Article

Rethinking Jewish Theology

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Abstract: This short essay takes an exploratory approach to redefining Jewish theology. I will offer a brief reflection on both possible philosophical—through the concepts of participation, truth, and textuality—and theological—around the categories of philosophy of religion, propositional Jewish theologies, and Jewish theology—frameworks for it. Ultimately, I attempt to highlight that religious practice is essential for a significant exercise of Jewish theology in a Jewish context and, simultaneously, that theological meditation is fundamental for a meaningful Jewish journey.

Keywords: Jewish theology; Jewish philosophy; philosophy of religion

1. Introduction

1.1 This introductory essay concerns the character of "Jewish theology".[1] It is beyond its scope[2] to reconstruct the idea of "theology" or to define its alleged contents in the Jewish canonical texts[3] or to engage with the discussions related to the topic found in contemporary literature.[4] **1.2** Due to the prefatory nature of these notes, I will only sketch the definitions based on which I will base future research on the character, purposes, and comparative prospects of Jewish theology. I will do so around two theoretical frameworks. The first, philosophical, is grounded on the concepts of participation, truth, and textuality. The second, theological, is rooted in the categories of philosophy of religion, what I will call propositional Jewish theologies, and Jewish theology more broadly. **1.3** From my perspective, Jewish theology should aim to offer a phenomenological model of the indivisible relations between what can be ambiguously labelled as "practice" and "theory" in Jewish religious life, conceptualising the unresolvable dialectics bounding the halakhic and metaphysical representations of it. Although this writing is a preliminary venture, it aims to be a modest step in this direction.

2. A Philosophical Framework for Jewish Theology

2.1.1 The relations between the different levels of reality are characterised by participation; that is,[5] whatever it is, it is what it is by partially instantiating something other than itself, which is ontologically prior to it. **2.1.2** There is a correspondence between the levels of being and knowledge; therefore, one cannot know what at least relatively is not. **2.1.3** The access to reality is, consequently, always mediated by the one approaching that reality. That process constitutes a mediated objectivity, meaning "an objectivity that does not reflect the reality of an object which-stands-over-against the human consciousness, but rather that takes into account the contribution of our self-conscious mind for the establishment of the content of that metaphysical object, and thus reflects the relational unity between subject and object".[6] **2.1.4** That mediated objectivity is not only individual but also collective. There is *my* experience, *my Jewish* experience, and *Jewish* experience. They cannot be dissociated because of the above correlation between ontological and epistemological participation. **2.1.5** Mediated objectivity involves a certain private language, in the sense that "a name, in the narrow logical sense of a word whose meaning is a particular, can only be applied to a particular with which the speaker is acquainted, because you cannot name anything you

are not acquainted with".[7] In every private language, each name refers to an extra-linguistic particular to which the individual or communal subject of that language is related. That private language can be codified into a dictionary, the collection of terms used to represent the mediated objectivity on the base of it.

2.2 In Jewish texts, truth can be understood to be, beyond semantics, (in) a relation. Beyond the absolute truth, there is a derived epistemological understanding of relative truth—the closer a statement is to how someone or something is, the truer it is—and a fundamental ontological meaning of relative truth—the closer a person, object, or event is to what it should be, the truer it is.[8] In both cases, truth exists in relation. In the first case, truth is not a property of sentences alone. When something is said about the world, it is assumed that there is an ontological imbrication between what exists and what is said about it. In the second case, truth is not a property of a person, object, or event. When something is said to be true, it is accepted that that exists in relation to other people, things, or events. The idea of truth expresses a particular crystallisation of what is there in relation to something else and a moment in the subjective understanding of it. In the first case, when something is true, that says something about everything else. In the second, when something is true, it means something about the individual arguing so.

This understanding of truth can be exemplified through a Talmudic passage. In the Babylonian Talmud, tractate Ḥullīn 7a, it is written that when Rabbi Pinḥas b. Yaʾir was going in a certain direction to fulfil a divine order, he saw a river blocking his path. He asked the river to part its water for him to pass through it, but the river answered that this was impossible for it: "you [R. Pinḥas] are going to perform the divine will for you [to pass through the river to obey God's commandment] and I will also perform the divine will for me [to continue flowing as a river]". However, R. Pinḥas replied: "if you do not part, I [will] decree upon you that water will never flow through you'". It has been disputed that this expression should not be literally read as expressing that the river was going to be condemned to no longer exist, as a consequence of an event, in a future time. On the contrary, the truth of the river in relation to its creator and the truth of the river in relation to the rabbi encounter each other, and when this happens, both are transformed. The river is, and it is true in relation to God and the individual who is in front of him. The rabbi is, and it is true in relation to God and the river. They both are and are true in relation to each another. Each of our truths, which each of us somehow is, exist in their mutual relationship. In the story, the river misunderstood his truth as static, falling short of living up to what it truly was, meaning, what it should have been. Therefore, it was condemned to have never existed, not in the future, but in itself. [9]

With regard to the same issue, it has been clarified that truth can only be discovered through one's own experience.[10] Each experience is always different from the others'[11] because truth exists in the relationship constituted by that experience. That experience is not only revealing a certain truth; it is that truth itself. It would be impossible to understand the ontological truth (or to represent it with a truthful statement) of something we have no experience of, to have the experience of something we are not related to, and to be related to something we at least somehow are not. Truth potentially exists in the infinite relationships by which all things are constituted, and it is actualised by the individual and collective appropriation through which it becomes true. In Judaism, this movement is the collective testimony of the People of Israel and the personal authentication of every Jew.[12]

2.3.1 The coming of meaning into language is not universal.[13] In Judaism, revelation is contained, articulated and expressed through texts and their interpretation, which is not only about what is being said but also about what it means to say it—the Jewish path of coming into language. Therefore, considering the textual core of the Jewish intellectual and spiritual traditions throughout time, it is vital to first clarify[14] what is, metaphysically,[15] a Jewish text.[16]

2.3.2 Textuality is a mode of apprehension which construes its object assigning it a specific way of being—that of a text.[17] Nonetheless, there are no isolated Jewish texts. In the Jewish tradition, the property of textuality—that is, of being a Jewish text—is not

projected into one object but the underlying weave. Every Jewish text is a commentary of every other Jewish text. Commentaries are not unidirectional, closed texts. Each text—each commentary—is co-present with every other text, those of which it is a commentary, even if they are not mentioned, and those that will be a commentary on it, even if they have not been written yet.[18] In Judaism, the chain of transmission is itself one of interpretation.[19] That is, the written Torah pre-contains the chain of interpretation of the oral Torah, but the latter is not an interpretation of the former: it is Torah itself. The chain of interpretation is ontologically primitive. Relations and relata are inextricably interconnected.[20]

2.3.3 The textuality of a Jewish text relies neither on its objectivity nor on its subjectivity. On the one hand, the textuality of a Jewish text does not inhere within it. On the other hand, the textuality of a Jewish text is not the meaning it carries. A Jewish text is not so because of what it is or says. Its textuality is conferred by its reader through the act of use. This act of use implies assigning an actual meaning to an object that is seen as carrying a potential truth (or a range of potential truths). A reader, interpellated by a text, within the framework of a collective, theoretical and practical tradition of exegesis and use, abstracts the text's verbal content from its original setting, interpellating it through a particular interpretation. Paraphrasing the famous and usually misunderstood Derridean dictum, it could be said that there is nothing outside the poem, and, simultaneously, there is nothing outside-poem. Every text is a poem which can only be understood from the truth of its readers.

2.3.4 Nevertheless, in the Jewish texts, truth does not lie within them.[21] It is not their property; it does not inhere in them. The "true" text is rejected as an idol.[22] The interpretation mentioned above should not be reduced to a mere theoretical inquiry, and the act of commentary should not be confused with that of exegesis.[23] Texts are not a collection of propositions about reality. They are imbricated with it[24] because the act of use by which a Jewish reader engages with the Jewish texts, actualising their truth, is to fulfil[25] the commandments—one of them to study these same texts.[26]

2.3.5 The commandments can only be fulfilled by deeds. They can be utterances, mental acts, or bodily acts.[27] The commandments are regulative ideas,[28] "pieces of advice",[29] but must involve at least a certain degree of intention.[30] These actions implied by the commandments "concretise" the revealed truths articulated by the texts.[31] However, the commandments' truth comes into existence when they are fulfilled, and in this movement, their number is infinite. Each of them, each act by which they are due to be fulfilled, is unique.[32] Nobody can fulfil a commandment, verify a truth, or interpret a text like anyone else, or even as it has been done in the past or will be done in the future.[33]

2.3.6 Texts are co-present with the reader. The attribution of textuality through the act of use assimilates the reader to the text's time, on the one hand, and the text to the symbolic world of the present, on the other. Textuality creates a transtemporal space, a liminal zone between past and present. The temporality of a Jewish text is a "practical present"[34] in which past and future collapse into the present by means of the practice through which the truth of a text is verified and hence, actualised. In the end, to read a text is always to write it.

2.3.7 The same object may be bestowed with another mode of being, including non-Jewish textuality.[35] Nonetheless, there is no Jewish textuality without engaging with the texts through the commandments. This is why, every morning, a series of blessings are mandatorily recited before studying any piece of Torah, the last of which says that the Torah is truth itself. The truth of Torah—the truth of every Jewish text—lies in itself. The Torah is true by itself. However, the Torah becomes so when the reader engages with it by fulfilling the commandments, the first of which, in this case, is to claim that the Torah is true. Otherwise, the Torah would be true, but it would not be. When a Jewish text is studied by a reader who does not engage with it, since its textuality does not lie in itself but in the act of use, this text becomes a vacuous tautology that only says what it says, without saying—because of not being interpellated—anything at all.

3. A Theological Framework for Jewish Theology

3.1.1 It is usually assumed that in every theistic worldview, it is possible to find—or to derive from—a particular "theology", which is seen as a formal category that only varies in its contents across religions. Consequently, it is said that there are neutral theological problems, assumed to be so beyond a particular tradition, to which different, apparently comparable solutions could be given from each religion's viewpoint. **3.1.2** However, this perspective impoverishes the multiple ways each tradition thinks about the dilemmas that took shape in its historical, intellectual, and spiritual context because the experience of the *theos* is not universal, and the *logia* uttered about that experience is untranslatable. Each religion implies a dictionary in which there are no nouns, only verbs, because every term, to be understood, involves a specific experience of what is named.

3.2.1 The private language that, through its dictionary, each religion is, can be translated into another private language. As in any translation, this involves a second-degree definition of each name, in which they are related to another name in a different private language instead of to the particular one they named in the first place. This is the movement from theology to philosophy of religion, where the signifiers do not point beyond themselves to other signifiers instead of a transcendent signified. In philosophy of religion, every name is the name of a name. Throughout this iterative process, much of these names' meaning is lost. **3.2.2** Comparative philosophy of religion is possible because, since conceptual categories are reducible to other categories, abstract puzzles can be postulated in its domain: Notwithstanding, comparative theology is not possible because there are not—and there could not be—abstract theological dilemmas disconnected from the experience on which each tradition is based.

3.3 From the explicit or implicit propositional content of Jewish canonical texts,[36] it is possible to derive several theoretical definitions. These definitions talk about "what it is [...] that Jews actually stand for"[37] or "Jewish cultural and religious beliefs and practices".[38] As such, they are constative speech.[39] The sum of these propositions, the output of philosophical research, can be labelled as "propositional Jewish theologies" in the plural. **3.3.2** The best interpretative tool to investigate, systematise, and understand, conceptually and historically,[40] propositional Jewish theologies (as an object)[41] is analytic theology (as a method).[42] When applied to them, analytic theology becomes Jewish Analytic Theology. In a nutshell, Jewish Analytic Theology can be defined as a category for certain prominent Jewish scholars raised in the analytic tradition dealing with conceptual problems that they find in the Jewish canonical texts based on the philosophical grounds determined by their intellectual family and, in the case of some of them, through their religious faith.[43]

3.4.1 Notwithstanding, Judaism cannot be reduced to the multiple "propositional faiths"[44] that have emerged from it—and their analysis. Judaism is not about having faith in the contents of the revelation on Mount Sinai or even in the revelation as an event but about testifying to it through the observance of the commandments to which, therefore, Jewish theological ideas are intimately attached (for instance, the theological question of substitution prayer for sacrifices is based on the physical question of the need to bring sacrifices). **3.4.2** This is not arbitrary. As it has been said, "having lost the touch of His presence, they [Jews] seek now solace in the pressure of His yoke".[45] However, Jewish "primacy of practice"[46] should not be a legal rigorism attempting to fill the empty space left by the abandonment of metaphysics. On the contrary, through the observance of the commandments, the truth potentially contained in the revealed texts is actualised by collectively and individually appropriating them. This is what Jewish theology should be worried about, not only to look for potential answers but to go deep into the question itself amid everyday life.[47] In other words, "the theme of theology [here, "propositional theologies"] is the dogma, the content of believing, [and] the theme of deep theology [here, "theology"] is the act of believing, its purpose being to explore the depth of faith, the substratum out of which belief arises. It deals with acts which precede articulation and defy definition".[48]

This—the problem of what it means to be Jewish—is the only "content" of Jewish theology, which cannot be expressed in the language of analytic philosophy because the propositions that are the object of analytic theology are always reducible to a specific religious experience and Jewish theology deals with the irreducible experience of being Jewish. As it has been said, "in order to appropriate theological language, phenomenology must be interested in irreducible religious experience. This is the kind of experience that cannot be explained away as epiphenomenal [. . .]. Moreover, this religious experience is of unique historical events in which God makes His specific claims on the humans subjects to whom he has revealed these claims. Since these events occur at a particular time, in a particular place, to particular people, they are not universally at hand for everyone, anytime, anywhere".[49] The characteristic feature of Jewish theology is that this very way of being—not of being this or that—is the central issue that defines it. Furthermore, "whenever a phenomenological concept is drawn from originary sources, there is a possibility that it may degenerate if communicated in the form of an assertion. It gets understood in an empty way and is thus passed on, losing its indigenous character and becoming a free-floating thesis".[50] Jewish theology should be, thus, a phenomenology of Jewish existence.

Since it speaks from within something, Jewish theology is performative speech, meaning a discourse "focused on what happens beyond saying: what speech acts are performed in or by saying what is said, or what is generated by saying what is said".[51] As a fundamental movement of self-reflection on the act of being Jewish, Jewish theology implies a transformation of the individual whose experience is enacted through this practical[52]—neither theoretical nor poetical, even when modern academic life implies a certain "poietical" deformation of both theory and practice.[53] That is, it is an intellectual exercise with spiritual implications for the practitioner's life, not only an academic exercise that solves philosophical problems.[54] As it has been argued, "a worldly statement about something present, even when it is performed as a simple naming, can refer directly to the said. On the other hand, a statement about human existence as well as every statement about being (every statement about the categorial), in order to be intelligible, requires an overhaul and reorganisation (*Umstellung*) of the understanding in terms of what the statement is pointing out".[55]

It would be historically incongruous to argue that there was or is an "indigenous" Jewish thought, whether theological or philosophical. Witnessing the revelation at Mount Sinai has been, and the process of participating in the ongoing tradition of interpretation still is, "purely" Jewish, yet this experience is put into words using concepts from different nations. Jewish theology is not Jewish due to its topics[56], but because it is anchored in a meaningful dialogue with the Jewish tradition of interpretation, recognised as epistemically authoritative and ontologically constitutive. That is, it is not only inspired by Jewish texts or ideas: it relies on ontological participation in the ongoing chain of interpretation and transmission.

3.5 Propositional Jewish theologies and Jewish theology are inseparable. Jewish theologies need theology not to be reduced to a philosophy of the Jewish religion. The contents of propositional Jewish theologies are a conclusion from the movement of actualisation of the texts' potential meanings by epistemologically and ontologically participating in the chain of revelation and interpretation through the performance of the commandments. When the answers to the one and only question of Jewish theology appear, the propositional content is born, and it should be analysed through the methodological tools and conceptual maps of analytic philosophy. Notwithstanding, abstracted from this fundamental movement, Jewish theological ideas can be formally enunciated, but they are no longer themselves. Each Jewish theological concept exists through those acts because of which they come to be.[57] Jewish theology needs theologies because it assumes that although Jewish essence can never be grasped completely, it can be brought to language.[58]

3.6 Since partial and plural metaphysical and, hence, epistemological participation in other religions such as Christianity and Islam could not be possible for a Jew, and, therefore, (s)he could have no "evidence" of the multiple Christian or Islamic truths,[59] there

is nothing that (s)he can say concerning the truth or falseness[60] of Christianity and Islam.[61] Philosophically, this leads not to a positive but a negative pluralism,[62] a suspension of judgment where each truth can only be affirmed from itself—an idea that several Jewish thinkers have expressed, throughout history, in different ways.[63]

3.7 The very idea of "theology" should be abandoned or at least replaced by conceptual categories such as "Jewish theology", "Christian theology", or "Islamic theology", remembering that these are not different versions of the same but equivocal, even if unavoidable, names for different ways of representing respectively incommensurable encounters with the divine.

Nevertheless, this does not aim to diminish the urgency of inter-religious work.[64] On the contrary, it clears it from the epistemic arrogance implied by comparative theology,[65] taking the human aspect which should be at its core, back to its centre. The more time a person spends with someone else, the closer (s)he will get to understanding the experiences upon which the other's dictionary is based. As a Jew, the Christian or Muslim experiences of my colleagues David and Mohammed, which come before their experience of Christianity or Islam as a body of beliefs, will always remain inaccessible to me. Therefore, I would never understand the propositions they derive from it. Nevertheless, after the time we have spent together, getting to know each other, I can at least grasp what they mean when they say this or that because I have gained some access to how they live.

As has been said, "the logos, the word, in which the multifarious religious experience is expressed, does not lend itself to standardisation or universalisation. The word of faith reflects the intimate, the private, the paradoxically inexpressible cravings of the individual for and his linking up with his Maker. It reflects the numinous character and the strangeness of the act of faith of a particular community which is totally incomprehensible to the man of a different faith community. Hence, it is important that the religious or theological logos should not be employed as the medium of communication between two faith communities whose modes of expression are as unique as their apocalyptic experiences. The confrontation should occur not at a theological, but at a mundane human level".[66]

4. Conclusions

The vast majority of contemporary scholarship in Jewish philosophy and theology is thematically and methodologically dominated by the history of ideas.[67] The history of Jewish thought, the philosophy of Judaism, and propositional theologies are essential to understand the what, the why, and the how of Jewish life. It has been said that "prayer must be always related to a prayerful life",[68] implying that the former without the latter is an empty signifier. Since it would be impossible to imagine a Jewish text that does not participate in the weave of the Jewish chain of interpretation, the same can be said of Jewish theology. There should be, for anyone willing to live (in) the characteristically Jewish tension between deeds and words,[69] a space for theological metaphysics that, through a phenomenological approach, gives words to the conceptually irreducible flow of Jewish life. This is Jewish theology, which in the end, is nothing but a very narrow bridge through which, by embracing the text, we aim to become—ourselves—a commentary.[70] As the poetess wrote, "even if I say sun and moon and star, I am talking about things that happen to me. And what did I wish for?/I wished for a perfect silence./That is why I speak".[71]

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Notes

1   I will refer to a succinct selection of Jewish texts without implying that they are the only ones that could be understood in the same sense, or that my reading exhausts their explanatory possibilities. I will use several philosophical works as exegetical tools without assuming that, by doing so, I am elucidating those texts themselves, and I will somehow eclectically consider Jewish texts from different domains and genres under the assumption that all of them illuminate a different layer of revelation.

2   There are two main problems—philosophical dilemmas and personal paradoxes—in this text that, although important for what is being said, are left unconsidered: the limits of the interpretation of Jewish and philosophical texts and of the former through the latter.

3   See (Jacobs 1964; Shapiro 2004; Kellner 1986, 2006; García Martínez 2013; Gottlieb 2020).

4   See (Fisher 2019; Hughes 2014).

5   On the concept of "participation", see (Boulding 2021).

6   (Bubbio 2016, p. 237; Rosenbloom 1960).

7   (Russell 2010, p. 29). For Wittgenstein's consideration of the topic, see (Wittgenstein 2009, §244–71, pp. 95–102). Of course, I am not implying that this understanding of private language follows either Russell or Wittgenstein.

8   For a different approach to the same issue, see (Lebens 2014a; Hazony 2012).

9   See the Maggīd of Mezeric's ᶜŌr Tōrah 89.

10 See Rabbi Naḥman's Liqqūṭey MōHaRan I:191:1.

11 See Rabbi Naḥman's Liqqūṭey MōHaRan I:65:3; II:72:1–6.

12 See (Kavka 2012).

13 R. Barthes argues that "the coming into language of meaning points to a universal ontological structure, namely to the basic nature of everything toward which understanding can be directed" (Barthes 1977, p. 164).

14 Defining what constitutes a Jewish text is essential for Jewish theology. This can be seen in (Novick et al. 2019). In this debate, T. Novick argues that "The concepts on which they [those working on Jewish thought] focus must in one way or another be meaningfully "in" the texts, or else what [. . .] [is being described] cannot meaningfully be called Judaism". S. Lebens, D. Rabinowitz and A. Segal reply that "Judaism is no doubt animated by its texts, but it consists in much more than those texts. [. . .] A philosophical investigation of any of these things could count as Jewish without being anchored in any text. [. . .] Once one accepts that Jewishness is not essentially bound up with historically accurate interpretation of texts, then one opens up the door to the possibility that even textual interpretations can be Jewish [. . .] without being historically accurate, or textually accurate". Because of how "texts" are defined in this essay, both definitions can be simultaneously adopted.

15 See (Halbertal 1997).

16 This whole section ("2") is deeply inspired (both as a whole and in its details) by (Wilson 2012), a comprehensive, fascinating, and thought-provoking article which has not received the attention it deserves, and mainly on his five theses (Wilson 2012, pp. 346–47). Because of the extent of my reliance to (Wilson 2012) throughout this section—an intellectual dependency, in content and form, that cannot be overemphasised—I will avoid quoting him repeatedly. On the same topic, see (Bauks et al. 2013; Borchardt 2020; Gracia 1994; Dal Bo 2015; Mroczek 2016; Schniedewind 2012).

17 See (Heidegger 2000), "§ 32. Verstehen und Auslegung", pp. 148–53, and an English translation in (Heidegger 1962), "Understanding and Interpretation", pp. 188–95.

18 See (Lebens 2020; Sommer 2015).

19 See, for example, BT, Menaḥot 9b: "[Moses] went and sat at the end of the eighth row [in Rabbi ᶜAqībā's study hall] and did not understand what they were saying. [Moses'] strength waned. When [Rabbi ᶜAqībā] arrived at one matter, his students said to him: My teacher, from where do you [derive this? And Rabbi ᶜAqībā said to them: [It is] a halakhah [revealed] to Moses from Sinai. [When Moses heard this,] his mind was put at ease"; BT, Sanhedrīn 11a:7: "The Sages taught: After the last of the prophets, Ḥaggay, Zakharyah, and Malʾakhī, died, the Divine Spirit [departed from the Jewish people. Nevertheless, they were [still] utilising a Divine Voice"; BT, Bavā Batrā 12a:12–14: "From the day that the Temple was destroyed, prophecy was taken from the prophets and given to the Sages. [. . .] And a Sage is greater than a prophet"; and Seder ᶜOlam Rabbah 30: "God showed [His secrets] [. . .] generation after generation [. . .] [to] the prophets [. . .], the Sages".

[20]　For Maimonides, every text will be a metaphor—its metaphor, the metaphor that the same text is—until the end of times (Mishneh Torah, Hilḥōt Melakḥīm 12:1: "Messianic prophecies are metaphors. In the Messianic era, everyone will realise which matters were implied by these metaphors and which allusions they contained"). However, at the same time, the metaphor contains as a referent its reference (Mishneh Torah, Hilḥōt Teshūvah 8:8: "The Sages did not use the expression "the world to come" with the intention of implying that [this realm] does not exist at present or that the present realm will be destroyed and then, that realm will come into being. [. . .] [The world to come] exists and is present").

[21]　See, for example, BT, Bavā Meṣīʿā 59b:4–5: "]Torah[is not in Heaven"; BT, ʿErūvīn 13b:10: "both these and those are words of the living God"; and Sifrā Beḥuqqotay 8–10: "did Israel have only two Torahs? Were not many Torahs given to them?". See also BT, Gittīn 76b, and Maimonides' reading of it in Mishneh Torah, Hilḥōt Gerūshīm 8:22 and 9:11. These lines have been read from different perspectives. See (Hayes 2009–2010; Helmreich 2019; Saiman 2006; Stent 1979; Sinai and Golding 2016; Wozner 2008).

[22]　As M-A. Ouaknin said, "the breaking of the tables is not the destruction of the law; it is, on the contrary, the gift of the law in the form of its breaking [. . .]. Moses does not pass on, at first, the Law, but its shattering; its impossibility of being an idol, the place of perfection" (Ouaknin 1981, p. 244).

[23]　As P. Hadot said, "throughout the [Christian] Middle Ages, instruction consisted essentially in textual commentary [. . .]. Insofar as philosophy was considered exegesis, the search for truth, throughout this period, was confounded with the search for the meaning of "authentic" texts; that, of those texts considered as authoritative. Truth was contained within these texts; it was the property of their authors, as it was also the property of those groups who recognized the authority of these authors, and who were consequently the "heirs" of this original truth. [Consequently] philosophical problems were expressed in exegetical terms" (Hadot 1999, p. 73).

[24]　G. Scholem pointed out that, in traditional Judaism, "truth is given once and for all [. . .] [and it] merely needs to be transmitted [. . .]. The effort of the seeker after truth consists not in having new ideas but rather in subordinating himself to the continuity of the tradition of the divine word and in laying open what he receives from it in the context of his own time. In other words: not system but commentary is the legitimate form through which truth is approached" (Sholem 1971, p. 289). This is a different understanding of the idea of "commentary".

[25]　The idea of "fulfilling the commandments" could have been replaced by "following Halakhah". However, the intention is to highlight the experience of fulfilling, struggling to fulfil, or not fulfilling at all each halakhic mandate: the dynamics, not the static structure.

[26]　The debate on the rationale behind their observance implies the problem of their nature and, consequently, of what it means to fulfil them. The discussion on the reason for the commandments, biblical or rabbinical, is beyond the scope of this essay. See (Heinemann 2008).

[27]　I assume that "understanding" also implies a physical action. See BT, Megīllah 17b.

[28]　By "regulative ideas", I mean those ideas that, although they cannot constitute knowledge, serve the heuristic purpose of regulating thought and action. See (Kant 1998, A180/B222, pp. 297–98).

[29]　For instance, see Zōhar II 82b.

[30]　The discussion on the intention underlying the commandments cannot be properly accounted for here. Nevertheless, it may be said that this intention may be divided into four subsequent levels: (a) not to be doing something else when the act of the commandment is being performed; (b) not to lack the intention of performing such commandment; (c) to perform the commandment; and (d) to be entirely focused on the commandment (Mishnah Berūrah 60:7). In fact, the division in MB is between (c) and (d). However, meanings (a) and (b) can be found in Shulḥan ʿArukh 589:10, based on BT, Roʾsh HaShanah 32b-33a. If there is (c), then there must be (a) and (b), but there might be (a) without (b) and (c) and even (a) and (b) without (c). Several sources argue that no intention is needed for the proper fulfilment of some of the commandments, e.g., MaHaR"aL's Gevurot HaShem 52. Nonetheless, they refer to meanings (c) and (d). Furthermore, it is argued that if, in the process of performing a commandment, there is the intention of doing it properly, but a mistake is made and realised afterwards, since the intention was a proper one, then the commandment is considered as having been properly performed (Toṣafot on Berakḥōt 12a). The discussion on the idea of "intention", which can be found in hundreds of Jewish canonical texts, is waiting for a proper philosophical discussion. See (Weinshtock Saadon 2022).

[31]　See Tanḥumā, Beḥuqotay 3; Shemōt Rabbah 15:8; and Zōhar 130b.

[32]　Although it has already been said, it is worth emphasizing that this essay does not attempt to give an account of how the idea of the commandments has been thought about throughout Jewish intellectual history. See (Bloch 1880; Cohen 1934–1935; Appel 1975; Bland 1982; Halbertal 1990; Elon 1994; Davidson 2005; Friedberg 2010, 2013; and Brown and Herman 2021).

[33]　It could be said that the commandments come into existence and disappear. See R. Kook, ʿOlat Raʾyah, L'Sukkōt, when he says so about the sukkah.

[34]　See (Oakeshott 1983). I first found this reference in (Wilson 2012, p. 347).

[35]　See (Sommer 2015).

[36]　See (Spero 2013). This content evolves across time through the halakhic decision-making process. See, for instance, the Ḥatam Sofer's discussion of the idea of messianism in Sheʾelōt Teshūvōt on Yoreh Deʿah 356.

[37]　(Lebens et al. 2019, p. 3).

38   (Melamed 2010).

39   (Austin 1962, p. 3).

40   For an introduction to the problem of how analytic philosophy understands the history of philosophy, see (Rorty et al. 1984; Garber 2001; Sorell and Rogers 2005; Reck 2013).

41   I should add to this sentence, "when the philosopher is reading the texts in the original . . . ". To make philosophy or history of philosophy relying only on English translations is both a cause and a consequence of the idea that the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic "theologies" are only different answers to the same problems.

42   See (Ayers 1978; Watson 1993).

43   Jewish Analytic Theology may be seen as (a) a stylistic commitment when problematising Jewish texts or ideas, with a greater emphasis on logical consistency and clear explanations than other philosophical approaches; (b) the problematisation of Jewish ideas by someone working under the methodological, epistemological, and ontological premises that characterise analytic philosophy; or (c) the consideration of Jewish texts from the perspective of an analytic philosopher, an endeavour that could be focused on four non-exclusive possibilities: (i) a doxographical recapitulation of the "theological" problems found in these texts, which at the same time would inevitably manifest the philosophical assumptions of the analytic philosopher behind this attempt, (ii) an attempt to find the Jewish answers to the questions raised by this analytic philosopher, (iii) a more inquisitive utilisation of those texts for the problematisation of the same issues, or (iv) the consideration of Jewish ideas—in Jewish texts or beyond them—in dialogue with the authors and texts of the analytic tradition.

44   See (Lebens 2022a, p. 155).

45   (Soloveitchik 1994, p. 103).

46   See (Rynhold 2005, p. 45).

47   "The everyday—not the unusual—made [and makes] up the raw material of experience which each generation transmitted [and transmits] to the next" (Agamben 1993, p. 11).

48   (Heschel 1960, p. 318).

49   (Novak 2017, p. 238). See also (Deketelaere 2018).

50   (Heidegger 2000), "§7.Die phänomenologische Methode der Untersuchung. C. Der Vorbegriff der Phänomenologie", p. 36, and an English translation in Heidegger (1962), "¶. The Phenomenological Method of Investigation. C. The Preliminary Conception of Phenomenology", pp. 60–61.

51   See (Guidi 2017, 2020).

52   As Aristotle explained, "making (*poiesis*) aims at an end distinct from the act of making, whereas in doing (*praxis*) the end cannot be other than the act itself: doing well is in itself the end" (Nicomachean Ethics, IV:4, 1139b). It could be said that in Judaism, what is theoretical is also practical and vice-versa if it is, precisely, poietical. For example, see Liqqūṭey MōHaRan 1:5:2.

53   See (Balaban 1990).

54   On a similar idea in the Christian tradition, see (Efird 2021; Wood 2014).

55   (Heidegger 1976, p. 410, n. 1). There is an English translation in: (Heidegger 2010, p. 339, n. 153).

56   (Illman 2000).

57   On the Jewishness of Jewish philosophers in general, see (Frank 2004; Jospe 2009; Leaman 2010; Stern 2017).

58   See (Zuckerman 2015; Heidegger 1967), and an English translation in (Heidegger 1993).

59   From this perspective, it would not be possible to argue that "a rational person outside of any religious community should treat the evidence for all religions equally [but] a rational person rooted *within* a religious community, by contrast, need *not* treat the evidence for every religion equally" (Lebens 2021, p. 385).

60   See (Lebens 2022b, p. 80, n. 18; Lebens 2017a, pp. 509–14).

61   For a different perspective on the same topic, see (Lebens 2013), where he deals with the epistemology of, as he says, "sociological religiosity".

62   For a detailed account of pluralism, see (Sagi 2007, 2009, 2015).

63   For a history of Jewish theological pluralism, see (Brill 2010, 2012).

64   Furthermore, comparative theology should not be confused with theology of interreligious dialogue. See (Meir 2022, pp. 1–10).

65   Supposing that those involved in "comparative theology" are assumed to be dealing with the same issue, if this is not to be a dialogue of the deaf, then they would end up telling the others not only that they are wrong, but that they do not properly understand what they mean when they express themselves. See (Lebens 2014b, p. 262).

66   (Soloveitchik 1964, p. 23). See also (David 2014).

67   Among the few exceptions are S. Lebens, who has been profusely quoted throughout this essay, and J. Diamond (see, for instance, (Diamond 2018)).

68   (Soloveitchik 2006, p. 63).

69   In Sifrē Dvarīm 41, there is a discussion concerning the understanding of Dvarīm 5:1: "'and you shall learn them and keep and do them'. This indicates that deed is dependent upon study, [but] study is not dependent on deed. And we have found that the punishment for [the failure to] study is greater than [for the failure to do] deeds. [. . .] [Therefore,] which is greater, study or deeds? Rabbi Ṭarfōn said: "deeds are greater". Rabbi ʿAqībah said: "study is greater". All of them responded and said: "study is greater, for study leads to deeds". Although this passage seems to explicitly favour the theoretical over the practical, see (Hirshman 2006): 9 for a different perspective and an evaluation of the complexity of this dialogue.

70   For a similar idea, see (Lebens 2017b).

71   In (Pizarnik 2001), "Extracción de la piedra de locura. XIII", p. 243, the Jewish-Argentine writer said: "aun si digo *sol* y *luna* y *estrella* me refiero a cosas que me suceden. ¿Y qué deseaba yo?/Deseaba un silencio perfecto./Por eso hablo".

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