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A Bicorp—Who I Was: How Many Head Phylacteries (*Tefillin Shel Rosh*) Should Conjoined Twins Wear?

Sergey Dolgopolski

Departments of Jewish Thought and Comparative Literature, University at Buffalo SUNY, Buffalo, NY 14260, USA; sergey@buffalo.edu

Abstract

The paper renegotiates two regnant and interconnected modern assumptions, a reduction of forgetting to memory loss, and insistence on a self-remembering individual as the social atom, from which one builds molar and molecular social structures. In the article, a critical conceptual retrieval of the notion of bicorp extends beyond the doctrinal frameworks of rabbinic and patristic traditions to afford a heuristic scope in which to access the significance and limitations of a modern individual as an atom of the society. The main result is a detection of the central rather than marginal role of bicorp in creating legally imputable and responsible individuals in society. This result is accompanied by a connected detection of the long-term reversal, in which memory, including the memory the individual has of oneself, becomes primary and forgetting plays a deceptively secondary role of a memory loss in society.

Keywords: primary forgetting and memory; conjoined twins; bicorp; Talmud and Patristics; person; individual; type; concepts versus doctrines

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If you do not remember it, forget it!
(A Yiddish Proverb)

גלמי ראו עינך
"O Conjoined Twin who I was, your eyes saw!"
"O G-d, Your eyes Saw Me as the Conjoined Twin!"
(Psalms 139:16 [Ps. 138:16 in LXX]; two free translations)

1. Introduction[1]

This essay introduces what might be called bicorp trouble[2]. It seeks to evoke the foundational rather than marginalized role of bicorps as dual individuals and dual personae in interpretive traditions of rabbinic and patristics and, by extension beyond these traditions, in diagnosis of configurations of individuality, personality and humanity in the long duration of the life of these political and theological notions. The essay employs hermeneutical and comparative approaches to read the texts within and across the traditions. The analysis contextualizes the bicorp in, between and beyond rabbinic and patristic traditions by comparative reading of respective cases and texts.

2. Preamble: On Jews, Christians and Traditions

I would like to ask: who are these "people who follow the Old Testament"?[3] The rabbinic tradition does not have an "Old Testament." The question is not a matter of "mere

semantics." Rather, it provides an initial contextualization in which the argument of the essay unfolds. By a logic that is not obvious but crucial, one can only have an "Old Testament" if one already has a "New" one. Contrary to what might seem like common sense, the "Old" is not an original text but a retrospective construct produced by the "New."

In both the rabbinic and Christian traditions, the invention and canonization of a second testament occurs in the early third century. In Christian patristics, this takes the form of the "New Testament" (Barton 1998) while, in the rabbinic tradition, it appears as the *Mishnah* or *Mishneh*—a term that simultaneously means repetition, teaching and complement to the written law. (Which also means that, for quite some time, the Church Fathers themselves did not yet have an "Old Testament" either.)

This example illustrates several things. First, in both traditions, the question concerns the transparency of the tradition to itself—both for its students and recipients and for those who relate to it with either allegiance or repulsion from the outside.[4] This is distinct from the question of how a tradition actually unfolds over time. This is not to suggest that there is a definitive answer to the question of a tradition's internal unfolding, as opposed to how it is perceived. But it does mean that asking this question is essential to any meaningful engagement with a tradition or across the traditions.

Without asking that question, we live within prejudice—either positive or negative, or perhaps some gray zone in between. But do we really want that? How far can such prejudice—positive, negative or mixed—actually take us? It can go quite far, as history shows. But no matter how far it goes, it always ends in a dead end. Prejudice, because it has no source in the tradition itself, cannot afford anyone a genuine relation to that tradition. So, the question of a tradition's transparency to itself is as crucial as it is, perhaps, irritating.

A second consequence of uncritically accepting the division into "Old" and "New" Testaments is the production of the political–theological concept of the "Jew." This concept is, on one level, a Roman invention (deriving from the name of the province, Judea), but on another level, it becomes a Christian necessity: the Christian self-concept requires the figure of the "Jew" as the eternally condemned other. One important aspect of this concerns the name "Israel." Christians redefined themselves as "Israel in spirit" (i.e., the "good" Israel) while relegating "Israel in flesh" (i.e., the "bad" or "evil" Israel) to the Jews. The most effective way to win a competition for the name "Israel" was to take that name away from the rival. The result: the name "Jew" comes to replace "Israel in flesh," ending the competition before it can even begin. Christians thus need "Jews" not only to define themselves but also to mark a theological boundary between good and evil.

However, the historical path from the category of "bad" to that of "evil" is not straightforward. In both rabbinic and patristic traditions of late antiquity, "evil" begins to take on the status of a power or force in its own right. This development gives rise to the thesis that "evil exists"—not as a substance with its own essence but as a force that reveals itself in the weakness of human thinking. The inverse of this argument, of course, is that "evil does not exist"—that it has no independent being. Both sides of the debate hinge on a novel concept of "existence" as something that *is* without being *definable*. In other words, "evil" is not merely a moral or ontological category—it is, through and through, a political–theological notion.

3. Back to Bicorp—Who I Was?

What follows explores this matter via the lens of a bicorp.

"Bicorp" names one body as two bodies which *paradoxically* are the one body. I will thus talk about bicorp, *a* bicorp but also *the* bicorp. I will also use the established terms, "bicephal" (two heads on one torso) and "conjoined twins" (e.g., two torsos, four legs, four hands with conjoined pelvis). However, these accepted terms do not suffice as they auto-

matically assume two individual bodies as a starting point, thus, suppressing and dismissing the paradox of the bicorp rather than naming it.

Methodologically, I am less interested in the doctrines per se, but I am, very much, in the conceptual apparatuses and figures of thought percolating in making the doctrines. Doctrinally, bicorps often present themselves as marginal, often a matter of curiosity of course, and thus deserving *some* attention; but no more. I will try to argue however that the question and the paradox of the bicorp can be central for asking the question of humanity in such, as I will highlight, radically different terms as individuum (one who/which cannot be further divided, thus already gesturing to the bicorp issue), person (who remains despite any divisions) and type (a term negotiating sameness and plurality, as we will soon see). At this point it suffices to say that the questions and the paradoxes of the bicorp these terms help to articulate are conceptual question and thus cut across and despite any set doctrines. What follows therefore proceeds with reading texts slowly and with theoretical analyses to be able to account for this difference between set doctrines and fluid concepts.

I proceed with reading sources slowly.

3.1. Source 1: "A Person Who Has Two Heads": Conjoined Twins and Phylacteries: bMenachot 37a

בעא מיניה פלימו מרבי מי שיש לו שני ראשים באיזה מהן מניח תפילין א"ל או קום גלי או קבל עלך שמתא אדהכי אתא ההוא גברא א"ל איתיליד לי ינוקא דאית ליה תרי רישי כמה בעינן למיתב לכהן אתא ההוא סבא תנא ליה חייב ליתן לו י' סלעים

איני והתני רמי בר חמא מתוך שנאמר (במדבר יח, טו) פדה תפדה את בכור האדם שומע אני במדבר יח, טו) אך חלק (אפילו נטרף בתוך ל' ת"ל

שאני הכא דבגולגולת תלא רחמנא

Set in early third century in Sepphoris, the story relates how in a school of rhetoric where the Mishnah or the compendium of "second laws"—those parallel rather then derived from the Scripture—was put together under auspices of Rabbi Yehudah the Prince.

A certain fellow, Plimo asked the Rabbi:

> —[He] who has two heads—on which of them is he to put the phylacteries with the parchments of script "Listen, Oh Israel, The Tetragrammaton [is] our God, Tetragrammaton only"?

To understand the following, rather aggravated response of the Rabbi, one is to notice the stakes and stances the rabbis had about validity of the Mishnah as a second law to come in parallel rather than to be derived from the Scripture by way of direct scriptural exegesis, i.e., by way of *Midrash*. This tension and competition between Mishnah and Midrash undergird the weight of the question. This is why, perhaps, as we will immediately see, the Rabbi went very defensive about this question, even if the question could have passed for a merely marginal, a seemingly simple matter of curiosity. At stake is the Rabbi's ability to answer the question based on a tradition, if any, which would be parallel to the Scripture, rather than by deriving an answer from the Scripture.

> —Rabbi answered: Go [to teach such things] in exile, or else take upon yourself desolation (to connote "social death" or "excommunication")

Offering no answer, the Rabbi instead asks Plimo to leave Sepphoris. And this is only for such a question! The Rabbi even boldens the ask by a threat: if not, you will cause [me] to impose an excommunication on yourself. The Rabbi does not seem to consider bicephals matter or to even exist. Why, because they threaten the clean, Porphyry-like classification of individuals in the world. More will be said immediately on the Rabbi's Porphyrian stance.

We have already intimated why such a harsh response for what may have passed for mere curiosity: the Rabbi sees the question as a threat to his authority in front of all his disciples—i.e., to the authority of his project, the Mishnah.

Before moving on to a medieval commentary of Tosafists (12 to 14th centuries, France and Germany), a commentary on why did not Plimo ask, "*How many phylacteries such a bicephal should be putting on?" Why was the question only on which of the heads, rather than on the number of phylacteries? The language of the question, "ראשים מי שיש לו שני"—"That who has two heads [on which of them is he to put the phylacteries?]"—suggests that for Plimo bicephals are individuals. Each bicephal is a) a who; and b) this *who* is one person. Plimo does not see the bicephal as two persons in one body.

This, I must note at least in passing, implicitly answers the question of whether a bicephal is an individual or a person. The difference is crucial. Individuals are parts of Porphyry's tree. Individuals always fall under a species and differ from each only numerically or else in modi only. Species, in turn subordinate to other species and ultimately to genera. Species and genera are juxtaposed to individuals. The latter is singular, the former are universals. So is Porphyry's tree. Plimo is not a Porphyrian (i.e., not a neo-platonic Aristotelian). Rather, for Plimo, each bicephal is a person, a hypostasis. As a person, or in the language of Plimo, a *who* (…מי ש), a bicephal is neither an individual (=singular) nor universal. This is because, for him, the *whos* are not the *whats*. The *whos* cannot be classified (do not fall under the tree). This is why the question is only on which of the heads, not on how many phylacteries.

As we shall see, Plimo's assumption (bicephal is a who and not a what) was quite a position. It did have alternatives. An alternative would be to consider the bicephal "a monster," a deviation. An example of that approach we find in Augustine's *The City of God*, where he mentions a case of a man born in the Orient being double in the upper part of his body and simple in the lower part, having "two heads, two chests, four arms, but only one belly and two feet" (The City of God XVI, 8). Augustine added that this monster "had lived enough time so that his fame attracted many spectators." He further says that despite the monstrous character, this bicorp "descended from Adam."

Perhaps, the stakes in approaching a bicephal as a person rather than as an individual (or in Plimo's language asking "on which of the heads to put the phylactery on" versus asking "how many phylacteries to put on") can add to our understanding of why the Rabbi responded so harshly: this polemics has been vivid and the Rabbi was closer to seeing a bicephal as a strange individual, a monster, rather than as a person. In these terms, the Rabbi was a Porphyrian.

3.2. Commenting on Bicephals in Rabbinic Middle Ages

The commentary of the Tosafot (France and Germany 12th to 13th–14th centuries) seems to take Plimo's side in seeing a bicephal as a person rather than as a monstrous individual: a bicephal can marry and have offspring. These commentators refer to late ancient exegesis of Scripture, Midrash.

Source Two: Commentary of Tosafot

Ad locum:

> או קום גלי כו'. בעולם הזה ליכא אבל יש במדרש אשמדאי הוציא מתחת קרקע אדם א' שיש לו שני ראשים לפני שלמה המלך ונשא אשה והוליד בנים כיוצא בו בשני ראשים וכיוצא באשתו בראש אחד וכשבאו לחלוק בנכסי אביהם מי שיש לו שני ראשים שאל שני חלקים ובאו לדין לפני שלמה. מ"ר:

> "[When Rabbi suggested Plimo to go away from Sepphoris] into exile" Rabbi must have assumed that the bicephal is a monster not to be found in this world. [Rabbi therefore took Plimo's question as an offensive, an attempt to find a ques-

> tion for which Mishnah or its composer cannot have an answer—S.D]. "However, in the Midrash there is an account about Ashmodai (the King of Demons), who produced a human ("an *adam*") from under the ground in front of King Salomon. This human (*adam*) had two heads, married a woman and they produced children like him, of two heads, as well as children like his wife, with one head, and when the children came to argue about the heritage of their father, one son who had two heads claimed two parts of the heritage; so that they came to King Salomon for the judgement."

To have produced *adam* from under the ground could mean to produce a deviant *adam*. Alternatively, it could mean to produce *the* adam, the first adam from under the ground. The difference concerns the same question: is a bicephal a deviation from the universal norm and thus a monster or is he a person and does not fall under the tree?

In terms of dynamics of the conversation in Sepphoris, Tosafists' commentary seem to explain Rabbis' reaction ("do not ask empty questions—empty of meaning and attempting to undermine and empty the project of the Mishnah!). Yet they also defend Plimo's question: if not in this world, then in the world under, not only is there such a person, but perhaps this person is the adam. After all, adam was interpreted as androgynous and thus a bicorporal person, too!

Then, which *adam* was it—a deviant monster or the *adam*? Whom did the demon unearth—the monstrous individual or a person suitable to marry and procreate, the one whose child every adam on earth is? Are we all children of a bicephal, especially if the latter simply plays the famous role of androgyne, from which the first couple emerged?

3.3. Rabbinic Typography and Personhood in the Babylonian Talmud

We can further glean rabbinic stakes in the question of *adam* as a person versus a merely numerically and modally different individual with the help of another rabbinic text—on typography of G-d versus typography of a human king. If we do, as we momentarily will, we will be able to see how a human king pushes to typify (all coins are coined by the same type and are supposed to look the same, be interchangeable) while G-d allows and demands to personify (all humans are coined by the same type, that of adam, yet they all look different, so that no one can come to the house of the other and say: this is my house, this is my spouse). This text will allow us to see the divine politics of personification (taking imputability from the type to the person) versus state-politics of typification (taking responsibility away from an individual in favor of a type.)

Yet, we should first continue with how the story of the Rabbi and Plimo unfolds—to show that Plimo's question was real:

> אדהכי אתא ההוא גברא א"ל איתיליד לי ינוקא דאית ליה תרי רישי כמה בעינן למיתב לכהן אתא ההוא סבא תנא ליה חייב ליתן לו י' סלעים

> Meanwhile Rabbi was approached by a man who asked: A baby-boy (the firstborn—S.D.) was born to me, of two heads. How much money am I to give to the *cohen* (priest) [to redeem this firstborn]. [At this moment, there came an old man and recited (what might be included in the Rabbi's Mishnah—S.D.): [in such a case, the father] is to give to the *cohen* 10 selah (5 selah per capita—S.D.).

The story first of all shows us the process of the composition of the Mishnah in the making: a question arises, and a reciter (the old man) offers the Rabbi an answer to include in the Mishnah. The story further defends Plimo against the Rabbi. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the story counts individuals by heads. The bicephal is not one person but two individuals. (The balance between person and individual tips toward individual, i.e., to Porphyry's tree.) Together, the three elements mean: the old man is a Porphyrian

and he supports Plimo against the Rabbi on the Rabbi's own grounds, under the tree. (As we remember, the Rabbi believed bicephals are individuals different from the genus and species of humans by modality and number only, since number defines how many individuals are there and how much money to pay. (Persons, unlike individuals, are not so easy to count.))

3.4. Persons, Individuals, Bicephals: A Rabbinic Typography

Yet is the only choice in approaching a bicephal between individual and person? That is, (1) Porphyry's tree of (a) conceptually different universals (genera and species) against (b) numerically and modally different individuals, both (a) and (b) countable[5], versus (2) an uncountable but coherent person. b.Sanhedrin 38a gives us yet another option, (3) types:

> תָּנוּ רַבָּנַן, לְהַגִּיד גְּדוּלָּתוֹ שֶׁל מֶלֶךְ מַלְכֵי הַמְּלָכִים הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא, שֶׁאָדָם טוֹבֵעַ כַּמָּה מַטְבְּעוֹת בְּחוֹתָם אֶחָד וְכוּלָּן דּוֹמִין זֶה לְזֶה, אֲבָל הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא טוֹבֵעַ כָּל אָדָם בְּחוֹתָמוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם הָרִאשׁוֹן וְאֵין אֶחָד מֵהֶן דּוֹמֶה לַחֲבֵירוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: ״תִּתְהַפֵּךְ כְּחֹמֶר חוֹתָם וְיִתְיַצְּבוּ כְּמוֹ לְבוּשׁ״.
>
> Our rabbis [of the generations of Mishnah and before] had taught: "To tell the greatness of the king of kings of all kings, the Holy, Who is Blessed": *adam* (=human king—S.D.) stamps several coins with one type (or signet—S.D.) and they all look the same. However, the Holy, Who is Blessed stamps every *adam* with the signet of the first adam and none of them look similar to his fellow, as it is said, [in the book of Job] "It is changed like clay under the seal and they stand as a garment"[6]

In this first part of the teaching, kings and states stamp coins to look the same, however, the King (with a capital k) stamps humans to look different. What kind of difference is this? Conceptual or numerical?

The second part of the teaching can help. The text continues:

> וּמִפְּנֵי מָה אֵין פַּרְצוּפֵיהֶן דּוֹמִין זֶה לָזֶה? שֶׁלֹּא יִרְאֶה אָדָם דִּירָה נָאָה וְאִשָּׁה נָאָה וְיֹאמַר: ״שֶׁלִּי הִיא״. שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: ״וְיָמֻנַּע מֵרְשָׁעִים אוֹרָם וּזְרוֹעַ רָמָה תִּשָּׁבֵר״.
>
> And why their faces look different from one another? So that *adam* would not see a nice dwelling or a beautiful spouse and say: this is mine; as it says [in next verse in the book of Job] "And from the wicked their light is withheld, and the high arm shall be broken"[7]

The difference is in faces. Each human face looks different, and this difference is neither numerical nor modal: it concerns *look*, neither number nor shape, nor color, nor quantity or quality. Only a look—the difference is phenomenological rather than physical. Moreover, this is, as we will momentarily see, a rather unusual phenomenology: I do not see my look. In more common terms, I do not see my face. Only others see how my face looks. I do not. Yet the face stamped on my head is what differentiates me.

3.5. Towards a Political Typography

In any case and most importantly, the difference between humans and coins is political rather than physical. After all, coins from the same stamp differ from one another (some get more worn; stamping never comes out the same, etc.). What really makes the coins look the same is the perceived "sameness" of the emperor profile on them. It is not the physics of the coins but the political will of (or ascribed to) the emperor which makes the coins the same, the will to make commerce possible despite their physical differences. Conversely, it is the political will of the King to make humans *not* look the same to prevent coveting, stealing and robbery (to some extent, at the very least). In parallel to the look of my face which only others see, the coins are about how the emperor looks, not about what the emperor is looking at.

There is thus more to this text: *adam* is a stamp, a type, a signet. That means both the form imposed on the clay and the form the clay takes. The two forms are the same physically. Yet, humans are different politically: in the look of their face, one's look one cannot see but all others can. Returning to the bichephal, that means it is just another print-off of *adam*, just one possible look of *adam*, no more but also no less. It is the same type, which is politically different each time; this type or this look is being produced, no matter with how many heads, limbs, etc. This is why, in the Tosafists commentary, the bicorp can procreate, and this is why it might even be the case that the first adam as androgynous, too.

Admittedly, this is head-spinning: is a bichephal a deviation, is it instead the proper off-print of the first adam, or perhaps just another variation among all humans faces, all of which the King is assumed to have politically designed to look different from one another?

Yet, the problem only starts here. Along with bicephals come bicorps. I do not venture to say that the former is a species of the latter. After all we are talking faces, whether we take them, with the rabbis, as types, or, with Church fathers, as either individuals or personae.

3.6. Beyond Deviants: Adam as Bicorp

With this, the question of bicorps has proven to exceed its perceived status of deviation, monstrosity or curiosity. It cuts into the very nerve of *what*, or more precisely, *who* the human or *adam* is. The scope of the question concerns not only the first *adam* as potentially an androgynous bicorp. It extends further towards the very core of what an ordinary marriage is as two humans become "one flesh." After all, אישה and איש are *in their past* a bicorp. These biblical expressions have been long (mis)translated as *man* and *woman*, but perhaps "spouses," the wife and the husband, in this order, can do a bit better? The biblical sequence is *adam*, then the wife (אישה), then the husband איש. Producing the wife from *adam* results in having produced the husband as well. "Woman," per Rashi's famous commentary, appears only after the fruit. The first woman was a phantasm produced by the wife's fear of death: "I will die, and he is going to marry אחרת," literally "she-other," which is, per Rashi, "woman."

What that means however is that the first status of humanity is (post)bicorporal: wife&husband (a conjunction in this order) is one flesh and is fundamentally *in* and from *the past*. In this framework, the first woman and as a result the first man are only phantasms of *potential* spouses. All consequent wives and husbands are haunted by these initial phantasms initiated by the first wife's fear of death.

However, this primordial sequence of *adam*, wife, husband, woman, man sinks into forgetting and gets replaced with the modern one: there first are man and woman and they then get into marriages, become husbands and wives. This reversal includes a switch from wife–husband order in the primordial past-bicorp to the husband–wife order in the modern inversion.

Bicorp thus cuts to the core of relationships between husbands and wives, or much more precisely wives and husbands, in modern society. The centrality (rather than marginality or curiosity) of the bicorp question (call it even "the bicorp trouble" to complement "gender trouble") manifests even further. The wife–husband bicorp does not end with the death of the first bicorporal adam, who by the way never woke up after the wife–husband sequence was run. The husband might have permanently remained asleep.

The one flesh (or one person/one type[8]) nature of husband and wife does not die with the first couple. Rather, it continues into consequent generations as well—despite its inverse in which man and woman, the products of the first bicorp death-fear, replaces the first so that husbands and wives become second to man and woman. Bicorps tacitly inform the laws of forbidden relationships given to Israelites in the wilderness. The forbidding to reveal the nakedness of one's mother (Lev. 18:7) is justified not by the logics of incest,

but rather, by only justification to appear ad locum, and this is in the next verse. It is a justification by the "fact" that the nakedness of your father's wife is the nakedness of your father (Lev. 18:8). Your father and his wife (inclusive of your mother) is one flesh, a bicorp, so that revealing the nakedness of the wife is revealing the nakedness of your father. Further, ad locum "do not reveal nakedness" could even mean do not try to separate the bicorp. In this, the bicorp, the modern husband and wife, is one person or type, for "flesh" as opposed to (body/corpus) can belong to a person/type only; on the contrary, for an individual a "body" or corpus alone suffices, no less is of essence there.[9]

3.7. Forgetting and Memory, in This Order

Forgetting and memory play hard in the structure of the first bicorp as well as in the consequent bicorps. The first wife and her husband is a figure of primary forgetting and of taming thereof with what passes for memory. The first *adam* had to be put to sleep—i.e., to fall into forgetfulness—before the wife was produced. Did he ever fully come back from that bliss? After waking up, it is no longer an androgynous bicorp *in the present*, but rather the wife and the husband as an androgyne *in the past*. Do either of them fully remember that? The husband does show remembrance, he recognizes his wife as part of himself, even if clearly seeing and experiencing the difference. His "self" however is no longer fully that of a bicorp. He now recognizes/remembers himself as *different* from his wife. In her turn, the wife did not show, did not indicate any memory of their primordial state of bicorp at all. Perhaps she never relegated their bicorporal life to the past and thus has nothing to remember either. Perhaps she was still perceiving the two as one; that is, as her? Perhaps this is why she was so deeply shuttered by the perspective of dying before him? I offer these interpretive questions, for which there are likely no certain answers, only as indications of the uncertainty of the first couple's new memory of themselves vis-a-vis the full certainty of there being a sway of forgetting, from which they might or might not fully recover. We cannot say. What we can say, and this is most important, is the following: the bicorp does not always and does not necessarily present itself as such. It can instead be a figure of forgetting to undergird the modern utopia of monocorporal individuals, persons or types.

3.8. From Bicorporal Witness to Singular–Plural in G-d Elohim

The well-hidden centrality of the bicorp is further rather actively operating in rabbinic teachings about witness. A testimony the rabbinic court can accept requires a minimum of two individual witnesses to testify as one. Disqualifying one of them disqualifies both. No one individual is a valid witness per se. By a broader implication of that, no one can reliably think alone. The logic similar to that of the differential typography of "my" look which only others can see is at work here too. The witnesses must differ from one another in type and only then can they produce a testimony for a court that is acceptable (after scrutiny among judges) as a testament, on which, further on, they vote for the verdict.

In rabbinic tradition, the bicorp goes even further: from thinking witnesses to thinking about the Holy, Who is Blessed, too. Closely linked in the Biblical tradition with the Tetragrammaton, *elohim* is a homonym and connotes judges, princes, powers and gods in plural. This homonym is plural in the double sense of plurality, too: (1) these connotations are all in plural, and (2) the plurality of the homonym is an issue in itself, which rabbis are grappling with.

For a better-known example, Maimonides seeks to eliminate the second aspect of the plurality of the *elohim* by disambiguating the homonym (and all homonyms) in the Bible. For a less-known example, if the Scripture has homonyms, they must be preserved and taken as such: if it says "hand of Tetragrammaton," and if this is a homonym, then

homonyms must not be eliminated/disambiguated. Instead, they are to be appreciated as such.[10] They therefore are not to be taken allegorically: "young at the time of war and old at the time of judgement"[11] and "the G-d praying, upon the entrance into court room with Israel, 'let it be pleasant to me that my mercy will overcome my anger'" should not be reduced to allegorical/pedagogical turns of speech.[12]

This is where the issue of the primordial forgetting continues to erupt in the never finished transition from the androgynous bicorp into the first wife and first husband. That primordial forgetting of the bicorporal state cuts into the core thinking about the Holy, Who is Blessed, into the trope of *adam* created "in the image of *elohim*."[13] In which sense is adam the bicorp an image of *elohim*? Is the bicorporal androgynous *adam* the image of *elohim* in a sense, in which *elohim* has a similarity to a bicorp? This question, perhaps, can gesture to the true scope, true fear, true curiosity, and true excitement, too, of the bicorp trouble.

3.9. Towards Bicorp as a Figure of Thought in Patristics

The bicorp, as a figure of thought, operates not only as in the Talmud where G-d enters the courtroom with Israel asking that it would be pleasant for Him that His mercy will overcome His anger but also in the Gospels, in the Gethsemane prayer. However, here I enter the territory of patristics, where I can only rely on secondary literature. As with rabbinic texts, my interest is in the concepts and movements of thought rather than in the doctrines and their differences. With this caveat in mind, I turn towards the Gethemane. If a bicorp is interpreted not as two individual bodies but rather as two persons in one body, one finds oneself in an area of anthropology that is conceptually very close to Christology. Two personae in one body closely relate to the question of the god-father and of the son of god as differentiated personae incarnated in one body; or, alternatively, only the son of god is. Again, my interest here is not doctrinal but conceptual, which also means I am interested more in the question and in the array of concepts it implies rather than in one or another answer (even if, I recognize, answers do matter a great deal doctrinally). In yet another instantiation of the bicorp, one draws closer to the Job imagery of humans as vestments or clothes (or to the above rabbinic imagery of types in whom faces are stamps), a version of incarnation spells that the persona of the Messiah dresses itself in the body/soul complex as one dresses in clothing: the bicorp is clothing for the deity incarnate, a deity which remains a bicorp. That explains how the Messiah, if understood doctrinally as Logos/God incarnate, can be directing prayers to and against oneself.

Yet another doctrinal issue, where the bicorp operates concerns the question of: Who suffers on the cross: the Messiah (*theopaschism*, which is as far as I know is doctrinally accepted) or the god-father (*patriopassianism*, which is, to the best of my knowledge, a herecy[14])? The Gethsemane prayer ("Let this goblet bypass me, but let it be pleasant to you, rather than to me"[15]—I interpret the prayer along the lines of the G-d's prayer in the court room with Israel, as above) is a sight where these theologies and anthropologies come on display. In just one version of it: is there (a) only one person (the son of god) incarnated/dressed in the body/soul complex or is there (b) two personae in there? If (a), how is it possible that one person can have two wills? This is how the question was posed in John Damascine and Maxim the Confessor. In this, "be pleasing" was transformed into "will" and the latter was understood as an independent faculty, so that two wills can be in one person.

This line of interpretation became dominant both doctrinally (as far as I know) and conceptually beyond the doctrine, as I will immediately illustrate. The illustration will come from an eighteenth century work of fiction, the chapter "The Double Mistress" by Jonathan Swift, Alexander Pope and John Arbuthnot under the fictional Scriblerus Club

(Swift et al. 1950). In this work, Lindamira and Indamora, the twins conjoined in their lower "organs of generation," are considered by everyone as a curious monster, except for a fictional character, Martinus Scribelius, who falls in love and marries Lindamira, to the initial strong dismay but final acceptance of Indamora. As the story unfolds, an Eastern Prince kidnaps the conjoined twins and marries Indamora. A lawsuit unfolds, advancing from primary courts to higher instances, in an attempt to figure out if Lindamira and Indamora can stay in their respective marriages or if the marriages are to be nullified.

A doctrinal antecedent of this work of satire and fiction can be found in Canon Law. For one, it has to do with the following question: May conjoined twins enter into the sacrament of matrimony? Talking about a slightly different question, that of the possibility of marriage for twins conjoined in their male organs of generation, the Parisian theologian Eustache de Grandcourt

> "felt that for such persons marriage was impossible. A wife may only be sexually intimate with her husband, but in the case of conjoined male twins, she would be intimate with not only the one twin she consented to marry but also with the other twin in virtue of the twins sharing "only one instrument of generation." So in consummating the marriage, she and her brother-in-law would be committing adultery. On the other hand, if she attempts to consent to marry both twins, this too would be impossible, for monogamy rather than bigamy is the Christian form of marriage. Despite raising this objection, Eustache concluded that conjoined persons may indeed get married because they have been given everything necessary for marriage." (Kaczor 2015)

These two cases, the canonical and the satirical, differ in the bicorp's gender and in the ultimate outcomes: a male bicorp in the canonical case and a female one in the satirical one, ultimate permission for the marriage in the former case, and ultimate forbidding in the latter. The common assumption in both cases is the importance of the bicorp's *inner consensus* and *will* in order to make marriage even considerable. One other common denominator is the sense of the marginal nature of such a case. Finally, both cases advance the principle of one mind (will) in one/unified/not fully divided body. In the concluding part of this essay, I will address limitations of these two common denominators.

4. Resulting Observations

A pay off of such an analysis is in noticing that modern Western societies went in one direction of reading bicorps: the direction in which two numerically partially distinguishable bodies would form one body—with one soul, to form one person—while asking (and never resolving, but constantly oscillating on) the question of how many personae such bodies incarnate. However, while central in the theology of incarnation, the bicorp was marginalized by reduction to curiosity. Left from this horizon of possibilities was a typography in which the bicorp is a default human condition.

There is also another resulting observation: both conceptually and, as far as I can surmise, doctrinally the West went after Maxim the Confessor and John Damascene's invention of will as a faculty in its own right, as these thinkers, in explaining the Gethsemane prayer, posited two wills in one person. At least two further consequences of that should be noted. First of all, a Greek and Hebraic possibility of "being pleased" as a condition only (versus "will" as a separate and active faculty) has been disregarded and/or dismissed. Second of all, the understanding of intention, intent and intentionality—as central as it became in the West—was closely, indeed too closely, connected to that active notion of the will as a faculty.

In this constellation of possibilities, a crucial one becomes lost. This is the possibility of intention without will. To take the example and analysis thereof in Heidegger's *Vom*

Wesen der Wahrheit (Heidegger 1997), when looking at Theaetetus but seeing Socrates, the latter enters my mind as intention, but neither of the two characters is in my will. Finally, and most pertinently to appreciating the rabbinic contribution to thinking bicorps, bicorps can be and perhaps are to be demarginalized, that is to say to become retrieved as the defaults but forgotten primary foundations of a human condition, a foundation we perhaps should try to remember as best as we can, even if this memory will always fail to undo the primordial forgetting it will be trying to tame.

5. A Theoretical Post-Script: "I Forgot" and Where Things Go from Here

In this analysis I have begun gesturing towards the—never completable—transitioning from the primary forgetting as the state of an androgynous bicorp before it becomes "they" and awaken to the memory of themselves, first as the wife and then husband. I would like to advance preliminary theoretical considerations on the resulting structure of forgetting in relation to their memory of themselves.

"I forgot…" The phrase touches upon the core of the bicorp trouble. It is much easier to ascribe thoughts one experiences to oneself and to say, rather arrogantly, "I think," i.e., "it is me, who thinks those thoughts."—It is I, a singular individual, rather than some bicorp! It is a bit harder to do the same with "I forgot." If listened to carefully, the phrase humbles the arrogance of the "I": it is much more obvious that forgetting happens to "you" rather than "you are the one who forgets." This is why, perhaps, the core of the forgetting is not in *what* was forgotten but in the question of with *whom* or to *whom* did the forgetting happen. Forgetting is directed first of all not at a *what* (what was forgotten) but at a *who* (whom did it take in its sway).

The phrase "I have forgotten" is arguably the case of what scholastics called "external denomination." Another example of that would be "Chimera does not exist"—if it does not exist, what are we talking about? Or else the phrase "it rains"—the "it" denominates even less than Chimera. And in "I forgot" (which, unlike "I think" or "it rains" or "Chimera does not exist," must always be in past tense) *I*, or *you*, or *he*, or, for that matter, *it* or *they*, is an even lesser denominator of anything either existing or active than the Chimera herself. At least that consideration helps making "I forgot" a less obvious phrase.

There are even more important, even if preliminary, ruminations. They concern the Platonic theory of anamnesis and its seeming parallel in the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Niddah. According to Plato, before the birth the *soul* sees all *ideas* and forgets them after the birth in order to try and recall through the process of education, i.e., through a dialogue with Socrates. In the Talmud, the *fetus* has learned (by heart) all the (oral) *Torah* and, after the birth, attempts to recall it through learning, i.e., through refutations and defenses of that which presents itself to the *fetus* as the Torah. The argument that forgetting of the *Torah* happens to the *fetus* rather than the forgetting of the *ideas* happens to the *soul*—all after the birth—invites us to ask about the status of the forgotten: the forgotten is the *one, the who*, who suffers from the advent of forgetting (*fetus* or the *soul* at the moment of birth). In the case of the fetus, falling into forgetting means becoming a who. In the case of the soul, falling into forgetting means still remaining a person. That means that, in the Talmudic passage, the forgotten is not the idea the soul has contemplated before, dropped and is now regaining through dialogues with Socrates but the very transition from the fetus to the *who,* to the child with the name, mother and father, which means falling into forgetting. To be forgotten means to be born.

The forgotten is thus a *who*, the ex-*fetus*, as bicorporal as it was with the future mother. The fetus was forgotten, meaning it was thrown away in the outside world and away from the mother, who by the same token also comes to being and forgets even if she often does

not let go of her prior status in relation to the fetus, now a child. The bicorp of the wife and the fetus ceased to be. Instead, the mother and the child emerged.

We therefore should also keep in mind the conjoined twins when thinking through (a) Plato's anamnesis of the ideas of the soul and (b) the Talmudic forgetting of the Torah in connection to the fetus' bicorporal condition before the birth and the forgetting thereof after the birth. This is where I enter into a conversation with Azzan Yadin-Israel's analysis of the fetus and forgetting in the Talmud and in psychoanalysis in this Special Issue (See: Yadin-Israel 2025). We need to keep both (a) and (b) in mind as we think about Freud's "*Wo Es war, soll Ich werden*" (Freud 1940) anew. As Azzan Yadin-Israel allows us to see, Plato and Freud spell out two mutually opposing positions and juxtapose themselves to a Talmudic passage where it is not the idea which is forgotten but the fetus, who thus suffers the onset of forgetting in becoming the child and in making the mother, with whom, before she became the mother, i.e., before birth, the fetus was a bicorp.

What exactly the fetus then "recalls" through learning the Torah remains intrinsically open. The core is not what we as such former fetuses and former bicorps with our future mothers recall. Rather the core is the fact that we do recall as individuals, types or persons; and thus become forgotten as bicorps with our future mothers. First comes the forgetting of the *who*, then the forgotten *what*. Then comes memory/recollection (however, never full as compared to *who* and *what* is forgotten). Only then comes what is remembered. In this economy, in what passes for memory, the question of *who* is forgotten does not come up at all. The latter therefore remains in the original forgetting and lingers in the never fully successful effort of remembering.

6. The Forgotten Forgetting

If, then, the marginalized—yet, as this essay argues, foundational—condition of the human as a bicorp has been forgotten, this forgetting is more than the loss of a certain fact or condition, more than a mere lapse of memory. It entails an inversion in the relation between forgetting and memory. The dominant understanding conceives forgetting as memory's failure, as if memory were always primary and forgetting only secondary. The preceding analysis of the human, the individual, the person, or the "me" as a forgotten bicorp suggests a different relation between them. It points to a primary forgetting, a forgetting that precedes any "who" to have forgotten and any "what" to have been forgotten; a forgetting that occurs in the very passage from bicorp to individual, person or "me."

This is a forgetting that no memory precedes: a primary forgetting tout court.

Such forgetting is paradoxical, as is the paradox of the "me," person or individual, who is only ever possible already and only ever after the bicorp who I was—and whom I cannot remember, because I could not project myself into either. This necessitates a new look at the relation between forgetting and memory: a view in which memory of myself is but an attempt to domesticate the fundamental sway of that first forgetting, and in which my forgetting myself remains only a secondary forgetting—one that still endangers the always secondary memory of "myself." This memory of myself thus maintains, paradoxically, the forgetting of the bicorp who I was.

In this scheme of things, forgetting as a primary operation comes in contradistinction from a prevalent view that forgetting is nothing but an erasure or loss of memory

By way of a final corollary: in saying, "Wo Es war, soll Ich werden,"[16] Freud might agree with the position I advance here that forgetting is primary, but I would not agree with Freud: for him it is still about *what* is forgotten, not about *who* is forgotten. And even if the *who*, in his case, could be reduced to a *what* (a father, a mother, a child or another definable role), I would rather follow a line of thinking (Augustinian and Talmudic at the same time, however paradoxically that might sound) that the *who* is forgotten at the very

moment when the who-question is answered with a what-answer. Alas, there is no other answer to the who-question. I can never answer any who-question directed to me, except perhaps to attempt to say, without any certitude whatsoever: the bicorp, who I was.

A final coda: Can I then remember, let alone recall, the bicorp who I was? I can surely not recall; for "I" then was not the "I" of a monocorp, who I currently am. I cannot take my "I" to the "I" before "I" was a bicorp. The bicorp is my past to which I have no access. So, no recollection can be available. That applies even to a recollection of an either Platonic or rabbinic *androgynos.* Neither recollection does more than provide an image of that which cannot be recalled.

How about memory, then? At best, I bear the memory that I have forgotten of the very bicorp who "I" was (I strike through the "I" here). I forgot myself as a bicorp before I became an individual, a person or a type.

To attempt to remember the forgotten bicorp who I/we was is perhaps to ask: If I … no, excuse me, if we, oh no, excuse me, if we were, oh no, if I once was/were a bicorp, the first adam, can I actually remember that? Or, would alternatively "my" memory of myself/ourselves as a bicorp be only a screen hiding that which I can neither remember nor forget?

At best, I cannot remember, but I cannot forget either.

The core of this question is: Do I remember we/us? Is the I before I was the bicorp and the I that I am now the same I? Can I now remember us then? The answer is no. Perhaps indeed, in the final analysis, adam-bicorp never recovered from the dream state the divinity incurred on adam before producing the first wife.

By way of an illustration this fundamental interplay of memory as only a screen hiding and propagating the work of fundamental forgetting, let me turn to an interlinguistic play.

There is an illustrative interplay of words in Polish and Russian when it comes to remembering and forgetting. In Polish, "to forget" is zapominać. In Russian "zapomnit'" means "to remember," as if the same root expresses opposing senses. Yet there is another word in Russian which draws closer to Polish: "zapamjatovat'." That means exactly as in Polish: "I forgot," in the sense of "I have put a false picture, a false memory instead of that which I could not remember. I produced a memory which made me forget." This can mean putting a pseudo-picture there where no other picture is possible.

In this light, all I can do to remember myself as a bicorp who I fundamentally always am is to zapominać in Polish or zapamjatovat' in Russian. This is the only thing I can accomplish. What that means, however, is that my foundational condition is the condition that can be described in two words: "I forget," in the following sense: this is what I fundamentally do. Is this a condition or a doing of a patristic *person* or of a rabbinic *type*? At any rate this condition cannot be accounted for if we begin and stick to an *individual* in the modern sense.

With this diagnostic exclusion of the modern individual in favor of either a person or type, I reread my first epigraph: "If you do not remember it, forget it." There is more to "you" here than what a modern notion of individual can describe. The tacit but forceful operation of this "more," however, is only discernible as a work of a primary power of forgetting for which memory is only an attempt to have tamed. That also means there is more to "it" here, too; or rather there is less, much less, to "it" in the quote. This "it" means no less but also no more than "it," such a subjectless and objectless form as "it rains": there is nothing behind the "it."

7. Conclusions

Resulting from this analysis is a sense that even if bicorporality remains marginalized it continues to play foundational role in the political and theological constitution of

humanity across rabbinic and patristic traditions, foregrounding, as it is, the complex relationships between individual, type, person, forgetting and memory as these relationships unfold in the history of the West in, across, beyond and despite the canons. Retrieving and reevaluation of the hitherto unrecognized central role of bicorporeality in modern society becomes an increasingly urgent task.

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[2] To this end, I am borrowing Judith Butler coinage, "gender trouble" (Butler 2006).

[3] A quote from Article 107 of the *Ecclesiam Suam* of 6 August 1964, "We would mention first the Jewish people, who still retain the religion of the Old Testament, and who are indeed worthy of our respect and love" shall suffice to exemplify this ancient trope. See: *Ecclesiam Suam* (1964).

[4] I draw here on the notion of "tradition of tradition" (Granel 1972) and on its evocation within the Alain de Libera project of archaeology of modern subject and subjectivity (de Libera 2007; de Libera and de France 2015).

[5] Difficulties multiply here. Concepts do not differentiate one from another numerically, individuals do. This is why transiting from concept to individual is from non-numerical to numerical and, thus, is not quite possible. Is a bicephal a numerically different individual within the genus and species "human"? If so, one can correctly say, "This bicephal is a human." (The problem with that will be the same as the problem of transiting from any genus or species to an individual: from non-numerical to numerical.) If, on the contrary, this bicephal is not a numerical individual (one or two under the species of humans) then the only correct saying will be: "This human is bicephal." (The assumption will then be that the genus and species "human" exist/subsist only by way of exemplification in Paula, Peter, or bicephal. In this case the bicephal becomes a name of a person or indicates a person without a name.)

[6] Job 38:13–14 *The Koren Jerusalem Bible* Translation: "That it [the Morning] might take hold of the ends of the earth, And the wicked be shaken out of it? It [=the Earth] is changed like clay under the seal and they [the wicked] stand as a garment."—Theology of a human as either a stamp upon or a garment of the earth/clay received its continuation in patristic theology of kenosis (emptiness) and theopaschism (suffering/Passions/passivity of the Messiah), in which theology human body and soul make for the dress of the Messiah—and in that of each human alike. This last point enters into a dialogue of doctrinal difference and conceptual coversion with the rabbinic text at hand: rather than seeing every human as the stamp of the Messiah (all humans, like all coins, are the same), the rabbinic text insists on the difference beyond numeric: all humans look different. This look arguably extends beyond the difference in the modus, as look is phenomenologically not reducible to the material difference in color or shape. Yet, leaving doctrinal elements of this theology aside, of interest is an anthropological component thereof: human as a dress. This anthropological component extends across and despite doctrinal distinctions.

[7] Job 38:15 *The Koren Jerusalem Bible* Translation.

[8] Person-, individual- and type-approaches yield different takes on the soul/body/mind problem. Persons make mind impersonal, unless the soul/body complex is connected with the mind and mind becomes synonymous with the soul. Not totally unsimilarly, individuals (and the thereby implied bifurcation of the individual versus universal) place value on the universal, so that the individual body/soul have nothing but numerical and modal value. Types allow for differential exemplification approaches. It is not that only (as with the persona approach) Paula and Peter are exemplifications of the would be "universal" human, so that the human existed nowhere except Paula and Peter, and every time entirely and as a whole, but rather that the differentiation between the types is required: just as the first adam, as an androgyne, had this differentiation within, so too each stamp/type of adam is an *adam* only in so far as his face is *differerent* from the face of another *adam*. Off-prints are only good as long as they

differ from one another, otherwise this is not a type. In this typographical approach, I never encounter a face without other faces from which it differs. There is no universal face, just as there is no individual face. There only are differential faces. And no, there has never been a bicorp with two bodies and only one face.

[9] This old distinction between flesh/type/person complex versus body/corpus/soul complex can be seen at work in Husserl's 1934 analysis of the difference between *Körper* and *Leib* (Husserl 1934).

[10] See: Taku (1984).

[11] I quote and translate from Rabbinc Liturgy of Shabbat Service, a 13th century *piyyut* ascribed to Rabbi Juda of Regensburg (d. 1217).

[12] b.Berachot 7a: What does [the Holy, who is Blessed] pray? Rav Zutra Bar Tovia said: "Let it be pleasing to me that my mercy will overcome my anger, and my mercy prevail over my legal arguments [with Israel]" suggesting a never-completed differentiation within the deity: even if this differentiation is not taken as corporeal, it does suggest a logic of never completed differentiation, the logic of the bicorp in the sense of differential typification of the Holy, Who is Blessed.

[13] Genesis 1:27, interpreted: "and *elohim* created adam in his image; in the image of *elohim* he created him, male and female he created them" וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים ו אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם׃. "In his image" can be taken as "in the image of *adam*, which *elohim* had." That of course leaves it open whether the elohim possessed the type, adam, which he used to stamp the adam or, alternatively, and much more widely accepted, elohim too was of that type.

[14] I am drawing on Alain de Libera's work, in particular on his *Le Sujet de La Passion: Cours Du Collège de France 2016* (de Libera 2021).

[15] I chose the passive or static "be pleasant" to address the semantic fields of θέλω (in Mat 26:39 and Mark 14:36 as well as βούλει in Luke 22:42); this is a departure from conflating these semantic fields with those of "will." The latter already presumes an independent faculty, so that there can be two different "wills" in one person. Such a reading is a *result* of Maxim the Confessor and John Damascene's interpretive work, their way to solve the problem of two wills *in one person*, which for them was the person of the son of god.

[16] Ibid.

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