



Book Reviews

Wirth, Jason M. *Mountains, Rivers, and the Great Earth: Reading Gary Snyder and Dōgen in an Age of Ecological Crisis*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2017. 174pp. (PB) \$20.95. ISBN: 978-1-4384-6542-5 (HB) \$75.00. ISBN: 978-1-4384-6543-2

Viable responses to the global ecological crisis require more than knowledge, more than policy, economics, and engineering. They require a transformation of what it means to be human and to coexist with the multifarious denizens of Earth. It requires, in the words of Pope Francis, an “ecological conversion,” that is, a conversion toward a consciousness and conscience grounded in the interconnectedness of humans with the habitats and inhabitants of Earth (xxii). The practice of ecological conversion is articulated with clarity and profundity throughout Jason Wirth’s book, *Mountains, Rivers, and the Great Earth: Reading Gary Snyder and Dōgen in an Age of Ecological Crisis*. Wirth’s focus, though, is not on the Pope or Christianity. His focus is the Buddha Dharma, interpreting ecological conversion as the Buddhist practice of awakening—a practice of mindful, caring attention to the myriad things of the Great Earth. Writing from the place of such practice, Wirth integrates philosophical, literary, artistic, religious, and ecological perspectives as he reads the works of “Gary Snyder (b. 1930) and, to a lesser extent, the great Kamakura period Zen Master Eihei Dōgen (1200-1253)” (xiii). This is not a book *about* Snyder and Dōgen. It is an exercise in thinking and practicing *with* them, expressing the place of the Dharma in their works while attending to the current condition of life on Earth. It is an interdisciplinary and cross-cultural book about responding to ecological crisis, and it is “a book from and about the Dharma” (xiii). Embracing his role as a scholar-practitioner, Wirth does not mistake careful thinking for the critical distance fetishized in academic professionalism. He gives a rigorous reading of Snyder and Dōgen while also communicating impassioned commitments to the practice of the Dharma and to the mutual flourishing of beings in a democracy that extends throughout the Great Earth. “This book is its own intimate practice, its own attempt to awaken to earth democracy” (xxiii).

Following the Preface, the book is divided into three parts, each of which contains two chapters. Before elaborating on the intricacies of “Earth Democracy” (Part III), Wirth considers the meaning of “The Great Earth” (Part I) and Snyder’s own place along the West Coast of North America, that is, the coast of what Native Americans call “Turtle Island” (Part II). Part I is the most philosophically dense, presenting several ideas expressed by Dōgen, with attention to their context in the Buddhist tradition and their reiteration in Snyder’s writings. Chapter 1 discusses the titular phrase, “Mountains, Rivers, and the Great Earth” (*senga daichi*), which comes from Dōgen and resonates in Snyder’s “Wild” (3). Dōgen inherits a tradition of Buddhist thought for which the realization of one’s own awakening is nothing other than the realization of all things such as they are. The awakening referred to as “Buddha nature” extends to all beings. For Dōgen, “mountains, rivers, and the great earth are the ocean of Buddha nature” (9). In terms of a famous Zen saying, one sees mountains as mountains and waters as waters before one studies Zen, and after studying Zen one sees that “[m]ountains are not mountains, waters and not

waters,” and then finally, after one has attained awakening, “[m]ountains are really mountains, waters are really waters” (9). By emptying oneself and all things of whatever independent substance that one naively takes them to have, Zen practice returns one’s sense of things to things in their suchness, which is empty of any independent existence. Awakening is a “dropping away of the body and mind” (*shinjin datsu raku*) of the self and all beings, leaving things as they are, as mountains and waters (14).

The realization of the emptiness (*śūnyatā*) of things is a realization of their interconnectedness or dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) in the matrix of the Great Earth. In Dōgen’s famous *Mountains and Waters Sutra*, this interplay between the interconnected forms of things and their emptiness is expressed in terms of *sansui*. Combining “mountains” (*san*) and “waters” (*sui*), *sansui* means something like “landscape” (11-12). The Great Earth is the interplay of waters and mountains, *yin* and *yang*, emptiness and form. To realize that mountains are mountains is to realize that mountains are not independent substances but are intimately intertwined with waters. Just as the rigidity of *yang* becomes the flow of *yin*, mountains flow. They walk. They practice. As Dōgen says, “a mountain always practices in every place” (13). For Snyder, who articulates this teaching in the poems comprising *Mountains and Rivers Without End*, this sense of practice means Dōgen can be read as an ecologist (11). Studying oneself means studying mountains and water. The practice of awakening is the practice of the Great Earth, the Wild, the practice of cultivating wisdom and compassion for all beings. Sitting meditation (*zazen*) is a crucial part of Zen practice, but practice happens in every place, hence Snyder’s recognition of the profound ecological and social implications of Dōgen’s appreciation for the head cook (*tenzo*) at a Zen monastery (22). The *tenzo* has very little time for *zazen*, yet has all the more opportunities for practice in the careful preparation of food.

Practice is about realizing the emptiness and interconnectedness of the Great Earth, but not as if practice is a means to an end. Rather, practice is realization. Expressing this practice-realization (*shushō-ittō*) in language is its own practice. Wirth considers ways in which poetry manifests that practice for Dōgen and Snyder, such that words are not separate from the wild world but are integrated non-dualistically into the Great Earth. This means that the “Wild” is not simply a social construct. Texts about the “Wild” are conditioned by the texture of the Wild itself. The Great Earth is a text. Creative, expressive of differences and relationships, “the Great Earth itself is a sūtra” (29). Landscape painting is not merely an anthropocentric projection; rather, the ongoing transformation of mountains and waters is itself a painting (37). Wirth applies this poetizing to the specificities of Turtle Island in Part II, beginning with Chapter 3 on the notion of place, where he brings figures like Herman Melville, Immanuel Kant, and Gilles Deleuze to bear upon Snyder’s place-based practice—bioregionalism. As that chapter focuses on the elemental habitat of place, the next chapter focuses on the inhabitants of place, specifically the bears of Turtle Island, who have undergone a devastating loss of species diversity and abundance while humans have increasingly encroached on their place. Snyder’s telling of a Native American tale, “The Woman Who Married a Bear,” provides a corrective to anthropocentric attitudes of superiority and domination over bears. Bringing a Zen sensibility to this indigenous story, Snyder conveys the way in which all beings find their practice in their place, in delicate interconnections with other beings.

In Part II and III, Wirth brings into relief the close connection that Snyder has with indigenous practices of inhabiting Turtle Island. Snyder avoids the condescension that characterizes many academic appropriations of Native ways. “Snyder does not speak *for* indigenous peoples but rather *with* them” (94). This fits with Dōgen’s practice of a

communication that facilitates mutual awakening, “Buddha to Buddha communication” (35). Like what Snyder calls “plain speech,” it is a communication hospitable to vernacular values (65). That kind of communication nurtures the seeds of a more ecological sense of democracy, which is the focus of Part III, where Wirth adapts Vandana Shiva’s definition of “earth democracy”—a democracy that sees “the planet as a commons” (107). Wirth draws Snyder together with George Bataille and Bruno Latour to propose a democracy of exorbitant gift exchange in which humans are not the only political agents. This is like post-humanism or what Snyder playfully calls “pan-humanism,” a humanistic enterprise that takes nonhumans seriously (xxv). Wirth finds practices of earth democracy in the indigenous ritual feast of mutual gift-giving called “potlatch” (87). That feast enacts a gift economy that avoids individualistic attachment to property and celebrates the intimate interpenetration of humans with one another and with their places. Even for communities entrenched in capitalism, every place affords possibilities for a gift economy through the practice of re-inhabitation, that is, the practice of awakening to one’s place.

This book is an exemplary work of scholarship and practice in cross-cultural environmental philosophy. Wirth is uniquely comprehensive in his reading of Snyder, interpreting Snyder’s poetry and prose in light of their Buddhist, indigenous, and ecological dimensions, and providing a clear interpretation of the place of Dōgen’s Zen therein. With its philosophical grounding, moral and spiritual compass, alliance with indigenous people, and commitment to the commons, Wirth’s radical proposal for earth democracy makes this book particularly compelling. It also makes the book quite timely, as it is written in “unrepentant defiance” of the erosion of democracy manifest in Donald Trump’s United States presidency (xv). While this book is comprehensive and politically engaged, it is by no means exhaustive in analyzing earth democracy in terms of Snyder and Dōgen, nor does it purport to be. Instead, it presents skillful means (*upāya*), which seek awakening not systematization or explanation (44). Accordingly, even topics that are given relatively little treatment are still addressed skillfully with gestures for deepening practice. For instance, while gender issues are relatively absent from the book, Wirth points to the “gender fluidity” in Snyder’s work and mentions the failure of Buddhism historically in its treatment of women and transgender, gay, and lesbian people (52). For those people and, indeed, all beings, much more work remains to be done. The practice of earth democracy is ongoing, without end, as mountains and waters.

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The Contingency of Necessity: Reason and God as Matters of Fact. [New Perspectives in Ontology.] By Tyler Tritten. Edinburgh University Press, 2017. 272 pp. Hard Cover \$110, ISBN: 978474428194

In his new book, *The Contingency of Necessity: Reason and God as Matters of Fact*, Tyler Tritten defends the thesis that “all necessity is consequent”—and, thus, that “no necessity is absolute”—by elucidating the ontological status of the epistemic (1). What is at stake for him is a metaphysics that reconciles the *modus operandi* of reason with the irreducible contingency that there is something and not just nothing. Indeed, Tritten’s is a metaphysics which resists the

attempts made by essentialist ontologies to infer God's quoddity from of his quiddity. Whereas the latter attempt to deduce God's existence from his essence, Tritten rejects this approach, arguing, instead, that, while God's essence is operatively necessary, the positing of that essence is a contingent fact. As Tritten contends, God must create a rational universe, but only on the condition that he actually creates—which God is free to do or not do—meaning that the rational world has no necessary *a priori*, but instead exists *factum brutum*. Tritten draws from this insight to emphasize both the primacy of act and its "unprethinkability" (*Unvordenklichkeit*). If existence is irreducible to the intelligible, then what makes being be is not, as Parmenides suggests, what we understand of it (i.e. God's essence), but the "ex-static event," i.e. the absolute's "de-cision" (*Ent-Scheidung*) to exist. At the risk of oversimplification, Tritten's essay expands on and reinvigorates the invitations made by 19th and 20th century Continental philosophy—especially those from Schelling and Heidegger—to reject the ontotheological assumption that divinity is synonymous with metaphysical necessity. Whereas the latter presumes that rational necessity is exhaustive of the absolute, Tritten argues that reason is the ground that God *overcomes* in revealing himself as free. For Tritten, creation is the act of God's anterior being entering into relation. And so, for him, while God himself is free, that freedom becomes real as transcendence only insofar as it gives birth to immanence. Ontologically, this insight entails a redefining of God's perfection on the basis of his ability to posit difference. *Perfection is not what God is but what God becomes* insofar as God allows what is not him, i.e., the rational universe, to exist.

Inspired by Schelling's metaphysics of time, Tritten, in defending his thesis, utilizes Schelling's understanding of the dialectic, which defines the absolute in terms of God's "unprethinkable decision." Contra Hegel, this notion of the dialectic is just as much an affirmation of opposites as it is a synthesis, for, in that moment of decisiveness, God posits his essence as actual while simultaneously affirming his potential not to be. Tritten articulates this "expressing" as it pertains to his thesis that all necessity is consequent: in the moment God creates an intelligible universe, he simultaneously affirms his capacity to posit himself as chaos, and, thus, as nothingness. For Tritten, the nature of this "expressing" is what is most crucial. As *that which expresses what is actual and possible*, God, as unprethinkable being, is both possible and actual without being either possible or actual. Tritten introduces this indeterminacy as a means of defending the point that freedom and necessity are true of God *a posteriori*. In positing himself as both possible and actual, God transcends them both, revealing himself to be free insofar as he is both possible and actual without being beholden to either. In this way, God subverts the logic which equates the exercise of freedom with acts of domination and destruction, since God exerts mastery over his alterity by allowing it to be. Again, Tritten's emphasis on the originality of the act is crucial. God is neither free nor necessary *a priori*, but becomes free by allowing the determinations of possibility and actuality to have being. For Tritten, it is the relational nature of freedom and necessity that defines God's decision as "unprethinkable." Since God is not originally God, but becomes divine through the eternal beginning, what cannot be deduced is the beginning itself, since it is the *a priori* through which the *relata* of freedom and necessity are brought into relation. Tritten articulates how this notion of the absolute exposes the difficulties with other metaphysics of contingency, particularly Meillassoux's position that contradictory beings must exist and the Neoplatonic doctrine of emanation. Whereas both paradigms argue explicitly (or implicitly) against the absoluteness of the principle of sufficient reason, in treating creation as a natural effect of the subject's "what-ness," both positions overlook the "unprethinkability" of the deed, and, in turn, contradict the insight that free subjects

transcend the world they create. Sustained critiques of these positions dominate the early chapters of Tritten's work and prove useful in distinguishing Tritten's ontology from essentialist ones, which regard creation as a foregone conclusion, and, consequently, negate the reality of difference.

One of the many strong points of the essay is its emphasis on logic, wherein Tritten derives the "unprethinkable" *a priori* for the laws of identity, non-contradiction, and the excluded middle. While the typical logician believes that these principles are self-evident, Tritten argues against their metaphysical necessity, claiming that their facticity is irreducible to their intelligibility. What is at stake, for him, is the notion that logical principles are true *a posteriori*, meaning that they become real through the original act of creation. Tritten elucidates this point by demonstrating the interdependency of the three principles, specifically, their existential parity. In doing so, he reinforces the contingency of their very existence. It is God who decides to put the cardinal truths of logic into effect, and, who, conversely, retains the possibility of retracting them. While this insight does not entail that God creates arbitrarily—since, *strictu sensu*, God, as the virtual contradiction that excludes no possibility, does not create—it does refute the claim that logical truths are self-grounding. On the contrary, principles of logic are created truths, derivatives of the absolute's unconditioned decision to be.

In addition to the core arguments, it is worth mentioning that Tritten includes a number of fruitful engagements between Schelling and other major figures in the Continental tradition, including detailed interactions with Heidegger's articulation of the "last God" and Badiou's subtractive ontology. Also, in a more limited fashion, there are references to the works of Markus Gabriel, Richard Kearney, and John Sallis. All of these engagements are consistent with the main objective of the essay, which, as Tritten claims, is primarily speculative—and not overtly political or ethical—and are especially valuable given that much of the secondary research on Schelling aims to put him in dialogue with Hegel.

Finally, a word about Tritten's concluding remarks, wherein he establishes the foundations for future research on the ontology of personhood, specifically as it pertains to the absolute. As Tritten writes in the final lines of the afterword, "The God of the ontology of the fact is a God both ontologically ultimate—even if not equivalent with the Absolute—and, because a free God who acts rather than merely moving towards self-achievement according to a principle of nature, a personal God to whom one can sing, dance, pray and worship" (246). Intriguing is this theme of how man relates to God, since it is a key link between Schelling and his immediate successor, Kierkegaard. While Tritten's book coincides with Schelling's thesis that the efficaciousness of systematic philosophy presupposes an unsystematic *a priori*, simultaneously, it addresses only briefly Schelling's implicit inference that the "unprethinkable decision" is accessible through God's personhood. Indeed, this is more of a suggestion for future inquiry than it is a criticism, but it, nevertheless, bears mentioning. While, for Schelling, it is not metaphysically necessary that God exists, we, ourselves, as free beings, can still empathize with his situation, since it is our very much like our own. Hence the reason why Schelling, in the *Freiheitsschrift*, associates the activity of the absolute with love. It is love that overcomes the Godhead, which is how God himself can be accessible to us, even while still transcending reason. For while it is irrational for God to want to want, and, in turn, abandon his perfection, each of us understands why someone would want to love and evade boredom. Schelling's metaphysics, then, lends itself to an understanding of the spiritual conditions - such as love, boredom, and anxiety - that motivate (without coercing) the subject to act, and, which, in turn, allow us to understand the subject's decisions outside the context of essentialist presuppositions. Tritten addresses some of

these conditions in this essay, and a more sustained treatment of them will compliment this work very well.

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***Heidegger and Jewish Thought: Difficult Others*, by Elad Lapidot and Micha Brumlik (eds.). London/New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017, 322pp. \$44.95 ISBN 978-1-78660-472-9**

A recent addition to the series *New Heidegger Research*, the volume *Heidegger and Jewish Thought: Difficult Others* not only takes up the controversy about Heidegger's anti-Semitism that has erupted in the aftermath of the publication of the *Black Notebooks* but significantly advances the debate. Conceived by its editors as an "intervention," it seeks to reconfigure current discussions by widening the scope of analysis beyond the *Notebooks* in order to determine the tensions as well as convergences between Heidegger's philosophical work and the rich, polyphonic tradition of Jewish thought. In its attempt to stay clear of "hegemonic" discourses that delegitimize Heidegger's thinking—even "an entire tradition of Heidegger-inspired critical theory" (5)—and that run into danger of producing "a figure of the Jew as something [...] unthinkable" (3) despite their well-meaning anti-anti-Semitism, it reframes the relation between these modes of thought along the lines of Heidegger's reflections on *polemos* in which moments of "intimacy" and "strife" coincide and of the Yiddish notion of *machloykes*, of dispute or quarrel: With two nods to Levinas, this relation of alternating, at times coinciding withness and againstness, nearness and distance, is characterized in terms of "difficult otherness." It is explored in detail in seventeen essays grouped into the three parts *Heidegger Thinks the Jews*, *Heidegger and Jewish Thinkers*, and *Heidegger and Jewish Thought*. Rather than giving a comprehensive overview over the multiplicity of perspectives assembled, this review confines itself to highlighting selected contributions to each of these parts.

In the first part, Peter Trawny and Donatella Di Cesare build on the results of their extensive studies,¹ which sought to describe Heidegger's anti-Semitism as "being-historical" and "metaphysical" respectively. In reaction to Jürgen Habermas and others who have criticized that his interpretation might philosophically nobilitate the "banal" (Jean-Luc Nancy), crudely cultural character of Heidegger's anti-Semitic remarks on "*Juden*," "*Judenschaft*" and "*Weltjudentum*," Trawny endeavors to substantiate his reading by turning to "an excessive ascription of a phantasmatic, groundless otherness" (34) that crystallizes in Heidegger's references to Karl Marx. Gathering such references, scattered over writings from four decades,² it is argued that Heidegger closely associates Marxian thought with an "inversion" of Platonism and, thus, with "metaphysics" in its most radical form. On Trawny's account, Heidegger sees Marx as the "incarnation" (35) of the "principle of destruction"—a principle which, in a 1942 *Notebook* entry, is related to "*Judenschaft* in the time-space of the Christian West, i.e. metaphysics"—because of the materialist privileging of "life" over "spirit." For Trawny, Heidegger's "othering" approach

¹ Cf. P. Trawny, *Heidegger and the Myth of a Jewish World Conspiracy*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015 and D. Di Cesare, *Heidegger and the Jews: The Black Notebooks*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018.

² Trawny includes notes by Heidegger in his 1932 edition of Marx's early writings, a passage in the *Black Notebooks* from the early 1940s, the 1947 *Letter on Humanism*, and the Le Thor seminars held in the late 1960s.

to Marx and his corresponding nostalgia as to a “loss of ‘Heimat’” (38) brought about by the supersession of the Greco-Germanic world of “useless,” therefore “free” *theoria* and art by “useful” labor and production, can only be understood adequately in the larger context of “being-historical” thinking. According to this thinking, “the history of metaphysics is dominated by a Jewish beginning where God as creator is a super-technician” (37). The essay convincingly demonstrates the form and extent of Heidegger’s attribution of Jewish “otherness,” based on which Marx comes to represent the “Anti-Christ” (cf. 35). Furthermore, it reminds us of the troubling lack of critical judgment Heidegger’s “being-historical” grand narrative brings with it, thus leading to absurd identifications of Marx as “a pre-Hitler; Hitler a post-Marx” (36)—or even of Judaism and National Socialism. To further undermine Heidegger’s dichotomous discourse on German “selfhood” and Jewish “otherness,” it might have been productive to engage with readings that explore possibilities of Marxian thought that lie beyond “life” as defined by wage labor and production; readings such as Herbert Marcuse’s who, in his experimental attempts at formulating a Heideggerian Marxism,³ emphasizes the significant role played by the “useless” and, especially, by art in a liberated, post-revolutionary society.

Donatella Di Cesare, in her contribution, defends and elaborates her interpretation of Heidegger’s anti-Semitism as “metaphysical.” On her account, Heidegger—despite his programmatic concern with the “destruction of metaphysics”—becomes part of the “metaphysical” tradition himself in two respects when thematizing “the Jewish question, the *Judenfrage*” (75): Firstly, he situates himself within the horizon of influential projects of modern European and, in particular, German philosophy that entail the determination of radical counter-figures such as, paradigmatically, “the Jew.” Pointing to Hegel’s, Kant’s, and Nietzsche’s accusations against Jews with their more or less veiled references to a *bellum judaicum*, Di Cesare argues that Heidegger reinforces such violent implications when, in the *Black Notebooks* and elsewhere, he ideologically deploys his considerations on *polemos*, now understood in terms of a planetary conflict along the lines of a friend/enemy-distinction between “the Germans” and “the Jews.” Secondly, it is Heidegger’s usage of metaphysical modes of thought—“dichotomies,” “hierarchical oppositions,” and, most importantly, “*quidditas*”—that warrants the characterization of his anti-Semitism as “a *metaphysics of the Jew*” (77). What is it that, for Heidegger, defines “the Jew”? According to Di Cesare’s cogent analysis, “the Jew” is an abstract figure that, detached from existing Jews as indicated by the generalizing expressions *das Jüdische* and *Judentum*, primarily appears as “an obstacle”: As the main representative or even the main agent of the “oblivion of being”—here, Di Cesare hears an “echo of [...] the charge of deicide” (78)⁴—“the Jew” blocks the path toward a re-appropriation of what is the Germans’ “own” and toward “a purification of being” (*Reinigung des Seins*; cf. 79). In light of his essentializing understanding of “the Jew,” it becomes evident that Heidegger’s amalgamation of the philosophical and ideological register, of *Seinsfrage*, *deutsche Frage*, and *Judenfrage* develops no critical distance whatsoever from National Socialist imaginations and inventions of “the Jew” as fundamentally “other” and, ultimately, as enemy. Referring to Heidegger’s remarks

³ The attempt is made explicit in Marcuse’s texts “Beiträge zu einer Phänomenologie des Historischen Materialismus” and “Über konkrete Philosophie” dating from the late 1920s; it also informs certain considerations in *One-Dimensional Man*.

⁴ In this context, Di Cesare points to Christian sources, in “post-Greek Christian philosophy” and in Luther, as another factor that influences Heidegger’s idiosyncratic anti-Semitism.

on “annihilation (*Vernichtung*) and “worldlessness” (*Weltlosigkeit*),⁵ Di Cesare suggests that, at its worst, his thinking on “being and the Jew” is compatible with “the project of a biopolitical remodeling of the planet” (77). Turning to Franz Rosenzweig and, especially, to Emmanuel Levinas, Di Cesare indicates a contrasting non-figurative understanding of Judaism: Conceived as “an *unassimilable remnant* that, for the West, points to the possibility of an elsewhere and a beyond” (81), it is irreducible to both particularism and universalism—the concepts alternately (or, in instances of extreme stereotyping, simultaneously) used in anti-Semitic discourses to level charges against the Jews for being overly “rooted” and overly “uprooted” respectively. Following Levinas, Di Cesare argues that Jewish existence and experience opens up a fundamental alternative to Western metaphysics in its dependency on “being, destiny, origin, *logos*, *ratio*, the *aut aut*” (82): For one thing, it challenges the strict separation between self and other and the privileging of the former over the latter, i.e. the conceptual dispositive that prepares the ground for grasping “otherness” in terms of enmity. Against “closed” understandings of subjectivity and communality, Levinas’s emphasis on exteriority, on exposure to and responsibility for the other as constitutive of individual and collective identity dismisses Heidegger’s idea of *Dasein* “returning to” and “appropriating” itself. In addition to demonstrating how to think what might be called alter-identity and hetero-autonomy, Levinas, in drawing on the Jewish tradition, rejects a certain “paganism” inscribed in Heideggerian thought: Rather than insisting on belongingness to the ground of a specific local “world”—on a *Bodenständigkeit* “incapable of opening a gap in the elemental immanence of the world” (83)—“Jewish being” is interrupted and unsettled by the responsibility for the Other. In thus marking the Jewish experience of “being-for” as “exemplary” (not “universal”), Di Cesare concludes, Levinas confronts us with questions that are outside the scope of Heidegger’s thought: “Can we dwell as strangers? Can we reside without being part and parcel of the earth, keeping our roots in the heavens?” (85)

In the first essay of the volume’s second part, Eveline Goodman-Thau takes up these questions in her reflections on the differences between “humanism” in its “Hellenistic” and its “Hebraic” form. Examining the biblical sources of the latter and their contemporary reformulation in the writings of Levinas,⁶ she outlines the features of a unique approach to subjectivity and inter-subjectivity; an approach, according to which “obedience” to the “demand” of the Other is prior to all deliberation and choice. Situated at the inter-face of self and other, subjectivity emerges in response to such “demands” and takes the form of what Levinas calls “*the other in the same*” (cf. 96). Accordingly, inter-subjectivity and communality are expressive of a “human fraternity” that precedes the conclusion of contracts. Such an understanding of coexistence in terms of “multiplicity” within “unity” challenges the notion—central to Heidegger’s exclusivist, anti-plural, and anti-egalitarian considerations on “folkish *Dasein*”—that meaningful, “historical” community is dependent on the homogenizing moments of shared “heritage,” “work,” and “mission.” Goodman-Thau’s contribution thus presents another humanism, a “humanism of the other” as Levinas has it. This “Jerusalemite” humanism is not affected by Heidegger’s critique of the “Athenian” humanist tradition because, in its emphasis on exteriority and alterity, it runs counter to a discursive logic dominated by the idea of the

⁵ For the way in which Heidegger uses these terms when describing (Jewish) otherness as “enmity,” see the 1933-34 lecture course *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit* (GA 36/37, 91) and *Überlegungen VII-XI* (*Schwarze Hefte* 1938-39; GA 95, 97).

⁶ For instance, she indicates how Levinas’s ‘phenomenology of the face’ takes up the notion *ze ke-neged ze*, which, in Genesis 3, describes the recognition in the first encounter between Adam and Eve (cf. 91).

sovereign, autonomous *animal rationale*. In concentrating on the divergences between Heidegger and Jewish thought, Goodman-Thau (and this applies to Di Cesare, too) leaves aside the question whether Heidegger's thinking contains any conceptual resources that—albeit fragmentary and largely unused by Heidegger himself—allow for a tentative movement towards the Jewish intellectual tradition. For instance, one might wonder whether notions such as *Angst*, *Ruf*, *Erfahrung*, *Befindlichkeit*, or *Betroffenheit*, by indicating exterior, responsive moments of subject as well as of community formation, can provide points of contact.

In contrast, Babette Babich challenges the idea of irreconcilable modes of “German” and “Jewish” thought (cf. 145). More specifically, she emphasizes parallels between Heidegger and Critical Theorists—especially, Theodor Adorno—with regard to their reflections on the “culture industry” as well as on the Shoah. These parallels, she argues, are not affected by the fact that Heidegger notoriously “excludes Jews from the history of philosophy, notably excluding his contemporaries as well, including his own students” (135). Babich insightfully traces this “silencing of Jewish names,” for which she instances Hannah Arendt, Günther Anders, and Jacob Taubes. What is more, she raises the question why the exclusion of “Heidegger’s Jews” is often reproduced rather than rejected in contemporary “Heideggerian” philosophical discourse—and goes on to ask whether this is the result of mere “inattention” or of a pervasive anti-Semitism. Her discussion of Heidegger in relation to Adorno, however, is less incisive since it exaggerates affinities between the thinkers. While it is certainly wise not to determine this relation on the basis of Adorno’s 1964 *The Jargon of Authenticity* alone, the far-reaching approximation of their post-war remarks on the Nazi genocide is problematic and ultimately unwarranted. When Adorno thematizes the impossibility for completely “expropriated” victims to die an “individual” death in the extermination camps (or when Arendt, in a similar vein, speaks of the “fabrication of corpses”) this is neither an “echo” nor an “appropriation” of Heidegger’s comments on the “inauthentic” death of those killed in the camps.⁷ Instead, distinctions that insist on the irreconcilability of Heidegger’s and Adorno’s attempts to comprehend the Shoah are necessary for at least three reasons: First, Heidegger’s remarks in the 1949 Bremen Lectures uncannily reflect the notion of Jewish “worldlessness” in the *Black Notebooks*—the Jews’ allegedly subhuman, object-like as-if existence would thus be complemented by their subhuman, object-like as-if death. Second, when aspiring to a philosophical analysis of the Holocaust, these remarks unqualifiedly and uncritically suggest a “sameness” of the gas chambers, the Berlin blockade, and agriculture as “motorized food-industry.” Finally, when applied to the concrete political context of the post-war years, such considerations enable Heidegger to equate the fate of the displaced, “homeless” East Germans to the fate of the murdered Jews—a relativization of the Shoah, with which Heidegger places himself “outside logos” as Marcuse formulates in a 1948 letter to his former advisor.

It is the third part, *Heidegger and Jewish Thought*, that contains the most innovative contributions to this volume. Exploring themes in Jewish intellectual history as they relate to Heidegger’s thinking, it constitutes its central achievement. Elliot Wolfson’s impressive “study in comparative metaontology” elaborates significant “correspondences” between the Kabbalah and Heidegger with regard to their common endeavor to overcome “onto-theology.” Independent of questions of direct influence and reception, Wolfson’s attempt to “identify a modality of Jewish thought that can be placed in juxtaposition to or in conversation with Heidegger” (191) shows that both share important concerns such as, e.g., a non-instrumental understanding of

⁷ In Heidegger’s post-war comments on the Shoah, the “inauthentic” character of such a death is apparent in his usage of the term *unkommen* as opposed to (“authentic”) *sterben*.

language that emphasizes its ‘naming’ and ‘inceptive’ capacities. Most importantly, kabbalistic and Heideggerian thought converge in rejecting “the solipsism of the metaphysical ground of thought thinking itself, the Aristotelian description of God as the unmoved mover” (179). Drawing on a broad textual basis of kabbalists’ works from the 16th to the 20th centuries and of Heidegger’s writings from *What is Metaphysics?* to *On the Way to Language*, Wolfson’s discussion reveals an extraordinary constellation of complex, yet fruitful otherness that crystallizes in the notions of *Ein Sof* (the “no end” or “infinite” of God prior to his emanation and self-manifestation) and *Nichts* as *Sein* (“nothing” as “being”) respectively. The conceptions of “trembling that comes into the open” and “jouissance” in the teachings of Israel Saruq, of “rift,” “leap,” and “play” in Heidegger indicate commonalities as to the signification of “origin”: Rather than providing a *fundamentum inconcussum*, “origin” is interpreted in terms of “oscillation” and “between-ness,” of a dynamic “essencing” of withdrawal and emergence, nearness and remoteness, hiddenness and openness. As such “astonishing affinities” (185) in understanding “original” nothingness as a void that is a source or as an “abysmal ground” make apparent, Heidegger, by either neglecting the Jewish tradition altogether or by reducing to it to a variety of Platonism, Cartesianism, or Christianity, deprives himself of an extensive reservoir of alternative, non-metaphysical figures of thought. It is the great merit of Wolfson’s essay to have neglected Heidegger’s neglect and to have marked both the “chasm” and “common ground” between Kabbalah and Heidegger, the “polemic” “manner of belonging-together of these two patterns of thinking on the nature of being” (191).

Michael Fagenblat focuses on problematic, rather than productive affinities between Heidegger and another strand of Jewish thought, modern Zionism. In particular, he seeks to use Heidegger’s political ontology as a “resource” for critically thinking through Zionist political theology, which is central to “the Jewish political imaginary in Israel” (245). It is thanks to a perceptive discussion of Heidegger’s (mis-)reading of Hölderlin that the essay, this explosive approach notwithstanding, avoids being “merely a provocation” (246). Against the background of similarities between Heidegger’s view of Hölderlin as “the poet of the Germans” and Jewish perspectives on prophets (and, especially, Moses), Fagenblat expounds the ambiguities, the dangers and potentialities inherent to the notion of dwelling “poetically” or “prophetically.” Due to its “pharmacological” structure, it lends itself to interpretations that dangerously essentialize and objectify the meaning of notions like people, language, land, heritage, or destiny. As Fagenblat shows, such objectifications—“historical” rather than “biological” in character—shape Heidegger’s occupation with Hölderlin in the years following his political activism in support of the Nazi movement.⁸ He argues that it is precisely Heidegger’s one-sided reading of Hölderlin’s prophetic poetry that can serve as an indicator of “risks,” as a “warning” that is relevant with respect to contemporary Jewish political theology. The account gains additional persuasive power by setting Gershom Scholem’s interpretations of Hölderlin against Heidegger’s. Aware of the “‘pure interpretability’ of Hölderlin’s wild figuring of the German national” (262), Scholem recognizes that the notion of “fatherland” cannot be “territorialized.” Reading the *Hyperion*, Scholem is struck by the interwovenness of proximity and distance, own and foreign—an extraterritorial, diasporic understanding of home that leads him to ask whether “Hölderlin was a Jew” (*ibid.*). Thus deploying Scholem’s Hölderlin, Fagenblat indicates how such an understanding, reminiscent of the jointure of Sinai and Zion in Jewish historical experience, can

⁸ Pointing to their “dialectical” rather than “polemical” character, Roberto Esposito develops a similar critique of Heidegger’s interpretations of Hölderlin’s poetry. Cf. R. Esposito, *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010, 102-111.

function as “a corrective to determinations of Zion as a territorial presence that can be occupied” (260).

Let me conclude. Despite variances in cogency and innovation between the individual contributions, this volume as a whole lives up to its own standard of being an “intervention” in the spirit of *polemos*. By assembling a wide array of approaches, it inter-venes in the most literal sense: It comes between dominant discursive positions that, while masquerading as neutral analyses of the ideological implications of Heidegger’s thinking, too often are deeply factional in character. Without attempting to mediate between or reconcile said positions, let alone Heidegger and the Jewish intellectual tradition, it attests to the possibility of productive dialogical dispute between modes of thought generally deemed incompatible. In doing so, it opens up the space for alternative ways of accessing the complex relation between these modes that go beyond collecting evidence for or against Heidegger’s anti-Semitism.

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