

Olga Belmonte García

LOVE AT THE RIGHT TIME. THE RECOGNITION OF OTHERS IN FRANZ ROSENZWEIG.

ABSTRACT

In this article we delve into the conception of love for neighbor present in *The Star of Redemption*. Rosenzweig's New Thinking is in praise of life, despite pain, and by virtue of love. Becoming oneself passes through the relationship with the other. Love of neighbor is born from the recognition of the other as close and representative of all humanity. This love requires going beyond the "-isms" that separate us; it involves getting closer to the other without denying him or her (or even oneself), but recognizing them as different. But how do we know who we should love at every moment? Prayer, Rosenzweig would say, is the one that enlightens our neighbors matured for love.

KEYWORDS

neighbor, love, recognition, time, Rosenzweig

Introduction

Love and suffering remain always close in life, they attract each other and awaken one another.¹ From this fact Rosenzweig learns that "sorrow dwells in the self, but love dwells in the you"². Love and suffering are, in fact, the origin of life. Rosenzweig turns to Talmudic texts to show how love can cause suffering (a suffering of a different kind than that caused by punishment), and also how, and in what sense, the neighbor is the only one capable of freeing the slave from pain with his or her hand.

The fragment in which he alludes to a sick rabbi stands out for its beauty. In it, he tells how the rabbi, who was convalescing, cries in front of a visitor. The visitor asks him why he is crying: is it because of his poverty, or the passing of the years? But he reckons there is no point in crying for such matters... The rabbi's answer is that he is crying because of the immense beauty he sees in the closeness of his neighbor. The visitor realizes it makes sense to cry for that and asks the rabbi if he loves his sufferings. The rabbi answers: "yes, but

1 This article is an updated revision of paragraph 2 of Chapter 4 of my book *La verdad habitable. Horizonte vital de la filosofía de Franz Rosenzweig*, entitled "La relación con el otro" (Belmonte 2012: 129–145).

2 Letter to Margrit Rosenstock (28.8.1919), in Rosenzweig 2002: 408.

not for themselves, nor for their reward". The visitor then held out his hand and the rabbi stood up, seeing that he was already healthy.³

Rosenzweig considers that this kind of experience is what breaks a system. In some cases, the self is the sick one; in others, it is the hand that heals. But can anyone heal themselves? The Talmud answer is negative: no prisoner can free himself from his prison. Rosenzweig recognizes that he would not be able to love his sufferings (even if they came from God), either for themselves or for their reward. He wonders if his sufferings will only be bearable to him when someone reaches out to him and he is aware of it. The human being never owns the ground under his feet, but each individual is sustained by the close hands of the other who welcomes him and holds him; just as he, reciprocally, holds the other. From this reciprocity in relationships man obtains the strength to stand up and help.

It is necessary to physically take the hand of the other to be certain of life and of the strength of love. The certainty of love, the trust in the other, comes from the experience of the other, whether through the gaze, the gesture or the word.⁴ Rosenzweig recalls the words Juliet said to Romeo (in *Romeo and Juliet*, II, 2; Shakespeare): "the more I give, the more I have". Whoever does not act in this way, whoever saves and economizes on his gifts or his love and the gestures that embody them, will never become who he is or who he should be, for he will never have anything that is his own, or anyone else's. This is the law of energy and the growth of life, the law of generosity, which generates life. On the other hand, the law of death is the opposite: that to each increase corresponds a decrease,⁵ a degeneration.⁶

If we pay attention to the temporality of life and love, the moment acquires a central importance, as can be seen in the thought of two authors who influenced Rosenzweig in this matter: Nietzsche and Kierkegaard. The affirmation of life, a constant in Nietzsche's thought, always implies the affirmation of each instant. But we can question whether bearing the eternal importance of each instant, as Nietzsche demands, is really possible; whether it is possible to love each and every instant (the one of immense joy as well as that of the deepest pain) so much so that we would not only tolerate, but want its eternal repetition (in the eternal return).

Loving Life

It is very difficult to live in a constant lucidity, in a continuous affirmation of the instant, when the present is given to me as a joyous gift. It is difficult to situate oneself in eternal gratitude. But it is much more difficult and almost unimaginable to live affirming each instant as unique when in misfortune, in

3 Letter to Margrit Rosenstock (16.11.1919) (ibid).

4 Letter to Margrit Rosenstock (22.12.1919) (ibid: 499).

5 Letter to Margrit Rosenstock (8.4.1918) (ibid: 108).

6 For a reflection on generosity from a philosophy of proximity, see Esquirol 2018.

the face of pain, in a present that is experienced as punishment, as an eternal non-meaning. How can we affirm the instant when it is no more than a bearer of death?

Rosenzweig also believes that we must live each instant with the greatest possible intensity, but not in order to wait and tolerate its eternal repetition, but because it may be the last (and therefore unique). God has given us, has granted us the thought and the vision of death, so that we may focus our gaze not only on the most distant, on what is the second nearest (*Übernächste*), but also, and above all, on the next instant (*nächste*).

The fact that we can die the next moment makes us focus on and limit our gaze to the next moment. Death is already always a second nearest (distant) moment, so we should not be blinded by its vision. We must conceive each next instant as a beginning from which to start, as an open door, and not as a second nearest moment to lament (a never-approaching horizon). Although we must not anticipate the Coming, we must still give it a space, a place.

This approach seems viable, for example, in the case of death itself: I can try to live my time in a lucid and authentic way when I know it is coming to an end. But this is only feasible in lives that are quiet, in the sense of not always being under the threat of misfortune, insecurity or unjust violence. In the simplest and least abused lives, a certain hope for the future can be born, especially when one is aware (based on certainty or trust) that the pain suffered is temporary. Hope or trust would then not be situated in the present moment, but in the heaven of the future, in the sphere of Redemption (of salvation).

This is what happens in sickness (when it can be cured) or in desperation over something concrete that will certainly pass. It is then that the experience of the present moment is translated into full confidence in the future moment, since one is certain that everything will pass. Meaning is not always glimpsed in the present, but also sometimes situated in the future (when the present appears engulfed in non-meaning). But how can we affirm the present moment of a life marked by pain and barbarism? How can we tolerate life, affirm it, in situations in which it is difficult even to speak of a life worth living?

In pleasant situations, in a happy existence, one can speak of the eternal affirmation (full experience) of each instant and of full confidence in the experience, as it appears in Nietzsche or in Rosenzweig. But what happens when the situation one is living is unjust, painful, tremendously unhappy? In this case it is difficult to attend to the instant as a gift, even though Nietzsche prepares our stomachs with strong aphoristic concoctions and large doses of philosophical vertigo. The affirmation of life is extremely tragic when life is clothed in the garb of death and extreme pain. The present is no longer a gift, but a punishment, whether deserved or otherwise.

How can we situate hope or trust in the present moment? It is unthinkable. If we consider situations such as those experienced in the Nazi death camps, or even today at any war, appealing to future hope or to the full experience of the present reveals itself to be very difficult. What is it that sustains those who live in a situation in which there is no longer any room for hope, what is

the force that drives us to live when the future ceases to exist, in the instant in which death appears as the nearest and most certain possibility?

There are stories of victims who tell us that, even in the blackest darkness, they were able to extract from themselves an inexplicable, uncontainable force that compelled them to keep fighting for their life. It is then that the person who lives in these conditions wakes up with the only ambition of staying alive one more day, perhaps at all costs. In this situation, atrocities can be committed, motivated in part by the suffocating environment, in which life desperately clings to itself (above all moral experience).

We can recall, for example, the extremely hard experience of those who were assigned to the Special Units (*Sonderkommando*), in the Nazi concentration camps during the Second World War. These units were created as part of the “Final Solution”. They were made up mostly of Jewish inmates, who collaborated with the Nazis in the extermination process: they led the victims to the gas chambers, gave them the appropriate orders at each moment, and then collected, processed and incinerated the bodies. They performed these jobs in order to receive privileges, such as abundant food, drink, tobacco, and most importantly, a few more months of life.

These inmates knew that they would eventually be exterminated as well. Even so, they fought for that truce, they used all their strength to stay alive one more day. Perhaps we cannot speak of hope in the future, nor do I believe that they had hope in the present. Life may cease to have meaning, but even then that does not mean that death is sought or expected as a solution. The fear of death, the unknown, the inevitable, seems to remain intact and even to emerge more intensely. One dissociates oneself from the death of others, which is generalized and pushed away from oneself (who stops seeing the other as someone with a name, with a face). All in order to postpone, avoid or flee from one’s own death. At this point we should ask ourselves what we would be capable of, not to save the life that has ceased to be life, but to flee from death, from the possibility of ceasing to be. Paradoxically, hope for a future life and anguish in the face of death come to have the same effect: the struggle for life, but at a very different price.

In situations such as those we are analyzing, we find not only examples of a stark and dehumanized struggle against death (and therefore for life itself). We also know of the experiences of those who sacrificed themselves, who chose death, in order to raise the dignity of their own life and even to preserve that of others. Does their response to barbarism mean that they did not love life enough, that they succumbed to the enemy? It is inevitable to recognize in them the saints to whom Primo Levi later referred: the saints died, only those who crossed the threshold of the human by choosing inhuman actions could save their life, as he did.

This is a common experience in those who survived, because they feel that deep down it was their cowardice or luck that saved them: they always had to give in at some point, to opt for the privileges of the Nazis; they had to deserve life at the cost of defying morality. But when freedom and moral autonomy have

been left behind, it is difficult to judge the actions of those who are threatened, persecuted and tortured in this and all wars or conflicts that still stain the world with blood. Moral assessments must be prudent and tremendously respectful when it comes to judging the actions of victims. Even so, this approach to their actions does not redeem their own consciousness of guilt.

Being Yourself with Different Others

Rosenzweig (as Heidegger would later do) understands that the fullest existence of one's own is that in which one recognizes and chooses his own possibilities. In the improper existence, on the other hand, the individual remains diluted in the "mass", in a generalized "they" (which may be the State, the multitude...): he does what "they" do, he thinks as "they" think, he reads what "they" usually read. Acknowledging the task that one's own existence presents us means to wake up (from the We) and become anxious about the eternal responsibility that is opening up to us: becoming ourselves! Something as difficult as that is necessary to achieve one's own existence.⁷

But this task is in grave danger if we do not attend to the essential relationship that links us to the other. We can consider that there is nothing in the human being, nothing that structurally-essentially leads to considering the possibilities of others or the call (to authenticity) that does not come from myself, but from God or from the other. There are authors who understand that other people's possibilities are only taken into account to the extent that they limit one's own (hence the conception of the other as a threat, present in Heidegger and also in Sartre). In such conception, there is no previous morality (as a First Philosophy) that leads me to live other people's possibilities as my own, to assume the death of others (to die for others, to hurt myself for others...). But Levinas or Michel Henry follow this second line, for they suggest that there can be in the human being an equally original tendency to take the possibilities of others as one's own.

Rosenzweig presents destiny as the most distinctive trait of human existence, that which keeps one united to the world (while the self remains isolated), and also links one to God and others. Destiny (one's mission) is what makes each individual unique and distinguishes him or her from others: each individual has a destiny of his or her own; but this destiny also reminds him or her that there is a common horizon: the destiny of all humanity. Trust in destiny means having hope in the future. Judaism embodies hope, while Christianity gives more importance to faith. But truth is achieved when hope, faith and love appear united.

Destiny is what gives unity to one's existence by pointing out a project, a mission, and linking one to the world at the same time. Possessing a destiny,

⁷ A brief Jewish history helps us to understand this idea: "In the future world, the question I will be asked will not be: 'Why didn't you become Moses?' The question I will be asked will be: 'Why haven't you been yourself?'" (Zimet 2002: 69).

man inhabits the world by recognizing it as the horizon of his realization. Death is the perfection of destiny, its fulfillment. One's own destiny is something to be experienced and something to pray for. The problem then arises again: how should we understand the meaning of those lives in which death has come too early for their realization to be possible, or the life of those who have been tortured and sacrificed? Is this kind of life an expression of perfection, the fulfillment of one's own destiny? How can one try to understand this fact without using unjust statements?

Rosenzweig believes that we should all pray for our own destiny, but always at the right time. The right prayer is only uttered when he who prays for his own destiny prays, at the same time, for the destiny of all. World and man possess in themselves the foundation of their completion, the seed of their fulfillment. The eternity of both is different from that of God, since it is fulfilled in the sphere of the Redemption and is sustained in a soil that is different from that of God.

Man's eternization is sustained on the soil of Creation (of the relationship between God and the World), which is the "and" that unites in man his being loved by God (in Revelation) and his love for his neighbor, for the world, which he recognizes as God's creature (in Redemption). The eternization of the world, on the other hand, is based on Revelation (the relationship between God and man), which is the "and" that unites in the world his character as creature and as Kingdom.

God lives in the full light in eternity; the world, at all times; man is always the same, so he has no history. Rosenzweig conceives history as prehistory. Man lacks prehistory, and therefore history. Only the world has history. But the world ceases to be temporal (historical) and enters the threshold of eternity every time it receives human acts of love. This is something that Lévinas takes up again, considering that history is totalizing, that is: it tends to reduce its object to concepts. But man cannot be reduced to a closed whole. Man only has history as a citizen of the world: as a personality.

In worship, eternity becomes everyone's time, since individual prayer is linked to the prayer of all. In worship, the Kingdom of God (represented by the figure of the Star) becomes the nearest thing, for it is illuminated by common prayer. In this way, in the right prayer the arrival of the Kingdom is accelerated: the community eternalizes the next moment, gives a lasting character to the present, making it possible for eternity to come now. But the instant is a fleeting glance, it is but a glimpse (*Augenblick*). Eternity (which does not die) cannot be given in the instant, which is fleeting, but in the "stand hour" (*Stunde*: hour; *stehen*: stand), the hour that remains. The hour contains the multiplicity of the instants, ordering them in a succession that has a beginning, a middle part and an end. The instant no longer passes, but is reborn again in each hour, and in this way, it eternalizes itself.

In *The Star*, the possibility of eternalizing the instant is pointed out, in the scope of Redemption: the relationship between man and the world. In the Primordial World (Book I of *The Star*), the mute elements appeared (Creation); in

the World (Book II), The Star appeared always renewed, as the flash of an instant (Revelation); only in the Supra-World (Book III) does the instant acquire duration, the Star acquires permanence, and thus becomes visible to man (Redemption). The Star is shown in illumination without words, in perfect understanding. The common gesture of the liturgy goes beyond the common word and expresses the union of men in the community of the act.

Although Rosenzweig tries to avoid and specifically criticizes reductions, it can be said that in the area of the Redemption there can be a certain mediation of the element of man. Rosenzweig criticizes Idealist dialectics, because it always mediates one of the elements in relation: the antithesis is only a mediation between the thesis and the synthesis. But Rosenzweig seems finally to make the same supposed mistake. As we have said before, in the Redemption (the relationship between man and the world), man responds to the love received in Revelation by loving the world (his neighbor). Man's love is, in this sense, the fulfillment of God's love.

But can it be said to be a mere fulfillment? That is, if God redeems the world through man, is the action of human love not mediated? This action would lack autonomy: man does not choose the object of his love, nor does he decide to love for himself, he only loves as a response to a previous love. Therefore, man's love for the world would be reduced to a response to the love received in Revelation and to the fulfillment of Redemption (animation of the world).

But it would be a mistake to conceive the relationships between the elements as a temporal succession. At the very moment when the soul receives God's love, it discovers itself, not as a creature (an object among objects), but as a new interlocutor, in relation to others like it: it discovers man as a neighbor. It is not a mere response; love of neighbor is a new force that man discovers in himself, when he opens himself to the other. Love of neighbor is not, therefore, mediated, as a response or as a fulfillment of something external.

The act of love has, in this sense, its own entity, as a disinterested tendency, as a "free" love of the world (of neighbor), as a full and sincere offering to the other. From this point of view, we can speak of a solidarity that does not respond to the previous explicit relationship of man with God (recognized as a determined moment in man's own life), but, rather, it comes from the direct recognition of the neighbor as close and, at the same time, as a representative of the whole humanity.⁸

It should therefore be noted that according to Rosenzweig it is possible to direct one's life towards the realization of the Good and the Truth without being explicitly referred to or open to God, within the framework of a given religion. Is it possible to live according to the commandment of love, to embrace

8 Solidarity appears in Rosenzweig's philosophy in terms of love of neighbor. I have analyzed this question in the article "La recuperación de la confianza en la filosofía de Franz Rosenzweig: el camino hacia el encuentro con el prójimo" [The recovery of confidence in the philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig: the way to the encounter with the neighbor], in the collective work: Villar, García-Baró 2004.

solidarity, love of neighbor, without having one's eyes fixed on God? We can say that it is possible, and in fact there are examples in the lives of people who have defended solidarity without linking it to a certain experience of God. Rosenzweig understands that he who, without reference to God, loves his neighbor is not far from the Kingdom. In his analysis of the relationships between the elements, he does not refer to a particular religion, but to the constitution of the human being as such (prior to any religious reference), since God created man, not religion. This explains why he did not present *The Star* as a philosophy of religion, but as a system of philosophy.

But in the context of human life, if it is not the explicit relationship with God that poses to the human being the commandment of love of neighbor, then it is worth asking what originally inspired this love in the human heart and what explains why in certain cases it does not arise. If we look at Rosenzweig's letters, we see how he points out that love of neighbor is often born outside of religion. In them, Rosenzweig implicitly maintains that man is more than his religion. It is understood that religion is a certain way of configuring the element God and the relationship that is established between God and what He is not (Man and the World). Each culture, each people, offers a figure, a certain conception of the elements, but this is not the only one.

Each human being must understand and accept that his way of conceiving the elements and the relations between them is not the only possible one (nor can he aspire for it to be) but, in order to facilitate dialogue between the different conceptions, it is necessary to prevent certain groups, cultures, religions, from being denied, silenced or rejected by others that are more present or more forceful in the way they make themselves known or affirm themselves. The basis of tolerance is to recognize the insurmountable distance that exists between my way of understanding the Absolute (God) and the Absolute itself. Only in this way will we be able to understand, with H. Cohen, that there are many ways of conceiving God, as absolute as our own.⁹

The authentic relationship with one's neighbor (love) does not know of religions, it does not respond to certain "-isms" (philosophical currents, ideologies...). A concrete theory, one's own nation, one's own religion, are the necessary foundation, but one must not make of them a "-ism" to be worshipped (a "fundamentalism", to use a term Rosenzweig did not use himself). Love of one's neighbor must be placed above love of God or of one's own nation,. But there are those who, blinded by theories, reject those who are not part of their "-ism". Even if it is through a difficult exercise of humility and generosity, one must leave aside the "-isms", since they are only a beginning and a foundation: a starting point. This implies that we must not theorize about the other, reducing it to a mere concept, but rather look at the face of the other, recognizing it as the closest thing.

Those who remain in the realm of the "we" avoid generalizations, because the "we" does not include "-isms" (even if each one has their own). Beyond

9 Cfr. Cohen 2008.

religions and prior to faith is love of neighbor, as the bond that sustains the relationship between the most diverse people. Rosenzweig affirms that he who rejects his neighbor does not flee from him, but from the “-ism” that he represents; he who distances himself from his neighbor does so because he does not have sufficient strength to overcome his hostility to that “-ism” through love of neighbor. We should not put our trust in theories, because they are only possibilities, but in facts, in reality. Reality shows the difference between beliefs. Rosenzweig’s and his friends’ roots are separate (they have different religions), but their crowns are intertwined, because they have grown up next to each other (friendship unites them). Cutting off the roots that support them (denying their own religions) would, at the same time, dry up the crown that unites them, that is, end their friendship.

We must recognize the differences, because otherwise we would be denying reality: we would renounce being ourselves or we would not let the other be. But that means respecting beliefs in all their diversity, while preserving the ties that unite us beyond them. What unites people is not religion (it is not the God of each religion), but love (present in all religions, as the basis of the link between names). Man only becomes himself through his neighbor: the “I” only becomes me after the roundabout through the “you”, when he discovers himself as a “you” in the relationship with another. This means that the one who denies his neighbor becomes artificially isolated, alone; he reduces himself to a piece of the world, every time he distrusts his neighbor. Only through love does the lover enter the heart of the beloved, discovering himself as a soul.

We must distinguish between the experience of faith and the experience of love, trying to overcome the contradiction that sometimes exists between them. This is the task that inspires *The Star of Redemption*, since it is situated in the heaven of the future, in the realm of love (of life), to which one can hope, in which one can trust.¹⁰ Even so, there are times when Rosenzweig seems to deny the other, when thinking about the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. He acknowledges that he hopes (*erwarten*) and trusts (*hoffen*) in the final conversion of Christianity to Judaism. This is something that appears clearly in *The Star*, and also in the author’s letters. In reality, the Christian is, for Rosenzweig, a Jew who has renounced his Judaism; he is a Jew who is not in good health (mainly due to his impatience), but who, nevertheless, remains a Jew.

Rosenzweig even maintains that spiritual community between Jews and Christians is only possible if the Christian allows himself to be spiritualized. But this conversion would mean falling into the error of reducing Christianity to Judaism. Rosenzweig seems to forget here that, for there to be a relationship between two elements, both must be different. Starting from Rosenzweig, but going beyond him, I consider that he who bridges (dialogues) with another religion is not the one who converts to it, but the one who approaches it, re-connects with it, without renouncing his own (if he has one).

10 Letter to Rudolf Ehrenberg (25.8.1919), in Rosenzweig 1979: 643.

Prayer Illuminates, Love Acts

Prayer is understood in Rosenzweig's thinking as a way of looking, as a form of enlightenment of the world, but does it have a practical dimension; that is, can it intervene in the order of the world? Not by itself, the author will say: only love works. Love always produces some effect, precisely because it does not seek any end (it does not pretend to be useful). The act that is performed for a certain purpose disappears when it does not reach that end, but also when it does reach it. Conversely, the action of love is blind, it only knows its end through what it touches, through what is closest to it. But it does not know the path it must follow and the dangers it must avoid. In the action of love, uncertainty and surprise are present.

The act of love is blind; but in prayer, the moment is placed in God's eyes, in the light of his face. In prayer, man asks God to enlighten his actions. The neighbor is not seen, but touched by the blind hand; the next thing is not sought, but discovered, thus orienting the direction of the act of love. Prayer is capable of raising its eyes above its neighbor and seeing the whole world that he represents; it thus teaches us to seek the next with our eyes (not with our hands).

The next one is the object of the act of love that is already "ripe to receive the soul" (Rosenzweig 1988: 300). But one can fall into the danger of not loving blindly the next one whose time has come and loving instead what a sudden illumination indicates. Prayer can, in this case, lead to acts of love that are empty, because they are inappropriate. Prayer illuminates what is far away, but love acts on what is next (neighbor). The person who prays has his own perspective, but this does not mean that he cannot be oriented towards a common goal. It is prayer that illuminates and points out to love the proper way that leads to the common goal; it brings the distant closer to the action of love. But one of the dangers lies in the possibility that love may forget what is near, what is next, and set its sights on what is above (distant).

The life that grows responds to a determined order (by Creation); but the particular soul responds to a different order (Revelation), which starts from its own perspective. God has arranged that in the life that grows the world is ordered in a single way (life follows its natural course), but there are at the same time multiple human ways of ordering the world. Man orders the world through the eyes that prayer offers him. It is therefore understood that whether or not the world is ordered according to the divine order depends on man; on him (his freedom) depends the possibility of reaching the Kingdom (by praying).

The solitary soul (who prays in solitude) cannot be ordained according to divine ordination (alone). Even if they pray for the same thing, souls remain in solitude when they pray alone. Solitary prayer offers solitary enlightenment. It is in common prayer that the basis of the common (unified) ordination of the world is found. But prayer alone does not affect the order of the world. Prayer enlightens, it is love that acts, making effective the ordination of the world. Love gives itself to our neighbors that prayer illuminates. What unites people is not so much the content of prayer as its form: the act of praying in common.

Love gives effectiveness to prayer and allows it to intervene in the order of the world: directing actions towards objects that are ripe for love. The solitude of prayer can jeopardize the action of love on one's neighbor. Impatience leads to eternalizing a still immature moment, which leads to anticipating the future in order to disguise it as the present and force its eternization.

Rosenzweig says that to avoid this we must have the capacity to wait, since God will come without us having to worry about how He will do it. Excessive attention to the future, to the instant second nearest (*Übernächste*), prevents attention to the present, to the next instant. In the same way, blind attention to the past (to tradition) prevents us from living the present fully. In this sense, Rosenzweig affirms that living moments should not be drowned in dead texts: attending to the past does not necessarily imply denying or drowning the present. The past is the soil that supports the present (like fertile land); but it does not immobilize the present, it does not render the present inert (as if it were a rock).

The possibility of tempting God, that is, man's freedom, is opened up in prayer, which illuminates acts of love. Prayer asks for light in order to recognize the opportune acts of love, so it is not love, but prayer that can direct one's gaze towards unreachable surroundings, towards untimely neighbors, thus delaying the arrival of the Kingdom. According to Rosenzweig, there is no unjust prayer because of its content, but because of the time in which it is asked. Even praying for the death of another (denying that the other is an "I like you") (ibid: 305) is not unjust because of its content (since it is already granted, for everyone has to die); but it is unjust because of its time: it asks for the fulfillment of something that has already been accomplished. What is unjust is praying at the wrong time.

But it is worth asking whether prayer alone can be unjust (inopportune), whether only the intention of committing a wrong is unjust. We must not forget that it is important to attend to and denounce the act itself. Rosenzweig understands that error can occur in prayer (illumination), but not in love, which is blind. The inopportune anticipation (of eternity) only occurs in prayer; love cannot eternalize mistaken proximities: man cannot contradict the divine order of the world. He who does not love his neighbor does so because prayer has erred in enlightenment. But we can think that this way of justifying the (mistaken) act of love, because of its blindness, is at least questionable, if one wants to recognize human responsibility in the sphere of action.

There are certain actions apparently enlightened by prayer that involve denial, even the killing of one's neighbor. It is not enough to condemn "wrong" prayer; it is also necessary to condemn its consequences, the nature of the acts it has motivated. Man not only makes mistakes in his prayers (or in his desires), he also commits injustices in the area of redemption: of the relationship with his neighbor. Rosenzweig does not make it explicit in this sense, but it is not enough to take it for granted.

In *Das Büchlein vom gesunden und kranken Menschenverstand*, Rosenzweig goes so far as to say that any violence one receives from another is because he has not prayed enough. In this work he speaks of praying and giving thanks, assigning prayer a central importance in human relations (and in the

relationship with God). But it is not enough for those who defend justice to explain the harm suffered by resorting to the insufficiency of our prayers. The executioner does not exercise violence because of an error in his eyes (in his prayers); the victim does not become a victim for not praying enough.

We must insist that Rosenzweig clearly rejected this work, to the point of refusing to publish it. This must be present in our assessments of what he says in it. Even so, it makes sense to analyze the problems it raises. We cannot fail to point out that this way of conceiving suffering is too unjust for those who suffer, for those who are hurt day by day by a life that is less and less alive. Can we say that one suffers because one has not prayed enough? It is not the one who suffers who does not pray enough; but the one who commits injustice who does not love enough, who is incapable of recognizing and affirming the dignity of the other.

Even so, that is also the line followed in the reflection on suffering in the first pages of *The Star*. Rosenzweig points out the importance of not silencing the pain of the victims, the radical importance of recognizing each concrete death, because it is the concrete man, not man in general, who dies; he does not “die” in general, but “I” die. Awareness of the pain of others, the proximity of pain (incarnated in one’s neighbor), avoids indifference in the face of suffering, prevents man from remaining blind and deaf in the face of injustice.

Each individual is called to recognize and choose his own path, in the hope that, in every moment, in every instant, the Kingdom, the Redemption, can come. Rosenzweig places the origin of man’s freedom, the basis of the possibility of choice, in his distance from God: God hides his providence so that man can thus choose between placing himself freely before him and distancing himself. Man cannot tempt God in Creation (for he does not choose to be born) or in Revelation (for he does not choose to be loved by God). God can only be tempted in the Redemption, which is the realm of human acts. But the freedom of the act, the possibility of tempting God, is given because He himself has tempted man before. God’s temptation makes possible human freedom, expressed in prayer, in which man asks God not to let him “fall into temptation”¹¹.

In this sense, it can be said that trust and faith in God are given freely, in the sphere of human action. It is precisely the awareness of being tempted by God that gives man confidence to continue to have faith in spite of adversity (as happens to Job). God’s temptation thus preserves man’s freedom: it allows him to be aware of his freedom and to believe in it. Everything depends on God, except the fear of God, which is in the hands of man’s freedom. The Commandments (engraved on the tablets) are the expression of this freedom “on the tablets”¹². In prayer, temptation on the part of God and temptation on the part of man are present. The possibility of redemption is, in a certain sense, in the hands of man, because it depends on his action. But once man decides

11 *Talmud*: Bejarot 60b; Mt 6, 13; Rosenzweig 1988: 295.

12 The original words “engraving” and “table” are written the same, although they have different phonetics. Rosenzweig uses the similarity to create this word game. See note by the translator, Miguel García-Baró, in Rosenzweig 1997: 321.

to say yes to God's will, the believer is not free in the love of his neighbor, because in him he fulfills God's love (he fulfills a commandment).

It is in the distance between the temporal and the eternal that the relationship with the instant occurs, in which eternity becomes perceptible.¹³ There is no eternal versus temporal, but the temporal inhabits the eternal; the temporal is realized in the realm of eternity. The authentic experience of time does not silence the past, the present or the future (it does not reduce one to another). A bridge between them must be built, which will allow us to illuminate and experience each moment in our life from the root of our own past, the soil of the present that we inhabit and the sky of the future that we dream of.

In one of the subjects taught by Rosenzweig the relationship of man with the past (history), the living present and the future was explored.¹⁴ The course syllabus consisted of the following sections: "The Heirs of History", in which Rosenzweig spoke of the man who doubts and the devout; "The Children of Time", which included the revolutionary and the aristocrat, the faithful and the infidel, the talented and the simple man; "The Sowers of the Future", which included the returnee and the prophet. Regarding the past, the present and the future we can move between two extremes: affirmation or denial, permanence or change (revolution). It is up to us to guide our experience of time.

Another of the courses given was presented as a conclusion to the studies at the Free Centre for Jewish Studies (*Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus*). It was entitled: "Old Answers to New Questions" (*Alte Antworten auf neue Fragen*). Here again, he tries to avoid reduction by building a bridge between the past (Creation) and the present (Revelation), which would allow us to better face the present from the lessons of the past, instead of impoverishing and limiting its understanding. We can also recall here the letter that Rosenzweig wrote to his mother, to encourage her to attend to the present and not to get stuck in the past. Rosenzweig begs her not to die before her time, but to leave the past behind and open her spirit to the future.

Praying Together

Whoever tries to judge or define the human being moves away from the concrete man in order to attend to man in general. Neighbors do not judge each other, at least not in the moment they see (look at) each other and speak. Neighbors only look into each other's eyes, but in order to see man in general, one must force one's gaze. The one who judges his neighbor inevitably distances himself from him, becoming a man alone. But the one who looks his neighbor in the eye is no longer alone. In the same way, one can be present for another only if he dares to look at him. Rosenzweig encourages us to look at our neighbor: "Look at us!" (*Sieh uns an!*)¹⁵. It is a change in the way of looking that can only be given by oneself, it cannot be forced.

13 Letter to Hans Ehrenberg, Berlin (7.6.1919), in Rosenzweig 1979: 631, 632.

14 Letter to Gertrud Oppenheim (29.9.1920) (*ibid*: 690).

15 Letter to Rudolf Hallo, Kassel (10.11.1919) (*ibid*: 652).

As we have pointed out, prayer loses effectiveness when it goes beyond the neighbor (of the next moment), so that it can equally anticipate or delay the coming of the Kingdom, which ceases to be fulfilled in the right time. Prayer fails when it illuminates proximities unreachable for love (“second nearest”) and so it ceases to have a firm ground to tread. The action of love for the “second nearest” dies when it reaches its goal, as happens to any action directed to an end. In this way, the coming of the Kingdom is distanced, for it does not come by anticipating second nearest people, but by loving what is near. We must wait for the right moment to sow and reap the fruit, since haste can lead to the loss of the harvest. It is important to wait for the right time, the opportune time; in this way man can avoid being dominated by time.

Patience is central to this approach. Impatience leads to trying to reach, or love, the farthest things. This error in prayer (or in longing) is equivalent to anticipating the future that does not yet correspond to the next moment: it means trying to eternalize moments that are still distant and untimely (wanting what is still unattainable). The exalted one tempts God’s impatience by wanting to hasten the Coming; the sinner, on the other hand, tempts God’s patience by delaying the Coming.

Rosenzweig points out that the gift of trust means “being able to lawfully offer one’s life” (Rosenzweig 1988: 316). The sacrifice ceases to be a sacrifice for the patient, who trusts and hopes, because he is not afraid to sacrifice his life, but finds its meaning in offering it (in giving himself). To be able to give one’s life, one must trust in one’s destiny and wait for the future. Rosenzweig places hope above faith and love (forces that appear to be linked to it). To Rosenzweig the Jewish are the eternal people of hope, and the Christians adopt this new teaching from the Jews.

Goethe walked alone, guided only by hopeful confidence, but without opening himself to faith and love. Goethe’s pagan prayer had as its only content his own destiny. Goethe represents the believing creature (but not open to Revelation), who avoided falling into the “too late” of the sinner and the “too early” of the exalted (his prayer illuminated the right moment) (Rosenzweig 1988: 319). Zarathustra represents the union of the sinner and the exalted one (who anticipates and delays the coming of the Kingdom), so Nietzsche did not glimpse the right moment: hence his sinking and his isolation in the most absolute solitude (ibid).

Rosenzweig maintains that only the present moment, the now, is ripe for eternity. Man can tempt God, he can love the second nearest (*Übernächste*), but he cannot eternalize it. In this sense, love of the second nearest is always an unhappy, ill-fated love. The Coming does not only overcome one when one believes in the beloved God, but also when one has the five senses awake and looks at reality, waiting for the beloved God to happen below, to give Himself in the instant.

But the Kingdom is not reached by loving God directly, but by loving God in the world, in what is near.¹⁶ For this it is essential that prayer is given at

16 Letter to his mother, Kassel (15.8.1921), in Rosenzweig 1979: 717.

the right time, that is, that it neither anticipates nor delays the coming of the Kingdom. The right prayer makes the realization of the Kingdom possible by transforming man's prayer to suit the divine order. But this prayer cannot be said alone; it must be articulated in the community. Man's destiny is only a fleeting moment in the time of the world; but at the same time, each man is an irreducible part of the world. The individual prayer for one's own destiny must be, at the same time, a prayer for the destiny of all. In this sense, the Jew learns at birth that he does not live by and for himself alone; he does not live only his own life, but that of his ancestors and of future generations.¹⁷

Redemption is the work of man and of the world, not of God, so it requires time. God is eternal, so Redemption, Creation and Revelation are all just as old to him. Man, instead, lives in the moment and the world, in the present. To him, the future is an anticipation that only slightly touches him as it unfolds. The world and man can only measure time by attending to each other: man measures it through the growth of the world and the world, through the acts of love he receives from man. Man grows in the world, and so his life depends both on himself and on the world. Man's destiny is therefore a part of the destiny of the world, an instant in the stream of time of the world.

The times of the Day of the world of the Lord the world of the Lord are, to God, experiences of himself: in it, God becomes Creator, Revealer and Redeemer. Everything that happens is, in God, current; it is not change or growth, but always Him being. God is eternally coming, that is, he always remains coming. Traditional philosophy conceived unity (the whole) as a self-evident and understandable presupposition. But Rosenzweig considers that unity only happens as unity of God, which is the end of the road.

Man is the foundation of the endurance of the world, which sometimes seeks refuge in God the Creator and sometimes expects everything from man. The world (and the man who lives in it) trusts in God's creation and has hopes in the human action, thus remaining in the opposition between nature and culture. The doubt between this trust and this expectation is the doubt out of which the world lives and which will be resolved with the coming of the Kingdom, when human and divine action will be unified. The Redemption of the world is given thanks to the Revelation of God to man; this is what transforms the human action into the work of God.

God renews his eternity beyond time, where sowing and fruit come together. Both the created being and the redeemed being are beyond the world, overflowing it. Man's created being precedes his revealed being, but the created being of the world will arrive fully in the Redemption, in which the vision is light and not a miracle (as in Revelation). In the relationship between man and the world the threshold that leads from miracle to illumination is crossed: the mystery (of Creation) and the sign (of Revelation) are illuminated by the light (the star) of Redemption.

17 Letter to Margrit Rosenstock-Hüssy (15.6.1920) (ibid: 675).

References

- Belmonte García, Olga (2012), *La verdad habitable. Horizonte vital de la filosofía de Franz Rosenzweig*. Madrid: Universidad Pontificia Comillas.
- . (2004), “La recuperación de la confianza en la filosofía de Franz Rosenzweig: el camino hacia el encuentro con el prójimo”, in Alicia Villar and Miguel García-Baró (eds.), *Pensar la solidaridad*, Madrid: Universidad Pontificia Comillas, pp. 310–338.
- Cohen, Hermann (2008), *El concepto de Religión en el sistema de la Filosofía*, trad. por José Luis López de Lizaga. Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme.
- Esquirol, Josep M. (2018), *La penúltima bondad*. Barcelona: Acantilado.
- Rosenzweig, Franz (2002), *Die “Gritli” Briefe. Briefe an Magrit Rosenstock-Huessy*. Tübinga: Editorial Vilma.
- . (1997), *La Estrella de la Redención*, trad. por M. García-Baró. Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme.
- . (1988), *Der Stern der Erlösung*. Frankfurt am Main: Editorial Suhrkamp.
- . (1979), *Gesammelte Schriften: Briefe und Tagebücher (1919-1929)*, Band I, 2. Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Zimet, Ben (2002), *Cuentos del pueblo judío*. Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme.

Olga Belmonte Garsija

Ljubav u pravo vreme: priznanje drugih kod Franca Rozencvajga

Apstrakt:

U ovom se članku upuštamo u koncepciju ljubavi prema bližnjemu prisutnu u *Zvezdi iskupljenja*. Rozencvajgova „nova misao“ pohvala je životu, uprkos bolu i ljubavlju. Doći do sebe odvija se kroz odnos s drugim. Ljubav prema bližnjem rađa se iz prepoznavanja drugog kao bliškog i kao predstavnika čitavog čovečanstva. Ova ljubav zahteva nadilaženje „izama“ koji nas razdvajaju; podrazumeva približavanje drugom bez odricanja od njega (niti od samoga sebe), već prepoznajući ih kao drugačije. Ali kako znati koga bismo trebali voleti u svakom trenutku? Molitva će biti, reći će Rosenzweig, ono što će prosvetliti naše bližnje zrele za ljubav.

Ključne reči: bližnji, ljubav, prepoznavanje, vreme, Rozencvajg