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Autochthony, Promised Land, and Exile: Athens and Jerusalem Revisited

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ABSTRACT

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The study examines three myths endemic to Western culture, autochthony (indigenousness), promised land, and exile taking as figurative representations Athens for autochthony and Jerusalem for promised land. The myth of autochthony is found in ancient Greek literature and the myth of promised land is found in Hebrew scripture. The notion of exile is shown to be a corollary to promised land, and in opposition to autochthony. The philosophy of Martin Heidegger is shown to articulate an essential commitment to autochthony, which is explicitly contrasted to rootlessness and homelessness (what Heidegger takes to be the substance of modernity itself). The philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig is shown to prioritize Jewish exile as necessary for world redemption, a notion of exile explicitly contrasted to autochthony. Nazi Germany exemplifies the opposition of German autochthony and Jewish exile.
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CHAPTER 1

AUTOCHTHONY AND PROMISED LAND – ATHENS AND JERUSALEM

"An old flower strips itself of petals one by one,
and stands there nude, death's image and its spoil;
a fragile peach-bough cracks beneath its load
and inch by inch it droops toward the soil.

And you, young man, what death is waiting now for you?
is that insectile buzz the bullet's sound,
or will you, smashed and scattered by a bomb,
be ploughed into the dark beneath the ground?
—— Miklós Radnóti, Foamy Sky

1.1 The Fundament of Ground – A Nation's Land

What could be more fundamental than the ground upon which we live? We scour the
earth, till the soil, live off the land, carve up territory and bury the dead. Abstractly, we insist
that arguments stand on solid ground, and temper flights of fancy by keeping both feet there.
The earth is said to be a divine creation and here and there the ground is holy.

Two myths about the ground, autochthony and promised land, as well as the notion of
exile, encompass the scope of this study. The concrete analogues to these myths would be
Athens and Jerusalem. The two great cities are both historical places and conceptual loci,
timeless wellsprings of language and culture that course through the entirety of Western his-
tory, civilization and culture: Greek and Hebrew, or in the phrasing of Matthew Arnold Hel-
lenism and Hebraism. Generally, Athens stands for Greek philosophy and drama, the acad-
emy and reason, democracy and imperialism. Jerusalem symbolizes the nation of Israel, the
Holy Land, the God of Western monotheism, scripture and worship, and destruction and ex-

ile. In ancient Greek literature we read of the autochthonous origins of the Athenians, that they were born out of the earth itself, out of the soil of Attica; they were not immigrant settlers or conquerors from abroad but indigenous to their land. By contrast in Hebrew scripture we find the story of the roving Abraham and his descendents to whom God promises the land of Canaan. Abraham is not indigenous to this portentous holy land; he is a traveler with whom God makes a covenant, the promise of land for him and his descendents.

Here we have two narratives about nationality, two radically opposed mythical histories of national origin and identity, both of which prioritize land. Athenian national identity is based on indigenousness, it establishes legitimacy by naturalizing the relationship between the people and the land; kinship is both natural and civic as the common origin in mother earth binds the citizens together. By contrast Israel’s national identity is legitimimized through the covenant of promised land between God and the patriarch Abraham; kinship is established by paternal descent and commitment to the covenant. Autochthon is necessary, while promised land is contingent. The relationship between the Athenians and the Attic soil is absolute; it cannot be overturned or undone. The relationship between Israel and the land is conditional, first in accord with the Abrahamic covenant (circumcise all male descendents and the land is yours), and later in accord with the law and historical theology (transgress the law and God will exile the nation from the land; remain faithful to the law and the nation will be restored to the land).

A nation’s land, its territory and soil, forms the basis of both narratives. Autochthon always pertains to a specific site, a place, as does promised land, in our case Attica and the land of Canaan, or Athens and Jerusalem. There are other sites of autochthony, differentiated by the dynamics and purpose of the myth’s variations, just as there are other promised
lands. Is every continent not host to an indigenous people identifying itself as historically belonging to a specific place in the land, such as the Aymaras of the Andean Plateau? Is not promised land today more than a literal or mental place of expected felicity, but now an over-wrought cliché: America, California, heaven, God’s good work, hopes and dreams, someday in the future?

Autochthony (auto + chthôn, earth) by definition refers back to itself. In simple terms it means ‘out of the earth itself’. Accordingly, Athens enjoys the prestige of symbolizing the West’s philosophical roots; recall Whitehead’s deft phrase, all philosophy is a footnote to Plato. To consider the Promised Land, however, the Holy Land of Hebrew scripture, one must also consider the conditional terms of the promise, and the contrary of dwelling in the land—exile. In scripture, promised land and exile together constitute a dialectic that engenders a dynamism moving Israel along its historical path. It is not the myth of the people’s land, but the myth of the promised land; thus signaling one to interrogate the text, inquiring: What are the terms of the promise? What are the conditions necessary for fulfillment? According to the historical theology of the biblical narrative, when Israel lapses into sin thereby breaking its promise to God, the consequence is exile from the promised land.

1.2 The Myth of Autochthony

The Oxford English Dictionary defines an autochthon as, first and literally, “a human being sprung from the soil he inhabits; a ‘son of the soil’.” Second, autochthons are “the earliest known dwellers in any country; original inhabitants, aborigines.” Both definitions—the first implicitly and metaphorically and the second explicitly—convey a political historical understanding of indigenousness, that a given people, a nation, has inhabited a particular land
or territory since time immemorial. The Aborigines, for example, are considered the original inhabitants of Australia, distinct from the Europeans who came later.

When pressed, however, the determinative character of this political historical autochthony begins to break down, challenged by anthropological and archaeological science: the Aboriginals, we are told, arrived on the Australian continent some 25,000 years ago, having traveled from Southeast Asia. What allows us then to say historiographically the Aboriginals are autochthonous to Australia or the Cherokee indigenous to the Appalachian highlands or the Iroquois native to northeastern America? In a phrase, a people either declares its autochthony or is declared to be autochthonous; it is a declaration typically occasioned by contact or confrontation with an 'other'. Thus, the Australian Aborigines become autochthonous at the moment they encounter and are encountered by the non-Aboriginal, the European settlers. As such, autochthony signals a moment when the mythical character of history becomes most evident: time immemorial is the unlit reservoir of historical space, the point on the time line where the historical record fades out and a cultural memory is conjured from the darkness, or in the phrasing of Eric Hobsbawm, a tradition is invented.²

Predictably, there is no single unequivocal definition of indigenous peoples since the differences among such peoples are considerable and non-indigenous persons and institutions, like anthropologists and the state, seldom have similar interests. "Indigenous peoples themselves claim the right to define who they are, and reject the idea that outsiders can do

² Eric Hobsbawm’s notion of the invention of tradition provides a resourceful way of interpreting the myth of autochthony, as well as that of promised land. See Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., The Invention of Tradition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
so,” writes Lotte Hughes.  

Nevertheless, Hughes continues, “anthropologists [...] use the term indigenous peoples to describe a non-dominant group in a particular territory, with a more or less acknowledged claim to be aboriginal.”  

The International Labour Organization defines the autochthonous as:

Peoples in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from populations which inhabited the country, or a geographic region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural or political institutions.

This definition was adopted in 1991 and is often cited by international organizations working on behalf of indigenous peoples.  

It and similar definitions are usually framed within the context of colonialism, with colonial authority de-legitimized. We might call such definitions postcolonial in substance.

Always implicated in the myth of autochthony is the non-autochthonous other; historiographically the autochthon is qualified as such only when and where there is an encounter with the non-native other. This other might be nomads or invaders, or it could be settlers

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6 Hughes 2003, 15.
who bring a number of institutions, a radically different culture. In both the colonial and postcolonial worlds the other is generally the state and the autochthons constitute a marginalized if not oppressed group, such as the Indians of the Asian subcontinent during European (mostly British) colonial rule or the various Native American nations then and now. The imperial colonizers themselves may cherish the noble birth of autochthony, as the Athenians did, and the British too in the glory days of their empire. Recall the stigma of ‘going native’, which in a sense meant trading in one’s birthright for an alternative autochthony. Rousseau’s noble savage is itself a romanticized version of the autochthon seeming to emerge from the dense forests of the New World, beckoning the Europeans to question the purpose of civilization.

The myth of autochthony empowers nations to both constructive and catastrophic ends. Indigenous peoples throughout the world today depend heavily upon the unifying dynamic of postcolonial autochthony in the quest for increased group cohesiveness and identity, an identity necessary for securing from states and international organizations political recognition. Such recognition is not merely pro forma but a necessary basis from which to seek rights involving limited national and legal autonomy as well as critical land use. In addition to the unquantifiable degree of symbolic significance, physical dominion over land is central to social and economic livelihood: a place to dwell and bury the dead, farmland, grazing pastures, access to water, and control over natural resources such as timber, minerals, and of course crude oil and natural gas. Native Americans, for example, have only limited mineral rights to the lands they occupy, thereby uprooting them from the land. In response, a number

7 A figure such as T.E. Lawrence represents only a temporary exception to the stigma of ‘going native’, for even he eventually returned to his native England and sought to distance himself from his enigmatic, grandiose Arab personae.
of Indian nations have established gambling casinos on their reservations as a means to increase their national revenue. In Bolivia, the indigenous *Indios* have in recent years repeatedly organized road blockades to pressure the government and foreign corporations to cease expropriating from local communities without sufficient compensation spring water and natural gas.

But autochthony has a destructive side too. In Nazi Germany we find the inverse of postcolonial autochthony, where it is the state that appropriates "peasant enrootedness" and *völkisch* sentiment in the composition of its Aryan *Blut und Boden* ideology, one that paints the Jews as non-native, parasitic invaders in the land poisoning Teutonic blood and soil.\(^8\) Here we have the construction of an extreme other. Such state-sanctioned militant autochthony continues to flare up throughout the world, spawning "proprietary claims that still result in fierce local wars"\(^9\) and, in the case of Rwanda, genocide—despite post-Holocaust declarations of "Never again!"\(^10\)

**1.3 The Myth of Promised Land**

In the West the origin of the myth of promised land is of course found in the Bible, specifically in the covenant between God and Abraham regarding the land of Canaan. But the idea itself is not restricted to scripture. The pervasive influence of the Bible on Western

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\(^10\) The genocide in Rwanda is only one of the more obvious manifestations of human catastrophe occasioned by autochthony and covered by the international news media. Regional conflict and mass death associated with autochthony can currently be found in Iraq, India, Australia, and throughout the continents of Africa and South and Central America.
culture transforms the covenantal transaction into a generalized concept. Accordingly, colonial conquest itself brings into play the notion of promised land, territory believed to fulfill certain hopes and aspirations, be they religious, economic, or political.

Perhaps the most historically momentous expression of the myth of promised land outside of scripture would be the allure of the New World, the settlement of which was profoundly invested with religious meaning, and in the United States continues to be so despite the constitutional separation of church and state and the implementation of so-called secular civic nationalism. In fact the binary ‘God and country’ is so indelible to the American psyche that the so-called secular realm appears to be more epiphenomenal rather than fundamental to the culture.

The establishment of the modern nation-state of Israel in 1948 rearticulates the myth of promised land for the burgeoning postcolonial world. Though a secular nationalist movement, Zionism appeals to an historical connection between the Jewish people and Palestine, a relationship premised on implicit appeal to the Bible, as there are no extra-biblical or non-Jewish sources that advance the covenant of promised land between Israel and God or that document the Davidic monarchy, thereby lending historical political legitimacy to claims to the land. When it does not implicitly reference the biblical notion of promised land, Zionism proceeds somewhat apophatically, negating exile (shelilat hagalut), arguing that the Jews cannot forever remain in exile; they like other modern nations need a homeland to escape the centuries-long persecution suffered in the Diaspora.

The founding of modern Israel naturally invites reappraisal of the myth of promised land as conceived in Hebrew scripture. Biblical faith, “a pursuit of historical belonging that
includes a sense of destiny derived from such belonging,”

places the theme of land squarely in the center of its enterprise. In contrast to modern existentialist theologies that emphasize rootless, personal autonomy and choice, a bible-based faith is understood as a response and resolution to the ubiquitous ‘exile’ said to be brought about by the complexities of modernity itself. Endeavoring to situate religious faith on stable ground, it acknowledges “that land continually moves back and forth between literal and symbolic intentions.” On this subject, biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann explains:

A symbolic sense of the term affirms that land is never simply physical dirt but is always physical dirt freighted with social meanings derived from historical experience. A literal sense of the term will protect us from excessive spiritualization, so that we recognize that the yearning for land is always a serious historical enterprise concerned with historical power and belonging.

The faith and theology that Brueggemann explicated here coincides with what might be loosely termed the ‘return to earth’ indicative of environmentalism, ecology, and even contemporary neopaganism, a trend with antecedents in the discovery and settlement of the New World and reaching fever pitch in the land reform pervading the globe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. To pro-Zionist Evangelical Christians, the myth of the promised land has come full-circle, from Israel to America and back again to Israel. In recent years, the Israeli government has courted American evangelicals for economic and political purposes, and conservative Christians in the United States frequently come to the defense of question-


12 Ibid, 2.

13 Ibid.
able tactics on the part of the Israeli government, making reference to the role of the Holy Land in the advent of the ‘end times’.\textsuperscript{14}

1.4 Exile, Diaspora, and Postmodernity

Exile constitutes the contrary to both autochthony and settlement in promised land. In the mid-nineteenth century, for example, untold numbers of Irish were driven by famine from their land and into exile, and many found their way to the American promised land. But if the Irish migration exemplifies a movement from homeland to exile wherein exile itself is readily recast as promised land, consider the slave trade. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, countless Africans were wrenched from their native lands and sold into slavery in the Americas, thereby thrown into an exilic world tragically far from any perceived promised land. Who but a sadistic and cynical joker would tell the captured and shackled African he is on his way to the promised land? Only after emancipation and drawing explicitly from the biblical story of the Israelite exodus from Egypt do African Americans indeed reconfigure their exile in the Americas as promised land.

In the biblical narrative, Israelite history is one of a back-and-forth between settlement in the promised land and exile brought about by various calamities associated with the surrounding kingdoms of Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, and Persia. Eventually, the Roman sacking of Jerusalem in 70 CE signals the culmination of ancient Jewish exile. Not until 1948 does the exile end in an historical political sense. Theologically, however, the establishment of modern Israel does not signal the end to the Jewish Diaspora, as the founding of

the nation-state is viewed as a political endeavor not (yet) accompanied by the arrival of the messiah and the ingathering of all the exiles.

Diaspora is originally a Greek term meaning scattered seed, and it is often associated with the Jews throughout much of Western history. Today, however, there are countless diasporas (Armenian, Irish, Palestinian, Tibetan, etc.), symptomatic of the world-wide rootlessness characteristic of what Jean-François Lyotard calls the postmodern condition. This is the human condition not following in epochal fashion the modern era, thereby signaling its end, but instead the ever-fluctuating “nascent state” of modern ideas, principles and modes of comportment. The seemingly coherent grand narratives serving as foundations for modern social, political and cultural stability (e.g., Capitalism, Democracy, Marxism, etc.) now show themselves to be contingent, constructed and projected, and rich with differences covered over by the powerful and the authoritative. The historical moment in which we find the self-referential interrogative style of postmodernism would be globalization, when knowledge is commodified, high speed telecommunication enables instant world-wide connectivity, financial conglomerates and markets transcend national political boundaries, and more and more people are on the move, departing their homelands for the prosperity awaiting them in some promised land, be it near or far.

Secularism, ostensibly one of the fundamental tenets of modernity, has begun to crack apart, revealing its contingency, and around the world the religious is challenging the hegemony of the nation-state (in, for example, the United States, India, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Pakistan). Sociologist Peter L. Berger, who famously advanced the idea of the secular in the 1960s, now writes, “the assumption that we live in a secularized world is false. The world

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today [...] is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever.”¹⁶ As the legitimacy of the modern institution of the nation-state is increasingly questioned from the perspective of religion, theologians and scholars are turning to exile and diaspora as resourceful concepts for reconfiguring religious faith and principles. Walter Brueggemann, John Howard Yoder, Stanley Hauerwas, and Daniel L. Smith-Christopher emphasize the value of exile for Christian faith,¹⁷ and Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin do likewise for Judaism.¹⁸ The latter suggest that “Diaspora can teach us that it is possible for a people to maintain its distinctive culture, its difference, without controlling land, a fortiori without controlling other people or developing a need to dispossess them of their lands.”¹⁹ Exile and diaspora, then, are symptomatic of globalization and the postmodern condition.

1.5 Autochthony and Promised Land in Conflict

America as a place of both autochthony and promised land illustrates the devastating consequences of these two myths in conflict. For the European colonists, the New World was the new promised land, and its settlement, though fraught with hardship and sacrifice, was thought to be sanctioned by God himself. For the many Indian nations already dwelling


in the land, the colonists were invaders, visiting upon them incalculable ruin and dispossessing them of land they had occupied for generations.\textsuperscript{20}

What the conflict between autochthony and promised land reveals is, first, the centrality of one particular land to both worldviews and, second, the shared purpose of the two myths in securing a relationship between people and land. But whereas autochthony derives its legitimacy from positing a natural or historical relationship between land and people, the myth of promised land gets its force from positing a contractual relationship between land and people, a relationship brokered by Providence. In religious terms, autochthony is pagan and promised land is monotheistic; both define the value of land for the people, paganism from below and monotheism from above. Power and cunning determine who will triumph over the other and lay hold of the land.

The modern nation-state of Israel constitutes another arena where autochthony and promised land conflict. Today a popular view among Palestinians is that they are descendants of the ancient indigenous Canaanites and the Israeli Jews European colonialists who have displaced the native population.\textsuperscript{21} A novel variation of this view is that the Palestinians were themselves Jews who converted to Islam following the Muslim conquest, a position that

\textsuperscript{20} Perhaps the most infamous account of colonial treatment of the indigenous population of the New World is that of Spanish missionary Bartolomé de las Casas, \textit{Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indians}, published in 1552. Las Casas served as bishop of Chiapas and pursued with admirable determination the cause against slavery and ill treatment of the indigenous Americans.

\textsuperscript{21} See for example the profile of Palestine at the Arab media outlet Al Jazeera’s website, http://english.aljazeera.net/.
attempts to confound exclusive claims to the land on the part of contemporary Jewish settlers.22

Among contemporary historians and archaeologists there is indeed a trend to challenge the supremacy of the biblical narrative regarding the history of the land and its people. This is the position of Keith Whitelam in his controversial The Invention of Ancient Israel: the Silencing of Palestinian History.23 Noting the preponderance of scholarly interest in the Bible and the history of ancient Israel, Whitelam asks rather pointedly: “Where, then, do we find courses on the history of ancient Palestine?”24 His frustration is palpable, as he observes “the history of ancient Palestine, it seems, does not fall under the domain of either Theology or History in our institutions of higher education.”25 He contends that “as an academic subject it appears not to exist: it has been silenced and excluded by the dominant discourse of biblical studies.”26 He offers as the reason for this lacuna the influence of biblical scholarship:

22 There are numerous sources on the internet that promulgate this idea, partly based on genetic research reported in scientific journals. See for example Ariella Oppenheim et al, “High-resolution Y chromosome haplotypes of Israeli and Palestinian Arabs reveal geographic substructure and substantial overlap with haplotypes of Jews,” in Human Genetics 107 (6), December 2000, 630-641. Also see Michael F. Hammer et al, “Jewish and Middle Eastern non-Jewish Populations Share a Common Pool of Y-chromosome Biallelic Haplotypes,” in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA 97 (12), June 6, 2000, in which the authors argue Ashkenazi Jews are paternally related to Palestinians.


24 Ibid., 3

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.
There exists, then, what we might term a discourse of biblical studies which is a powerful, interlocking network of ideas and assertions believed by its practitioners to be the reasonable results of objective scholarship while masking the realities of an exercise of power.  

This "exercise of power" is closely tied to "the social and political context out of which modern biblical studies has emerged." Whitlam points to the rise of historiography and nationalism in nineteenth-century Germany as the determinative phenomena. The development of biblical studies in German universities was shaped not only by a generalized Christian worldview (encompassing ideas of both Catholicism and Protestantism), but also by philological methodologies that focused exclusively on the biblical text and interpreted it in terms of the then nascent discipline of history.

Whitlam and a growing chorus of other scholars are challenging the hegemony of biblical scholars in piecing together the history of the holy land in antiquity, contending first and foremost that scripture is an unreliable source decidedly biased in favor of the Israelites and consequently the Jews, overlooking the history of the indigenous non-Jewish population. Objective history should proceed only on the basis of empirical archaeological evidence and non-biblical written sources. Following this, Whitlam, Thomas Thompson and others cast doubt on the veracity of the Israelite conquest recounted in the book of Joshua as well as the unity of the tribes under a stalwart Davidic monarchy recounted in the 'Chronicler's History'. Their research deals extensively with, in Whitlam's words, "the so-called 'emerg-


gence’ or ‘origins’ of Israel in Palestine during the Late Bronze–Iron Age transition and the subsequent period of the founding of an Israelite state in the Iron Age,”\textsuperscript{30} extensively tracking and dating settlement patterns among the Semitic peoples who inhabited the land.

Close analysis of archaeological evidence and history is beyond my expertise; I simply wish to draw attention to the general structure of the debate: biblical history versus so-called objective, empirically based history. The challenge to the hegemony of biblical history constitutes for many a challenge to Israeli claims to the land as well as to religious faith itself among many Christians and Jews. Constructing a presumably objective history derived from archaeological evidence also appears to bolster Palestinian claims of autochthony in the land. But the matter is hardly conclusive, as reconstructing a coherent Palestinian history from antiquity to the present remains an ongoing endeavor still lacking sufficient concrete data and fraught with the politics and power struggles of a history bearing tremendously on religious faith and national identity—an extraordinarily contentious endeavor to say the least.

On the ground, the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis is in the barest sense reduced to violence and bloodshed; Palestinian tactic versus Israeli strategy. While the Palestinians are by and large confined to squalid living conditions in Gaza and the West Bank, the Jewish state implements an aggressive ideology of land entitlement. According to Brueggemann, such land entitlement is “enacted in unrestrained violence against the Palestinian population.”\textsuperscript{31} Because Israel is a frequent target of internal terrorist violence as well as occasional cross-border attacks, land seizure and settlement is pursued officially in the interest

\textsuperscript{29} Thomas L. Thompson, \textit{Early History of The Israelite People: From the Written and Archaeological Sources} (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992).

\textsuperscript{30} Whitelam, 1996, 5.

\textsuperscript{31} Brueggemann, 2002, xv.
of national security. But the ambitions of the Jewish settler movement to occupy more and more of the land is also sanctioned by an entrenched, religious orthodoxy which exacts significant political influence and justifies such settlement with an appeal to the biblical covenant of promised land. Thus, the dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian relationship leads many scholars, such as Noam Chomsky, Edward Said and Norman Finkelstein, to argue a quasi-colonial situation exists in Israel, with the Israelis lording a nationalist interpretation of promised land over the indigenous Palestinians.\textsuperscript{32} Said points out that the Oslo agreements initiated in September 1993, "do not include any reference, not one sentence, about the Palestinians’ right to self-determination."\textsuperscript{33} And South Africa’s Anglican Archbishop and Nobel Laureate Desmond Tutu said that he was deeply distressed by the Palestinian situation during a visit to Israel, remarking, "It reminded me so much of what happened to us blacks in South Africa."\textsuperscript{34}

On the optimistic side, more recent developments suggest a trend toward compromise and perhaps even relative Palestinian autonomy in the near future.\textsuperscript{35} The road ahead, how-


\textsuperscript{35} During the research and writing of this study, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon implemented a complete withdrawal from Gaza. Critics, however, point out that the overall Israeli strategy may be one of surrendering Gaza while aggressively maintaining settlements in the West Bank, settlements that the United Nations has deemed illegal. Sharon’s backers counter that his is a strategy of realpolitik with regard to Israeli voters, most of whom appear to favor complete disengagement from the Palestinians. Accordingly, Sharon’s long-term plans are said to include withdrawal from major parts of the West Bank as well.
ever, will undoubtedly present many challenges, especially with regard to the fate of Jewish settlements in the West Bank (what some Orthodox Jews call Samaria) and Jewish residents in traditionally Muslim East Jerusalem. While it may seem to many that the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis is fated, the opposition between autochthony and promised land is not one of necessity but political will. In fact, the archaeological data discussed by White-lam, Thompson and others suggest that on the whole the ancient Israelites likely lived peacefully alongside the Canaanites and other Semitic peoples inhabiting the land in antiquity.

1.6 Thesis: Autochthony and Exile in Conflict

Taking the Holocaust as a reference point, we can see that among the innumerable currents converging in this event, the German autochthon and the Jewish exile clash with ghastly results. As noted above, it is in Nazi Germany that the state itself effectively broadcasts the idea of German indigenousness, deliberately contrasting it to the presence of the Jewish Diaspora.\(^3^6\) National Socialists adroitly cultivated Germany’s (and ultimately much of Europe’s) well rooted antisemitism through the shrewd use of radio and electronic public address at a perfectly auspicious moment in history, while the nation agonizingly transitioned from agrarian to industrial. Through such broadcasting they were able to widely and successfully disseminate belief in Jewish ‘infestation’ and ‘destruction’ of Aryan indigenousness, health, and superiority.

What I advance in the following pages is an historical contrast between autochthony and exile which I argue is evident in the post-World War I philosophies of Martin Heidegger

\(^3^6\) Originally an agricultural term meaning to spread seeds, broadcast captures the dynamic of Nazi use of radio and other media to propagandize against the Jews. But it is also resonant with diaspora, meaning scattered seed: thus the Nazis basically “re-seeded” German soil, hoping to uproot and eliminate the Jews and in their place cultivate the perfect Aryan race.
and Franz Rosenzweig respectively. The Holocaust serves as the obvious historical reference point for tracking the clash between German autochthony and Jewish exile. But the manifold antecedents to this conflict can be found in the history of the broader intellectual and cultural climate long before the Second World War, in for example the romanticized notions of German destiny and love of the Fatherland that helped to bring about the First World War.  

Given the teleology of their respective thinking—both share a philosophic crescendo building up to perfect human existence—Heidegger’s early philosophy reveals a commitment to autochthony and Rosenzweig’s a commitment to exile. In my view their philosophic endeavors following the First World War are indicative of the much larger currents of autochthony and exile, currents that diachronically stretch back to antiquity and are figuratively captured by the metaphors of Athens and Jerusalem. Synchronously, Heidegger and Rosenzweig both share in the spirit of the times the absolute necessity of renewal, be it Dasein achieving authentic existence or the course toward world redemption. It was a sense of renewal born out of nationalism, industrialization, and sweeping economic and social changes, all parts of the beginnings of globalization and the gradual erosion of colonial legitimacy. At the center of this social and historical storm, culminating in the many mass death events of the twentieth century, is the conflict between autochthony, promised land and exile. This study constitutes an intellectual history of this conflict through examination of the works of Martin Heidegger and Franz Rosenzweig written in the 1920s and early 1930s.

37 Historian Mary Fulbrook writes, "Wilhelmine Germany was characterized by rapid industrialization; by the steady rise of the SPD, symbolizing increasing social confrontation; and by instable parliamentary political alliances, with increasingly important pressure-group politics [...] Ultimately, Wilhelmine Germany played a major role in unleashing the First World War and precipitating its own downfall. The social tensions which had dogged it were not resolved in the successor regime, the Weimar Republic, and in new forms played an important role in the eventual rise of Hitler." See Mary Fullbrook, A Concise History of Germany, second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 137.
Regarding these two German philosophers, consider Heidegger’s well-documented affiliation with Nazism in the early 30s. Some argue that his philosophy reveals not a brief foray but an essential relationship with völkisch Blut und Boden sentimentality, a core principle of National Socialist ideology. Emmanuel Levinas contends that Heidegger’s “attention to the forgetting of Being,” privileges a so-called natural existence, that his philosophy explicates “a pagan existing.” Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari observe that Heidegger cherishes the Greek autochthon, whose specificity “is to dwell in Being and possess its word.”

To be sure, there is a discernible beauty to Heidegger’s philosophy, explicit is the self’s quest for an authentic embrace of Being. But Heidegger’s emphasis on “lofty landscapes of nature [and] an impersonal fecundity” amounts to a de-emphasis of other persons, a damnable flaw in terms of ethics. In Heidegger’s world the autochthon’s care is directed toward rootedness in the soil and technology obfuscates this authentic, autochthonous care. Edith Wyschogrod observes, “Heidegger sees the primary distortions resulting from technique as blighted landscapes, urban sprawl, and dreary industrial complexes. The destruction of persons for him becomes a secondary phenomenon.”

Conversely, Rosenzweig’s philosophy accentuates Jewish exile and condemns national autochthony in the evolving course toward world redemption. Rosenzweig’s system shares an affinity with Heidegger’s hermeneutic approach: both articulate a philosophic tele-

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38 Levinas, 1993, 52.


40 Levinas, 1993, 53.

ology wherein the individual moves toward a kind of unity with the world. Heidegger characterizes his aim as a response to the question of the meaning of Being, whereas Rosenzweig, explicitly religious in his philosophy, characterizes the goal as redemption. But as noted above, Heidegger loses sight of other persons, emphasizing Being in abstraction; no matter how authentic the individual may be in his or her comportment with the surrounding world other persons are incidental not integral. Rosenzweig however never loses sight of other persons: his philosophy struggles upon the middle ground between the individual and the communal but nevertheless remains committed to the human realm, not privileging a perspective of Being in the abstract. It is the relation between the self and the neighbor that prepares the world for redemption.

What is more, Heidegger situates the self’s inquisitive search for the meaning of Being squarely within the movement of history. Dasein as the access route to the meaning of Being is constituted largely by its historical situation; “the way everydayness expresses itself varies historically,” thus “historical differences are not innocuous.”42 Rosenzweig, however, takes Hegel’s philosophy of history as his point of departure and situates Judaism beyond the destructive currents of history. The Jews for Rosenzweig are a non-autochthonous people whose continued existence derives from their refusal to take root in a land and thus situate themselves within history. Accordingly, the difference between Heidegger’s and Rosenzweig’s respective interwar philosophies exemplifies the conflict between autochthon and exile.

42 Ibid., 158.
1.7 Plan of the Study

The study is divided into two parts. Part One is entitled Athens and consists of an historical and philosophical examination of, first, Plato’s philosophy as set forth in the *Republic*, highlighting his treatment of autochthony and the problems associated with it. Second comes an historical and philosophical examination of Heidegger’s philosophy and in particular his retrieval of the Greek notion of autochthony in grounding the authentic existence of Dasein. He reconfigures autochthony from an Athenian concept to a Teutonic one in an effort to refine the identity of the German *Volk*.

Part Two is entitled Jerusalem and consists of, first, an historical and linguistic examination of the ideas of promised land and exile in Hebrew Scripture, showing the contingency of promised land and the significance of exile in the composition and redaction of the biblical texts. I then take up an historical and philosophical examination of Rosenzweig’s milieu and magnum opus *The Star of Redemption* to demonstrate his commitment to the notion of exile in advancing the course toward world redemption. I conclude with some discussion comparing Heidegger and Rosenzweig, noting their shared influences and crucial differences, as well as considering the ubiquity of autochthony, promised land, and exile.

The overall thrust of this study is guided neither by an in depth comparative analysis of Heidegger’s authenticity and Rosenzweig’s redemption nor a critical philological contrast of Athenian political theory to biblical theology. Instead I aim to demonstrate the fundamental and significant function of three concepts—autochthony, promised land, and exile—in Western intellectual history. I do so by sketching concise and contextualized presentations of Plato, Heidegger, Rosenzweig and Hebrew Scripture. Hopefully the reader will come away from this dissertation with an appreciation for the heuristic value and epistemological con-
cern of autochthony, promised land and exile, for they are not in my view merely benign artifacts of myth and literature but rich concepts that capture potent social, religious and historical forces.
PART I: ATHENS

CHAPTER 2

THE MYTH OF AUTOCHTHONY

"The heart has its reasons, which reason does not know. We feel it in a thousand things. I say that the heart naturally loves the Universal Being, and also itself naturally, according as it gives itself to them; and it hardens itself against one or the other at its will. You have rejected the one and kept the other. Is it by reason that you love yourself?"

— Pascal, *Pensées*¹

2.1 The Myth of Autochthony in Ancient Athens

History insists that every national landscape have its myths of origin and identity. The name America often serves as a placeholder for mythical notions of pioneering exploration, colonial settlement, and rugged individualism. Ancient Athens also had its myths of origin and identity, the most prominent of which contrasts sharply to that of America.² As classicist Meyer Reinhold tells it, "A strong Athenian folk memory emphasized the *indigenous* character of the population, with their earliest kings as being earth-born" (emphasis added):

The most popular tradition was that Cecrops was the first king of Athens, and had sprung out of Mother Earth—a hybrid creature, with upper part of a man and lower part of a snake. The latter detail signifies his close association with the native soil [...] The successor of Cecrops was another earth-born hybrid figure, half-man, half-snake, Erichthonius or Erechtheus [...] After Erichtho-

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² In addition to autochthony, Simon Hornblower identifies three other myths of Athenian national identity: Athens as refuge, gifts of grain, and Ionianism. See his *The Greek World 479-323 BC* (London: Routledge, 2002), 127ff.
nius was born, miraculously out of earth as a result of Hephaestus' spilling his seed on the ground during his futile but passionate struggle with the chaste maiden goddess Athena, the patroness of Athens took up the child and cared for it. 3

Oxford classicist Simon Hornblower writes that the myth "is firmly established in Herodotus and in Thucydides." 4 However, "it was Euripides in the Ion who gave it most emphatic and patriotic expression, not only when he makes the god Hermes in the Prologue speak of the 'autochthonous people of famous Athens' (lines 29-30) but by making Ion the son of the Athenian princess Kreousa, [...] daughter of Erechtheus and thus a descendant of Kekrops, half-man and half-serpent, i.e., earthborn." 5

"Autochthony is a double idea," Hornblower writes: "it combines the idea that the Athenians were 'earth born' (gegeneis), sprung from the (in reality not very rich) soil of Attica; and the idea that they had always thereafter gone on living in the same place. They were not immigrants but aboriginals." 6 He adds that, of course, "Any such aboriginal myth is liable to be nonsense historically" 7 Hornblower reasons that for the Athenians the myth functioned as "a useful way of scoring off the Spartans who were Dorian and therefore im-


4 Hornblower, 2002, 128. The extant sources are Euripides (Ion, 360.8 Fragmenta); Herodotus (1.171-172, 4.45, 4.109, 4.197, 8.73, 9.73); Thucydides (2.36 Peloponnesian War); Aristophanes (1079 Wasps); Lysias (2.42-43 Funeral Oration); Isocrates (4.24-25;4.63; 12.123-126); Plato (Republic 3:414a-415e, Menexenus 237b ff, Statesman 271a-c).

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., 127-128.

7 Ibid., 128.
migrants.”\textsuperscript{8} Euripides, for example, wrote: “Now someone who settles in one city from another is like a peg ill-fitted in a piece of wood—a citizen in name, but not in his actions.”\textsuperscript{9} Accordingly, the myth functioned as socio-political means of shoring up group identity in the polis—both essentially and historically, distinguishing between the so-called indigenous, true Athenians and the non-indigenous immigrants among the population. Hornblower identifies its popularity as classical rather than archaic because “it was in the fifth century that it really took off.”\textsuperscript{10} One can easily substantiate this claim by simply taking note of the main literary sources of autochthony: Euripides (484-406), Herodotus (484-420), Thucydides (d. 401), Aristophanes (450-388), Lysias (445-380), Isocrates (436-338), and Plato (428-348).

Historically, the Peloponnesian War likely played a huge role in generating conditions for the myth to thrive among fifth- and fourth-century Athenians. Thucydides records that in the years leading up to the war, most Athenians “had lived in independent communities throughout Attica [...] both in earlier generations and right down to the time of the present war, being born and bred in the country.”\textsuperscript{11} The war, which lasted from 431 to 402, led not only to the elimination of the local councils and governments of the small towns and rural districts as well as the consolidation of political power in Athens, it precipitated a substantial migration of the rural population of Attica into Athens itself.\textsuperscript{12} The peasant farmers of the

\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{10} Hornblower, 2002, 128.

countryside “were far from pleased at having to move with their entire households,” Thucydides writes.\textsuperscript{13} “It was sadly and reluctantly that they now abandoned their homes and the temples time-honoured from their patriotic past, that they prepared to change their whole way of life, leaving behind them what each man regarded as his own city.”\textsuperscript{14} On this point classicist L. B. Carter writes, “The references to the temples and ‘what each man regarded as his own city’ signify the strength of the attachment of the country-dwellers to their native towns and villages. After, or indeed alongside, political institutions, it was religious sites, holy places, and the ceremonies associated with them which most strongly identified the citizen with his city, and Thucydides implies that these country-dwellers felt stronger ties with their towns and villages than they did with Athens, the seat of Government.”\textsuperscript{15} In all probability the population displacement associated with the war brought about a wave of popular nostalgia among fifth-century Athenians, nostalgia for the disrupted bucolic life held dear by the country-dwellers now residing in Athens.\textsuperscript{16} Frequently articulated in public funeral orations and drama, autochthony provided something of a mythical return to this life. Not just a myth of national origin, it was one that prioritized and rendered sacred the soil from which a good number of Athenians had been displaced.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 106.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{16} Nostalgia as an identifiable and diagnosed mental condition, first documented by the Swiss physician Johannes Hofer in 1688, belongs to a constellation of afflictions all associated with wartime and battlefield trauma: shell-shock, combat fatigue, and post traumatic stress disorder.
2.2 The Myth of Autochthony in Plato

Perhaps the most famous literary account of the myth of autochthony is that found in Plato's *Republic*. The dialogue constitutes his utopian vision of the city-state where philosophers are kings and each and every citizen has a unique and essential role in the life of the community. The overriding aim of the dialogue is to give a definitive account of justice—ultimately understood as the virtue of harmonious balance. In Book I, Socrates persuades Thrasyilmachus that justice is not simply the triumph of the more powerful but instead "a soul's virtue, and injustice its vice" (353e), and that "a just person is happy, and an unjust one wretched" (354a). Unsatisfied with his all-too-easy victory over Thrasyilmachus, Glaucon and Adeimantus in Book II press Socrates to defend against "most people's opinion" that justice "is to be practiced for the sake of rewards and popularity" rather than as an end in itself (358a). Glaucon says he wants to hear justice "praised by itself" (358d), and in response Socrates suggests they seek it out not in the individual but in the city, since "there is more justice in the larger thing, and it will be easier to learn what it is" (368e). In Plato's *Republic*, explains Jean-François Pradeau, "the difference between the human soul and the city is simply quantitative in a strictly anthropological sense (and also in an anthropomorphic one: the city is a large-scale individual). So what applies to the human soul, in respect of what is good, just and true, should also apply to the city, which assembles all those souls in a com-

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17 In addition to the *Republic*, Plato raises the issue of autochthony in the *Statesman* and *Menexenus*.

munity."^{19} "His whole argument was that the state grows out of the nature of the individual," writes historian of philosophy Samuel Stumpf. "The state, said Plato, is a natural institution, natural because it reflects the structure of human nature."^{20}

The quest for justice accordingly moves from the realm of the individual to the realm of the city and thus becomes a discussion to "create a city in theory from its beginnings" (369c). Socrates moves swiftly through an illustration of agricultural and mercantile trade, demonstrating how the inevitable expansion of the city will necessitate more land: "Then we'll have to seize some of our neighbors' land if we're to have enough pasture and plough-land. And won't our neighbors want to seize part of ours as well, if they too have surrendered themselves to the endless acquisition of money and have overstepped the limit of their necessities" (373d). This observation leads to the creation of an army drawn not from the ranks of the farmers and craftsmen but instead comprised of a guardian class, as warfare, like farming, cobbling, weaving and building, is a profession. Of these "well-born youth" (375a), Socrates says, "Philosophy, spirit, speed, and strength must all, be combined in the nature of anyone who is to be a fine and good guardian of our city" (376c). This ambitious program begs the question of the potential warrior: "But how are we to bring him up and educate him?" (376c). Socrates now calls attention to the importance of "education in music and poetry before physical training" (376e), here alluding to the prominent role myth will play in establishing the ideal republic.


Plato obviously knew well the power of language in educating the young. The way words impress upon a child’s soul is analogous to the physical handling the infant experiences at the hands of mother and nurse: everything happening to the young individual is momentous; even subtlety and nuance are registered. And so, “we must first of all, it seems, supervise the storytellers” (377b), for “The young can’t distinguish what is allegorical from what isn’t, and the opinions they absorb at that age are hard to erase and apt to become unalterable” (378d). Taking full advantage of such malleability, Plato advocates the use of false stories and censors those that cast the gods in shameful, jealous or malicious terms:

The battles of gods and giants, and all the various stories of the gods hating their families or friends, should neither be told nor even woven in embroideries. If we’re to persuade our people that no citizen has ever hated another and that it’s impious to do so, then that’s what should be told to children from the beginning by old men and women; and as these children grow older, poets should be compelled to tell them the same sort of thing (378c).

Socrates implies that the guardians are to be modeled after the gods, thus the character of the gods must be portrayed in flawless, virtuous terms.

Defending the use of false stories, Socrates concludes Book II with a distinction between the falsehood in words and the ‘pure’ or ‘true’ falsehood of the soul; the former is superficial and particular, while the latter pertains to absolute and universal metaphysical reality. A falsehood in words can be quite useful, “against one’s enemies” and “when any of our so-called friends are attempting, through madness or ignorance, to do something bad” (382c). In addition, fictional stories are useful in educating the youth of Athens, “about those ancient events involving the gods” (382d). What Socrates calls a ‘pure’ or ‘true’ falsehood in the
soul, however, "is hated by all gods and humans" (382a). He says that "to be false to one's soul about the things that are, to be ignorant and to have and hold falsehood there, is what everyone would least of all accept, for everyone hates a falsehood in that place most of all" (382b).

Following this distinction, in Book III Socrates goes to some length to demonstrate the insidious nature of imitation, itself a kind of falsehood: no doubt a fundamental and useful thing among the young, mimicry at some point conflicts with the individual's inborn nature. Accordingly, the guardians of the city, born of a particular class and with a specific nature, must not be led to imitate craftsmen or shipmen, for instance. Likewise, those among the productive class, craftsmen, physicians, farmers, shipmen, and so forth, must be dissuaded from attempting to imitate trades in which they are not inclined by natural inborn talent. To emphasize his point, Socrates says that "if a man, who through clever training can become anything and imitate anything, should arrive in our city, wanting to give a performance of his poems, we should bow down before him as someone holy, wonderful, and pleasing, but we should tell him that there is no one like him in our city and that it isn't lawful for there to be" (398a). The jack of all trades, then, is a master of none, and as such is perceived as a threat to the finely-tuned organizational structure of the city-state. The guardians especially must be shielded from the misleading influence of the aimless dilettante. Rather, in their singular task, they "must be like sleepless hounds, able to see and hear as keenly as possible and to endure frequent changes of water and food, as well as summer and winter weather on their campaign, without faltering in health" (404a-b). In sum, all tradesmen, farmers, and especially guardians must train their attention on their respective professions
alone and must not dabble in secondary fields. The fundamental structure of the polis is precisely this organizational alignment of citizen and craft.

Finally, the rulers of the ideal republic “must be the best of the guardians,” those who demonstrate philosophic expertise (412c). Moreover, they must be chosen from among “those men who, upon examination, seem most of all to believe throughout their lives that they must eagerly pursue what is advantageous to the city and be wholly unwilling to do the opposite” (412d-e). What begins to become apparent at this point in the dialogue is that the organizational structure of the city, of each part of the polis having a precise, singular function in coordination with every other part, is itself justice, the arrangement of all people and their work “in accordance with standards or requirements,” in the most general sense “to appreciate properly.”21 The challenge, of course, is realizing this vision of justice, squaring the citizens of the polis with their respective roles and bringing about the expected social and political harmony.

Because the guardians are charged with the paramount responsibility of defending the city-state and because it is from their ranks that the rulers emerge, their virtue must be closely monitored and itself guarded from the pernicious influence of material desire. Accordingly, they are to be cordoned off from the rest of the city and made to live a sort of ideal, ‘communist’ life:

First, none of them should possess any private property beyond what is wholly necessary. Second, none of them should have a house or storeroom that isn’t

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21 Of the terms ‘just’ and ‘justice,’ Webster offers, 11. in keeping with truth or fact; true; correct […] 13. in accordance with standards or requirements; proper or right: just proportions […] to do justice to, a. to act fairly toward. b. to appreciate properly. c. to reflect or express the worth of properly. [1150-1200; ME < OF < L jústilia = just(us) just + ilia –ice]. Random House Webster’s College Dictionary (New York: Random House, 1992).
open for all to enter at will. Third, whatever sustenance moderate and courageous warrior-athletes require in order to have neither shortfall nor surplus in a given year they’ll receive by taxation on the other citizens as a salary of their guardianship. Fourth, they’ll have common messes and live together like soldiers in a camp (416d-e).

The point of this isolated communal existence wholly bereft of privacy is to shield the guardians from the competition, greed and trickery of mercantile trade and economics, a way of life that would undermine their singular task of shielding the city from harm and preserving its organization and territorial situation. Mary Nichols writes that the guardians under communism have no private lives that conflict with their public duties. They are only one thing—citizens of the city. And what they are is completely visible, for men living under this communist regime have no privacy in which they can remain unseen. They cannot appear to be what they are not.22

Cambridge classicist James Adam comments, “The communism of the Republic is, next to its educational curriculum, the principal guarantee which Plato provides against the abuse of political power on the part of his Guardians.”23

Yet in spite of their cloistered existence, fine education and well-born status, Socrates concedes that the guardians are still quite vulnerable. “The severe education of the warriors has not rendered them free of temptation which might ultimately make them wolves instead

22 Mary P. Nichols, Socrates and the Political Community (Albany: State University of New York, 1987), 85.

of watchdogs,” writes Allan Bloom.24 “They still think of the good things as those which are scarce and which men wish to keep privately for themselves.”25 Acknowledging the temptations of material gain that continue to beset the guardians, Bloom tracks Plato’s’ implicit logic, a sort of logic of care:

Nothing in their education has as yet attached them to this city and its well-being. If they care for the city they must love it, and if they are to love it they must connect it with their own self-love: they will love the city most if they are of the opinion that the city’s advantage is their own advantage.26

“The fact that regimes require human institution, as other natural things do not,” Bloom adds, “calls their naturalness into question.”27 According to Bloom’s reasoning, Plato needs something to establish in the heart and minds of the guardians the unshakeable conviction “that the city’s advantage is their own advantage.” No matter how impeccable the logic, how philosophically refined the argument for planting in the minds of the guardians the absolutely essential correlation between their existence and the welfare of the city, such an argument remains “constantly threatened,” as Bloom notes, “either because it is not simply evident to natural reason or because reason can so easily be mastered by sophistic arguments or by passions.”28

In short, what Plato needs is something to stir the passions. So, Socrates returns to his previous discussion about the practical use of certain falsehoods, inquiring:

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26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid., emphasis added.
How, then, could we devise one of those useful falsehoods [γενοίτο ταῦτα ἡ γενεαίον οὐν ψευδάτ] we were talking about a while ago, one noble falsehood [γενεαίον τι οὐν ψευδόμενοι] that would, in the best case, persuade even the rulers, but if that’s not possible, then the others in the city? (414b-c)

What has been various translated as useful falsehood, heroic falsehood, noble falsehood and perhaps most famously as noble lie is what Socrates calls “a Phoenician story which describes something that has happened in many places”—the myth of autochthony (414c).

The aim of the myth in its immediate context is simple: to inspire in the guardians an unalterable sense of fidelity to both the city-state and the land. Plato introduces the myth when he seeks a powerful means for grounding the identity and character of the guardians such that “they will guard against external enemies and internal friends, so that one will lack the power and the other the desire to harm the city” (414b). In other words, the guardians must believe that they can and will triumph over foreign enemies using force and compatriots employing seduction, both with the ultimate aim of undermining Plato’s just society. As Socrates tells it:

I’ll first try to persuade the rulers and the soldiers and then the rest of the city that the upbringing and the education we gave them, and the experiences that went with them, were a sort of dream, that in fact they themselves, their weapons, and the other craftsmen’s tools were at that time really being fashioned and nurtured inside the earth, and that when the work was completed, the earth, who is their mother, delivered all of them up into the world. There-
fore, if anyone attacks the land in which they live, they must plan on its behalf and defend it as their mother and nurse and think of the other citizens as their earthborn brothers (414d-e).

These guardians must be a passionate lot, by their very nature able to feel the pain of any attempt to subvert the community as it exists upon Attic soil. Socrates implies that such a passionate sense of devotion will move the guardians to defend the community and the land no matter the cost to themselves. Having been born out of the earth or descended from autochthonous ancestors, the citizens of Athens will have an instinctive emotional attachment to the land equal in kind to that of the son to the mother. Edith Wyschogrod observes that Plato is (perhaps cavalierly) “seeking a basis in nature for the state that is more natural, as it were, than nature itself, one in which no counterwill to the state could arise.”  

Indeed, as Bloom notes, “malcontents have no justification for rebellion.” The myth of autochthony overcomes the divide between culture and nature. Ordinarily, the city as the locus of culture stands in opposition to nature, but a city whose origin is earth-sprung subverts this opposition. Athens stands as part of the natural landscape. The myth of autochthony bridges the perceived opposites culture and nature, city and soil; the autochthon is the living repository of this mythical bridge.

Thus far, however, the myth is incomplete for grounding the perfect city-state. Plato seeks not just a natural relation between land and people; he also wants to naturalize certain class divisions. In fact, the myth of autochthony as it stands thus far would actually undermine such divisions in that all citizens are equally fraternal, coming as they do from the one

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mother earth. "Since the earth is the mother of all and all are brothers," writes Nichols, "the lie indicates the homogeneity of all the members of the city." Enlarging his version of the myth of autochthony, Socrates strikes an analogy between citizens and metals, now incorporating what some commentators call the myth of metals:

"All of you in the city are brothers," we'll say to them in telling the story, "but the god who made you mixed some gold into those who are adequately equipped to rule, because they are most valuable. He put silver in those who are auxiliaries and iron and bronze in the farmers and other craftsmen."

(415a)

Just as metals are graded according to value and utility, the citizens are separated into three graded divisions: iron and bronze for farmers and craftsmen; silver for guardians; and gold for rulers. James Adam notes that Plato combines autochthonous ancestry "with the popular association of different metals with different degrees of merit, as in the Hesiodic ages of man." The most obvious modern analogues to this association are the three classes of Olympic medals—not incidentally gold, silver and bronze—and military medals such as the silver cross and the bronze star. Adam adds that Plato's aim here "is to give a religious and

31 Nichols, 1987, 84.

32 Most commentators on Plato treat the analogy between citizens and metals as an indistinguishable and integral part of the myth of autochthony. Some, however, like Karl Popper and Jon Hesk, while acknowledging the analogy is integral to Plato's version of autochthony, point out that it constitutes an entirely separate myth, the myth of metals. But the myth of metals recorded by Hesiod in his Theogony is not about the nature of human beings but about historical ages. Plato appropriates the substance of Hesiod's myth and weaves it into the myth of autochthony.

33 Adam, 1963, 193.
quasi-historical sanction to the sentiment of patriotism and the institution of caste.”34 As such, the citizens are more than simply autochthonous kin, the myth says they are comprised of fundamental, even auspicious, earthen elements—metals, thereby naturalizing their particular social station and casting their identity in pagan religious terms. Moreover, social mobility is limited and guided by the essentializing nature of the metals and commingling across class lines strictly prohibited:

“So the first and most important command from the god to the rulers is that there is nothing that they must guard better or watch more carefully than the mixture of metals in the souls of the next generation. If an offspring of theirs should be found to have a mixture of iron or bronze, they must not pity him in any way, but give him the rank appropriate to his nature and drive him out to join the craftsmen and farmers” (415b).

This mandated downward mobility is complemented by what appears to be an equally mandated upward mobility, again based entirely on the merit associated with the metals:

“But if an offspring of these people [the farmers and craftsmen] is found to have a mixture of gold or silver, they will honor him and take him up to join the guardians or the auxiliaries, for there is an oracle which says that the city will be ruined if it ever has an iron or a bronze guardian” (415c).

Socrates finalizes the undertaking by invoking a religious sanction warning against misguided upward mobility, once again solidifying the class divisions but leaving open the possibility of an occasional exception when ability reveals the presence of gold or silver in one among the iron and bronze class.

34 Ibid.
2.3 Problems with the Myth of Autochthony in the Republic

Does Plato include the myth of autochthony out of necessity? Does the plan for the ideal republican city-state require the intended aims of the myth? Obviously Plato likely would not have included the myth if it did not serve a needed function. Why bother invoking a myth that is meant to inflame passions in the context of a well-reasoned plan if it is not absolutely necessary? Why risk the inconsistency? To be sure, Socrates’ reluctance to proceed with the myth suggests its implausibility. And yet, the myth cannot simply be subtracted from the dialogue, for without it, as Edith Wyschogrod points out, “the implementation of Plato’s plan for an ideal state as envisioned in Republic would founder.”

The establishment of distinct, well-defined social classes lays the foundation for the polis. “This provision is the corner-stone of Plato’s State,” writes Adam, “and as soon as it gives way, the edifice is doomed. It is only by the elevation of the worthy and the degradation of the unfit that class-distinctions can be made to coincide with Nature; and unless they do, the foundation of the city [...] is sapped.” Plato’s unique telling of the myth of autochthony, which includes his novel myth of metals, lays the groundwork for the fundamental organizational ethos and necessary defensive pathos of the city-state, as well as naturalizing the existence of such a state; together they establish the foundation and stability of the community. Nevertheless, Plato’s inclusion of the myth raises at the very least four issues worthy of examination. First is the inconsistency or illogic of his version of the myth pairing up common earthborn origins with rigid social class distinctions. Second is the perceived inconsistency of Socrates, the dialogical philosopher of reason, appealing to myth, a type of dis-

35 Wyschogrod, 1998, 221.

36 Adam, 1963, 196
course associated with poets. Third is the pathological nature of the myth and its relation to reason; a pathos that enables the myth's effectiveness but which appears to defy reason. And fourth is Plato's use of deception in establishing a community supposedly devoted to truth.

2.3.1 Autochthony and the Myth of Metals

As noted previously, autochthony in its most basic sense conflicts with Plato's need for social class distinctions. The consanguinity established by common earthborn origins would seem naturally to undermine such distinctions. And yet these socio-political distinctions serve a fundamental function in the constitution of the republic. Indeed, the ultimate aim of the dialogue is to demonstrate that these distinctions serve the larger purpose of articulating Platonic justice, the proper alignment of (all adult male) citizens and their jobs and the consequent social harmony intended by such alignment. Ultimately, Plato's novel inclusion of the myth of metals actually amounts to a refinement of autochthony, a further qualification of the specifics of earth-born origins.

With his inventive version of the myth of metals, of certain metals characterizing certain social types of citizens, Plato appropriates and reconfigures an archaic myth of historical periods or ages. Reinhold writes that in the antique Near East, "Peoples in that region had long believed in four ages of man, Golden Age, Silver Age, Bronze Age, Iron Age, a cycle based on the pessimistic view that man's lot had progressively degenerated—the more technology advanced, the greater was man's moral decline and suffering."37 Reinhold continues:

To this traditional sequence of ages characterized by metals the Greeks added an Heroic Age, thus establishing their own five ages of man. They placed this added period just before the beginning of the Iron Age, the harsh time in

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37 Reinhold, 1972, 164.
which they themselves were living, and assigned to this Heroic Age the great
heroes of their mythology, from remembrance of the culminating achievement
of their early culture, the Mycenaean Age, which lingered in the folk memory
as an age of glory.  

Recorded in Hesiod's *Theogony* and a widely known idea, Plato appropriates the substance
of the myth, refashioning the order of the metals from a strict sequence of ages to a hierarchy
of human nature. The moral typology associated with the metals is emphasized while their
historical character is collapsed into the one-time momentous birth of the first guardian class,
when "the earth, who is their mother, delivered all of them up into the world" (414e). This is
the point where the myth of autochthony and the myth of metals become one.

It would be beside the point to debate what is more integral to the overall plan,
earthborn origins or the analogy between men and metals; Plato relies on both in planning the
republican city-state. Autochthony in the barest sense is necessary not only to instill in the
guardians the requisite passion for defending the polis, but also to establish the natural basis
for the city-state. Ultimately, the myth of autochthony serves as the perfect vehicle for con-
veying the myth of metals, also indispensable in planning the polis by establishing necessary
social divisions. In the autochthonous republic, "the very functions which the regime has
educated the citizens to fulfill are attributed to nature; the citizens grow into their political
roles as acorns grow into oaks."  

Pairing the myth of autochthony to the myth of metals may at first appear inconsistent, but closer examination reveals that Plato's novel version of
the myth of metals flows quite naturally from the myth of earthborn origins: it solidifies the

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social class distinctions so vital to the health of the city-state by naturalizing those distinctions, thereby creating an environment in which, as Bloom notes, "malcontents have no justification for rebellion."\(^{40}\) Plato's version of the myth of autochthony in the Republic establishes consanguine kinship among all the citizens, but then further qualifies this kinship with a hierarchical division of the polity for the sake of social order and justice. The common wellspring for the substance of the myths is mother earth.

2.3.2 Myth and Reason

Is there then a deeper inconsistency with Plato's liberal use of myth? Is he not a philosopher who disdains mythos and favors logos, who above all views myth as false and therefore in opposition to the logical quest for absolute truth? Is not myth a device of the poet and sophist, against whom the philosopher stands in defense of orderliness and truth?

Historically, in ancient Greece "national thought characteristically exploited mythology for examples of models of behavior, much as our culture once used the Biblical references widely. Mythology also served as one of the fundamentals of the educational process in Greek schools, so that from childhood through maturity the Greek of the classical age encountered the cultural dynamism of the national mythology as one of the unifying forces in Greek life."\(^{41}\) However, as Reinhold explains, in the decades leading up to the beginning of the fifth century BCE:

a process of degradation and decay of myths had begun. As early as Homer's Iliad and Odyssey (written about 800-700 B.C.) many myths had been "cleaned up" and reinterpreted under the influence of the rationalistic tenden-

\(^{40}\) Ibid.

\(^{41}\) Reinhold, 1972, 21.
cies of the Greeks. Gradually, the growth of rationalism dealt a serious blow to the authenticity and credibility of myths, and ultimately new branches of thought—philosophy, science, history—replaced myth.\(^{42}\)

The ascendancy of rationalism itself sprang from a confluence of several factors, the most discernable of which are technological developments associated with the written word.

The increased use of writing as the medium of philosophy and rhetoric, which eclipsed the primacy of orality in organizing thought, played a huge role in fostering abstract thought. As Walter Ong so elegantly points out, “Writing establishes what has been called ‘context free’ language or ‘autonomous’ discourse, discourse which cannot be directly questioned or contested as oral speech can be because written discourse has been detached from it’s author.”\(^{43}\) Ong’s broader argument, drawing on the pioneering work of Eric Havelock, is that the transition from orality to literacy enabled the ascendancy of abstract, philosophical thinking, a transition personified by the teacher-student, speaker-writer relationship between Socrates the orator and Plato the author. “Plato’s entire epistemology was unwittingly a programmed rejection of the old oral, mobile, warm, personally interactive lifeworld of oral culture (represented by poets, whom he would not allow in his Republic).”\(^{44}\) In contrast to the oral lifeworld of poets, “Platonic form was form conceived of by analogy with visible form. Platonic ideas are voiceless, immobile, devoid of all warmth, not interactive but isolated, not part of the human lifeworld at all but utterly above and beyond it.”\(^{45}\) The centralizing, con-

\(^{42}\) Ibid.


\(^{44}\) Ong, 1982, 80.
solidating, and dominating force of Platonic thinking—realized in practice by his Academy—and the ascendency of philosophy in general marginalizes poetry as the discourse at the center of Athenian culture. Historian of myth and religion Bruce Lincoln, drawing out Reinhold’s observation, argues:

By the end of the fifth century, the tremendous authority assigned to poetic discourse far exceeded the role poetry actually played within the changing relations of power and knowledge that constituted Athenian society. Poetry remained central to the education given the elite and enjoyed high popularity and cultural prestige, particularly in the tragic dramas that were part of the great civic festivals. Still, the importance of state and commercial discourse—legal, political, and practical speech, all of which took the form of prose, often written—was fast eclipsing anything poetry could offer.46

The transition from the oral, poetic worldview to a literate, rational one initiated nothing short of an epistemological revolution in Greek thinking, which itself became the stage of a many-sided conflict:

In this volatile situation, numerous claimants emerged, all of whom sought to displace poetry from its paramount position and to establish themselves, their practices, values, language, and favored categories of thought in its place. Among these were the Sophists, rhetoricians, aphorists, legislators, demagogues, physicians, and physiologists (i.e., practitioners of “natural philosophy”), as well as others, about whom we know far too little. The group about

45 Ibid.

whom we know most, however, is—of course—the one that ultimately prevailed: the wealthy young aristocrats who were dissatisfied with Athenian democracy and gathered first around Socrates, then around Plato.\textsuperscript{47}

With the ascendancy of philosophy and the preferred medium of writing, Reinhold suggests, "myths came to be regarded as merely poetic fictions."\textsuperscript{48}

The poets who, in Lincoln’s words, “make prominent use of mythoi” come in for harsh criticism in Plato’s \textit{Republic}.\textsuperscript{49} Plato considers them “ignorant and virtually unconscious, but powerfully manipulative.”\textsuperscript{50} He takes the religious component of poetic speech, that through the poets the Muses speak, and turns it against their traditional authority. Lincoln explains:

In contrast to the mutually sustaining relation of thought and speech he takes to be characteristic of philosophic practice, Plato thus depicts the poet’s inspired speech as utterly divorced from his mental processes. When the Muses speak through him, the poet literally loses his mind and enters a state of “divine madness,” in which he can transmit the goddesses’ speech without understanding it and can initiate no knowledgeable speech of his own. Far from authority, the poet emerges as something of a cipher.\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{47} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{48} Reinhold, 1972, 21.

\textsuperscript{49} Lincoln, 1999, 38.

\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Ibid.}
In Plato’s world, poetic transcendence constitutes a subversive interruption of the sober and more accurate kind of thinking based on a mathematical pursuit of the Good. In the words of classicist Eric Havelock, Plato opens Book X of the Republic by characterising the effect of poetry as ‘a crippling of the mind’. It is a kind of disease, for which one has to acquire an antidote. The antidote must consist of knowledge ‘of what things really are’. In short, poetry is a species of mental poison, and is the enemy of truth.\textsuperscript{52}

Havelock adds that “Plato’s target seems to be precisely the poetic experience as such. It is an experience we would characterise as aesthetic,\textsuperscript{53} and decidedly not philosophical.

But if Plato roundly condemns the poets and their intoxicated state of mind, he appropriates for his own purposes one of their time-honored traditions, myth. Myths in Plato’s republican scheme are seen as useful in that they serve to ground the education of the unphilosophical. Illustrating how the guardians will be schooled, Socrates explains, “at first we tell mythoi to children and these, on the whole, are false, but still they have some truth in them. So we use mythoi for small children, before gymnastics” (377a).\textsuperscript{54} Socrates then proceeds to qualify the role myth will play:

Now, will we stand lightly by and let the children listen to any chance mythoi fabricated by any chance people, so that their souls take up opinions that are opposite to those we intend them to have when they come to maturity?

By no means will we do so.

\textsuperscript{52} Eric Havelock, Preface to Plato (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1963), 4.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 5.

\textsuperscript{54} Republic 377a; in Lincoln, 1999, 41.
Above all, it seems to us that one must supervise the makers-of-*mythoi*, and one must approve that which is good in their compositions, and condemn that which is not. And those which are approved, we will persuade nurses and mothers to recount them to their children, and to shape their souls with these *mythoi*, even more powerfully than they shape their bodies with their hands (377b-c).\textsuperscript{55}

Once appropriated from the now-discredited poets, myths retain their practical utility in educating the public, serving to unify the nation and shore up collective identity, but carefully selected and articulated in a manner that upholds Plato’s republican ideal. Lincoln writes, “where it cannot establish or communicate sure knowledge, the state is content to foster beliefs that are both probable and useful,” and in this regard “myths come in handy.”\textsuperscript{56} In particular, as Lincoln notes:

there are audiences—children above all, but also the lower classes—who are unable to appreciate the subtleties of philosophical analysis and argumentation but still need to be convinced of certain propositions if they are to contribute to the good of the state (or, at a minimum, to pose no danger to it). Once again, myths will do the trick. In both instances, *mythoi* serve as prime instruments of indoctrination, which the state […] uses for its own purposes.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{55} Republic 377b-c; in Lincoln, 1999, 41-42.

\textsuperscript{56} Lincoln, 1999, 40.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 40-41.
Upon considering the apparent inconsistency of the rational Socrates invoking myth, one can see that Plato actually acknowledges the powerful, practical and even noble utility of myth.

In general, Plato is condescending toward philosophers who stoop to traffic in *mythoi*. Parmenides, Xenophanes, Empedocles, Pythagoras, and Protagoras all come in for criticism of this sort. Still, he himself is not above quoting a myth when it helps to advance his case.  

He appropriates myth from the poets as a useful rhetorical device, one that serves not the immediate purpose of a dialogical pursuit of the truth but statecraft, the composition of his republican utopia. While introduced into the dialogue with reservation ("When you hear it, you'll realize that I have every reason to hesitate"), the myth of autochthony plays a vital role in underscoring the geographic foundations and socially stratified structure of the city-state (414c). Plato's goal in the *Republic* is not the composition of a purely logos-oriented philosophy, but the composition of a city-state, the planning and implementation of which requires both mythos and logos, both rhetoric and philosophy.

2.3.3 Passion and Reason

Related to the topic of myth is that of passion verses reason. The myth of autochthony is a kind of pathopoeia, "a speech, or figure of speech, contrived to move the passions." In fact, the effectiveness of the myth hinges entirely upon its capacity to inflame the passions to the point where an attack upon the land will move the guardians to "defend it

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as their mother and nurse" (414e). Here Socrates seems to make something of an end run around reason in order to "persuade the rulers and the soldiers and then the rest of the city" to remain faithful to his republican ideal (414d). In the words of Edith Wyschogrod:

It would seem that proper pedagogy would suffice to assure sound, that is, rational, governance. Yet in order to implement the rule of reason, Plato invokes a myth that can only undo rationality, that of a community of autochthons, of those who see themselves as sprung from the same earth and thus bound by blood. Autochthony assures homogeneity, but reason is unsaid by the consanguinity of origin.\(^{60}\)

In sketching the ideal state, one ostensibly guided by philosophic reason, Plato reluctantly concedes the limits of reason for characterizing or even instituting the necessary relationships between citizen and citizen, people and land, and the productive and ruling classes. Socrates may demonstrate to his audience the logical (or dialogical) reciprocity of community life, employing "proper pedagogy" to emphasize the role of harmony and balance in the well-ordered state, but ultimately he concedes that ratio comes up short and in doing so appears to compromise the primacy of reason. However truthful and logical the reciprocal dependence among the citizens and the obvious need for land, Socrates needs something more to convince the guardians they must be willing to die for the state. Invoking a myth of origins he makes an appeal to passion for the establishment and maintenance of the ostensibly reasoned community, thereby revealing the shortcomings of reason for holding the community both together and in its place.

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\(^{60}\) Wyschogrod, 1998, 245-246.
In his commentary, Adam characterizes Plato’s use of autochthony and its attendant passion as something of a stopgap measure, merely a temporary first phase in establishing the republic. Likening Plato’s use of the myth to the medieval scholastic dualism of faith before reason, Adam writes, “We require some guarantee for the permanence of the city and its institutions; and nothing could be more in keeping with the prevailing moral and religious spirit of Plato’s ‘musical’ education than that he should find that guarantee in faith rather than reason” (emphasis added).\(^6\) This medieval religious doctrine, most famously articulated by Thomas Aquinas, says that the Christian devotee must have faith in the existence and workings of God primary to understanding the rational arguments for such existence and workings. Discussing how God is known by human beings, Aquinas writes:

> God is not said to be not existing as if He did not exist at all, but because He exists above all that exists, since He is His own existence. Hence it does not follow that He cannot be known at all, but that He exceeds every kind of knowledge, which means that He is not comprehended.\(^2\)

Aquinas is here linking God to infinity and pointing out that the created human intellect is incapable of adequately comprehending God as infinitude. What is needed to overcome this deficit in human understanding is some sort of divine intervention: “in order to see God, there must be some likeness of God on the part of the seeing power whereby the intellect is made capable of seeing God.”\(^3\) This likeness of God is, “namely, the light of divine glory,”

\(^6\) Adam, 1963, 193; emphasis added.


\(^3\) Aquinas, 1978, 52.
or, in other words, religious faith bestowed through grace. Thomistic philosopher Étienne Gilson summarizes Aquinas’ position thusly:

For the end of man is none other than God; but this end manifestly exceeds the limits of our Reason. Again, man must possess some knowledge of his end to be able to order his intentions and actions in relation to it. The salvation of man, therefore, demanded that the Divine Revelation should bring to his knowledge a certain number of truths which are comprehensible to his Reason. In short, since man needed knowledge concerning the infinite God who is his end, this knowledge, going beyond the limits of his Reason, could not but be offered to the acceptance of his Faith.

In the Thomistic order of things, reason can only supplement the devotee’s faith, not supplant or supercede it, for the faculty of reason resides in the created intellect, which cannot sufficiently apprehend the infinitude of God. Religious faith is the foundation upon which a reasoned comprehension of God can be built, but such faith is never entirely superceded, only complemented.

Returning to Plato’s use of the myth of autochthony, Adam, however, adds, “The case is different when the Platonic city attains full maturity, and it is equally appropriate that Reason, embodied in the Rulers, should then become the final guarantee.” Adam here seems to be arguing that the passion inspired by the myth of autochthony will ultimately give way to the rule of reason. But Socrates nowhere says this. Instead, he deploys the myth, albeit with

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64 Ibid.


admitted reservation (and even embarrassment for its obvious implausibility and perhaps too its appeal to passion), and then appears to yield to the myth's implausibility by leaving the matter "wherever tradition takes it" (415d). Upon hearing it, Glaucon responds, "I can't see any way to make them believe it themselves, but perhaps there is one in the case of their sons and later generations and all the other people who come after them" (415d). Socrates rejoins, "I understand pretty much what you mean, but even that would help to make them care more for the city and each other" (415d). Though appearing somewhat pessimistic about the prospect, Socrates and Glaucon understand the myth of autochthony as a memorial, a social institution intended to remind later generations of their indigenous ancestry. In addition to being something of "ideology in narrative form," the memorializing effect of the myth is meant to reverberate through the years, continually moving the passions of the Athenian guardians. Inconsistent with his earlier point, Adam comments, "The first generation of citizens would remain incredulous, but the γεννατος ψευδος [noble lie] would be impressed upon their children, and soon be universally believed." It is hoped that over time the effectiveness of the myth will increase, not diminish and eventually yield to the rule of reason.

Historically, it is instructive to bear in mind the socio-political role of the myth of autochthony in ancient Athens; Plato did not simply pluck it out of thin air. Socrates calls the myth "Nothing new, but a Phoenician story which describes something that has happened in many places," claiming that "the poets" have "persuaded many peoples to believe it," but erroneously adding that "It hasn't happened among us [Athenians]" (414c). Socrates shrewdly characterizes the myth as ancient and pervasive, thus bearing the stamp of tradition, and yet


68 Adam, 1963, 196.
not widely known among Athenians. But the popularity of the myth in Attic literature and oratory of this period suggests otherwise.

Despite to Socrates’ modest portrayal, the myth of autochthony is evident (and in some cases central) in the works of Euripides, Herodotus, Thucydides, Aristophanes, Lysias, and Isocrates, all of whom are associated with Athens. Moreover, autochthony in its basic form operated as a central and significant fixture in public funeral orations, epitaphioi, which not incidentally “was one of the particularities by which Athens distinguished herself from other cities.”

Classicist Nicole Loraux in her magisterial *L’invention d’Athens: Histoire de l’oraison funèbre dans la « cite classique »* demonstrates the popularity and pervasiveness of the myth, writing:

From Pericles to Hyperides, the same postulate animates the epitaphioi: between Athens and the others, the difference is not, will never be, reducible. To be this model of Greekness that it intended to present to the Greeks, the city had first to be its own model. So the official orators are not concerned with the claim to universality that was to lead Aelius Aristides to make Hellenistic Athens “the complete image of human nature”; they sought rather, in exalting the absolute uniqueness of the polis, “to put Athens in the superlative.” Such is, in the epitaphioi, the aim of the passages on autochthony.

According to Loraux, “the funeral oration was an *institution*—an institution of speech in which the symbolic constantly encroached upon the functional, since in each oration the

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70 Loraux, 1986, 332.
codified praise of the dead spilled over into generalized praise for Athens."71 Publicly praising the fallen soldiers of Athens, the orators invoked as the rhetorical centerpiece of the epitaphioi the myth, "proclaiming that their autochthonous birth gave the Athenians," in the words of Lysias, "both a mother and fatherland,"72 thereby refashioning "‘nature’ to the advantage of a purely political symbolism."73 According to Loraux, autochthony in the context of the funeral oration served a specific civic and political function:

For the Athenians it is not so much a matter of being able to claim descent from the first man, as to claim the honor of having been born, from the outset, Athenians, [...] from the Attic earth already constituted by a civic land; thus the oration suggests that the Athenians have never imitated anyone but themselves, in a repetitive but homogenous time.74

What we see in the Athenian discourse of the funeral oration, then, is the workings of a popular discourse at once intended to unify the audience into a socio-political singularity and distinguish that singularity from all other such city-states. Contrary to what Socrates says, the fact is the myth did happen in ancient Athens; it is well represented in Attic literature and drama prior and contemporaneous to Plato. In addition, it is found at the heart of the popular political discourse of Athenian funeral orations, a discourse which evolved into a significant socio-political institution in fifth- and fourth-century Athens. What had not happened in Athens by the time Socrates is proffering his version of the myth is the novel addition of the

71 Ibid., 2.
72 Lysias 17, autochthones ontes ten auten ekektento metera kai patrida; in Loraux 1986, 337.
73 Loraux, 1986, 337.
74 Ibid., 332.
myth of metals, the refinement of the myth of autochthony with the introduction of rigid class distinctions.

All told, Plato’s myth of autochthony is not merely a temporary measure, as Adam suggests, rather the efficacy of the myth is meant to live on and influence later generations. Once institutionalized, the myth becomes a memorial to the original earthborn ancestors and as such is intended to stir the passions of the Athenians—“their sons and later generations and all the other people who come after them” (415d). One could certainly question the appropriateness of Adam’s choice of analogy (faith before reason), or rather his interpretation of that analogy, but the key point here is that the myth is not meant to be forgotten or succeeded; rather it must be remembered (and was indeed remembered in drama and funeral oration) in order to maintain what Plato sees as a necessary emotional sense of patriotism. It so happens that the doctrine of faith before reason does parallel Plato’s intentions regarding the myth, but it is inaccurate to say that in either case the first half of the equation (autochthony or faith) is to be succeeded by reason at some point. Like the dynamic the medieval scholastics had in mind with faith before reason, the myth of autochthony serves as a permanent foundation for the establishment of the city-state (however rational it may aspire to be), not an initial, temporary measure. It is misguided to contend, as Adam appears to do, that because the rulers possess and articulate philosophic reason, and the lower class lacks this capacity, the rule of reason is the “final guarantee” for establishing and maintaining the state. For in fact, the rulers, rising as they do from the guardian class, derive their unique status and fidelity to the city-state from the passion inspired by the myth of autochthony. “Proper pedagogy” is insufficient for imparting to the guardian class and future rulers the requisite doglike
capacity of viciousness to foreign enemies and friendliness to fellow citizens. With the myth of autochthony, Plato acknowledges the power and utility of both myth and passion, both of which are actually indispensable and decisive fundaments in the Republic rather than oppositional phenomena in need of complete suppression.

But if Plato guardedly introduces the myth of autochthony in the context of a rational discourse on statecraft, and even underplays the necessary pathological function of the myth, what remains is the apparent conflict between reason and passion. Perhaps the single most identifiable philosophic pair found in the history of Western philosophy is that of reason and passion, schematized in terms of mind/body, head/heart, intellect/will, thinking/feeling, rational/irrational, philosophy/rhetoric, and so forth. In their simplicity, introductory readings in moral philosophy and the history of philosophy—influenced by the Christianization of Plato—too often suppress the heuristic purpose of this dualism (and others like it) and instead render it an ontological or epistemological absolute. Stumpf, for example, writes that:

For Plato, morality consists in the recovery of man’s lost inner harmony. It means reversing the process by which the reason has been overcome by the appetites and the stimuli of the body. Reason must regain its control over the irrational parts of the self.

On one level, Stumpf is entirely correct: Plato does seek to recover a “lost inner harmony.” This is especially evident in the idealistic planning of the Republic where harmony serves as a metaphor for justice. But on another level, one resonant with a Christianized history of phi-

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75 By invoking the metaphor of the dog who is both friendly and vicious, Plato may be appropriating and refashioning the Greek notion of cynicism, the virtues of which were extolled with considerable frankness by Diogenes, 412-323: doglike = Kynikós = cynic.

76 Stumpf, 1975, 69.
losophy, inner harmony is deferred, subordinate to an exaggerated conflict between reason and passion. In fact, such a reading of Plato provides the philosophical justification for Christian asceticism.

In Augustine’s *Confessions*, for example, arguably one of the most influential texts in the Platonic tradition, one finds the refinement of both reason and passion to the point of an either/or dualism, or rather dilemma. In a passage that characterizes a well-worn theme in *Confessions*, Augustine, quoting scripture, declares to God, “It is truly your command that I should be continent and restrain myself from gratification of corrupt nature, gratification of the eye, the empty pomp of living.”\(^77\) Of course, Augustine is exploiting a theme already pervasive in Christian scripture, itself influenced by Platonic schemata. Consistent with Augustine’s either/or struggle between bodily pleasure and Christian fidelity, the first Johannine epistle from which he quotes is itself overtly dualistic. Bart Ehrman identifies the author of this text as

opposing Christians who maintained that Jesus is a phantasmal being without flesh and blood by reminding his audience of their own traditions about this Word of God made manifest: he could be seen, touched, and handled; that is, he had a real human body. And he shed blood. Thus, the author stresses the importance of Jesus’ blood for the forgiveness of sin.\(^78\)

\(^{77}\) Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, translated by R. S. Pine-Coffin (New York: Penguin Boos, 1988), 233. Pine-Coffin emphasizes Augustine’s paraphrasing of scripture, in this case 1 John 2.16: “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world,” as rendered in the Oxford NRSV.

Possibly addressed to a community of docetic secessionists who were uncomfortable with the corporeal instantiation of Christ, the author of I John implores his audience “not to believe every spirit, but test the spirit to see whether they are of God.”

By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God. This is the spirit of antichrist, of which you heard it was coming, and now it is in the world already.\(^79\)

Intimately familiar with the either/or conflict playing out in much of Christian scripture, what Augustine develops in *Confessions* is a theology of Christ’s passion implicating passion in the Platonic sense: Christ’s suffering on the cross is quite specifically linked up to the bodily senses and appetites universal to all humankind, and these in turn are set in opposition to the existence of the soul. Among the major strands of thinking that together comprise the background to Augustine’s theology are Manicheanism and Gnosticism, both of which are framed within neo-Platonic philosophy.\(^80\) But because Augustine was trained in rhetoric, it is neces-

\(^79\) 1 John 4.1-3.

\(^80\) Augustine’s *Confessions*, aside from dealing with Christian ambivalence toward asceticism, is explicitly polemical toward the Manicheanism to which he adhered prior to converting to Christianity. Trained in the art of rhetoric, Augustine however finds the dualistic schemata of Manicheanism and Gnosticism quite useful, particularly in dealing with the inner-outer schematization of an individual body animated by a soul, *a la* Plato and especially the latter’s *Meno*. While neither discusses Augustine, two important texts on Gnosticism are Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989) and Pheme Perkins, *Gnosticism and the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993). Both deal at length with the dualism so indicative of both Platonism and Christianity that can be found operating in Augustine’s work. Another critical source for coming to terms with Augustine in relation to ‘Western philosophical tradition’ is Paul Ricoeur, particularly in his *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, ed. Don Ihde (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974). Ricoeur writes: “Anti-Gnostic in origin and intention, because evil remains integrally human, the concept of original sin becomes quasi-Gnostic to the degree that it is rationalized. Henceforth it constitutes the cornerstone of a dogmatic mythology that is comparable, from
sary to consider Aristotle’s strict separation of logic from rhetoric, a distinction that informs what we might call the ‘Western philosophical tradition’ with enormous ramifications.

In the Organon, and particularly in the *Posterior Analytics*, *Topics*, and *On Sophistical Refutations*, Aristotle develops his views of logic, differentiating between demonstration or scientific proof and dialectical reasoning. He concludes his logical treatises with sweeping condemnation of rhetoric, characterized as a “ready but rough” type of dialectical reasoning. Rhetoricians

used to suppose that they trained people by imparting to them not the art but its products, as though any one professing that he would impart a form of knowledge to obviate any pain in the feet, were then not to teach a man the art of shoe-making or the sources whence he can acquire anything of the kind, but were to present to him with several kinds of shoes of all sorts: for he has helped him to meet the need, but has not imparted an art to him.⁸¹

Stephen Tyler remarks that in Aristotle “logic is separated from rhetoric and the Aristotelian elaboration of rhetoric, for all its emphasis on the accommodation of speech and soul, is consequently an act of persuasion divorced from the speaker’s apprehension of truth, and is only

the epistemological viewpoint, to that of Gnosticism. In order to *rationalize* divine reprobation, which in Saint Paul was only the antitype of election, Saint Augustine constructed what I have been daring to call a quasi-Gnosticism. Certainly, for Augustine the divine mystery remains total. But this mystery is that of election: no one knows why God gives grace to one person and no grace at all to another. In return, there is no mystery to reprobation: election is by grace, perdition is by law, and it is in order to justify this perdition by law that Augustine has constructed the idea of a natural gift, inherited from the first man [Adam], effective as an act and, as a crime, punishable” (281).

added on as an adjunct to reason.”\textsuperscript{82} The conflict between reason and passion implicitly re-configured as the conflict between philosophy and rhetoric serves as the starting (and end) point for much of moral philosophy and history of philosophy: the sophistical method of rhetoric is ostensibly cast out to make way for the more scientific or objective philosophical pursuit of truth; the irrational is subordinate to the rational. The quest for meaning, no matter the arena, discipline or field, becomes formalized: divorced from its ‘lifeworld’ contexts, meaning is sought in the \textit{form} of a discourse rather than its \textit{social context and purpose}. Charting the gradual course of this development in Western philosophy subsequent to Aristotle, Tyler writes:

\begin{quote}
With the scholastics rhetoric eventually becomes again the original Sicilian art of the Sophists, a means of speaking skillfully and sophistically, the hallmark of priestly casuistry. With the decline of rhetoric, meaning was separated from the speech event, and the notion of speech or speaking subordinated to the idea of language. Meaning by the seventeenth century had become almost entirely a property of words rather than deeds, as revealed primarily in the rationalist philosopher’s equation of thought and language, and in his identification of language as the limit of reason. To this distinction the empiricist philosophers added their interpretation of the distinction between reason and passion.\textsuperscript{83}
\end{quote}

The dramatic conflict between philosophy and rhetoric, or reason and passion, historically comes to a head, as it were, first in Schopenhauer’s concepts of will and representation and


\textsuperscript{83} \textit{Ibid.}
finally in Nietzsche, who insightfully draws attention to the subjective, value-laden character of rationalism. Reason and any hierarchy of logical typology, Nietzsche would argue, derive not from the objective, rational order of things, but from the all-too-human predisposition to valuate the world based on desire and power; reason itself is the grammar of rationalization.

Absent from this tradition, writes Tyler, is the "rhetorical vision of meaning, first articulated by Plato in the Phaedrus [...] a unity of thought and expression accommodated by the speaker to a specific receptivity of the soul addressed."\(^8^4\) The Phaedrus is a testament to the importance of an implicated understanding of philosophy and rhetoric. First demonstrating the absurd lengths to which rhetoric sometimes goes, Socrates offers a defensive reply on its behalf:

   But could it be, my friend, that we have mocked the art of speaking more rudely than it deserves? For it might perhaps reply: "What bizarre nonsense! Look, I am not forcing anyone to learn how to make speeches without knowing the truth; on the contrary, my advice, for what it is worth, is to take me [rhetoric] up only after mastering the truth. But I do make this boast: even someone who knows the truth couldn't produce conviction on the basis of a systematic art without me" (emphasis added).\(^8^5\)

By putting this defense in the mouth of rhetoric personified while Socrates and his friend have a private conversation in the countryside, rather than letting us hear from Socrates while engaging his fellow Athenians in the Agora, Plato reveals his apprehension concerning the virtues of rhetoric. His strategy is far more subtle than the hard and fast either/or dualism

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\(^{8^4}\) Ibid.

\(^{8^5}\) Phaedrus, 260d.
held up by an oversimplified tradition bolstered by religious asceticism. My point here, suggested by Tyler's very brief history of rhetoric and meaning, is that reason and passion or philosophy (the love of wisdom) and rhetoric (the art of speaking) were not likely perceived by Plato as oppositional binaries; rather they were by necessity complementary implicates.

While Socrates expresses reservation when offering the myth of autochthony, largely because Plato is negotiating a complicated, even inscrutable, relation between reason and passion, in the end the appeal to passion in the context of formulating a rationally based community is not as contradictory as so often believed. In fact, Plato knew well that for all his emphasis on the primacy of philosophical reason, passion and rhetoric are both necessary to the establishment of the state; the rationally planned community must employ a rhetorical appeal to passion for the sake of gaining and maintaining control of popular sentiment—the indispensable kinship between citizen and state necessary for the security of the city-state. Here one sees in Plato an emphasis on balance between two seemingly conflicting but necessary and actually complementary forces rather than on any perceived conflict. Without both, the ethical interconnectedness necessary for the survival of the city-state would become imbalanced and eventually unravel. Just as the individual has both reason and appetites, the city as "a large-scale individual" is likewise constituted. To attempt to fashion a city-state by actually stifling the passion of popular sentiment and in particular patriotism would be unsuccessful and even catastrophic. Instead, in setting up the state, the planners and rulers must appropriate collective passion or popular sentiment for the larger purpose of stabilizing the

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86 Pradeau, 2002, 44.
polity.\textsuperscript{87} Plato knows this and likely foresees the consequence of insisting upon a strict separation of reason and passion. Tyler argues that in fact, historically, "This separation of reason and passion has destroyed the ethical basis of discourse [...] Neither reason nor rhetoric alone provide the basis for discourse, for discourse is the original ethical system, its principals and means creating and emerging in acts of communication."\textsuperscript{88} To reiterate, Plato’s ultimate aim is to strike a balance between passion and reason, between rhetoric and philosophy, between the needs of the unphilosophical (children and the lower class who respond to rhetoric) and the more intellectually sophisticated (educated adults and the upper class who

\textsuperscript{87} One could make the case that the political success of the conservative movement and the collapse of New Deal liberalism in the United States beginning in the mid-1960s illustrate Plato’s strategy regarding popular sentiment and patriotism. Shifting national political discussion from economics to so-called ‘culture wars’ (via think tanks, books and news media), prominent conservatives, often allied with some form of Evangelical Christianity, have won popular support and electoral gains largely through frequent appeals to individual passion and popular sentiment, references to scripture, and a characterization of patriotism ("God and country") allowing no room for dissent whatsoever, a patriotism frequently couched in terms of an either/or moral choice. Liberals who continue to insist upon addressing economic issues, even when those issues touch upon what ought to be characterized as cultural issues such as alleviating poverty, make their case in well-articulated, thoroughly rational arguments, but nonetheless have become almost entirely irrelevant in current popular political discourse. Civic and political discourse in the United States have in recent years become increasingly hostile in tone and fueled mostly by the mercurial dynamic of popular sentiment (and a careerist-oriented news media) instead of guided by a rational liberalism espousing the notion of common humanity. In short, Enlightenment liberalism is dying a protracted, obvious death on the stage of American politics. See Michael Lind, The Next American Nation: The New Nationalism and the Fourth American Revolution (New York: Free Press, 1996) and Up From Conservatism: Why the Right is Wrong for America (New York: Free Press, 1996). Likewise, Plato’s overall strategy in the Republic is less about implementing the rule of reason or bringing into existence a perfectly rational city-state and more about gaining control of the collective passion known as popular sentiment, and in particular the meaning of patriotism. While he contends that control over such passion is fundamental to the stability of the polis (integral to achieving justice), implicit is the role such control plays in empowering the rulers, those controlling popular sentiment and the meaning of patriotism.

\textsuperscript{88} Tyler, 1978, 167.
believe they have given up rhetoric for philosophy). That he seeks to articulate this balance through the means of dialogue is no accident.

One must bear in mind that in addition to charting the course for the establishment of the ideal republic, the aim of the dialogue is to demonstrate that justice, however difficult it is to define, is ultimately shown to be the virtue of harmonious balance in both the individual and the city. In frank terms, Leo Strauss writes:

Justice consists in everyone's doing the one thing pertaining to the city for which his nature is best fitted or, simply, in everyone's minding his own business: it is by virtue of justice thus understood that the other three virtues [wisdom, courage and moderation] are virtues. More precisely, a city is just if each of its three parts (the money-makers, the warriors, and the rulers) does its own work and only its own work. Justice is then, like moderation and unlike wisdom and courage, not a preserve of a single part but required of every part.  

Like the just city that achieves a sort of productive and economic consonance, the just individual must achieve balance and coordination between reason and the appetites through moderation. Justice does not consist in extinguishing desires through austere practices like celibacy or fasting by the individual or the group, but, again, in realizing a balance between reason and passion in both the individual and the community. The largely Christian-influenced reading of Plato that sets up a strict contrast between reason and passion, a dichotomy whose increasing opposition can be traced to developments in Christianity from the early church to Catholicism to Protestantism to modern sectarianism, amounts to an oversim-

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plification. For Plato, an appeal to passion does not undermine reason; rather like logic and rhetoric in discourse, reason and passion are complementary elements of the individual and social human condition.

2.3.4 Deception and Truth

There remains, however, the fourth issue with Plato's use of the myth of autochthony, the explicit use of falsehood and deception in constituting the republic. This too appears to be an inconsistency when we identify Plato and his teacher Socrates as thoroughly truth-oriented. The presumed teleology in Platonic philosophy is universal truth, the constellation of eternal and absolute universal Forms all derived from the one perfect, unchanging Good. Nothing more symbolizes Plato's disdain for deception and a seemingly irrepressible pursuit of the truth than the allegory of the cave set forth in Book VII of the Republic, where the prisoners of the cave "would in every way believe that the truth is nothing other than the shadows" of puppeteers wielding artifacts (515c). The purpose of education is to guide one, metaphorically speaking, up the rough, steep path leading out of the cave and into the sunlight of the 'real' world above. Socrates invites his audience to "interpret the upward journey and the study of things above as the upward journey of the soul to the intelligible realm" (517b):

In the knowable realm, the form of the good is the last thing to be seen, and it is reached only with difficulty. Once one has seen it, however, one must conclude that it is the cause of all that is correct and beautiful in anything, that it produces both light and its source in the visible realm, and that in the intelligible realm it controls and provides truth and understanding, so that anyone who is to act sensibly in private and public must see it (517b).
Even before introducing the famous allegory of the cave, Socrates is at pains to show Adeimantus that “the thing that is really a falsehood is hated not only by the gods but by human beings as well” (382c). Here he is referring to the ‘true’ or ‘pure’ falsehood in the soul and not to the practical “falsehood in words,” which seems to be akin to what we call a white lie.

The distinction between a ‘falsehood in words’ and a ‘falsehood in the soul’ is critical for Plato. Recall that in debating the definition of justice, Socrates challenges Cephalus’ argument that “justice consists in giving back what one is owed and telling the truth.”\textsuperscript{90}

Everyone would surely agree that if a sane man lends weapons to a friend and then asks for them back when he is out of his mind, the friend shouldn’t return them, and wouldn’t be acting justly if he did. Nor should anyone be willing to tell the whole truth to someone who is out of his mind.

That’s true.

Then the definition of justice isn’t speaking the truth and repaying what one has borrowed (331c-d).

As classicist Jon Hesk points out, “noteworthy here is Socrates’ stress on necessity. To avoid doing an injustice to the insane friend, one \textit{must} deceive him.”\textsuperscript{91} Such an instance Hesk identifies as justification for paternalism: “Person x decides that person or group y must be successfully deceived for [his or her] own good.”\textsuperscript{92} Greek literature is rich with such scenarios, often in the form of a general having to deceive his troops in order to maintain morale, pre-


\textsuperscript{91} Hesk, 2000, 151.

\textsuperscript{92} \textit{Ibid.}, 152.
vent mutiny, or marshal them for attack.93 For Socrates, deception or lying in such circumstances “then becomes ‘useful like a drug’ (hōs pharmakon chrēsimon: 382c).”94 In the words of classicist Carl Page, “Socrates implies that pharmacological lying is the judicious use of a poison, the poison of deceit.”95 When he first introduces such deception in 382e, the pharmakon appears to be available to “anyone concerned about their (sic) friends,”96—such as the necessity of lying to the insane friend. Later, however, in 389c Socrates contends, “it is not good for non-rulers to lie,”97 not because one’s unskilled use of the pharmakon could ultimately poison the friend’s soul, but because it confounds the mission of the rulers. It is unclear as to whether or not Plato seeks to ban from the non-ruling public lying altogether. But it is unambiguously clear that the citizens of Kallipolis are not allowed to lie to the rulers, just as, by analogy, “the failure of the patient to communicate his condition to his doctor” would render the physician’s treatment “that much less commanding and effective.”98

The justification for pharmacological deception of the masses comes down to the ultimate teleology of Plato’s socio-political plan: the establishment of the perfectly just ideal republic, and not a popular grasp of universal truth. Moreover, the means to this end are fraught with unreliable deficits in human nature. In defending the noble lie, Page argues that as Plato sees it:

93 See Homer’s Odyssey, 12.210-20.

94 Hesk, 2000, 153.


96 Ibid., 19.

97 Ibid.

98 Ibid.
the average human soul cannot be left entirely to its own devices [...] We do need help in the business of managing our own good, and only if we did not would lying count automatically as blameworthy interference. At the deepest level, Socrates' endorsement of lying does not rely on taking a dim view of the average citizen's capacity to direct his or her life; rather, it rests on a recognition of the natural weakness that must be strengthened and the perfectly mundane infirmities that tend to undermine the acquisition of full-fledged virtue.\(^9^9\)

Such "natural weakness" includes the selfishness of children, the apolitical character of parental affection, and the irrepressible desire for praise and recognition among citizens—all of which would ordinarily derail movement toward the realization of the just state. Page adds that "The autonomy of individuals is neither so inviolable nor so sovereign as to preclude the relevance of direction from others [that is, pharmacological deception by the rulers], and it shows no disrespect to try to save friends from the derangements we all understand."\(^1^0^0\) According to Page, then, pharmacological lying is justified by the larger, nobler purpose of establishing and maintaining the ideal republican state. Such deception amounts to little more than a harmless even uplifting white lie. In sum, the myth of autochthony, for Plato, is a nationalist, consciousness-raising pharmakon that serves the greater good of the republic, without, according to commentators like Page, encroaching upon the inviolability or sovereignty of the individual citizen.


\(^1^0^0\) *Ibid.*, 32-33.
2.4 Karl Popper’s Critique of Plato’s Republic

Does the deception of the noble lie, the myth of autochthony, in Plato’s Republic contradict the principles of modern liberalism? Is the apparent nobility of the pharmakon itself false, evidence of a totalitarian scheme behind the planning of the republic?

The question of whether or not Plato advocates totalitarianism was answered rather forcefully in the affirmative by Karl Popper in the mid-twentieth century, in volume one of The Open Society and Its Enemies, The Spell of Plato. Published in 1945, the concluding year of the Second World War, the book initiated a broad and oftentimes fierce debate over the politics of Platonic philosophy. Popper wrote in the years leading up to and during the war, explicitly responding to the rise of fascism and its attendant brutalities. His tone is understandably alarmist at times, and yet hopeful. The aim of the book, he writes in the Introduction, is

to show that this civilization has not fully recovered from the shock of its birth—the transition from the tribal or ‘closed society,’ with its submission to magical forces, to the ‘open society,’ which sets free the critical powers of man. It attempts to show that the shock of this transition is one of the factors that have made possible the rise of those reactionary movements which have tried, and still try, to overthrow civilization and to return to tribalism. And it suggests that what we call nowadays totalitarianism belongs to a tradition which is just as old or just as young as civilization itself.\textsuperscript{101}

Popper sets Plato in contrast to Heraclitus, arguing that the former “believed that the law of historical destiny, the law of decay, can be broken by the moral will of man, supported by the power of human reason.” In Popper’s view, Plato wishes to establish a state which is free from the evils of all other states because it does not degenerate, because it does not change. The state which is free from the evil of change and corruption is the best, the perfect state. It is the state of the Golden Age which knew no change. It is the arrested state.

Popper finds in the Republic a damning critique of democracy and political liberty, writing that Plato, “uses invective, identifying liberty with lawlessness, freedom with license, and equality before the law with disorder. Democrats are described [...] as insolent, lawless, and shameless, as fierce and as terrible beasts of prey, as gratifying every whim, as living solely for pleasure, and for unnecessary and unclean desires.”

While perhaps excessive, Popper’s characterization of Platonic political philosophy derives partly from the unsavory “city of sows” described in the Republic. According to Socrates, the apparently natural course of the once healthy democratic city leads to an insatiable appetite for the acquisition of goods and the fulfillment of desires: the healthy city, “no longer adequate” (373b), must, by necessity it seems, be enlarged to “a luxurious city” of excess and even shameless decadence (372c). Illustrating the dynamic in perfectly Hobbesian terms, Socrates says of such ‘luxury,’ “we’ll have to seize some of our neighbors’ land,” and by inference “our neighbors [will] want to seize part of ours as well” (373d). This dynamic Socrates identifies as “the origins of war,” arising as it does “from those same

102 Ibid., 20.
103 Ibid., 21.
104 Ibid., 42.
Socrates identifies as “the origins of war,” arising as it does “from those same desires that are most of all responsible for the bad things that happen to cities and the individuals in them” (373e). We have here in Plato a decidedly unflattering portrait of both populist democracy and unregulated capitalism, of a riotous and destructive economy fueled by the unrestrained greed of the populous.\textsuperscript{105} In addition, the recognition that the vices associated with greed flourish in the city, and that other cities are similarly luxurious, excessive, and desirous of other lands necessitates the establishment of an army to protect the city both from within and without. And as previously discussed, the army of guardians, from which the rulers come, is constituted not by craftsmen, tradesmen, farmers and such but by a professional class of soldiers who have a monopoly on the use of force to maintain the order and territorial situation of the city-state.

The devolutionary trend of the luxurious society calls for extreme measures, Popper explains. The myth of autochthony lays the groundwork for certain crucial “sociological doctrines” in Platonist political philosophy:

\begin{itemize}
\item [(A)] The strict division of the classes; i.e. the ruling class consisting of herdsmen and watch-dogs must be strictly separated from the human cattle.
\item [(B)] The identification of the fate of the state with that of the ruling class; the exclusive interest in this class, and in its unity; and subservient to this unity, the rigid rules for breeding and educating this class, and the strict supervision and collectivization of the interests of its members.
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{105} In contrast to Adam Smith, Plato obviously had no faith in anything like the corrective ‘invisible hand’ said to operate in \textit{laisser-faire} economics; Plato it seems was less idealistic than the common sense Scotsman.
(C) The ruling class has a monopoly of things like military virtues and training, and of the right to carry arms and to receive education of any kind; but it is excluded from any participation in economic activities, and especially from earning money.

(D) There must be a censorship of all intellectual activities of the ruling class, and a continual propaganda aiming at moulding and unifying their minds. All innovation in education, legislation, and religion must be prevented or suppressed.

(E) The state must be self-sufficient. It must aim at economic autarchy; for otherwise the rulers would either be dependant upon traders, or become traders themselves. The first of these alternatives would undermine their power, the second their unity and the stability of the state.106

Popper concludes this outline of doctrines with the pronouncement, “This program can, I think, be fairly described as totalitarian.”107

In order to ensure the future stability of such a state, or more specifically the guardian class which embodies the core principles of the state and out of which the rulers emerge, Plato turns to education. According to Popper:

The institution which according to Plato has to look after the future leaders can be described as the educational department of the state. It is, from a


107 Ibid., 87.
purely political point of view, by far the most important institution within Plato's society. It holds the key to power.\textsuperscript{108}

Indeed, as Socrates' allegory of the cave well illustrates, education is the paramount institution in the ideal republic, fashioning the guardian class and guiding a select few within that class in the development of philosophic wisdom and eventually to knowledge of the one perfect Truth. And yet the founding myth of this institution is not simply false, it is a lie.\textsuperscript{109} But whatever the ontological status of autochthony, whether or not the Athenians were indeed born out of the Attic soil, Socrates believes it to be untrue and as such he intends the myth to deceive its audience. "Plato introduces his Myth of Blood and Soil with the blunt admission that it is a fraud," Popper writes, deliberately casting Plato in terms meant to resonate with the Nazi doctrine of \textit{Blut und Boden}.\textsuperscript{110}

The Myth itself introduces two ideas. The first is to strengthen the defence of the mother country; it is the idea that the warriors of his city are autochthonous, 'born of the earth of their country,' and ready to defend their country which is their mother. This old and well known idea is certainly not the rea--

\textsuperscript{108} \textit{Ibid.}, 133.

\textsuperscript{109} Consider the distinction between truth, falsity and deception: "Questions about truth and falsity belong to the ontological and epistemological domain and involve questions about what is the case and how or if it can be known to us. A statement is true or false if what is said to be corresponds to what actually exists or is. Questions about truthfulness and deception belong to the moral domain of intention. Someone is being truthful when what they say, they believe to be true. If they intend to deceive, they are not being truthful—they are lying. They say something they believe to be false (or not true) with the intention that someone else should believe it to be true. The liar pretends that circumstances are other than they are." See Lionel Cliff, Maureen Ramsay, and Dave Bartlett, eds., \textit{The Politics of Lying: Implications for Democracy} (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 2000), 3. See also S. Bok, \textit{Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life} (Sussex: Harvester, 1978).

\textsuperscript{110} Popper, 1962, 140.
son for Plato’s hesitation (although the wording of the dialogue cleverly suggests it). The second idea, however, ‘the rest of the story,’ is the myth of racialism: ‘God...has put gold into those who are capable of ruling, silver into the auxiliaries, and iron and copper into the peasants and the other producing classes.’ These metals are hereditary, they are racial characteristics.\textsuperscript{111}

Popper also points out that the upward mobility of the low born into the guardian class “is rescinded in later passages of the Republic.”\textsuperscript{112} In Book IV, Socrates says that any exchange between the three classes “is the greatest harm that can happen to the city and would rightly be called the worst thing someone could do to it,” labeling such exchange an injustice (434b-c). “From this passage,” Popper writes, “we learn that any admixture of one of the base metals must be excluded from the higher classes. The possibility of admixtures and corresponding changes in status therefore only means that nobly born but degenerate children may be pushed down, and not that any of the base born may be lifted up.”\textsuperscript{113} By concluding the myth “with the cynical fabrication of a prophecy by a fictitious oracle ‘that the city must perish when guarded by iron and copper,’” Plato is likely acknowledging that his ‘racialism,’ to use Popper’s words, was “opposed to the democratic and humanitarian tendencies of his time.”\textsuperscript{114} For Popper, then, the “Myth of Blood and Soil,” euphemistically termed the noble lie, is pure and simple “a propaganda lie,” similar in kind to “Hobbes’ conventionalism, […] that the

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 141.

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
tenets of religion, although not true, are a most expedient and indispensable political device.”

In order to justify this deception and escape the paradox of founding the republic of virtue and truth upon untruth, Socrates makes a crucial distinction. Differentiating between falsehood in words and falsehood in the soul allows him to advocate the use of ‘practical deception’ or pharmacological lying while at the same time maintaining an overarching teleology aimed at universal truth, the former ostensibly serving the interests of the latter. But does this distinction hold up under examination of the republican education? Popper’s analysis suggests otherwise:

[One’s] educational aim is not the awakening of self-criticism and of critical thought in general. It is, rather, indoctrination—the moulding of minds and of souls which (to repeat a quotation from the Laws) are ‘to become, by long habit, utterly incapable of doing anything at all independently’ (Popper 1962, 131-132).

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115 Ibid., 141-142. Drawing out this point, Popper writes, “It is hard to understand why those of Plato’s commentators,” most notably among them James Adam, “who praise him for fighting against the subversive conventionalism of the Sophists, and for establishing a spiritual naturalism ultimately based on religion” (to wit the educational process illustrated by the allegory of the cave), “fail to censure him for making a convention, or rather an invention, the ultimate basis of religion. In fact, Plato’s attitude towards religion as revealed by his ‘inspired lie’ is practically identical with that of Critias, his beloved uncle, the brilliant leader of the Thirty Tyrants who established an inglorious blood-régime in Athens after the Peloponnesian war. Critias, a poet, was the first to glorify propaganda lies, whose invention he described in forceful verses eulogizing the wise and cunning man who fabricated religion in order to ‘persuade’ the people, i.e. to threaten them into submission […] In Critias’ view, religion is nothing but the lordly lie of a great and clever statesman. Plato’s views are strikingly similar, both in the introduction of the Myth in the Republic (where he bluntly admits that the Myth is a lie) and in the Laws where he says that the installation of rites and of gods is ‘a matter for a great thinker.’”
It would seem, then, that in Popper’s view, the allegory of the cave and all its fine talk about grasping the immutable truth amounts to little more than rhetorical subterfuge. Rather, the aim of education is not to lead the young guardian up the steep path of the cave into the realm of the ‘real,’ but to indoctrinate the student with the political needs of a well-organized, unchanging and therefore stable republican state (the ‘real’ of Realpolitik). With the myth of autochthony, “we see that Plato’s utilitarian and totalitarian principles overrule everything, even the ruler’s privilege of knowing, and of demanding to be told, the truth. The motive of Plato’s wish that the rulers themselves should believe in the propaganda lie is his hope of increasing its wholesome effect, i.e. of strengthening the rule of the master race, and ultimately, of arresting all political change.”

Perhaps the shrewdest move of all is “Plato’s blunt admission that his Myth of Blood and Soil is a propaganda lie.” By prefacing the myth with the distinction between falsehood in words and falsehood in the soul, contending that it is merely an instance of the former, Plato downplays and even obfuscates the deceptive character of the myth. It is left to go “wherever tradition takes it” (415d), but ultimately intended to serve as a memorial to the autochthons of time immemorial. “The Myth is true, Plato could have said, since anything that serves the interest of my state must be believed and therefore must be called ‘true.’” Yet by admitting the myth is a lie, and then leaving the matter “wherever tradition takes it,” Plato not only avoids the difficulty of reconciling the use of large-scale deception with his theory of education illustrated by the allegory

116 Ibid., 140.

117 Ibid., 141.

118 Ibid., 144.
of the cave, he also deflects critical inquiry into the character of the myth itself: Is it a falsehood in words or a falsehood in the soul?

Surely, if the guardians are led to believe the myth and never waiver in their belief, and future generations continue the tradition, then it would seem the myth of autochthony is more akin to a falsehood in the soul rather than a superficial falsehood in words, a grand white lie. As Popper sees it, Plato’s distinction between these two falsehoods is not entirely convincing. Socrates says that “to be false to one’s soul about the things that are, to be ignorant and to have a falsehood there, is what everyone would least of all accept, for everyone hates a falsehood in that place most of all” (382b). By contrast, the “Falsehood in words is a kind of imitation of this affection in the soul, an image of it that comes into being after it and is not a pure falsehood” (382b). The obvious objection unfortunately not raised by Adeimantus would be that “everyone would least of all accept” any falsehood, no matter how it is categorized. Moreover, given the long-term (timeless) quality ascribed to the function of the myth in constituting the guardian and ruling class, and especially its necessary pathological force, it can hardly be said that the myth and its effectiveness is merely “a kind of imitation of this affection in the soul.” If some future generation of guardians is forever deceived by the myth of autochthony, utterly convinced of its earthborn heritage, then it is fair to say that these guardians possess “ignorance in the soul of someone who has been told a falsehood” (382b), that they suffer a falsehood in the soul.

Setting aside determination of the myth’s kind of falsehood, the scope and magnitude of the deception itself for Popper renders Plato’s republic a totalitarian ‘closed society’. In his words, “the magical or tribal or collectivist society [is] called the closed society, and the
society in which individuals are confronted with personal decisions, the open society."\(^{119}\) Invoking a biological metaphor, Popper compares the closed society to an organism, stating that such a society "resembles a herd or tribe in being a semi-organic unit whose members are held together by semi-biological ties—kinship, living together, sharing common efforts, common dangers, common joys and common distress."\(^{120}\) Plato's characterization of the guardian class, with its isolated 'communist' existence and belief in the myth of autochthony, constitutes such a social organism. In fact, structured as it is by Plato's unique understanding of justice, of each member fulfilling a specific role coupled with rigid class boundaries, the city-state as a whole adheres to the criterion of the organic state and closed society.

By contrast, the open society lacks those aspects that make it comparable to an organism. "The aspects I have mind," Popper writes, "are connected with the fact that, in an open society, many members strive to rise socially, and to take the places of other members."\(^{121}\) Such striving leads to social mobility as well as class struggle. Drawing out the metaphor, the "cells or tissues of an organism, which are sometimes said to correspond to the members of a state, may perhaps compete for food; but there is no tendency on the part of the legs to become the brain, or of other members of the body to become the belly."\(^{122}\) While on the one hand the organic society is closed to change and its "institutions, including its castes, are sacrosanct," the open society on the other hand is constantly in flux, there is "competition for

\(^{119}\) Ibid., 173.

\(^{120}\) Ibid.

\(^{121}\) Ibid., 174.

\(^{122}\) Ibid.
status among its members,” i.e. social mobility as well as political opportunity. Alluding to contemporaneous fascism and communism, Popper adds, “It is therefore not surprising to find that most attempts to apply the organic theory to our society are veiled forms of propaganda for a return to tribalism.” In fact, as he points out in the Preface to the second edition, his entire analysis is intended to demonstrate the dangers inherent to utopianism: “I see now more clearly than ever before that even our greatest troubles spring from something that is as admirable and sound as it is dangerous—from our impatience to better the lot of our fellows.” In making his case, Popper insists, “one has first to be disturbed by the similarity between the Platonic theory of justice and the theory and practice of modern totalitarianism before one can feel how urgent it is to interpret these matters.” The goal in planning and implementing the ideal political state can and does lead to the creation of “powers of appalling destructiveness.” Popper concedes that “Plato’s declaration of his wish to make the state and its citizens happy is not merely propaganda:” To put this point more precisely: I believe that Plato, with deep sociological insight, found that his contemporaries were suffering under a severe strain, and this strain was due to the social revolution which had begun with the rise of democracy and individualism. He succeeded in discovering the main causes of this deeply rooted unhappiness—social change, and social dissen-
sion—and he did his utmost to fight them. There is no reason to doubt that one of his most powerful motives was to win back happiness for the citizens.  

Nevertheless, according to Popper, Plato “erred in his fundamental claim that by leading them back to tribalism he could lessen the strain, and restore their happiness.” Writing long before the term fell out of favor, Popper means by his reference to tribalism, “the emphasis on the supreme importance of the tribe without which the individual is nothing at all.” He adds in a note, “I use the term ‘collectivism’ only for a doctrine which emphasizes the significance of some collective or group, for instance, ‘the state’ (or a certain state; or a nation; or a class) as against that of the individual.”

In debating the merits and morality of Plato’s republic, it was Leo Strauss in the last century who confronted Popper most forcefully. Without going into the specifics here, Popper of course advocates the liberal position while Strauss takes the conservative (or neoconservative) position. The defining issue is modernity in the broadest sense: philosophically, prioritizing the knowing subject over the Divine; theologically, emphasizing immanence at the expense of transcendence; politically, increased moral and social autonomy among the citizenry and diminished political hegemony among a landed aristocracy. In this context, to be conservative means to question the purpose and moral legitimacy of the Enlightenment and its ideology, modern liberalism. Popper argues that Plato’s republican utopia is a totalitarian ‘closed society’, whose modern analogues are fascism and communism; the counter-

\[128\] Ibid., 170-171.

\[129\] Ibid., 171.

\[130\] Ibid., 9.
part to such political evils is the 'open society' based on liberal principles of transparent, representative governance and individual autonomy. Strauss by contrast contends that the advent of modernity itself signals the decline of Western civilization. He agrees with Page regarding the benefit of a consciousness-raising noble lie. Strauss himself draws a line from Plato to Machiavelli to himself, working to rearticulate genuine political philosophy (which in his view has historically lapsed into ideology), and extolling the virtues of Realpolitik for proper governance.

In principle, the debate is not whether or not Plato himself endorsed the noble lie or whether or not Plato really intended the Republic to be a workable blueprint for a sociopolitical utopia. Rather, the debate takes as its point of departure Plato's pharmakon and, arriving at two opposing sides of the contemporary political spectrum, inquires into the 'nobility' of the aims of a political class deceiving the citizenry en masse. Such a debate emphasizes not deception itself but the intended aims of the deception. Some will concede that a democratic government in certain circumstances may have to deceive the public in the interest of national security; when for example the country is at war and the rulers believe deceiving the citizenry helps to deceive the enemy. In the early 1970s, when this debate was playing out most aggressively among intellectuals (usually building upon the Popper-Strauss debate), the Watergate scandal served as the unacknowledged political example, with President Nixon ultimately deemed to have acted ignobly. Aside from the expected political and historical rehabilitation of Nixon and his actions now underway, the broader debate nevertheless continues unabated. The response to the question of the morality of Plato's pharmakon appears to be guided largely by, harking back to the early twentieth-century, one's philosophical and political worldview: liberal or conservative.
2.5 Concluding Note on Plato’s Autochthony

Given the context of the dialogue, the purpose of Plato’s myth of autochthony can be summarized in four basic points: (1) to provoke among the guardians a commanding passion for the land, a passion which will lead to unflagging defense of the land from foreign attack or intrusion; (2) to bring about a powerful sense of kinship among the rulers and guardians (and possibly all citizens) thereby engendering an assiduous commitment to maintain the harmony and order of the community; (3) to naturalize a three-tiered division of social classes, thereby solidifying their establishment and limiting social mobility; and (4) to establish and naturalize the difference between indigenous inhabitants of the city-state—autochthons—and the non-indigenous, heterotopic other, an other who should be perceived as a threat to the natural order and territorial situation of the community.

In closing, two points should be noted. First, taking Plato’s noble lie as the point of departure for the debate over the morality of the objectives of a political class deceiving the citizenry en masse necessitates a somewhat strong reading of Plato. In the Republic, Socrates proposes initially telling the noble lie not to the majority class, the productive iron and bronze citizens, but to the guardians and the rulers; the pharmakon would be used by a minority intelligentsia to control the rulers and warriors. More accurately, what is at stake in terms of modern liberalism is not the wholesale deception of the citizenry by the rulers, but, first, a challenge to transparent governance and, second, the naturalization of class divisions effectively preventing upward mobility. These are points taken up by Popper in his critique of Plato and the closed society.

Second, many commentators on the Republic, including Allan Bloom, Jon Hesk, Karl Popper, and Mary Nichols, just to name a few, characterize the guardian class as living a de-
cidedly ‘communist’ existence. Shared living and dining spaces, the lack of privacy and private property, isolation from the community at large, a censored education guided strictly by service to the city-state, and the barest salary, together constitute for these and other commentators an ancient analogue to modern communism, thereby rendering Socrates’ plan suspect if not entirely fallible. This plan, however, is not unlike that of any institutionalized military or warrior class. While the specifics would surely vary from one state to the next, the general outline remains the same, as does the conclusion: an institutionalized military is not a liberal democracy.
PART I: ATHENS

CHAPTER 3

MARTIN HEIDEGGER AND THE NECESSITY OF AUTOCHTHONY

"Now on classical soil I stand, inspired and elated
Past and present speak plain, charm me as never before."
— Goethe, *Roman Elegies*

3.1 War and Germany’s Special Path: Nostalgie pour la boue

Much as Plato’s conception of autochthony was advanced within the historical context of a nostalgia for bucolic Attic life engendered by the Peloponnesian War, Martin Heidegger’s early philosophy is informed by a Teutonic autochthony following the First World War. His was a philosophy with ideas found in the broader conservative revolution of Weimar Germany, an intellectual movement beholden to vague yet powerful notions of German soil and *Volk*, authoritarian, anti-bourgeois and preparatory to the rise of National Socialism. Heidegger aligns himself with this interwar revolutionary movement of German nationalism and, according to Charles Bambach, employs a “lexicon of fate, destiny, decision, struggle, and community.” Carefully tracking the development of Heidegger’s thought in terms of *Bodenständigkeit*, Bambach finds that Heidegger retrieves from post-war cultural philosophy the popular idea that the Germans were on a special path to an earth-shattering destiny, “a metaphysical *Sonderweg* that grants to the Germans alone a spiritual mission to save the West.” Heidegger develops a unique vision of this special path, one that draws from ancient

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Greek philosophy but reconfigures it for a German nation reeling from postwar territorial compromise and psychological defeat. As Bambach explains:

What will mark Germany’s metaphysical Sonderweg for Heidegger is both its autochthonic bond to the ancient Greeks and its “irreplaceable rootedness” in the native soil. In both of these inseparable bonds of rootedness/autochthony, Heidegger will find a justification for Germany’s revolution against Western nihilism and the forces of rootless cosmopolitanism that he sees threatening “the völkisch tradition of origin from the soil and blood.”

The term Bodenständigkeit connotes indigenousness or autochthony. A literal rendering into 'soil constancy' resonates with the historical notion of time immemorial typically conveyed by the use of such terms as native, indigenous, and aboriginal. As is widely known, Heidegger sought out or coined German terms that in his view shared an historical, political, and philosophical pedigree with certain Greek terms, working to reveal the perceived greatness of ancient Greek life rearticulated on German soil. His choice of Bodenständigkeit signals both his commitment to the renewal of the German Volk and the philosophic enterprise of transplanting ancient Greek concepts in German soil.

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5 Boden connotes ground, soil, landed property, bottom, floor, and abstractly footing or the firm ground of an argument or opinion; the term orients hundreds of idiomatic and colloquial expressions such as heimatlicher Boden (native soil) and mit dem Boden verbunden sein (to be bound to the soil), as well as Boden gewinnen (to gain ground) and sich auf den Boden der Tatsachen stellen (to take a factual view, to face facts, to base one’s views on facts). Ständig connotes constant, continual, steady, perpetual, and established; it orients expressions such as ständiger Aufenthalt (fixed place of abode) and ständige Rechtsprechung (established practice [praxis]). See *Langenscheidts Enzyklopädisches Wortenbuch*, ed. Otto Springer (Berlin: Langenscheidt, 1978), and *Heath’s New German and English Dictionary*, ed. Karl Breul (Boston: D. C. Heath and Co., 1936).
Heidegger began his career path in theology studying medieval scholasticism but eventually came under the spell of Husserl’s phenomenology. His analysis of Husserl’s work led him to the ancient Greek philosophers and into a fateful relationship with what might be called the Zeitgeist of Teutonic nostalgia for ancient Greek culture. Bambach emphasizes the impact of the First World War on the young Heidegger, an event that Heidegger would later romanticize and even lie about. A heart condition kept him in Freiburg throughout most of the war, working both as a university lecturer and postal censor. In the last months of the conflict he served as a meteorologist in the Ardennes planning gas attacks against the approaching American army. Later, however, Heidegger would portray himself in the Deutsches Führerlexikon of 1933/34 “as a volunteer for war service” who ultimately served at the front during the pivotal battle of Verdun. Biographer Hugo Ott suggests that this barefaced lie was Heidegger’s “characteristic way of glossing over a period of unevent-

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7 In his monumental study of the Enlightenment, Peter Gay notes a “Teutonic paganism [that] was to become a formidable rival to the Mediterranean paganism of the philosophes” (9 n1); it consisted of “a strange mixture of Roman Catholic, primitive Greek, and folkish Germanic notions [whose] inspiration was the Nibelungenlied, not Vergil’s Aeneid; German folk songs, not Horace’s Odes” (Ibid). See Peter Gay, The Enlightenment: An Interpretation. The Rise of Modern Paganism (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977). The distinction between Greco-Roman and Teutonic paganism is unfortunately overlooked by many scholars dealing with modern German thought and history.


9 Ibid, 154.
ful service” during the war.¹⁰ Turning inside out the concept of nostalgia as wartime melancholy over loss and homelessness,¹¹ Heidegger in a speech delivered in 1934 sentimentalizes the war front as only someone who was not there could do:

A wholly new experience emerged at the front out of which was formed a wholly new idea of community. This new spirit at the front bore within itself the strong will to make war the determinative power in the Dasein of the Volk [...] This awakening of the spirit of the front in the war and its consolidation after the war is nothing other than the creative transformation of this event into a formative power of futural Dasein.¹²

Bambach notes that Heidegger shared his romanticized view of war—in particular trench warfare for its autochthonous resonance—with National Socialist philosophers Alfred Baeumler, Franz Böhm, and Kurt Hildebrandt, among others, all of whom understood “the Great War as an important catalyst for the National Socialist revolution.”¹³ According to Bambach,


¹¹ From the Greek *nostos*, to return home or to one’s native land, and *algia*, signifying grief or suffering; together meaning “the sad mood originating from the desire for the return to one’s native land.” Johannes Hofer first identified the term and concept nostalgia as a medical condition in 1688; he was diagnosing a malaise that afflicted Swiss mercenaries fighting abroad. See Johannes Hofer, “Medical Dissertation on Nostalgia, 1688,” in *Bulletin of the Institute of the History of Medicine*, trans. Carolyn Kiser Ansbach, Vol. II, No. 6 (August 1934), 376-391.

¹² Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1976ff), vol. 16, 298; quoted in Bambach, 2003, 6. Heidegger’s glorified idealization of the war front is perfectly heroic on the surface but ultimately repugnant for its fraudulence. Franz Rosenzweig, who actually served at the Balkan front during the war, views the experience much differently; while vaguely apocalyptic for Rosenzweig, the war experience arouses not a positive or glorious view of destiny or history but one of dread. As I discuss in Chapter 5, Rosenzweig counters Heidegger’s early affinity for nationalism and autochthony with an anti-autochthonous course toward world redemption.
“these philosophers found a model for the *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* (‘community of fate’) that they believed was transforming Germany from a mere national state to a vital and organic national *Volk*.”¹⁴ The model was an idealized view of soldiers of the soil, both Greek and German.

Richard Wolin also draws attention to the centrality of the so-called “war experience” in helping to fashion the rhetoric of a philosophical and political revolution among many German intellectuals, including Heidegger. Among the oddly named conservative revolutionaries were Moeller van den Bruch, Carl Schmitt, Oswald Spengler, and Ernst Jünger. They earned their oxymoronic moniker by advocating the need for radical change while also maintaining a fierce preference for “traditional, organic, precapitalist forms of life.”¹⁵ As Wolin characterizes them, “they based their hopes for a revitalized German Reich on the proto-fascistic vision of a militant, expansionist, authoritarian state.”¹⁶

In his now infamous Rectoral Address of 1933, Heidegger not only valorizes military service, he identifies it as one of three bonds between student and *Volk* essential to the will and destiny of the university and the nation: this bond “demands the readiness, secured by knowledge and skill and tightened by discipline, to give the utmost in action,” encompassing and penetrating the entire existence of the student.¹⁷ Heidegger and the other conservative

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revolutionaries held, in Wolin’s words, “a shared disposition, mood, or aesthetic sensibility”

encompassing “a general fascination with ‘limit-situations’ (Grenzsituationen) and extremes”

and among other nihilistic proclivities “an infatuation with the sinister and forbidden, with

the ‘flowers of evil’.”18 The much celebrated war experience of 1914-1918 “added a crucial
dimension of apocalyptic urgency to their entire manner of thinking and writing.”19

Hugo Ott singles out Hermann Göring, famed commander of the Richthofen Fighter

Squadron during the First World War and early leader of the Hitler movement, as Heidegger’s

“ideal of new German manhood.”20 Heidegger presented a copy of Martin Harry

Sommerfeldt’s Hermann Göring: Ein Lebensbild to his friend art historian Hans Jantzen.

The book, nothing more than a “journalistic rag-bag,” portrayed Göring as a blustery cham-
pion of the Volk. According to Sommerfeldt, Göring had become Minister of Interior not to
dispense justice but “to carry out a political programme [...] wholly and unequivocally Prus-
sian, German, and unreservedly national.”21 In this capacity, “Göring will use this power

ruthlessly, unflinchingly—until the successful outcome proves him right before the German

nation, Europe, the world, and the tribunal of History.”22 Not an incidental figure, Sommer-

feldt’s Göring, according to Ott, “was an important source of material for Heidegger’s rector-


19 Ibid.

20 Ott, 1993, 150.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid., 151.
ship address, his proclamations during the autumn of 1933, and the statements he issued in
his own defence in 1945—even down to the linguistic nuances.”

3.2 Heidegger and Nazism

Heidegger’s affiliation with the Nazi party was widely known by the end of the war
in 1945. Following his official rehabilitation, however, the issue had little effect on his
growing influence and reputation as an intellectual. The publication in 1987 of Victor
Farias’ *Heidegger et le Nazisme* is today widely believed to have set in motion the begin-
nings of a harshly critical view of Heidegger’s life and philosophy. Scores of books have
since come out ostensibly proving the essential interrelation of National Socialism and his
philosophy. Scholar’s arguing this position, from the forceful to the nuanced, include the
above-sited Charles Bambach, Richard Wolin, and Hugo Ott, as well as Jurgen Habermas,
Karl Löwith, Thomas Sheehan, Thomas Rockmore, Hans Jonas, and many others. In re-
sponse, others have come to Heidegger’s defense, not to exculpate his personal involvement
with the Nazi party but to remind us of his profound influence as well as the depth and rigor
of his thinking. Hans-Georg Gadamer solemnly intones:

> And now I am asked whether today, after Farias’ revelations (which were not
> revelations to us at all), we can “still” concern ourselves with the philosophy
> of this man as we have previously done. “Still today?” Anyone who asks


24 Victor Farias, *Heidegger et le Nazisme*, trans. Mynain Bernarrock and Jean-Baptiste Gras-
work was actually not very original, as he more or less repeated much of what Hugo Ott and
others had already written. Nevertheless, Farias’ book brought about something of a scandal
and embarrassment to Heidegger scholars, particularly in France where his influence was
considerable.
such a question has a lot of work to do. Heidegger's lifelong confrontation with the Greeks, with Hegel, and finally with Nietzsche was seen as a great intellectual renewal in Germany and in France and throughout the entire world.

Is that all of the sudden wrong? 25

For many Gadamer's question here is not seen as rhetorical, especially for those who remind us of Heidegger's awkward and ethically ambiguous silence regarding the Holocaust. To these critics Gadamer poses another question, and gives us a hoped-for response:

Did he not feel in any way responsible for the horrible consequences of Hitler's seizure of power, the new barbarity, the Nürnberg Laws, the terror, the sacrifice of humanity's blood in two world wars—and finally for the indelible ignominy of the extermination camps? The answer is clearly no. That was the corrupted revolution, not the great renewal from spiritual and moral strength of the people that he dreamed of and that he longed for as preparation for a new religion of humankind. 26

Gadamer's summation is balanced but not likely to sway those who have long since concluded that Heidegger is both personally and intellectually implicated with Nazism. As it happens, his philosophy itself becomes a problem, a moral dilemma about the possibility of damnable courses or consequences lurking within a rigorous, seductive, influential and to some redemptive philosophy.


26 Ibid.
I doubt there will ever be satisfactory resolution to the Heidegger case one way or another. But like Nietzsche's writings, which I would argue reveal not just the insight or bombast of a single man but deep and widely held sentiments regarding loss of moral foundation and the portents of turbulent change in late nineteenth-century Europe, Heidegger's philosophy is pregnant with similar notions and others of a more national character in early twentieth-century Germany. Though I believe his philosophy can and should be examined in a positive light, like other great philosophic works, acknowledging and examining the problematic parts instead of roundly condemning the whole, I would not go as far as Julian Young, for example, who argues that his philosophy is wholly consistent with the ideas and principles of liberal democracy. Whatever Young's motives, his position represents an unnecessary extreme seeking to thoroughly sanitize Heidegger's philosophy. We can acknowledge that Auschwitz and all that it signifies would have occurred whether or not Martin Heidegger lived and wrote. But there are elements in Heidegger's philosophy that one must concede are morally indefensibly or at the very least politically problematic, namely his program of German autochthony and the way he privileges land over people in diagnosing the ills of modernity. Autochthony (and much else in Heidegger's philosophy) is an ancient concept with increasing popularity in nineteenth-century Germany, and it is a concept that

27 See Julian Young, Heidegger, philosophy, Nazism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). On the other side of the debate, I also disagree with the overall thrust of works by Wolin and Bambach, who despite their careful and probing analysis appear to characterize Heidegger's philosophy as thoroughly totalitarian by design. I site these authors because they have done the hard work of tracing the unsavory and insidious strands in his philosophy, not because I completely agree with their conclusions regarding the overall political character of Heidegger's philosophy, if indeed it can be characterized in its totality.

28 It should be noted that the contemporary environmental movement's perceived privileging of land over people remains a controversial issue; the movement has unfortunate affinities with popular back-to-nature movements in nineteen-century Germany.
does in fact challenge the universality of liberal democracy, with the capacity to provoke violent provincialism. In dealing with Heidegger's philosophy, there is no need to attempt a "de-Nazification" in toto, as Young and others attempt to do; sound analysis need only acknowledge and parse those elements that do indeed have an insalubrious affiliation with National Socialism or other sources of troubling political dogma. With specific regard to the present study, in tracking Heidegger's sources and uses of autochthony, and contrasting him to Rosenzweig and his emphasis on exile, we see their philosophies and the broader historical relationship between German and Jew in a fuller, more nuanced light.

3.3 A Wilhelmine Landscape and Dasein's Historicity

In 1889, the year Martin Heidegger was born in Messkirch, Germany, novelist Conrad Alberti published a novel entitled Die Alten und Jungen (the Old and Young) in which the young protagonist cries out:

I'll tell you what we need [...] We need a Jena that will tear us out of this stinking, fouled, slovenly bed upon which the bourgeois has thrown us—so that the rabble that has ruled the fatherland since 1870, jobbers and N.C.O.s, will learn that there is something higher than stock market swindlings and close-order drill.  29

The character's anguish is intended both to conjure up a romanticized yet long past Napoleon conquest as well as an historical self-consciousness. Historian Edward Fox points out, "Napoleon's conquest had the overall effect of reinforcing the Romantic reaction against rationalism, especially in Germany, as nationalism in the subject territories took the form of an assertion--

tion of the *indigenous* culture against the rigid rationality imposed by the French administra-
tor.\textsuperscript{30} It was in the nineteenth century that history as a well respected and influential disci-
pline came into its own, and with this development "a heightened appreciation of the diver-
sity of different epochs, cultures, and the normative truths holding sway in each of them."\textsuperscript{31}

The moral upshot to the new historicism was relativism, which for nationalists led inexorably
to an anguished questioning of modern German identity. Historian Mary Fulbrook writes:

Not only imaginative writes [such as Fontane, Mann, Hauptmann, etc.], but
also social thinkers, explored the implications for personality and family life
of the bundle of changes that were occurring, in the shift from what was seen
as an 'organic', traditional 'community' to a more alienating, individualistic
'society' (the distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*). There was
particular fascination with the implications of *rootless* life in the modern
city.\textsuperscript{32}

Prior to the Great War, and to some extent part of the constellation of its causes, was
a flourishing cultural pessimism spawned by fitful industrialization, growing materialism,
rising nationalism, and a popular preference for the non-rational and repressed. In the late
1800s there arose back-to-nature movements, for example, wherein "the constraints and re-


\textsuperscript{31} Jeffreay Andrew Barash, *Martin Heidegger and the Problem of Historical Meaning*, revised and expanded edition (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003), 2. Barash notes, "One of the most profound intellectual developments of the modern period has been the genesis of a specifically historical worldview," adding, "During the nineteenth century the historical style of understanding came into its own, not only as a tool for the historian's fact gathering, but as a fundamental approach to human culture in a broad variety of social sciences" (xvii).

pressions of a stuffy bourgeois existence were literally thrown off." Fulbrook writes of the *Wandervögel* (wandering birds) who "donned loose and comfortable casual clothing and set off on hiking and camping trips through the countryside, singing songs and attempting to adopt as natural a lifestyle as possible." She adds that these youth groups "tended to be strongly nationalistic and simultaneously anti-materialist and anti-semitic, since Jews were identified with crass money-making in modern society."

The valorization of the Great war and the role of struggle (*Kampf*) for Heidegger and other philosophers and conservative revolutionaries allied with National Socialism sprang from their loathing of modernity and in particular what Wolin describes as "Weimar normalcy [...] a state of generalized 'affliction'." In his lecture course of 1929-1930, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, Heidegger declares: "everywhere there are disruptions, crises, catastrophes, needs: the contemporary social misery, political confusion, the powerlessness of science, the erosion of art, the groundlessness of philosophy, the impotence of religion." He identifies the source of this affliction as the "absence of an essential oppressiveness in Dasein," its "emptiness as a whole, so that no one stands with anyone else and no community stands with any other in the rooted unity of essen-

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33 Ibid., 146.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.


tial action."\textsuperscript{38} He adds: "Each and every one of us are servants of slogans, adherents to a program, but none is the custodian of the inner greatness of Dasein and its necessities."\textsuperscript{39} Thus, what Heidegger and other revolutionaries find loathsome is bourgeois modernity, and the antidote to this affliction, the means toward a new community of fate, is to be found in the modalities of war, power, struggle and destruction, and a turn to autochthony.

More profound than his pedestrian interest in Göring, Heidegger in 1924 began reading the \textit{Correspondence between Wilhelm Dilthey and Count Paul Yorck von Wartenburg}, taking special note of the latter's critique of modern Europe's "intellectual and spiritual rootlessness."\textsuperscript{40} Bambach points out that in these letters Yorck continually returns to the theme of rootlessness and presents himself as "an advocate for a life rooted in the soil, the earth, the homeland, and in history."\textsuperscript{41} Alluding to the mythical Wandering Jew, Yorck pairs up exile and avarice, setting up a contrast between Greek and Jew that is intended to prefigure that between German and Jew.\textsuperscript{42} Heidegger draws heavily from Yorck's contrast, and as we shall

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Ibid}, 163.

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Ibid}.


\textsuperscript{41} Bambach, 2003, 18.

\textsuperscript{42} Bambach writes: "Those who have abandoned the permanence of the soil for the fluidity of capital have severed their ties to their own historical identity. As examples of this economic shift, Yorck will point to the Jews, "that whole tribe who lacks the feeling for a psychical and physical ground or soil." In an essay on Aristotle and Sophocles titled "Katharsis," Yorck will contend that modern humanity has become so displaced from the roots of its historical soil that it can no longer properly grasp the great pain of banishment "which the Greeks, who knew no supraterrestrial home, experienced when they were separated from their fatherland" (2003, 18), citing \textit{Briefwechsel zwischen Wilhelm Dilthey und dem Grafen Paul Yorck von Wartenburg, 1877-1897}, ed. Sigrid V. Schelenberg (Halle: Niemeyer, 1923), 19, 20, 23, 33, 39, 250, 254, and Paul Yorck von Wartenburg, "Katharsis," in \textit{Die Philosophie des Grafen...
see in chapter five, Rosenzweig appears to accept this contrast as well, rejecting autochthony and favoring exile for the proper modality of Jewish national existence.

Heidegger’s 1924 lecture course on Aristotle as well as his unique notion of historicity in Being and Time reveals the influence of the Yorck-Dilthey correspondence. In the Aristotle course he announces to his students, “we need to win back rootedness and autochthony as it was alive in Greek science.”\textsuperscript{43} Bambach argues that Yorck understands “the native earth and local landscapes as determinative forces [...] of German historical destiny.”\textsuperscript{44} Heidegger sees in Yorck’s thinking a fundamental connection between autochthony and destiny, and from this articulates his own view of Dasein’s authenticity deriving from its historical rootedness in the soil.

In sections 73-77 of Being and Time, Heidegger explicates his distinctive view of historicality in relation to Dasein and in particular its self-constancy. Dasein is not simply the sum of momentary experiences coming and going; nor is it something like a repository in which such experiences gradually collect. “Factual Dasein exists as born; and, as born, it is already dying, in the sense of Being-towards-death.”\textsuperscript{45} Of this fateful trajectory, Heidegger writes:

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\textsuperscript{43} Bambach, 2003, 17, citing the still unpublished text of Heidegger’s 1924 summer seminar, Grundbegriffe der Aristotelischen Philosophie, currently located in the Herbert Marcuse Archive, #0005.01, 6, 5, 109, 41-42. Bambach notes “Heidegger will find in Aristotle’s usage of \textit{to autochthonas} (those inhabitants who are sprung from the soil; Rhetoric 1360b), the Greek source for his own German understanding of those who are \textit{bodenständig} (rooted in the earth).” Bambach, 2003, 17 n10.

\textsuperscript{44} Bambach, 2003, 18.
Thrownness and that Being towards death in which one either flees it or anticipates, form a unity and in this unity birth and death are ‘connected’ in a manner characteristic of Dasein. As care, Dasein is the ‘between’. Thus, Dasein is characterized by its temporal position between birth and death; it is something of a confrontation of these two factual phenomena which in effect establish its historicity. In section 75, he adds:

The thesis of Dasein’s historicality does not say that the worldless subject is historical, but that what is historical is the entity that exists as Being-in-the-world. *The historicizing of history is the historicizing of Being-in-the-world.*

Heidegger finds that Yorck correctly identifies traditional historical research as ocular and ontical, and thus contributing to the concealing of Being in the ontological sense. Yorck counters Dilthey that the historical is itself ontological. Heidegger accepts Yorck’s critique, and champions an ontological understanding of historicality, explaining that: “Whether the *historiological disclosure of history* is factically accomplished or not, *its ontological structure is such that in itself this disclosure has its roots in the historicity of Dasein.*” Wolin explains that historicity basically “signifies the fundamentally historical character of all human Being-in-the-world and life-forms.” Heidegger takes a nineteenth-century concept and renders it existential such that the individual is much more than a being-in-the-world of

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49 Wolin, 1990, 23.
history; its every aspect of being is established by the historical and the historical itself is engendered by Dasein. What this means is that not only does the self exist in history, but the very composition of the self as Dasein is determined by its historicity, its past must be understood as a horizon of past futures which determine the course and content of its coming future; moreover, Dasein's historical world is established by the historicity of the self.

Like Bambach, Theodore Kisiel tracks the development of this theme in Heidegger to the Dilthey-Yorck correspondence. In 1924, Heidegger writes an article entitled "The Concept of Time (Comments on the Dilthey-Yorck Correspondence)," situating it as a study beneath the rubric of a phrase underscored in one of Yorck's letters: "our common interest in understanding historicity." Kisiel writes:

Historicality is an ontological character of the human being, Dasein. The basic constitution of Dasein, from which Historicality can be read off ontologically, is temporality. The endeavor to understand Historicality thus leads to the task of a phenomenological explication of time. In this endeavor, Heidegger returns to the contrast between Dilthey and Yorck, arguing that the former is "the 'sensitive' interpreter of the history of the spirit" who "endeavors towards a psychology in which the 'whole fact of man' is to be presented." Heidegger situates Dilthey's work within the field of neo-Hegelian historicism, advancing yet another variant of life-philosophy or Weltanschaung:

50 Theodore Kisiel, The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 323. Kisiel notes that the article sans the parenthetical subtitled appears as section 77 of Being and Time "virtually in the form it was written in 1924" (322).

51 Ibid., 323.

52 Heidegger, 1962, 449-450.
Everything centers in psychology, in which 'life' is to be understood in the historical context of its development and its effects, and understood as the way in which man, as the possible object of the humane sciences, and especially as the root of these sciences, is.\textsuperscript{53}

Heidegger finds in Dilthey a foil for his criticism against the popular life-philosophy. As Kisiel points out, in the letters Yorck calls for a radical overturning of the assumptions that form the basis of Dilthey's analytic psychology, "in order to arrive at a ground from which the method itself can be disclosed."\textsuperscript{54} Concurring with Yorck, Heidegger favors an ontological as opposed to an ontical or ocular view of history. Kisiel explains that from Yorck Heidegger finds conventional historiography and its methods wanting; what is needed is an ontology of the historical itself, and not the crude ocular portrait of the world built up from commonplace facts and augmented by psychological insight. Instead, the phenomenal ground for this ontology of history is Dasein, the access route to Being that is always already implicated in the world.\textsuperscript{55}

Bambach suggests that Yorck's emphasis on constancy upon the local landscape may at first seem to conflict with Heidegger's explication of Dasein in terms of a kinetic hermeneutical dynamism. What Heidegger does with Yorck, however, is accentuate Dasein's "'stretching itself along' [...] as a being who needs constantly (ständig) to re-position itself

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{54} Kisiel, 1993, 325.

\textsuperscript{55} Kisiel, 1993, 326.
in the field of possibilities—historical, contemporary, futural—that emerge for it and require interpretation.”

In section 77 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger writes

> At bottom Yorck is demanding a logic that shall stride ahead of the sciences and guide them, as did the logic of Plato and Aristotle; and this demand includes the task of working out, positively and radically, the different categorical structures of those entities which are Nature and of those which are history (Dasein).

Heidegger re-conceptualizes Yorck’s notion of constancy between people and native soil as “something dynamic and in need of continual revision and reinterpretation.” Identifying Heidegger’s use of the term *Bodenständigkeit* as a retrieval of the Greek notion of autochthony, Bambach argues:

> What autochthony means then is not simply a rootedness in the soil, in the past, or in the tradition from out of which one ‘views’ the world—a conception that more properly characterizes worldview philosophy. On the contrary, it signifies something concealed, mysterious, and chthonic whose meaning lies hidden beneath the surface of the earth, or rather whose meaning needs to be worked out in a confrontation (*Aus-einander-setzung*) with this concealment in order to grant one an authentic identity. As what is most concealed,

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the earth in this sense becomes an origin, an origin whose power helps to
shape the fate of an individual and the destiny of a Volk.\textsuperscript{59}

The philosophical route back to autochthony is achieved through the phenomenological ex-
plication of Dasein itself in its historicality. “To grasp the earth in this autochthonous way
requires a different understanding of it—neither as an object or \textit{Gegenstand} of nature or of
history but in terms of historicity,” Bambach adds.\textsuperscript{60}

\textbf{3.4 Heidegger, Plato and Aristotle}

Much like Plato in the \textit{Republic}, Heidegger announces in his Rectoral Address of
1933 his wish to place philosophy at the center of the university and at the service of the
German nation. Fusing the Delphic Oracle’s famed adage ‘know thyself’ with Nietzsche’s
will to power, Heidegger assumes the rectorship of Freiburg University, declaring a renewed
spiritual mission: “Self-administration can only exist when it is grounded in self-
examination. Self-examination, however, can only take place in the strength of the German
university’s \textit{self-assertion}.”\textsuperscript{61} But in interwar Weimar Germany he finds philosophy in a
state of tremendous decay and incapable of facilitating the self-assertion of the German uni-
versity and \textit{Volk}. Accordingly, “Heidegger deemed it necessary to free philosophy from its
moorings in academic theory and allow it free reign in the realm of questioning.”\textsuperscript{62} His fresh
approach

\textsuperscript{59} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{61} Heidegger, 1990, 6.

\textsuperscript{62} Bambach, 2003, 99.
would be one of “an open path of questioning rather than a fixed system of doctrine,” a modality he retrieves from Plato and Aristotle.  

In his courses on Plato and Aristotle in the early 1920s, Heidegger finds a path circumventing the dogmatic *Kathederphilosophie* of neo-Kantianism and neo-Hegelianism. The staid doctrinaire approached to philosophy has in his view only further contributed to the concealing of Being, and so what is needed is a radically different approach, one which first and foremost addresses the misguided distinction between theory and practice. Heidegger identifies the Greek understanding of theory “as the highest realization of genuine practice.”  

In Aristotle Heidegger finds one of the keys to understanding Dasein in an ontological sense, again seeking to overcome the erroneous divide between theory and practice. Aristotle speaks of the role of experience and assumptions in bringing about art and science, thus it is with Aristotle that Heidegger begins to develop his notion of facticity. Explaining Heidegger’s view, Kisiel writes, “factic life is always already interpreted and is in fact accessible only in and through such interpretations, from which it receives its meaning and through which it is understood.” From Plato and Aristotle Heidegger concludes that theory is the most authentic practice: “The fundamental theoretical attitude is that kind of *praxis* in

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64 Striking yet another parallel to Plato’s design for a republic, Heidegger announces in his Orwellian Rectoral address: “The much-lauded ‘academic freedom’ will be expelled from the German university; for this freedom was not genuine because it was only negative. It primarily meant lack of concern, arbitrariness of intentions and inclinations, lack of restraint in what was done and left undone. The concept of freedom of the German student is now brought back to its truth.” (1990, 10).


which the human being can be authentically human. It is proper to note that *theoria* is not merely a particular kind of *praxis* but the most authentic of all.”

By 1933, however, Heidegger in the Rectoral Address explicitly links up the Platonic-Aristotelian notion of theorizing with, in Bambach’s words, “a *völkisch* understanding of the *Politeia*.” Bambach draws attention to the role Plato’s *Republic* has played within Western history, its dialogical dynamic functioning as a kind of model for education and, for Heidegger’s purposes, “not as a kind of theoretical *Bildung*.“ Heidegger in the address asks what theory (τεωρημα) means to the Greeks, and responds that it is “not pursued for its own sake, but only in the passion to remain close to and under the pressure of what is [...] the Greeks fought precisely to comprehend and carry out this contemplative questioning as one, indeed as the highest, mode of human ἔννοια, of human being-at-work.” Bambach thus argues “Plato’s presence in the Rectoral Address [...] comes to signify the deep affinity between the German mission of rescuing the West through *Wissenschaft* (in its essential form) and the originary Greek founding of Western science as *philosophia*.“ And though Heidegger con-


69 *Ibid.*. Bambach remarks that “Heidegger’s only explicit reference to Plato in the Rectoral Address came at the very end when he cited the now famous line: “*τα . . . μεγάλα πάντα επισφαλείς . . .*” (“all that is great stands in the storm...”) (Republic, 497d). But the signature of Plato was imprinted on almost every page of the text. In the very opening paragraph, the discussion of ‘spiritual leadership’ (*geistige Führung*) takes up the question of the philosopher-king now recast to fit the situation of the German university. Heidegger’s crucial decision to root his discussion of spiritual leadership in terms of the university’s essence rather than its present historical appearance also shows Plato’s influence.” (103).


signs the only explicit reference to Plato to the concluding quotation, the address as a whole betrays a careful fusion of Platonic philosophy to National Socialism through the bonds of a national community (Volksgemeinschaft). The three bonds of Labor Service (Arbeitdienst), Military Service (Wehrdienst) and Knowledge Service (Wissendienst) demanded of the university students even echo Plato’s tripartite schema in the Republic of bronze, silver and gold classes. But in departing from Plato’s social hierarchy and situating the mission of the university as paramount, Heidegger places himself and his academic colleagues on common ground with the National Socialist worker, extolling “his völkisch and heroic values” as aligned with the university’s newly established ambitions toward fulfilling the destiny of German national greatness.  

3.5 Heidegger and Transcendence

Central to Heidegger’s understanding of both the subject/object and the theory/praxis dualisms, and more specifically his overcoming of these dualisms and his move to autochthony, is his unique explication of transcendence. In the philosophical and theological realms, as well as within the conventions of common sense, transcendence is generally understood as that which is beyond the world, be it God or something like a Platonic notion of the Good or Truth. Heidegger identifies this understanding of transcendence as one of the major barriers to comprehending the essence and situation of Dasein as well as the meaning of Being.

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73 Bambach, 2003, 105.
In *Being and Time* Heidegger acknowledges Aristotle’s own recognition that “the
‘universality’ of Being ‘transcends’ any universality of genus.”74 In line with philosophic
tradition, he argues, “Being and the structure of Being lie beyond every entity and every possi-
ble character which an entity may posses. *Being is the transcends pure and simple.*”75
His reinterpretation of transcendence at this stage comes with Dasein’s relationship with the
transcendent; on this scores he first cites the Aristotelian definition of man as a rational ani-
mal, but later references a theological source, Genesis 1:24, “And God said, ‘Let us make
man in our image, after our likeness’.”76

The modern departure from epistemological realism initiated by Descartes introduces
into philosophy a conception wherein all things outside of human consciousness are trans-
cendent. Cartesian epistemology calls into question the reality of the world beyond the
thinking subject and endeavors to bridge consciousness with the world. Subsequent philoso-
phical programs reformulate this schematic and advance various epistemological resolutions
to the problem of other minds. Heidegger approaches the issue by suggesting the inner/outer
dichotomy embedded in our common understanding of knowing locks us in the inner with
little capacity to grasp the meaning of Being in its entirety. In other words, as the Thomist
philosopher Etienne Gilson observes: if one begins with the modern Cartesian standpoint
then all philosophical attempts at bridging inner consciousness to the outer world are doomed
to failure.77 Heidegger likewise argues:

74 Heidegger, 1962, 22.
75 Ibid., 62.
76 Ibid., 74, 490.
With this kind of approach, one remains blind to what is already tacitly implied even when one takes the phenomenon of knowing as one's theme in the most provisional manner: namely, that knowing is a mode of Being of Dasein as being-in-the-world, and is founded ontically upon this state of Being.\textsuperscript{78} Heidegger instead proposes that knowing is "grounded beforehand in a being-already-alongside-the-world, which is essentially constitutive for Dasein's Being."\textsuperscript{79} Accordingly, the very essence of Dasein situates Dasein in the world alongside knowledge of the world; Heidegger sets out to refute the Cartesian starting point by collapsing the distinction between knower and known or consciousness and world.

The approach that confounds the traditional subject/object dichotomy of knowing is Heidegger's variation on Schleiermacher's hermeneutic circle. Breaking with philosophic tradition, he announces, "The assimilation of understanding and interpretation to a definite ideal of knowledge is not the issue here."\textsuperscript{80} Dasein does not need to break out of a subjectively manifest interpretive circle, transcend it in the classical sense, in order to fasten upon understanding and the meaning of the question of Being. Rather, "What is decisive is not to get out of the circle but to come into it the right way."\textsuperscript{81} He characterizes Dasein's being-in-the-world such that it comes to understand Being by moving alongside the beings that are


\textsuperscript{78} \textit{Ibid.}, 88.

\textsuperscript{79} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{80} \textit{Ibid.}, 194.

\textsuperscript{81} \textit{Ibid.}, 195.
ready-to-hand, the exercise of equipmentality; dwelling alongside and among the entities of the world such that Being is unconcealed constitutes care.

The Real is essentially accessible only as entities within-the-world. All access to such entities is founded ontologically upon the basic state of Dasein, being-in-the-world; and this in turn has care as its even more primordial state of Being.

The always-already character of Dasein as existing in the world, its equipmentality and care, trump the Cartesian approach to philosophical knowledge. Heidegger declares, "The question of whether there is a world at all and whether its Being can be proved, makes no sense if it is raised by Dasein as being-in-the-world; and who else would raise it?"\(^8\)

In addition to this spatial view where the subject/object distinction is collapsed or eradicated, it is Heidegger's understanding of temporality that enables him to articulate such a radically fresh approach to Dasein and transcendence. Temporality is the horizon of Being. Accordingly, when we endeavor to understand Being, we must understand Temporality, or specifically the three ecstases of time: (1) that to which Dasein has been abandoned or its thrownness ('past'); (2) Dasein's in-order-to ('present'); and (3) Dasein's for-the-sake-of-itself ('future'). Heidegger, of course, does not employ the traditional terminology, past, present, future; rather he departs from the convention view of time as a series of nows and characterizes these ecstases in relation to Dasein's continual disclose of itself to itself within the ambit of being-in-the-world.

\(^8\) *Ibid.*, 247.
In *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger further clarifies his unique understanding of transcendence. In other words, "the world is understood beforehand when objects encounter us [...] The mode of being of the world is not the extantness of objects; instead, the world [simply] exists." It is at this point that Heidegger develops most radically his novel understanding of transcendence, writing that "the world is transcendent, then what is truly transcendent is the Dasein." He characteristically enters into a discussion of the meaning of the attendant terminology, in a sense rehabilitating a traditional theological and philosophical concept:

Transcendere means to step over; the transcendens, the transcendent, is *that which oversteps as such* and not that toward which I step. The world is transcendent because, belonging to the structure of being-in-the-world, it constitutes stepping-over-to...as such. The transcending beings are not the objects—things can never transcend or be transcendent; rather, it is the "subjects"—in the proper ontological sense of the Dasein—which transcend, step through and step over themselves.

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84 Heidegger, 1988, 299.


He then adds, "Only a being with the mode of being of the Dasein transcends, in such a way in fact that transcendence is precisely what essentially characterizes its being."\textsuperscript{88}

Heidegger does not depart from the etymological force of the term transcendence. Rather, he seems to reposition the dynamics of transcending such that the enfolded nature of being-in-the-world ascribes transcendence to both Dasein and the world, but Dasein more primordially so. Dasein infuses the world with transcendence in the care structure of being-in-the-world, it "in its own being (transcendence) is already outside among other beings."\textsuperscript{89}

Transcendence is not instituted by an object coming together with a subject, or a thou with an I, but the Dasein itself, as "being-as-subject", transcends. The Dasein as such is being-toward-itself, being-with-others, and being-among-other-entities handy and extant. In the structural moments of toward-itself, with-others, and among-the-extant there is implicit throughout the character of overstepping, of transcendence. We call the unity of these relations the Dasein's being-in, with the sense that the Dasein possesses an original familiarity with itself, with others, and with entities handy and extant.\textsuperscript{90}

At this stage one can see that for Heidegger transcendence is not simply the movement from an inner-subject to an outer-object. Further, transcendence is not a singular manifestation that arises out of some entity or act. Instead, transcendence is the character of both Being itself and being-in.

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 301.

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid.
As in his 1927 course, in *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* Heidegger begins with the conventional meaning of transcendence, enumerating three senses: "1) an activity in the broadest sense of the term, a doing, 2) in the formal sense, a relation: the crossing over to X, from Y, [and] 3) something which is to be surpassed, a limit, a restriction, a gap, something 'lying between'."\(^{91}\) For Heidegger, these three senses "are only part of the general clarification" of transcendence.\(^{92}\) And so he elaborates: "1) the transcendent is contradistinction to the *immanent*, [and] 2) the transcendent is contradistinction to the *contingent*."\(^{93}\) The first of these senses merely recapitulates the subject/object problem of Cartesian epistemology, which Heidegger illustrates with a metaphor of a box:

Transcendence, then, is taken to be the relationship that some how or other maintains a passageway between the interior and exterior of the [subject consciousness] box by leaping over or pressing through the wall of the box. So the problem arises how to explain the possibility of such a passage.\(^{94}\)

He follows up this illustration by noting, "the problem of transcendence depends on how one defines the subjectivity of the subject, the basic constitution of Dasein."\(^{95}\) The Cartesian view of transcendence becomes one of an epistemological problem: what constitutes the passage from the inside to the outside; or to relate this discussion back to the issue of theory and practice, in what way does thinking and knowing come into the world of praxis? Heidegger's

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\(^{92}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{93}\) *Ibid.*


\(^{95}\) *Ibid.*
solution is to conceive Dasein's being-in-the-world such that the subject/object dichotomy, the interior/exterior relation, is overcome through realizing that transcendence constitutes the very essence of Dasein and its care structure.

Heidegger argues that it is neither an outer dimension standing in opposition to the thinking subject, nor an elevated realm beyond the world to which we aspire. Near the end of *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, he advances perhaps his most concise explanation of transcendence:

Transcendence is rather the primordial constitution of the *subjectivity* of the subject. The subject transcends qua subject; it would not be a subject if it did not transcend. To be a subject means to transcend. This means that Dasein does not sort of exist and then occasionally achieves a crossing over outside itself, but existence [itself] originally means cross over. Dasein is itself the passage across. And this implies that transcendence is not just one possible comportment (among others) of Dasein toward other beings, but it is the basic constitution of its being, on the basis of which Dasein can at all relate to beings in the first place.\(^{96}\)

Heidegger's understanding of transcendence is bound up with his understanding of world. He does not, however, enter into a discussion of the whatness of the world. Such a track is precisely the erroneous turn in getting at the meaning of Being and explicating the character of Dasein, for such an approach presumes the self/world dichotomy that encloses the self, thereby giving rise to the problem of crossing from the interior to the exterior. Rather, he argues that the question of the meaning of Being pertains to the *how* of the world. By way of

\(^{96}\) *Ibid.*, 165-166.
example, he cites a host of seminal thinkers on their understanding of world: for Heraclitus
the term is *kosmos*, which essentially means condition; for Augustine it refers to the attitude
of the inhabitants; for Aquinas also it is an attitudinal manner of existence; and for Kant
world means the wholeness of possibilities embedded in existence. In none of the above
does world mean the totality of entities. Heidegger is beholden to Kant on this point, stating
that the concept of world is indeed meant to point to the inner relation of entities and the po-
tentiality therein. He writes, "'World' as a concept of the being of beings designates the
wholeness of beings in the totality of their possibilities, a wholeness which is itself, however,
especially related to the human existence, and human existence taken in its final goal."\(^97\)
Heidegger now relates world back to Dasein itself, again emphasizing the *how* of being-in-
the-world:

The mode of human existing consists in defining itself in and by the whole.
Dasein's being-in-the-world means to be in the whole, specifically with re-
respect to the how. Even if Dasein were to conform itself to a single part and
expect everything from it, this very expectation would nonetheless witness to
existence and its wholeness.\(^98\)

He makes it clear, however, that understanding of the world does not simply amount to an
understanding of "useful items, the things of historical culture, in contradistinction from na-
ture and the things of nature."\(^99\) The 'how' that constitutes our understanding of the world is

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a boundless potentiality that suggests a perpetual dynamism or *kinesis* which eludes containment in individual entities.

In sum, Heidegger’s understanding of transcendence is to be understood as a dynamic activity rather than a static object beyond either consciousness or the world. To understand Dasein is to recognize the pervasiveness, the transcendence, of Being, which from Dasein’s perspective is being-in-the-world. Both the world and Dasein are transcendent, or rather transcending because both are always already crossing over and relating to one another holistically. We cannot understand Dasein without the world and we cannot understand the world without Dasein.

### 3.6 Authenticity and the Necessity of Autochthony

Heidegger’s reconfiguration of transcendence, his collapsing of the dichotomies that dog modern epistemology, inner consciousness/outer world, as well as his rehabilitation of theory and praxis, necessitates a stabilizing element, a ground. As Thomas Sheehan argues, in the final analysis Heidegger’s philosophy was not really about Being in the abstract sense; more accurately it was concerned above all to demonstrate “that Dasein is the answer to the question about the meaning of being.”\(^{100}\) Given Dasein’s kinetic and implicated character in relation to the world and temporality, how then does it gain a foothold amid the rough and tumble of thrownness?

Heidegger interpreted the conditions of Weimar Germany and post-World War I Europe as something of an eschatological crisis, the cause of which reached all the way back to Greek antiquity but had now reached critical mass in the spawning of industrialization,

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technology and late modern cosmopolitan rootlessness. Authentic Dasein, in its comportment of transcending, of always already being-in-the-world, would now make "a creative confrontation with all of previous history—its essential structures and epochs."\textsuperscript{101} Only by making such a confrontational stand "does a Volk come into the nearness of its origin. Out of this nearness emerges the soil upon which a standing and a persistence is possible: true autochthony."\textsuperscript{102} The role of autochthony in Heidegger's early philosophy, then, is presented not as feature of \textit{Bildung}, a worldly artifact for ready acquisition, nor as a principle of national historical identity, but as necessary fundament to grounding both authentic Dasein and its ambitious community of fate. In fact, for Heidegger autochthony provides \textit{common ground} between Dasein and the Volk. Authenticity is achieved through a holistic realization that sees consonance between Dasein and its autochthonous yet renewed ground, a shared primal ground continually cleared of the historical obfuscations that mask Being. Ultimately, however, the step from an authentic Dasein to a community of fate, a Volk who experiences collective authenticity, seems inadequately demonstrated in Heidegger's works of the 1920's and early 1930s. The mythical origin and character of autochthony in Greek antiquity, albeit very effectively reconfigured in Teutonic and Nordic terms by conservative revolutionaries and National Socialists for popular consumption, connects the individual to other persons in a tenuous, provincial way. At this point Heidegger makes his infamous turn toward philosophical poetics, finding in language a more primordial and authentic connection between Dasein and its community. Nonetheless, the poetics of dwelling within the fourfold will also be informed by a Greco-Teutonic autochthony, thus revealing that Heidegger never ade-


\textsuperscript{102} \textit{Ibid.}
quately overcomes the provincialism that burdens his philosophy and complicates its ethical consequences.
PART II: JERUSALEM

CHAPTER 4

THE MYTHS OF PROMISED LAND AND EXILE

"...he ran like a madman into the land
until at last among the desert bushes
as though thrown away he broke out in cries
that bellowed in the wilderness: God,
use me no longer. I am in pieces.
—— Rilke, “Comforting of Elijah”

4.1 Hebrew Scripture and Jewish Exile

In Hebrew Scripture exile and the hope of return serve as the unvarying context for
the myth of promised land. As figure is to ground, the heterotopic misfortunes of Abraham
and his descendents are understood in contrast to the constant theme of promised land. Wil-
derness, wandering, deportation, exile—all derive their meaning and force in contradistinc-
tion to the gift of land, and as Rolf Rendtorff points out, “the paths of the patriarchs are con-
tinually directed towards the land of Canaan as their goal.”¹ Biblical scholar Walter Bruegg-
gemann argues that in biblical history there is a “dialectic in Israel’s fortunes between land-
lessness and landedness, the latter either as possession of the land, as anticipation of the land,
or as grief about loss of the land.”² Scripturally, the land is repeatedly posited as resolution
to the problem of wandering or exile. Moreover, the promised land constitutes the nation’s
sacred space; redemption is afforded through dwelling in the land. Therefore, exile consti-
tutes a distancing from the God of Israel, an obstruction on the path toward redemption.

¹ Rolf Rendtorff, Rolf. The Old Testament: An Introduction trans. John Bowden (Philadel-

² Walter Brueggeman, The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith,
Following the sacking of Jerusalem in 70 CE, landlessness becomes more than a brute historical fact; it becomes the defining theological mode of Jewish existence. Thus, in Brueggemann’s schematization above, anticipation of the land and grief over loss of the land belong more appropriately to landlessness and not its contrary. Possession of the land and its territorial integrity constitute Israel’s historical quest and yet a seemingly unobtainable ideal. Writing “the first monumental History of the Jews” in the nineteenth century, Heinrich Graetz observes: “This is the eighteen-hundred-year era of the diaspora, of unprecedented suffering, of uninterrupted martyrdom without parallel in world history.” Jerusalem itself becomes more than an ancient city of past glory but a symbol of hope to counterbalance the agony of exile.

The travails of exile do not begin at 70 CE; this is the culminating point of a long, complicated history. Rather, exilic history, a theme of peril running throughout the biblical narrative, begins in 732 BCE with the first Assyrian conquest of the northern kingdom of Israel and the subsequent deportation of Judeans in 701. The destruction of the first temple in 587 (frequently misidentified as the beginning of exile) signals the end of the Davidic monarchy and with it Israel’s unity in the land. Biblical scholar Rainer Albertz argues:

The fall of the Judean monarchy and the destruction of Jerusalem were a severe blow to the official Jerusalemite theology of king and temple, with its massive appeal to Yahweh in support of state power. The guarantee that the

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Davidic monarchy would endure forever and the central tenet of Zion theology, that the presence of Yahweh on Mount Zion made the city impregnable to external enemies, had been refuted by the course of history.\footnote{Rainer Albertz, \textit{Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E.}, trans. David Green (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 133.}

Population dispersions, as Isaiah Gamdi notes, were not uncommon in the ancient Hellenistic-Roman world,\footnote{Isaiah M. Gamdi, \textit{Land, Center and Diaspora: Jewish Constructs in Late Antiquity} (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 60.} but Israel's case was unique: not just population displacement, military defeat or property loss, but an overwhelming theological crisis and with it seemingly incomprehensible conceptions of religious and political authority. After all, the land itself was a gift from Yahweh, not the territory of conquest, and the monarchy had been sanctioned by the priests, Yahweh's intermediaries. Albertz explains the subsequent development of Jewish theology in light of the religious calamity:

With the exile, consequently, the dominant state-centered theology of the monarchy faded into the background, surviving only in more or less major revisions and mutations. Instead, after a lengthy struggle, the message of the prophets of judgment, which in the preexilic period had been an opposition theology rejected by the majority, came decisively to the fore. With its bias toward political and social criticism, it became a widely accepted element of Israelite religion.\footnote{Albertz, 2004, 133.}

Early on the prophetic tradition had challenged the authority of the monarchy, viewing it as an affront to the authority of Yahweh. The collapse of the monarch and the seemingly end-
less dispersions inflicted upon the Israelites necessitated some sort of theological response if not justification. Accordingly the textual enterprise becomes one of theodicy as the prophetic literature and the historical texts emerge within the climate of exile. The exile itself becomes a literary framing device, an authorial and authoritative theme. Dispersion would be interpreted as punishment for the sins of the people, be it the Israelites themselves or the pagan Canaanites living in their midst. As a result of deliberate redaction, the Torah (the books of Moses) establishes the relationship between the patriarchs' actions and settlement in the land. During the early settlement and monarchical periods, the prophetic tradition frequently points to transgressions on the part of leaders and the people as the cause behind the nation's social and political ills.

The Babylonian Exile (587–538 BCE) is identified as the critical period for scriptural redaction and subsequent Jewish theological development. "No era in Israel's history," writes Albertz, "contributed more to theology than the exile." Elaborating this point, he suggests that the significance of the exilic period lies in Israel not retreating into denial or simply forgetting the catastrophe, but in seizing it as an opportunity for theological, social and political renewal. This process began with laments and confessions of sin in worship (Pss 44; 74; 79; 89; Lam 5) and in public assemblies (Lam 1; 2; 4), went on to include the reception of preexilic prophets of judgment (Hosea, Amos, Isaiah, Micah, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel), and concluded with the Deuteronomistic His-

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8 Ibid., 435.
tory and the retrospective prophetic books (the Four Prophets book, the Deuteronomistic Jeremiah books, the Ezekiel book).\(^9\)

In piecing together Israel's history, the authors and redactors were guided by one overarching theme, exile, an historical fact of existence that included notions of theological, social, and political perspective. In exile, those who succeeded the authority of the monarchical court "set out to compose the first official history of Israel, from the entrance into Canaan to deportation from the land."\(^10\) Albertz notes that the new vanguard "openly blamed the people and the kings and sought to demonstrate on the basis of past history how their sins against Yahweh had led to catastrophe."\(^11\) In closing his analysis of the exilic literature and history, he writes:

The exilic period was not only the era when the first official history of Israel (DtrH) was written; it was also the golden age of Israelite theology and history. Precisely because Yahweh's actions in history during this era long appeared impenetrable, prophetic circles paid close attention to the history of their period and interpreted it theologically. Moreover, because Israel was no longer the partner but now more often the victim of rising and declining world


\(^11\) *Ibid.*, 437. Albertz adds that the Jews' rather frank treatment of their own misfortunes amounts to something of "a minor miracle when compared with the repression of the history of National Socialism in Germany after 1945." Actually this is an awkward comparison, as the two respective pasts would be historical and mythical opposites, the oppressed versus the oppressor. It is also worth pointing out that it was precisely Germany's obsession with its past misfortunes that help lay the grounds for the advent of the Second World War as well as the Holocaust.
powers (Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians), these circles conceived history as never before in terms of world history.\textsuperscript{12} At the same time Israel’s history becomes theological its theology becomes historical. The guiding motif is exile from the land, and ‘the land of Canaan’ evolves into a deep reservoir of theological symbolism; it becomes not merely the land given to the Israelites but the holy land situated within a cataclysmic world of unpredictable providential forces. The light in the darkness of exile becomes the land itself and all it comes to symbolize: Yahweh’s benificent promise and a unifying force among the tribes.

Even the social, political and economic successes of the diaspora community, albeit slight in contrast to the imperial power of Babylonia, were marginal compared to the centrality afforded the notion of exile in the emerging theological history. Gamdi contends that when “embracing theodicy in their wish to justify the harshness of exile from the Land, the sages nevertheless searched for a ray of light within what was otherwise considered a justified punitive process.”\textsuperscript{13} He points to the refusal of the diaspora communities to assimilate to the host nation, which led the rabbis to their conception of ultimate galut (exile).

But this punishment was also transformed, turned inside out, so to speak. As Gamdi argues, “It was their very reluctance to assimilate that ultimately assured the people of Israel a final restoration of the Land.”\textsuperscript{14} National solidarity was achieved first and foremost by kinship and second by the shared exilic experience. Both, however, were understood in relation to the now distant land. Within this context, Jerusalem, once the home of the temple and the

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 439.

\textsuperscript{13} Gamdi, 1997, 30.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
epicenter of the nation, came to symbolize the hope of final restoration, itself the theological, historical teleology of Jewish national existence. Given the unpredictably turbulent forces casting Israel about, fragmenting the nation and forcing each community to adapt to a host environment, the promised land was thus reconfigured in conceptual terms and absent the centrality of the temple became an object of praise, most reverently in the liturgy of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

4.2 Internalizing Exile

Exile too was reconfigured. To be sure, exile constituted both a brute historical fact and a theological orientation. But just as the prophets and sages of biblical antiquity turned to theodicy in their efforts to explain Israel’s unending calamities, the medieval mystical tradition did likewise, enhancing the theological significance of exile.

Gershom Scholem, advancing a Hegelian interpretation of Jewish history, sees in Lurianic mysticism the refinement of exile into “one of the most amazing and far-reaching conceptions ever put forward in the whole history of Kabbalism.” The novel mystical concept is Tsimtsum, which literally means ‘concentration’ but in Kabbalah connotes ‘withdrawal’. Accordingly Scholem clarifies, “to the Kabbalist of Luria’s school, Tsimtsum does not mean the concentration of God at a point, but his retreat away from a point.”

What does this mean? It means briefly that the existence of the universe is made possible by a process of shrinkage in God […] According to Luria, God was compelled to make room for the world by, as it were, abandoning a region

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16 Ibid., 260.
within Himself, a kind of mystical primordial space from which He withdrew
in order to return to it in the act of creation and revelation.\textsuperscript{17}

Scholem then suggests, "the idea of Tsimtsum is the deepest symbol of Exile that could be
thought of."\textsuperscript{18} Jacqueline Rose, tracking the mystical and messianic aspects of contemporary
Zionism, also draws attention to the centrality of exile: "Right inside the spiritual process, we
find a perfect analogy for exile: God becomes, like his chosen people, 'an exile unto Him-
self'."\textsuperscript{19} Worth pointing out is that Scholem identifies the expulsion from Spain in 1492 (cu-
riously the very year Columbus landed in the West Indies and 'discovered' America) as a
crucial phase in the history of Jewish mysticism: this exile signals a national catastrophe in-
tensifying the desire for redemption thereby leading to the rise and reception of Isaac Luria's
inventive and stylized interpretations—interpretations heavily laden with the themes of exile
and restoration.

Though this chapter is primarily confined to Hebrew Scripture rather than including a
wide range of rabbinic and Kabbalistic texts, I cite Rose and Scholem in order to draw atten-
tion to the Zionist orientation toward promised land and exile—at least in a preliminary way.
Modern Zionism in effect transforms mysticism and messianism into powerful religio-
political forces. Rose cites the revealing words of Abraham Isaac Kook, the first chief rabbi
of modern Israel and still today an influential and inspiring figure: "The anticipation of re-

\textsuperscript{17} Scholem, 1961, 260-261.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 261.

\textsuperscript{19} Jacqueline Rose, \textit{The Question of Zion} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 22,
quoting Scholem, 1961, 261.
dempht is the force which keeps exile Judaism alive, and the Judaism of the land of Israel is salvation itself.”

4.3 Naming the Land

Given the composition of Israelite and Jewish theology through the methodology of historiography, some discussion of the various names for the land and their scriptural context will shed light on the development of both promised land and exile as national and theological themes of Israelite and Jewish identity. Though the following analysis is less philosophical in orientation than the rest of this study, more in tune with the philological method within biblical studies, my overall aim in pursuing this line is to present an interdisciplinary approach to the intellectual history of promised land and exile. What I hope to demonstrate below is the contingency of promised land within the biblical texts themselves, as well as the dynamism conveyed in the narrative between promised land and exile.

Three of the world’s major religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, all claim a heritage in what is called the Holy Land.21 Given the extraordinarily rich history of this land and the many names attached to it, little wonder then that it remains to this day one of the

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21 Hebrew erets ha-kodesh or admat ha-kodesh יְרוּשָׁלָיִם or יְרוּשָׁם מִנָּה, Latin terra sancta/terra sanctificata, Arabic, al-ard ul-muqah-hasah. Klein (1987) offers the following: “גּוּרֶס [...] 1. earth. 2. land, country. 3. ground. Related to B Aramaic בִּרְאָס [... ] Aramaic בִּרְאָס. Ugaritic ars, Arabic ard, Akkadian ersetu (=earth), Tigre ‘ard, compare to Arakiel – name of the earth in the Book of Enoch 8.3; compare to אָדָמִים לְאָדָמִים. Derivatives: גּוּרֶסן and לְאָדָמִים [basis for אָדָמִים] ground; soil, earth, land. Probably derived from אָדָמִים and originally denoting ‘the red arable ground;’ compare to Akkadian adnati (= pieces of land, places of residence), which is a loan word from Hebrew אָדָמִים.”
most contested territories in the world. Situated as it is at the crossroads of three continents, it has for centuries been the scene of cultural and national convergence and conflict. While the borders have varied with time and changing political circumstances, roughly the land is bounded to the west by the Mediterranean Sea, to the east by the Jordan valley and river, to the north by an east-west line north of Lake Tiberias (the Sea of Galilee), and to the south by an east-west line south of the Dead Sea. The eastern, northern and southern boundaries have varied dramatically throughout history, extending well beyond the Jordan, the Galilee and the Dead Sea respectively. Biblical accounts situate the eastern border east of the Jordan River (in the modern nation-state of Jordan) and the northern boundary has included modern-day Lebanon. Today the southern frontier forms a point that extends through the Negeb region all the way down to the Gulf of Aqaba.\(^{22}\)

The difficulties that attend to discussing the Holy Land are well-captured in Barry Bandstra’s widely used textbook *Reading the Old Testament* where he says: “The reason Canaan/Palestine/Israel has been the object of so much attention throughout history is its location.”\(^{23}\) No one can deny the pivotal role location plays in the history of this land; but equally contentious seems to be what to call this land which is so rich with religious symbolism. Inconsistency abounds in scholarly references to the land. The awkward nomenclature cited above, so indicative of struggling to write a text with straightforward pedagogy, inoffensive language, and broad marketability, illustrates the divisiveness involved with talking and writing about it.


For pedagogical purposes, 'Canaan' and 'Palestine' are what we might call official names, whereas 'Zion', 'the Holy Land', and 'the Promised Land' are the more religious or literary names. The name 'the land of Israel' falls somewhere in between, as it is of course an official name today but biblical in origin. 'Israel' sans phrase is the pan-tribal eponym, more properly a name for the nation it is now popular shorthand for the state and the land. A distinction must be made between 'Palestine' and 'Philistia' on the one hand and Hebrew Peleshet (land of the Philistines) on the other: although 'Palestine' (Latin Palaestina, Greek Palaistinē) has for a long time been thought to be a transliteration of Peleshet, David Jacobson has recently argued that it may actually be a translation based on the meaning of Israel, 'wrestles with God'.24 All of these names are loaded terms, each is a placeholder for an extraordinarily dynamic complex or congeries of historical conjecture, political ideology and religious connotation.

4.3.1 Canaan

In a wide range of archaeological, biblical, geographical, and historical works, 'Canaan' signifies the region as a whole as it existed in antiquity, whose civilization—in the general historical account—has been traced to as far back as the Paleolithic and Mesolithic periods, between 40,000 and 10,000 BCE. Settlement in more permanent villages, however, has been dated to the Neolithic Age, between 7000 and 4000 BCE, when the fortified city of Jericho was likely built.25 A period of significant growth, a cultural revolution of sorts, is


25 Representative of the scholarly use of 'Canaan' are Michael Avi-Yonah, The Holy Land (1972), and Avraham Negev, Archaeology in the Land of the Bible (1977), as well as a host
thought to have occurred in the early part of the Bronze Age (c. 2000-1500), when Semitic peoples penetrated the area from the north and likely brought with them skills in metallurgy and sculpture. Michael Avi-Yonah identifies this era as the Canaanite period when the land and people “acquired a definite historical character.” Among these incoming Semites were “the Kinaahu (‘People of the Purple’, an allusion to the purple dye produced on the coast of Phoenicia) or Canaanites,” thus the origin of the name. J. A. Soggin suggests that the name “probably already appears in the cuneiform texts at Ebla (end of the third millennium BCE) in the form kinahhu and orthographic variants, and was in use in Roman North Africa among the population of Punic origin as late as the fourth and fifth centuries CE, as attested by St. Augustine.” On the origin and use of the name, Soggin says that the purple dye production “took place in Phoenicia, and the Greek word φοινικής and its derivatives, already attested in the tablets of Mycenae as po-ni-ki-yo, refer to Phoenicia in the narrower sense rather than to the region in general.” However, Soggin goes on to say that in dealing with the biblical texts and other ancient Near Eastern sources, ‘Canaan’ generally denotes “the whole region

of widely used textbooks, such as Stephen L. Harris, Understanding the Bible (2000) and the above-cited text by Bandstra. Popular use of the name ‘Canaan’ in geography and history can be found in National Geographic Magazine. See, for example, Rick Gore, “Who Were the Phoenicians” (October 2004) and Joel L. Swerdlow, “The Power of Writing” (August 1999).

26 Avi-Yonah, 1972, 12.

27 Ibid., 13.


29 Ibid.
and not just the small part known as Phoenicia.\textsuperscript{30} In sum, the name itself is back-formed after the Semitic people who occupied the northwest coast of the land, the Canaanites, and its usage in historical contexts is actually anachronous in so far as scholars refer to the land as Canaan even before the Canaanites entered and settled; it is only a matter of historical convenience, as when one speaks of America during the late Iron Age.

‘Canaan’ (כָּנָ֫ן) occurs in Hebrew Scripture a total of eighty-two times, greatly outnumbering all other names for the land.\textsuperscript{31} Of these, nine references are to a man named Canaan, son of Ham, brother of Egypt and lowest of slaves.\textsuperscript{32} Both Oxford's Jewish Study Bible (JSB) and the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) infer a metonymic reference to the Canaanites in these verses, suggesting that they were slavish and sexually perverse. The seventy-three references to the land of Canaan appear in Genesis thirty-four times, with the remaining thirty-nine instances appearing in Exodus (3), Leviticus (3), Numbers (11), Deuteronomy (1), Joshua (8), Judges (6), Isaiah (2), Zephaniah (1), Psalms (3), and I Chronicles (1). ‘Canaan’ is entirely absent from the books of Samuel and Kings, suggesting that the redactor or redactors belonging to the Deuteronomistic historical tradition and sympathetic to the monarchy deliberately avoided or suppressed its usage.

Examination of the immediate context of all references to Canaan reveals a constellation of related themes: residing in the land, land as inheritance, father’s land, famine in the land, place of ancestors, land as destination, conquest of land, and settlement of land—all of

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{31} NRSV and Strong (1980). Compare to thirty-one occurrences of ‘land of Israel,’ one occurrence of ‘holy land,’ and no occurrences of ‘promised land’ as precisely phrased.

\textsuperscript{32} Ge. 9.18, 9.22, 9.25, 9.26, 9.27, 10.6, 10.15, 1 Ch. 1.8, 1.13.
which imply the overriding theme of assignment of the land to the Israelites by Yahweh. Other less-occurring instances relate Canaan to the construction of altars (Ge. 33.18, 35.6, Jos. 22.10-11, 22.32), the non-Israelite inhabitants (Ex. 15.15, Ps. 106.38), sustenance of the land (Jos. 5.12), and the language of the land (Is. 19.18).

Reference to Canaan within the predominate context of assignment of the land occurs nine times (Ge. 12.5, 17.8, 48.3, Ex. 6.4, Le. 25.38, Nu. 13.2, De. 32.49, Ps. 105.11, 1 Ch. 16.18). Of these references, three make an explicit connection between assignment of the land and covenant (Ge. 17.8, 48.3-4, Ex. 6.4), all of which are identified with the law-oriented P-source.

4.3.2 Land of Israel

In Hebrew erets yis-rā-ēl (ארץ ישראל), this name today officially denotes the modern nation-state for both the State of Israel and the Zionist movement. The origin of the name is of course biblical though its occurrence is rare: only twenty-four times in Hebrew scripture. ‘Israel’ itself is the name given to the patriarch Jacob in Genesis 32.29, meaning ‘wrestles with God’, and eventually when prefixed with ‘land’ (erets) it comes to signify the territory of the northern kingdom. The entire term erets yisrael first appears in 1 Samuel 13.19: “No smith was to be found in all the land of Israel [ארץ שביל, מը], for the Philistines were afraid that the Hebrews would make swords or spears.” In addition, it occurs three times in 2 Kings (5.2, 5.4, 6.23), once in 1 Chronicles (22.2), and three times in 2

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33 Soggin, 1993, 8.

34 JPS and BHS, Gen.13.9.
Chronicles (2.16, 30.25, 34.7), all in an historical sense concerning the monarchical period and referring only to the territory of the northern kingdom.

The remaining fifteen occurrences are all found in Ezekiel, a book that is apocalyptic yet this-worldly, with a clear distinction between “Judah and the land of Israel [תִּקְנֵי נַחֲוָה]”, and a discernible triadic structure: 1-24 – judgment on Judah and Jerusalem; 25-32 – judgment on foreign nations; 33-48 – salvation for Israel. In the final third part, Yahweh instructs the mortal Ezekiel what to tell the House of Israel: “Say to them: As I live—declares the Lord God—it is not My desire that the wicked shall die, but that the wicked turn from his [evil] ways and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways, that you may not die, O House of Israel!” The message here is one of redemption in the historical world.

The Babylonian Exile (587–538 BCE) plays the central role in shaping the apocalyptic message in Ezekiel, one resonant with nationalism, patriotism, and the morality of sin-punishment/repentance-salvation. While the vanquishing Babylonians play the role of God’s wrath, good and evil are actualized, first, in the divided kingdom (Israel=good, Judah=evil) and, second, in the distinction between the exiles (who maintain fidelity to Yahweh) and those remaining behind in Judea (who succumb to the errancy of idolatry). Biblical scholar Rolf Rendtorff comments: “In Ezekiel, who was one of those deported in 597, we find a fun-

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36 JPS and BHS, Ezek. 27.17.
38 JPS, Ezek. 33.11.
damental shift from preaching of judgment to preaching of salvation with the fall of Jerusa-
lem in 586.”\textsuperscript{39} Later he adds that it “very probable [...] that in this period there was an in-
tensive concern with the religious traditions and perhaps with revising them and reinterpreting
them in a creative way.”\textsuperscript{40}

Significant is the distinction found in Ezekiel between ‘land of Israel’ (ים נָבָרָה, יִשְׂרָאֵל) and simply ‘the land’ (ילה נָבָרָה), the latter signifying the much larger “land that you shall allot
to the twelve tribes of Israel.” The book offers a surveyor’s guide for setting “the boundaries
of the land [ים נָבָרָה לְגֹא חֵלֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל]” (47.15).\textsuperscript{41} In this passage and in 20.42 and 33.24, ‘the land’
(ילה נָבָרָה) signifies the Promised Land, the entire territory of the first covenant and not just the
northern kingdom. Never in Ezekiel does the complete term ‘land of Israel’ (erets yisrael,
ים נָבָרָה, יִשְׂרָאֵל) refer to the region as a whole. The lesser used admat yisrael (להאִמְת יִשְׂרָאֵל),
more accurately translated as ‘holy soil or ground’ found in 20.42 and 33.24 does, however,
make such a reference. 20.42 states, “Then when I have brought you to the soil of Israel

\textsuperscript{39} Rendtorff, 1991, 58. He reiterates this same point on 214.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{41} JPS and BHS, Ezek. 47.15-21: “As the northern limit: From the Great Sea by way of Heth-
lon, Lebo-hamath, Zedad, Berathah, Sibraim—which lies between the border of Damascus
and border of Hamath—[down to] Hazer-hatticon, which is on the border of Hauran. Thus
the boundary shall run from the Sea to Hazar-enon, to the north of the territory of Damascus,
with the territory of Hamath to the north of it. That shall be the northern limit. As the eastern
limit: A line between Hauran and Damascus, and between Gilead and the land of Israel:
with the Jordan as a boundary, you shall measure down to the Eastern Sea. That shall be the
eastern limit. The southern limit shall run: A line from Tamar to the waters of Meriboth-
kadesh, along the Wadi [of Egypt and] the Great Sea. That is the southern limit. And as the
western limit: The Great Sea shall be the boundary up to a point opposite Lebo-hamath. That
shall be the western limit. This land [ימה נָבָרָה] you shall divide for yourselves among the
tribes of Israel.”
to the land \(\text{לָשָׁן יִשְׂרָאֵל} \) that I swore to give to your fathers, you shall know that I am the Lord.\(^{42}\) And 33.24 reads, “O mortal, those who live in these ruins upon the soil of Israel \(\text{לָשָׁן יִשְׂרָאֵל} \) argue, ‘Abraham was but one man, yet he was granted possession of the land \(\text{לָשָׁן יִשְׂרָאֵל} \). We are many; surely, the land \(\text{לָשָׁן יִשְׂרָאֵל} \) has been given as a possession to us.”\(^{43}\) While the distinction between ‘the land’ (the entire region) and ‘the land of Israel’ (the territory of the northern kingdom) is maintained, with the introduction of the phrase \textit{ad’mat yisrael} (soil/ground of Israel) comes the application of the pan-tribal eponym ‘Israel’ to the entire region. The intention here appears to be theological: the curse inflicted upon the northern kingdom of Israel and its territory—evident in the Babylonian occupation—becomes a curse for all the tribes in the entire land. Moreover, the salvation of the nation as a whole depends upon the salvation of the exiles from ‘the land of Israel’, that is the northern kingdom. What we find in Ezekiel, then, with its frequent references to the land of Israel and the region as a whole is the development of a theology wherein the salvation of all the tribes depends upon the restoration of the northern kingdom’s land to the tribe of Israel. Additionally there is refinement of a dualist morality of sin and redemption wherein land is the reward for fidelity to Yahweh.

It is debatable whether or not the redactors of the Deuteronomistic History had in mind a deliberate name change from ‘land of Canaan’ to ‘land of Israel’. As noted previ-

\(^{42}\) JPS and BHS, Ezek. 20.42; whereas the JPS translates \textit{ademat} (יִשְׂרָאֵל) as ‘land’ in this context, I have modified the translation to read ‘soil’ in order to point up the contrast to \textit{erets} (יִשְׂרָאֵל).

\(^{43}\) JPS and BHS, Ezek. 33.24; as above, the JPS translates \textit{al-ademat yisrael} (יִשְׂרָאֵל) as ‘in the land of Israel’ while for the sake of distinction I have modified it to read ‘upon the soil of Israel’. 

ously, ‘Canaan’ is entirely absent from the books of Samuel and Kings, and moreover these books mark the first use of ‘land of Israel’. Abraham Malamat notes that such a change in name “is not explicitly stated as such, either in the Conquest cycle or anywhere else, apparently because the new name was brought about through a gradual historical process and not a single, definite event.”  

44 However, Malamat draws on the name change from Laish to Dan found in Judges 18 to suggest that the authors and redactors of the Conquest cycle may have deliberately suppressed or avoided the use of ‘Canaan’ in favor of ‘land of Israel’. 45 He contends, “Following the conquest of Laish, the new name Dan lent itself to the overall description of the Israelite settlement, denoting its northern extent, as in the stereotyped expression ‘from Dan to Beersheba’.” 46 Although the Conquest cycle may provide evidence of special attention to the name of the land, or perhaps give rise to expressions about the boundaries of the land, we must be cautious about arguing for a deliberate name change for the region as a whole among the Deuteronomists. Aside from the complications associated with the canon sequence and dating the various texts, the primary reason for no such explicit name change is because in all extant sources ‘Canaan’ refers to the entire territory (the Promised Land) whereas ‘the land of Israel’ (ית־ישראל) is a compound term found in the Bible referring only to the territory of the northern kingdom. Thus, the referent in these two cases is not the same and as such there would be no need among the redactors of the Deuteronomistic History to institute such a name change. What we do find, however, is the generalized form ‘the

45 JPS, Judges 18.28-29: “They rebuilt the town and settled there, and they renamed the town Dan, after their ancestor Dan who was Israel’s son. Originally, however, the name of the town was Laish.”
46 Malamat, 2001, 185.
land’ in lieu of repeated use of ‘the land of Canaan’, suggesting the avoidance of the name ‘Canaan’ to denote the entire region.

4.3.3 Palestine, Philistia, and Peleshet

Until recently, the scholarly consensus was that the Greco-Roman ‘Palestine’ (Greek Palaistinē, Latin Palaestina), was a transliteration of Hebrew Pelesheth (Pî̄lēšēt), meaning ‘Land of the Philistines’ or ‘Philistia’. This, in fact, is the progression offered separately by etymologists Eric Partridge and Ernest Klein. In a much cited recent article, David Jacobson, however, argues that the name ‘Palestine’ may have instead been conceived “as a Greek pun on the translations of ‘Israel’ and the ‘Land of the Philistines’.” Jacobson notes that in contrast to biblical references, the Greek Palaistinē and Latin Palaestina appear in ancient literature referring not to the small coastal swath originally known as Philistia but to the entire region. Palaistinē (παλαιστίνη) first appears in Herodotus’ Persian Wars, probably written around 440 BCE, describing, according to Jacobson, “not just the geographical area where the Philistines lived, but the entire area between Phoenicia and Egypt.” Moving on to the “philological problem,” Jacobson argues that “If the Greek Palaistinōi were derived

47 Eric Partridge, 1983: “Palestine, whence Palestinian. The adjective derives from Latin Palestinus (variation of Palaestīnus), adjective of Palaestīna, variation of Palaesīna, transliteration of Greek Palaistinē, itself from Hebrew Pelesheth. The inhabitants were, in Hebrew, Pelisīm or Pelishīm (cf Arabic Filasīm).”


49 David Jacobson, 2001, 43.

50 Herodotus, Book I, chapter 105 and Book III, chapter 91. See Godolphin, 1942.

51 Jacobson, 2001, 44.
[read: transliterated] from the Hebrew *Peleshet* (Land of the Philistines), we would have expected that *Peleshet* would appear in the Septuagint as *Palaistinoi,* ⁵² that is as a transliteration with Greek case inflection. But the translators of the first Greek Bible did not use such a name. “Instead, they referred to the *Pelishtim*, the people we call Philistines, as the *Philistiein*, while the Hebrew *Peleshet* is rendered as *Gê ton Philistieim* (literally, the ‘Land of the Philistines’), rather than [...] *Palaistinê.*” ⁵³ Jacobson also notes correctly that the “Septuagint translators tended to *translate* place-names rather than *transliterate* them, especially where familiar Greek names existed.” ⁵⁴

That the Septuagint school of translators did not do the same in the case of the Hebrew *Peleshet* (the land) and *Pelishtim* (the people) is indicated by the fact that the term they used, *Philistieim*, has a Semitic, rather than a Greek, ending. In other words, *Philistieim* is a transliterated term from the Hebrew for the Philistine people. *Palaistinê* and *Palaistinoi* must therefore signify something else. ⁵⁵

Jacobson’s conclusion is that *Palaistinê* is actually a Greek translation or artful coinage imitating the origin of the name ‘Israel’ (wrestles with God). “Greeks, well versed in the epics of their heroes, would have been intrigued by the Biblical explanation of the name Israel,”

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Jacobson suggests. Moreover, the name *Palaistinè* "is remarkably similar to the Greek *palaistès*, meaning 'wrestler', 'rival' or 'adversary'."

In Greek eyes, the people of Israel were descendants of an eponymous hero who was a god wrestler (*a palaistès*): the name wrestler also puns on the name of a similar sounding people of the area known locally as *Peleshet*. Thus, in Jacobson's view, "we have a perfectly logical explanation" as to why the name *Palaistinè* is most likely a translation of 'Israel' rather than a transliteration of *Peleshet*.

Whatever the precise origin of the name, today 'Palestine' is a highly charged term associated with the political aspirations of the Palestinian people, who feel that since the inroads of the Zionist movement and the establishment of the modern nation-state of Israel they have been uprooted from the land and politically disenfranchised. 'Palestine' as the name of a political nation-state is yet to be officially realized. Consequently, in the words of Rashid Khalidi, "the Palestinian's identity remains in question."

Soggin says that today "the term is used to indicate the region in a generic sense, regardless of whoever exercised sovereignty there, as distinct from Syria and Lebanon."

This generic use is easily seen in contemporary scientific and geographical works detailing the region. Atlases today routinely include, for example, a 'Physical Map of Palestine'. Additionally, archaeological, historical and philol-

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56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid., 47.
60 Soggin, 1993, 8.
ogical works often use the name ‘Palestine’ in this generic sense rather than ‘the Holy Land,’ presumably because the Greco-Roman origin of the name is thought to convey a certain dispassionate, scientific sense.\textsuperscript{62}

Historically, the name as used to denote the entire land is said to have been “introduced by the Romans after the [failed Bar-Kokhba] revolt of 132-134 CE in place of the traditional \textit{Iudaea},”\textsuperscript{63} in the form of Syria-Palestine, allegedly as a shrewd means of undermining the Jewish national movement. Echoing a widely held opinion, Soggin suggests that because of such a motive, ‘Palestine’ “is usually rejected in Hebrew circles.”\textsuperscript{64} This bias against the name, however, is a recent development. The Soncino Talmud uses ‘Palestine’ throughout, though denoting the land only in a non-religious geographical sense. Jacobson rejects the veracity of attributing to the Roman emperor any devious motive, suggesting that “Hadrian’s choice of \textit{Syria Palestine} may be more correctly seen as a rationalization of the name of the new province, in accordance with its area being far larger than the geographical


\textsuperscript{62} Representative of the ‘historical’ use of the name ‘Palestine’ are H. J. Franken and C. A. Franken-Battershill, \textit{A Primer of Old Testament Archaeology} (1963), and John Bright, \textit{A History of Israel} (1972). Most nineteenth-century German philologists and historians appear to consistently use the name \textit{Palästina} to denote the land.

\textsuperscript{63} Soggin, 1993, 8.

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Ibid}. It’s not clear what Soggin means by “Hebrew circles”. The reluctance to use ‘Palestine’ among contemporary Jewish scholars can be traced not to Roman origins, but to the Zionist movement in Europe. The decisive shift from ‘Palestine’ to ‘Land of Israel’ accompanies the shift from European languages to Modern Hebrew among those discussing the land, ongoing throughout the first half of the twentieth century and reaching a tipping point of sorts with the Holocaust and the subsequent establishment of the State of Israel.
Judea,” and further because “Syria Palestine had an ancient pedigree that was intimately linked with the area of greater Israel.”

During the era of early Christianity, the Latin West referred to the land as Palestine (Palaestina) and of course the Holy Land (terra sancta/terra sanctificata. The 1978 edition of Encyclopedia Britannica traces the contemporary use of ‘Palestine’ to the time of the British Mandate following the First World War. This, however, is an unfortunate, erroneous (and possibly biased) assertion, as scholars and cartographers alike had generally maintained the use of the name since the Roman era. When in 1922 the League of Nations issued its mandate to the British obliging the legal settlement of Jews in the land, calling the land Palestine had long been customary. The French Atlas de Géographie Historique of 1911, for example, identifies the region as “Palestine,” and the German Hand-Atlas die Geschichte des Mittelalters of 1880, uses “Palaestina.” Speakers of Arabic have used and continue to use the name Falastin to denote the land as a whole, a transliteration of the Greek.

Most scholars dealing with the Holy Land, be they archaeologists, biblical philologists, or historians, have since the 1970s certainly grown more sensitive to the rich connotations the names ‘Israel’ and ‘Palestine’ convey. But the unfortunate, unintended yet inevitable consequence is that one’s choice of name, no matter how delicately qualified, now seems to be understood as coded with political, religious, and historical sympathies. Consider, for

65 Jacobson, 2001, 47.


example, the scrutiny now directed to biblical archaeology, a discipline that looks for ar-
chaeological evidence in support of the biblical narrative, especially regarding the exodus
and settlement of the land.69 Because the Bible is now considered by many archaeologists
and historians of the ancient Near East to be historically unreliable if not entirely false, con-
temporary references to the land in antiquity are increasingly made using the terms ‘Palest-
tine’ and ‘Canaan’, names that historically appear in non-biblical sources. Debate over the
history of ancient Israel (the nation) is now articulated by two rival camps called ‘maximal-
ists’ (those favoring the use of the Bible in support of piecing together the history) and the
‘minimalists’ (those who jettison the Bible and look solely to archaeological data and non-
biblical sources). Professor of ancient history Baruch Halpern, himself something of a
guarded ‘maximalist’, consistently uses ‘Canaan’ to indicate the land in antiquity.70 By con-
trast, ‘minimalist’ Thomas Thompson in his Early History of the Israelite People from the
Written and Archaeological Sources prefers the name ‘Palestine’.71 No matter how faithful
one may be to the principles and methods of Wissenschaft, this divide seems to mirror the
conflict on the ground between the Jewish Israelis and the Arab Palestinians over the occu-
pied territories.

Most modern English translations of the Bible use the terms ‘Philistia’ for the He-
brew Peleshet (פֵּלֵשֶׁת), ‘Philistine’ for the Hebrew adjective and plural noun Pelīshiṭīm,
(פֶלִישִׁיתִים), and ‘the Philistine’ for the definite ha-Pelishti (הַפֶלִישִׁית). Peleshet (פֵּלֵשֶׁת) oc-

69 Traditional biblical archaeology, rapidly falling out of vogue, can be found in Avraham


71 Thomas L. Thompson, Early History of the Israelite People: From the Written and
curs only eight times in Hebrew scripture, once each in Exodus, Isaiah, Joel, and Zechariah, and four times in Psalms. Adjectival and nominative variants of ‘Philistine’ occur two-hundred and forty-seven times. The name ‘Palestine’ is not customary in English translations of scripture, with one notable exception found in Joel 3.4 in the King James version, referring to Philistia as the small southwestern coastal region. Needless to say, Peleshet nowhere in the Bible denotes the land as a whole—the Promised Land—but the smaller coastal region. As for the precise origin of Peleshet, it remains uncertain; it is a strictly biblical term. While there is no hard evidence of a link, it is certainly plausible to suggest it derives from the Hebrew root _plsh_ (פלש), to penetrate or invade, issuing the noun _palshan_ (פלשן), invader, and the adjective _palshani_ (פלשני), invading. In the source of the terms, scripture, the Philistines were after all a considerable source of antagonism for the Israelites.

4.3.4 Zion

‘Zion’ (צלם) has a host of connotations. In Hebrew Scripture it is first identified in 2 Samuel 5.7 as ‘the city of David’: “But David captured the stronghold of Zion; it is now the City of David.” Thus it is considered a Jebusite acropolis that David captured and subsequently where the Ark of the Covenant was kept. It appears 150 times in scripture referring to Jerusalem, and over half of all occurrences appear in two books, Isaiah and Psalms, the

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72 Ex. 15.14; Is. 14.31; Joel 3.4; Zech. 9.6; Ps. 60.10, 83.8, 87.4, 108.10.

73 Other (less notable) exceptions are: Third Millennium Bible, Joel 3.4; Douay-Rheims Bible, Jer. 47.1, Eze. 16.57; The Message, Dan. 8.9, 11.16, and The Webster Bible, Joel 3.4.

74 JPS and BHS, 2 Samuel 5.7: יִבְלָאָה יָהָא קַשְׁדָּה יִזְיֵה יִזְיֵה יִזְיֵה יִזְיֵה יִזְיֵה יִזְיֵה יִזְיֵה יִזְיֵה יִזְיֵה יִזְיֵ

75 2 Sam. 5.6, 6.12.
latter of which sings the praises of the city while the former emphasizes its sin. As with Ezekiel, the relevant background for both books here is the Babylonian Exile and the subsequent sacking of Jerusalem. Two frequent variations include ‘Mount Zion’ (har-Zion, הַר זִיּוֹן) and the strident ‘daughters of Zion’ (b’not-Zion, בָּנָות זִיּוֹן).

Bound up with the twin theme of Jerusalem’s destruction and deliverance, ‘Zion’ is overall a prophetic and poetic designation meant to arouse religious emotion and fidelity to Yahweh, more so than the nominal ‘Jerusalem’. This is especially the case when the context regards the city’s centrality in notions of messianic salvation and the apocalyptic restoration of the exiles. The connotations of prophecy and salvation were no doubt the primary motive behind the name Zionism for the modern Jewish nationalist movement, as well as its precursor Hovevei Zion (Lovers of Zion), one of the first modern settler movements. Accordingly, ‘Zion’ in the modern era came to designate the land as a whole rather than just Jerusalem. Michael Prior notes that the term “appears in texts from the Hebrew prophets, in the exhortations of the Karaites of the Middle Ages, in the Zion poetry of [Judah] Halevy, in the various aliyahs associated with the Kabbalists and others, in the Jewish opposition to emancipation and assimilation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and in the aspirations of the prayer-book presented afresh to each new generation of Jews.”

The origin of the name is unclear. Klein notes that some scholars trace it to the root zwh in the sense ‘to erect’ (e.g., zion, הָרִים, monument). Others trace it to the Semitic base

76 Zionism = German, Zionismus; French, sionisme. Chartered in Germany, Hovevei Zion or Hibbat Zion found its most popular support among Russian Jews wanting to flee the pogroms and resettle in the Holy Land.

zyn, in Arabic šāna, ‘he protected’, thus it would convey something like ‘fortress’ or ‘citadel’. Still others now lean toward an association with the base zhh or zyh, suggesting Zion originally meant ‘bare hill’. Possible support for this latter view might lay with zayon (珒 النو) meaning ‘dry ground’, especially with a contextual approach to scriptural composition and deference to the flood story.

4.3.5 Holy Land

Although ‘the Holy Land’ is by far the most popular unofficial name for the region, the term ad’mat ha-kodesh (אַדְמַת הַקּוּדֶשָׁה), more precisely translated as ‘holy soil/ground’, appears only once in Hebrew Scripture, in Zechariah 2.16: “The Lord will take Judah to Himself as His portion in the Holy Land, and He will choose Jerusalem once more” This verse is rendered in the Latin Vulgate as “et possidebit Dominus Iudam partem suam in terra sanctificata et eliget adhuc Hierusalem,” engendering the idiomatic terra sancta. The more common erets ha-kodesh (אֶרֶץ הַקּוּדֶשָׁה) actually never occurs in scripture. As neither the Mishnah nor the Gemara nor the various midrashim employ the term, ‘holy land’ (erets ha-kodesh) does not appear to be significant in early rabbinic literature, though it is important to note that the rabbis do discuss the land.


79 Zayon (珒 النو), ‘dry ground’ appears in Is. 25.5 and 32.2.

80 JPS and BHS, Zech. 2.16:

71  יָשָׁב יְהֹוָה אַתָּה הַקּוּדֶשָׁה וַתֹּאְכִילוּ אֶרֶץ הַקּוּדֶשָׁה וְהָבֹא שָׁבָא בִּרְשׁוּתֵב

81 Latin Vulgate, Zec. 2.12.
Popular use of the expression ‘the Holy Land’ (*terra sancta*) in the West is consequent to the rise of Christendom, gaining currency with the Crusades and scholasticism. Pope Urban II in the eleventh century, searching for a means to end the schism with the Eastern Church and unite all of Christendom, hatched a plan for ‘a war to recover the Holy Land.’”^{83} At the Council of Clarmont in November of 1095, Urban, ‘a Frenchman speaking in the vernacular to a French audience, delivered his epoch-making appeal.’^{84} The Ottoman Turks had wrecked the Byzantine Empire and in the process seized the holy places of Christianity. “What noble work it would be to rescue the Lord’s sepulcher from their foul hands! […] So Urban concluded, and the entire assemblage, we are told, shouted as with one voice, ‘*Dieu le veut*—God wills it!’”^{85} Consequently, the abstract holy land of the parish homily quickly became a tangible entity of unimpeachable purpose, resulting (rather predictably) in a mad pilgrimage by countless peasants armed with all manner of crude weaponry. The fact that the Crusades were repeated gives evidence of the role the Holy Land plays—as a concept and territory—in the lives of villeins, serfs, and nobles alike during the Middle Ages.

Obviously not a benign term, ‘the Holy Land’ does have a certain ecumenical and political utility, capturing as it does the theological significance of the land for Jews, Christians and Muslims. It remains to be seen whether or not such utility can and will be exploited for

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82 The only occurrences of the term appearing in the Soncino translation are created by the bracketed insertion of the term ‘holy’ before the term ‘land’ by the editors as a means of clarification.


beneficent purposes in the years ahead as the idea of separation between church and state—as well as the idea of secularization itself—continues to lose ground in the political sphere throughout the world.\textsuperscript{86} Nowadays even European academics are beginning to the see the critical role religion plays in the lives of huge numbers of people and their conceptions of governance throughout the world, and thus reason enough for sustained, careful study.\textsuperscript{87}

The concept itself—holy land, sacred ground—is probably universal, extant as it is outside of the Western monotheistic tradition in, for example, Hinduism\textsuperscript{88} and countless manifestations of paganism.\textsuperscript{89} The connection between the safety of settlement or agricul-

\textsuperscript{86} For sociological and political discussions of the demise of secularization see Peter L. Berger, ed., \textit{The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics}, 1999. Also see Bruce Lincoln, \textit{Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11}, 2003, for an analysis of the use of theology in political discourse and a helpful set of observations for the study of religion following the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Lincoln offers a rhetorical analysis tracking the similarities between the discourses of fundamentalist Christianity in the United States and “radical Islam” in predominately Muslim countries.

\textsuperscript{87} This observation is based in part on anecdotal evidence: in discussions with my European friends and academic peers, more and more tell me that they must confess the importance of going back to the study of religion to understand the thoughts and actions of contemporary humankind. This constitutes a reversal of sorts on the topic of religion among European academics, where, with the exception of the Netherlands, few departments on the continent give serious study to religion.

\textsuperscript{88} \textit{Khet} is the Hindi term for ground, land, soil, etc., \textit{khet ana} meaning ‘holy land’. In Hinduism, the holy land is the region bounded by the Himalayas to the north and the Vindhya mountains to the south. Other names for this region include \textit{brahma}, \textit{punya-bhu}, and \textit{tapoban}. Stephen Tyler mentions “the part south of the Himālayas […] Bhāratavarsa, “The Land of the Sons of Bhārata,” in his \textit{India: An Anthropological Perspective} (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 1973), 6.

\textsuperscript{89} Paganism is an extraordinarily huge concept; it could even encompass Hinduism and Egyptian worship. Here I mean by the term the constellation of pre-Christian Mesopotamian and European religions, such as ancient Druidism, and the countless contemporary manifestations generally characterized as neopagan, such as modern Wicca.
tural fertility and divinity is direct and explicit in these and countless other religious traditions.

4.3.6 Promised Land

For ‘promised land’ the Oxford English Dictionary offers: “the land of Canaan, as promised to Abraham and his posterity […] hence allusively applied to heaven, or to any place of expected felicity.” Like a famous quote that turns out to be fabricated, the precise phrase ‘the Promised Land’ appears in neither the Hebrew Bible nor the Latin Vulgate nor the King James Bible. Instead, the concept arises out of such phrasing as “The Lord, God of heaven, who took me from my father’s house and from my native land, who swore [‘ןֵלֵבַע] to me an oath, saying, ‘I will assign this land to your offspring’” (Gen. 24.7) and “Reside in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; I will assign all these lands to you and to your heirs, fulfilling the oath that I swore [‘ןֵלֵבַע] to your father Abraham” (Gen. 26.3), and so forth.90 Thus, the concept of promised land is not established by naming the land but by qualifying the land in the context of covenant. In strictly semantic terms, the land is given to the Israelites, it constitutes a gift. What makes it a promise is the covenant, which is spelled out in Genesis 17.9-14 following the gift of “all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting holding” (17.8).91

90 JPS and BHS, Ge. 24.7, 26.3.

91 JPS, Ge. 17.9-14: “God further said to Abraham, ‘As for you, you and your offspring to come throughout the ages shall keep My covenant [םְתַלּוּם ] and it shall be the covenant between Me and you and your offspring to follow which you shall keep: every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and that shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. And throughout the generations, every male among you shall be circumcised as the age of eight days. As for the homebor
The obligatory nature of covenant suggests a sense of promise, "to give verbal assurance of" something, and "afford ground for expectation." Harvard law professor Charles Fried writes that promise is the "device that gives trust its sharpest, most palpable form." He adds: "By promising we transform a choice that was morally neutral into one that is morally compelled." In addition, the moral weight of promise imparts an overt sense of intentionality, "for a promise puts the moral charge on a potential act;" it invokes trust in a future action (or contract) and not simply in the sincerity of the present. Thus, the breadth of promise explicitly encompasses the present and the future; when there is something promised, such as land that was promised, has been promised, or will have been promised, as we find in the biblical narrative, the total spectrum of past, present, and future is conveyed. On this score the idea of promised land contributes to the enabling of theological historiography.

Philologically, the Hebrew 'give' or 'spoke/said' is first rendered 'promised' (pollicitus) in the Latin Vulgate.

**Example 4.1: Deuteronomy 19.8:**

slave and the one bought from an outsider who is not of your offspring, they must be circumcised, homeborn and purchased alike. Thus shall My covenant be marked in your flesh as an everlasting pact. And if any male who is uncircumcised fails to circumcise the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his kin; he has broken My covenant."


95 Ibid.

96 Ibid, 9.
Hebrew Scripture —

...v 'natan lecha et-kol-ha'arets asher diber latet la'avotecha.

[literally: and he will give you all the land that he said to give to your forefathers]

Latin Vulgate —

...sicut iuravit patribus tuis et dederit tibi cunctam terram quam eis pollicitus est.

[literally: as he swore to your forefathers and will have given to you all the land as he promised]

Example 4.2: Deuteronomy 25.19:

Hebrew Scripture —

...ba'arets asher Yahweh-Elohecha noten

[literally: in the land that Yahweh-God gives you]

Latin Vulgate —

...in terra quam tibi pollicitus

[literally: in the land as [ ] promised [to you]

St. Jerome’s translation is enabled by the sense of the Hebrew verb d’ber ( דבר ) connoting ‘agree’, ‘reach agreement’, or ‘assure’. The Hebrew in the above verses conveys the sense of ‘agreement’ and ‘assurance’: the substance of Yahweh’s spoken word is assured and there is

97 As Wheelock has noted, the Romans made liberal use of the future perfect, in this case ‘will have given’ rather than the simple past or perfect, ‘gave’, d’bat, implying a conditional sense, here perhaps alluding to the covenantal relationship between God and the patriarchs and the possibility of errancy on the part of Israel. See Frederic M. Wheelock, Wheelock’s Latin Grammar, fourth edition (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 161.
every reason to expect its fulfillment. Moreover, the Hebrew d’ber and the Latin pollicitus, related to politic, polity, policy, and -polis, are both used in the context of civic authority and governance. Thus, the official policy, as it were, is that all the land that Yahweh assures Abraham he will give him and his descendants becomes all the land God promised to the patriarchs. The King James version remains more or less faithful to the Latin syntax: De. 19.8 reads, “...and give thee all the land which he promised to give unto thy fathers.”

There is no treatment of ‘promised land’ in rabbincic literature, though there is some discussion in the midrashim of ‘divine promise’, usually rendered in English as divine assurance. The term in question here is the Hebrew d’ber, connoting spoken assurance. Indicaive of the playful skepticism of rabbincic thinking, Genesis Rabbah 76.2 says “the righteous has no assurance in this world,” then comments, “For God’s promises are dependent on [a person’s] righteousness, and he may sin.” 98 Jastrow renders this passage, “the righteous do not rely on the divine promise in this world.” 99 Broadly, rabbinic Judaism emphasizes the conditional sense of promise, that promises can be and are broken.

The Hebrew l’erets ha-muvchat (לארץ המועבה ‘promised land’) is a modern rendering most likely following from the German ‘gelobtes Land’, itself derived from the Latin. The earliest non-biblical source employing the term ‘promised land’ in English is John Milton’s Paradise Lost (1667):

A passage down to the earth, a passage wide,

Wider by far than that of aftentimes


Over Mount Sion, and, though that were large,

Over the promised land to God so dear\textsuperscript{100}

While it is surely possible Milton coined the term in English, the expression was more likely a staple of the Sunday sermon in his day.

The concept of promised land is now a fixture of biblical criticism, widely recognized as a compositional theme or editorial device. The two leading promises are identified as land and posterity. Rendtorff notes that in the redaction of the text these "promises increasingly played the role in the formulation of larger ‘patriarchal narratives’ as elements of composition and interpretation."\textsuperscript{101} The main text he identifies as Genesis, chapter 15, "in which the promises are developed into a kind of ‘promise narrative’: Abraham is to have as many descendants as the stars in the heaven (vv. 1-6), and these are to possess the land (vv. 7.21)."\textsuperscript{102} The penultimate verse (18) secures the promises with a covenant between Yahweh and the patriarch: "On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, ‘To your offspring I assign the land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates’."\textsuperscript{103}

The compositional elements of the promises and the divine speeches in which they are given "bind the Abraham story, the Isaac story and the Jacob/Joseph stories together into


\textsuperscript{101} Rendtorff, 1985, 136.

\textsuperscript{102} \textit{Ibid.}, 137.

\textsuperscript{103} JPS, Ge. 15.18:

\begin{scriptsize}
\textbf{בִּיוֹתָּם הָהָּא כַּכָּה יִהְנֵה אַחֲרָאָבָכָה בְּרִיחַ לִאָמֶר לִשְׁמַךְ נַעֲהֵי אַחֲרָאָבָךְ נִפְשָׁתָם מֵהַאֲבָה מִשְׁמַרְיִיתָם}
\end{scriptsize}
a larger, coherent unity."\(^{104}\) Significantly, "in these divine speeches the paths of the patriarchs are continually directed towards the land of Canaan as their goal, and a deviation to the peripheral regions of Mesopotamia or Egypt proves to endanger this union of the patriarchs (i.e. Israel) with their land."\(^{105}\) The historical context of the composition and redaction of the promise narrative is, like almost all passages dealing with entitlement to the land, the Babylonian Exile; it is during this period that, as Rendtorff notes, "this patriarchal tradition must have acquired direct significance."\(^{106}\)

\(^{104}\) Rendtorff, 1985, 137. The divine speeches are found in 12.1.-3, 26.1-2, 31.11, 13, and 46.1-5.

\(^{105}\) Ibid.

\(^{106}\) Ibid.
PART II: JERUSALEM

CHAPTER 5

FRANZ ROSENZWEIG AND THE NECESSITY OF EXILE

"Before the Law stands a doorkeeper. To this doorkeeper there comes a man from the country and prays for admittance to the Law. But the doorkeeper says that he cannot grant admittance at the moment. The man thinks it over and then asks if he will be allowed in later. 'It is possible,' says the doorkeeper, 'but not at the moment.'"

— Franz Kafka, "Before the Law"

5.1 The Trauma of War and the Rejection of History

If Heidegger romanticizes the Great War and disingenuously invokes the "new spirit at the front," Franz Rosenzweig returns from the conflict with a radically different perspective, one of disenchantment with the Hegelian inspired nationalism that in his view led to the immense bloodshed. In contrast to Heidegger, Rosenzweig did serve at the front, in an artillery battalion in the Balkans, witnessing first hand not just an unprecedented scale of mass death but also the absurd futility of war in the service of the nation-state. Though both


3 Stéphane Mosès writes: "Along with all men of his generation, he had lived out the war experience as a historical catastrophe, a war in the course of which, furthermore, the European peoples had confronted each other in the name of typically Hegelian values. In Rosenzweig’s eyes the war experience is decisive not because it refutes Hegel’s philosophy of history, but, on the contrary, because it confirms its tragic truth. A history molded by the rivalries of states and the nationalistic passions of peoples can only be a catastrophic one." System and Revelation: The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig, trans. Catherine Tihanyi (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 24.
thinkers shared in the intoxicating spirit of philosophical and cultural renewal as well as the search for "a vital domain of existence beyond the grasp of historicism,"\(^4\) in contrast to Heidegger's view of an autochthonous German Volk. Rosenzweig abstracts the Jews from the currents of world history and predicates Israel's survival and eventual redemption on a non-autochthonous exilic existence.

Submitted in 1912, Rosenzweig's doctoral dissertation was the genesis of his Hegel und der Staat, which did not appear in print until after the war in 1920. By then he had come to reject his earlier views of Hegel, historicism and statecraft, writing in the Preface that the book now constituted mere scholarship rather than actionable philosophy. In the Concluding Remark, Rosenzweig says of the Hegelian world: "Both the individual as well as the nation are thus, in a certain sense, to be sacrificed to the state, the individual right of man as well as the totality of the nation to the deified state."\(^5\) Peter Gordon comments that in Rosenzweig's view, "The war had rendered the book's doctrines and hopes obsolete; it was little more than a record of the 'spirit of the prewar years.'"\(^6\) During and after the war, Rosenzweig changed course and sought to counter Hegelianism with a redemptive theology that reprioritized the

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\(^5\) Rosenzweig, "Concluding Remark" to *Hegel and the State*, in his *Philosophical and Theological Writings [RPT]*, translated and edited by Paul W. Franks and Michael L. Morgan (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000), 80. Mosè's translator, Catherine Tihanyi, renders this line: "The State has become an idol that demands for itself sacrifice of the individual and the nation" (1992, 32). See Rosenzweig, *RHS*, vol. 2, 243: "Beide, der einzelne wie die Nation, können erst in ihm ganz das werden, was sie sind, der einzelne erst im Staat wahrhaft sittlich, die Nation erst im Staat wirklich Volk; beide, Einzelmensch und Nation, sind so in gewissem Sinne dem Staat zu opfern, dem vergöttterten Staat das Eigenrecht des Menschen wie die Ganzheit der Nation."

individual lost in the abstraction of philosophical history. According to Stéphane Mosès, in the process, his "critique of the State in the name of the rights of the individual then becomes generalized into his radical refusal of history itself."7

5.2 Return to Judaism

The intellectual orientation of the young Rosenzweig was one of a critical attitude toward the neo-Hegelian "overemphasis on a history in which God supposedly reveals himself" in the realization of the one Spirit.8 Biographer Nahum Glatzer records that Rosenzweig believed God should redeem humanity "not indirectly, through history, but individually, through religious practice."9 Given the pervasiveness of neo-Hegelianism in German universities, and especially that of Ranke, Treitschke, and Meinecke, Rosenzweig grew increasingly disenchanted with academic philosophy, and found himself drawn more to the existential philosophy which prioritized the concrete Sitz im Leben of the individual person.10 In terms of a systematic approach to the problem of redemption, he turned to religion as the antidote to Hegelian historicism, but was reluctant at first to outwardly concede this move. As Glatzer phrases the dilemma, "trained in the sciences, in logical criticism, and in methods

7 Mosès, 1992, 33.
9 Ibid., xiii.
of modern historical research, [Rosenzweig] could not conceive of a Western scholar ‘accepting religion’, after all.”

Discussions with his cousins Hans and Rudolf Ehrenberg, and friend Eugen Rosenstock, all coverts to Christianity, eventually lead him to a change of heart.

In the winter of 1913, Rosenzweig continued work on Hegel und der Staat, attended courses in jurisprudence at the University of Leipzig, and lunched daily with Rosenstock, with him discussing the lack of spiritual fulfillment in contemporary Hegelian philosophy. Rosenzweig evidently envied his friend’s intellectual and spiritual security in Christianity. “In contrast to the logos of philosophy that has the nature of a monologue,” writes Glatzer, “Rosenstock interpreted the biblical ‘word’ as a part of a dialogue. His philosophical position, rooted in religious faith was secure, while Rosenzweig, though outspoken in his criticism of contemporary philosophy, had not yet broken through to a positive solution.”

A devout Christian, Rosenstock prevailed upon Rosenzweig to convert, and nearly succeeded. He concluded that he “could turn Christian only qua Jew—not through the intermediate stage of paganism,” meaning he wanted to reacquaint himself with Judaism before proceeding to Christianity. Though he “never mentioned this event to his friends and never presented it in

11 Ibid., xiv. In retrospect Rosenzweig remains ambivalent toward religion. Peter Gordon argues that he would later in “The New Thinking” reconfigure Judaism as originally ‘fact’ and Christianity as originally an ‘event’, and not as religion. And yet in the Star, in which the term ‘religion’ appears only in the revised 1930 edition as a subheading, “many other closely related or synonymous terms appear with great frequency, such as faith, theology, scholasticism, the Church, the ecclesia (Ekklesia), paganism, Judaism, or Jewry (Judentum), Christianity (Christentum), dogma, and being faithful (Gläubigsein).” See Gordon, 2003, 134-135. The secular dynamic of Wissenschaft about which Glatzer writes had by then already had a long pedigree in Germany. The separation of German universities from ecclesiastical domination was a complicated, drawn-out process fostered largely by philologists in the eighteenth century.


his writings,” the story told by Glatzer is that Rosenzweig underwent a sudden spiritual awakening and affirmation of Judaism while attending Yom Kippur services on October 11, 1913. In a letter to his mother dated October 23, the then twenty-six-year-old Franz wrote that the “connection with the innermost heart with God which the heathen can only reach through Jesus is something the Jew already possess, provided that his Judaism is not withheld from him by force; he possesses it by nature, through having been born one of the Chosen People.” He interprets both consanguinity and the election as the spirit of Judaism, avoiding the notion of essence. “It was the great error of nineteenth-century Jewish movements—chiefly Orthodoxy, Liberalism (i.e., Reform), and Zionism—to define the ‘essence’ of Judaism in their own image precisely at the point that they were dividing Judaism into sectarian slivers. Indeed, each movement, in its quest for hegemony, was attacking the integrity and vitality of Judaism.”

5.3 A German Jewish Landscape

Among the social and political factors pressing in on Rosenzweig and his peers were the rising tide of antisemitism, the restless decay of the Austro-Hungarian empire, Germany’s identity crisis as a nation, and the specter of an all-encompassing European war. Not to argue that he was thoroughly apprised of current events, rather these trends share the general

14 Glatzer, 1998, xviii. The story of the Yom Kippur ‘epiphany’ is inferred from the timing of Rosenzweig’s letters and the centrality of the Yom Kippur liturgy in schematizing redemption in The Star.


16 Myers, 2003, 100.

concept of nationalism, of which Rosenzweig was well informed and deeply distressed.\textsuperscript{18} Modern continental nationalism had grown out of the French Revolution, bringing about in due course a popular messianic fever that swept across Europe. Rosenzweig understood nationalism as the modern political manifestation of Jewish election. As Mosès summarizes it, “Ever since the great national movements of the nineteenth century, all historical peoples had become chosen peoples.”\textsuperscript{19}

In Germany nationalism as an historical force was explicitly informed by Hegelian historicism and in particular that of Ranke and his thread of influence, precisely what Rosenzweig reacts against in 1913. His own teacher Meinecke was sympathetic to the Bismarckian conservatism and the popular obsession with German historical destiny. \textit{Realpolitik} was the order of the day as Goethe's yearning toward cosmopolitan universalism must give way to Hegelian nationalism articulated through shrewd and even threatening political maneuvering.

In 1916 an informal debate over the appropriate Jewish orientation toward German nationalism took place between Rosenzweig's mentor Hermann Cohen and Martin Buber, who at the time Rosenzweig barely knew. The war was underway and antisemites were blaming Jews for military setbacks at the front as well as economic ills at home. The neo-Kantian Cohen advocated a position of assimilation, maintaining that “Germany's war aims

\textsuperscript{18} See Geoff Eley, \textit{Reshaping the German Right: Radical Nationalism and Political Change after Bismarck} (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1980), esp. ch. 8, “The Radical-Nationalist Contribution.” Imperial Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow’s dissolution of the Reichstag in 1906 seems to have been a watershed moment in the evolution of modern German nationalism. The Bülow Bloc insinuated itself as mediator among Conservatives, Free Conservatives, National Liberals, anti-Semites and the Agrarian League, while fulminating pan-Germanic nationalist aspirations.

\textsuperscript{19} Mosès, 1990, x
were one with the messianic aspirations of the prophets of Israel." Thus Jews should have no reservations about serving the Kaiser’s army and defending ambitious pan-Germanic nationalism. Cohen’s optimistic liberalism reveals his belief in the symbiosis of German and Jew. Buber however had little faith in such a symbiosis and argued that the Jews should hold themselves aloof from the various nationalists movements where they lived.

Breaking from this mentor, Rosenzweig knew precisely where nationalism would lead Germany as well as all of Europe—to violent confrontation. Indeed, the dynamic of Hegel’s dialectic of history necessitated such conflict. In November 1912, with tensions rising between Russia and Austria over the fate of Serbia and the outbreak of war widely anticipated, he wrote to his friend Hans Ehrenberg: “This war will not come to a decisive end, but it implies two, possibly three wars; we are on the threshold not of a single war but of a whole epoch of wars.” The expected outbreak of World War I in August of 1914 confirmed for Rosenzweig the disquieting truth of Hegelian philosophy as well as his insight about the consequences of nationalism. After the war in 1919 he wrote, “We feel the extent to which we are at the end today, when the century of Bismarck, at whose gate the Hegelian life stands like the thought before the deed, has collapsed.” Conveying a sense of renewal shrouded in

\[20\] Ibid., 204.

\[21\] Glatzer, 1998, 22. Today Rosenzweig’s words seem prophetic as the twentieth century can now be seen as one of the bloodiest in history, with two world wars, the Holocaust and numerous regional conflicts accompanied by ethnic cleansing and genocide. Rosenzweig may be borrowing a page from Nietzsche, who said as much some thirty years prior. Moreover, prognostications of continental war were so widespread in Europe leading up to the First World War that its advent is not far from being a self-fulfilling prophecy.

\[22\] Rosenzweig, PT, 75.
dread, he finds Hegel’s vision of history not simply intact after the war but confirmed and widely influential.

Coming to grips with the warring dynamic of historicism, Rosenzweig struggles not only to find a stable theological foothold, but a solution to the problem of Judaism’s subrogation in Hegel’s world history. In this system Judaism “had been superseded by the movement of the world spirit from the ancient to the modern Christian world, and in the process the Jewish people had been left stranded outside the current of world history.” Moreover, Spirit’s culmination in “the Christian-Germanic world” meant that redemption for the Jews would be found only in “their disappearance from a historical stage on which they no longer had a role.” In Germany this idea of disappearance would come to mean a host of objectionable possibilities, from assimilation to outright annihilation. Philosophically the problem accompanying Hegel’s exclusionary history was “the very mystifying fact that the Jews had indeed survived,” that while consigned to the dustbin of history they were nevertheless a collective reality still very much alive. In response Rosenzweig seeks to rearticulate and reenliven Judaism and its relevance in the evolving course toward world redemption.

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23 Paul Lawrence Rose, German Question/Jewish Question: Revolutionary Antisemitism from Kant to Wagner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 112.


26 See Rose, 1990, for a comprehensive discussion of the various responses to the Jewish Question among both Jewish and non-Jewish intellectuals and authors in nineteenth-century Germany. He details the development of what he terms ‘revolutionary antisemitism’, from Kant to Wagner.
Rosenzweig however finds the different schools of German Judaism practically and philosophically ill equipped to confront Hegelianism. Liberal Judaism, most explicitly represented by the Reform Movement but also associated with Wissenschaft des Judentums, championed a somewhat irreverent ethic beholden to libertine individualism rather than Israel and its eternal covenant with God. Rosenzweig believed “each Jew’s religious existence was not simply personal,” writes Eugene Borowitz.\(^{27}\) Rather, he or she “shares the Jewish people’s Covenant with God, made at Sinai and renewed through centuries of loyalty and practice.”\(^{28}\) Much like Enlightenment liberalism which sought to overcome the staid dogma of medieval Christianity with reason and science, liberal Judaism embraced a rationalist ethic that downplayed and even suppressed Israel’s unique and pious past, a move that Rosenzweig viewed as unacceptable. Moreover the liberal view appeared to capitulate entirely to the Hegelian paradigm wherein Judaism is superseded by a secularized, Germanized Christian spirit, thereby providing no satisfactory means for redemption encompassing Judaism qua Judaism.\(^{29}\)

Traditional Judaism represented an extreme in the opposite direction, a dogmatic compromise of individual autonomy. An orthodox insistence on unquestioned commitment to religious observance regardless of changing circumstances appeared to Rosenzweig a dis-

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\(^{28}\) *Ibid*.

\(^{29}\) Löwith points out that Hegel does not condemn “the so-called secularization of original Christianity [as] a reprehensible apostasy from its original meaning. On the contrary [such secularization] signifies the true explication of this origin through positive realization.” The seemingly non-Christian ideas of Enlightenment liberalism spreading throughout Western Europe, for example, nonetheless contain the *spirit* of Christianity and thus the realization of pure Spirit. See Löwith, 1991, 35.
ingenuous means for establishing and maintaining an authentic relationship with God. The rising religious orthodoxy was in a sense reacting against the excesses of liberalism and articulating a collective, performative piety that de-emphasized the individual. Though admirable in their comprehension of Judaism as a people, traditionalists nevertheless overlooked the concrete, existential *Sitz im Leben* of the individual. The soldier in the trenches, for example, has a radically unique subjectivity different from that of the stylish merchant or rural hut dweller. Such lived specificity profoundly affects the conditions of the world and thus has to be taken into account in a comprehensive system of world redemption.

Finally there was Zionism, which advanced a strictly secular, nationalist solution to the long-debated Jewish Question and which disdained religious piety but held to the notion of election. Like a host of contemporaries and others before him, Rosenzweig sees in the Zionist movement the fire of messianism. But the religiously inspired political movement presented a paradox: in its endeavor to establish a nation-state Zionism would be negating Judaism and undermining Israel’s possibility for redemption. Though Rosenzweig agrees with the refusal to assimilate and understands Zionist loyalty to the people, the land, and the Hebrew language to be “primary signs of Jewish authenticity,” the movement itself constituted yet another manifestation of the nationalism plunging Europe into war. Ultimately Zionism had little room for an authentic relationship between God and human; rather, the emphasis was on one between the people and a territorial nation-state, an historical and transi-

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30 Moses Hess in *Rome and Jerusalem* “claims messianism as the specific Jewish contribution to world culture.” See Jacqueline Rose, *The Question of Zion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 10, who writes, “At its most simple, Zionism can be understood as the first Jewish messianic movement after [Shabtai] Zvi” (9).

tory relationship that censored the realization of the spirit of Judaism as well as the possibility of world redemption. If realized Zionism would simply take Israel down into the ashes of world history.

5.4 Hegelian History

What exactly is history? According to Hegel in *Philosophy of Right*, it is “Spirit clothing itself with the form of events or the immediate actuality of nature.”

Shlomo Avineri calls it “the context where the Nous is in the process of being realized.” And Edith Wyschogrod describes it as “a spectacle of ephemera which arise, endure for an interval, decay, and give rise to new forms.” This process is not mere abstraction but readily observable in nature and the social world. Thus Hegel contends, “The stages of its development are therefore presented as immediate natural principles.” And though the countless individual, social and political entities of the world are animated by mundane and immediate concerns, “they are all the time the unconscious tools and organs of the world mind at work within


\[\text{35 Hegel, 1967, 217 §346.}\]
them. The shapes which they take pass away, while the absolute mind prepares and works out its transition to its next higher state."

The beauty of Hegel's historical process is found in its inner rationality, which serves as a bridge between the actual and the ideal. In praise Rosenzweig writes, "Neither separation nor mere agreement was asserted, but an innermost connection. The knowable world becomes knowable by the same law of thinking which returns to the summit of the system as a supreme law of being." And though the "essential characteristic of the spirit and its age is always contained in the great events," all the same even the cacophonous noise of the everyday world articulates Spirit and contributes to the gradual "growth and development of human freedom." Hegel add, "such particularities as a petty occurrence, a word, express not a subjective particularity, but an age, a nation, a civilization, in striking portraiture and brevity."

However, as Wyschogrod sagaciously points out, "This optimistic view is tempered by Hegel's well-known characterization of history as a slaughterbench, a process moved by the passions of individuals who embody the spirit of their times and who rise above conventional moral restraints to engage in war and other forms of bloodshed, thereby changing the

36 Hegel, 1967, 217 §344.


39 Hegel, 1992, 297 §549. This is the central point of Marxist literary critics who argue that close examination and analysis of seemingly minor or banal characters reveal not just personal particularities but also much about the time and place in which they live, and if we substitute the telos of Spirit with one of material, especially about class conditions and economic forces.
The structure of the dialectic, the course of world history, actually "necessitates the ascent and fall of peoples and civilizations." Because "the embodiment of Spirit's self-realization in history is the nation," conflict and especially war are integral to the process. In theory the dialectical process "achieves its highest rational expression in war, when it is freely undertaken on behalf of the state." Echoing Heraclitus, Hegel believes, "War has the higher significance that by its agency [...] the ethical health of peoples is preserved in their indifference to the stabilization of finite institutions." Striking an analogy with nature he argues, "just as the blowing of winds preserves the sea from the foulness which would be the result of a prolonged calm, so also corruption in nations would be the product of prolonged, let alone 'perpetual' peace." Alternatively, "peoples unwilling or afraid to tolerate sovereignty at home have been subjugated from abroad [...] their freedom has died from the fear of dying."

Hegel divides this bloody history into four successive stages or realms, each of which embody a principle of Spirit's evolving self-realization: (1) the Oriental stage of immediate identity lacking self-awareness, (2) the Greek stage of preliminary self-awareness opening the door to ethical individuality, (3) the Roman stage of increased self-awareness achieving

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41 Ibid., 114.

42 Ibid., 117.

43 Wyschogrod, 1985, 126.

44 Hegel, 1967, 210 §324.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.
abstract universality, and (4) born out of the opposition and subsequent resolution between subjective and objective, the Germanic Christian stage wherein Spirit becomes fully realized and self-conscious; the actual and the ideal become one and the same. Within the dialectical movement of world history, "the scale upon which a nation's stage of development is measured is its progress in freedom by which Hegel means the pursuit of the rational ends intrinsic to the life of Spirit."\(^{47}\)

For Hegel Judaism belongs to the subaltern Oriental realm wherein "subjective freedom is lacking," "the external world of nature is either directly divine or else God's ornament, and the history of the actual is poetry" by which he means scripture.\(^{48}\) In this realm there is little constancy, "and what is stable is fossilized." A nation thus lives "only in an outward movement which becomes in the end an elemental fury and desolation. Its inner calm is merely the calm of non-political life and immersion in feebleness and exhaustion."\(^{49}\) For Hegel the continued existence of Judaism constitutes a "'fossil nation,' a 'ghost race,'" a people "incapable of historical development."\(^{50}\)

In a sense Hegel prefigures Nietzsche. Both thinkers ultimately transcended the antisemitism endemic to German culture, yet both were consistently critical of ancient Judaism, which they each identified with the slave in the master/slave relation. Furthermore, Nietzsche was fiercely critical of antisemites and antisemitism, and Hegel advocated Jewish

\(^{47}\) Wyschogrod, 1998, 117.


\(^{49}\) Hegel, 1967, 220 §355.

\(^{50}\) Rose, 1990, 112.
emancipation and civil rights.\textsuperscript{51} Nevertheless, as with the dynamic of Nietzsche's influence, Hegel's philosophy of history, provided antisemites with an intellectual justification for one of their core beliefs: "namely the supposition that the Jews had fulfilled their historical purpose in antiquity, that they were no more than a hasverian 'ghost people' without land or living spirit, and that they must now 'die' and dissolve into the ashes of history [...] the final revolutionary redemption of Jewish history was to be the redemption of Ahasverus—extinction."\textsuperscript{52}

5.5 The Antimonies of Redemption

In \textit{The Star of Redemption} Rosenzweig accepts Hegel's basic historical schematic and the teleology of its movement toward a Christianized world of Spirit's realization. He concedes that since the culminating point of its exile in 70 CE, Israel has existed apart from the surrounding Gentile world and refused to adopt or assimilate to the Christological mode of existence. But instead of concluding that its detachment from world history renders it historically or spiritually insignificant, Rosenzweig contends exile allows Israel to maintain in pure form the universal goal of redemption in the messianic era. He sees Israel as having "reconstituted itself as an ecclesia or Synagogue, grounding her existence solely in the preservation of biological community and in the prayer service of her liturgical calendar."\textsuperscript{53} In other words, it is precisely Israel's eternal exilic existence that constitutes its spirit and singular task in relation to the Christianized world of history. "As a prefiguration of the messianic

\textsuperscript{51} Rose, 113, 115.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 109.

\textsuperscript{53} Paul Mendes-Flohr, "Franz Rosenzweig and the Crisis of Historicism," in Mendes-Flohr, 1988, 139.
community, the Synagogue serves the Church as a 'mute admonisher', reminding the Church that history, in which her mission to the pagans perforce involves her, is but a necessary byway in the journey of humankind to truth and the eschaton."\(^{54}\) Through the presence of the exiled Jews among the nations of the world, "the Church is challenged to retain the pristine clarity of its mission to bring redemption to the world."\(^{55}\) Whereas Christianity first redeems the pagan world then accompanies the nations of the world in the movement toward universal redemption, Judaism stands outside of history, beyond temporality, drawing the Church toward ultimate resolution and redemption: "Christendom is 'eternally on the way'; the Jewish people alone experiences eternity in the midst of history itself."\(^{56}\)

Rosenzweig finds in historical time an inherent imperfection that forestalls the possibility of Redemption. "Continuous time, where instants add up to other instants, is but a perpetual stationary run where nothing radically new can ever happen" writes Mosès.\(^{57}\) On this matter he is influence by Nietzsche, specifically by the latter's thought of eternal recurrence of the same wherein "infinity is bound up with time and recurrence."\(^{58}\) Leading up to Nietzsche's first account of eternal recurrence, Zarathustra proclaims, "I find man in ruins and scattered as over a battlefield or a butcher-field. And when my eyes flee from the now to

\(^{54}\) Ibid.

\(^{55}\) Ibid.


\(^{57}\) Ibid., 200.

the past, they always find the same: fragments and limbs and dreadful accidents—but no human beings." 59 Zarathustra thus concludes: "To redeem those who lived in the past and to recreate all ‘it was’ into a ‘thus I willed it’—that alone should I call redemption." 60 Seeing in history the crushing repetition of a slaughterbench or butcher-field, Rosenzweig rejects it as the appropriate temporal space of Judaism, "because in it, Redemption is condemned to always remain yet-to-come. This is why Redemption can only be realized outside history." 61

Rosenzweig’s response to the subrogation of Judaism in history is to a certain extent anticipated by Jewish thinkers who had already critiqued the Hegelian system. One such figure was Nachman Krochmal (1785-1840) who argued the Jews constitute an eternal people residing beyond the machinations of the historical dialectic. Krochmal attributes their privileged status "to the fact that Judaism is the purest form of monotheism and so is equal to the Idea of Spirit itself. All other histories, including German Christian history, are merely particular examples of Spirit; Judaism alone is universal Spirit. Indeed so powerful is the Spirit in Judaism that the Jewish people alone of all peoples have survived without the existence of a state!" 62 Rosenzweig echoes similar sentiments some seventy-five years later in the Star, though with considerably more sophistication and with a sobering perspective validating the Hegelian and Nietzschean view of history gained at the Balkan front. 63 Acknowledging the


60 Ibid., 139.


pervasiveness and force of Christianity in the world, he does not however de-emphasize its role in his system. Instead he approaches the problem by presenting an innovative understanding of the dialectical confrontation and resolution between Judaism and Christianity, between eternity and history, between exile and autochthony.

As Rosenzweig sees it, the human condition is such that all peoples want to avoid decay and death and realize eternal existence. “Both the Jewish people and the State present themselves as collective realities more enduring than life itself since they want to be freed from the natural law of war and death.”64 Nations seek eternity in the establishment of the state where the relentless repetition of temporality is thought to be held off. “Among the peoples of the world there is pure temporality. But the State is the attempt, inevitably always to be renewed, to give to the peoples eternity in time.”65 Taking as his point of departure Hegel’s philosophies of history and right, Rosenzweig holds, “the State is the ever-changing form under which time moves to eternity step by step.”66 The state affords the peoples of the

63 Rosenzweig’s diaries and correspondence offer no evidence that he read or was even familiar with Krochmal, but it should be noted the latter’s work emerged within a context of Jewish scholarship taking on Hegelian philosophy of history, generally inverting it to prioritize Judaism and de-emphasize Christianity. See Nachman Krochmal, Moreh N’vukhe ha-Z’man (The Guide of the Perplexed of Our Time), ed. Simon Rawadowicz (Waltham: Ararat Press, 1961). The standard assessment of Krochmal is Jay M. Harris, Nachman Krochmal: Guiding the Perplexed of the Modern Age (New York: New York University Press, 1991). For balance and corrections to Harris’ work see Yehoyada Amir, “The Perplexity of Our Time: Rabbi Nachman Krochmal and Modern Jewish Existence,” in Modern Judaism, vol. 23, no. 3 (2003), 264-301. Also see Shlomo Avineri, The Making of Modern Zionism (New York, 1981), chapter 1, and Nathan Rotenstreich, Jews and German Philosophy (New York, 1984), 143-151.

64 Mosès, 1992, 216.

65 Rosenzweig, 2005, 352.

66 Ibid.
world an opportunity to grasp at eternity by seeking “to make a cycle out of the pure flow of
time to which the peoples in themselves are devoted.” But the inherent dynamic of state-
craft is vicious, for “at every moment the State violently settles the contradiction between
preservation and renewal, old and new law.”

Only the new moment breaks the violence of the old and threatens to let life
flow away again like a free river; but the State at once raises its sword anew
and confines the river again to stagnancy, the continuous movement of the cy-

cle. These moments confined by the State are therefore authentic “hours” of
the people’s life that of its own accord knows no hours; only the State brings
standstills, small stations, cramped times, into the unceasing flowing away of
this life in time. The times are the hours of world history; and only the State
brings them in through its warlike sentence of confinement that makes the sun
of time stand still until at any given time “the people have become masters
over its enemies.”

By contrast: “In the people of God,” the Jewish people, “that which is eternal is already
there, in the midst of time.”

The Jewish people is in itself already at the goal toward which the peoples of
the world are just setting out. It possess the inner harmony of faith and life
which Augustine may attribute to the Church as harmony between fides and

67 Ibid.
68 Ibid., 353.
69 Ibid., 354.
70 Rosenzweig, 2005, 352.
salus, but which to the peoples in the Church is still only a dream. Of course, by possessing it, the Jewish people stands outside the world, which does not yet possess it; by living the eternal peace, it stands outside of a warlike temporality; by resting at the goal that it anticipates in hope; it is separated from the march of those who draw near to it in the toil of centuries.\textsuperscript{71}

Eternity is momentarily beheld during the liturgy of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. "It is this particular form of ritual time, whose intentionality is not directed toward the repetition of the past but toward the anticipation of the future, that determines the Jewish peoples' attitude toward societies and their governments, that is, toward the political sphere,"\textsuperscript{72} an attitude characterized by exile, estrangement from the land. However, "the Day of Atonement itself is only a fleeting moment. As soon as the feast is over, the Jewish people returns to its historical condition."\textsuperscript{73} Thus, the ritual experience of Yom Kippur merely "suspends time but does not abolish it."\textsuperscript{74} What predominates is the condition of exile.

5.6 Redemption and the Necessity of Exile

In elaborating his distinction between the Jews and the worldly nations, Rosenzweig identifies land as the crucial difference between the two. "The most important rejection in rejecting the state is that of the people's connection to land. By abandoning the land, the

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 351.

\textsuperscript{72} Mosès, 1992, 201.

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 200.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 201.
community loses its need for an army, for war, in short for all external forms of violence.\textsuperscript{75}

For Rosenzweig, the Jewish people are unique in that they remain satisfied with their consanguine kinship, whereas all other nations insist upon holding fast to a particular land; they base their kinship of blood upon a prototypical relationship between the people and the soil.\textsuperscript{76}

In a passage that reads like satire of Plato’s autochthony at the hands of Aristophanes, Rosenzweig writes:

\begin{quote}
The peoples of the world cannot be satisfied with a community made up of the same blood; they put forth their roots into the night of the earth, itself dead yet life-bestowing, and appropriate from its permanence a guarantee of their own permanence. Their will to eternity clings to the soil and to the soil’s dominion, the territory.\textsuperscript{77}
\end{quote}

This relationship to the land is a relationship of blood and soil, it is the ground upon which the state is founded and it is articulated in the myth of autochthony. By staking a claim to a particular territory, rooting itself in the soil and thus institutionalizing itself as not just a nation but a state, a political entity caught up in the dynamics and conflict of history, a people strives for eternal existence: rootedness is thought to represent permanence and thus eternity.

But as Rosenzweig sees it,

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{75} Gibbs, 1992, 137.
\textsuperscript{76} Gibbs points out that “Rosenzweig speaks as though no other people has ever done this,” that is lived nomadically as a blood-based clan, “that all others have been rooted only to soil” (137). As to the historical validity of characterizing Judaism as essentially blood-based (i.e., racial or ethnic), in truth “Jews welcomed and even solicited converts in antiquity” (138). The obvious problem with Rosenzweig’s theory is, as Gibbs points out, “a potentially catastrophic racism” lurking not far beneath the surface (138).
\textsuperscript{77} Rosenzweig, 2005, 318.
\end{quote}
when a people loves the soil of the homeland more than its own life, then the
danger hangs over it—and it hangs over all peoples of the world—that nine
times that love may save the soil of the homeland against the enemy and also
with the soil the life of the people; but a tenth time the soil remains as that
which is loved more and the very life of the people pours out on it.\textsuperscript{78}
The soil nourishes and yet drains the people of its lifeblood. The inevitable conflict among
warring nation-states, the conflict essential to the forward momentum of Hegelian history,
bleeds nations dry. Autochthony, then, becomes not the precondition for permanence but
impermanence: it is the demarcation of the locus of death. The primacy given to the soil by
the various nation-states ultimately allows war to de-emphasize consanguine kinship in favor
of the abstract prototypical relationship between nation and land; war transforms peoples into
instruments of both historical and chthonic fertility.

Conversely, the Jews are a nation constituted by blood without regard to the land,
who have been exiled from their promised land and therefore unattached to a particular soil;
their bond is blood and shared exile. Whereas the autochthons “do not trust in the life of a
community of blood,” by contrast the Jewish people “were the only ones who trusted in
blood and abandoned the land.”\textsuperscript{79}

For this reason, the tribal legend of the eternal people begins otherwise than
with indigenousness \textit{[autochthonie]}. Only the father of humanity, and even
he only as regards the body, is sprouted from the earth; Israel’s ancestors,
however, immigrated; his story begins, as the Holy Books recount it, with the

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{79} Rosenzweig, 2005, 299.
divine command to go out of the land of his birth and to go into a land that God will show him. And the people becomes the people, as in the dawn of its earliest times so later again in the bright light of history, in an exile, the Egyptian one as later the one in Babylon.\textsuperscript{80}

Rosenzweig outlines a counter-myth to that of autochthony based on “the tribal legend of the eternal people”—a counter-myth of exile, the substance of which is consanguinity and nomadism. For Rosenzweig exile consists of uprootedness and wandering, the condition of the Jewish people that contrasts absolutely to all other nations, who “are more attached to the land than to their own life as a people.”\textsuperscript{81} He writes:

for the eternal people the homeland never becomes its own in that sense [of attachment to the land]; it is not permitted to sleep at home; it always remembers the lack of constraints on a traveler and is a knight truer to his land when he lingers in his travels and adventures and longs for the homeland it has left than in the times when he is at home. The land is in the deepest sense its own only as land as longing, as—holy land.\textsuperscript{82}

In what Mosès calls “the very heart of [his] conception of the Jewish people,”\textsuperscript{83} Rosenzweig emphasizes the role of longing for the land. As something pivotal to Jewish history and memory and yet beyond the embrace of complete ownership, ultimately only God’s possession, the land is made holy, the ephemeral substance of an enduring yet unfulfilled promise.

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 319.

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 318.

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 319.

\textsuperscript{83} Mosès, 1992, 179.
Gibbs argues, “Rosenzweig is not only observing the exile and dispersion as a historical fact; rather, he emphasizes that even when the people took possession of the land, it held that the land was God’s.” 84 “And this is why for it,” writes Rosenzweig, “even when it is at home, again differently from all peoples of the earth, this full proprietorship of the homeland is disputed; it is itself only a stranger and tenant in its land.” 85

“The land is mine,” says God to the people; the holiness of the land removes the land from its natural hold as long as it could take hold of it; the holiness infinitely increases its longing for the lost land and henceforward no longer lets it feel entirely at home in any other land. 86

Mosès describes Rosenzweig’s characterization of the relationship between the Jewish people and the land as “essentially a relation of absence.” 87 Thus, the promised land must remain, in Rosenzweig’s theology, an unattainable goal, always prominent in the consciousness of the Jewish people but never realized as an historical actuality, a real possession. If the Jewish people were to “put forth their roots into the night of the earth,” and allow attachment to the land to supplant the bonds of blood, this would then put them squarely within the destructive confines of history, and redemption would thus be thwarted.

What then constitutes redemption? For Rosenzweig it is when “God becomes the One and All which, from the first, human reason in its rashness has everywhere sought and everywhere asserted, and yet nowhere found because it simply was nowhere to be found yet,

84 Gibbs, 1992, 137.

85 Rosenzweig, 2005, 319.

86 Ibid., 319.

87 Mosès, 1992, 179.
for it did not exist yet.”88 Peter Gordon remarks that “there is an ultimate moment to redemption that surpasses human capacities altogether. In this moment, the structures of exclusion and familiarity that necessarily shape our lives as human beings are ultimately dissolved through an act of God.”89 But in order to bring about this divine intervention, the world as a whole must be in-souled. And as Norbert Samuelson comments, “it becomes so by the ‘[individual] soul’s act of love toward the nearest.’”90 Rosenzweig in fact preaches a theology of neighborly love which engenders the logic of redemption: “Thus love turns the world into a world animated with a soul, not so much by what it does but because it does it from love.”91 Characteristically prolix and obscure, Rosenzweig writes:

If then a not-yet is inscribed over all redemptive unison, there can only ensue that the end is for the time being represented by the just present moment, the universal and highest by the approximately proximate. The bond of the consummate and redemptive bonding of man and world is to begin with the neighbor and ever more only the neighbor, the well-nigh nighest. Thus the chant of all is here joined by a stanza sung by but two individual voices—mine and that of my neighbor’s.92


91 Rosenzweig, 1985, 240.

92 Ibid., 234-235.
He then adds, "where someone or something has become neighbor to a soul, there a piece of the world has become something which is was not previously: soul."\(^{93}\) Writing that it is "the future realization of the unity that Hegelian philosophy mainly claimed already existed, viz., the unity of the one and the all," Samuelson argues that in redemption "both the human and the world will disappear. The human does so by redeeming the world, and the world does so by redeeming the human. All that remains is God transformed."\(^{94}\) Gordon counters this interpretation with a more rigorously supported view wherein "redemption creates what Rosenzweig calls a 'new totality.' By this he means that the primal elements—God, Man, and World—are brought together in a stable and enduring temporal relationship."\(^{95}\) Most importantly, "this new totality never cancels out the worldly and temporal qualities of man and world. While redemption brings man and world into a relationship with God, they are not fused with God such that they lose their distinctive characteristics."\(^{96}\) Samuelson appears inconsistent on this point, later acknowledging that each of the three courses (Creation, Revelation, and Redemption) should be seen "as a vector (Bahnverlauf) extended between two particular (einzeln) points."\(^{97}\)

Whatever the precise character of redemption itself, what is clear is that within Rosenzweig's system the grounds for it involve Jewish landlessness. Moreover, according to Leora Batnitzky, *The Star of Redemption* suggests that the antisemite rightly recognizes the

\(^{93}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{94}\) Samuelson, 1999, 200.


\(^{96}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{97}\) Samuelson, 1999, 211.
Jew’s homeless position and the aesthetic characteristics it produces.”

She then adds the rather disconcerting claim, “Rosenzweig agrees with Richard Wagner that the aesthetics consequences of Jewish difference, of Jewish uncanniness, are unsettling to the non-Jew.”

Robert Gibbs also points to the “potentially catastrophic racism” lurking with the system of the Star.

From this we can conclude that Rosenzweig does not attempt to overcome the anti-semitism so characteristic of Weimar Germany. In fact, again according to Batnitzky, “Judaism’s relation with the one, unique God as well as Judaism’s relation to the external world, cannot but cause the Christian, and Christian society, to hate the Jew [...] this Christian hatred of Judaism, Rosenzweig argues, is not something that Christianity can ever overcome, for it is part and parcel of the very definition, essence, and meaning of Christianity.”

Comparatively we could say that the orders of Heidegger’s authenticity and Rosenzweig’s redemption move in opposite directions. Whereas Dasein’s authentic existence, achieved by coming to terms with its autochthonous being-in-the-world, appears to engender a measure of consonance with the Volk, within Rosenzweig’s system redemption is realized following the neighborly love that defines the community and fills the world. It would seem then that the fundamental difference between the two is ethical: Heidegger’s early philosophy conspicuously lacking a convincing ethic and instead emphasizing the primal relationship between Dasein and the soil; Rosenzweig by contrast building a system de-

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99 Ibid.


101 Batnitzky, 2000, 145.
pended upon the dynamic that abides between neighbors and redemption itself involving the entire world. But Gordon argues otherwise, writing, "The Star therefore lacks any robust theory welding ethics to redemption: it construes a final act of redemption as beyond human activity."102 In other words human agency by itself is insufficient for bringing about redemption. Moreover, Rosenzweig's characterization of Israel as fundamentally exilic, perpetually residing beyond the world and world history, as well as Christianity's essential hatred of the Jew, appears to eradicate the possibility of Jewish-Christian neighborly love. Anticipating Heidegger's turn, Rosenzweig points to the significance of language for bridging the gulf between self and neighbor, but refines this point only later in "The New Thinking."103 Ultimately in The Star the Choral Form—"the roof over the house of language"—remains only an act of anticipation rather than complete fulfillment.104 "The individual qua individual could not soar higher than the prayer of the individual, the individual lament [...] But the kingdom does not come in revelation, and the prayer thus remains a sigh in the night."105


104 Rosenzweig, 1985, 231.

105 Ibid., 233.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: ATHENS, JERUSALEM AND THE OTHER

6.1 Rational Tolerance of the Other

In 1781 the Prussian public official Christian Wilhelm von Dohm published *On the Civic Improvement of the Jews*, helping to initiate broad public discussion of the disquieting Jewish Question dogging Europe. That same year Austrian emperor Joseph II issued the Edict of Toleration, which abolished the yellow badges Jews had to wear outside the ghettos and allowed Jewish children to attend public elementary and secondary schools within the empire.¹

Predictably there was ambivalence regarding the Edict: reformers welcomed it joyfully while traditionalists were scornful, suspicious of education reform that would be dismissive of Talmudic and other Jewish literature. Navigating a narrow path between the two camps, Chief Rabbi Ezekiel Landau of Prague advocated a position of caution with regard to reform, counseling the Jews to “remember that they are guests in a land not their own. Even if given legal parity, they should retain a sense of psychological submissiveness; they should never be arrogant, never think themselves fully at home, or fully free.”² He nonetheless goes on to advise them to learn German and pursue the opportunities of a secular education, concluding that to do otherwise would be an affront to the good graces of the emperor.


What is significant about the dynamic of the nascent liberalism and tolerance is the
decisive role played by the higher power of the monarchy, an element of power that would be
missing from the German political and cultural landscape following the First World War.\(^3\) The Jewish Question engenders a refinement of autochthony, promised land and exile in
modern Germany in terms of national identity and religiosity, and the otherwise volatile
dynamic of these phenomena in conflict is stabilized largely by a powerful and unifying
political force, one which following the death of Bismarck gradually begins to disintegrate
until the nation seeks out war. Not only did the Treaty of Versailles concluding World War I
dismantle the German monarchy, in doing so it devastated the organization and power of the
German Landeskirchen, for the regional princes served as local heads of the Church and they
were essentially stripped of their offices. This vacuum bereft of a singular guiding power
helped lay the ground for the success of the conservative revolutionaries and National
Socialists in reinvesting German soil with a Teutonic and Nordic pagan significance, one in
direct contrast to Jewish cosmopolitanism.

In the early years of reform and enlightenment, the inertia of tolerance was
accelerated incrementally by the literary figuration of the ‘good Jew’. Writers like Johann
Gottfried Schnabel, Christian Gellert, and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing endeared their readers
to noble and altruistic Jewish characters through magazine articles, novels and plays. Much
the way Socrates envisions the force and dynamic of myth in Plato’s Republic, this finely
focused and popular figure had considerable influence. In consequence, “The good Jew was
not only a literary character but, even more, became a kind of symbol of the author’s

\(^3\) On the history of Christianity in interwar Germany, see Klaus Scholder, *The Churches and
enlightened attitudes and was understood as a parable for the struggle of a bourgeoisie dedicated to the principle of reason against all expressions of prejudice and intolerance.⁴ Such a literary approach can be seen as a tactic both coordinating with and battling against the larger strategy promulgated by European monarchs and even the French National Assembly: “Everything for the Jews as individuals but nothing for the Jews as a nation.”⁵ In a sense this shrewd strategy constituted the perfect conundrum, a socio-political rendering of the philosophical problem of the one and the many. Among others, it was the Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelssohn who would most notably take up the challenge to advance the cause of tolerance by accentuating the particular over and against the universal.⁶

Mendelssohn in 1783 published Jerusalem or on Religious Power and Judaism in which he echoes the sentiments of the American founding fathers, arguing for a clear distinction between the powers of state and religious affiliation. Addressing the leaders of Europe he pleads, “Do not reward or punish any doctrine, do not tempt or bribe any one to embrace a religious creed!”⁷ His approach contrasts sharply to that of Hermann Cohen who argues in 1917, “The state alone […] must ensure freedom of conscience and safeguard the

⁴ Julius H. Schoeps, “1783;” in Gilman and Zipes, 1997, 90. Schoeps argues, for example, “The significance of Lessing’s Nathan der Weist (Nathan the Wise) for German Jewry should not be underestimated. This play encouraged Jews to define themselves and became a kind of reference point that not only provided the basis for the concept of toleration but also permitted the definition of a formula for the coexistence of Jews and Christians.”

⁵ Ibid. This is the infamous dictum of Count Clermont-Tonnerre given during the French National Assembly in December 1789.

⁶ Mendelssohn published his Jerusalem six years prior to Clermont-Tonnerre’s rather pointed pronouncement; nevertheless, the latter’s dictum encapsulates concisely the position of many who sought in emancipation the divestment of Jewish tradition.

independence of religious creed against outside impediments and handicaps.”

Though the socio-political atmosphere had changed considerably from Mendelssohn’s day to that of Cohen, the latter’s optimism regarding the role of the German state would ultimately prove to be less judicious. As Julius Schoeps points out, “Mendelssohn did not want the state to play any special role in enforcing this demand” of religious toleration. Entrusting the fate of the Jews both individually and collectively to a handful of royal sovereigns appeared to him counter to the spirit of cultivating an enlightened public: “Principles are free; by their very nature, attitudes do not suffer constraints or corruptions […] Thus, neither church nor state are entitled to subject the principles or attitudes of men to any form of coercions.”

The impetus for religious toleration can of course be traced to a wide range of historical figures, texts, and movements, from the aesthetic and humanistic ideas of the Renaissance, through the protestation of the Reformation, to the rationalism of the Enlightenment and the successes of empirical science. Arguably it would be the American and French revolutions that effectively dethroned the preeminence of religious identity and installed in its place the more popular and pressing notion of political liberty.

Apart from the more general historical currents, Mendelssohn’s legacy is surely considered significant if not seminal to German-Jewish philosophy, but his influence in the broader currents of secular European philosophy is muted. David Sorkin notes that Mendelssohn himself ultimately conceded “his philosophical views were at least ten years

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8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
out of date.” Amplifying this self-critique to contend he “was even more out of step with his contemporaries than he himself was willing to acknowledge,” Sorkin points first to the influence of the medieval Maimonides and his practical rationalism, the basis from which Mendelssohn could harmonize polysemous scripture with reason, and concludes by pointing out that his “formative period as a philosopher was in the 1740s and 1750s,” rather than at the turn of the century. Thus, in Sorkin’s view, Mendelssohn should more accurately be understood “as a Jewish theological Wolffian who attempted to do for Judaism what Reinbeck and Baumgarten had done for Protestantism.” Sorkin’s position may be overstated but regarding the subsequent course of German philosophy Mendelssohn’s resistance to the idea of universal linear progress would indeed not prevail.

6.2 Kant and Heidegger: Internationalism and Autochthony

Immanuel Kant based his conception of morality on laws that are both universal and necessary: his categorical imperative is intended to inform immediate and purposeful action. Yet he succeeded in detaching validation of moral laws from the empirical world. The necessary and universal laws of reason had to be “traced to the activity of consciousness itself, conceived not as the product but as the precondition of experience, providing it with a universalizable structure in the pure forms of temporal and spatial intuition and in the pure logic of the understanding.” The empirical world did not simply impress itself upon the


12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.
knower; rather the transcendental categories of consciousness provided the framework for grasping the world. Further, being itself does not constitute a real predicate: to think or say a thing exists adds nothing to the concept of the thing; rather such a statement amounts only to positing a phenomena quite apart from the character and content of the noumenal world.\textsuperscript{15}

Heidegger’s indebtedness to Kant is considerable, particularly with regard to Kant’s claim about the predication of being. As he writes in the introductory pages of \textit{Being and Time}, “The Being of entities ‘is’ not itself an entity.”\textsuperscript{16} On this point Béatrice Han-Pile avers, “So Heidegger agrees with Kant on the object of the investigation (the determination of entities), and on the idea that the structure of ontological determination is not itself ontical.”\textsuperscript{17} Moreover, Heidegger is beholden to Kant regarding his understanding of world. Recall that for Kant the world is not simply a posited entity or sphere of entities but the boundless potentiality and interrelation abiding among the innumerable entities of the cosmos. Heidegger develops precisely this interpretation of world in his 1920s lectures to the point where Dasein’s authenticity itself rides on transforming this potentiality; world is

\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{14} Jeffrey Andrew Barash, \textit{Martin Heidegger and the Problem of Historical Meaning}, revised and expanded edition (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003), 7.
\item\textsuperscript{16} Heidegger, 1962, 26. He adds: “If we are to understand the problem of Being, our first philosophical step consists in not [...] ‘telling a story—that is to say, in not defining entities as entities by tracing them back in their origin to some other entity, as if Being had the character of some possible entity.”
\item\textsuperscript{17} Béatrice Han-Pile, “Early Heidegger’s Appropriation of Kant,” in \textit{A Companion to Heidegger}, ed. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 80.
\end{enumerate}
not some sort of ‘what’ to which consciousness must cross; rather it is the ‘how’ of Dasein’s comportment amid the potent entities of nature.

But Heidegger must be differentiated from Kant with regard to the latter’s cosmopolitanism. In contrast to Mendelssohn who saw in universalism an unappreciative withering away of the particulars of the world, Kant envisioned the laws of reason leading humanity to the eventual realization of the universal rule of law in both the national and international spheres. Kant’s philosophy is the idealism that informs President Wilson’s League of Nations. For Heidegger, however, Weimar culture and its liberalism exemplify the consequences of Kantian cosmopolitanism bringing not enlightenment but only more obfuscation. Dasein’s authentic being-in-the-world, rooting itself in the German soil, stands in direct opposition to Kantian universal enlightenment.

Borrowing from and building on Aristotle’s view of nature pulsing with potentiality and guided by teleological laws of reason, Kant sees in teleology the temporal aspect, and this for him necessitates an all-encompassing history. The laws of universal reason translate into an inexorable progress toward the perfect civil society. But as we all know so well, Heidegger was not a progressivist, not in the 20s and early 30s. He did not subscribe to the idea of history sweeping humankind along toward a more just and equitable civil society in the future. Dasein in fact must confront history, and not by simply turning back but by digging in and drawing up the primal, by conjuring up the myth of autochthony. Beginning in 1934 Heidegger will chart a somewhat different course for Dasein, one of philosophical
poetics. And though he renounces his intellectual alignment with National Socialism, his later notions of dwelling and poetic articulation also will be informed by autochthony.¹⁸

6.3 Kant and Rosenzweig: Universal History and Exile

_The Star of Redemption_ begins with the assertion, “All cognition of the All originates in death, in the fear of death.”¹⁹ But according to Rosenzweig this absolutely crucial fact of the human condition is suppressed by philosophy, most notably idealism, which “takes it upon itself to throw off the fear of things earthly, to rob death of its poisonous sting.”²⁰ Rosenzweig argues that the rational method of idealist philosophy renders death from an aught to a naught and thereby “plugs up its ears before the cry of a terrorized humanity.”²¹

Philosophy started only when reasoning wedded itself to being. But it is precisely to philosophy, and precisely at this point, that we deny our allegiance. We seek what is everlasting, what does not first require reasoning in order to be. This is why we were not entitled to deny death, and this is why we have to admit the Nought wherever and however we may encounter it, and make it the everlasting starting point of the everlasting.²²

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¹⁸ See Martin Heidegger, _Poetry, Language, Thought_, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1975). In these and other writings of the later Heidegger his inheritance of Greek autochthony is arguably even more explicit in so far as his relationship with Aristotle’s philosophy becomes deeper and more refined and it was from Aristotle that Heidegger originally took the notion of autochthony.

¹⁹ Rosenzweig, 1985, 3.

²⁰ _Ibid._

²¹ _Ibid._, 5.

²² _Ibid._, 20.
Not only does Rosenzweig critique the entire history of Western philosophy in its unwillingness to adequately confront death and the negative, he singles out Kantian idealism and particularly its basis in universal reason and fixation on an abstract notion of the All. He suggests, "One should have taken one more step backward and anchored action in the foundation of a 'character' which, for all it partook of being, was nevertheless separated from all being. Only thus could one have secured action as world to itself as against the world."\[23\]

This needed distinction between the individual and the All, however, never occurs among philosophers, and in fact it is further occluded by the Kantian idea of universal morality and reason. Rosenzweig argues:

in Kant's case the concept of the All again carried off the victory over the individual through the formulation of the law of morality as the universally valid act. With a certain historically logical consistency, the 'miracle in the phenomenal world'—as he felicitously designated the concept of freedom—sank back into the miracle of freedom—sank back into the miracle of the phenomenal world with the post-Kantians.\[24\]

The Kantian separation between the phenomenal and noumenal worlds effectively shunts the possibility of achieving a more genuine and robust comprehension of life and death by sweeping the individual up into the calculating machinations of "historically logical consistency." Rosenzweig observes, "Kant himself serves as godfather to Hegel's concept of

\[23\] Ibid., 10.

\[24\] Ibid.
universal history, not only with his political philosophy and his philosophy of history, but already with his ethical fundamentals.”

In one regard Rosenzweig views the modern philosophical oversight of the negative as somewhat ironic. *The Star* is very much a response to the theological crisis of modernity, the first signs of which, according to Rosenzweig, were “already visible with Kant.” But the crisis is most explicit in Nietzsche. Peter Gordon characterizes Rosenzweig as a post-Nietzschean philosopher, meaning “he takes seriously the philosophical message in Nietzsche’s dictum ‘God is dead’ (or, if one prefers, the equally metaphorical claim that humanity has ‘wiped away the infinite horizon’).” This particular orientation of Rosenzweig explains his initial reluctance to adopt an overtly theistic position. Moreover, like Nietzsche Rosenzweig shares in the formative principles of a philological *Wissenschaft* that effectively detaches textual analysis from ecclesiastical guidance and introduces “a particularly self-reflective encounter with texts and history.” And just as Nietzsche finds in

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25 Ibid.


27 Ibid., 150.

28 See Robert S. Leventhal, “The Emergence of Philological Discourse in the German States, 1770-1810,” in *Isis: An International Review Devoted to the History of Science and Its Cultural Influences*, vol. 77, no. 287 (June 1986), 248. Leventhal argues that “the basis of [modern] philological theory, practice, and institutions can be linked directly to Heyne and the Philological Seminar at Göttingen” (247), adding that while “interpretation in earlier philological, biblical, and juridical scholarship sought to reconstitute the authoritative text and the authentic meaning of the signs, the new philology introduced a particularly self-reflective encounter with texts and history” (248). Also see John Edwin Sandys’ magisterial *A History of Classical Scholarship* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1998), esp. vol. 3. In the early years of university reform, the difficulty for universities such as those at Göttingen, Halle and others of similar mission was securing patronage among an aristocracy allied to the
this detachment the loss of moral foundation and the inevitable rise of nihilism, Rosenzweig recognizes the fundamental negativity now confronting modern humanity. Furthermore, Rosenzweig does not shy away from the abyss, as he contends idealism so blindly does; rather he is convinced of the absolutely fundamental and therefore crucial role of the negative in formulating a rigorous course toward redemption. Rosenzweig would say that Kantian and Hegelian idealism have very little to say to the soldier in the trenches: his subjectivity is so heavily laden with the negative and death is such an ever-ready possibility that the logical consistency of idealism constitutes little more than irrelevant noise.

As is well known, Rosenzweig was a disciple of the neo-Kantian Hermann Cohen. But whereas Cohen believes in a certain measure of historical progress, Rosenzweig holds no such position. Recall that redemption can only come when God unexpectedly intervenes in the world; no amount of neighborly love alone is sufficient to merge man and world. “Nevertheless,” writes Batnitzky, “in the final analysis, both agree that historical time cannot itself produce the Messianic era. Cohen argues that the best we can do is put our energies into helping history move progressively along; Rosenzweig argues that Cohen’s optimism is an illusion.”29 In contrast to Cohen, Rosenzweig sees Judaism not as yet another nation with a culminating history, but as the embodiment of “the disruption of God’s revelation into the human world.”30 Thus, Rosenzweig must insist upon the fundamental negativity of Judaism—exile. In seeking to break with philosophic tradition, to counteract the historical

*Landeskirchen* where the faculty worked to articulate a hermeneutics not aligned with traditional Christian interpretation.

29 Batnitzky, 2000, 193.

and logical abstraction of Kant and Hegel, he first draws attention to the negative, then characterizes Israel’s exile as the political instantiation of the negative—the disruption of God’s revelation.

6.4 Concluding Remarks

It has not been my intention to embark upon a lengthy comparison between Heidegger and Rosenzweig, mapping two systems and pointing out the similarities and dissimilarities or in particular comparing authenticity to redemption; I am more interested in the means to the respective ends rather than the ends themselves. Nor have I sought to draw a detailed contrast between Plato’s political theory and the religio-political concepts found in Hebrew scripture. Instead I have tried to tell a story about three historical ideas of both popular and intellectual significance—autochthony, promised land, and exile—and show how they resonate in Greek philosophy, biblical theology, Heidegger’s philosophy and Rosenzweig’s theology. My point has been to demonstrate the utility and insight gained by using these ideas to examine political and philosophical currents within Western intellectual history, and to show how fundamentally operative they are within this history. One could just as easily apply these concepts to Chinese, Indian or African histories, both revealing and illustrating the political and cultural tensions engendered by population displacement, nativist nationalist movements, and qualification of land in terms of political or religious aspirations. In India, for example, the Hindutva nationalist movement explicitly draws on notions of
indigenousness and religious identity to shore up a political-religious identity of inclusion and exclusion.\textsuperscript{31}

My hope is that this study serves as an introduction to the seminal roles of autochthony, promised land and exile in history, and in particular the conflicts these concepts engender when allied with religious and political forces. I believe the merits of recognizing the function of these concepts is more than heuristic, but rather quite revealing about the dynamic of the human condition. If adequate and effective, this brief study should provoke more questioning and analysis of religious and political phenomena and in particular where these phenomena intersect. With the steady decline of the nation-state, a mercurial institution to begin with, and the increasing authority of religious figures, institutions and phenomena throughout the world, the full weight of an identity politics qualified by nativism and rootlessness is again beginning to be felt around the world. More than anything else, the tragic events of 9/11 signal this turning point, and the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq demonstrate the significance of a territorial religious nativism in conflict with a quasi-colonial political authority.

But perhaps more than any other region on the globe, the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians represents the intensity with which autochthony, promised land and exile constitute a treacherous dynamic seemingly without resolution. The founding of modern Israel and in particular the kibbutz movement arguably constitutes a reversal of sorts wherein the Israelis cultivate a powerful sense of autochthony in the Promised Land. Israeli autochthony thus supplants to a certain extent Arab indigenousness, rendering the

Palestinians not natives but exiles in their own land. If we then recall the role of autochthony in laying the ground for the Holocaust in Nazi Germany a disturbing analogy arises: to what extent are modern Israelis rearticulating the very dynamic that led to the annihilation of their forebears in Europe only this time as the oppressors? This is, in fact, a charge repeatedly leveled against the Israelis, typically with visible sarcasm. The irony is rarely overlooked: Jacqueline Rose in her engaging *The Question of Zion* writes: “For Buber, [Hans] Kohn, and Arendt, the incipient militarism of the new state was a trap, the consequence of its injustice toward the indigenous peoples,” adding that they “would agree that there is something inside the ethos of Judaism that runs counter to the militarization of nationhood. But for them, that ethos should act as a brake on power.”\(^{32}\) Where the irony does not come through is within the perspective of militant nationalists like former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who, Rose points out, believes that the ethos of neighborly love or compassion “is the regrettable consequence of the Diaspora, which triggered this ‘long, horrible transformation of the Jews’.”\(^{33}\) Rose encapsulates the psychological dimension of this vexing bifurcation of ethos and militarism as “a colossal *sublimation* of historical pain.”\(^{34}\) Indeed, the seemingly intractable divide between the ethos of compassion and the violence of militant nationalism in Israel today recapitulates the gulf between theory and praxis in Heidegger and eternity and history in Rosenzweig.

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\(^{34}\) *Ibid.*
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