

THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY
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ЕВРЕЙСКИЙ
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САНКТ-ПЕТЕРБУРГСКИЙ
ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫЙ
УНИВЕРСИТЕТ

JUDAICA PETROPOLITANA

Scholarly Journal
Научно-теоретический журнал

№ 7 (2017)

Jerusalem
5777

Санкт-Петербург
2017



Академия
Исследования Культуры

УДК 30.2+94(3)+811.411(05)
ISSN 2307-9053

The International Center for University
Teaching of Jewish Civilization
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Department of Jewish Culture
at Saint Petersburg State University

Международный центр университетского
преподавания еврейской цивилизации
Еврейский университет в Иерусалиме

Кафедра еврейской культуры
Санкт-Петербургского
государственного университета

Специальный выпуск: Исследования по еврейской философии
и интеллектуальным традициям иудаизма

Special issue: Research on Jewish philosophy and intellectual traditions of Judaism

Номер подготовлен к изданию и опубликован в рамках проекта:
This issue was prepared for publication and printed in the framework of the project:



Российский
научный
фонд

Российского научного фонда | Russian Science Foundation
(проект № 15-18-00062 «Формирование культуры в диаспоре
на примере еврейской, армянской и греческой диаспор»;
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При финансовой поддержке:
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Научное издание

JUDAICA PETROPOLITANA

№ 7 (2017)

Подписано в печать с готового оригинал-макета 01.07.2017.
Формат 60 × 90 1/16. Бум. офсетная. Печать офсетная.
Усл. печ. л. 9,5. Тираж 550 экз. Заказ № 701

Издательство «Академия Исследования Культуры»,
197343, Россия, Санкт-Петербург, ул. Чапыгина, д. 6, лит. А
Тел.: +7 (981) 699-6595;
E-mail: post@arculture.ru
http://arculture.ru

Отпечатано в типографии «Литография»
191119 Санкт-Петербург, ул. Днепропетровская, д. 8

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All contributions submitted to *Judaica Petropolitana* are peer-reviewed

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**A MATHEMATICAL ROAD TO LITURGY.
RELIGION AND MATHEMATICS
IN FRANZ ROSENZWEIG'S PHILOSOPHY¹**

Abstract: The role and significance of mathematics were disputed through the first twenty years of the 20 century. In this dispute, Franz Rosenzweig occupies an original position, which is still easy to integrate into the context of his age. Even though Rosenzweig did not participate in the Davos dispute between Heidegger and Cassirer, his opinion is clearly formed in his works, particularly in the *Star of Redemption*. Together with Cassirer, Rosenzweig recognizes the significance of mathematics and its role as the organon of thought. However, Rosenzweig postulates that any symbolism, including mathematical symbols is only valid on the plane of the elements, in the reality of the past time, which has already been captured by thought. Therefore, Rosenzweig agrees with Heidegger in that the sphere of the mathematics has its limitations. However, for Rosenzweig, the greatest achievement of Cohen's logics is the direction of thought towards the present and the future. As it turns out, mathematics is only the starting point of the path, and waits to be supplemented by grammar and liturgy.

Keywords: mathematics, grammar, liturgy, disputation in Davos, temporality, element, path, configuration (Gestalt), source, differential, correlation, source logic, logical organon, categories, functors, H. Cohen, Cassirer, Heidegger, Rosenzweig, Kant, Leibniz.

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**МАТЕМАТИЧЕСКИЙ ПУТЬ К ЛИТУРГИИ.
РЕЛИГИЯ И МАТЕМАТИКА В ФИЛОСОФИИ
ФРАНЦА РОЗЕНЦВЕЙГА**

Резюме: В споре о математике, характерном для первой трети XX-го века, позиция Франца Розенцвейга оказывается и оригинальной, и хорошо вписывающейся в контекст эпохи. Хотя Розенцвейг не участвовал в давосском дис-

¹ This article follows the presentation made on 27.9.2016 in Warsaw during the conference "Epistemologia doświadczenia religijnego".

Статья подготовлена на основе доклада, прочитанного 27.9.2016 на конференции "Epistemologia doświadczenia religijnego" в Варшаве.

путе между Хайдеггером и Кассирером, его точка зрения ясно сформулирована в его работах, особенно в «Звезде избавления». Подобно Кассиреру, он признает значимость математики и рассматривает ее в качестве органа мышления. Однако, согласно Розенцвейгу, математический символизм, как и вообще всякий символизм, работает только в мире элементов, уже в постигнутой реальности прошедшего времени. Тем самым, как и у Хайдеггера, сфера математического оказывается у него ограниченной. Однако Розенцвейг считает величайшим достижением логики Когена обращенность мышления в настоящее и будущее. Здесь математика оказывается только начальной точкой пути и должна быть дополнена грамматикой и литургикой.

Ключевые слова: математика, грамматика, литургия, давосский диспут, темпоральность, элемент, траектория, гештальт, исток, дифференциал, корреляция, логика истока, логический органон, категории, функторы, Коген, Кассирер, Хайдеггер, Розенцвейг, Кант, Лейбниц.

1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Karl Löwith², an outstanding thinker of the 20th century, and Peter E. Gordon³, a modern researcher, popularized the paradoxical notion that there is an inner proximity between the ideas of Martin Heidegger and Franz Rosenzweig. On several occasions, including Davos, Heidegger did reproach the Neo-Kantians for their tendency to mathematize philosophy⁴. As for Rosenzweig, he has a high opinion of mathematics and considers it the organon of intelligence. Heidegger's attacks on natural history powered by mathematics and on the Early Modern science are well known. In doing this, Heidegger was following a long-rooted anti-mathematical trend in philosophy. We only have to read the 13th book of the *Metaphysics* in order to find that Heidegger's criticism was not just recently invented.

This consideration makes an interesting background for Rosenzweig's position in the argument. Not only does Rosenzweig accept Cohen's praise of mathematics, he regards Cohen as the thinker who has helped philosophy out of the dead-end where it was heading from Parmenides to Hegel, thereby devaluating the whole of Heidegger's philosophical legacy. Furthermore, Rosenzweig does not stop with Cohen. He develops his own philosophical system where mathematics is much more than a starting point. For Rosenzweig, it becomes the general basis of thinking!

Yet, while Rosenzweig insists on the significance of mathematics, he also limits its sphere to his first organon. Rosenzweig's 2nd and 3rd organons are connected to grammar and liturgy. The relation between grammar and math-

² See Löwith 1942: 53–77.

³ See Gordon 2003.

⁴ See Discussion Between Ernst Cassirer and Martin Heidegger, in: Langiulli 1971. For Heidegger's relation to Neo-Kantianism see Дворкин 2013: 155–173.

ematics are understandable, since mathematics is often presented as a special language. But where is the connection between mathematics and prayer?

However, Rosenzweig's conception is a deep thought that will bear its fruits. Moreover, it has a grounding in the history of the question.

For ancient civilizations, mathematics was not only a practical engineering tool. It was also related to the mythical and the sacral. This connection has always looked awkward to European scientists, who believed that mathematical thinking should be characterized as abstract and rational. There even exists a trend to downplay the ancient Eastern mathematics, stating that the real mathematical science was born in Greece⁵. But the Greeks are problematic as well. The development of their mathematics was led by the most, mystical of the Greek philosophers — the Pythagoreans and the Platonists.

The Pythagoreans, who have admittedly created the ancient Greek mathematics, saw an immediate connection between prayer and numerical structure. The Kabbalah also connects mathematics to mysticism. In this context, Rosenzweig's argument does not seem paradoxical as it did at first glance.

Before we turn to the analyze Rosenzweig's thoughts on mathematics, we should mention his important predecessor, to whom Rosenzweig and Cohen make immediate allusions in their works. This is a person who has contributed much to the mathematization of science during the Early Modern period. It is Nicholas of Cusa who has made infinity the central notion of his theology and of mathematics.

2. THE DISPUTATION IN DAVOS AND THE QUESTION OF RELATION BETWEEN MATHEMATICS AND PHILOSOPHY

To consider the position of mathematics, we will address the disputation that took place during the philosophical congress in Davos in March, 1929. There, Heidegger opposed the Neo-Kantian position as a whole.

To quote Heidegger,

Kant... did not wish to provide a theory of natural science, but to show the problematic of metaphysics, more specifically of ontology.

At that, Cohen's disciple E. Cassirer remarks:

The positioning of the mathematical sciences of nature is for me only a paradigm, not the whole of the problem.

To explain the position of Kant and the Neo-Kantians in the relation to mathematics, Cassirer says:

Kant's major problem is how freedom is possible. For Kant, on the other hand, this was exactly the problem. Granted this finitude, how can there be necessary and universal truths? Now are synthetic judgments a priori possible?

⁵ See, among others, van der Waerden 1954.

That is the problem which Kant exemplifies with mathematics. Finite cognition involves itself with truth, but this relationship again works into a “merely”...

Heidegger has said that Kant has given no demonstration of the possibility of mathematics. But this problem is posed in the *Prolegomena*. Once more, then, this pure theoretical question, how does a finite being come to a determination of objects which as such are not limited by finitude, must first of all be clarified.

In Cassirer's reading of Kant and Cohen, mathematics is not a self-sufficient problem. It is used as a metaphor to express the relation between the finite and the infinite, which is effected in the Kantian's ethics. Cassirer admits that human being is finite, but the same being becomes transcendent when it is seen in relation to another person. Here Heidegger intervenes:

For Kant human reason is completely dependent upon itself and cannot escape from itself into an eternal and absolute nor into the world of things. This “In-between” is the essence of practical reason. One goes astray in the interpretation of the Kantian ethics if one does not see the inner function of the Law for Dasein... Ontology is an index of finitude. God does not have it.

... [Important is] the fact that Dasein is “something-which-is” which is open to other “things-which-are” and to itself.

Heidegger gives a radically ontological reading of Kantian ethics as an expression of a finite being. The transcendent is effected inside this finite being as an aspect of its openness. Thus, Heidegger does not realize the move from finite to infinite that happens in Cohen's ethics, and the mathematical metaphor only produces a “metaphysical illusion”.

Cassirer argues against this point of view, as he introduces the conception of the symbolic form to unite the finite and the infinite. Using Kant's theory of productive imagination, Cassirer states that mathematics is a realization of his symbolic form, where the finite and infinite are connected. As Cassirer explains, other such forms are mythology and language.

If we now turn to Rosenzweig's view of the question, it is evident that his position differs from that of Heidegger as well as Cassirer. At that, it is important to remember that Rosenzweig formulates his view before any of the other two authors. As for his teacher, for Rosenzweig the mathematical is a way of relating the finite to the infinite, and here he is close to Cassirer. However, Rosenzweig postulates that mathematics approaches this relation from the side of the finite. It is only valid on the plane of the elements. However, mathematics is also the starting point for understanding the temporal character of being, which finds its true expression only on the plane of the paths. Here Rosenzweig departs radically from Cassirer. Mathematics, symbolism and mythology only exist in the world of the ontological, or, more precisely, in the already completed pre-world of the elements; while language is effected with the present time and the processual character of the paths. Here Rosenzweig approaches Heidegger. But still, there is a significant difference: for Rosenz-

weig, the temporal character of being is expressed differently in the present and in the completed past. The presented is realized in the paths of the creation, the revelation and the redemption. It is absolutely transcendent. The present is oriented towards the future, but this stance is something more than anticipation — it is seen first of all as will and responsibility. The past, the present and the future interact closely, but an ontological meeting between them may only happen in the past. Rosenzweig's ontological unity between the times resembles Heidegger's conception of horizon.

As Heidegger says:

the fact that time itself has the character of horizon, so that I have always conjointly in an anticipatory remembering stance, the horizon of present, futurity, and pastness, and, consequently, there is given a transcendental-ontological time determination within which alone something such as the permanence of substance is constituted.

Heidegger has detected by himself or borrowed from the Neo-Kantians the fundamental character of the present, but he reduces the relation between different times to the ontological limits of the substance. For Rosenzweig, it is only the projection of the present into the past. Following Cohen, Rosenzweig defines present as an act or a deed directed into the future. The present is always absolutely new, transcending the ontological prospect of the past, which is only its source. But for the present, the connection to the source is crucially important.

3. COHEN'S CONCEPTION OF MATHEMATICS

In a way, Cohen continues Kant's relying on mathematical argument. For Kant, mathematics was the most illustrative example of the synthetic a priori judgements he has been trying to detect. Still, Cohen invests mathematics with new features that Kant did not. In the first place, it is related to the central problem of philosophy after Kant — that of the thing in itself. If the transcendental form is the real expression of the mathematical, then its relation to the thing in itself shall also be expressed mathematically. Here, Cohen makes use of the notion of correlation that he borrows from mathematics. First, the idea is viewed as an expression of the correlation between the object and the subject or between the phenomenon and the thing in itself. Furthermore, this correlation may be expressed in mathematical terms. Cohen here, as Maimonides did some time before, uses the notion of the differential developed by Leibniz to create a solution for a purely Kantian problem.

The differential is the limit of a zero-approaching sequence. Therefore, it is the purest expression of the correlation between the thing proper and its phenomenon. Thus, mathematics achieves what ontological philosophy cannot: it speaks of things without disclosing their particularities.

Rosenzweig describes Cohen's theory in his *Star of Redemption*:

The differential... is, on the one hand, the quantity that is dissolved in that which is without quantity, and then, on the other hand, it has, as "infinitesimal" and by that right, all the properties of the finite quantity, with only one exception: precisely this property of the quantity. It is in this way that it draws its strength that founds the reality⁶.

Cohen's theory of the differential is further developed in his remarkable logic of the source, which becomes the cornerstone of Rosenzweig's philosophy.

In this logic, Cohen reconsiders the very notion of the first principles. This is the central notion of the ontological philosophy and the basic construction of Aristotle's metaphysics. Remarkably, the concept of the principle (ἀρχή) originates with the Ionic school, who also proposed the notion of limit (πέρας). Together with the Pythagoreans, this school is regarded as a precursor of mathematical thinking in Ancient Greece. Receiving the notion of the principle from them, Aristotle deprives it of its temporal character. The principle is universal; it becomes the universe. In this way, the principle was considered by the ontological philosophy which Rosenzweig defined as ontology from Ionia to Jena, that is, to Hegel and Schelling. Although the great dialectic philosophy of the nineteenth century described the world's dynamic, this dynamic related only to the world as a completed whole and not to a specific event that was still going on. With the notion of the differential Cohen steered dialectics from analysis of the whole, the all, to the analysis of a single event. The Neo-Kantian Jacob Gordon defined this change as a movement from Hegel's dialectic of the system to Cohen's dialectic of the source⁷. Rosenzweig highly appreciated it, referring to Cohen's logic of the source as a "scientific achievement"⁸.

4. ROSENZWEIG'S CONCEPTION OF MATHEMATICS

For Cohen and Rosenzweig it was evident that the differential correlational logic of the source allow to do what Kant never achieved: it presented the world not as a static system of qualities that Aristotle described, but as a dynamic mathematical system, bringing the revolution that Galileo and Copernicus had started to its conclusion. This movement was based on Cohen's understanding of the present time as different from the complete and closed past. It gave Cohen the key to comprehend the nature of history, religion and the process of interpersonal relations.

⁶ Extracts from *The Star of Redemption* are given hereinafter as translated by Barbara E. Galli, see Rosenzweig 2005: 28. See also: Rosenzweig 1996.

⁷ See Gordon 1927.

⁸ See Rosenzweig 2005: 28.

Rosenzweig follows this way, often alluding to his mentor. Yet, Rosenzweig unfolds his own theory, significantly different from Cohen's thinking. In fact, he emphasizes that his development of the logic of the source is "contrary to what the teacher thought"⁹.

Formulating the difference between the two theories, the Israeli researcher I. Gilad points out that Rosenzweig does not employ the notion of correlation. Instead, Rosenzweig develops his own detailed theory of paths (*Bahnen*) and configuration (*Gestalt*). What is the difference between Rosenzweig's paths and Cohen's correlation?¹⁰ The answer is simple, and given plainly by Rosenzweig himself. Correlation does not allow us to transcend the limits of the object under consideration. It means we are trapped inside the world that Rosenzweig called the element. This reality offers a possibility of dynamic movement, but there is no actual dynamics, since the world of the elements is always already defined ontologically, that is, seized by our thought. Thus, for Rosenzweig, the sphere of the mathematics is naturally limited to the elements. Although the differential mathematics, unlike the classical one, touches upon the processual character of the world, it still describes a completed world perceived by thought. The real dynamics appears with interaction between the elements, a move out into the transcendental reality. Here, the paths is formed.

Thus, Rosenzweig sides with Heidegger's idea, not yet voiced at the time, concerning the limitation of the physical and the mathematical knowledge. But, unlike Heidegger, Rosenzweig does not become an enemy to the sciences. Instead, he tries to define their limits. According to Rosenzweig, mathematics should be supplemented. He therefore develops three organons: mathematics, grammar and liturgy.

5. THE ORGANONS OF ROSENZWEIG

In the second book of the *Star of Redemption*, in the chapter "Creation. The limits of mathematics", Rosenzweig states that with the movement from element to paths mathematics ceases to apply. It may only use symbols to describe the pre-world:

The symbolic language of mathematics that we used above to explain the becoming of elements fails here. Already the reversals cannot be represented in the framework of equations, because the meaning of the inversions only becomes clear through the radiation outward of that which previously had been fused together... yet, what emerges above all from the completed elementary figures are not the pure forms of the Yes and No that sprang from the nothing and alone are represented through symbols...¹¹

⁹ Rosenzweig 2005: 28.

¹⁰ See Rosenzweig 2005: כהן הרמן של ה'עיון השוואתי בהבנת מושג ההתגלות בהגותם של הרמן כהן ומרטין בובר.

¹¹ See Rosenzweig 2005: 135.

Instead of mathematics, Rosenzweig presents another organon: grammar. The central difference here is that grammar has access to the present time. It gives the man possibility to speak at the current moment. According to Rosenzweig, this ability to speak now forms the paths of man's relation to God and the world.

From the level of the elements, the path is seen as haphazard, spontaneous connections. Therefore, the events that happen on the level of the paths seem impossible, new, wonderful when perceived from elements.

God has much work to do here! However, every time it turns out that there was nothing impossible.

And yet, every time it appears that there is no wonder, since in the completed world of the elements all that has happened is natural and lawful. Thus, language, for Rosenzweig, is not a sign system, a symbolic form or something resembling mathematics; it is the core of the movement from mathematics to liturgy.

To give an example, let us consider how the meanings of words change with the movement from the logical and the mathematical to the grammar and the language proper. In the first part of the *Star* Rosenzweig examines the three original words that have basic, essential meanings in the world of mathematics and logic. They are "Yes", "No" and "And". In the second part of the book, these words become genealogical sentences. "Yes" becomes "Good", "No" unfolds into the root words of the dialogue, "I" and "You", while "And" forms a genealogical sentence designating conjunction. Thus, the movement from mathematics to grammar is for Rosenzweig the movement from estranged completed reality to the living *Dasein* or the event of the present tense.

"The word of man is a symbol: at every moment it is newly created in the mouth of the one who speaks"¹².

However, the event of the present, as Rosenzweig understands it, does not terminate; it is directed into the future. Therefore, the organon of grammar develops as the organon of liturgy...

6. THE LOGIC OF THE CONFIGURATION. LITURGY

While the organon of mathematics relating the finite and the infinite applies to the level of elements, and the organon of grammar works on the level of paths, the third organon acts on the level of the configuration. The term configuration (*Gestalt*), borrowed from Goethe, becomes an important notion within the *Star*. Each level is characterized by relations of a specific kind, so that the logical and mathematical relations appearing on the level of the elements is essentially significant for the subsequent levels as well. However, this relation is static, the time here has already completed itself and so is identical

¹² See Rosenzweig 2005: 121.

to space. The grammatical organon of the second level describes interpersonal processes. Here, time is of essence, but this present time lasts only a moment before relapsing into the past. Only at the level of the future time becomes stable. Therefore, the essence of the third organon is the relation of times.

Rosenzweig examines two configurations expressed in the Christianity and Judaism. The configuration of Christianity unfolds in time and so has a historical nature. The configuration of Judaism is stable and only moves within itself.

A good illustration of this difference is Rosenzweig's description of the Jewish and the Christian prayer. As an example of the Christian prayer, Rosenzweig gives the prayer of Goethe, who always asked God to let his actions complete in the best way possible¹³:

Give, oh labor of my hands, the great happiness that I can finish it (Goethe, Hoffnung).

The corresponding example of a Judaic prayer is the prayer of "Moses the man of God":

And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us (Psalm 90:17)

According to Rosenzweig, both prayers have the most important property: the time of the praying man coincides with the time of God. The Bible calls this time "the favorable time" and "the time of blessing". For Rosenzweig, this is the time when the configuration is realized. However, Goethe prays as an individual. Therefore, Rosenzweig states, the process of his prayer unfolds in history or in the life of a person. But realization always calls for new realization. The prayer of Moses presupposes the actions of a community, and it is in this actions that this prayer is realized.

This description makes it evident that for Rosenzweig past, present and future do not form a sequence. The future is the time when the configuration is realized, but the configuration comprises the past and the present. Liturgy, the organon of the future, is therefore supported by the two preceding organons: grammar and mathematics. Here naturally comes the question: what is the configuration from the mathematical point of view?

The notion of the element has been used in mathematics ever since the Ionic philosophers. It makes clear the substantial nature of the first organon. The Ancient Greek mathematics imagined its object as a specific ideal reality. In contrast to that, the modern mathematics is relation. Instead of things, it mostly deals with functions and processes. This is especially true when we consider mathematical analysis and the theory of sets. With this background, Rosenzweig's idea of configuration acquires a remarkable mathematical meaning. On the level of the configuration, all quantities and relations are not defined, but together they become something stable.

¹³ See Rosenzweig 2005: 293.

I presume to give here an interpretation drawing on the theory of categories:

$$AC = AB \rightarrow BC.$$

A , B , and C here are not sets, but categories, their structure defined by their interrelation. AC , AB , and BC are functors, while the arrow indicates the natural transformation of categories¹⁴. These mathematical terms correspond to Rosenzweig's are elements, paths and the configuration. The elements will become sets on their own, but as part of the configuration they form a new non-trivial structure.

As far as we can see, Rosenzweig's new thinking has the potential to make mathematics once again the perfect queen of sciences.

7. MATHEMATICS AND RELIGION. THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The twentieth century thinkers saw an opposition between religion and the sciences, which could be easily used to prove that religion is useless or even lying. Such notions still exist. However, in the beginning of the twentieth century voices were heard arguing that the secular worldview is also devoid of sense and value. The Russian philosophers, P. A. Florensky and A. F. Losev among them, championed the connection between mathematics and religion. It is not surprising that their opinions are close to Rosenzweig's views. These ideas are still relevant in our time, when the relation between religion and science has acquired a definitive value.

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¹⁴ See Goldblatt 1979.

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