* – “freeing of oneself through which a free and open realm emerges between those speaking. ... The form of this truth is friendship.”⁶⁷

Curiously, and strikingly, this mystical community, called to “gather back into the unity of the One” in remembrance of the history of beYng, takes place *in the synagogue*. It takes place, Heidegger says, “only by συναγωγή [*synagogue*] – by bringing into One ... that which rests in itself ... in ‘queen’ beauty” (my emphasis). We thus arrive, just in time for *Shabbos*, to the point where Heidegger imagines friends, German friends, gathered around the Torah-like Word of their master Hölderlin, gathered in the synagogue for the bridal festival, to greet the divinity, like kabbalists returning from the hilltops to Safed, having welcomed the presence of the *Shekhina* to dwell for a while, to dwell for the transitional time of sabbatical existence within history on earth. The festival, through its remembrances, draws the people, especially the friends (חבריא), to beYng-together. We thus arrive not to the Greek morning but to other days

66 I have not yet had the chance to integrate my findings with the intriguing views of Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, *Mishna Consciousness, Biblical Consciousness: Safed and Zionist Culture* (Tel Aviv: Van Leer Institute Press/Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2022) [Hebrew], though I would like to.

67 GA 52, 165; trans. McNeill and Ireland, *Hölderlin's Hymn “Remembrance,”* 140.

of old, ימי קדם, to another *Morgenland*, קדמה, and another history within the history of metaphysics, the *Geschichte* in which the mysteries of Israel are concealed within the mysteries of Heidegger's conception of the spiritual mission of German Dasein.

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