
THE WORD OF THE QUEST EDITOR

Dossier: Contemporary Judaism and Politics

The task of teaching plays a fundamental role in the construction of humanity. It is the task that George Steiner, in his *Lessons of the Masters*, has called the *great teaching*: “the education of the human spirit directed at the esthetic, philosophical and intellectual works” that perpetuates not only the individual man “but also humanity”¹. The “tradition” of “translation” is one of the major achievements of our culture in its search for knowledge construction. In this tradition where we have been formed, which goes from the legacies of Eastern and Western worlds, from the passing of oral to written languages, of the first writings to printing, “translation” and “treason” make up a fundamental pillar. The world of writing is always a translation, since even in the poet’s or prophet’s own originality, when translation from one language to another is taking place, a work of appropriation or apprehension occurs.

Following this path, the question over the meaning and method of the Jewish Thought arises: are we making philosophical questions about Jewish truths or, on the contrary, are we making Jewish questions from philosophical matters? And at the same time, is there a Jewish method for a philosophical object or, instead, do we have to find a philosophical method for a Jewish object? The words by Franz Rosenzweig may mark the perspective proposed in this Dossier: in a letter addressed to Hans Ehrenberg in 1921, he wrote, “the Jewish is my method, not my object”². And it is Steiner who enlightens us once again to go deeper into the relationship between Judaism and instruction: as he well analyzes, the teaching situation is within the foundations of Jewish monotheism, “the Torah transmitted to Moses and through him, the Psalms inspiring David, the books of prophesy and proverbs, embody a curriculum, a manual for instruction and daily use”³. This way the spoken word became text and from then the historical persistence of a teaching discourse interrelated with the construction of Jewish identities. Once the Book has been constituted, the leap has been given, and Judaism will read the world, philosophy, and even literature from the textual basis of what has been taught and has to be taught. For that, according to Steiner, “the Jewish homeland is the text, in any place of the Earth where it is trusted to memory, subjected to thorough examination,

1 Steiner George, *Lecciones de los Maestros*, trad. M. Condor, Buenos Aires, DeBolsillo, 2011, p. 59.

2 Citado por Miguel García-Baró en su texto “La figura de la Estrella: una perspectiva global para la lectura de Rosenzweig” introducción a la traducción al español de: Rosenzweig Franz, *La Estrella de la redención*, trad. Miguel García-Baró, Salamanca, Ediciones Sígueme, 2006, p. 14.

3 Steiner George, *Lecciones de los Maestros*, p. 144.

and made object of endless comment"⁴. We will therefore say that the Jewish method is the comment, and from then opens the possibility that from the times of the Emancipation, through the Jewish Enlightenment, it has become prevailing to wonder about the world *beyond* Judaism but seen and conceived of from the sources of Judaism.

The Jewish Thought has traditionally rejected the identity and geographical territorialization of the authors to debate on what is conceived as universal problems. Until the beginnings of the twentieth century, it was supposed that philosophy or the Jewish thought were an antinomy for which the universality of Athens was declared against the theoretical particularism or provincialism of Jerusalem, reducing philosophy to the first "place" of knowledge: Athens. However, European Jewish authors from the ends of the nineteenth century and the period between wars, managed to show the universality of the Jewish Thought formerly conceived as provincial. This way they built a historical reading of the tradition that includes the Jewish from the old days until today. Thus, from Philo to Maimonides, from the Muslim space of the medieval and post-medieval world to exponents of the Jewish philosophy before or after the Second World War like Hermann Cohen, the already renowned Rosenzweig, Walter Benjamin, Gershom Scholem, Martin Buber, Leo Strauss, or Emmanuel Levinas became part of a new canon or tradition.

Following this view, it was my intention through the mentioned texts in this Dossier to give an answer to the following subjects: What is, or what is not politics in the Jewish Thought? What are the key topics for the discussion of 21st century between Judaism and politics? What is the relation of Contemporary Judaism and Jewish Thought? What is the relation between Jewish Thought and global politics? What is the relation between Judaism and politics in one Jewish philosopher from 20th Century? The texts here presented materialize three perspectives to approach the relation between politics and Judaism in the contemporary studies: history, Jewish Thought and literature. Thus the texts intend to cover the different views that define the studies about Judaism. Although models are always synthetic views of reality, it is my intention that from this Dossier, readers can develop a wider look on the relation between politics, theology and philosophy from the Jewish perspective.

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4 Ibid.

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