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FRANZ ROSENZWEIG ON COMMUNITY

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## WORLDLY COMMUNITY AND COMMUNITY OF BLOOD IN *THE STAR OF REDEMPTION*: A CRITICAL APPROACH FROM HELMUTH PLESSNER'S ANTHROPOLOGY

### ABSTRACT

This work offers a critical approach to Franz Rosenzweig's conception of community in *The Star of Redemption* based on Helmuth Plessner's political anthropology. First, it presents Plessner's critique of social radicalism and of the apoliticism of the German spirit, and its parallelism with the Jewish spirit. Second, it delves into the passage from *Hegel und der Staat* to *The Star* in a communitarian key. Third, it dwells on the difference between community of blood and community of faith in Rosenzweig, together with his theological-political translation into the distinction between the eternal people and the peoples of the world. Last, as a conclusion, it makes manifest the apoliticism of the Rosenzweigian proposal, and therefore, its incapacity to give an answer to the political problem in Weimar, of which its catastrophic consequences Rosenzweig did not know.

### KEYWORDS

society, community,  
politics, religion, blood

### Introduction: Social Radicalism, Antisemitism, and Judaism

The relation between community and society represents one of the most decisive gravity points around which the philosophical political reflection spins at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginnings of the 20<sup>th</sup>. Its conception in terms of a radical opposition developed by Ferdinand Tönnies in its great work from 1887, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, amounted doubtless to a true milestone for the ones that followed him. Thus, in 1924, Helmuth Plessner (2015: 11) began his *Grenzen der Gemeinschaft* referring to Tönnies' proposal, but in order to put it into question and to posit, instead, according to the basis of his political anthropology, the existence of a sort of dialectical relation between both forms of human association: a natural and immediate one, proper to a community in which the individual dissolves, and another of artificial character which allowed the safeguard of the individuality. The limits of the community should be established by the society, in the same way in which the ones of the latter are given by the sphere of familiarity that the community represents. In this way, Plessner advocated for finding a sort of middle term

or equilibrium, which would allow the survivance of the individuality without falling into social atomism, or, to the contrary, that would guarantee the existence of a common fund out of which the singular individual would emerge, without detaching itself completely from it. In contrast to Tönnies, Plessner did not think that Modernity, in short, resulted in the destruction of the communitarian bonds, but in their limitation; the maintenance of these limits, as a matter of fact, was deemed crucial during the Weimar period in view of the progressive rise of the most radical political options in the *Reichstag*: the communitarianism from the left, represented by the Communist Party, and from the right, captained by the Social National Party as the most bloody -and in the end triumphant- variant of both the *Jugendbewegung* and the German Conservative Revolution.

Plessner's political anthropology heralded thus a philosophical resignification of the public sphere, which a large part of the German *Intelligentsia* had let slip into oblivion, and, in particular, a civilization of Carl Schmitt's concept of the political or, in other words, of the difference between friend and enemy as the specific political criteria (Schmitt 2007: 26 ff.; Plessner 2018: 53 ff.). As for the first point, Plessner's aim was none other but Martin Heidegger, who in *Being and Time* had relegated the *Öffentlichkeit* to the sphere of the impropriety of existence, and whose *Dasein* found its realization in the *Innerlichkeit*, which is apolitical by definition. As Plessner assigned himself to show in *Die verspätete Nation*, this gesture was common in the German Protestant tradition, in relation to which Heidegger could well be considered the last station - which can also be said of Schmitt himself, whose vindication of the political involved an emphatic rejection of politics understood as a discussion in the public sphere and, consequently, as a vindication of the forms of association or human grouping that find their base in a substantial homogeneity or equality of the people. In fact, Plessner's search of an equilibrium between community and society can be understood as one of an equilibrium between the Western tradition, particularly the French political tradition, and the Centro European tradition, proper to Germanic peoples. The aforementioned gesture, that is, the one of a refuge in interiority, was in fact a nonpolitical move which Thomas Mann described in its perfection in his 1918 *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*: rejection of civilization for the sake of culture, and of parliamentary democracy in favor of authoritarianism, but also of civil society by way of a national community that finds its juridical realization, that is its representation, in the State institutions, and ultimately in the decisive and deciding figure of the sovereign as incarnation of the whole life of the State (*Staatsleben*).

Seduced by culture, the German bourgeoisie preferred its subject condition rather than its active implication in public affairs (Lepenies 2006). It could not find in them any fulfillment whatsoever, but just a distraction: pure worldly, secular mediocrity, which was not worth at all in comparison with the heights of the religiosity aura that *Bildung* could lead to, at least since Fichte (Koselleck 2006: 105–158). We are facing here the distinction, advanced by Friedrich Meinecke (1911: 1–20) in that swan song of German nationalism that was his

*Cosmopolitanism and the National State*, between the political nation-State, whose rise in history dated in 1789, and the cultural nation-State, the true aspiration of the German people, which, according to certain metaphysics of history linked to the notion of destiny, distinguished it from all other peoples of the world. Product or not of a mythic symbiosis (Traverso 1995), Plessner found here a perverse connection between the German and the Jewish peoples that he made manifest in the observations he added to the first edition of the work that was published later as *Die verspätete Nation*:

Once and again, we hear that all antisemitism is nothing more than mere professional envy. This is true to a large extent, but it does not explain the specific nature of the ideological masking and justification. We can get closer to this nature if we speak of competence in a more profound sense, having in mind not much the business or the status but the destiny of the two adversaries. Both are “peoples” and more than States. Both are in their disequilibrium with respect to the State and in their situation of wait imposed by history, witnesses of a past world that has vanished and guarantors of a world order yet to come. Both are unhappy and their grandiosity consists therein: they are from the day before yesterday and of the day after tomorrow, without rest in the present (Plessner 1935: 184 f.)

Opposite to the materialist accounts of antisemitism, Plessner presents here a motive of spiritual, philosophic and historical nature that points to the existence of a certain essential community between Germanness and Judaism: both peoples would share a metahistorical and metapolitical character that would have allowed German Jews to feel especially comfortable in the context of German culture, with independence even of the traditional anti-Jewish pogroms and their own political emancipation. However, emancipation should have been enough in a nation-State with a fundamentally political base such as the French Republic, while in Germany it was accessory, extrinsic: the Germanness of German Jews was not encrypted in their condition of *Staatsbürger*, despised by the German people itself, but in its assimilation to the German Protestant *Kultur*. The infamous proclamations of the parasitism of German Jews did not have to do in essence with economic or professional elements, but with cultural aspects, that is with a supposed Judaization of the German *Volksgeist*. In fact, this logic is not strange to cultural Zionism, endowed with special relevance in the Weimar Germany: adversaries of the assimilationism that represented, for instance, Herman Cohen, intellectuals like Martin Buber or Gershom Scholem saw in this acculturation a Germanization and Christianization of the Jewish people contrary to its very existence as a national community with the singular destiny conferred by its “chosen people” condition.

Franz Rosenzweig, to whose conception of community this work is dedicated, was very conscious of the dissolution of German Judaism to which this position led to, such as that of Cohen, who nonetheless had been his master in the study of the sources of the Jewish tradition. In contrast to Buber or Scholem, however, he did not opt for the return to Palestine as a medium for

the recuperation of Jewish life, but for a dis-assimilation (*Dissimilation*) of the Jews that would take place in the midst of Germany itself<sup>1</sup>. Its contribution, in this sense, was given by the foundation of a true community of study, the *Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus*, in the city of Frankfurt, that would stand against the assimilationist tendency of the 19<sup>th</sup> century *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. The foundation of the *Lehrhaus* meant without a doubt a crucial moment in Rosenzweig's vital and intellectual trajectory and led to the posthumous interpretation of the author of *The Star of Redemption* as a master of Judaism, to which his collaboration in the *Verdeutschung* of the Hebrew Bible with Buber also contributed. Rosenzweig's educational project aspired to be a practical application of the conception of Judaism developed in its capital work. Hence, its creation did not have a political pretension whatsoever: its intent was of a strictly cultural nature - an application of the *Bildung* ideal to the Jewish community of Germany- and thus apolitical, as apolitical was the Judaism of *The Star*. It is not in vain, from this point of view, that the study and interpretation of tradition became for Rosenzweig, at least after the end of the Great War, a true existential haven which allowed him to stay in the margins of the political events of the era, the analysis of which, by 1917, Rosenzweig was still engaged in (Rosenzweig 1984: 241–368). If the return to Judaism in 1913 had not been a barrier for him to participate in the battlefront of the First World War, it was the very course of it that in the end tipped Rosenzweig's vital scale in favor of the *Maguen David* (Avineri 1988: 831–838).

The political disillusionment that the experience of war meant for Rosenzweig was decisive for his definitive (re) Judaization and, in the first place, for the writing of *The Star of Redemption*. To a certain extent, it is not inaccurate to conclude that the consummation of what started in the notorious *Leipziger Nachtgespräch*<sup>2</sup> with Eugen Rosenstock -with whom later, in the middle of the war, he held a passionate dialogue about the relation between Judaism and Christianity (Rosenzweig – Rosenstock 1971) - signified a de-politization of Rosenzweig thought, even when the third book of *The Star* could be interpreted as a critique (literally *avant la lettre*) of Carl Schmitt's political theology (Navarrete 2017a). Too often, in any case, the insistence in his role of master of Judaism, encouraged by some of the claims of Rosenzweig himself, as well as by the editorial policy of the family following his early death, and consolidated by the publication of the only available biography of him (Glatzer 1961), has attempted to forget that, in the path to *The Star*, a first great contribution to the history of philosophy is to be found: his book about Hegel's idea of the State, inspired in chapter 11 of the already mentioned

1 Rosenzweig refers to this dis-assimilation in connection to his educational project, to which we will refer immediately, in an entry of his diary dated April 3rd of 1922 (Rosenzweig 1979: 770). About this issue see also: Navarrete 2015: 109-134.

2 The nocturnal conversation that caused in Rosenzweig, impressed by Rosenstock, the decision to convert to Christianity and finally, of returning to Judaism. That conversation was the background of the interchange of letters to which we will turn immediately.

*Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat* by Meinecke, who at that time supervised, as *Doktorvater*, the work of the young historian of ideas that Rosenzweig was before the First World War. It would be unfair to place the author of *Hegel und der Staat* among the defenders of the Ideas of 1914, since he never supported nationalist positions and even his own interpretation of the Hegel's political ideas, against the reading among others of Meinecke, advocated for a revision of the characterization of the Swabian philosopher as a German national thinker (Rosenzweig 2010: 526–533). Nonetheless, his approach to the (a)political problem of the community, was brought about precisely by his study of the philosophy of the State in Hegel, and therefore, it is mediated by the long existing tradition that Plessner, as we know, identified as the driving force of what came to be *Das Schicksal des deutschen Geistes im Ausgang seiner bürgerlichen Epoche* (*The Destiny of the German Spirit at the End of its Bourgeois Epoch*)<sup>3</sup>. Besides what Heidegger could have taken from Rosenzweig in secret (Möbuß 2018) as well as the most notable difference between the two in reference to the influence that they both had on the German philosophical landscape during the Weimar Republic, one and the other incarnate, from Germanness and Judaism respectively, the same “political indifference of the spirit” denounced by Plessner (2018: 87) at the last breaths of the failed Weimar democratic project.

### Society and Community from Hegel to *The Star*

If we take into account the centrality of the concept of *Gemeinschaft* in Rosenzweig's thought, not to mention the notorious position occupied by Tönnies in the German intellectual scene of the time, the fact that the former never mentions –either in any of his published works, in life or after his death– the work of the latter about the forms of human association to which we referred at the beginning of this work<sup>4</sup>. His contempt for society is visible in *The Star of Redemption*, where he refers to its concept as “purely worldly” (*allzuweltlich*) (Rosenzweig 2005: 301). Actually, it appears just in four occasions, one of them in relation to Hegel, through whom he tells us in *Hegel und der Staat* (Rosenzweig 2010: 391) the expression *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* acquired its “eminent sense” (*ausgeprägten Sinn*), which he describes in the following way:

The common life [*Gemeinleben*] of human beings in the great associations [*Verbände*] and even in the State and beyond the State, to the extent in which it was

3 This was the original title of *Die verspätete Nation* in 1935.

4 Rosenzweig did not even had an exemplar of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* in his library, as it shows the corresponding register. For that matter, it is at least worth to mention the fact that Tönnies published a review of *Hegel und der Staat* in the *Zeitschrift für Politik*. In it, he remarked in an implicit way the moderate reading of Hegel by Rosenzweig, since it does not get into the heroization of the Swabian philosopher by its first biographer Karl Rosenkranz, nor in his condemnation by Rudolf Haym (Tönnies 1924: 173 f.).

not the same State life but that it was found in relations more or less wide with the State [...] In the civil society rules that perspective that only wants to know about the independent individuals associated “by the necessities of the individuals and with a *juridical system* as an instrument for the security of the people and of property, and with an *external organization* for their interests, particular and common”. This is the “*External State*”, the “State of necessities”, the “State of the understanding” (Rosenzweig 2010: 392)<sup>5</sup>

As a system of reciprocal dependencies, which is how Hegel calls the civil society, “the economy [...] is its original content” (Rosenzweig 2010: 392). Consequently, as a member of the civil society, the human being is considered as a “person”, whose free will realizes or exists as an owner, not as a carrier of the State (*Staatsträger*) or a citizen (*Staatsbürger*). This latter does not exist as such in the phenomenal world of the ethical which is the civil society, in which the ethnicity loses the content which it found in the family and appears just in a formal way, but it finds its existence in the substantial unity of the ethical community the State as an end in itself consists in. In the State, therefore, the free will of the individual, from which community derives, reaches its supreme right and, at the same time, complies with its supreme duty: to be a member of the State (Hegel 2009, § 258). As early as August 1910, Rosenzweig had recorded in his diary this characteristic of the Hegelian conception of the State and its relationship with the individual: “The individual’s truth is transferred to the community” (Rosenzweig 1979a: 106), that is, to the *Volk*, whose *Geist* the State represents. At that time, nonetheless, he established a barely accurate comparison between the Hegelian and Marxist models, as if the only difference between them in this respect rested in the material or sensible character of the “economic community” (*Wirtschaftsgemeinschaft*) in Marx. In the text published in 1920 but finished in its essential part right before the break of the war in 1914, Rosenzweig (2010: 469) corrects this first impression: Hegel’s civil society is conceived in materialist terms, in such a way that Marx’s intervention would only consist in the substitution of the State for the civil society, as well as of the State’s credo (*Staatsgesinnung*) for the class consciousness. Maybe this could be true for Marx, however, as “founder of social democracy” (Rosenzweig 2010: 467), but not, of course, for the form of social radicalism that Marxism represented, the communitarian ethos of which is not to be discussed.

Besides this last consideration, in the Final Remarks of *Hegel and the State*, added by Rosenzweig at the end of the Great War, when he already had the experience of the damage caused by nationalism, Meinecke’s disciple corrects his master indicating that, in the path from Hegel to Bismarck, the ideologues of the II *Reich* and in particular Heinrich von Treitschke would have proceeded to a sort of nationalization of the Hegelian idea of the State (Rosenzweig 2010: 527 ff.). According to Rosenzweig’s interpretation, the liberal element in Hegel’s philosophy of the State did not have any connection with the idea of

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5 Hegel’s citations come from the paragraphs 157 and 183 of his *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*.



nation. Hegel and Treitschke agreed on conceiving the State as a goal, but the first led the will of the individual to it, while the second made the same with the nation: one might consider Hegel as linked to the national idea just as a philosopher of history, not as a philosopher of the State. The statement that “the new *Reich* had at its cornerstone something that was strange or at least unnecessary to the Hegelian ideal” (Rosenzweig 2010: 530) can be considered a defense of Hegel and of the potentialities of his conception of the State, or at least his exculpation of what happened between 1914 and 1919. However, the damage was already done: “We are at the end. We feel it today, when Bismarck’s era has come to an end, at whose threshold Hegel’s life is situated as the thought before the action” (Rosenzweig, 2010: 526) It was about the end of a historical era: the long 19<sup>th</sup> century, as it is called by Eric Hobsbawm (1962; 1975; 1987); and about the end of a world: *The world of yesterday* described by Stefan Zweig (1947) in his memoirs. But also, about the end of the political hopes of Rosenzweig, to which Meinecke’s disciple responded with the decision to obey the “dark impulse” that he referred to with the expression “my Judaism” (Rosenzweig 1979b: 680). The collapse of the *Reich* not only left a desolated field in history, but also in Rosenzweig’s path: the author of *Hegel and the State* cleared the way for the author of *The Star of Redemption* (Rosenzweig 2010: 17 f.; Rosenzweig 1979b: 679 ff.).

### Community of Blood and Community of Faith

The crystallization of Rosenzweig’s New Thinking in his *opus magnum* means in general terms a rupture with Hegel as the culmination of Classical German Philosophy, and, from a broader perspective, of Idealism as a whole, to which Rosenzweig refers as well as *denkende Philosophie*, just as this has been cultivated from Ionia to Jena. This does not mean that it is not possible to identify the presence of certain Hegelian elements in *The Star*, as I have shown elsewhere (Navarrete 2016). One of such elements, certainly not accessory for the system of philosophy that represents Rosenzweig’s major work, is the relation between Judaism and Christianity, the thematization of which by the young Hegel (1907: 241–342) in *Der Geist des Christentums und sein Schicksal*, somehow, the philosopher from Kassel inverts. This is not a minor question for the topic concerning us. To the contrary, the conception of both religions by Rosenzweig depends intimately on their relations to revelation and community. This is how he puts it into words before the First World War in an entry of his diary dating from June 20<sup>th</sup>, 1914, regarding Hermann Cohen:

Judaism has its unity by nature in blood, that is, behind it, in the idea through the prophetic revelation, that is to say, in front of itself. To the contrary, Christianity, is a church just by way of the development that emerges from the person of Jesus, that is, it has to have its revelation behind itself, because it is not here a matter of a natural community but of a community founded on revelation (Rosenzweig 1979: 158)

In his letter to his parents on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 1916, that is, still two years later, Rosenzweig insists on this same idea: “Only Christianity begins with believing; Judaism, on the contrary, begins with community, and in turn Christianity *leads* towards “community”, whereas Judaism leads to believing” (Rosenzweig 1979a: 201). This idea, namely, that Judaism is a natural community that is directed towards the accomplishment of the promise, while Christianity is a community founded in the promise of the future accomplishment of community, is the base from which Rosenzweig conceives the correlation between both religions as the condition of possibility of redemption, as well as, in consequence, their respective relations to the world. In this way, when he asks himself for “the formation of mutual participation [*Gemeinschaftsbildende*] in this mutual participation of Christianity [*Gemeinschaft der Christenheit*]” (Rosenzweig 2005: 361) his answer is clear: its expansion to the whole wide world by its missionary activity. Christianity is a “mutual participation of bearing witness [*Gemeinschaft des Zeugnisses*]” (ibid: 361), that is, of the testimony of itself as the only way that leads to redemption, identified with Christ’s *Parousia*:

In the testifying to the mutual participation [*Gemeinschaft*] the way must be testified to at the same time. The mutual participation [*Gemeinschaft*] becomes one through the testified faith. Faith is faith in the way. Everyone who is in the community knows that there is no other eternal way than the way he is taking. Belonging to Christianity, he knows his own life is on the way that leads from the coming to the coming again of Christ. (ibid: 363)

This interpretation of Christianity is founded in the words that John put in the mouth of Jesus as he said farewell to his disciples after the Last Supper: “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one goes to the Father if not through me” (John 14:6). Rosenzweig adopted this position regarding Christianity *from the beginning*, that is to say, from the moment in which, after he decided to convert to the Christian faith, he made the decision to remain in Judaism. In fact, this is the central argument of the letter addressed to Rudolf Ehrenberg on October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1913, in which he informs for the first time about this true event of his personal existence. It is worth to cite it *in extenso*, despite its length:

Christianity recognizes the God of Judaism, not as God, but as the “Father of Jesus Christ”. It holds itself to the “Lord”, but because it knows that He is the only way to the Father. He stays all days, to the end of the world, as the Lord of His Church. In this moment, nonetheless, He stops being the Lord, and He as well will be subjected to the Father and the Father will then be, All in All. We agree about the meaning of Christ and His Church in the world: no one gets to the Father if not through Him.

No one *goes to* the Father, but it is a different matter when it is no longer needed to go to the Father, because one is *already* in Him. And that is the case of the people of Israel (not of the individual Jew). The people of Israel, elected by its Father, turns its eyes, firmly, beyond the world and history, to that last, very far point in which the Father of Israel will be One and Unique (“All in

All"!)). In that point in which Christ stops being the Lord, Israel stops being elected. In that Day, God loses the name in which only Israel calls Him. God is no longer "its" God. Now, until that day comes, the life of Israel consists in anticipating that eternal day by way of confession and its mode of acting, in being in the world as a living sign of that day, as a people of priests, in sanctifying the name of God by way of the Law, through its proper holiness (Rosenzweig 1979a: 134 f.)

Here we find ourselves facing the distinction between "the peoples of the world" and "the people at the goal" (Rosenzweig 2005: 348), a truly theological-political kernel of *The Star of Redemption* and, in the same measure, a capital question in relation to the Rosenzweigian conception of community. This theological-political element is already present in the aforementioned letter, when, at the beginning of his report to his friend, Rosenzweig refers to the "baton" of the church and to the "broken scepter" of the synagogue. This scheme appears developed later, already in the letter exchange held by Rosenzweig with Rosenstock, before finding its exposition, finally, in the third book of *The Star*. According to the interpretation of its author, the historical development of Christianity, that is, of the church, would have its origin in a "Judaization of the pagans" (the *goyim*, that is, the nations: ἔθνη) and it would have resulted in a "Christianization of the concept of a 'people'" that Rosenzweig identifies with nationalism (Rosenzweig – Rosenstock 1971: 130 ff.). So, this would be nothing but a secularization of the Jewish content by antonomasia: the election, which, universalized and made worldly, would translate itself into a "messianic politics" by means of the identification of the *salus and fides* of the peoples of the world, that is, through a divinization of the *civitas terrena* (Rosenzweig – Rosenstock 1971: 132 f.). "Nationalism expresses not merely the people's belief that they come *from* God [...], but that they go *to* God", Rosenzweig writes to Rosenstock (1971: 131), from which it can be inferred that ethnic or national communities (*völkische Gemeinschaften*) would come to assume, in a worldly manner, the way of being of the community Christianity would consist in. Or, rather, to the contrary: Christianity realizes itself through the "worldly mutual participation" (*weltliche Gemeinschaft*) that is the national community. If at first, as we will see in the case of the Jews, Christians found their Kingdom outside the world, according to the word of Christ himself, in its final stadium, Christianity would become world through the nation "from the moment there is the possibility of a Christian State, that is, since the Reformation" (Rosenzweig 1984: 114).

## Worldly Community and Eternal People

The influence of Hegel's metaphysics of history, and at least in some measure of the State, is barely discussable at this point. In his Philosophy of Objective Spirit, or of Right, Hegel (2009, §270; 1992, §552), in effect, had identified the Christian religion, as a religion of freedom, with the "basis" (*Grundlage*) of the

rational-ethical State, as the very substance of ethicity itself, which would realize itself fully in the State institution. As it is obvious, Hegel was thinking, just as Rosenzweig, in Lutheranism. In fact, it is not but his interpretation of Hegel's couplet about the rationality of the actual that Rosenzweig puts into play here.

“What is rational is actual” [...] This is not valid in general and forever, but since it turned into an ethical exigency and criteria of human institutions through Christianity, by means of the idea of the Kingdom of God on Earth. It is actually valid since then and because it imposed to the action the task of actualizing reason in the world. Thus (from then on!), knowledge was confronted to the task of examining how reason has implemented itself in actuality (that turned into that since then!). Just because the rational has been made actual – principle of action –, just because of that the actual is now rational – principle of knowledge –. The second part of the phrase, that against Hegel's usage is always presented as the kernel of this thought – “the Hegelian affirmation of the rationality of the actual” –, is just the consequence of the first part, namely of the revolutionary idea of the actuality of the rational. The second member of the proposition, that founds the knowledge and shows how the State of our age of the world must be understood, presupposes the premise of the interpretation of history which expresses the vital ethical principle for this State. (Rosenzweig 2010: 355 f.)

Although, as we saw earlier, Hegel derived the ethical community from the free will of the individual and, in the same sense, did not situate the nation at the base of the State, the German nationalist thinking just needed to put the Hegelian philosophy of history and the relation between Christianity and State in which was founded, at its service, in order to turn the survival of the nation (*salus*) into an object of faith (*fides*), that is, to divinize or spiritualize the national community, which is strictly worldly in its origin. The State, thus, turned into the instance of mediation that allowed, at the same time, the secularization (*Verweltlichung*) of the spirit (Christian) and the spiritualization (Christianization, in short) of the world (of the peoples). The absolutization of the ethical community of the people, before which the individual can only sacrifice itself, in which it must dissolve itself in order to realize the right to its own realization, finds this way its finest expression. As far as individuality or personality are concerned, the human being is thought to be only part of the communitarian whole, just as it happened, according to Rosenzweig (2005: 64), in the Greek polis: “The ancient individual does not [...] lose himself in the community in order better to find himself in it, but quite simply to build it” and “the community is an ultimate reality for the individual, beyond which he cannot see”. The Christianization of the political communities, of the peoples and States, definitely, would have added a messianic sense to this “being closed to the outside” and “unconditional characteristic within” (ibid: 63) common to all worldly *Gemeinschaft*.

From this point on, there is no difference for Christians between a war of faith or a religious war and a war of the State or a worldly one: The Way to the goal that, from its origin, Christianity represents for the peoples of the

world, becomes in its final era universal history, whose carriers are the States (ibid: 354). The goal to which the Christianized peoples are moving towards is achieved not only by the pure missional activity of the church as a testimony of faith, but through the (false) *eternalization* of national communities that the State's machinery produces by means of the dialectic of right and violence, war and revolution, in which it is grounded (ibid: 352–354). It is only this way that it can emulate the eternal people that is the community of blood which in Rosenzweig interpretation the people of Israel would consist in.

The ethnic, popular or national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*) that is also the chosen people, distinguishes itself from the rest by the fact that only this community satisfies itself with its own blood. It does not need the State, nor, consequently, universal history, to find the guarantee of its eternity. Just in it blood and spirit are one and the same thing: only this community is both people and religion, that is, people in terms of religion, and religion in terms of people. As such, it has no will of eternity, because eternity has already sprouted in it. This way, it can abandon the earth whose domination requires another community, any of the rest of the peoples of the world, “for they do not have confidence in the living community of blood, which would not be anchored in the solid ground of the earth” (ibid: 318). Considering the way events would unfold in the Germany his work was to be published in, it does not cease to amaze the language that Rosenzweig employs in *The Star of Redemption*. All the more if we recall Plessner's above-mentioned words about the deep reason of antisemitism. Only few years after, the ideological base of the domination structure that resolved the physical extermination of the European Jews appealed precisely to the eternity of Germanness<sup>6</sup>, identified its condition of *Volksgemeinschaft* with a *Blutgemeinschaft*, and, finally, linked this blood to a determined soil as its vital space or *Lebensraum*. Its war would have been thus analogous to the war of religion like the one fought by Israel against the peoples of Canaan (ibid: 350).

We know about the perversion of language that carried out the third *Reich*, but we also know the messianic dimension that the figure of the *Führer* took (Klemperer 1949; Guardini 1946). There is something uncannily premonitory in Rosenzweig's considerations about community. But the eternity and the blood to which he referred to characterize the community of Israel did not have anything to do with the State nor with race: The superiority of the Jewish people was for Rosenzweig a purely spiritual superiority, that is, in his terms, it was encrypted in a superior link with the relations that, according to the figure of *The Star*, God maintains with the world and with the human being; the *Volksgemeinschaft* of Judaism is both the closest to Creation as well

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6 *Dem ewigen Deutschtum* can be read, without going too far in the entrance of the Philosophy Faculty of the University of Freiburg in which Rosenzweig studied. The inscription dates from 1936 and for that reason, Rosenzweig, who died in 1929, could not know anything about it, but he could of the Pan-Germanism already present in his epoch.

as to Revelation, and for that reason it alone is the condition to anticipate the Redemption to which the peoples of the world (yet) are moving towards. It is all about a meta-ethical and, consequently, meta-political and meta-historical community; its relation to the people of the world is analogous to the relation of the Self (*Selbst*) to Personality (*Persönlichkeit*) (Rosenzweig 2005: 81 f.) That is the meaning of the *Shema Yisrael*: “The mutuality was called by a mutual name, and when listening to the name, the community was there [*war sie da*]” (ibid: 341) in the same way as Abraham responded to the calling of God with the words *Da bin ich* and he started to exist, reborn as the *homo revelationis* which the Self is: The singular human I that hears and in that way becomes in the You to which the divine I is revealed. It is the miracle of the revelation of God’s love to Creation (through His people) what gives accomplishment to the “unpersonal communal life”, to that “natural community of the same blood” that Israel is. The promulgation of this miracle, in the form of the love for the neighbor, anticipates for its part the messianic “realm of brotherliness” of every human being to which Rosenzweig also refers (ibid: 219) as the “covenant of a supra-natural community”: the redeemed humanity. The Jewish pure *Blutgemeinschaft* represents in advance the unity of the humankind against the Christian risk of divinizing this world with too much urgency; on the other hand, the Christianization of the peoples (not of their concept therefore), the fulfillment of which would consist in the unification of the Earth in a *Völkergemeinschaft*, would co-assist in the redemption as long as, in the face of the danger of Judaism’s forgetting of the world, it would remind Judaism that redemption is the Redemption of this world and of the humankind in it.<sup>7</sup>

## Final Remarks

In his critique of social radicalism, Plessner (2015: 42–57), in light of the political panorama of his time, identified two fundamental possibilities for community: the common origin of blood as the unifying idea of the ethnic-national *communitarianism*, on the conservatism side, and the impersonal ideal of reason on the side of communism. Both exaltations of the sphere of community, without the limitations imposed by civil society, end necessarily, for him, in violence.

In its ethnic-national form, the accentuation of ethnicity leads to a conscious nationalism and to war as the last possibility of confrontation [...]. In contrast, in its international form we find an anti-national, not ethnic communism, in the last resort adverse to blood, that pretends to realize the pacifist ideal by means of military violence (ibid: 49).

In light of the recently exposed about Rosenzweig’s critique of “messianic politics” it is possible to affirm that the thinker from Kassel would subscribe in general terms to the interpretation of ethnic-national communitarianism by

7 See Navarrete 2017b: 183–202.

Plessner, who never doubts in linking it to early Christianity, but first of all, to the Reformation of the church according to the spirit of the first Christians (ibid: 19 ff.). Just as Rosenzweig in *Hegel und der Staat*, Plessner (ibid: 49) also points to Treitschke (and in his case to Fichte) as promoters of the Christianization of the nation-State in Germany. In the end, ultimately, Rosenzweig himself (1999: 95) conceived his analysis of the messianic politics, that is, of nationalism as a historical figure of Christianity, as a “theory of war”. As we know, the Judaization of Rosenzweig was the result of his painful experience of the consequences to which precisely the ethnic-national communitarianism led: the bloodshed of the people in the land that is its own and as such is loved, or the “community with the dead” in which the love of motherland turns into (Rosenzweig 2005: 318)<sup>8</sup>. Another form of love, the love for the neighbor as oneself, grounds in Rosenzweig the impersonal community of humanity that anticipates the blood community of the Jewish people; this messianic community is, in terms of supernatural, also international because it is beyond all national distinction, but also beyond all history. For this reason, its proleptic sign must remain on the margins of the historical temporality, on the margins of the State and, as a consequence, of war: “The Jew [...] is the only genuine ‘pacifist’” (Rosenzweig 2005: 351). The community of blood of the Jewish people seems to situate itself in the middle between the ideals of the ethnic-national community and the impersonal community which Plessner confronted: it participates in the blood ties, understood in a sense much wider than what is proper to naturalism and biologism, and it irrationally founded itself in love, but it points to a nonviolent, metapolitical unification of humanity as a whole. It is not reason but faith the ideal and impersonal center on which it rests, it does not stop to be an existential community (*Existenzgemeinschaft*), even though it does not have a personal center (Plessner 2015: 52).

Rosenzweig’s conception of the Jewish people as a (messianic) community of blood responds to a metaphysical retreat strategy regarding the political and, in that sense, it constitutes at best a metapolitical critique of the political consequences that are derived from the apoliticism typical of the German spirit. As for the retreat of the political, this meta-politics is hardly distinguishable from this apoliticism, except for the fact of wanting to subtract itself from the authoritarian State to which apoliticism led to. It is a sort of subtraction in relation to the subtraction intrinsic to the apolitical: subtraction respect to the community of destiny that subtracts itself from the political sphere in which democratic politics founded on tact and diplomacy must act (ibid: 95 ff.) As such, it does not seem to be in the condition, as Rosenzweig posed (1979b: 969), to pretend to put limits to politics; of course, it would not be able to do it in an active manner. Rather, a spiritual retreat regarding politics seems to leave a free path for this to incur in excesses. The destiny of the Jewish communities of East Europe, those that would not have needed the dis-assimilation proposed by

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8 As well for Plessner (2015: 45 ff.), love is a factor of the institution of an ethnic-national community.

Rosenzweig as they did not go through the previous moment of acculturation, is a dramatic and catastrophic example of this. Rosenzweig proposal participates too much of the own romanticism the ethnic national communitarianism nurtures from. The limits of this, the limits of community and, in today's terminology, the limits of populism that in the last times, as in Weimar's, have been gaining ground everywhere, are in turn established by a solid institutional tissue that would formally guarantee the material functioning of the civil society without this causing the dissolution of the communitarian bonds, which are co-natural to human beings but not necessarily ethnic-national (Plessner 2018: 118 ff.). In such a form of human association, the community of blood so longed for by Rosenzweig could also exist, as well as its corresponding figure of humanity, but just as one among the potentially infinite possibilities of the fathomless human nature.

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## Svetovna zajednica i zajednica po krvi u *Zvijezdi iskupljenja*: kritički pristup sa pozicije antropologije Helmuta Plesnera

### Apstrakt

Ovaj rad nudi kritički pristup koncepciji zajednice Franca Rozencvajga u *Zvezdi iskupljenja* na osnovu političke antropologije Helmuta Plesnera. Prvo, predstavlja Plesnerovu kritiku socijalnog radikalizma i apolitičnosti nemačkog duha i njihov paralelizam sa jevrejskim duhom. Drugo, upušta se u prelaz iz *Hegel und der Staat* do *Zvezde* u komunitarnom ključu. Treće, zadržava se na razlici između zajednice krvi i zajednice vere kod Rozencvajga, zajedno s njegovim teološko-političkim prevođenjem u razliku između večnog naroda i naroda svijeta. Na kraju, kao zaključak pokazuje apolitičnost rozencvajgovskog predloga, a samim tim i njegovu nesposobnost da odgovori na politički problem u Vajmaru, o čijim katastrofičnim posledicama Rozencvajg nije znao.

Ključne reči: društvo, zajednica, politika, religija, krv