EMMANUEL LÉVINAS’ BARBARISMS
ADVENTURES OF EASTERN TALMUDIC COUNTER-NARRATIVES
HETERODOXLY ENCOUNTERING THE SOUTH

by

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This dissertation examines the scope and limitations of the re-appropriation of the term *barbarism* by modern Jewish intellectuals in conversation with Third World social movements. Emmanuel Lévinas is my paradigmatic example of this re-appropriation, as his Talmudic interpretations illuminate this process, and his work is located on the axis of the encounter between Jewish and decolonial thinking. I contend that Lévinas follows a classic line of modern European interpreters who expressed their discomfort with the description of the Jewish people as barbaric. While this discomfort can be traced within this *orthodox* interpretation of Lévinas, I argue that his particular solution for the problem can only be explained by a more *heterodox* exploration. Lévinas’ positive re-appropriation of the term is part of contextual conversations that he sustained with other peoples characterized as barbarians (i.e. Third World decolonial theorists). While this re-appropriation was originally conceived in order to establish an East-East revolutionary conversation between Eastern European rabbinical interpreters and other radical *Eastern* projects (i.e. Maghrebi Marxism) it became an East-South decolonial conversation between Jewish and Afro-Caribbean/Latino-American intellectuals. This conversation, however, ultimately challenges the apologetic Jewish re-appropriation of *exteriority* in the concert of *multiple barbarians*. I explore the limitations of Jewish thought to engage with this community and cross from an apologetic to a critical barbarism.
This dissertation, in conclusion, seeks to make an original contribution in the interrelation between Jewish and post-colonial studies. I aim to do so by first, demonstrating that the Jewish return to classical sources is historically and conceptually a decolonial counter-narrative that was influenced by (and in turn influenced) Third World discourses; second, explaining the reasons and consequences of the persistence of Jewish imagery and influences in Third World decolonial theory; third, exploring the limits of Jewish thinking and the benefits of the expansion of Jewish apologetical dialogues into barbaric critical conversations. And finally, challenging most contemporary scholarship in modern Jewish philosophy, which holds that Jewish thought and the modern re-reading of its sources can only be understood in the context of Western consciousness.
To the Barbarians of the World,

among them

Gita Stanislavsky de Salomon, Socialist Cosmopolitan Jewesses

Arnoldo Slabodsky, Working-Class Latino Jew
“[The Jewish] nation is only an ignorant and barbarous people who have long united the most sordid avarice with the most detestable superstition and the most invincible hatred for every people by whom they are tolerated and enriched.” (Voltaire, 1764)

“Force is the midway of every old society pregnant with a new one…. [Of] the Christian colonial system, M. Howitt, a man who makes a specialty of Christianity, says: ‘the barbarities and desperate outrages of the so-called Christian race throughout every region of the world …are not to be paralleled by those of any other race.’” (Karl Marx, 1873)

“It is nonsense to brand the state of the Jews at the time as barbaric, degenerate, etc. It’s really an integrated culture; it is only the individual (Maimon for instance) who becomes a barbarian by relinquishing it. If one looks at it from the outside, without knowledge of the language and present customs, it may appear barbarous…what seems decadent to a goy-who was then a pagan and is now a Christian—is the very essence of Judaism.” (Franz Rosenzweig, 1916)

“I am a native in a colonial country, a Jew in an anti-Semitic universe, and an African in a world dominated by Europe…. After fifteen whole years of exposure to Western culture, of which ten were filled with the conscious rejection of Africa, must I now accept this self-evident truth, that all these ancient and monotonous melodies move me far more deeply that all the great music of Europe…Yes, I suppose I am an incurable barbarian.” (Albert Memmi, 1953)

“The one-for-the-other is the very signifyigness of signification. How can such a research be undertaken without introducing some barbarism into the language of philosophy…and we well not have ventured to recall the beyond essence if this history of the West did not bear, in its margins, the trace of events carrying another signification, and if the victims of the triumphs which entitle the eras of history could be separate from its meaning.” (Emmanuel Lévinas, 1974)

“The real overcoming of the [ontological and dialectical] tradition… is found in the philosophy of Lévinas…. I have been able to formulate [this project] departing from a personal dialogue that I maintained with the philosopher in Paris and Louvain in 1972…. What we intend to achieve, as I expressed in a European university at the beginning of 1972, is precisely a ‘Barbaric Philosophy,’ a philosophy that emerges from the dominated ‘non-being.” (Enrique Dussel, 1973).
Acknowledgments

One of the most helpful pieces of advice a doctoral student can receive is to consider his/her dissertation a practical professional exercise, irrelevant for the world outside of the ivory tower, and with a very limited audience. The only good dissertation, therefore, is a finished product that can be sold on the market. While my dissertation has both formally and substantively been influenced by this understanding, I have continually resisted subscribing to the notion that years of work are limited to what one encounters on the cold printed page. All academic work in the humanities and social sciences constitutes a political intervention that reproduces, projects, or revises a model of society. Besides the content and form of a dissertation, there is a political orientation that renders the work meaningful. This orientation precedes and follows the content and form of the text itself. It answers why a subject merits study and of what use it can be marshalled upon completion. While the following text represents the fruits of sixteen months of eremitic work, what is meaningful in my dissertation, its orientation, is entirely indebted to conversations, dialogues, fights, monologues, and silences I encountered in, and among the cities of Durham, Buenos Aires, Toronto, Bratislava, Berkeley, Cape Town, Toronto, Jerusalem, San Martin, Amsterdam, Chicago, San Jose, Paris, Princeton, Mar del Plata, Waco, Budapest, Santiago, Saskatoon, Amsterdam, Amherst, Berlin, San Antonio, Prague, Porto Alegre, Munich, Mexico D.F., Montreal, London, and Atlanta, since my arrival to the North American academy in 2002. I would like to thank the following people for the orientation that endows meaning to my work. I thank those who helped my barbarizing Jewish thought find expression in the construction of de-colonial epistemologies.

First of all I would like to thank my family. My parents Mabel and Jorge taught me the value of responsibility in times of despair and permanent struggle in moments of certainty. My sister Silvina is the source of inspiration for my quest for justice in Jewish Latin America and my sister Deborah my accomplice in the fight against quixotic mills. With their tender hugs and timorous kisses, my nephew Alejandro and my niece Nahiara taught me that love (and Skype) can defeat distances. In addition, I would like to thank my Jewish families in North America. In Durham I was adopted by the Schulman who went out of their way to make me feel at home my first year in the US. In Waco I enjoyed having my mentor and family under the same roof. Ann, Aaron, and Isaiah made me feel like another son/brother in the Ellis household. In Toronto the Schwebel-Donsky
welcomed me as one of their own. As much as ever, Ruth, Carl, Josh, and Soshie have shown me that family can be created beyond blood ties.

In the second place, I would like to thank a network of radical scholars in the North American academy. They not only nourished me with their works but also encouraged my project. First of all, I would like to thank my mentor and the single most important influence of my research, Marc Ellis (Baylor University). He took me under his wing after reading just one short article composed in my deficient English. He invited me to work with him and since then has been my mentor in research and life. In moments of uncompromised research, Dr. Ellis is the model for any socially committed scholar. It is an honour to be his mentoree and be the one responsible to continue his project. I would also like to thank the network of Latin@ scholars who have included me in their activities, published my work, and continually offered much needed and valuable advice. Among them I would like to offer especial thanks to Walter Mignolo (Duke University), Nelson-Maldonado-Torres and Ramon Grosfougel (University of California-Berkeley), Nancy Bedford (Garret Seminary), Gustavo Gutierrez (Notre Dame University), and Lewis Gordon (Temple University). A special thanks to Enrique Dussel (UAM) who provided continual encouragement, and endless hours of conversation (even after midnight!) around the world. I am proud to think that, thanks to them, this is a Latin@ work in liberationist Jewish thought.

In the third place I would like to thank my committee. I was fortunate to have a hands-off committee who trusted in my work and allowed me to develop my own structure limiting their participation to the moment in which the criticism was crucial for necessary re-directions. Robert Gibbs, my dissertation director, took a student who was perverting texts he loves, and trusted in the pink-red-black disaporic conversation as a possible basis for a 21st century Jewish philosophy. Ivan Kalmar always encouraged my explorative theoretical framework and was the anchor to my original background in social sciences. Marsha Hewitt was an insightful critic of my work and it was her early support that convinced me of the wealth of Toronto despite its classical environment.

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Thanks to the above-mentioned people this dissertation has a clear orientation: the creation of an alternative epistemology out of the Jewish sources that replaces the Jewish people in the barbaric struggle of the wretched of the earth. I do not believe that this work will finish this replacement. But, paraphrasing Rabbi Tarfon, I still believe that it is not my duty to finish the job, but I do not have the liberty to neglect trying.

Santiago Slabodsky
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
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Introduction

a. The Problem: Setting the Stage

This dissertation argues that Emanuel Lévinas re-appropriated the discourse of imperialism, and seeks to prove that this move arose out of his conversations with Third World intellectuals. Drawing on historical and conceptual evidence of this encounter, I contend that the provocative usurpation of the term *barbarism* overcomes a longstanding Jewish discomfort with both the racialization of the other and the disqualification of alternative sources of thinking. I establish Lévinas within a line of Jewish thinkers, namely Hermann Cohen and Franz Rosenzweig, who confronted the systemic construction of the non-Western other in social theory. The members of this school of thought, which I will call *rabbinical diasporism*, excelled in the study of the Western canon but decided to face its ethical limitations. More specifically, they confronted the simultaneity of liberal assimilation and totalitarian annihilation of the other within a presumably universal Western system of thought. By positively usurping the concept of barbarism, these authors reinserted Jewish thought within a concert of decolonial voices that challenged the previously mentioned contradiction.1

The construction of the *other* in the modern Western canon is built on a paradox: on the one hand, the other is deemed to be essentially, timelessly exterior; there is a remainder of difference attributed to *nature*, which cannot be totally sublimated, despite acculturation. On the other hand, alterity is taken up within history, as the horizon of the *yet-to-be human*, or as terrain for potential

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1 The first generation of the Frankfurt School explored in length this modern interrelation between assimilation and annihilation. The School’s work is especially relevant since it takes anti-Semitism as a paradigmatic example that is presented in permanent comparison to such other colonial constructions as Black racism. See, specifically, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, “Elemente der Antisemitismus. Grenzen der Aufklärung” in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Amsterdam: Querido Verlag N.V., 1947), 199-244. Translated in “Elements of anti-Semitism. Limits of Enlightenment” in *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, Edmund Jephcott trans. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 137-172. I will further explore their work in 3.2.3. I would like to thank Professor Marsha Hewitt for guiding my doctoral work on critical theory at the University of Toronto, and Professors Atilio Boron and Eduardo Gruner for formally introducing me to this field while at the University of Buenos Aires.
assimilation; in other words, nature becomes historical as the material for Bildung. This intrinsic tension has been resolved in the Western canon in the material and bio-political repression of the other, who is welcome as a human being only if she follows the mainstream model of self-consciousness. However, in canonical philosophical accounts of the development of the Self, self-consciousness is constituted by the abstract negation of alterity. By building this paradoxical system as a pre-condition for assimilation, the power of the Self forces the alterity to abandon the resources from which she derives power, namely her literary sources, practical sociology, and historical memory. At the same time, Western discourse limits full integration by essentializing the alterity’s nature. This marks the frontier of the barbarian since she is not incorporated into the system, but is instead stripped from her previous frame of reference. The barbarian, consequently, becomes a tool for Western self-consciousness and her permanent resistance is a latent regressive threat to the Enlightenment conception of history. In modernity, the West reinforces its consciousness and overcomes that threat through the economical and geopolitical annihilation of the other, and does so by way of imperialism and totalitarianism via capitalism. Nevertheless, the barbarian deploys Western knowledge of the canon and re-appropriates its terms to subvert the system from within its discourse, but from outside its bosom. This barbarian, in other words, reclaims resources of power and defines “self-restituting barbarism” as her locus of knowledge.

2 In order to emphasize the social dichotomic determination, I will refer to the Self/Ego/Imperialism as masculine and the alterity/otherness/decolonialism as feminine throughout the entire work. In this way, I follow the Fanonian recommendations of Nelson Maldonado-Torres regarding the decolonial awareness of the Manichean nature of cultural relations between colonizer and colonized. See Maldonado Torres, Against War. Views from the Underside of Modernity (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 103-106. This dissertation has been, from the outset, influenced by personal conversations that took place between myself and Professor Maldonado-Torres during my MA at Duke University and during our encounters in Europe and the US.

3 Walter Mignolo’s self-restitution of barbarism is not coincidentally elaborated “from exteriority (in Lévinas’ sense).” See Walter Mignolo, Local Histories/Global Designs. Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 98. By following Mignolo, I overcome the only negative stance of the Frankfurt School acknowledging the importance of positively seeking an alternative to the totalitarian Hegelian system, which resisted sublation by the Western project. I will further explore this framework in 4.3.2. This work is deeply indebted to the questions that Professor Mignolo posed in class and during personal conversations throughout the last seven years.
I maintain that by explicitly tackling the role of barbarism in the Western system and recovering Jewish resources of power, rabbinical diasporism is a paradigmatic example of this barbarism. A line of Jewish thinkers offers an alternative to the discarded sources, sociology, and history of the Jewish tradition. It is only Lévinas, however, who follows the major course of this trend to re-appropriate the term barbarism and to qualify this alternative system. It is necessary that the encounter between displaced geopolitical locations (an Eastern Jew such, as Lévinas, as well as Southern intellectuals) to realize the provocation of a decolonial re-appropriation of racializing Western terminology. In this work, therefore, I show the importance of Third World thinking in Lévinas’ resolution of long-term Jewish discomfort with the term barbarism. I aim to reinsert Jewish thought within a decolonial framework, showing the importance of its dialogues with other non-Western traditions, and exploring the limits of this recovery of forgotten resources of power.4

b. The Field: An Overlooked Encounter

The analysis of Jewish thought within a decolonial framework is an overlooked area in English-speaking academia. After the explosion of post-colonial studies in the 1980s, there have been some tentative encounters between Jewish studies and this field, primarily in the realms of cultural theory, literature, anthropology, and history.5 Jewish thought, however, seems to have been

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insulated from a burgeoning encounter with decolonial criticism. This responds to the intrinsic epistemological limitations of both post-colonial studies and philosophical textual studies of Jewish thought. I discern two factors that have motivated the lack of the historical and conceptual interrelation between Jewish and post-colonial studies: one, the narrow political character of English-speaking post-colonial studies; and two, the philosophical reproduction of Jewish polarity in the context of deconstructing binary ethnographical constructions. Let me explain these otherwise esoteric interdisciplinary factors.

The first is a limitation of post-colonial studies, as it is understood in the North American (or transatlantic) branch of the field. The provincial development of the field finds its Messianic turning point with the publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* in 1978. Despite simplistic readings of his political bias, Said does include the discourse on Jews as part of his critique of Orientalization. In other words, *the Jew* is indeed seen as racialized next to Said’s major interest, *the Arab.* The problem with Said’s work is not his lack of acknowledgment of the discourse on the Jew but the absence of the decolonial discourse of the Jew. Whereas the Jew is racialized, Jewish discourse is always depicted as reproducing either colonialism (from Moses Hess to Golda Meir) or Orientalization (from Karl Marx to Bernard Lewis). The discourse that constructs the Jew is accepted as part of the racialization of imperial powers. The theoretical confrontation, however, is hardly seen as a decolonial epistemology. This disconnection between the discourse on and of the Jew

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8 See ibid., xiii (for Marx) and 315-321 (Lewis) and Said, “Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Victims” in *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Random House, 1992), 66-67 (for Hess) and 138 (for Meir). This is further explored in his late readings of Freud. See Said, *Freud and the non-European* (London/New York: Verso, 2003). The Jewish voices he brings are for the most part identified with the Western colonial project.
is largely reproduced in the best of the scholarship that further examines Jewish Orientalization and makes a critique of Jewish philosophers. This is true not only of the productions developed on European soil, but also of the innumerable non-European Jewish communities. Therefore, as critics have argued, we should remember that Said’s *Orientalism* was published within only a year of *The Question of Palestine*, an explicit anti-Zionist manifesto. The problem of the Saidian legacy is not that simplistic political bias should be defended; for example, millions of dollars need not be invested in Holocaust studies for the suffering of the Jew to be acknowledged. Post-colonial studies do accept the racialization on the Jew. Rather, it is on the contrary, a more complex, narrow conception of decolonial politics that refuses to accept the discourse of the Jew as part of the community of resisters.

Those who, from their place in Jewish cultural studies, did attempt to cross the aforementioned boundary point out the second limitation. Moreover, attempting to overcome this problem shows the limitation of Jewish philosophy. As Sander Gilman remarks, post-colonial studies are particularly interested in subverting the binary opposition of East versus West through studies of what Homi Bhabha calls “hybridity.” The Jew, however, is rarely seen in the desperate situation *in-within* locations of knowledge. She or he is portrayed, Gilman reflects, either as the defenseless prototype of the Oriental victim of oppression or as the best and most original of

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9 I am referring to the superb work of Gail Anijdar and his critique of Franz Rosenzweig. See *The Jew, The Arab: A History of the Enemy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 87-98. I return to this critique in 1.3.5 and 5.3.2.

10 Said is unable to recognize the complexity of a non-Western Jew. In his work, for example, the Tunisian Jewish decolonialist, Albert Memmi, is seen as one of those who “crossed the border” and stands with the colonizer. See Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), xx and 260-1. It is true that Said’s work mostly denounces Orientalism and does not collect decolonial voices; but the incorporation of a great number of Jewish voices among the Orientalist discourse limits the exploration of this discourse in those who follow Said, and to add, pays attention to decolonial voices. It is interesting to note that Professor Memmi, a longstanding voice in French decolonial studies, was unaware of this problem when asked in private conversation.

11 This theoretical limitation that follows the clear political stand of Said has been pointed out by Kalmar and Penslar in *Orientalism and the Jews*, xiv-xviii.


13 Homi Bhabha’s conception of hybridity has had a long-term impact in English-speaking post-colonial studies. See the explanatory introduction to *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 4.
Western triumphant cosmopolitanism. In this way, Jews are seen with an eternal and unchanging condition without being transformed by either the space they inhabit or the currents of thought that challenge the Western discourse that also racialized them.\textsuperscript{14} This is not limited to the European who represented the Jew from the model of Rothschild (or today George Soros) to the one of the Ostjuden (I permit myself to say Latino/a or Iraqi Jews).\textsuperscript{15} But, it is the American Jew who becomes paradigmatic of this opposition without \textit{within-ness}. In the post-war context, the Jew is successfully welcomed into the white society in order to reproduce the binary racializing conception of American society.\textsuperscript{16} Nevertheless, he or she is simultaneously seen through the Holocaust Industry that places him or her on the other side of the equation.\textsuperscript{17}

Contemporary American readings of European Jewish thought reproduce this polarization with new nuances. There are sociological works that explore the hybrid nature of the Jews within (and only within) Western society.\textsuperscript{18} But works in the textual analysis of Judaism insist on portraying Jewish thought as a branch of Western philosophy; Jerusalem (or Babylonian/Yavnean Jerusalem in a post-Buberian framework) is only paired with Athens. For example, one of the most brilliant representatives of the new generation of textual scholars underlines that the objective of this work is to “contest the ancient opposition between Athens and Jerusalem,” showing that there is “no gap”

\textsuperscript{14} Sander Gilman is, once again, at the forefront of the theoretical analysis of Jewish culture and thought. See Sander Gilman, “We’re not Jews: Imagining Jewish History and Jewish Bodies in Contemporary Multicultural Literature” in Kalmar and Penslar ed. \textit{Orientalism and the Jews}, 201-204.
\textsuperscript{15} Norman Cohn in his reading of \textit{The Protocols of the Wise of Zion} synthesizes the simultaneous existence of both poles. Furthermore, he explains how this incubated National-Socialist anti-Semitism. See Norman Cohn, \textit{Warrant for Genocide} (Chico: Scholars Press, 1981).
\textsuperscript{16} Karen Brodkin explains this incorporation of Jews into “white society” in order to reproduce a binary construction of racial relations in North America. See \textit{How Jews Became White Folks and What that Says About Race in America} (New Brunswick: Rutledge University Press, 1994), 1-25.
\textsuperscript{17} See the protest in the construction of American Jewish theology and philosophy in Marc Ellis, \textit{Unholy Alliance: Religion and Atrocity in Our Time} (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996). I first read the work of Prof. Ellis while writing my honors thesis at the University of Buenos Aires and since then, Prof. Ellis has become my academic, political, and personal mentor. I hope that this dissertation can justify his description of my work as a new generation of his pioneer discourse.
\textsuperscript{18} See for example, Paul Mendes-Flohr, \textit{Divided Passion: Jewish Intellectuals and the Experience of Modernity} (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996).
between the two geopolitical locations of knowledge. The pairing of Jewish philosophers with either continental (Christian German theology/philosophy) or North American (pragmatism) analysis is therefore the norm. Indeed, Jewish thinkers seem to have been able to develop Western thinking better than have their Christian counterparts. In this way, textual scholars in Jewish philosophy, overlooking historical connections with peripheral locations, disregard the hybrid nature of the Jew and its place as a reaction to colonizing epistemology. This reproduces Gilman's reflections: the Jewish thinker—especially in German and French Jewish thought—is triumphantly Western, as his or her philosophy is shown as the best work in particular cosmopolitans within Europe. Yet it is always read as unfairly vanished or perpetually traumatized (sometimes as the only sufferer) by the powerlessness during the most catastrophic event in history: the Holocaust.

It is by pairing Jewish thought with that of Delhi, Mendoza, or Fort-de-France that Jewish thought appears as neither triumphantly cosmopolitan nor completely dispossessed. Fortunately, this pairing project is not only conceptual, but also historically accurate. Post-colonial research and decolonial discourses that emerge from the aforementioned locations of knowledge (India, Latin America, and the Afro-Caribbean) have been particularly interested in relating their studies with Jewish authors and Jewish experiences simultaneously. As such, they revise the conception of

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19 Martin Kavka, *Jewish Messianism and the History of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 9. My project differs from the brilliant work of Kavka as he thinks that Western thinking can be used in favor of a “Jewish project” within the West. I intend, contrarily, to show that that Western thinking should be “stood on his head” before a Jewish re-appropriation of it is possible (the terminological elective affinity is not a pure coincidence but an explicit geo-epistemological stand).


21 Among those writings I return to Albert Memmi’s work. In his classic portrayal of the binary opposition between “colonizer” and “colonized,” the Jew is a clear example (alongside but more relevant than the Italian) who is seen as part of both worlds. The hybridity, in this work, is one of the main characteristics of the Jew. See Memmi, *Portrait du colonisé: précédé du Portrait du colonisateur* (Corrêa: Buchet/Chastel, 1957) 22-25 and 159. Translated in *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (New York: Beacon Press, 1992), 13-15 and 122. I thank Prof. Memmi for his time in Paris during the summer of 2007 when I was writing this dissertation.

22 This is not limited to the German Jewish case. Going beyond textual studies, intellectual historian Samuel Moyin depicts the influence of German theology on Emmanuel Lévinas’ conception of the other and not, as it is commonly understood, by the Jewish thought of Hermann Cohen and Franz Rosenzweig. See Samuel Moyin, *Origins of the Other: Emmanuel Lévinas. Between Revelation and Ethics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).
Jewishness and Judaism as the limit of European thinking by reinserting “the Jew” and Jews into a decolonial framework. The Jewish thinker becomes not only the prototype of hybridity but also a conversational partner owing to common experiences that give rise to shared tools of analysis and values. Voices in three trends of thought in pre- and post-Saidian studies follow this pattern: Indian subaltern studies, Latino trans-modernity, and the Caribbean existentialism.

The two major voices of the Indian school of subaltern studies find theoretical departures from Jewish thinkers. Gayatri Spivak is originally known for her translation of Jacques Derrida’s De la Grammatologie and for the popularization of German cultural critic Walter Benjamin’s reading history against the grain, a key theme in her celebrated essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Likewise, Homi Bhabha departs from Theodor Adorno to identify his ethnicity, Parsi, as “Jews of the East.” The school of transmodern Latin American studies delves even further into this logic. Walter Mignolo finds in Max Horkheimer virtually the only example of a European-born borderline gnosis, and reads Jewish racialization as key factor in the beginning of modernity (next to African slavery, Islamic expulsion, and Native genocide). Likewise, Enrique Dussel departs from Emmanuel

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23 Hannah Arendt has been particularly influential in the development of the difference between Judaism (as the narrow orthodox definition of religion) and Jewishness (as the inescapable existential condition). See these definitions in the letter that Hannah Arendt wrote to his mentor Karl Jaspers on the 7th of September of 1952 in Hannah Arendt, Karl Jaspers: Briefwechsel 1926-1969 (München: Piper, 1985), 233-238 Translated in Correspondence, 1926-1969 Lotte Kohler and Hans Saner ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1995), 196-201. A critical appraisal can be found in Richard Bernstein, Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Question (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 27-30 and 184-188.

24 Subaltern studies began as a historiographical school in the 1980s under the leadership of Ranjit Guha, and has gone on to lead trends of literary thought, anthropology, and philosophy. The original collection of texts that show the related, but Said-independent, line of thinking can be found in Guha ed. Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982-1996). In later North American developments of the school, the Saidian imprint can be easily traced. I would like to thank Professors Walter Mignolo and Teresa Berger for guiding me on my first critical readings of this school.

25 See the translation of Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976). The original text can be found in De la Grammatologie (Paris Éditions de Minuit, 1967).


27 Mignolo, Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking, 98 and 146. In a private conversation I sustained with him in San Antonio in 2004, Prof. Mignolo also mentioned that one of the most important turning points of his life was his reading and deep identification with ‘Gregorio’ (the conversation was in solid Spanglish) Samsa, Kafka’s principal character in the Metamorphosis. We will further comment this case in 4.3.2.
Lévinas to decolonize the European orientation of Latin American philosophy. 28 Furthermore, he encourages Latin Americans to abandon Athens and depart from Jerusalem to construct a liberationist movement. 29 Lastly, Caribbean existentialism (an extension of the Negritude movement) also departs from Jewish experience and texts. Aimé Césaire’s reflections on colonialism depart from reflections on the Holocaust. 30 His heir, Frantz Fanon, evaluates blackness in permanent comparison to the (Sartrean) inauthentic Jew, while confronting the legacy of both Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud. 31

c. The Framework: The Scope of Jewish Thought

The bond between decolonial theorists and Jewish thinkers is easily traceable. The problem, however, is to explore the extent to which Delhi, Mendoza, and Fort-de-France take from those Jewish thinkers the Jewish character of their work. In other words, I am asking about the extent to which Benjamin, Horkheimer, and Derrida represent Jewish thought (Jerusalem) as opposed to—based on their assimilation into their surrounding culture—a provincial reading of Western thinking (Athens). In other words, who can claim license to speak for Jerusalem. This question by itself implies a strict separation between Jewishness and Judaism, and requires an exploration of the limits of Jewish thought. I will never dispute that Isaac Deutscher is right when he contends the existence of an extended line of Jewish rebels who find Judaism “too constraining,” engaging in the liberation of all mankind as a secularization of Jewish prophetic discourse; the influence of these thinkers, Karl

29 Dussel, “Autopercepción Intelectual de un Procesor Histórico” Anthropos 180 (September-October 1998), 17. I explore this assertion in greater detail in 4.2.1.
30 Aime Césaire, Discours sur le colonialism (Présence africaine, 1955), 39-54. Translated in Discourse on Colonialism (New York University Press, 2001), 41-56. I further explore this in 4.4.2. I would like to thank Professor Lewis Gordon for his encouragement for the study of Afro-Caribbean and Jewish thinking as interrelated.
Marx or Leon Trotsky for example, on Third World revolutionaries is known. The fact is, however, that there is no way to discern if it is the Jewish character of their proposal (as if it could be compartmentalized) that influences decolonialists. After all, non-Jewish organic intellectuals such as Antonio Gramsci and Mao-Tse Tung have been as influential as have the above-mentioned Jews in Third World thinking.

Therefore we need to examine that was the Jewish difference of these authors, and not general topics of Marxism or post-modernism, what influenced de-colonialists. Naturally, the essentialism of pure Judaism stripped from its context would just be a recreative academic game. But a narrow definition of Jewish thought with which to probe the Jewishness of the authors is closer to what becomes relevant for decolonial theorists. In this dissertation, I propose to use this narrow definition of Jewish thought to explain that is the Judaism embraced in the Jewishness of some of these intellectuals that captivated decolonialists. Paradoxically (or not), it is this narrow definition of the Jew that can elucidate how the Jewish difference of the non-Jewish Jews has been of such interest to Third World thinkers.

I argue that this strict definition of Jewish philosophy is one that fulfills the requirement of three competitive definitions of Jewish thought. To construct this definition I take and complement the model proposed by Raphael Jospe in his article “What is Jewish Philosophy?” In this text, Jospe explores three different schools of thought that define the scope of the field; he calls them formalism, essentialism, and contextualism. I shall explore the requirements of each and conclude with both a selection for the case in this project (Lévinas) as well as a justification.

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34 In other words, and as one of my rabbinical mentors used to qualify, such actions that fall far from ortopraxis: ‘intellectual masturbation.’
35 Raphael Jospe, What is Jewish Philosophy? (Tel Aviv: The Open University of Jerusalem, 1988).
The first school of thought is formalism, as represented by the original work of Jacob Klatzkin and complemented by some of Jospe’s contemporaries. Formalism interprets Jewish philosophy as defined by its external structure and not by its content. The two examples brought forth by Jospe are the linguistic and biographical components of an author or a work. Jewish philosophy, as such, is written in a Jewish language and/or by a Jew. Jospe reflects that the first criteria should be discarded, as major works of the Jewish tradition were not written in Hebrew (or Aramaic) but in host languages such as Arabic, German, or Latin (even Aramaic). He rescues, however, the necessary criteria of the Jewish identity of the author as a pre-condition (albeit not a sufficient factor) to understand the work as Jewish philosophy. In this case, Jewish philosophy is written, at minimum, by a Jew, but there is no real analysis on its content. In this way, Jewish philosophy is not a philosophy of Judaism, but a philosophy of a Jew.

The second school of thought, essentialism, recognizes that Jewish philosophy should be a philosophy of Judaism. The model that Jospe takes as his major example is the work of Julius Guttman. The essentialist school defines Jewish philosophy according to its content. Jewish thought has an essence (particular problems and paths to deal with these questions). The difficulty with this position, Jospe argues, is that it assumes the ahistoricity, uniformity, and acontextuality of Jewish philosophy. In other words, the center is unchanging; there are common, inviolable agreements in the Jewish tradition, and time and space do not influence the school of thought. Writing in the 1980s, however, Jospe does not contemplate a provocative and more sophisticated re-edition of this trend, as is the school of textual reasoning that arises in the 1990s and 2000s. According to this school, the essence of Jewish philosophy is the communal use of Jewish sources.

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36 See the original work of Klatzkin in *Thesaurus Philosophicus Linguae. Hebraicae et Veteris et Recentioris* (Leipzig/Berlin: Eschkol 1928, 1933).
38 Julius Guttman, *Die Philosophie des Judentums* (Munich: Ernst Reinhardt, 1933).
39 Jospe, *What is Jewish Philosophy?*, 46-65. The analysis of Jospe is more complex, but I simplified it in order to re-evaluate the school through textual reasoning.
and the way of reading them according to rabbinical methodology. As the divinity is *inscribed in the text* (as opposed to being incarnated in history in a Christian context), the interpretation develops an oral tradition already existent in the original text. The sources are not immutable but *permanently unfolding*. Although discussions can be carried to the extent in which the interest in a Jewish method does not place them within the school of formalism, the unchanging essence of Judaism through the acceptation of the oral law permanently unfolding, places this school within essentialism. At the same time, by defining itself as post-modern and concerning itself with the context of social application of the lessons learned, this essentialism overcomes the *ahistoricity and uniformity* of previous accounts.\(^{40}\) In this way, we learn from formalism the importance of the historical Jewish *biography*, and from essentialism the *continually developing literary essence* of Judaism.

The third school of interpretation that Jospe offers the reader is the *contextualization* of Jewish thought. According to the model of Isaac Frank, the chief author of this trend described in Jospe’s account, three characteristics would delineate a particular text as Jewish philosophy.\(^{41}\) First, the work should arise from a *collective Jewish experience* second, it should be aimed at a *Jewish audience* and should *advance* Jewish thought; and third, it should be *successful* in doing so. Frank analyzes a complicated case (the work of Baruch Spinoza) and concludes that the first and third criteria are easily traceable, but the second falls into the realm of subjectivity, and is therefore a model with a difficult and problematic application. Jospe offers a resolution, that of replacing the second characteristic with the idea of *the encounter*. In other words, Jewish philosophy should rise from a *collective Jewish experience*, should be *successful in influencing Jews*, and should be *part of an encounter between Judaism and other traditions* (allowing us to understand the natural hybridity of Jewish thought).


\(^{41}\) Isaac Frank, “Spinoza’s Onslaught on Judaism” in Judaism vol. 28, N. 3 Spring (1979) and “Was Spinoza a Jewish Philosopher” in Judaism v. 28, n. 3, Summer (1979).
Naturally, Jospe is thinking that this encounter is between Athens and Jerusalem, but I will show that Athens can be replaced with Delhi, Mendoza, and Fort-de-France.42

A narrow definition of Jewish thought, I contend, should simultaneously follow the criteria of the three schools. It should be biographical (written by a Jew), literary (read according to rabbinical Jewish texts with a particular Jewish method of textual development), and contextual (should arise from the collective experience of the Jewish people, should influence Jewish people, and be a result of an encounter of Judaism with another location of knowledge). Of each of the cases, we mentioned in the previous section, there is only one name that fulfills all these characteristics: Emmanuel Lévinas, the Lithuanian-Jewish Talmudic interpreter and philosopher. He will be the paradigmatic case of the relationship between a narrow definition of Jewish thought and decolonial theory. First, he is biographically a Jew; he is born in the East (Kovno), was displaced after the Russian Revolution, and was singled out as a Jew during his internment in a prisoner-of-war camp during War World II while his wife and daughter were hidden in Paris.43 After the war, he directed the École Normale Israelite of the Alliance Française (ENIO) for more than twenty years. Second, one of the best-known features of Lévinas (and the most important for our work) are his Talmudic interpretations that followed his Mitnagdeic heritage, the influence of a teacher (Mordechai Shoushani), and his career in education in classical Jewish readings at the ENIO.44 Finally, his work is also contextually Jewish. His Talmudic interpretations were written “under the presentiment of the Holocaust” (a Jewish collective experience), presented at the Colloque des Intellectuels Juifs de langue

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42 Jospe, What is Jewish Philosophy? 63-72. It is not a coincidence that the author from whom Jospe draws the conception of the encounter is native from a Southern location: Shalom Rosenberg, an Argentine Jewish philosopher and leading voice (and long-time head of) in the department of Maghreb-Israel (Jewish thought) at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. It is important to notice that Rosenberg brings this interconnection in most of his works. Just as an example in one of his most known texts, God and Evil in Jewish Thought, the first source is a Spanish book printed in Buenos Aires that defines his philosophical framework. See Tov-va-ra’ba-hagut ha-Yehudit (Tel Aviv: Matkal/Ketsin, hinukh rashi/Gale-Tsahal, Misrad ha-bi ta hon, 1985), 7.

43 This dissertation is not a work in intellectual history; my interest is mostly conceptual as my focus will be on the essentialist and contextualist dimensions. The reader can, however, trace Lévinas’ biography in superb works such as Marie-Anne Lescouret, Emmanuel Lévinas (Paris: Flammarion, 1993) and Salomon Malka, Emmanuel Lévinas: La vie et la trace (Paris: Albin Michel, 2002).

44 This essential dimension will be fully developed in the second chapter of my dissertation.
française (for a Jewish audience), and deeply influenced Jews (as I will demonstrate, it was ex-Marxist Jews who founded the *Institut d'études lévinassiennes*). Finally, as I will argue here, his work originated with an *encounter*, not with the Greeks but with *other* barbarians.

**d. The Case: The Encounter of Lévinas and Dussel**

Lévinas’ work is the concentration of my analysis. In this research, I employ this strict definition of Jewish thought to explain that the Jewishness of the authors attracted the decolonizers. I will show, however, that modern Jewish thought can only be explained when we complement the interior reading of the tradition (an orthodox understanding) with more heterodox encounters.

Lévinas encountered a young and “sympathetic group” of southern intellectuals, among them Enrique Dussel, in Paris and Louvain in 1971 and 1972. He remembers the conversation with great interest. After acknowledging he “met Enrique Dussel,” he continues, reflecting upon how “there is a very interesting attempt in South America to return to the spirit of the people...I am very happy, even proud when I heard the echoes of my work in this group. It is a fundamental approval. It means that other people have also seen the ‘same thing.’” The echoes of Lévinas’ work can be traced to 1973, as soon as one year after the encounters. Dussel, one of the organizers of the encounters, writes: “the real overcoming of the [ontological and dialectical] tradition...is found in the philosophy of Lévinas. Our overcoming will consist in rethinking the discourse from Latin-America.” His project, according to Dussel, departed “from a personal dialogue I maintained with the philosopher in Paris and Louvain...what I expressed in a European university at the beginning of

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45 This contextual dimension will be fully developed in the third chapter.
46 This contextual dimension will be fully developed in chapter four.
1972 is precisely a ‘barbaric philosophy,’ a philosophy that emerges from the dominated non-being.”49 By then, this non-being was what Lévinas called *exteriority.*50 Lévinas, influenced by this conversation, was going to answer his new partner in conversation. One year after Dussel’s Lévinasian declaration in *America Latina, Dependencia, y Liberación,* Lévinas published *Autrement qu’être ou Au-délà de l’essence.* In the last pages of the text, (as if the late incorporation of the term should be emphasized) Lévinas writes that the only possibility of accepting responsibility for the other is to “introduce some *barbarism* in the language of philosophy.”51 His project, the exploration of the traces of what is beyond being or beyond essence, is one with a “*barbarous title.*”52 Lévinas argues that he would not have even “ventured to recall the beyond essence if this history of the West did not bear, in its margins, the trace of events carrying another signification, and if the victims of the triumphs which entitle the eras of history could be separate from its meaning.”53

This encounter was far from the sole conversation between Lévinas and Dussel. A few years later, Dussel turned to Lévinas for the reduction of his conception of the other to Jewish suffering.54 Lévinas answered Dussel, making use of the barbaric sources (a Talmudic reading of *Pesahim 118b*) to show the revolutionary character of the barbaric Jewish tradition. According to Lévinas, the community of Israel stands next to *other* barbaric peoples (of Egypt and Ethiopia) and the suffering and starved hope for a “regenerated humanity” that should confront, defeat, and condemn the egotistic “wild beast of Rome,” also known as “the fraternal West” or “America.”55 Lévinas, more than thirty years later, remains the leading voice for a new barbarian living within the “wild beast”:

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49 Ibid., 125.
50 This is the major description of what cannot be sublated within the system in Emmanuel Lévinas’ first work (*Totalité et Infinite*). This will be explored further in the second chapter.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
54 Dussel, “Para una Fundamentación Filosófica de la Liberación Latinoamericana,” 8. This is further explored throughout the fourth chapter.
the Latino/a in the United States. Theoretical voices of the barbaric claim that the “self-restitution of barbarism is a theoretical locus,” learning from “the exteriority (in Lévinas’ sense).” Lévinas’ exterior barbarism, therefore, became an integral part of the Latino-American and Latino/a (Third and Fourth World) decolonial discourses. At the same time, his own re-appropriation cannot be explained without the supposedly heterodox affinity between Lévinas and this anti-imperial trend of thinking.

**e. The Concept: Barbarism**

Lévinas and Third and Fourth World discourses were able to visualize ‘the same thing.’ I contend that this commonality was based on their confrontation with the Western use of the term barbarism. In this manner, they took an alternative stance of another long-term revolutionary line of thought that was as Jewish as it was influential in decolonial discourses. From Karl Marx to Max Horkheimer via Rosa Luxemburg, Marxist Jews have confronted the problem of barbarism by inversing the term: the barbaric was not the dispossessed colonized, but rather was the cruel empire. Marxist Jews inverted the term without changing its negative connotation. Lévinas and Dussel then re-appropriated the concept, portraying it positively with the use of those resources that were discarded by the West. The question that remains is why barbarism was the scenario of this encounter between Jews and Third World thinkers.

I contend that barbarism stands out as one of the most provocative rhetorical resources of imperial projects. From early antiquity, it emerged as a tool for self-consciousness and the creation of a fixed nature of the other (a natural slave); in the early Medieval Ages, it was a real threat for the

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57 With this approximation to Lévinas, I revise the work of my own teachers showing that Lévinas not only sees the other disrupting the path of the Self, but she also becomes a ground for knowledge. See the comments on the supposed limitation of Lévinas in doing so in Maldonado-Torres, *Against War*, 183.
58 This is one of the major problems developed in the third chapter of my dissertation.
empire since it can actually can make history regress (it is not the naive bon savage that is naively waiting for civilized illumination); and, from the late Medieval Ages to the Modern era, a wide range of others continued to be identified as barbarians. Some of these examples are Natives (by Gines de Sepulveda), Arabs (by Thomas Aquinas), Jews (by François-Marie Arouet, better known as Voltaire), and Africans (by George W. Hegel). Let me briefly expand on the first two periods; later, I will explain in more depth the Modern conception of pan-barbarism that includes, among others, Natives, Arabs, Jews, and Africans.

The term barbaroi emerged during the recounts of the mythical Trojan wars and became popular in Athens during the confrontation with the Persian Empire (between the sixth and fifth century BCE). The political results of this popularization were threefold. First, it was an exercise in self-definition to structure a community against foreign invaders. Second, it served as an attempt to universalize the provincial ideal of Athens in the pan-Hellenic model. Third, it helped to legitimize the “natural slavery” of the enemies. Even though, etymologically, the term refers to those foreigners who were unable to speak (Greek), it also quickly expanded to refer to a negative idealization of political organizations, sexual behaviors, and cultural customs. Whereas the Greek was democratic and dignified in costumes, the barbarian was tyrannical, cannibalistic, and sexually perverse. Aristotle, in his Politics, further rubricated this binary opposition. The philosopher, quoting Euripides, wrote that their costumes show that "they are a community of slaves....Wherefore the poets say, it is meet that Hellenes should rule over barbarians; as if they thought that the barbarian and the slave were by nature one." From the very beginning, barbarism has been a practice in self-consciousness, a creation of a reductive umbrella for all of the contrary others, and the moral justification of their slavery under the (self-created) Greeks.

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60 Aristotle, Politics, 1252b. See further commentaries in Hall, Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-definition through Tragedy, 164-165.
During Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, the concept of barbarism achieved a new dimension. For centuries, Celtic and German threats of Romanic *civilitas* inspired the creation of a single denomination; all the enemies helped to unify Christians and pagans in defense of the *pax romana*. Rome, despite Christian cosmopolitanism, still defined itself in a clear “ethnic sense.” The barbarian and the Roman were seen as the opposition between man and animal in a context in which the barbarian was a real threat to “civilization.” Augustine of Hippo, breaking with Aristotelian monopoly, hoped for the barbaric reform through conversion, and the effective incorporation of the conquistadors into *civilitas* lessened the relevance of the concept of barbarism between the eighth and fifteenth centuries. Muslims, the enemies, were seen more as a heretic sect than barbarians were, but as soon as Christians attempted to re-conquer Europe, Arabs in North Africa and the Ottoman Empire started to be qualified as barbarians. To Aquinas, who returned to Aristotle years before, these barbarians were unable to change their nature and to submit to natural law. This move back to Aristotle meant that the barbarian was, once again, unable to reform. In the Middle Ages, the threatening nature of the barbarian was reinforced and the late, rational return to Aristotle meant the racially fixed nature of the other.

In this context of early colonial expansion, a major debate took place in Sevilla and Valladolid. In inquisitorial Spain, Gines de Sepulveda and Bartolomé de las Casas debated the nature of the newly discovered Natives. Juan Gínés de Sepúlveda, armed with Aristotle’s *Politics* he had just translated, wrote *El Tratado de las Guerras Justas contra Los Indios* in 1547. In this text he justifies the mistreatment of the Natives with the argument that it is natural that the “most powerful and most

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62 Ibid., 380.
63 Ibid., 382.
64 Ibid., 390.
65 Ibid., 398.
66 Ibid.
perfect rules over the weakest,” supporting himself with the biblical Proverbs that state “he who is stupid should serve the wise man.” Following the Aristotelian definition of barbarism, he defines the Natives as “barbarous and inhumane people who have no civil life and peaceful costumes.” As if to emphasize the modern paradox, Sepulveda charitably commands Christian civilization to at once both “destroy and educate these inferior people.”

In the same context, the colonizer confused Jews and Natives, and a plot led by the Jews was integral part of the collective imaginary from Spanish to French imperialism. This very plot was to be recovered in the Protocols of the Wise of Zion and the incubation of the National Socialism of Germany in the last century and a half. Revisiting the Enlightenment in pre-imperialist France, Voltaire published his Dictionnaire philosophique in 1764. Voltaire, one of the luminaries of the Enlightenment and an anti-clerical champion of civil liberties and religious freedoms, includes an entry on Jews in his work. He defines the Jewish people as “an ignorant and barbarous people who have long united the most sordid avarice with the most detestable superstition and the most invincible hatred for every people by whom they were tolerated and enriched.” Voltaire was but a single link in the long chain of categorization of non-Westerners as barbaric. Jews were clearly included within the usage of barbarians, even by champions of human liberty.

The next power-to-be, the state of Prussia, finds its crystallization in the system of Georg W. Hegel. There are known Hegel readings in which the Spirit achieves full consciousness and re-encounters materiality through its triumphant march in history. The people who contributed to history are, in Hegel’s terms, sublated. There have been a number of peoples, however, unable to

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68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
71 Ibid. See Norman Cohn in note 15.
contribute to history. In his *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte* (1837), Hegel writes about the “African man.” According to Hegel, the African man has always lived in a stage of “barbarism and has continued to remain in this state up to the present day. The Negro is the example of animal man...the Africans have not yet attained this recognition of the universal, their nature.”73 As we can see, there is a clear line of understanding of the barbaric connecting Greece and modern imperialism. Barbarism, therefore, is a concept utilized for self-consciousness, to create an aegis, which gathers all enemies, and one that recognizes and maintains an impression of threat to the security of the empire. The interconnection among Arab, Native, African, and Jewish characterization of barbarians found its final step when the Maghreb inhabitants (mostly Muslim Arab Africans, but also Jewish) were characterized as barbarians or berbers; the Mediterranean coast defined as the coast of Barbary. It is no coincidence, therefore, that this was the term that diverse others, among them the Jews, re-appropriated in their counter-narratives.

f. The Methodological Orientation: Counter-narrative and Elective Affinities

This dissertation explores the scope and limitations of a broad decolonial encounter, which re-appropriates the terms of the center with the content of the displaced sources of thought. In the next paragraphs, I explore a methodological orientation that is able to cover the breadth of this analysis. I sustain that a framework of *decolonial elective affinities of conceptual counter-narratives* permits the interdisciplinary passage from the analysis of the historical to the inquiry over the philosophical, via

73 G.W. Hegel, “Der Naturzusammenhang oder die Geographische Grundlage Der Weltgeschichte” in *Vorlesungen Über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte* (Hamburg: Feliz Meiner, 1955), 218. Translated in “The Natural Context of the Geographical Basis of World History” in *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, Johannes Hoffmeister ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 177. It is important to mention that this is the first time in my genealogy that peoples are qualified simultaneously as savages and barbarians. I opt to use the term barbarian for its connotation beyond the particular case. For a critical approach to Hegel’s conception see Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, *Achieving Our Humanity: The Idea of the Postracial Future* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 24-25.
the structure of sociology of knowledge; from the descriptive analysis of textual adaptations to the construction of critical theory, through the problem of the barbaric encounter; and, from Jewish studies within traditional frameworks to a decolonial theory that includes this tradition within the barbaric forces, via a revision of the Jewish history of ideas.\textsuperscript{74}

Let me begin by developing a background for the methodological unity of my dissertation: the re-appropriation of the terms of the enemy within Jewish studies. The subversion of the other’s concepts in order to confront official history is not a novelty in the contemporary study of Jewish thought and culture. In the 1980s, Amos Funkenstein coined the term \textit{counter-history}. He did so by critically departing from Walter Benjamin’s, “Theses on the Philosophy of History.”\textsuperscript{75} For Funkenstein, the function of \textit{counter-history} is “polemical.... [Its] method consists of the systematic exploitation of the adversary’s most trusted sources against the grain.”\textsuperscript{76} In other words, there is an appropriation of the other’s sources and concepts in order to reconstruct his or her identity, thus “destroying the identity of the other.”\textsuperscript{77} The diversity of his case is surprising as he includes movements that defied a center (such as the Jewish revision of the history of Jesus circa of the seventh century BCE or the Marxist revision of capitalism in the nineteenth century), powers in confrontation with each other (the Protestant’s revision of Church history in early modernity), and clearly oppressive systems (the Nazi construction of the Jew and, in his courageous perspective, the Zionist construction of the Palestinian).\textsuperscript{78} Disregarding the various levels of asymmetry, Funkenstein

\textsuperscript{74} In my second chapter I will suggest that the development of a counter-narrative is not exclusive of North American Jewish studies but, with different names, has been developed in Afro-American Studies (Audre Lorde) and, perhaps even more interestingly, Afro-Jewish Studies (Lewis Gordon and Anne Gordon) as well. See 2.2.1 for complete bibliographical information.

\textsuperscript{75} Not coincidentally, only a few years later, the same proposal of Benjamin was the source that Gaitry Spivak employed within subaltern studies to study Indian peasants. This connection, as far as I know, has been missed by Jewish and decolonial thinking. Original texts can be found in, for example, Amos Funkenstein, “Anti-Jewish Propaganda: Pagan, Medieval and Modern,” \textit{Jerusalem Quarterly} 19 (Spring 1981): 56-72. I will focus, in particular, on the later re-edition of the questions as it is explained in “History, Counter-History and Narrative” in \textit{Perceptions of Jewish History} (Berkeley, Calif., 1993), 22-49.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 39.

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 36.

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 40-49.
establishes that all counter-histories are an unethical “distortion of the adversary’s self-image, of his identity, through the deconstruction of his memory.” In other words, the location from where this counter-history is generated is not important, neither is whether its function is to oppress or defend the other. The existential condition of the historian of ideas is irrelevant to the required professional ethics.

His student, David Biale, revises this question with an internal critique of his mentor. By doing this, he proposes an alternative conception of counter-history. Whereas it is clear, Biale reflects, that Funkenstein “despise[s]” these schools, it is less so on what grounds he rejects them. The student asks whether these proposals are unethical because of their social implications (“the questionable ethical motivation in the negation of the other’s identity”) or their unprofessionalism (“reality does not shine through?”). Biale, acknowledging the center-confronting potential of a counter-history, shows that even historiographically speaking counter-history is not unprofessional. To arrive at this conclusion he proposes to re-examine the relationship between revisionism and counter-history. Whereas “the revisionist proposes a new theory or finds new facts, the counter-historian transvalues old ones.” By doing so, the historian brings to the debate alternative approaches that illuminate other histories. The counter-historian does not find truth in new facts, but instead “finds the truth in a subterranean tradition that must [be] brought to light.” This history “lies in a secret tradition,” uncovered by the counter-historian. In this way, counter-history can be recognized as a subterraneous tradition that rebels against the sublation of past and present communities.

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79 Ibid., 36.
80 See the original use in his dissertation later published as Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History (Cambridge, Mass., 1979). The particular text I will develop is his response is “Perceptions of Jewish History: David Biale, “Counter-History and Jewish Polemics against Christianity: The ‘Sefer toldot yeshu and the Sefer Zerubavel Jewish” Social Studies 6.1 (1999), 130-145.
81 Ibid., 130.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid.
Michael Mack puts forth this new conception of counter-history, understanding the relevance of systemic Jewish constructions to the development of this subversion.\(^\text{85}\) Jewish philosophy, as such, is included as the referent of the secret tradition. Mack departs from Funkenstein and Biale’s historiographical revision and coins a new term: counter-narrative. By counter-narrative, Mack means “a reversal of dominant conceptual narratives, whereas counter-history focuses on a temporal (that is, historical) reversal.”\(^\text{86}\) Mack escapes the strict historiographic revision and makes clear the normative import of the analyses of the conceptual responses to Western systems of thought. The primary significance lies in the simultaneous revision of what happened, what can be thought, and from where (or from whom) it can be thought. Whereas Mack analyzes the discourse on the Jew (Kant, Hegel, and Wagner), he centers his analysis in the discourse of the Jew.\(^\text{87}\) In other words, the “critique of this pathological pseudotheology” includes, for example, Cohen and Rosenzweig, and extends to Lévinas.\(^\text{88}\) This new project overcomes simple differentiation between history and philosophy, paying attention to the subterraneous critique of the center in the construction of alternative normative projects. Mack’s model, however, presents the project as simply a reaction to official discourses decontextualized of other reactions. In his analysis, therefore, there is no internal or external positive cohesion of the projects except for the common negative subversion of the center.

Led by Michael Lowy, the school of sociology of knowledge explores the positive content of the aforementioned subversion. Sociology of knowledge has historically researched how modes of thought come to be. In other words, what are the intellectual, social, economical, and political

\(^{86}\) Ibid., 12.
\(^{87}\) I view Mack’s work as an opportunity to overcome the aforementioned limitations of Said. See point b. of this introduction.
\(^{88}\) Mack, *German Idealism and the Jew*, 12.
conditions for thinking to emerge?\textsuperscript{89} In his theoretical proposal, Lowy contends that it is possible to trace both a hidden elective affinity between, for example, subversive libertarian movements, and positive content of Messianic Judaism. This is a novel encounter between Jewish thought and radical tendencies. Implicitly following Biale and Mack in the analysis of nineteenth and twentieth century Germany, Lowy sustains that the subversion of the center’s narrative was not the only objective of this trend; one that includes, for example, Rosenzweig, Benjamin, and Gustav Landauer. This movement aspired to build “a radically other world.”\textsuperscript{90} The cohesive positive project, according to Lowy, was the “polysemic” rabbinical understanding of the term “tikkun olam.” In this manner, diverse Jewish thinkers (including religious Jews with anarchist tendencies as well as assimilated libertarians) created “a subterranean network of correspondences,” making use of the utopias of the center but redirecting them through a rabbinical conception. The subversion, for Lowy, is established in the encounter between this positive understanding of Judaism and radical Western trends.\textsuperscript{91}

The model I make use of here follows this methodological construction. I follow Biale in understanding the new light rise of the re-appropriation of the tools of the center, but I do so conceptually, not solely historiographically. I follow Mack’s project to understand the conceptual relevance of Jewish subversion of the center, but I sustain that Jewish thought could offer a positive move that is not limited to the response to anti-Semitism. Finally, I follow Lowy’s conceptual elective affinity between Judaism and radical trends, but I sustain that the most provocative encounter takes


\textsuperscript{90} Michael Lowy, Redemption et Utopie. Le Judaisme libertarie en Europe central (Paris: Presses Universitaries de France, 1988), 7-9. Translated in Redemption and Utopia. Jewish Libertarian Thought in Central Europe. A Study in Elective Affinity (London: Atholone Press 1992), 2-3. It is not a coincidence that Yair Auron, probably the most solid author in the analysis of the Jewish identity in 1968, understands that the banner of tikkim olam was very sensitive to the generation. Indeed, the English translation of the work we will cite in chapter 3 is entitled, Tikkim Olam: the phenomenon of the Jewish radicals in France during the 1960s and '70s (Jerusalem: Institute of the World Jewish Congress, 2000).

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 3-18. We will further explore this text on 3.3.1.
place, heterodoxly, outside of the West. These encounters, and the rules for an engagement in correlation, will be taken from the work of Enrique Dussel. In his article, “Transmodernidad e Interculturalidad,” Dussel offers a model for this conversation showing the internal limits of Jewish thought, and what needs to be done for a full incorporation of Judaism into the barbaric forces. To rephrase, methodologically speaking, this is a work of a positive projection of Jewish thinking that explores the counter-narrative of the elective affinity between Jewish thought and decolonial radicalism according to a trans-modern theoretical structure.

g. The Structure: The Argument of the Dissertation

I employ the aforementioned methodology to analyze a paradigmatic case: the re-appropriation of imperial language by Emmanuel Lévinas in conversation with Third World intellectuals. Leading up to this analysis, my project proceeds with three parts and comprises five chapters: 1) The Counter-Narrative: Barbarism in Jewish Thought (Chapters I and II); 2) The Elective Affinity: The Audiences and Encounters of Lévinas’ Barbarisms (Chapters III and IV); and, 3) The Critique: Limits of Lévinas’ Barbarisms (Chapter V). The core of the work is preceded by this introduction and a conclusion will set the framework of analysis and the direction of future projects.

In the first section, entitled The Counter-Narrative: Barbarism in Jewish Thought, I trace three different stages in the process of re-appropriation of the term barbarism in twentieth-century Jewish thought, which conclude in a Hebraic counter-narrative. I show, through an orthodox reading of

92 It is important to notice that Lowy already practiced this connection but did not theorize about it. See, for example, the Latino-American liberationist realization of Walter Benjamin’s historiographical readings in Michael Lowy, Walter Benjamin: avertissement d’incendie: une lecture des thèses "Sur le concept d’histoire" (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2001). Translated in Fire Alarm: Walter Benjamin ‘On the Concept of History’ (New York: Verso, 2006). My work is deeply indebted to the Brazilian-French sociologist of knowledge.

93 I depart from a framework in Jewish Studies and in the text itself will complement it with decolonial theory showing the natural connection between one and the other. This link takes place by reading the possibilities and limitations of this encounter in the last chapter. My theoretical framework to do so will be extracted from Dussel’s “Transmodernidad e Interculturalidad (Interpretación desde la Filosofía de la Liberación),” 65-102.
a lineage of Jewish thinkers, that barbarism is a key component of their systems, and its subversion of the term’s Western usage. This section is divided in two chapters.

The first chapter, “Barbarism and Jewish thought before Lévinas,” depicts the stages that precede Lévinas’ counter-narrative. First, I show how Hermann Cohen explicitly replaces the term *barbarism* by non-equivalent Talmudic concepts (*ben-noah*/*ger toshav*) to demonstrate that Jewish people have rational costumes and are not barbaric. Rationality, for Cohen, denotes hospitality for the stranger who is never treated as a barbarian. From this rationality, he contends that it is by following a Jewish path (and not a contaminated Christian way) that it is possible to attain what is presumably the final goal of Western modernity: the peaceful unification of humankind. It is by being hospitable with the stranger, a sibling since the times of Noah, that humanity can aspire to a common future. Jews, in this context, become the origin and beneficiary of this rationality. While this hospitality arises out of Jewish sources, Cohen insists that in order to be rational the West ought to accept Eastern Jewish immigration as pre-condition for redemption. The second stage is represented by Cohen’s student, Franz Rosenzweig. He follows Cohen’s project, explicitly rejecting the term *barbarian* to describe the Jewish people. Instead, he notes how the Jews are an eternal people who live outside history and are on one of the paths (of eternal life) toward redemption. The model for this eternal community is found in the idealization of the sociological lives of Eastern Jewry. The non-barbaric Eastern Jew passes from being the model of cosmopolitanism that permits redemption to the model of already attained redemption. The term *barbarian*, subsequently, is recovered to qualify those who leave the non-barbaric community (Judaism) to engage with Western values. Judaism is a non-barbaric community that already welcomes redemption; those who leave the community become barbarians.

The second chapter, entitled “Lévinas’ Barbarisms,” is a textual analysis of keystone texts constructed out of Lévinas’ Talmudic readings. Lévinas proposes a *two-pronged barbarism*. First, he
adapts Rosenzweig’s use of the term and contends that those who leave the community to engage with the West are barbaric because the West (the empires of Rome and America via Europe) is barbaric; barbarism is defined as the cruel system unable to acknowledge its responsibility in the cultural and economic reduction of the otherness. Lévinas, influenced by decolonial voices, returns in a virtuous circle of critique to the original problem of Cohen (the identification of Judaism with irrational barbarism). It is at this moment that he introduces the radicalism of his conversation partners and, instead of rejecting or replacing the concept, he positively re-appropriates. In this way, he practices a counter-narrative of the term barbarism, inserting the radical content of non-Western Judaism. The model for this barbarism is the Eastern Jew, including both the Eastern European (himself) and the Oriental North African Jew (his students at the ENIO and the post-Marxist founders of the Institut d'études lévinassienne). It is only when dispossessed locations of knowledge meet (and not, following Said, when a Western thinker speaks for them) that a barbaric location of knowledge can emerge.94 In Lévinas, consequently, Jews are the barbaric force that works toward a just society and the community of Israel is (problematically subsuming Egypt and Ethiopia into a Hebraic community) the source of human regeneration. This shows the affinity of his counter-narrative with non-Western thinking. I call the first barbarism civilizational barbarism and the second pan-Hebraic barbarism.

The second part of this dissertation is entitled The Elective Affinity: Audiences and Encounters of Lévinas’ Barbarisms. In it, I contend that while the orthodox interpretation can explain Lévinas’ discomfort with barbarism, only the heterodox conversations elucidate his particular usages of the term. In these chapters, therefore, I read the reciprocal influence of the encounter between Lévinas’ counter-narrative of the two-pronged barbarism and its audiences: Marxist Jews on civilizational barbarism and Third World decolonizers on pan-Hebraic barbarism. Accordingly,

94 This is a reference to what has become a major post-colonial critique of Marxism. See the first quote of Edward Said’s Orientalism, v.
I re-insert Jewish thought with anti-imperial schools of thought that struggle for or with the wretched of earth.\footnote{Both chapters of the second part are preceded by the question, is Marxism/decolonialism all we need? This is an attempt to offer an alternative configuration of Lévinas’ thinking as a response to Anabel Herzog’s question in “Is Liberalism “all we need?” Lévinas and the Politics of Surplus”\textit{Political Theory} 30 2 (2002), 204-227.}

In the third chapter, “Lévinas’ Civilizational Barbarism: Is Marxism all we need?” I explain the elective affinity that diverse non-Jewish Jewish Marxists felt with Lévinas’ project after the failure of the revolution of 1968. I show Lévinas’ interest in replacing the Westernized Marxist revolution of the non-Jewish Jews by an easternized Rabbinical revolution of the Jewish Jews. In order to engage with them, I demonstrate that Lévinas takes over a long-time Marxist non-Jewish discourse by identifying economic imperialism with barbarism; Karl Marx, Rosa Luxemburg, Leon Trotsky, Walter Benjamin, Max Horkehiemer, and Theodor Adorno made use of the term. Lévinas completes this trend by making use of Jewish sources to redirect the disappointment with Marxism from the 1920s to (and especially) the late 1960s. Whereas Lévinas was partially successful (three Eastern Maoist/Trotskyist Jews founded the Institut d'études lévinassiennes five years after his death) the self-appointed heirs were unable to cross the limits of a Marxist reading of barbarism. They are incapable of escaping the negative connotation of the term. The encounter of dispossessed locations of knowledge (East-East) is necessary but not sufficient to create the ultimate exteriority, barbaric philosophy.

The fourth chapter is entitled “Lévinas’ Hebraic Barbarism: Is Decolonialism All We Need?” In this section, I explore who was able to cross into the positive re-appropriation of the term. I explained that the aforementioned encounter between Lévinas and Dussel is the culmination of a five-hundred-year bond between Jewish and Latino thought. From the beginning of modernity, Jewish image was important for the counter-narrative of Latin American identity. Likewise, the supposed Judaism of some Native groups was extremely important for the recovery of Judaism by the
Portuguese Jewish community of Amsterdam after the dark years of the Inquisition. Jews and dispossessed peoples from the Americas (Natives, Latinos/Latinas, and Afro-Caribbeans) have been re-appropriating identities and imperial terms in relation to each other for five-hundred years. Dussel portrays himself as the natural heir of Lévinas by following this original elective affinity and creating a barbaric philosophy out of Lévinas’ writings. Lévinas rediscovers the barbaric description of his own philosophy only two years after meeting Dussel and one year following Dussel’s publication. Decolonial theorists are, in this construction, the natural heirs of Lévinas’ barbarism. Lévinas, from his part, starts reintroducing Jewish thought within a decolonial framework following other peripheral Jewish thinkers.

“The Critique: Limits of Pan-Hebraic Barbarism,” the third part, and fifth chapter, of this dissertation follows the last encounter, exploring the limits of the proposed barbaric counter-narrational conversation from rabbinical diasporism. Far from forcing an external critical structure, I read these limits through the theoretical framework of the school’s heirs. The third part, therefore, challenges the first by way of the second. I begin by illustrating, through Dussel’s model of transmodern conversations, the impossibility of barbaric Hebraism in confronting the empire without subsuming the others into its project. I sustain that there is a key factor that Lévinas (and rabbinical diasporism) disregards: only when a process of self-criticism has been practiced is there a reason for a pan-barbaric project. Otherwise, a counter-narrative is just apologetics and not a critical barbarism. In this critique, I show how Marxism and even English-speaking post-colonialism (by itself heir of French-speaking decolonialism) can help rabbinical diasporism to avoid two problems that arise from the aforementioned critique: utopianism and Orientalism. As such, I go beyond the previously mentioned theoretical constructions to read internally the limits of the counter-history and its elective affinities. The section will be followed by a conclusion denoting the significance of this work and what still needs to be explored.
Part I: The Counter-Narrative: Barbarism in Jewish Thought

CHAPTER I: BARBARISM AND JEWISH THOUGHT BEFORE LÉVINAS
According to the covenant with Noah, every man is already the brother of every other... [but] the barbarians are not within the horizon of the Hellenes.\textsuperscript{96}

These \textit{East European Jews} combine intellectual energy with religious enthusiasm... How then, could I be fearful of any threat to our fatherland [Germany] if it were to admit Jews of this type... there is probably no man among us who has not met and admired some Polish Jews of unsurpassed inner nobility.\textsuperscript{97}

It is nonsense to brand the state of the Jews at the time as \textit{barbaric}, degenerate, etc. It’s really an integrated culture; it is only the individual (Maimon for instance) who becomes a \textit{barbarian} by relinquishing it. If one looks at it from the outside, without knowledge of the language and present customs, it may appear \textit{barbarous}... what seems decadent to a goy-who was then a pagan and is now a Christian—is the very essence of Judaism.\textsuperscript{98}

I have also seen many \textit{Sephardim} [in Uskub.] The Jewish way of life is entirely natural to them. They consort only with one another, and rightly consider themselves an elite, but as regards hospitality... imagine, by the way, a thoroughly drab lodging-house interior; they receive guests in one of their bedrooms.\textsuperscript{99}

\section*{1.1. Introduction}

\subsection*{1.1.1. Pre-War Rabbinical Diasporism on Barbarism}

In this first chapter, I practice a textual reading of a current of Jewish responses to the problem of barbarism that preceded and informed Lévinas’ counter-narrative. I locate the forerunners of his thought in the discursive context of the German “renascence of Judaism” between the turn of the century and the interwar Weimar republic.\textsuperscript{100} In particular, I focus on those authors who share with Lévinas a common characteristic, namely they revise the Western conception of barbarism in the setting of a pro-rabbinical and diasporic systemic construction. In other words, these authors create a project in order to confront not only external but also internal

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{99} Letter of Franz Rosenzweig to his parents dated the 6\textsuperscript{th} of April of 1917. Ibid., 382-3/51.
\item \textsuperscript{100} The renascence of Judaism is a project of counter-culture. It aimed to develop a renewal of Jewish tradition out of an educational romantic reform that implied a return to the sources of an “authentic” Judaism. See Michael Brenner, \textit{The Renaissance of Jewish culture in Weimar Germany} (New Heaven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), 69-128.
\end{itemize}
debates of the role of Judaism in the twentieth century. This revalorization of a diasporic rabbinical Judaism is what set this train of thought apart from other contemporary Jewish proposals. Other alternatives not only replace the rabbinical sources by a romantic, pietistic interpretation of Judaism, but also overcome the struggle with barbarism revalorizing the Oriental character of Judaism as a way to put forward Zionist aspirations.\(^\text{101}\) While the latter trend finds in Martin Buber its major exponent, the former includes the work of Hermann Cohen and Franz Rosenzweig. I contend that it is only when we reapproach the work of these two last authors that we can start understanding the role of barbarism in Emmanuel Lévinas’ counter-narrative. The movement re-addresses the problem of barbarism within a decidedly exile rabbinical school, which finds, in the rabbinical literature, practical sociology, and non-utopian sacred history, an alternative that directly challenges the impurity of Western Christianity, its readings of Judaism, and its Jewish acolytes. I argue, therefore, that the replacements of the term barbarism in Cohen, Rosenzweig, and Lévinas are contextual adaptations of a continuous current in twentieth century Jewish thought.\(^\text{102}\)

By choosing to pursue a close textual reading of this development, I start my dissertation with an orthodox approach to the analysis of Lévinas and barbarism. I investigate the extent to which a current of Jewish thought informs a Jewish thinker. In this chapter, therefore, I explain the revision of barbarism in Cohen and Rosenzweig as a way to set the framework of Lévinas’ Hebraic barbarism, as well as analyze the limits of this correspondence. The intention of this chapter is

\(^{101}\) I am referring in particular to the work of Martin Buber who coined the term “Jewish Renaissance.” Buber, in his writings on Hassidism, attacks the rabbinical framework and reintroduces Judaism within the “Oriental” (though not the barbaric) as a way to justify the natural return of the Jew to Palestine. The primary sources can be found in Martin Buber, “Der Geist des Orients und das Judentum” Vom Geist des Judentums (München: K. Wolff, 1916), 9-48. Translated in “The Spirit of the Orient and Judaism” in On Judaism, Nahum Glazer ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), 56-78. See the study of his anti-rabbinical and pro-Zionist orientation in Paul Mendes-Flohr, “Fin de siècle Orientalism, The Ostjuden, and the Aesthetics of Jewish Self-Affirmation” in Divided Passions: Jewish Intellectuals and the Experience of Modernity (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 81-100. This will be further developed in 5.3.1.

\(^{102}\) Regarding the concept of “adaptation” of this current in Jewish thought, turn to Robert Gibbs, Correlations in Rosenzweig and Lévinas (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 31-33. Adaptation is a translation from drash which can be defined as a rabbinical discursive analysis (in opposition to the literal, allegorical, and mystical interpretations) that permits the permanent unfolding of the divinity (i.e. law) inscribed in the text through the interpretation of the forerunners. The first part of my dissertation in specific, and my project as a whole, is indebted to Professor Gibbs who supervised this dissertation.
neither to practice a comprehensive reading of the authors nor to explain the variety of trends of thought that could have influenced Lévinas. In other words, I do not intend to explain the projects of Cohen and Rosenzweig as a whole, but to analyze the crucial role of barbarism in their projects. By evaluating their Jewish systems alongside other texts written during the same period, I contend that we can trace the basic structure of Lévinas’ confrontation with barbarism. Likewise, this chapter does not aim to study the multiple traditions that also informed Lévinas’ proposal on barbarism. Instead, the first part of my dissertation explores the extent to which Jewish philosophy can explain its discourses from within. I will show that the narrow conception of Jewish thought serves as a guide to understand Lévinas’ aim and framework, but is wholly unable to explain his project (as is developed in the second chapter). It is for this reason that a more heterodox reading will be needed to explain Lévinas. In the third and fourth chapters (the second part of my dissertation), I will show how non-Jewish Jews (Marxists in particular) and decolonialists (Latin Americans in specific) become both audiences and influences in Lévinas’ development of barbarism.

This chapter, consequently, explores the common confrontation to the problem of barbarism in Cohen and Rosenzweig in light of their posterior adaptation of Lévinas. Some readers, however, may doubt of the accuracy of presenting Cohen and Rosenzweig within a common school. Whereas some interpreters describe Cohen and Rosenzweig as representatives of two different epistemological stages (the rationalism of the late nineteenth century versus the romanticism of the twentieth), others read them as integral part of the same project (such as anti-historicism). A

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103 It is important to make note that there are other influences that complement my analysis; first, the conception of barbarism by such phenomenologists Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger; and second, the struggle between France and Germany regarding civilization and barbarism. The aim of this work is to explore Lévinas within Jewish and decolonial trends; for this reason I will not focus on these connections unless they are necessary to unfold this study.

104 See Michael Brenner, The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany, 43. Brenner points out that Cohen represents nineteenth century rationalism and Rosenzweig, the new romanticism of the twentieth century. I contend that this clear-cut difference cannot be sustained after an in-depth reading of their Judaic projects.

105 One of the few contemporary intellectual historians (albeit highly critical of their project) finds Cohen as the forerunner of a trend that effectively includes Rosenzweig in an anti-historicist (I would define it as anti-Hegelian) trend. See David Myers, Resisting History: Historicism and Its Discontents in German-Jewish Thought (Princeton: Princeton University
priori, the first line of interpretation may be accurate. Cohen is born in an observant Jewish household before the end of the first half of the nineteenth century. He became an important intellectual reference due to his prominence as a chair in philosophy, which allowed him to lead the Neo-Kantian school of Marburg in the last decades of the nineteenth century. From this influential position, he defended Jews against anti-Semitic attacks in court (which qualified Jews as barbarians), and finished his days teaching at the Lehranstalt für die Wissenschaft des Judentum in Berlin and defending the right of Eastern Jews to immigrate to Germany. His thought, a priori, is still invested in rationalism and there is no explicit rejection to Western society.106

Rosenzweig, on the contrary, was born in an acculturated family almost fifty years later and was tempted to convert to Christianity. By becoming Cohen’s student, however, he started to engage with Jewish sources and formulated a program for Jewish educational reform, renouncing an academic career. He engaged in this project while struggling against his own demons, which stemmed from his experiences in the Great War (where, as I will show, he met with barbaric-to-be Eastern Jews) and his degenerative illness. His pedagogical project was practiced far away from Berlin, in Frankfurt, since the enlightened intellectual environment of Cohen turned him back. In his project, reason is being rejected as the path to know all and there is a refusal to accept the bourgeoisie character of Western society.107

A closer look at these authors’ works through the light of their discourse in barbarism, however, may shed some light on the natural connection between the works of the teacher and the student. In both projects, there is an explicit discomfort to describe the Jewish people as barbaric. In

Press, 2003), 71. In this way, Myers is explicitly taking the lead of one of the classic interpretations of the commonality between the two thinkers written by Alexander Altman. See “Theology in Twentieth-Century German Jewry,” Leo Baeck Institute Year Book 1 (1956), 194. However, there are two differences in my project in terms of the superb work of Myers. First, he emphasizes the differences between one and the other after this common anti-historicist overlapping. Second, he understands that their theological frameworks limit their projects. In this chapter, I show that when reading the projects as social theories Rosenzweig will be easily read as an adaptation of Cohen.

106 Ibid., 42-49.

107 For a brief but constructive analysis of Rosenzweig’s life, see Salomon Malka, Frantz Rosenzweig, Le chantique de la revelation (CERF: Paris, 2005). There is no translation in English of this work.
other words, they resist the sublation of the Jewish people in the triumphal march of the Hegelian Spirit in history and its consequential stripping of the resources of power. In its place, they displace the term, creating a project in which Judaism is a pure path toward a just society and final liberation. A duality arises from both projects. The Jew will be both the theoretical source to understand otherness and the otherness that permits the achievement of this social redemption. In Judaism, the other is protected, as in the West, thereby reducing her to the suffering of the tradition. While the Greek can only consider the suffering of their own geopolitical interiority, Christianity depends on conversion for the acknowledgement of the suffering of those who became part of the ecclesia.

Conversely, it is the memory of mythical Jewish slavery in exile that demands the community to establish a structure of social responsibility preventing the re-edition of this hardship in the others, especially typified by the homeless ger toshav or resident alien. Christianity, as the heir of the mythical Greek and represented by philosophy, becomes an erroneous and futile conqueror, violently blind in its reduction of the alterity. Judaism, in its place, becomes the source for a just world and a unified liberation. Barbarism, in this way, becomes the central problem for this line of thinking. Cohen simultaneously replaces the term barbarism and identifies the other as the Jew. Rosenzweig departs from the literary rejection of Judaism as barbaric and establishes his other through an ideal sociology that accuses those who leave the integral community to engage with the West of being barbarian. Lévinas departs from this point to call the West itself barbaric and later re-appropriates the term to re-value Judaism through barbarism.

1.1.2. Road Map

108 It is important to notice the Hegelian project as the last stage in the development of the term barbarism. See point e. of the introduction. This counter-Hegelian aim will continue through Lévinas.
In Rosenzweig and Cohen, as a consequence, barbarism becomes a crucial problem in their systems of thought. In this chapter, I will follow Cohen and Rosenzweig’s adaptations of this trend, beginning first with a summary of the argument’s key points in order to facilitate the reading of the adaptations.

For Cohen, the Greek and the Christian are unable to acknowledge the fragility of the other (the barbarian) that is beyond their geopolitical sphere. While the Greek can only recognize the suffering of the Hellenic, the Christian only recognizes the suffering of the person who is conquered and becomes a Christian. The suffering to be acknowledged should be the suffering of the one that is alike. Cohen rejects this reading of otherness and replaces the concept of barbarism for the one of ger toshav (resident-alien more classically translated as stranger-sojourner). In a state that follows the Jewish sources, the resident-alien is protected by the state without requirement of conversion. The source of this acknowledgment of the fragility of the alterity arises from the memory of the slavery of Egypt. The material suffering of the other, which becomes the spiritual suffering of the Self, is acknowledged to prevent the other from undergoing the past hardships of the Jews; acknowledging the suffering of the other is to defend her alterity. What protects her is not the commonality with the Jew, but the Jewish determination not to let other people go through similar hardships. The Jewish path, in this project, is directed toward redemption. The support for the otherness (never pejoratively barbaric) re-enacts the original unified humankind (the pact of the bnei-noah or the sons/daughters of Noah) and is able to rebuild a mutual asymmetry in humanity. This conception of otherness, paradoxically, serves (for Cohen) to defend the immigration of Eastern Jews who, once the term barbarian is rejected, become the source of possible redemption. If the West does not accept them, they would be betraying their own principles that, curiously, are a product of the Jewish sources. While the Jew is being sublated, according to a history read from Christian sources, the Christian is trapped to defend the alterity in a history read from Jewish sources. Once the
barbaric accusation is displaced, the Jew becomes, therefore, the source of a pure and rational path toward redemption and also its beneficiary.

This is the starting point of Rosenzweig’s work: the reading of history out of Jewish sources as a route to reject the barbaric understanding of the other who is the Jew. The Jew is not a barbarian, but lives in eternity. In Rosenzweig, redemption in history will be seen once again according to the Jewish sources and their practice in Jewish sociology. The Jew, in exile, becomes a light for the nations, without intention to subsume the other into the blood community of the Jew but rather to witness the extent of its message of responsibility toward the alterity. The Jew rejects empowerment that leads the people to lose their center: social responsibility toward the otherness and the construction of a unified humankind. In its place, through its yearly liturgical practices, it re-enacts the encounter and responsibility toward the otherness that becomes the model for engagement with the alterity. This Jewish path creates a community without subsuming the other into its people. This practice will stand in contraposition to the violent attempt of the Self (Greek, philosophy, Christianity) to attain eternity through the simultaneous conquest of the all in addition to the enclosing of the Self. The barbaric does not stand within the Jewish people but in those who aim to empower themselves leaving the community. This conclusion is what leads Lévinas to adapt Rosenzweig in post-war France. The German thinker, following his teacher, rejects the barbarism of the Jew and locates the barbarism next to civilization. Lévinas will adapt this thought, making civilization itself barbaric, turning the current around to re-appropriate the term for the Jew, and understanding it for its content of the ideal type of ger toshav.

The rejection of barbarism in Cohen’s and Rosenzweig’s projects is rooted in a duality: the Jew is both the theoretical source (to acknowledge the otherness) and the alterity herself. By presenting this duality, this trend confronted three tendencies that were deeply influential in both the late nineteenth and early twentieth century: one, a Hegelian reading of history that sublates Judaism
in the triumphal march of the Spirit; two, its Jewish acolytes (Zionism, liberal assimilation, and scientific socialism) that define the Jewish situation as abnormal and demand an overcoming of it; and three, the interrelated nationalist and xenophobic tendencies that were very present in late nineteenth century, intensifying after the German defeat in the Great War and becoming a majority by 1933. Topics such as the replacement of purity in Jewish sources, the specificity of the alterity, the confrontation with Hegelianism (extended into Heidegger) and its Jewish followers (Marxism, assimilation, and Zionism), and the xenophobia that led to Auschwitz will be, as I shall show later, the point of departure for Lévinas. The writings of the Lithuanian-French philosopher, along with Cohen’s and Rosenzweig’s, become the source for a rabbinical diasporic project that will give rise to a counter-narrative of Western sources.109

1.2 Hermann Cohen on Barbarism

1.2.1. Toward a Place for an Other

Hermann Cohen writes his major Jewish system (Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums) in the final years of his life, and the work was only published after his death. Despite the theological vocabulary of the introduction and the first seven chapters, I contend that the work should be read as a confessional (i.e. ethnic) social theory. His departure, as theological as it is, is not from an acting God, but rather an abstract God-idea, which is from the very beginning correlated (related but separated) to the concrete human being. This God-idea relates to this human being through the “impartation of the spirit of holiness” or rationality that, as we will see, can be also read

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109 Dana Hollander identifies this move as a “Politics of Cultural Affirmation” including intellectuals beyond rabbinical diasporism. See, “Buber, Cohen, Rosenzweig and the Politics of Cultural Affirmation” Jewish Studies Quarterly 13 (2006), 87-103. Hollander’s is a very interesting attempt to include African-American pragmatism (more notably Cornel West) within a framework of European Jewish thought. My project is informed by her work but differs since I limit my sources to the rabbinical diasporical school.
as exegetical and social responsibility.\textsuperscript{110} The responsibility of the human being is the rational interpretation and not the simple obedience of the divine command. This immutable command continuously reveals itself (i.e. it is an oral law) and men ought to interpret it in such a way that their actions help the march toward the desired end: a unified and peaceful humankind.\textsuperscript{111}

All human beings, with no exceptions, are capable of acquiring this responsibility since all of them have not only the same origin but also the same future. Whereas their common origin is their covenant as sons-of-Noah, their common north is the future unification of humankind.\textsuperscript{112} This double commonality rejects any racial stratification of peoples.\textsuperscript{113} The “next man” who is strange to the land of the Self is not a barbarian. On the contrary, she has a common origin and future. She should be recognized, embraced, and loved as a sibling, not in spite of but because of her fragility. While the common origin offers the chance of empathy for the destitute, the common future claims to reinstitute her rights. Only a society that shelters the other (as we shall see typified as the resident alien) and recognizes her as an equal will be able to march toward a just, unified humankind. In this way, the other is not rejected as foreign, as with the Greeks, or subsumed into the Church, as with Christianity, but loved individually as a symbol of humanity. The just treatment of the other becomes, in Cohen’s perspective, the condition for redemption.\textsuperscript{114}

For our purposes, the first seven chapters of \textit{(The) Religion of Reason out of the Sources of Judaism} have a double task in making Cohen’s position clearly demarcated in comparison to other


\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 82-87/71-75. For further interpretations of the role of God as a “constitutive principle”, see Andrea Poma, \textit{The Critical Theory of Hermann Cohen} trans. John Denton (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 165-186. In his interpretation, Poma concludes that according to Cohen, “God must be conceived no longer in relation to the logical problem of origin, but in relation to the ethical problem of the end (or purpose) of becoming and man’s reason must be considered as action and no longer as knowledge.” (186) This can be considered the basis for a reading of Cohen as a social theorist.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 136-137/117-119.

\textsuperscript{113} Jacques Derrida points out the non-racial reading of Cohen. Unfortunately, Derrida misses (due to his lack of close reading of the major Jewish system of Cohen) the critique of the Hellenic. In this way, he mistakenly read Rosenzweig’s work as a direct opposition to his teacher. See Jacques Derrida, “Interpretations at War: Kant, the Jew, the German” trans. Moshe Ron in \textit{New Literary History} 22.1 (1991), 50-51.

contemporary proposals within both Jewish philosophy and Neo-Kantianism. First, contra Martin Buber, these chapters result in the exclusion of God as the subject of any direct intervention in the world, focusing on human relations, aims, and activities. Responsibility arises from engagement with an alterity in asymmetrical separation (correlation) and not from an intimate, symmetrical, and transcendental dialogue. In the second place, contra Ernst Troeltsch, these chapters open the possibility of reading the essence of religion beyond philological research (in particular) and critical historical methods (in general). Religion can be read according to the idea that ought to guide its development; the sources, according to Cohen, hold the immutable principle that ought to guide the actions of the individual. In this manner, the sources contain both the ideals and the experiences of the people, obliterating a clear distinction between idealism and materialism. While differentiation with Buber offers Cohen the possibility of proposing a social theory (following some Kantian guidelines), his distance from Troeltsch links him to a critical idealist perspective that he will later recognize as a prophetic ethical socialism. In other words, the proposal of Cohen in the treatment of the resident alien and support of immigration is going to be read as a (non-Marxist) socialist social theory out of the Jewish sources.

115 In his introduction to the English translation, Steven Schwarzschild emphasizes that the title of the book is ‘religion’ and not ‘the religion’ since Cohen sustains that Judaism is only one religion of reason. A reader of Cohen, however, could argue that the weight of Judaism in his analysis (in opposition to polytheism, pantheism, and Christianity) forces us to recognize that there is at least an epistemological rational privilege of the tradition. This privilege is going to be fully acknowledged by Cohen’s heirs: Rosenzweig and Lévinas. See Steven Schwarzschild, “The Title of Cohen’s ‘Religion of Reason out of the Sources of Judaism’” Ibid., 8-20.

116 Ibid., 79-81/68-70. Along with Zionism this is one of the most important differences the proposal of his rival Martin Buber. While Buber sees in the proximity of the dialogue between the I-Thou the origin of responsibility, Cohen claims that the independence of this dialogue what offers the above-mentioned responsibility. This difference persists even when Buber, leaving behind the early disputes, praises Cohen ‘return to Judaism.’ See Martin Buber, “The Love of God and the Idea of Deity” in Eclipse of God (Amherst: Humanity Books, 1988), 52-63 and Martin Buber, I and Thou trans. Walter Kaufman (New York: Touchstone Books, 1970), 65-66.

117 Ibid., 2-5/2-4. Cohen and the Marburg school of Neo-Kantianism, in opposition to the school of Baden in general and Ernst Troeltsch in particular, contend that history and science are unable to grasp the real content of religion that is approached after reading history according to an previous idealized structure. See further discussions on this problem in Wendell Dietrich, Cohen and Troeltsch: Ethical Monotheistic Religion and Theory of Culture (Atlanta: Scholar Press, 1996), 14-17.

1.2.2. From Barbarian to Ben-Noah/Ger Toshav

The conception of Judaism as the source of rationality and responsibility is developed in the aforementioned sections. It is in the eighth chapter, “The Man as a Fellowman,” in which Cohen directly relates this problem to his account of the stranger. In this section, the philosopher crosses two interrelated bridges. First, man that until now was considered “only an abstract moral creature” is being analyzed “in relation to historical experience.”119 Second, Cohen goes beyond his analysis of “man as singularity” to reflect on “man in plurality.”120 To rephrase, the subjects are studied as historically constituted collectives and not simply abstract individuals. It is in this chapter that the theological comments will lead to a social theory of responsibility toward foreignness, making this ethical concern (and not vice versa) his metaphysical claim. It is in this context that Cohen will unfold the perception of otherness out of Greek sources in order to compare it with the ideal extracted out of Jewish literature.121

In Greek thought (or according to ethics) “the next man is in no way already the fellowman.”122 This, however, does not mean that the Greek is completely stripped of the human concern that leads to hospitality for the stranger: “[t]he humanism of the Greek teaching about the gods is shown by the fact that the highest god, Zeus, is made to be of hospitality, of guest friendship.”123 This conception of the foreign as a guest-friend demands the Greek “to be faithful in war and peace.”124 This faithfulness, however, is not enough virtue for Cohen.125 The category of

119 Ibid., 116/113.
120 Ibid.
121 See 1.1. to understand the importance of reading these proposals as a social theory. This Jewish reading will rely on rabbinical interpretations (Jerusalemite Talmud and Breshit Rabah), particularly Genesis but also well extended into the other Mosaic books and the first prophetic texts.
123 Ibid., 120/116.
124 Ibid.
125 See the relevance of faithfulness as a Jewish mark within a Neo-Kantian reading in William Kluback, “Herman Cohen and Kant: A Philosophy of history from Jewish Sources” in Idealistic Studies 17:2 (1986), 164. It is not surprising that the analysis of faithfulness as a Jewish mark becomes the necessary link with what Kluback’s calls the “parting of the ways of the two philosophers” (165). This is why (going beyond Kluback) analyzing the significance of faithfulness as an
guest-friendship does not require its participants to “cease to fight each other” or “prevent them from cheating.” This Greek notion, the “paradigm of classic sentimentally,” according to the author, simply “unmasks the moral that still afflicts the concept of guest-friendship.” The morality of this ideal type does not point “toward a future,” a common reunification of the human beings, but toward a formal framework of honour; the Greek is still trying to defeat the foreign intrusion.

Furthermore, the category of guest-friendship is more limited than what a priori seems to be. The two mythical characters employed by Cohen to describe this ideal type are Hellenic (i.e. Diomedes and Glaucus). It is not only that the guest-friend will be fought and deceived, and the possible unification negated, it is that even the acknowledgment of him (always male) as a rival (or a human being) precludes him of being Hellenic. The Greek ideal type limits the possibility of acknowledging the otherness outside its geopolitical sphere. The ideal type of guest-friendship is both unable to end confrontation and grant common partnerships, but is also limited to the interior other and excludes all other relationships. The Greek already rejected the full hospitality to the Hellenic. The only subject active for the Greek is the Hellenic, and this relationship is honorable as far as it is fought to death. Those who are beyond the Hellenic are outside the realm of any communitarian relationship with the Greek. This geopolitical structure of cognition, consequently, forbids them to acknowledge a non-Greek as a human being. Cohen concludes by wisely asserting, “the barbarians are not within the horizon of the Hellenes.”

opposition to the Greek-Christian becomes more interesting than the analysis of faithfulness in the chapter dedicated to faithfulness as a virtue (chapter XXI).

126 Cohen, Religion/Religion, 134-137/116-120.
127 Ibid.
128 Ibid., 279/238.
129 Ibid., 120/116.
130 Whether this can be understood as a critique to the long enmity between Germany and France in moments in which Cohen may have been disappointed of WWI is beyond the scope of this work, but it would be interesting to re-read Cohen’s positions of the end of the war through classic metaphors.
The Greek who does not have the barbarian in the horizon is built in opposition to the non-humanity of an imagined nemesis, but constructs his identity with an ontology that precedes any relation with exteriority. The Hellenic is a social construction that only allows the Greek to live within what Lévinas will call his *economy* and what Rosenzweig will call his enclosed, speechless *I*. The sole recognized spatial sphere is Hellenic and the barbaric cannot be thought as more than a simple opposition of Greek virtues. Enclosed within his “own kind,” the Self is unable to offer hospitality to its own constructed antinomy. This is why the ideal for the Greek is going to be found in a mythological Greek “Golden Age.” The lack of inclusion of the non-Greek, even in imperfect ideal types as the guest-friend, makes it impossible for the Greek to point toward the future and relate to the other to create a unified, just humankind for any simple reason. The actual existence of other human beings becomes the most important threat for a world guided by Greek sources.

The monotheistic and prophetic center of Jewish sources (or religion of reason) proposes an alternative ideal type for the stranger. Contradicting a hierarchical and racialist reading of multiple origins of human beings (in the case that the barbarian could be understood as such), the concept of *Ben-Noah* establishes that “every man is already brother of the other” after being created by the same God and subscribing to a common pact. God establishes a covenant with Noah (the symbol of the human race) and becomes the preserver of earth and humanity. In this covenant, the human being promises to be the guardian of other men without spreading their blood. By acknowledging the common origin, the human being thus accepts the limits of his or her actions and the natural relationships with the stranger. According to Cohen, while the biblical text offers the sources, it is

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133 See 1.3 and 2.2.
135 Ibid., 138/119.
136 Ibid., 136-137 and 150-152/117-118 and 130-132. This impossibility of killing the other and her ethical resistance will be a repetitive motif in Lévinas. See 2.3.
the oral law, “the Talmud [that] creates the wonderful concept of the son of Noah.” Based on this human fellowship, the Bnei-noah can take three forms depending on the place of residence of the stranger (who can be passing through the land, living on it, or living in her own land).

First, she can be a noeri, according to which the foreign is welcome as a fellow person of a community of prayer. S/he was even admitted to the Temple of Solomon without any requirement of conversion. Second, a ger toshav, a resident alien, equal in front of the law but still idolatrous who secures her life under the protection of welfare laws. Third, she can be a tzadik or chassid (righteous) and belong to the chassidey-umot haolam, righteous members of other nations mostly living in his or her own lands who are recognized as those who free morality from religion. The relevance of the second type among all the others is pointed out by Cohen’s own extensive treatment of it. The resident alien, homeless, is the type that lives in permanent fragility. The ger toshav will be protected by labour law and its basic material needs are guaranteed by the community. Furthermore, she will join the Jewish inhabitants enjoying the Shabbat, not coincidently the symbol of human redemption, eternal rest, and a unified humankind. In a state that practices Jewish law, the ger toshav is protected and embraced as a sibling for whom no proselytism is imposed. This proposal, far from encouraging a theocracy, is seen as the origin of the modern state. The ger toshav “is not a believer and yet is a citizen of the state… is the forerunner of the natural law for the state and also from freedom of conscience.” This is the first of Cohen’s steps to develop a rewriting of history in order to create a Jewish modernity.

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137 Ibid., 142/122. The referred source is Genesis 9:1-17.
138 Even though I decided to identify the other as feminine, it would be practicing anachronistic violence to the text to change the gender of the original biblical/Talmudic terms used by the authors.
139 Ibid., 139-140/120-121.
140 Ibid., 140-141/121-122.
141 Ibid., 144/124.
142 Ibid., 158/183.
143 Ibid., 144/124.
The parting of ways between Athens and the Babylonian Jerusalem in their understanding of the other (barbarian versus ben-noah/ger toshav) is reflected in the way they construct their conception of an ideal society. Messianism, out of the Jewish sources, is “directed to the future” since it is able to embrace all human beings under one common project. Indifference to the other’s suffering is replaced by the responsibility that arises from the original pact. In the universal Nohaide pact, human beings acknowledge their potential to killing another human being. The sons of Noah promised, however, to refrain from spreading the blood of the other and acknowledge her as a sibling. This is complemented with the national pact within Judaism, which implements welfare laws to protect the ger toshav.\textsuperscript{144} In the case of the Greeks, however, the future is seen as a “prehistoric” and “innocent” past stage that is limited to the Hellenic groups. The killing of the other is not problematic (and could be even recommendable) in the aspiration to an impossible return to the aforementioned “Golden Age.”\textsuperscript{145} In the readings of Cohen, the alternative ideal types lead not only to different treatments of the stranger, but also condition the possibility of justice and final redemption.\textsuperscript{146}

Cohen acknowledges that there is a strong “particularity” in the national pact. The sources emerge from a national literature that was particularly “zealous” in its depiction of God and does not seem exceptionally humanitarian.\textsuperscript{147} It is true, Cohen reflects, that the universal covenant with Noah is followed by the national covenant of Abraham. Indeed, one of the missions of Judaism is to

\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., 287-291/246-249. This is what Lévinas will call later the “difficult freedom” of a “religion of Adults.” See 2.3.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., 290-292/248-250.
\textsuperscript{146} In a superb article, Kenneth Reinhard analyzes Jewish universalistic conceptions of otherness departing from the discussion over the neighbor (re’a) and includes Hermann Cohen among those offering a universalistic conception of the neighbor beyond the boundaries of Judaism. Even though it is extremely interesting to see the commonalities of Cohen with other Jewish philosophers across time and space, in his system of Jewish philosophy, Cohen is extremely clear that it is the notion of ben-noah and not of re’a what opens the possibility to think in a common and unified humankind. In his system, the discussion of Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Azai (Jerusalemite Talmud Ned. 9) seems to be a minor step in the connection between the formal ben-noah and its application in the ger toshav. Otherwise, the basis for human being unification would be pity and not the common origin (see comments on pity in pages 140-142 of Cohen). I believe that departing from the re’a may obscure the contribution of Cohen in the subject and this is why in my argument (that attempts to differentiate Cohen from Christianity) I privilege the place of Deut 23:8 over 19:8 in Cohen’s thought. The proposal of Reinhard still is fruitful to go beyond the line of thought we are following. See Kenneth Reinhard, “The Ethics of the Neighbor: Universalism, Particularism, Exceptionalism” in the Journal of Society of Textual Reasoning 4:1 (2005), n/a. in http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/journals/tx/volume4/TR_04_01_e01.html.
“destroy polytheism” without offering “any consideration to tolerance.” Nevertheless, Cohen brings to the attention of the reader the command of Deuteronomy 23:8. According to the text, the Israelites are “forbidden [from] abhorring the enemy,” even in cases of probed historical contention between peoples. He goes even further and calls for the responsibility of the Jew in the suffering of the stranger. Jewish law does not offer charity or acts of pity. Instead, it builds institutional welfare to alleviate their situation and confront structural social injustice. The ger toshav is “put together with the orphan and the widow, and in the national memory of Egypt,” and an alternative to the injustice that the Israelites suffered in the land of slavery is offered. This rejects assimilation of the suffering of the other to the suffering of the Self as the other who, in a Jewish context, should never be enslaved. This task of defending the fragile, the poor, and in this case the defenseless resident alien without reducing her to the Jewish community becomes an obligation after the necessary acknowledgment of the common origin and future. This bond with the ger toshav requires a “new feeling” that is proposed by the prophet and it “is made vivid on the basis of historical consciousness.”

According to socialist Cohen, the Jewish sources contend, “Stoic apathy is…entirely inadmissible.” The primary suffering is social and “only social suffering is spiritual suffering.” While physical suffering is “individual and subjective,” poverty becomes “the sign of the distress of a culture” and the “qualitative evidence of the low level of a culture.” In his displacement, Lévinas will call this civilizing action barbaric. A society that does not offer structural welfare for the ger

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148 Ibid.
149 Ibid., 139/120.
150 Ibid.
151 Ibid., 140-142/121-123.
152 Ibid., 145/125.
153 Ibid., 168-169/145.
154 Ibid., 158/136.
155 Ibid.
156 Ibid.
157 See 2.2.
toshav (considered barbarian by the Greek) shows its cultural degeneration. According to the Greek, “only the hero, the individual, suffers”; according to the Jewish sources, when the class suffers “in social suffering[,] the entire culture assumes a tragic role.”158 In this instance, “all the complexity of consciousness, including knowledge is affected by it. This is the profound meaning of social suffering: that the entire consciousness of culture is implicated in it.”159 This degenerated society, unable to offer a culture of responsibility, to rephrase Cohen, is then deprived from its rational path to redemption.160 The Jewish sources, as Cohen holds, present an alternative. Fruit of a unique God-idea, having implanted a common spirit of holiness (rationality) and a common covenant of a unique humanity (ben-noah), establishes a common historical and social responsibility toward the other. This is the only rational path toward a unified humankind (redemption). The assistance of the ger toshav, who should never suffer what the sons and daughters of Israel have, becomes the condition of a rational culture as well as the basis for the possibility of redemption. Rationality, according to Cohen, is responsibility for the stranger. In other words, rationality is not the maximization of potentialities but, rather, social justice.161

1.2.3 From Self-for-itself to Self-for-others

The rational culture is possible only out of the correlation between God and man, as explained in the Jewish sources. Cohen contends that, paradoxically, Jews “have been reproached by Christianity…for not allowing the connection between man and God…and this reproach includes

158 Ibid.
159 Ibid.
160 This is exactly what other socialists (of the scientific branch) such as Karl Marx, Rosa Luxemburg, Walter Benjamin and Max Horkheimer will identify as the barbarism of civilization. Cohen, in his quest to reject the term, does not follow this trend in his work. See 3.3.2.
161 For further limitations of the conception of Ben-Noah and an interior critique of its use by Hermann Cohen see Steven Schwarzchild, “Do Nohaite Have to Believe in Revelation?” in The Jewish Quarterly Review 53:1 (1962), 30-65. It is especially relevant to use the critique to Cohen’s interpretation of the subject in general and, specifically, the line that follows Maimonides pages 33-39. The erudite work of Schwarzchild is extremely interesting but it is not an objection for my work since I do not seek to demonstrate the degree of Jewishness of Cohen’s proposal, but its influence as a Jewish alternative on his heirs (i.e. Rosenzweig and Lévinas).
the suspicion that Judaism has obstructed culture.”162 In order to confront this accusation, Cohen replaces Judaism as the only tradition that is not mythified. Judaism, out of its sources, allows the Self to recognize (fruits of the connection with the God-idea) the other as a fellowperson (fellowman for him), opening the doors to a potential unified humanity that works toward a common redemption. Furthermore, Judaism is the only tradition that seems capable of confronting the culture of tragedy, replacing it with a culture of responsibility. Jews have not obstructed culture but offered the only rational (i.e. responsible) path to culture.163 In other words, Jews are not barbaric, but the most distinguished, rational contributors to world culture. The inclusion of Christianity among those reproaching Judaism for its lack of “spirituality” and the regression of its cultural forms is not surprising. This only extends to Medieval and Modern times the radical conceptual difference between the Jews and the Self-centered traditions rooted in Greek antiquity.164

In this section, I contend that Cohen’s attack against Christianity indicates how the latter becomes the inheritor of a pagan Self-centeredness. Consequently, Christianity is unable to become a source of a culture of solidarity that aims for the final unification of humankind. I argue that it is through this conception of otherness that not only the Greeks but also Christianity at large are excluded as a source of rationality. To arrive at this conclusion, Cohen confronts, as he did before with the Greek and the Hebrew, two models: Medieval Jewish thought and Medieval Christendom. The first, powerless Judaism, is able to acknowledge the suffering of the other, eager to recognize the other’s participation in the journey toward redemption. The second, the powerful Christendom, appears blind to the other’s empowerment due to its conquering ego, its pain and pleasure. It is,

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162 Ibid., 122/105.
163 This interest in showing the Jewish contribution to Western society as the distinctiveness of the tradition can be followed up to the American re-reading of the Germans. See for example the classic of Cecil Roth, *The Jewish Contribution to Civilization* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1940). This should be a fascinating topic for a cultural historian.
164 In this reading, I implicitly object attempts to reduce or privilege Cohen’s critique of Christianity to his views on Jesus and the cult of the heroes. Cohen’s critique of Christianity is far more complex than the critique on Jesus, his personality and readings. Many times these readings implicitly show an anti-Catholic Cohen when the critique, as we will see, can be well extended to Protestantism. See one of these examples in Walter Jacob, “Hermann Cohen and Christianity” *CCAR Journal* 17:1 (1970), 61-69.
consequently, unable either to recognize the suffering of the other or to acknowledge the necessary complementariness of the non-Christian other in the path toward redemption. This Self-centeredness, this focus on its own activity and suffering that does not allow recognition of the other, is for Cohen the mythical pagan element that limits Christianity.\textsuperscript{165}

Let me elaborate here on how Cohen portrays both traditions, starting with Medieval Jewish philosophy. According to the author, “the Jewish religious philosophers of the Middle Ages did not becloud their historical sense with doctrinal prejudices, either with regard to Christianity or to Islam.”\textsuperscript{166} On the contrary, however, “they granted both religions the merit of spreading monotheism among the peoples of the world… [they] did not see in the Christian Trinity the absolute negation of monotheism, but they characterize it as association in partnership (\textit{shituf}).”\textsuperscript{167} Cohen, insisting on the literary Jewish documents as the source for the concept of tolerance, reproduces the particularism in the quest for universality. The acceptance of other traditions does not arise from the contextual, tolerant surroundings. It is, instead, the result of Jewish sources: “the Jewish philosophy of the Middle Ages does not grow so much out of Islam as out of the original monotheism.”\textsuperscript{168} In this way, Judaism is able to embrace the other and protect her due to its ideal historical consciousness, and not its contextual surrounding. This is why Maimonides “becomes a classic of rationalism in the monotheistic tradition.”\textsuperscript{169} Cohen continues to rewrite history. Earlier, we learned how rabbinical interpretations of Genesis and Deuteronomy became the first proposal of

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnotetext{165}{According to Cohen, Christianity will be the inheritor of pagan elements such as the centeredness in the suffering of the Self. See Ibid., 258.}
\footnotetext{166}{Ibid., 280/139.}
\footnotetext{167}{Ibid.}
\footnotetext{168}{Ibid., 114/92.}
\footnotetext{169}{Ibid., 79/63.}
\end{footnotesize}
the non-confessional state. Now, it is Maimonides who becomes the source for rationalism and religious reform, which precedes and paves the way for (a very Jewish-like) Protestantism.

On the contrary, Christianity is unable to acknowledge the other as either another or as part of the collaboration in the march toward a common unification. In the first place, “in the idea of a world religion,” and not in the universality of the particular, “Christianity made the idea of one mankind the content of religion, and on this idea it has based its claim to world conquest.” In Judaism, the particular concept of a single, universal humankind permits the acknowledgment of the other and demands the Self to instrument welfare laws for the other. In Christianity, the concept of one religion blocks the acknowledgment of the other and justifies the claim for violence against the barbaric to eradicate her barbarism. In addition, if this eradication of the barbarian in the other is not possible, it aims for the eradication of the barbarian herself. In Judaism, as fruit of the covenant with Noah, the protection of the other is law for the state and for the individual. In Christendom, belief that “Christ becomes the Messiah of Mankind” means the tradition does not rest until the differences are erased. While “one mankind remain[s] its universal objective,” this is only “secondary” to the conquest of each individual. Judaism forbids the indiscriminate and violent conversion of the bnei-noah and elaborates ideal types to acknowledge the humanity, powerlessness, and rights of the non-Jews (i.e. the nocrim, geirei toshav, and the chassidei-abumot abolami).

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170 See 1.2.2.
171 Derrida writes that, according to Cohen, “There was a Jewish reformation before the letter of the Christian Reformation. Maimonides is its proper name.” However, it should also be pointed out that by re-writing the history of Christianism, he co-opts the Magrehbi history as well: “If Maimonides had only known, if he had only seen himself in advance carried away along the course of this fantastic cavalcade, this galloping of a German-Jewish historian of philosophy, running through all of Western History in one breath without stopping for a single moment, all in front of an American public! If he had only known, he who considered himself rather Judeo-Maghrhebian, Judeo-Arab, or Judeo-Spanish, that one day he would be recruited for this strange struggle.” We will return to this very co-option of the Eastern by the end of the section. Derrida, “Interpretations at War: Kant, the Jew, the German,” 65.
172 Ibid., 280/239.
173 Ibid., 281/240.
174 Ibid., 280/239.
175 Ibid., 282/242.
176 Ibid., 123/104.
Christianity sustains that “the individual and his salvation is its central point.” Since there is no acknowledgment of the other or of societal concerns, the preoccupation is reduced to the suffering of the Self. The suffering of Christ becomes the representation of the suffering of each one of the Selves waiting for personal and egotistic redemption. This rests on the expiation that follows the individual acceptance of the Messiah, and not a societal program for a just society. The Kingdom is not of this world. Whereas Christianity limits the possibility of redemption to the suffering Self, Judaism extends the possibility of redemption beyond its tradition. Christianity needs to make the other the same in order to acknowledge her, but Judaism can do so without the need of such a reduction. Christianity builds upon the Greek: the only one acknowledged is the one who is included in the same sphere. Judaism is not only the alternative, but also the purifier. Judaism, the religion of reason, “protests against all the alleged powers of the Self, against all those pretended powers of the I, which are rooted in…pain and pleasure.”

Christianity becomes mythified through its empowerment owing to its concern for its own suffering (and not in the suffering of the other, as in the case of Judaism). The Christian—and this is especially true in the Protestantism surrounding Cohen—is redeemed from sin through the salvation stemming from belief in Christ. This empowerment is represented by the state of the conquistador. Cohen asks: “did not the Church originate rather as an institution by the side of the state, with a claim to be set over and supplement the actual state? Without the state the Church could not originate.” From this ethical socialist perspective, Christianity is on a mission of conquest that only can originate from the economic and repressive resources of the state. In contraposition, according to Cohen, Judaism arises from the pre-state (i.e. an anarchical one, Lévinas would add later) situation of Deuteronomy, the prophetic protest against the power of the State (as in Isaiah or Amos), and

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177 Ibid., 280/239.
178 Ibid., 7/6.
179 Ibid., 229/197.
especially in the stateless situation of the post-exile (Ezekiel). This rejection of the power of the resources of the non-rational state is a direct confrontation with the state as the final fulfillment of the idea.

Interestingly, Cohen’s critique is not limited to Christianity; it is an internal discussion within Judaism. Addressing Spinoza and Zionism, it is the stateless situation of the Jews that offers them the chance to be a light for the nations. The historicity of the welfare accounts informs their moral exemplification. Christianity only offers a concern for the Self-protected from the conquest of the other. The Jewish theocracy lies, as part of its essence, in welfare state laws that protect the resident alien without the need of any conquest. After the fall of the theoretical state, it is the nature of Judaism to spread these values throughout the nations. In other words, contra Spinoza, its mission has not perished with the fall of the state, but its center is born before the state and, as a consequence, endures after its fall. The state ought to fall for Judaism to fulfill its mission. What Judaism is able to offer are the resources for the creation of a society in which the ger tashav is an equal to alterity and not the factual historical experience itself? Neither the past state nor a future Jewish state is needed. Consequently, “the endurance of the Jewish state, on the contrary, would have been an anomaly.” Cohen commands, furthermore, a reaction against the “backwardness of Zionism with regard to the concept of nation.”

180 Some of these conceptions of prophetic message in correlation will be extended years later by another exilic Jewish philosopher, Abraham Joshua Heschel. To see this overlapping (and/or influences) see Natan Rotenstreich, “On Prophetic Consciousness” in *The Journal of Religion* 54:3 (1974), 185-198. It is important to point out that Cohen uses an ideal conception of history, disregarding biblical criticism. The model of Deuteronomy, therefore, does not represent the historical reform of Joshua but rather the traditional retelling of the Law by Moses before the people entered the land.

181 This anti-Hegelian perspective is what makes the connection between Cohen, Rosenzweig, and Lévinas a viable school of thought. See 1.3 and 2.2.


185 Ibid., 295/253. The celebrated debate between Cohen and Buber regarding Zionism would need more than a footnote for it to be fully developed. See Buber’s strongest critique in Buber, *Jüdische Schriften* III (Gütersloh: Gütersloher
The prophet of the federation of the states returns to the simultaneous critique of Hegel, Spinoza, and Zionism, claiming that “[w]e think today of the Church as a unity analogous of the state. But such an analogy was already rejected by the original monotheism.”\(^{187}\) To complete the correlation with God, the human being ought to recognize that holiness is no more than social justice; it is not conquest, which is defined as the “Satan of History.”\(^{188}\) In a context in which the foreign is (to borrow from Lévinas’ vocabulary) digested by the conqueror in the Church-State fusion, the oral law finds in the stranger—*ben-Noah* and *ger toshav*—both the figure to protect and the condition of the future of humankind. Both traditions understand that “law does not have its origins in human status but comes from God.”\(^{189}\) Yet in Jewish sources, it is “in the complete equality under the law” amongst the community, offering “also to the stranger his share in the law of the land, although he does not profess the one God… [that] humanitarianism begins, namely, in the law and in the state, even though this state is based on the unique God, and even though the sojourner does not recognize him.”\(^{190}\)

The accurate path to read history, in this project, is not to be found in Christianity: “The Christological interpretation of God’s servant…mistakes the concept of history, because it made of the representative of suffering the representative vicar of guilt.”\(^{191}\) Contrarily, “[o]nly God can take guilt upon himself…. Man, however, cannot be relieved of his consciousness of guilt…. In Christology the Messiah becomes God but disregarding the difference, He, as the representative of

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\(^{186}\) Ibid., 422/362.

\(^{187}\) Ibid., 229/196. The reduction of different enemies (the Greek, Christianity, Hegelianism, Spinozianism, and to which I add Zionism) to the same has been pointed out by several critics, one such being Andrea Poma. See Poma, *The Critical Philosophy of Hermann Cohen*, 172.

\(^{188}\) Ibid.

\(^{189}\) Ibid., 140/121.

\(^{190}\) Ibid., 141/121.

\(^{191}\) Ibid., 308/264.
guilt, cannot be the ideal of man.”

It is not, as classic interpretations of Cohen’s heir (Rosenzweig) suggest, that Christianity is powerfully marching toward redemption and Judaism is an atemporal community with welfare values where, thanks to its lack of empowerment, acknowledges the stranger in his or her individuality. Instead, it is that Christianity has mistaken the concept of history. We have already seen that the suffering of the Self is the basis of Christianity, but not of Judaism. This directly reproduces the Greek (the only one acknowledged as the one within one’s sphere). Now, Cohen goes one step forward; by making the Messiah the representative of suffering, Christians are relieved of consciousness of guilt. This freedom from consciousness allows them to conquer the world without any conscious remorse for the blood that is spread. In other words, they do not take into consideration that they are breaking the same Nohaide rules that set the goal, which is a unified humankind. Cohen is as clear as he is inflexible in his claim: “The universalism of the Church is not to be equated to Messianism.”

This false Messianism (or eschatology), which transgresses the Nohaide rules and the models for the treatment of the other (in their views the barbaric), will never achieve the goal by following its pretended ontological claims. It should be “helped” by Judaism to recover its path and purify itself from mythical elements.

Redemption arises after the acknowledgment Self’s responsibility of the other through engagement in the right reading of and action upon history. Once Cohen has built this construction, he attacks the source of the suffering of the Self in Christianity, which is the conception of sacrifice itself: “the sacraments are not the Church’s own work, but belong to the private inventory of the individual man, then the mighty lever of the Messianic idea cannot be mistaken. It consists in the

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192 Ibid., 308-209/264.
193 Ibid., 301/258.
194 This is one of the central ideas already present in the different editions of the celebrated, “Deutschum und Judentum,” Judische Schriften Rosenzweig ed. (Schwetschke: Berlin: 1925), v.2, 308-309. I understand that this reading (the limitations of Christianity to achieve redemption given the transgression of Nohaide laws) may be critical. Other critics have understood that it is the utopianism and not the transgression that led Cohen to associate Christianity with eschatology and not with Messianism. See this position presented in Andrea Poma, The Critical Philosophy of Hermann Cohen, 237-238. I believe that both readings are complementary since in both cases the aim is the same: to exclude Christianity from a rational path to redemption.
substitution of the ritual, as instituted by the rabbis, for the sacrificial cult.”  

Cohen rejects the empty sacrifices that redeem man and women from guilt (which is the origin of the violence against the other). In its place, he finds in an exilic prophet (Ezekiel) the source to leave behind the sacrifice as a center for a religion of reason (or responsibility). According to Cohen, Ezekiel “aims at the transformation” of the sacrifice and asks himself, “What kind of preservation would the old rejection remain in force?” What Ezekiel proposes is a “new concept of man.” In this point, Cohen departs ways with his Protestant colleagues such as Julius Wellhausen. He shows that before Jesus, there was an earlier prophetic purification of cult. This is why simple readings of Cohen equating Protestantism to Judaism are unable to completely reveal Cohen’s project.

The old Self is represented by the state-Israelites (not yet fully developed Jews, who are only rabbinical and exilic) who offered insincere sacrifices in order to expiate, the Christians who were exculpated on the basis of the sacrifice of the Messiah in immemorial times, and also the Greeks who offered sacrifices to escape the disgraces that they suffer owing to of the actions of former generations. In contraposition to these attempts, the exilic Ezekiel presents a “new Self” who is fully responsible for his or her actions. His or her sins are not individual ones able to be expiated through a simple sacrifice to the gods, but are “understood primarily as social sins, which [can] only be atoned by social justice.” The community of prayer (kehila) is the perfect new balance between the individual responsibility that acknowledges the necessity of repentance (teshuvah) and the witness of the community as representation of society through which the social action can be practiced.

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195 Ibid., 301/258.
196 Ibid., 203/175.
197 Ibid., 206/177.
199 Ibid., 227/195.
200 In order to understand what is distinct about the Jews in Cohen’s readings, Derrida analyzes the specificity of the Jewish “soul” or “psyche.” Unfortunately, as opposed as he is to a natural relationship between Cohen and Rosenzweig, he does not attempt to understand that what makes the Jew distinguished (in Cohen’s view) can be her sociology (and
The prophets of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah promise that “God will give” a new heart and a new spirit “when he will make a new covenant with Israel... but Ezekiel says: make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit.” A new Self is born in the Jewish sources of the exilic Judaism, out of the human decision of engraining the responsibility that Judaism demands. Nevertheless, this development is only possible when “the state has been destroyed and its reestablishment could not and was not permitted as long as Persian supremacy had to be respected.” The exilic character of Judaism rewrites the history of suffering of the people: “The misery of Jewish history does not begin with the exile, for the loss of the national state has already been determined by the Messianic idea.” In Ezekiel, it is the rational decision to abandon the sacrifice for the community of prayer, (which allows the human being to take responsibility for his actions toward the other) that makes of the Jew the new Self. Out of Judaism arises this new Self and “whoever acknowledges monotheism only in its Christian form does not grasp the purity of Jewish monotheism.” Cohen concludes, noting, “the prophecy of Ezekiel constitutes the essential stage of this progress.”

As has already been mentioned, conventional readings of Cohen have pointed out the convergence between Protestantism and Cohen’s “prophetic Judaism.” However, there is no reason to believe that the attack against Christianity was reduced to Catholicism. Finding his sources in the Midrash Tana-Elyahu, Cohen reflects that “as witness heaven and earth for that, that be it an Israelite or a pagan, a man or a woman, a slave or a maidservant, only according to the action one...”

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202 This is what Lévinas is going to read later as the “Difficult Freedom” of a “Religion of Adults.” See 2.2.
203 Ibid., 229/196.
204 Ibid., 312/267.
205 Ibid., 421/364.
206 Ibid., 211/180. A more detailed explanation of Cohen’s treatment of Ezekiel and its difference with the previous non-exilic prophet can be read in Poma, The Critical Philosophy of Hermann Cohen, 220-228.
207 In previous years, this position was particularly emphasized by David Myers who reads Cohen’s Judaism as Protestant Judaism. See Myers, Resisting History: Historicism and Its Discontents in Modern Jewish Thought, 47.
does, the holy spirit rests upon him.”208 The new Self emphasizes responsibility and complete liberty of election in community. The justification is not made according to faith but action and the noci and ger toshav are its witnesses. The new Self is based on responsibility of action toward the other even when the faith is not the same. Additionally, the relationship with God is with the God-idea, and personal and direct contact is not an individual task of personal revelation, but is found in the encounter with the stranger. It is in these relations with other human beings that the new Self finds his center: “the behavior of man to God, which may be a mystery, can however, in some way be controlled by the behavior of man to man. The distinction of good and bad originates in this behavior, not in the behavior of man toward God.”209 The critique against one of the radical original Protestant doctrines in Zwilling, as well as its contemporary developments in Troeltsch, follows this critique of both historical and contextual Protestantism.210 The Christian (in at least the two major Western denominations that will become the first two churches in Rosenzweig’s account) is displaced as the Self by the new Self which emerges out of Jewish sources based on his or her responsibility toward the stranger (a new other who is not barbaric). Protestantism needs to be closer to prophetic Judaism not only to be a religion of reason, but also to be Protestantism itself.211

1.2.4. Counter-History out of the Jewish Sources

The exilic Jew, the new Self that arises out of the replacement of the barbarian with a ger toshav, represents responsibility in modernity. In this way, the Christian and the Greek are displaced as sources for the constitution of rational modernity. Previously, we analyzed two moments of this

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208 Ibid., 224/107.
209 Ibid., 153/133.
210 Ibid., 400/344 for Zwilling and 175/151 for Troeltsch.
211 In this way, I follow Dietrich’s interpretation regarding Cohen’s transformation of the 1860s-1870s convergence between Lutheran Protestantism and Prophetic Judaism to the anti-Christian critique of the 1900s as a consequence of the 1880s wave of anti-Semitism. See Dietrich’s, “The Function of the Idea of Messianic Mankind in Hermann Cohen’s Later Thought,” 253-254.
displacement; namely, the reading of Maimonides as the precursor of rational reform, and the figure
of the ger toshav as the source for modern non-confessional citizenship. Cohen complements this
historical rewriting with two new reformulations: sources from the Renaissance and the
Enlightenment.

In the first instance, as we read above, the new man has its origins and then is dislocated
from his native soil. The new Self arises as an exilic man. The origins of modernity and the
development of rational thought can be seen in the Renaissance when “the sciences, no less than the
arts, achieved a kind of internationalism hence, a community of human letters arose amongst the
peoples, such had not been remotely achieved in antiquity.” The Greek tradition may have been
represented as the Golden Age of the Renaissance. However, Cohen forces us to reflect on the
ethnocentrism of this community and its limitations for extension. Cohen argues, “the Renaissance,
with its humanism was everywhere connected with the classics, but always complemented by
religion, and contained biblical influences.” This humanitarianism could have had a Hellenistic
source but religion (and we should remember that by religion, he intends a rational religion or
Judaism) offered the unethical, exilic cosmopolitanism of the Renaissance. When Rosenzweig
understands Cohen’s Germanity as Europeanism, he is realizing the existence of the elective affinity
between cosmopolitanism and the new Self.

In the second place, modern (pre-Hegelian) German philosophy is also reinterpreted by
placing Hebrew literature as its source. “Modern Philosophy…represented…a dialogue of
international minds.” It is true that the “[r]epublic of sciences, as it was called at that time,

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212 See 1.2.3 and 1.2.4.
214 Ibid.
215 See the introduction of Rosenzweig to Cohen’s work in Jüdische Schriften (Berlin: C.A. Schwetschke, 1924). I am
unaware of an English translation, but a beautiful Spanish translation can be found in Miguel García-Baro’s,
“Introducción a los Escritos Judíos de Hermann Cohen” in Judaísmo y Límites de la Modernidad (Barcelona: Rio Piedras,
1998), 13-64.
emerged in the French Revolution, with the doctrine of universal human rights. However, it aroused more of a political claim than a universal human one.” 217 In contrast to this singular political claim, the universal humanism “inspired the German enlightenment.” 218 Following this line of universal humanism, we find the work of J.G. Herder. Herder, as it is known in Neo-Kantian circles, was the author of the cosmopolitan, humanitarian work, *The Ideas for a Philosophy of History of Mankind*. “Not by accident,” the author argues, “he was at the same time the author of the Spirit of the Hebrew Poetry.” 219 According to Cohen, Herder “discerned the spirit of mankind, already in the earliest documents of the Old Testament, not first in the prophets only. This was an important insight which guided Herder’s entire conception of the Spirit of the Bible: he discerned Messianism in the principle of Monotheism.” 220 Cohen asserts, “here it is manifest once again how much Germanism and Judaism have in common.” 221

The contribution of monotheistic Israel “did not come to final close in the Bible, as did the Greek spirit in its various works. Monotheism required a continuous development beyond the Bible.” 222 The sources of Judaism are at one’s disposal and the Jews are the “sign of truth of Monotheism. No state, but yet a people…Israel, as a nation, is nothing other than the mere symbol for the desired unity of mankind.” 223 Germanism, a la Cohen, does not see Judaism as the “heteronymous system of morality and spiritually vacuous” that demands its members’ immediate conversion from their “pseudo-religion with vacuous ritual and non-sense obligations.” 224 On the contrary, it is in the Jewish new Self that Germanism (directly and indirectly) finds its sources. It is

217 Ibid.
218 Ibid.
219 Ibid.
220 Ibid.
223 Ibid.
now possible to revise what Cohen was expressing in his pro-German statements, one such being:
“eventually…the Jew saw his Messianic idea revitalized in and through the German Spirit…. I believe that the Jews of France, England, and Russia owe a debt of filial piety to Germany, for it is the motherland of their soul to the extent that their religion constitutes their soul.”225 Cohen replaces an anti-Semitic idealist Germany for a critical idealist Germany that considers Judaism its rational source.226 In this context, Germany ought to be Jewish, otherwise it is not Germany. Similarly, Protestantism ought to be prophetic Judaism, otherwise it is not Protestantism. In other words, Christianity should follow Cohen’s counter-historical construction, otherwise it is not modern.227

As a consequence, those engaging in cosmopolitanism need to acknowledge their duty:
“This principle of ethics and its postulate of a world-wide community of nations are consonants with a fundamental principle of Jewish theology: the one God loves the stranger…and from this commandment to love the stranger…it is the duty of any government both from an ethical and religious point of view to grant protection to the stranger oppressed in his own country.”228 But it is from Germany, “the classic land of humanitarianism,”229 that Cohen demands a special responsibility: “I have already expressed my hope elsewhere that Germany will recognize what I consider to be its mission.”230 Cohen makes use of Kant’s theoretical proposal against Kant’s anthropological racism: “Kant once said that the earth has a spherical surface lest any may have

226 According to critics, the misunderstanding of the Jewish-German symbiosis (along with the Holocaust and the rise of Heidegger) is the reason for the lack of attention given to the work of Cohen in the English-speaking world. See Robert Gibbs, “Hermann Cohen’s Ethics” in the Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy 13:1-3 (2004), iii.
227 It should be pointed out that several secondary sources have already anticipated this Rosenzweigean interpretation of Cohen’s position last year. See Myers, Resisting History: Historicism and Its Discontents in German-Jewish Thought, 85.
228 Cohen, Grenzsperrre”/”On Closing the Borders”, 378-379/189-190.
229 Ibid., 380/191.
230 Ibid., 379/190.
more of a claim than another to any specific spot on it.” The replacement of Kant in defense of immigration follows the rewriting of history, which includes the aforementioned Jewish origins of the modern state secularism, rationalism, renascence, and enlightenment.

After the Holocaust, it was simple to discard Cohen’s proposal. After all, Germany did not particularly act à la Germany. However, Germany may not have been Germany in the times of Cohen either. One simply needs to remember his active participation against anti-Semitism to realize that his portrayal of Germany was not a historical reading. Cohen’s idealization, I contend, should be read as a political intervention. Cohen appeals to the German humanitarian mission to demonstrate the inadequacy of German policies: “my objection to any plan to close our borders to Jews of Eastern Europe is influenced by my religious outlook. This religious outlook of mine is primarily an ethical outlook, however. For me, the ideal of any constitutional state must be a united mankind.”

This ethical viewpoint is a reading of Germany that adjusts itself to the ideal only if it becomes Jewish and favors Jews. Cohen, contradicting conventional readings, does not seem to be praising Germany but instead showing its inadequacy of achieving the ideal. German rationality, cosmopolitanism, and idealism are owed to the Jews. It is in Germany’s interest to open the border to Jews. Doing so will offer Germans the possibility of achieving redemption, to engage with the task of responsibility. The Eastern Jews, for their part, would become the ideal ger toshav.

The experiences of long life have created a close relationship between me, the German born in Anhalt, and these people of Eastern Europe. I have revered them as my Talmud teachers and I gratefully remember nearly all of them. I have come to know among these men, the character traits of the unworldly sage, the unselfish sufferer and the pure idealist in all matters of minds and morals. And they have, through my life, claimed my admiration both for their intellectual acumen and depth and their moral stature and selfless renunciation of the world…. And these East European Jews combine intellectual energy with religious

232 In the reading of the ‘Jewishness of Kant’ see Derrida, “Interpretations at War: Kant, the Jew, the German,” 69.
233 Myers, Resisting History: Historicism and Its Discontents in German-Jewish Thought, 51-53.
enthusiasm…. Only the other day I read, once again, a report by a Gentile in which he described not merely the Rembrandt-like of such a Polish-ghetto-face but particularly its saintly expression. How then, could I be fearful of any threat to our fatherland if it were to admit Jews of this type… there is probably no man among us who has not met and admired some Polish Jews of unsurpassed inner nobility.  

What started out as an ideal the Jewish sources, displacing barbarism finishes with the ideal of the Jew who is not barbaric. Whereas Jewish sources offer the need to accept the noble but dispossessed ger toshav, the Eastern Jews become the model for this type. The ideal Germany, in order to be humanitarian, ought to accept its past (the Jewish sources) and its future (the Jewish immigration) as the condition for redemption (and a condition to be modern and German). Otherwise, it will be rejecting its own center (i.e. secularism, rationality, enlightenment, and in Cohen’s view, all Jewish values) and the possibility of leading the process toward the end. By associating rationality with responsibility, Cohen aims for a more Jewish (which is more modern) Germany. This project is impossible before the first step: the replacement of the term barbarism that is excluded from the vision of the Greek for a ger toshav that becomes the condition of redemption. Through this replacement, Cohen not only creates a counter-history of modernity, but also traps Germany. Germany, soon after, will make a decision to throw away both rationality and responsibility, losing any possibility to lead the ideal future. 

In the path to trap Germany, however, Cohen also traps the Eastern Jews. In Cohen’s idealization, they appear to be the forerunners of the Enlightenment, the humble and well-intentioned proto-rational beings, but not German yet. In Cohen’s words, “I have set German Judaism and its historical ideal as an example before Polish-Russian Jewry. But for this very reason, I feel justified in emphasizing the new strength and support we might gain from an influx of East

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235 Ibid., 382/191.  
236 Contextually, however, the Polish Jews were seen as the pioneers of German culture in the East. Cohen does not follow this narrative since it would be a reason to stop immigration. See Ascheim, *Bothers and Strangers*, 158.
European Jews.”237 In this way, a contradiction arises in Cohen’s perspective. If the ger toshav does not need to be incorporated to the same, if he does not need to be a believer (modern Jewish), why does the Polish Jew need to become German?238 The resolution of this problem is exactly where his two heirs, Rosenzweig and Lévinas, depart. Both of them will recognize that the Eastern Jew does not need to become modern. Rosenzweig follows the discomfort of calling Jews barbaric in Cohen, but makes a crystalline distinction leaving the originality of the non-Western Jew intact. Lévinas will follow Rosenzweig’s clear separation, but re-appropriates the barbaric when he calls the colonized Eastern (infinity or exteriority), a barbarian.

1.3 Franz Rosenzweig on Barbarism

1.3.1 Cohen’s Legacy and Rosenzweig’s Adaptation of Barbarism

“It is non-sense to brand the state of the Jews...as barbaric,” writes Rosenzweig from the trenches of the Balkans in 1916.239 Rosenzweig, who just returned from a visit to the Jewish community of Uskub (Macedonia), concluded that they had good costumes, that “it’s really an integrated culture.”240 Only three years before this letter, Rosenzweig had decided to engage in the enlightened European culture by converting to Christianity. He was going to follow the first Christians and enter the Church, not as a pagan but as a Jew. However, after a period of exploration of Judaism he decided to remain within what he will describe as the eternal people. Only a few months after this decision, Rosenzweig had already become student of Cohen at the Lehranstalt in Berlin. Rosenzweig writes that his encounter with Cohen became “the surprise of my life” and starts one of

237 Ibid.
238 Even though this can be read as an Orientalization of the Eastern, this understanding of the German-Polish Jewish fraternity as the direct consequence of Cohen’s readings clashes (in purpose and intention) with the alternative reading of the German-American Jewish/Protestant fraternity proposed by the Derridian reading of Cohen. See Derrida, “Interpretations at War: Kant, the Jew, the German,” 61-62 and 70-72. This will be particularly relevant in the next chapter when America is going to be identified with Rome and the ‘futuristic Talmudic nightmare’ by Lévinas. See 2.2.
239 Letter of Franz Rosenzweig to his parents dated the 9th of July of 1916. Rosenzweig, Breife und Tagebücher, 200/37.
240 Ibid.
his notes on Cohen’s thoughts, writing “About the Shabbat: ‘All of it is miracle!’ About the love of one’s neighbor: ‘this is beyond the sphere of development…this must have nothing to do with development—[it is] an a priori.” From his early return to Judaism, Rosenzweig departs from the connection between the a priori (the immutable principle) just treatment of the other, the stranger, and its reproduction in Shabbat, which symbolizes the full equality of the ger toshav and serves as the ideal anticipation of the (non-illuministic) redemptive unification of humankind. After being one of the first readers of parts of the manuscript of Cohen’s Jewish system, Rosenzweig unsurprisingly rejects the characterization of Judaism as a barbaric people. Following the teacher, Jews are distinguished by their hospitality toward the other. This attitude becomes the pure path toward redemption. Rosenzweig’s rejection of the barbaric characterization becomes the departing point for the construction of his own confessional (i.e. ethnic) social theory. The influence of Cohen in the development of this basic structure is clearly acknowledged by Rosenzweig himself when he zealously defends his teacher against those who attempted to convert him to Christianity in the past.242

I contend that Rosenzweig starts developing his own proposal, departing from where his teacher left, by reinserting Cohen’s major themes into a framework that tries to find an alternative to the West (and not to just replace it). In this sense, his proposal becomes a drash or an adaptation of the teacher. In Cohen, the reader finds simultaneity between two factors: the construction of civilized hospitality to the stranger out of the Jewish sources and the need for civilization to offer hospitality to the contextual resident-aliens (the Eastern Jews). In the context of the struggle for Eastern Jewish immigration, the rejection of the term barbarism and its replacement with a Talmudic term is a political proposal. Judaism becomes the theoretical source toward redemption, and the

241 As cited in Glazer, Franz Rosenzweig. His Life and Thought, 29-30.
242 See Rosenzweig’s defense of Cohen in Rosentock Husey, Judaism Despite Christianity. The ‘Letters on Christianity and Judaism’ between Eugen Rosentock-Huessy and Franz Rosenzweig (Alabama: University of Alabama Press.1969), 79. The letter was translated and edited by the same Rosentock.
practical, required, and dispossessed otherness that permits its achievement. Only the people who demonstrate solidarity with the dispossessed other without subsuming her (i.e. not as barbaric but as ger toshav) can achieve the ultimate goal, which is the social redemption of a unified humankind.\textsuperscript{243}

For Rosenzweig, the confrontation with the term \textit{barbarism} stands directly in defense of this stranger. The Eastern dispossessed Jews are the contextual model he uses to construct his system. He portrays them as the ideal, as they do not live in the problematic history that threatens to sublate them but in the eternity and immutability of the principle of solidarity that permits redemption. The simultaneity of source and dispossession in Cohen becomes a unity in the student. Rosenzweig rejects the term \textit{barbarism} in the context of his reflection on a Jew who left the Eastern community to engage with universal Western values beyond this organic and integrated culture (i.e. Salomon Maimon). The barbaric is not the community; “it is only the individual (Maimon, for instance) who becomes a barbarian by relinquishing it.”\textsuperscript{244} Barbarism, for Rosenzweig, does not characterize the life of the dispossessed community of the East, rather the rejection of the values of what he will understand later as an eternal and blood community.\textsuperscript{245} To understand these cultures as barbarians would be to follow a Christian path of deformation of Jewish identity: “If one looks at it from the outside without knowledge of the language and customs” the foreign, in this case the Eastern Jewish community, “may appear barbarous.”\textsuperscript{246} According to this reading Judaism has been “decadent not for a few centuries only, but ever since its inception (538 BCE). In the misunderstandings of the center of cultural power of Judaism, “what seems decadence to the goy—who was then a pagan and now is a Christian—is the very essence of Judaism.”\textsuperscript{247} Some interpreters may read the text as being one of the first sources that indicates Rosenzweig’s conception of a permanent contentious rivalry

\textsuperscript{243} Please see 1.2. for the complete formulation of this sketch.
\textsuperscript{244} Letter of Franz Rosenzweig to his parents dated on the 9th of July of 1916. Rosenzweig, \textit{Breife und Tagebücher}, 200/37.
\textsuperscript{245} The conception of \textit{blood community} is one of the most difficult topics in Rosenzweig due to its racialist connotations. For a clear reading of the term as a Jewish response to anti-Semitism (which does not exculpates but understands it in the context of the debate) see Mack, \textit{The Inner Anti-Semitism of Philosophy and Its German Jewish Responses}, 117-135.
\textsuperscript{246} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{247} Ibid.
between Judaism and Christianity. The two communities will be presented in his major work, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, as two paths from which enmity permits each one to achieve their north ("redemption") and overcome the limitations (or "dangers") of each one of their cultures. Rosenzweig not only expands Cohen’s conception of a correlation between God and the human being to a correlation of two traditions seeking a common end, he also writes from the pure essence of Judaism in confrontation with the temptation of a contaminated Christianity. If Cohen finishes his theoretical work in support of the Eastern European to convert him into a Western, Rosenzweig departs from this Eastern location to make of the Western an Eastern.248

As a consequence Rosenzweig’s adaptation of Cohen’s project, far from being reduced to the external relationships of Judaism with Christianity, achieved is a powerful relevance regarding the internal Jewish debate, East versus West. It is true, however, that Cohen and Rosenzweig were not the only Jewish intellectuals who sustained a clear solidarity with the Ostjuden in the early twentieth century. With his writings on the Eastern Jew, Rosenzweig participates in a contextual construction of a counter-myth. In nineteenth century German territories, “the West European Enlightenment project invent[ed] Eastern Europe as its barbaric mirror.”249 In other words, “German *Bildung* was explicitly juxtaposed to Polish Talmudic Barbarism.”250 The Ostjuden was the representation of barbarism and one of the founders of the sciences of Judaism recalls listening to how they “screamed, raved and sang like the savages of New Zealand.”251 During the early twentieth

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249 Steven Ascheism, *Brothers and Strangers*, xxvi.

250 Ibid., 13.

251 Ibid., 14. This was one of the characterizations of Eastern Europeans made by the founder of the Sciences of Judaism, Leopold Zunz. It is not surprising that intellectual historians remark that Zunz’s mentor was Rosenzweig’s great-grandfather, Samuel Meyer Ehrenberg, forerunner of the Sciences of Judaism. Lévinas will attack this school in several of his works, making use of the term barbarism (3.2). See Myers, *Resisting History: Historicism and Its Discontents in German Jewish Thought*, 75-77.
century, however, a romanticization of the Eastern Jew was built as a counter-myth to the irrational Eastern Jew. One of the maximum exponents of this trend was Martin Buber, an indisputable influence on Rosenzweig. This counter-myth denied antagonism or asymmetry between East and West, rejected the rabbinical emphasis on legislation for the ambiguous and modern-free (and Protestant) interpretation of the Bible, and recovered the potentiality of the pietistic spirit of the Eastern as an ally against anti-Semitism in Zionist circles.

By adopting this line of thought, though, Rosenzweig reinscribes this project within a Cohenian trend. In contraposition to the popular Buberian construction of the counter-myth, Rosenzweig stands as a non-Zionist supporter of rabbinic exilic Judaism. This is why in the quote of the last paragraph, he places the starting point of Judaism in 538 BCE. It was in this year that Cyrus, King of Persia, offered Jewish elite the possibility to return to their native land. Yet a majority of them decided to stay in exile, which was to become the alternative center of Judaism for more than a thousand years. The departing point of this rabbinical Judaism is not the exodus of Egypt or the establishment in Zion, but rather the acceptance of the cultural opportunity of the exile in Babylon. It is from this period that Cohen draws his most important sources (beyond the pre-conquest Deuteronomy). Firstly, Ezekiel, the exilic prophet that let a new man rise. Secondly, the clear Babylonic orientation (as opposed to Jerusalemite or Alexandrian) that rabbinical Judaism would adopt a few centuries later. Judaism, in Rosenzweig’s view, is rabbinical and exilic.

This exilic character of the Jews returns once again to Cohen, identifying the center of Jewish life, chiefly the treatment of the stranger as simultaneously emerging from Jewish sources and experiences. Reading it together with Rosenzweig’s construction of the Polish and the Balkan Jew

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252 Ibid., 80-99.
253 The development of this relationship can be found throughout the history of the letters and partnership in Glazer, Franz Rosenzweig His Life and Thought, 116-176.
254 See a portrayal of Buber in Ascheim, Brothers and Stranger, 121-138.
255 See 1.2.3. It is not a coincidence that Rosenzweig writes that the Talmudic period “was the high-point of Jewish history.” See Myers, Resisting History, 102. See also note 101.
sheds light onto the Cohenian nature of Rosenzweig’s proposal. Throughout his reflection on the Sephardic Jews of Uskub (Macedonia), there is a permanent reference to the “distinguished” attitude of the community. What makes them “dignified” though is not knowledge or wealth. In Rosenzweig’s words, “The Jewish knowledge is nil” and “they are a living proof of the saying that too much comfort demoralizes.” What is the quality that makes the first Eastern Jew distinguished? “They rightly consider themselves an elite, but as regards to hospitality… Imagine, by the way, a thoroughly drab lodging-house interior; they receive guests in one of their bedrooms.” Hospitality resumes the Jewish attitude toward relation with another and this is the reason that leads Rosenzweig to conclude, “the Jewish way of life is entirely natural to them.” What starts as an admiration for an aspect of their existence (their hospitality to the stranger) ends with a praise for their Jewish lives.

A few months later, Rosenzweig was traveling north, and the construction of a common life of the (now Ashkenazi) Eastern Jew was built from a series of letters. He starts to feel “pride in [my] race, in so much freshness and vivacity” of the Polish Jews. On site, he revises his understanding of education, admiring the product of the Polish cheder and he laments the state of education in his own context: “German city children are essentially proletarians without tradition, without substance, and hence without imagination. Here the five-year-olds already live in a context of three thousand years.” This life of, what he is going to identify as an eternal community, is confronted with the superficiality of the German Jew. In frank admiration for this community of Jewish life, Rosenzweig

256 It is important to notice that this common location of the Eastern (Ashkenazi/Sephardic) is in part a novelty. Sephardim (mostly represented by the distinguished Spanish Jews in exile and the Israelite French Jews) were not commonly located next to the Ostjuden. Indeed, the supposed Sephardic origin of the German Jews was emphasized in order to differentiate them from the Eastern. Rosenzweig, however, places Sephardic Jews next to the Ostjuden. In his view the two communities have an authentic Jewish life because of (and not despite) their dispossession. This leads Rosenzweig, as we shall see in the next section, to focus on these collectives as examples of the eternal community. See Steven Ascheim, Brothers and Strangers, 27.

257 Letter of Rosenzweig to his parents on the 6th of April, 1917. Rosenzweig, Breife und Tagebücher, 380-381/51.

258 Ibid.

259 Ibid.

260 Ibid., 565/74-5. Letter of Rosenzweig to his mother the 27th of May of 1918.

261 Ibid. Letter of Rosenzweig to his mother on the 23rd of May of 1918.
reflects, “I can well understand why the average German no longer feels any kinship with these East European Jews; actually they had very little such kinship left; he has become philistine, bourgeoisie.” In other words, the Eastern Jews (the Jews) are really “a unique nation on earth” but the German Jews have just become “degenerate parvenus.” This life, he observes, has no need to envy the Western World: “If you tease a toddler by telling him he’s crafty, he answers you with a whole diatribe on craftiness that might have come out of Shakespeare.” In these same moments, Rosenzweig was starting to draw the problems and structure of his major Jewish system, finding a model in the East from which he builds his ideal Judaism.

The relationship between West and East is asymmetrical—the former are powerful “parvenus and philistines” (either bourgeoisie or proletarian, they are defined by materiality) and the latter, powerless, distinguished, and eternal. This is a clear difference in the alliance proposed by Buber’s reading of the simple, pietistic, and ecstatic chassid. The critique does not seek an alliance between Western and Eastern Jews, but instead seeks the returning of the Jew to the authentic life of the eternal people. The East, according to Rosenzweig, is proudly diasporic and does not seek for a homeland in either their places of residence or Zionism. It is rabbinical and (as we will see) overtly ritualistic according to eternal rules, not just ecstatic. The communication with the divinity is not direct, but it is manifested through the care for the dispossessed neighbor. In contraposition to Buber, the alliance between Jews of the East and West in a cultural Zionist project is not going to

262 Ibid.
263 Ibid. Letter of Rosenzweig to his mother on the 27th of May, 1918.
264 Ibid. Letter of Rosenzweig to his mother on the 23rd of May, 1918.
265 It is important to notice that this Polish community is Hassidic, suggesting that Rosenzweig is, here, following Buber and not Cohen’s lead. What distinguishes this community, however, is not the ecstatic mysticism of the Hassid, but his/her brightness and high-level culture. This appreciation of a deep engagement with a cultural discourse is a Cohenian and not a Buberian line of thinking.
266 The participation of Rosenzweig within a Romantic, anti-bourgeois line of Jews—who from Buber to Landauer to Lukacs were following a common mandate (tikkun olam)—is pointed out by Michael Lowy. See Redemption and Utopia. Jewish Libertarian Thought in Central Europe. A Study in Elective Affinity, 57-62.
267 It should be noted that Rosenzweig follows Cohen in developing an ideal history removed from a factual one. Although it is true that Jews in Eastern Europe were less assimilated than in Western Europe, and that they participated less in liberal politics, the affluence of Zionism in the Ashkenazi East (origin of the Chovevei Zion) and local projects (such as the Bund) jeopardize this reading of Rosenzweig.
return to the Eastern Jews their dignity—they already live with dignity. In this manner, Rosenzweig makes use of contextual development to reinscribe and extend Cohen’s project. It is not by coincidence that in the previously mentioned letter he finalizes his lengthy comments on Eastern Jewry with a request: “don’t forget to send me Cohen’s Logic.” Out of the Jewish sources that led to the hospitality of otherness, a new life emerges. Rosenzweig adapts and complements Cohen’s project. Whereas the teacher opened the doors to revalorize the Jewish path in his Religion, the student will give further content to this Jewish path in his Star. What unifies their projects is their rejection of barbarism through the revalorization of the Eastern Jew. That said, what differentiates them is that Rosenzweig understands the Eastern as the ideal and demonstrates her perfection through a sociological analysis.

1.3.2. The Eternal Community: The Alterity for the Other

Starting an analysis of The Star of Redemption in the third part of the book may appear at first as being unorthodox, but by doing so, light is shed onto the apex of Rosenzweig’s entire proposal. The work comprises three parts, and our point of departure is the first book of the third of part. In it, Rosenzweig describes the characteristics of the Jewish dispossessed community by adapting and complementing Cohen’s project. The focus of the chapter is the possibility of the proud foreigner (exemplified by but not limited to the Eastern Jewish community) encountering otherness and achieving redemption. Why is this sociological analysis necessary? According to interpreters of Rosenzweig, “the vision of redemption requires complex social practices, and thus the method for studying redemption is social theory.” Rosenzweig begins his description of Judaism (the authentic community represented in the East) by explaining the reasons behind its exceptionality, its

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268 Letter of Rosenzweig to his mother on the 23rd of May, 1918. Rosenzweig, Briefe und Tagebücher, 565/74.
onto-political alterity. In Cohen, there is simultaneity between the Jew as both a source as well as a subject of hospitality. Rosenzweig follows this path, disregarding the need to become a new Self, focusing on the same community as the complete alterity (from its sources and life). This community of the Eastern Jew puts into practice the sources for redemption (hospitality of otherness), and is dispossessed (and deserves hospitality) at the same time. Cohen maintains that the Jew is the path to follow to achieve redemption. Rosenzweig goes one step further, contending that the Eastern Jew, by rejecting the pleasures of temporal and political life, have achieved a stage that welcomes redemption through their ritual. In his words, the community “purchased eternity at the cost of temporal life.”

The task of Rosenzweig is to describe this eternal community, distinguishing Judaism from other ones. Writing in an age of rising nationalism, during the first half of the twentieth century, Rosenzweig elects three cultural constructions that lead to the formation of a political nation—soil, language, and law. He explains that the alterity of the Jewish people lies in the rejection of the egotistic nationalism and in their sensitivity toward the otherness (never barbaric) in each one of these cultural constructions. This sensitivity arises, as in Cohen, from the guidance of the immutable source through their history of otherness. Let me explain how in each one of these characteristics Rosenzweig returns to the same center.

The first cultural construction that Rosenzweig analyzes is the relationship of this eternal community with soil. From the mythical beginning, the people see themselves as strangers from the possession of land. The “tribal legend of the eternal people begins with otherwise than indigenousness,” with a clear understanding of their nature as wanderer foreigners. “Israel’s

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270 Manuel Reyes Mate, Memoria de Occidente. Actualidad de Pensadores Judíos Obvidados (Barcelona: Anthropos, 1997), 165.
272 This reading is influenced by the account of Gibbs, but we emphasize one aspect of the construction (i.e. the role of hospitality in this construction). See Gibbs, Correlations in Rosenzweig and Levinas, 129-136.
ancestor...immigrated; his history begins as the Holy Books recounted it, with the divine command to go out of the land of his birth and to go into the land that God will show him.”273 To rephrase, from the beginning they acknowledge their ontological status as aliens who take residence elsewhere. This nature is further carried beyond the individual “tribal legend” and extended to the more comprehensive social construction. The creation of the national community also departs from the recurrent theme of its exilic character: “the people become the people, as in the dawn of its earliest times so later again in the bright light of history, in an exile, the Egyptian one as later one in Babylon.”274 Cohen had already unfolded the meaning of the two exiles. The teacher, reading Deuteronomy 23:8, encourages the love for the other and the shelter of the rival in memory of the exile in Egypt. Congruously, the exile of Babylon (already characterized by Rosenzweig as the beginning of the rabbinical understanding of people) is the source for the exilic prophet, Ezekiel, who will be able to take responsibility for the otherness. While the mythical history marks the strangeness of the Jew, its national history emphasizes it, linking to its memory the just treatment of the stranger.275

Rosenzweig adds a third insight to this dual historical source. Even after the conquest of the land, Jews were not proprietors of the soil: “for the eternal people the homeland never becomes its own.”276 The land is part of a divine promise and no rights or propriety can be held by the people. For the approval of Cohen, there is no myth that justifies the possession of the land.277 This is a radical difference from the rest of the peoples of the world: “even when it is at home, again differently from all peoples of earth, this full proprietorship of the homeland is disputed; it is itself

273 Ibid, III 51/319. This is a particularly interesting problem that escapes the textual readers who try to fuse Rosenzweig with Heidegger. See Peter Eli Gordon, Rosenzweig and Heidegger: Between Judaism and German Philosophy.
274 Ibid.
275 See 1.2.3.
276 Rosenzweig, Stern/Star, III 51/319.
277 The conception of demystification of the land, which can be identified as a Cohenian interest in Rosenzweig, is highlighted by Stephane Moses, System and Revelation: The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig, trans. Catherine Tihamy (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 178-9.
only a stranger and tenant in its land, ‘he land is mine,’ says God to the people.”278 This can be read as a double political critique against political Zionism and assimilation. On the one hand, it rejects any claim of, return to, or possession of land in order to solve Jewish exilic abnormality. Exile is the ontological reality of the non-barbaric Jewish people.279 On the other hand, it also rejects the possibility of engagement with the politics of the locations of residence, since the memory of the holy land “never let[s] anyone to feel at home in any other land.”280 This is what makes participation in the politics of the land impossible, and the Jew should be considered “the only genuine pacifist.”281 The alternative relationship to the land is a clear political stand of Rosenzweig: the Jew is trustworthy as a source for solidarity with the stranger because she herself is ontologically a stranger. This is not the assimilation of others in the history of the Jew but (as in Cohen) an ontological stand in the prevention of the suffering of the stranger.

The second construction that marks Jewish alterity and its relation with strangeness is that of language. Jews do not have an everyday language that transcends space: “everywhere speaks the language of its external destinies, the people of its language’s destinies, the language of the people with whom it perchance dwells as a guest.”282 According to Rosenzweig, the natural resident alien “never poses the language in its own right, it is always a language of immigrants.”283 Seeing themselves as foreign, “the Jewish people never identify itself entirely with the language it speaks,” and through its own creativity subverts it from inside. The people add “its own vocabulary or at least specific selections from the common vocabulary, its own word order, its own feeling for what is

278 Rosenzweig, Stern/Star, III 51/319.
280 Rosenzweig, Stern/Star, III 51/320.
281 Ibid., III, 91/351.
282 Ibid., III 52/320.
283 Ibid.
beautiful or ugly in the language in question, all this betrays that this language." The Jewish people, despite some interpretations, are not seen as pariah people à la Max Weber, but as a source of creativity in conditions of dispossession. The Jew neither be a Zionist nor a fervent national assimilationist, yet that does not mean an abandonment of creativity by subverting the hegemony of those who claim right of property.

The two models that Rosenzweig chooses to exemplify these creative peoples are unsurprising. This system was built after his visits to Uskub and Warsaw, where the eternal people is located in these non-barbaric (but still resident alien) cultures: “‘Judeo-Spanish’ in the Balkans and ‘Yiddish’ in Eastern Europe are the only best known cases today.” The two communities stand as the authentic descendents of a Jewish life that, as a stranger, renounces the right of possession (of soil or language). The ontological strangeness of the Jew, which departs from the historical and conceptual memory of the exoduses (Ur, Egypt, Babylon, and Spain), is completed by the current analysis of the alternative use of languages of host peoples. If the description of the relationship between land and the Jewish people attacked political Zionism and assimilation, the description of the language will similarly attack cultural Zionism. To encourage a Zionist-centric renascence of Hebrew presupposes that there is an abnormality in the current stage of the people as represented by the language. Rosenzweig agrees, “since immemorial times, its own language has no longer been the language of daily life.” However, “it is anything but a death language.” This language has a particular function: “the holiness of its own language has the same effects as the holiness of its

284 Ibid.
286 Several authors explored this overlapping of Weber and Rosenzweig . See for example Gibbs, Correlations in Rosenzweig and Lévinas, 117-121 and Reyes Mate, Memoria de Occidente, 168-172.
287 Ibid., III 52/320.
288 While the critique concerning land becomes a major confrontation against political Zionism, the discussion over language is an attack against cultural Zionists from Eliezer Ben Yehuda to Ahad Aham to Martin Buber. For an example, turn to the importance of the renaissance of the Jewish language in Ben Yehuda, “A Letter of Ben Yehuda,” The Zionist Idea, 160-65.
289 Rosenzweig, Stern/Star, III 52/320.
own land.” This function is to “prevent the eternal people from ever living entirely at one with the times.” The Jew rejects any hegemonic political participation (so far, Jewish political nationalism, cultural Zionism, and assimilationism of the host nation). It has a “final suspicion of the power of the world.” Its center does not change with time, but rather follows the principle of sheltering the other out of the history of foreignness that produces the source of this strangeness.

This immutability of the principle is the starting point of Rosenzweig’s third analysis: Jewish relation to the law. The rest of the nations are in concrete dynamism. This is why their laws change to adapt themselves to new situations, incorporating socially constructed customs: “they continuously change their today into new customs, a new eternal-of-yesterday, and at the same time set new law from their today for the tomorrow.” In other words, law-making, either positivistic or consuetudinary, becomes historically relative. On the contrary, in the life of the eternal people, revelation was given once and now “custom and law, having become non-augmentable and unreachable, flow into the one basin of that which is valid and forever.” The (oral) law, following Cohen, is not immutable but rather it flows from an immutable source. The center of its law, as we have seen time and again, is a hybrid of Jewish strangeness and Jewish shelter of the other. By making the law flow from a common point, the temporal disputes between conservative and revolutionary forces are erased. Rosenzweig has already confronted Jewish contextual temptations (both Zionism and assimilationism). Now he is going to attack a fourth one: idealism, or revolutionary forces. Other peoples “live in revolution,” where the law “is continuously changing” to satisfy the new modes of thought or production. The new laws of oppression or defense of the otherness emerges as an integral part of the unfolding of the Spirit or the different stages of class

290 Ibid.
291 Ibid.
292 Ibid., III 54/322.
293 Ibid.
294 Ibid., III, 54/322.
295 Ibid.
struggle. Conversely, in the Jewish people “reigns the law that no revolution could repeal” the original solidarity.296 This is not just a critique; several commentators of Hegelianism have pointed it out. Nevertheless, it is also a contextual concern. The solidarity, in contrast to Marxism—deeply influent in Jewish circles in the late 1910s in both Eastern and Central Europe—does not arise from the historical change and the development of the contradictions between forces and modes, but from the historical immutability of the original source.297

This departure of solidarity from immutability “removes power over time,” and for that reason “the Jewish people does not calculate the years of its own chronology.”298 Counting its own chronology would accept the historical distance of the oral law and current application from its original source. The aim of the Jewish people is not to advance to a next stage by burying the barbarism of the previous period. The full consummation of the immutable law of solidarity with the stranger is its goal, which is only accomplished when it flows directly from its origins. The law of solidarity is not just a “historical memory” of a “fixed point in the past that becomes more past every year.”299 It is a present duty and an immutable responsibility. This past is “eternally present; every individual is supposed to regard the Exodus out of Egypt as he himself had also gone out.”300 The memory of the Exodus in the present means—following Cohen—the immutable solidarity with the stranger. The principle rises from the experience that is present. The refusal to guide themselves by “the people’s chronology” follows the understanding that it “cannot be calculation of its own time for it is valid at all times, it is without time.”301

296 Ibid.
297 Writing in the very early years of the Weimar republic it is impossible to neglect mentioning the Jewish alternative represented by figures such as Rosa Luxemburg or Gustav Landauer in the revolts of 1919, and other figures such as Georg Lucaks in the years following the events. For a depiction of the internal struggle among “restorative” and “revolutionary” Jewish romantic proposals, see Michael Lowy, Redemption and Utopia. Jewish Libertarian Thought in Central Europe. A Study in Elective Affinity, 27-46.
298 Rosenzweig, Stern/Star, III, 55/323
299 Ibid.
300 Ibid.
301 Ibid.
stranger directs the particularity to universality. Such a universal aim is what sets the conception of
the calendar. Those who refuse to calculate the years of their own chronology “must calculate the
years according to the years of the world.” The chronology is not thought of according to the
distance of the law to orient the Jews, but rather the distance between the creation and the final
universal redemption that includes all strangers.

The Jewish community, however, stays out of history welcoming redemption. Through the
revision of the Jewish relationship with soil, language, and law, Rosenzweig typifies a community
whose models are extracted from an idealization of the life in the East. And in this typification, he
confronts liberal assimilationism, conservative idealism, radical Marxism, and political and cultural
Zionism—no more and no less than the current contextual temptations for the Eastern and Western
Jews of the time. The center of this community is the immutability of, and solidarity toward, the
strangeness. The community thus becomes eternal since “the past and future, otherwise strangers to
each other...grow into one.” In other words, “the begetting of the future” of the redemption of
mankind “is a direct[ly] bearing witness of the past” or the source of solidarity toward the
otherness. “The future is not foreign,” Rosenzweig prays, “but something that is its own,
something that carries in its womb and it gives birth every day.” The community becomes eternal
because it blurs the conception of time, re-enacting the past toward the future of redemption
through the principle of solidarity. This principle makes the community eternal.

All the other communities are perishable. Some of those communities trust in the eternity
of soil, but once the land is conquered, “the earth betrays the people...the earth itself persists, but
the people on it perish.” They may even trust in their language, but “language, too, lives this last

302 Ibid.
303 Ibid., III, 49/317.
304 Ibid., III, 50/318.
305 Ibid., III, 51/319.
of the people’s life with it.” 306 Finally, they show their contingency through their conception of the law: “the people are alive when they continuously change their today into new customs.” 307 As such, they need to admit the relativity of the constituency; to see “a time coming where their land will still certainly stretch out its mountains and its rivers under the sun, but where man will inhabit it; their language will be buried by books, their customs and their laws will have lost their living force.” 308

1.3.3. The Eternal Community: The Social Re-enaction of the Sources

As we mentioned above, the eternal community that refuses to empower itself (under the risk of perishing) lives eternally beyond the principle of solidarity. It is critical to ask, however, how the community guarantees the practical reproduction of this principle. To put it simply, the principle is re-enacted through the communal life. According to Rosenzweig, the sources contain the principle of solidarity with the stranger. Complementing Cohen, as do his readings of the solidarity of the Shabbat and the expiation of Days of Awe, this re-enaction is accomplished through the social practices that the Jew exercises throughout her calendar. All idealism is challenged by this approximation to Judaism. The source of the Jewish principle is her history, inscribed in the sources and re-enacted through social practice. Rosenzweig builds this reading into the second and third part of his work. As indicated by Rosenzweig, there are three marked but clearly interrelated stages in the social practice that re-enacts Jewish alterity and Jewish defense of alterity on a yearly basis. He entitles the first stage creation, second revelation, and third redemption. Each one of them will be analyzed according to the sources (Genesis 1, the Song of the Songs, and Psalm 115), represented by Jewish holidays (Shabbat/Pesach, Shavuot, and the Succoth/Days of Awe/Eve of Shabbat), and

306 Ibid., III, 52/320.
307 Ibid., III, 54/322.
308 Ibid., III, 57, 324.
social practices (narrative/listening, dialogue/sharing, chorus/greeting). They will be interrelated, as they are a progressive path toward the defense of the alterity and the revalorization of the Jewish alterity in the community.

The first stage, creation, explores the original interdependence of the Self with the otherness, which sets the basis for an incipient demand to acknowledge the alterity. In the beginning, according to Genesis 1, there is a monotonous and distant creation. The elements of the first days are created as objects. The monotony of creation is seen at the end of each period when all is signed in the same way: “good is the word of the end pronounced aloud for each day of creation.” During this period, God “does not personally color its predicate” to protect the distance and “pure objectivity.” On the sixth day, however, God involves himself with the creation, declaring, “Let us make a man.” At once, according to Rosenzweig, “the yoke of objectivity is broken, instead of an it an I.” The active creation of a powerful subject that recognizes himself as an I is necessarily related to the common project of a You: “with the I at the same time a You, a You with the I addresses to itself.”

The irruption of an I is conditioned to the common project with the other. The construction of a powerful subject without the participation of the alterity in the process is inconceivable. The You is a partner not only of his own creation but of the creation of the Self as a subject as well. In this first stage, however, he seems to be mute. The Self is more than an I, it is a We since in this context “he says We, and an absolute We, including everything.” The Self, in clear reference to Gn 1:26, represents the totality. The Self creates in the name of the two but cannot create himself unless he is complemented by the other. This involvement, and collaboration, will make the I

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309 Ibid., II, 83/164.
310 Ibid.
311 Ibid., II, 86/166.
312 Ibid.
313 Ibid., II, 87/167.
understand the difference in the creation of a You, in comparison with other creations. He will qualify it as “very good… it remains adjective, it remains with the framework of its essence, but it ceases to designate the simple singular quality…something that, while in the Creation, points toward beyond Creation.”314 Beyond Creation lie the multiple possibilities including human *indifference*, and *solidarity*. The other—the partner of creation—remains passive in front of the options because “we are still in Creation, and not yet in Revelation.”315

This source is re-enacted during the Shabbat, in general, and its evening, in particular. In this context, “[t]he sermon…is there to produce the mutual silence of the gathered community.”316 Its nature as a *non-polemical* and *conventional* discourse is guaranteed by its objective derivation from the sources that are originated out of the immutable principle. In the discourse, the possible actions are set and its conventionality does not “give rise to interruption,” facilitating integration. Through the act of listening, the still individual and passive contemplation of possibilities produces a “firm ground of all the mutuality of those gathered.”317 The You is no longer a singular but multiple You(s) that require such a step to recognize themselves as part of something other than just themselves. The project not only places the I and the You in contact, but moreover acknowledges the multiplicity of Yous. Yet, they are still inactive in comparison to the *darshan*, the Self who speaks for all. They are listeners. On the eve of Shabbat, they re-enact the Creation. Through the *joys of life* (wine and bread as representing nature and man’s work), they are participants of an act that, by making them passive spectators, allows them to contemplate the possibilities (indifference and solidarity) in silence.

314 Ibid., II, 87/168.
315 Ibid., II, 86-7/167.
316 Ibid., III, 63/329.
317 Ibid.
Rosenzweig extends his reading of the creation of the Self and other in Genesis, with a social dimension of the same problem: “the creation of people takes place in liberation.”\textsuperscript{318} The festivity of Pesach, which commemorates the event, is described around the very structured banquet or \textit{seder}. Far from being a symmetrical communal gathering, the I takes the position of the We once again: “the father of the family speaks, and the household listen.”\textsuperscript{319} This “instruction” always belongs to the “lord and master”; it is never thought “cooperatively.”\textsuperscript{320} The household, however, acquires “in the course of the evening mutual independence.”\textsuperscript{321} The children in asymmetry (even “youngest child” who rises to “prominence”) challenge the I with questions. In this moment, the You takes independence from the I, and the Self needs to be responsible and explain his actions. This act of responsible rebelliousness “becomes a sign of the people’s call for freedom” and the sign that both a responsible Self and an active other is emerging.\textsuperscript{322}

Revelation represents the encounter between a Self who is requested to assume his responsibility, and the other who slowly starts to demand an answer from her powerlessness. The Self is challenged in his position, as a We, as the only originator of civilization. The relationship is represented as the challenge of love. The source that Rosenzweig employs to analyze this relationship is the Song of Songs. The other, represented before by the intrepid children and now by the people of Israel and allegorically the female lover, starts to take her own independence. This presents a challenge for the Self, who before represented the totality. The presence of the challenged I, trying to find the language to express himself, is the main characteristic of the work: “No book in the Bible exists where the word I recurs proportionally more often than here.”\textsuperscript{323} The challenge is clear, “only when the I recognizes the You as something outside” him can it “grow from a

\textsuperscript{318} Ibid., III, 72/336.  
\textsuperscript{319} Ibid., III, 73/337.  
\textsuperscript{320} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{321} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{322} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{323} Ibid., II, 147/216.
monologue to a genuine dialogue.” 324 “In the whole book,” Rosenzweig reflects, “there is only one brief passage where the I remains silent…these are the words of love,” or the challenge of love. 325 The other, from her destitution, commands the I to love her and the I needs to answer, becoming thereby responsible for the other. Love, in this context, is acknowledgment of the presence of the other from the beginning and her being subsumed into a We. The children (in Passover), the woman (the lover that is more than an allegory), and the people of Israel (the represented allegory) are “the orphan, the widow and the stranger,” symbols of biblical representation of the powerlessness other.

Rosenzweig follows Cohen very closely in the aforementioned construction. For Cohen, loving God means to acquire reason, to love the defenseless other and take responsibility for her. The romantic Rosenzweig only starts from the second stage. He equalizes love (for God) with responsibility for the powerlessness. 326 Revelation follows a simple commandment: “You shall love,” as represented simultaneously by God and the defiant “neighbor.” 327 This responsibility is taken over by the first Jew, Abraham, who is the initial one able to answer the question posed to his selfish antecessors: “where are thou?” 328 The powerful (God) and the powerless (human), in this context, “seem for moments to exchange their roles.” 329 In revelation, far from creation, the powerful I acknowledges the asymmetrical relationship among human beings and recognizes that the only path to loving God, now represented by the dispossessed others, is to love the other. The genuine dialogue can emerge when the powerful human being (the darshan, the father, Adam/Cain/Abraham) answers to the other and takes responsibility for his actions. God is not the end but only a medium (an idea from Cohen?) for social responsibility. However, this love for the other in a genuine dialogue is not the end of the way. The “realm of the brotherliness beyond the

324 Ibid., II, 112/188.
325 Ibid., II, 148/217.
326 See this relation further explored in Reyes Mate, Actualidad de Pensadores Judíos Olvidados, 145-148.
327 Rosenzweig, Star/Stern, II, 114/190.
328 Ibid.
329 Ibid., II, 149/218.
love between I and thou” is waiting in redemption. The aspiration is a community, a chorus, and not just dialogue.330

This genuine dialogue of Revelation finds its re-enactment in the social practice of the three festivals of pilgrimage, Shavuot in particular. We have seen how in the first festivity (Pesach), the Self is the Lord and the other “gives ear to what the father of the family says in the ground upon which the home stands.”331 This Self, however, is soon asymmetrically challenged by even the youngest of the children. In this moment, the meal table sees itself initiating the process (though not yet achieved) toward “a real realized community” in which “each one is equal to the other.”332 Up to this point, the table, composed by the genuine dialogue, represents mutual care and interest, understanding that the material problems of the others (Cohen would say) are the spiritual responsibility of the Self. They do not just “chat” (what can be done in the streets and marketplaces), but a “mutuality is presented” and the levels of asymmetry are challenged though not yet erased.333 Shavuot is explicitly designed for the possibility of this encounter. Revelation is received as the commandment to love, and accept responsibility toward the other. Implicitly in Rosenzweig is the starting point of the communal responsibility of Shavuot. The community stays for a complete night, studying to take responsibility for the transgression of previous generations who represented them at Sinai. In this way, the individual, in dialogue with the other (even the other beyond his space and time), “takes upon his shoulders the yoke of the kingdom of heaven, the eternal unification of God with his people.”334 The re-unification that follows the dialogue seems to be limited to the Jewish people. But it will overcome the national limitations to include a symphonic community beyond the eternal community. As the passage from the monologue of the We to the dialogue

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330 Ibid., II, 150/219.
331 Ibid., II, 70/334.
332 Ibid., III, 69-70/334.
333 Ibid., III, 67/332.
334 Ibid., III, 66-67/335.
between I and the You was the transition between Creation and Revelation, the now transnational chorus of the new We will welcome redemption.

Redemption signifies the creation of a symphonic gathering of voices beyond asymmetrical distinctiveness—one not out the new Self, but a new We, a unified humankind. This new We does not just listen, but symphonically participates in a chorus. While the mandate is to love the neighbor and while the previous stage set the basis for conversation at a common table, it is in redemption that man, transcending the national borders, is fully able to acknowledge the significance of “loving the neighbor as himself.” This redemption can be clearly seen in Psalm 115. According to Rosenzweig, “this is the only one of the Psalms that begins and ends with a powerfully underscored We.” After hearing the commandment of loving the other, sitting at a table with an otherness that claims recognition, the challenged Self “cannot be dressed to the depth of loneliness.” The responsibility of the people of Israel is to carry this principle by showing that a community in solidarity, without chauvinism or paternalism. The Jewish people can attest that a community in solidarity can be created. However, it is not its chronology that counts. The Jewish people show the correct treatment of the stranger. Once the principle is extended and the necri prays in the Temple of Salomon, the earth shall given “to the children of men and not to the community of Israel.” The battle of Israel bears witness that it is possible to be Otherwise than Being; it is the other who lives from the right treatment of the other.

This final solidarity is re-enacted in the third pilgrim holiday (Succoth) and the Days of Awe (Yamim Noraim), in both cases going beyond what the source offers. Succoth becomes, at the same time, the festival of both “wandering and rest.” It is the celebration of survival and a day of deserved rest for the resident-alien. It is the celebration of the other when she is out of the hands of

335 Ibid., II, 197/257.
336 Ibid., II, 209/268.
337 Ibid., II, 212/271.
338 Ibid., III, 76/339.
the oppressor. Everyone, selves and others, is invited to leave the security of their home (i.e. their community) and share a common table. Among Rosenzweig’s sources, Salomon’s “word during the consecration of the Temple,” along with Ezekiel’s new Self and its “sanctification of the divine through the people for the peoples,” stand out. They are the sources of the noeri and new Self of Cohen, representing the “supreme hope” for an “action-bearing inner togetherness of unity of hearers, unity of God, and unity of people.” This is a community—a symphonic We created “beyond the mere foundation of mutual participation.” In the days of Awe, this supranational community is created. The Jewish people do not pray for and with themselves. At this point, the We “cannot be a narrower community than the one of humanity itself…Israel is conscious of praying with all the sinners…[with] the whole humanity.” The community is the We that both Cohen and Rosenzweig have already announced: “the whole community of Israel and the stranger that sojourns among them.” Nevertheless, after the judgment, as it is after each week when a Shabbat is over, Jews recognize “the dream of perfection.” Nonetheless, they need to accept that this “is only a dream.” The people of Israel welcome redemption through the re-enaction of the principle of solidarity in their calendar.

1.3.4. Counter-History, Totality & Barbarism

Rosenzweig clearly refuses to accept the term barbarian to describe the Eastern European Jews. They become, instead, the ideal eternal community that lives in eternity. The path toward redemption, as a consequence, is explained out of the Jewish sources, re-enacted by its Eastern

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339 Ibid., III, 77/340.
340 Ibid.
341 Ibid.
342 Ibid., III, 83/345.
343 Ibid., III, 85/347.
344 Ibid., II, 56/332.
345 Ibid., II, 332.
sociology. The Jews are placed once again as an ideal model to achieve redemption. In this way, Rosenzweig’s project does not differ from Cohen’s, it only emphasizes the sociology of rabbinical ritual as the ideal interpretation of sources. While some interpreters have placed Rosenzweig’s proposal beyond apologetics, the Jewish location from which Rosenzweig’s proposal rises is anything but rejected by the author. He sustains that each author “should depart from the real location of whom is writing, if it wants to be truth to itself. There is no other possibility than to be objective than to honestly depart from our own subjectivity.”

The Star of Redemption, despite current academic disputes, is a “Jewish book” with a “Jewish method.”

The barbarian is not the Jew, but rather are those who “relinquish from the community” and engage in presumably universal values that follow Greek theology, Christian philosophy, or Modern imperialism. In other words, Rosenzweig accuses of barbarism those who leave the Jewish community and intend to portray their new location as universal. Barbarism seems to be the self-centered, artificial universality of those who renounce eternal life. It is interesting to contemplate, following this idea, whether or not those traditions that pretend universality are also barbaric. Even though we can trace a long line of Rosenzweig’s contemporaries who call Europe or capitalism barbarism, I was unable to find a single source in Rosenzweig that clearly identify them as barbarians. For Rosenzweig, the hegemonic culture is not barbaric. This step is in turn utilized by Lévinas in his adaptation of Rosenzweig. Lévinas adapts both ideal types (the totalitarianism of the hegemonic culture and the eternal life of the blood community) and, with the help of heterodox conversation partners (Marxism and decolonialism), turns them into barbarism (civilizational

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346 Gibbs, Correlations in Rosenzweig and Lévinas, 120.
347 Letter to R. Stahal on 2/6/1927. Rosenzweig Breife und Tagebücher, 1154. Translated in Reyes Mate, Memorias de Occidente, 181.
349 See 3.3.
barbarism and Hebraic barbarism). Even though Rosenzweig does not call the civilization barbaric, all the elements of accusation to the hegemonic culture (that Lévinas will call barbaric) are already present in Rosenzweig’s struggle against totalitarian systems. In current scholarship, there is a general agreement that this is the tension that will “impress” Lévinas (perhaps as much as Rosenzweig’s reintroduction of barbarism to the discussion). Those interpreters who read Rosenzweig as the source for a fraternal dialogue between Christianity and Judaism, or show him eager to support Christian imperialism, might be missing an internal discourse in the author.

I read Rosenzweig as an adaptation of Cohen. According to the teacher, the Greeks and Christians were contaminated and were unable to acknowledge the otherness. In this manner, all possible dialogue between Judaism and Christianity (representing a triad composed also by the Greek and philosophy) is going to be a “dialogue in judgment,” where the impurity of Christianity is confronted. In the interpreter’s words, “without this judgment against Christianity, Judaism would not be Judaism.” The Star becomes a model for this dialogue: it is a subjective project (as Rosenzweig himself acknowledges) confronting the limits and impurities of Christianity as an extension of the Self-centeredness of the Greeks, connecting through philosophy. To rephrase, the problem of the West (Greek, Christian, philosophy) is the impossibility to abandon the egocentric early stages (represented by creation in the Jewish sources) and acknowledge the participation of the other in the community. Once the path toward redemption is extracted from Jewish sources, the West seems to be lost—perhaps as lost as the Jewish appeared to be when history was read out of

350 See sections 2.2. and 3.3
the Christian sources and she is a barbarian. Rosenzweig, as Cohen before, creates a counter-history out of Jewish sources, affirming the path that this particularity represents.

Who are, according to Rosenzweig, the totalitarian hegemonic cultures? In the first part of *Star*, Rosenzweig seems to have a clear and direct objective: to “throw…the gauntlet to the whole venerable brotherhood of philosophers from Iona to Jena.” Philosophy, according to Rosenzweig, becomes the egocentric escape for a Self refusing to accept limitations, finitude, mortality, and self-sufficiency. Rosenzweig is now presenting a Self who, on its intended abstract universality, fails to acknowledge that the other that will lead him to the transcendence of redemption. In opposition is a Self who, afraid of the unpredictable future, who only “wants to stay” and “demands self-preservation.” This Self, in “fear of death,” refuses the call for responsibility. The problem with this refusal is that the origin of this subject is neither independent nor self-sufficient. We have already seen that the Self constitutes itself as a subject, as only part of a common project with the other. If the Self does not recognize the role of this other (i.e. categorizes her as barbarian) he becomes an original thief, taking from the other dispossessed his share in creation. Rosenzweig understands that within this share of creation, carried are material consequences: “one day like a soldier in arms…takes possession of all the goods of the other’s house…. The Self robs him [to the other, man] in one blow of all the riches and all the goods.” A frank, clear opposition to the acceptation of the other’s material destitution is the Self’s social responsibility. The Self is not based in justice (encompassing ethics and justice in Lévinas), but in politics. He becomes “the lonely man in the hardest sense of the world. The ‘political animal is his personality.’” The fear of the unpredictable marks the impossibility of the acknowledgment of the otherness and the entering of

356 Ibid., I, 104/88.
357 Ibid., II, 7/9.
358 Ibid., I, 93/80.
359 Ibid., I, 93/80. This opposition between ethics (or political ethics) and politics (or imperial politics) captures the totality of rabbinical diasporic work, from Cohen to Lévinas.
the political realm. “The Self does not live in an ethical world,” Rosenzweig writes. “He has its ethos.” This ethos can be described as the inexistence of a “bridge to any outside, even if this outside is another will.” This Self is enclosed, and Rosenzweig finds three interrelated cases for this ideal type: the Greek, Christianity, and Philosophy.

1.3.5. The Self: Politics and Ethos

The first sample of this Self in Rosenzweig is the Greek. The starting point for Cohen, as we have seen, was the accusation of the Greek for his inability to acknowledge the other beyond his own Hellenic location. Rosenzweig adapts Cohen once again, delving into the characteristics of the “really classical antiquity of the Greeks…the heroes of Attic Tragedy.” He also depicts the two major critiques of the Greek: the Self is Self-enclosed and only out of a Jewish source is there an exit for the problem. First, the major characteristic of the hero is his impossibility to communicate outside his own realm: “The Self is closed in itself and no looking outside itself…the Self has no relation with the children of men, always only with one man alone, with the ‘Self’ precisely.” If we interpret the “children of men” as the ben-noah, we can understand how the Self is closed within himself, owing to his impossibility to acknowledge the common origin of the other. The Greek, lacking the universalistic conception of ben-noah, can only acknowledge that the children of men are barbarians. Rosenzweig concludes by writing that “the people…for which all other peoples are barbarians…” can be (or ‘have’ in his words) “the Self.”

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360 Ibid., I, 94/82.
361 Ibid., I, 95/83.
362 See 1.2.2.
363 Rosenzweig, Stern/Star, I, 96/82.
364 Ibid., I, 90/77.
365 See 1.2.3.
366 Rosenzweig, Stern/Star, I, 90/77.
In the second place, the overcoming of this limitation, as in Cohen, is found in the Jewish sources. The Greek is unable to engage because of his lack of interest in the responsibility that arises from a common humanity. The *hero* is not only unable of frank communication with those *inferior* to him, but to the Gods themselves. The hero “does not understand what is happening to him…he does not even try to penetrate the puzzling behavior of the Gods. Poets may ask Job’s questions about guilt and faith; but unlike Job, it does not even occur to the hero to ask these questions.”

Why is the hero unable to reflect on these questions and confront protests against his destiny? If the heroes “did so, they would have to break the silence.” By breaking the silence, the possibility of being asked about their prior responsibility arises. This is why the hero, afraid of his own mortality and the security of his own unethical possessions, seems to prefer the silence and acceptance of destiny to the latent risk of being called into question. Here then is a reverse revelation—it is through the fear of the other that no communication with the Gods is practiced.

There is a particularity in Rosenzweig, however, that is not necessarily found in Cohen. The teacher, in his intention to displace the Greek as the source of historical progression, seems to forget the universalization of Greek discourse in the history of the West (in general) and the creation of the barbarian as a universal type for otherness. Rosenzweig, fully aware of the discursive power “from Iona to Jena,” intends to fill this gap. The Greek can be silent but, as he robbed other men of their possessions, he has a role in the world—the power of violence: “The Self does not speak but it is heard.” However, “the Self does not come into life by being heard.” The first universality is the pretended right to the possessions of barbarian. The Self is able to command without speaking to the other, whom he ignores. The humanity of the other is not in their horizon, but the natural right to their possession is. The Self robs, and it is this conquest that sets the other’s dispossession. It is

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367 Ibid.
368 Ibid., I, 102/87.
369 Ibid., I, 107/90.
not by conversation but by command, which does not acknowledge the humanity of the other; namely, that the Self strips the other of his basic material living conditions. The other’s hearing is the acknowledgment of this dispossession, of the lack of material resources. The Self is not even taught how to speak to the other. He “learns how to debate[,]” how to defend his interests if the rhetorical path is needed. It becomes clear that all the Self does is to protect his original burglary for his fear of death.”370 In demanding immortality,” Rosenzweig writes, “it demands Self-preservation.”371 But, it is not the universal pretension of Self-preservation, rather the acknowledgement of the other that offers eternity. Lévinas will call this the dominion of the Self’s economy.372

The first model of the Self, as we have seen, was the Greek. The second, and probably the more difficult of the types, is Christianity. The Christian tradition is seen by most of Rosenzweig’s readers as an alternative and equal path to Judaism. My aim is not to contradict these readings, but I do suggest that there are some insights in the text that will connect Rosenzweig’s perception of Christianity with Cohen’s and Lévinas’ known confrontations to this tradition. For Cohen, the Christian was unable to acknowledge the other because, at the end, he is intimately linked with the Greek in the sense that both only have concern for their own suffering.373 The relationship between the pagan and the Christian returns in Rosenzweig: “the old gods, the old Adam, were nailed to the Cross, those born in paganism were reborn in Christianity to the new God, to the new world, to the new man…Christianity…purchased the end of pagan wisdom at the price of the course of having to remain constantly at the beginning of the way.”374 Rosenzweig reads the history of the church in three different periods, the last one (the Johanine that followed the Catholic Petrine and the Protestant Pauline) being the fulfillment of its mission. But even in this moment, the pagan and the

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370 Ibid., I, 101/86.
371 Ibid., I, 104/88.
372 See 2.2.
373 See 1.2.4.
374 Rosenzweig, Stern/Star, III, 178/421.
Christian are related. Goethe, identified as “the first father” of the new church, “had to be counted also as a pagan.”

If the Christian remains always at the border of paganism (or, to state more clearly, with the pagan inside him), we could ask to what extent the ontological Greek Self-centeredness is transmitted to Christian ontology. I propose to reflect on this problem by revising the construction of the “tyrants of the kingdom” in Rosenzweig.

In the introduction to the third part of Star, Rosenzweig commences with a reflection on whether or not it is possible to tempt God with prayer in order to bring redemption to the world, to hurry the kingdom. The tyrants of the kingdom are those who attempt to rush redemption, loving “the second nearest” instead of the neighbor. In other words, in their attempt to bring a just world, they surpass their interest for the other’s dispossession and exchange it for the objective (to reach and tempt God or the kingdom itself). Rosenzweig rejects these attempts. He prays: “the kingdom of heaven does not let itself be taken by force…the violence of [the tyrant’s]…claim takes revenge on it. The zealot, the sectarian, in short all tyrants of the kingdom of heaven, instead of accelerating the coming of the Kingdom, sooner delay it.” Are Christians tyrants of the kingdom? To what extent is this violence related to the self-centered violence of the pagan? According to Rosenzweig, “the Christian may well behold Christ in the brother, yet this finally carries him beyond the brother immediately to Christ himself…he cannot be satisfied with beholding the Cross from the middle of the way…he does not rest until the image of the Crucified One cloaks the whole world.” In Christianity, the objective is the second nearest (Christ, the parousia, and redemption) and the engagement with the other is simply a means to an end. By “belonging to Christianity, he knows his

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375 Ibid., III, 33/303.
376 Ibid., III, 7-13/283-289.
377 Ibid., III, 15/289.
378 Ibid., III, 117-118/368.
own life is on the way that leads from the coming to the coming again of Christ." The universality of the Church strips the other of her alterity.

The Self, on the Christian path, does not acknowledge the debt toward the other. The Self’s quest to encounter the other is not a product of a responsible answer to her destitution. It is not, as we will see in Lévinas, an I am here. It is, on the contrary, I will make you be here. It is not indifference, but repression as a condition for redemption. The other is simply subsumed into Christianity, following the Christian’s rush to achieve the kingdom. While the Greek qualified others as barbarians as a way to secure the truth of its ethnic superiority, the Christian subsumes the other in order to secure the truth of his eschatological superiority. Lévinas will understand the material consequences of this imperialism, understanding that both are part of the same project, which is the eradication of the alterity of the other and the eradication of the alterity in the other. Returning to Christianity itself, the problem is this very eradication of the alterity in the other. Christianity erases the differences, going “beyond the differences of sex, age, class, and race…it conceals the gulf between master and servant…roman and barbarian.” By doing so, it becomes even worst than a zealot; it becomes “a sinner who prays for the death of the other.” While “I cannot imagine it dead,” it is the killing of the other traditions, of the pagan in the other, which is the necessary quest.

If Christianity, as many point out, has a parallel path to redemption, it does not follow the eternal path of the Jewish sources, which are the guide for Rosenzweig. If the third part of The Star is the verification of the trifecta of creation-revelation-redemption of the second part, Christianity fails in its engagement. Jews, knowing this path, will refuse to offer any collaboration to Christianity.

379 Ibid., III, 104/363.
380 See 2.2
382 Ibid., III, 19/292.
383 Ibid., III, 18/291.
Here, Rosenzweig adapts Cohen once again. According to the teacher, the Christian has “mistaken the conception of history.” In a letter to Eugen Rosenstock, the conversation partner that insisted in his conversion, Rosenzweig writes: “we will not make common cause with the world conquering fiction of Christian dogma because (however much as a fact) it is a fiction.” This means, simply, that the path toward redemption, as clear and structured as it can be, will not achieve its goal because it does not follow the path described by the Jewish sources. If the Jew was qualified as barbaric by a history written out of the Christian sources, the Christian is just a fictional conqueror by a history written out of the Jewish sources. Rosenzweig verifies his position with a sociological analysis. Christianity is unable to reach either revelation or redemption. First, Christianity is a tradition that is unable to build the mutuality of dialogue. In the Jewish tradition, the sharing of a table allows the creation of a mutual dialogue. In contraposition, the Holy community “does not join together around the Lord’s Table for a meal, but each one walks there one by one.” This is further explored in the next stage, as redemption itself “has no place in the ecclesiastical year.” According to Rosenzweig there is no holiday that “conform[s] to the days of Awe” and as a consequence the symphonic chorus is unable to be built. I want to emphasize that this does not fully explain Rosenzweig’s description of barbarism but does challenge the simple readings of Judeo-Christian dialogue or at least Rosenzweig’s support for Christian imperialism. In the context of a Jewish reading of history, the Christian is left without word.

Christianity is the heir of the violent Greek Self looking for security and verification of his ethnic or theological superiority. The other is ignored or subsumed as integral part of an egotistic enterprise. Philosophy from “Iona to Jena” includes both models (the Greek and the Christian), and

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384 See 1.2.5.
385 Rosentock, Judaism Despite Christianity, 107.
386 Rosenzweig, Star/Stern, III, 139-140/388-9.
Rosenzweig defines quite well that its problem is a self-centeredness that yells, “I, I, I.” What is the problem with the twenty-five centuries of philosophy and its application into modernity in particular? The idealism of philosophy, from the times of the Greek, “duped” human beings in their attempt to know the all in order to escape from insecurity. Idealism assures the Self that the all can be thought and that nothing precedes this thought. According to Descartes, existence only arises after thought and there is no previous debt of the Self before its constituency as a subject. Consequently, the Self is directly able to ignore the just claim of the other for its share. This speculation, far from being the source of eternal life that escapes finitude, is suicide; only through the acknowledgment of the other can the eternal life be achieved.

The “culmination” of this quest is the Hegelian philosophy that “enclosed the history of philosophy in the system.” As a superior defense mechanism, Hegel places the Spirit at the beginning of history and subsumes all the steps on the way to the final stage, that of Christian-German nationalism. All the peoples who collaborated in the construction are sublated by a Spirit that antecedes them. Now the collaboration of the other is acknowledged, so far as it appears as one stage of the national spirit on the path toward the final redemption. In this way, it becomes the best defense against the claims of those dispossessed who should have disappeared from Earth. Rosenzweig writes that this “historical theology represented a police force against the attacks threatening its present its consciousness, for example the attacks that come from the death past.” This dead past asks but a simple question: where are you? The Self, represented by philosophy, however, does “not want to stop its ears before the cry of frightened humanity.” It knows the all

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387 Ibid., I, 7/9
388 Ibid., I, 11/12.
389 Ibid., II, 25/117.
390 Ibid., I, 9/11.
“by means of thinking by understanding itself in the history of philosophy[,] nothing remains for it to understand.”

Unfortunately, Rosenzweig is unable to see that the Jewish people were not the only ones sublated by Christian history. This is a pity since Africans, Natives and Hegel, Sepulveda and Aquinas saw Arabs as barbaric. In his comments on other traditions (especially Islam, but as well as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism), he portrays them once and again as failed selves rather than potential others. All of them are identified as similar, but at the same time not yet a complete Self, as in Christianity. Islam is represented as mere sensuality, in comparison with Jesus’ qualities, and as a proponent of a conversation with the Self or a product of simple imperative orders. Likewise, Hinduism represents the silence of creation that concludes in what the Christian fears (death); Buddhism is merely a nihilistic philosophy; and finally, “India’s God and China’s God, even before their final evaporation in Nirvana or Tao, share the weakness of those gods of the myth. But they are infinitively inferior to those gods.” It will be the task of Lévinas’ counter-narrative to contemplate the potentiality of other peoples’ collaboration to a Jewish project.

391 Ibid., II, 21-22/113.
393 Ibid., I, 48/3.
394 Ibid., I, 49/44. In this regard, Gail Anijdar is correct and this problem should be further explored. Refer to The Jew, The Arab: A History of the Enemy, 87-98. Rosenzweig’s racism and euro-centrism, as I explained in the introduction, can also be understood, however, in the path toward a decolonial theory, replacing rabbinical diasporism within a line of decolonial analysis. This could shed new light into the significance of a text that, as a cold writing, is extremely uncomfortable. I will return to this problem in the final chapter, showing that this is not merely a detail of Rosenzweig’s context, but an issue for rabbinical diasporism as well.
395 Ibid., I, 52/46.
CHAPTER II: EMMANUEL LÉVINAS’ BARBARISMS

A criminal Empire, Rome, destroyer of Israel...appears in the guise of a monstrous city of countless skyscrapers, the rabbinic doctor's futuristic nightmare of the Western world in its twentieth-century American realization. A city heaped with riches, a tiny fraction of which would suffice to feed the entire world. The accumulation of useless wealth...Nothing circulates, nothing is distributed..... [This demands] a condemnation of Rome, of a certain Rome, a certain political and ethical model... Rome or the fraternal West. 396

Every civilization that accepts being—with the tragic despair it contains and the crimes it justifies—merits the name ‘barbarian.’ 397

The struggle against Rome is the preservation of Israel, the chance of a regenerate humanity!... [The] community of the brave ones may well call to mind the community of Israel...[T]here is a rabbinic tradition that understands Egypt and Cush as being included in the ‘community of Israel,’ already saved in [the] battle of the Angel Gabriel, and admitted into the Messianic order. It is the entire new humanity of redemption that is protected by the anger directed toward the wild beast of Rome. 398

How can such a research be undertaken without introducing some barbarism into the language of philosophy...and we well not have ventured to recall the beyond essence if this history of the West did not bear, in its margins, the trace of events carrying another signification, and if the victims of the triumphs which entitle the eras of history could be separate from its meaning. 399

2.1. Introduction

2.1.1 Adaptation & Counter-Narrative

In the first chapter, I explored the role of barbarism in a current of Jewish thought integrated by Cohen and Rosenzweig. In this second part, I extend this trend with a textual reading of Lévinas’ barbarisms and the development of his counter-narrative. To build this bridge, however, I am confronted with a significant problem. In the exploration of the forerunners’ projects, I followed some of the principal lines of their major systems of Jewish thought (complemented by some disperse writings and letters). Their Judaic projects, each presented in a cohesive manner in a single text, were conducive to limiting our analysis. However, the possibility to trace a Judaic project in Lévinas’ writings seems to be more difficult. It is feasible to find a system of thought in his Greek (philosophical) mature works. Even disperse writings fit into the general framework developed in the system.400 The task is made more difficult with his Hebrew (Jewish) works dispersed among a diversity of parochial writings and Talmudic lectures written and published throughout a period of fifty years.401

This challenge of finding a cohesive Judaic project presents a difficulty for our chapter. An alternative solution might well be to explore Lévinas centering in the structure of his Greek system. Yet if I were to follow Lévinas’ philosophical edifice, a problem of parallelism would arise. On the one hand, the forerunners were analyzed according to their Jewish system (i.e. Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums and Der Stern der Erlösung) and not their critical scholarly works (for example but not limited to Ethik des reinen Willens and Hegel und der Staat).402 On the other hand, I would be exploring Lévinas’ proposal according to his critical scholarly contribution. For this reason, a proposal that finds a conducive (though not necessarily all-embracing) keystone from the

400 The system of the mature (post-war) Lévinas can be easily drawn from a constructive reading of Totalité et infini (1961), Autrement qu’être ou au-delà de l’essence (1974), and the collection of articles in Entre Nous (1991).
401 These writings include, but are not limited to, 1) Talmudic lectures (published in the proceedings of conferences and as independent collections in Quatre lectures talmudiques in 1968 Du Sacré au Saint. Nouvelles lectures talmudiques in 1977, L’ au-delà du verset in 1982, A l’Heure des Nations in 1988 and Nouvelles lectures talmudiques posthumously in 1996); and, 2) other texts collected in such volumes as Difficile liberté (first published in 1963 and revised in 1976).
402 The original works have not been translated into English: Cohen, Ethik des reinen Willens (Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1904) and Rosenzweig, Hegel und der Staat (Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1920).
aforementioned Jewish writings is imperative for our work. This keystone will be found in the Talmudic readings, generally speaking, and among them is one lecture that will be particularly helpful in maintaining coherence and clarity of analysis.403

In one of his last Talmudic readings, entitled “Les nations et la presence d’Israel,” an interpretation of Pesahim 118b, Lévinas announces a position on barbarism that he had been contemplating and developing for forty years. What is remarkable about this position is Lévinas’ two-pronged deployment of barbarism—on the one hand, as a condemnation of the power of the West, and on the other, as a rallying call to the collective of the brave ones (formed by the ideal types of Israel, but also Egypt and Cush, the Arab and the Black), according to which the term barbarian is re-appropriated as the hope for human liberation of the totalitarian tyranny of imperialism (Rome, the West, or America).404 This double depiction of Lévinas can be easily read as a natural adaptation of his predecessors. Cohen displaces the term barbarism, identifying the other as the valorous Jew, and finishes replacing the Christian reading of history for a Jewish path toward redemption.405 Rosenzweig departs from this simultaneity between Judaism as the pure path toward redemption and the Jews as the pure and courageous community of others. Too, he goes one step forward, describing as barbaric those who leave this integral community to engage the pretended universality of the criminal and egotistic West.406 Lévinas also moves away from this depiction of the criminality of the West and the courage of a Jewish community responsible to bring social redemption. He follows this twofold reading with the double-pronged deployment of barbarism. Initially, he depicts

403 While the scholarly works of Lévinas are written in Greek, and the parochial writings can be understood as a Greek background for a ‘Hebrew’ reflection, we will find in the Talmudic Lectures the attempt to write in Hebrew in an academic context. The combination between context and language is what leads us to think that the bedrock of our work ought to be found in the Talmudic Lectures.

404 The lecture was delivered at the Colloque des intellectuels Juifs de langue française in 1986. The original text was published under the editorship of Jean Halperin and Georges Lévitte in Les Soixante-dix nations: regards juifs sur les peuples de la terre: donnés et débats: actes du XXVIIe colloque des intellectuels juifs de langue française (Paris: Denoël, 1987), 35-62. In the text, Lévinas does not use the term barbarism but, as I intend to show, it follows the descriptions of barbarism that he developed since the early post-war years (yet its epicenter was 1974).

405 See 1.2.

406 See 1.3.
the criminal West itself as barbaric. Then, he re-appropriates the formal term barbarism but changes its content to the courageous community of the brave ones as described by Cohen and Rosenzweig. This re-appropriation is an attempt to dismantle the house of the master with his own tools. In other words, it attempts to create a counter-narrative.407

This dual usage of barbarism extends Cohen’s and Rosenzweig’s counter-narratives even further. The first prong of Lévinas’ position marks the culmination of his reflection on the barbarism of Western civilization. He attacks the egotistic liberty of accumulation, which fails to heed the ethical responsibility of redistribution. In the context of weaknesses of the socialist alternative (in times of the perestroika and only a few years before the fall of the Berlin Wall and the implosion of the Soviet Union), Lévinas condemns the criminal and egotistic unipolarity of Rome, the imperial West, and America. The commonality of the three models is their petrified accumulation of useless resources, when an insignificant portion of their wealth could feed a world that is starving to death. Lévinas’ concern is far from exclusively economical—following Hermann Cohen’s guidance, material scarcity is seen as a socio-spiritual responsibility.408 However, Lévinas goes beyond Cohen in seeking the violent defeat of the center, rather than a merely rational replacement of Western Christianity.409

The second prong of Lévinas’ position—the call for an alliance of other others (Jew, Arab, and Black)—goes beyond the attack, condemnation, and dispersion of the empire, becoming the source for a redemptive regenerated humanity. Lévinas is well known for his defense of the alterity

407 Please see the introduction for the concept of counter-narrative. Beyond Jewish studies, the possibility of using the logic of the master for subversion has been a long-time debate within liberationist thinking (especially in Feminism and Africana Studies). Their case is particularly relevant for our discussion since they not only use the master tools but they re-inscribe them within the rabbinical sources. The original source of debate is Audre Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” in Sister Outsider: Essays & Speeches (Trumansburg: The Crossing Press, 1984), 110-113.
408 See Cohen, Religion/Religion, 158/136. This analysis is further explored in 1.2.3.
409 Cohen’s replacement of the ‘Old Christian Self’ for a ‘New Jewish Self’ is a central component of the first chapter of my thesis See Ibid., chapter 8-11. This is further explored in 1.2.4.
of the otherness. While in his early work, he describes the alterity as “exteriority,” in his later work he furthered this initial location by seeking to interrupt the ontological discourse with the language of “barbarism.” Subsequently, in the interpretation of Pesahim 118b, this call for barbarism becomes Lévinas’ encouragement of those in the “margins of the West” to disrupt the discourse of the center as the only path to achieve social justice. Here, Lévinas follows Rosenzweig in opening up an alternative path through the transcendence (or “height”) of the powerless community, which breaks up the imperial monopoly of redemptive capabilities. However, he goes beyond Rosenzweig by incorporating other others to form a pan-barbaric front. As such, the Jew returns to history to confront and defeat—and not only contend from her eternity—the empire. This pan-barbaric front, following the trend, is not based upon a negative bond (i.e. the common memory of the destitution by the empire), but rather a positive attitude toward the other. The barbarian takes responsibility for the stranger’s destitution. This is the complete unfolding of the counter-narrative in rabbinical diasporism. Problematically, Lévinas includes in his counter-narrative the others into the community of Israel which was criticized by Cohen and Rosenzweig as a Christian/ Western strategy. Indeed, Lévinas associates it with the limits of Western thinking, in specific, Marxism. This rise stirs doubt in the possibility of dismantling the house of the master with his tools without betraying the principle that guides this struggle.

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411 Lévinas, Autrement qu’être/Otherwise Than Being, 273/178.
412 Ibid.
413 See Rosenzweig Stern/Star, III, 49-96/317-335. This is further extended in 1.3.1/2/3.
414 Lewis Gordon and Jane Anna Gordon, Not Only the Master’s Tools: African-American Studies in Theory and Practice (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2006). The need to go beyond only the master tools is a clear overlapping between Jewish and Africana radical theory. We will further explore this commonality in the fourth chapter.
2.1.2. Road Map

This exploration of Lévinas’ counter-narrative is the turning point of my dissertation as the following chapters discussed a variety of aspects (the first uncovers its origin, the third and fourth, its audiences and contextual influences, and the fifth, its limitations). I consider it necessary, therefore, to offer a road map pointing out those elements that will be carried beyond this textual analysis. The chapter comprises three sections (excluding this introduction and the conclusion). In the first, I analyze the path of the Self or Ego (Rome) from its temptation to the condemnation of its *civilizational barbarism* carried by the alterity. In the second, I develop the counter-narrative of the other (the *barbaric Hebrew*, or Israel) from its alternative humanism to its Messianic, apologetic, pan-Hebraist disruption. Finally, in the third, I explore the role of the other other (third party, Egypt and Cush) and its controversial incorporation into the *pan-Hebraist barbaric disruption*. I will briefly elaborate, here, upon the central argument of each of the sections.

Initially, I interconnect the interpretation of *Pesbaim 118b* with an early lecture exploring *Shabbat 88a/b*, “*Tentation de la tentation,***” delivered in 1964. In this section, I will depart from Rosenzweig’s influence on Lévinas on the relation among the Greece-Rome, Christianity, modernity and Philosophy regarding the treatment of the other. The central problem, as will be traced, is of an almost Hobbesian/Lockean Self, fearful both of being robbed as well as for the security of his life. Explore is how Rosenzweig and Lévinas, in a counter-Hegelian orientation, understand that this fear finds its resolution in the attempt to secure the monopoly of property of knowledge by the Self or Ego. The temptation of knowledge becomes the guarantee of security in the Western world, a temptation that Rosenzweig refused to accept as a Jew and Lévinas argues that after the Holocaust is no longer a “threat” for Judaism. Reading in Lévinas four interconnected temptations of property of

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415 The original proceedings were published under the edition of Éliane Amado Lévy-Valensi et Jean Halpérin *Tentations et actions de la conscience juive; données et débats. VVe et VIIe colloques d’intellectuels juifs de langue française organisés par la Section française du Congrès juif mondial* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France 1971), 59-80.
knowledge (cultural, eschatological, moral, and universal), I will delve into the problem of the reduction of the alterity to the same as an attempt to guarantee this security. As far as the other is understood within the same legal framework, the rules of which she submits to, the property of knowledge is secured.

With a particular focus on modernity, I conclude that the elimination of alterity of the other, or the elimination of the other herself (from liberal capitalism to totalitarian National Socialism), is part of a common process that follows the temptations of the attempt to guarantee security. Ontology becomes the practice that reproduces the system. Since the Self appears first, its liberty precedes any debt toward a previous stage. However, the other, from its material-spiritual destitution, demands the Self to take responsibility of an “original debt,” a previous “theft,” or ingénue “gift” perpetrated or received by the Self. In this moment, the burglary, or bequest, of the property of knowledge becomes property itself. This original debt is but an adaptation of Rosenzweig’s attack on the Self for his burglary. This Self, by prioritizing his liberty over his responsibility is unable to accept the previous stage of debt. Ontological thinking will be seen as the barbarism of the Self (or civilizational barbarism). Proposing to replace ontology with ethics in the acknowledgment of this previous stage, Lévinas also rejects the charity that empathy with this destitution could carry. In its place, he offers a straightforward revision of the “imperial” and “liberal” rules of distribution of resources. This critique will be the preface of “the condemnation of a political model” (from Rome to Europe to America) that takes as central the individual freedom of accumulation instead of the social responsibility of distribution.

In the second part, I will follow and revise what was developed in the first section. In the latter, we analyzed the Self in such a way that an overlapping with other trends which critique the accumulation of Western society can be easily brought back both to Cohen and Rosenzweig as well as to other contemporary movements, such as Marxism. In this section, I will investigate the
constitution of the otherness responsible for interrupting the Self that holds a specificity that places this other outside the above-mentioned trends. Namely, in the transition between the description of the Self and the other I will explore why Jews and not proletarians can be understood as the destitute other in the depiction of Lévinas. At this point, it is the Talmudic reading interpreting *Baba Metzia 83a-83b* presented in 1969 (only a few months after the revolt of May 1968) that took the name of “*Judaisme et révolution*” which is central to my analysis.416 Lévinas confronts the two proposals of “humanist critiques,” revising the principle that guides their struggle. While Marxism is defined as trapped in the realm of ontology—since it is primarily a false universalization of the other through the defense of “the rights of us”—Judaism demands an ethics as first philosophy that finds its primacy in the responsibility toward the defense of “the rights of the others.”

Nevertheless, while from the Jewish sources Lévinas puts forward the primacy of the right of the others, it is from the reflections on Jewish history that he finds this other in the Jewish people. Taking into account the accusation toward Marxism, Lévinas reproduces Cohen and Rosenzweig’s complicated simultaneity between the primacy of the defense of the other out of Jewish sources (or the Hebrew) and the extreme otherness of Jews. This extreme otherness is not being reduced to sources (à la Cohen) or ideal sociology (à la Rosenzweig), but it includes a reading of non-utopian history. In Lévinas, this combination of sources and history derives into an ideal sociology of disruption of the totality from the exteriority. This disruption (or counter-narrative) demands the incorporation of the Hebrew, the barbaric, within the realm of philosophy as the only possibility of recuperating the transcendence of the latter. Those in charge of disturbing the center will be this much-idealized ultimate type of community of the brave barbarians or community of Israel typified in the already mentioned interpretation of *Pesahim 118b*. To this interconnection between the Jewish sources and Jewish

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416 The original proceedings were published under the edition of Jean Halperin and Georges Lévitte, *Jeunesse et révolution dans la conscience juive; données et débats. Xe et Xle colloques d'intellectuels juifs de langue française organisés par la Section française du Congrès juif mondial* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France 1972), 163-181 and the discussion following the presentation in 182-188.
sociology, it is added the non-utopian counter-history through a *pan-Eastern* model (the experience of the Eastern European ghettos and the Oriental mellahs) written as a Lithuanian-Jew while mentoring Magrehbi Jews at the *École Normale Israélite Orientale*. This model becomes an (acknowledged) apologetic proposal to immerse in Judaism from the East by Eastern Jews, re-evaluating the utilization of this resource and the idealization of the Eastern by Lévinas' forerunners.

Finally, in the third section, I will explore the space of the *third party* (or the other other) in this confrontation between Ego and other, initially in general, and later on with greater specificity. At this point, I take up how Lévinas’ Greek and Hebrew works split on this matter, depending on the location from where Lévinas is writing. In his Greek works, the structural appearance of the third party disrupts the ethical relationship in proximity that should govern the relationship between Self and other. By contrast, in his Hebrew works (and in our own line of interpretation), Lévinas will understand the third party (represented by Egypt and Cush) as a natural ally of the other under the pan-Hebraist banner in the struggle against the “wild best” of Rome. However, as I point out, this common banner is not similar to the attempt to universalize the otherness as in the Marxist case of 1968. The commonality between the other and the third party is not the history of suffering (it will be “useless” and any theodicy will be deemed indecent) but rather it will be based on the shared principle of hospitality toward the otherness and the defense of her rights. The known third party is accepted because of being not only the land of slavery but also of shelter and integration. Lévinas, extending “Egypt” to the *Arab* including *Palestinians*, will relate this alliance with the Sadat-Beguin peace treaty of 1979. Parallely, “Ethiopia” (Africa, Blacks, the Afro-Asiatic masses, or those strange to the “Judeo-Christian religious history”) will be accepted since they kept their hands clean regarding the treatment of the other (Israel). This inclusion of *Egypt* (the pan-Arabic socialist nation) in the moments of the rise of Iran (an Islamist non-Arab option) in the Middle East and *Ethiopia* (the mythical homeland for the negritude movement and the reconsideration of the black roots of
civilization), but also the last place of Jewish Exodus (only a year before Ethiopian Jews fled the area) will not be innocent, but will present a stand in decolonial counter-narratives within the community of the brave barbarians.

In conclusion, this chapter textually traces the elaboration of two prongs of barbarism in Lévinas: whereas the first (civilizational barbarism) returns to the center the accusation of violent underdevelopment, the second (Hebraic barbarism) re-appropriates the accusation to place the Jew as the head of a those vanquished from history (represented by the Black and the Arab). The latter leads to the novelty of Lévinas’ approach, a counter-narrative of barbarism. This chapter limits itself to understand the textual construction of the project as a natural continuation of a twentieth century Jewish project on barbarism developed by Cohen and Rosenzweig. Nevertheless, this opens the door for a contextual reading of the audiences of Lévinas in both the Jewish community in France and the Third World in the third and fourth chapter. Far from being only a textual reading, however, this chapter stems from and urges a revised conception of how to read Lévinas. While most of the readings of Lévinas’ Jewish works are guided by the orientation given by his philosophical system, I will let the politics of the counter-narrative of his Hebraic thinking guide the ethical construction of his Greek project. Through this Hebraic lens, I see the centrality of the barbaric in his Greek works under a new light.

2.2. Civilizational Barbarism

2.2.1 The Legacy: From the eyes of the Other

While the interconnection between Lévinas’ Greek and Hebrew works have been (despite the writer’s own request) studied by the academy, a more extended reflection on what makes his
Hebrew works a unity ought to be explored. In general, these works encompass two different genres: first, his well-known Talmudic lectures that were delivered annually between the early 1960s and late 1980s at the Colloque des Intellectuels Juifs de langue française and later published in the conference proceedings and in diverse anthologies. In the second instance are his many short essays that touch on Jewish political thought, the relation of Jewish social thinkers and Judaism, and pedagogical reflections, mostly written during Lévinas’ activity as formal educational leader of the ENIO until early 1960s and extended until his final retirement from the position in 1979 (some of the latter essays have been collected in the volume Difficile Liberte).417

One of the natural connections between the two branches of his work is Lévinas’ first presentation at the colloque of Jewish intellectuals in 1959. The lecture, whose theme was the “spiritual biography” of Rosenzweig, is a parochial analysis in what would become the setting of his Talmudic lectures. Two years later, in his first major Greek work (Totalité et Infini), Lévinas writes not only that “Franz Rosenzweig’s Stern der Elosung [is] a work too often present in this book to be cited,” but also that he became “impressed” by Rosenzweig’s struggle against Totality.418 Since then, a numerous line of interpreters has identified an overlapping between Rosenzweig and Lévinas in their struggle for the coexistence of two paths (Judaism and Christianity, or Totality and Infinity).419 However, an alternative course opens by focusing on Lévinas’ aforementioned first presentation at the colloque. In this lecture of 1959, Lévinas presents his reading of Rosenzweig, entitled “Entre deux mondes.” Lévinas reflects that the work of Rosenzweig “bears witness to the destiny of European Judaism, which can no longer ignore the fact that for two thousand years now Christianity has been

417 Salomon Malka, Emmanuel Lévinas. His Life and Legacy (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2006), 84-143.
418 Lévinas, Totalité et Infini/Totality and Infinity, 14/28.
419 On the possibility of coexistence through translation, and nourishment as a continuation of Rosenzweig see Gibbs, Correlations in Rosenzweig and Lévinas, 164-175. The first time I developed the concept of barbarism in Lévinas was in the context of a seminar on Lévinas’ Greek works, which I took under Professor Gibbs in the fall semester of 2004. The full unfolding of the problem of barbarism, encouraged by my director from the very beginning, was conducted throughout the years in conversation with several participants of this memorable seminar. Among them, I would like to point out the fruitful interactions with Paula Schwebel, Jason McKinney, and Eva Mroczek.
the determining force in Western life.” 420 The problem of the Christian West, according to Lévinas, following both Cohen and Rosenzweig, is its “inability to recognize the other person as other person, as outside calculation, as neighbor.” 421

The Modern West presents itself as the legitimate heir of Greek thought through Christianity which does not accept the other in her specificity. Even the Modern Enlightenment, “a movement that leads to the liberation of man[,] enslaves man within the system that emerges from philosophy,” leading to “the necessity of a philosophical totality” and further resulting in “a totalitarian tyranny.” 422 In modernity, the totality that is achieved in the unity of the nation state needed the reduction of difference through the assimilation of otherness to the same system. Jews had been tempted to acquire their “ticket of admission” to European culture, after the fashion of a Heinrich Heine. 423 Yet after the Holocaust, it has been impossible to avoid acknowledging that the temptation of assimilation into the sameness led to a process of absolute rule of the Self above all alterity. The assimilation of alterity into a totality results in the eradication of difference (first in human beings as in Liberalism and later the human being itself, as in National Socialism). This has been just “a philosophy of power which does not call into question the same, a philosophy of injustice.” 424 In a context in which Jews were “bathed in a Christian atmosphere[,]” the paradigmatic alterity is being digested within the dominion, the “economy of the Ego.” 425 The eradication of difference is the assimilation of the other by the same in philosophy and history, and, more particularly, the justification of the Jewish assimilation and extermination. The human cost of this subordination is


424 Lévinas, Totalité et infini/Totality and Infinity, 38/47.

concealed by the abstract mechanism of sublation. Accordingly, “the relationship with the other to
the relation with Being in general remains under obedience of the anonymous, and leads inevitably
to another power, to imperialist domination, to tyranny.” The attack over imperialism is Lévinas’
acknowledgment that in a world in which the West made of all the territories its political or
economical dominion, the barbarian exists even in territories where those people lived for centuries.
The other is being tempted by becoming the same throughout the world.

2.2.2. Barbaric Temptations

Auschwitz, however, marks the end of the temptation for Jews. Writing under the
“presentiment of the Holocaust,” Lévinas reflects, “Christianity no longer poses a danger for
Judaism it is no longer a temptation for us.” Is this temptation only the assimilation of the other
into the structure of the totality that attempts to convert difference into sameness? If we read
Lévinas’ conception of temptation through the lens of Rosenzweig, the answer is affirmative, but
goes beyond the aforementioned assimilation of otherness. First, we recall that Rosenzweig was
tempted by his conversation partners to know the ultimate truth through a conversion to
Christianity. But after discovering the imperialist ambitions of those who attempt to conquer all (in
their path toward redemption) without stopping to engage with the other in her specificity, he
decided to remain within the newly discovered eternal life of the blood community that constitutes
the unique other. Second, Rosenzweig explains that the Christian action is the haste of a tyrant to
know the world to come, which, while tempting God to bring about the Kingdom, actually delays

426 Lévinas, Totalité et infinité/Totality and Infinity, 38/47.
427 It is impressive how the repetitive use of the term imperialism has not been understood in the context of the anti-
imperial struggle between the 1940s and 1980s in Paris.
429 Notice this notion of temptation throughout the conversations with Eugene Rosentock and Franz Rosenzweig,
further explored in 1.3.4.
the achievement of social redemption.\textsuperscript{430} Rosenzweig offers us the inner connection between the two temptations: initially, the temptation of a monopoly over cultural knowledge, which leads to assimilation of the other and then, the temptation to possess eschatological knowledge that ultimately delays the achievement of the goal through the interference of the Self.\textsuperscript{431}

Lévinas follows Rosenzweig’s understanding that “the temptation of the temptation is the temptation of knowledge.”\textsuperscript{432} Not surprisingly, this is the topic of one of his first Talmudic lectures (the interpretation of Shabbat 88a-b entitled “Tentation de la tentation”).\textsuperscript{433} The temptation of knowledge for Lévinas has a clear aim, chiefly the guarantee of security: “We do not want to undertake anything without knowing everything...we want to live dangerously, but in security, in the world of truths...courage within security, the solid basis of our old Europe.”\textsuperscript{434} The double temptation aiming at the guarantee of security is what guides the Ego’s actions in a mixed Hobbesian/Lockean state of nature. How does propriety—of knowledge—guarantee security? The Ego has an inner fear of being persecuted (or robbed, or bereft of its property, ultimately of truth). Or, he is perhaps afraid of being forced to recognize that he is not the first inhabitant, or to be contested in the origin of his property, of knowledge? In other words, he is questioned as to the relationship between his wealth and the other’s destitution. Lévinas is just adapting Rosenzweig. The Self ignores his debt and is unable to establish a dialogue: “Why does the other concern me...am I my brother’s keeper?” This becomes a refusal to be held hostage to the demands of the destitute other, based on ignorance of the previous debt.\textsuperscript{435}

\textsuperscript{430} The conception of the Christian as tyrant of the kingdom was developed in the first chapter of my dissertation through a re-reading of Rosenzweig, Stern/Star, III, 117-118/368 through the description of III, 15/289. See 1.3.4.

\textsuperscript{431} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{432} Lévinas, “La tentation de la tentation”/“Temptation of Temptations,” 76/34.

\textsuperscript{433} Original published in Éliane Amado Lévy-Valensi and Jean Halpérin eds Tentations et actions de la conscience juive; données et débats. V\textsuperscript{e} et VII\textsuperscript{e} colloques d'intellectuels juifs de langue française organisés par la Section française du Congrès juif mondial (Paris Presses universitaires de France, 1971), 59-80.

\textsuperscript{434} Lévinas, “La tentation de la tentation/Temptations of Temptations,” 76/35.

\textsuperscript{435} Lévinas, Totalité et infini/Totality and Infinity, 186/117.
The path to avoid being questioned about his responsibility regarding the other is to erase the alterity through assimilation. To achieve a world free of others (Judenrein) is the goal. Liberty is both freedom from responsibility toward alterity and the subsequent license to eliminate her. As such, both temptations (the property of both knowledges, the cultural and the eschatological) offer the expected security. That said, trapped by fear in his eternal path of achieving a complete assimilation of otherness, the Ego needs to find a path to reproduce himself and to justify the claim of his property, that of truth: “One can perceive a certain conception of knowledge, occupying a privileged position in Western civilization, behind or as a background to, the set of values ruling our morality.”

To the monopoly of identity and eschatological truth, we add now the property of moral control within an economy that, according to the Ego, becomes the structure for a global totality that includes and subsumes all difference.

This fear and attempt to find security defines the Ego; “[t]he temptation may well describe the conditions of Western man.” We are mistaken if we believe that the now triple temptation of knowledge is the ultimate goal of Western civilization. According to Lévinas, “temptation is not pleasure but the ambiguous situation” in which one despairs for security. In this context, “pleasure is still possible but in respect to which the Ego keeps its liberty, has not yet given up its security, has kept its distance.” The temptation of acquiring knowledge is the previous step to security that only the monopoly of identity, truth, and morality can offer. The tyrannical nature of Western society lies in this multiple monopoly. The Ego, cautious of defending his propriety—of truth—as a means for security, eliminates all possible competitors or alternatives through the objective morality.

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436 Lévinas, “La tentation de la tentation”/“Temptation of Temptations,” 76/34
437 Ibid.
438 Ibid.
439 Ibid.
The triple monopoly that is required for this sense of security is not a feasible project unless (borrowing from an alternative tradition but still using Lévinas’ same terms) it is reified in society.\(^{440}\) In other words, unless the Self is able to portray his independence from the origins of his cultural, moral and eschatological production (i.e. his labor within his economy) and presents it as beyond his personal and ultimate interest (i.e. security).\(^{441}\) With this aim in mind, “universal thought is a thought in the first person…this is why the constitution that for idealism remakes the universe starting from the subject….The I that constitutes dissolves into the work it comprehends, and enters into the eternal. The idealist creation is representation.”\(^{442}\) Universal thinking is held from the interest of the subject but the thoughts are dissolved once these laws are presented as eternal. Idealism is a representation of the Self’s interests diffused into the universal. In modernity, the set of values (from the God-reason of Robespierre to the Spirit-reason of Hegel to the Volk-reason of Hitler) are presented as if they were of an objective nature.\(^{443}\)

Yet, “the I was defined by reason. Reason speaking in the first person is not addressed to the other, conducts a monologue. And, conversely, it would attain to veritable personality would recover the sovereign characteristic of the autonomous human person, only by becoming universal.”\(^{444}\) Likewise, the monologue was represented by the Greek-Christian-Philosophy in the Star. In Rosenzweig, the triad represents the attempt of universalization of truth through the monologue that leads to violence over the others. In Lévinas, reason, as the value for universality, is conducted as a monologue by the Ego. The autonomy of European thought depends on the universal

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\(^{440}\) The problem of reification as a key concept of the critique of political economy of Karl Marx, the extension to the re-evaluation of cultural forms within a capitalistic society in Georg Lukacs, and the criticism of mass culture in Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno will be discussed in the third chapter of my dissertation. See 3.3.2. I am certainly not the first to relate the left-Hegelian Marxist conception of reification and Lévinas. See for example C. Fred Alford, Lévinas, The Frankfurt School, and Psychoanalysis (London: Continuum, 2002), 95

\(^{441}\) Lévinas, Totalité et infini/Totality and Infinity, 169-184/158-169

\(^{442}\) Ibid., 132/126.

\(^{443}\) The confrontation with idealism is not a surprise for those who followed the anti-Semitic nature of German Idealism (from Immanuel Kant via Georg Hegel to Richard Wagner) and its responses (from Heinrich Heine via Hermann Cohen to Franz Rosenzweig). Please consult Michael Mack, German Idealism and the Jew: The Inner anti-Semitism of Philosophy and German Jewish Responses.

\(^{444}\) Lévinas, Totalité et infini/Totality and Infinity, 188/173.
claim of its provincial discourse. In Lévinas’ words, “universal thought is an ‘I think.’” Thus, European thought defines itself by the achievement of this security through its universalization. The other is to be reduced to a comprehensible being within the framework already proposed from the center. Namely, the other is to be reduced to the same. Nothing can remain outside of the universal discourse. “Western philosophy has most often been an ontology: a reduction of the other to the same by interposition of a idle and neutral term that endures the comprehension of Being.” Ontology, and not ethics, is first (universal) philosophy as far as it helps as a “protective shell when this nakedness” of thought “is tied with insecurity, ambiguity and pain.” To the temptation of the property of cultural knowledge, eschatological knowledge and morality, we add the potentiality of universalization of the Self’s values to collect the quadruple temptations inherent in the propriety of knowledge. The Self’s concern over its pain is no more than the adaptation of Cohen’s accusation of Christian self-centeredness in its own suffering.

Intimately related to this highest stage of reification, modernity holds out the promise of disenchantment: “The modern world is above all an order, or a disorder in which the elites can no longer leave peoples to their customs, their wretchedness, and their illusion, nor even to their redemptive systems.” What modernity demands is the full realization of the universal aims in the disenchantment of non-elite cultures (either strangers or lower classes, as we will see, either Jews or proletarians, and later Blacks and Arabs). Dispossessed of their own documents (‘sans papiers’, what someone reading Le Monde and thinking about refugees would say, primarily about Jews in 1936, and Arabs and Blacks in the 2000s) and readings of history, those wretched of earth that do not receive

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445 Ibid., 36/25.
446 Lévinas, Totalité et infini/Totality and Infinity, 33/43.
447 Lévinas, Autrement qu’être/Otherwise than Being, 84/49-50.
448 Cohen, Religion/Religion, 280/239. Further explored in 1.2.4.
449 Lévinas, Autrement qu’être/Otherwise than Being, 283/184-185.
compassion from the Self are being left “in the desert without manna from the Earth.” The universalization of truth and moral values originates this “demented pretension of the invisible, when the acute experience of the human in the 20th century teaches that the thoughts of men are borne by needs which explain society and history, that hunger and fear can prevail over every human resistance and freedom!” Dispossession is the result of the eradication of difference, of the alterity in which a human being is defined as far as she can fit into the framework of the Self. If even the cultural values of distribution are being erased and replaced for the universal programs (de développement, a liberal-socialist French leading the IMF would argue) that are divorced from their origins, it is clear that political resistance will not be able to play any role in this framework in which politics is limited by the framework that is already imposed. The result of this dispossession is hunger and death from starvation. As we can see, Lévinas adapts Cohen’s understanding of the intimate relation between cultural dispossession/degeneration and economic scarcity.

If the temptation for security defines Western man, the imperialistic tyranny is the result: the “entire unsettling aspect of our Western world, its so often bloody history, with its cult of heroism and military nobility, its nationalistic exclusionism, its racial social and economic injustice” is a consequence of this original temptation. Nevertheless, Lévinas argues, the Ego is unable to see the privileged position that such militarism offers him: “To be able to eat and drink is a possibility as extraordinary, as miraculous, as the crossing of the Red Sea. We do not recognize the miracle this represents because we live in Europe which, for the moment, has plenty of everything, and not in a

450 Ibid. It is not a coincidence that Lévinas is using the same term ‘damnes’ that was popularized years before by the decolonial thinker Frantz Fanon, See Damnés de la terre (Paris, Maspero: 1961). Translated as The Wretched of the Earth Constance Farrington trans. (New York, Gove Press, 1963). I will explore this interconnection in the fourth chapter of my work, tracing in the Black Caribbean literature produced in France the turning point of the concept of indigenous barbarism (from Aimé Césaire to Fanon himself), See 4.3.2.
451 Lévinas, Totalité et infini/Totality and Infinity, 23/35.
452 Writing during the context of the debate between structuralism and post-structuralism, this reflection may lead to alternative interpretations of the extension of Lévinas’ thought placing him in a permanent tension to post-structuralism.
Third World country." However, empathy (charity) toward the suffering of the other will not be enough for Lévinas as the economic and cultural dispossession are intimately related. Cohen understands that the material needs of the other are the new Self’s spiritual needs. Lévinas follows, once again, Cohen’s line on the extension of materiality: “Scarcity is a social and moral problem not an exclusively economic one….A community must follow the individuals who take the initiative of renouncing their rights so that the hungry can eat.” Lévinas urges us not to be short of memory and remember that “to return to a stage of indigence in Europe, despite all the progress of civilization, is a most natural possibility for us, as the war years and the concentration camps have shown.”

The compassionate empathy for the other is not enough; it is in the memory of the concentration camps (symbolized paradigmatically by Egypt, the source of prevention of assimilation on Cohen and Rosenzweig) that the problem should find a solution for the sake not merely of the other, but also for the tentative future of the Self. However, Lévinas points out that the only possibility for such self-renunciation would be the complete alteration of the system of values in which the liberal modern society or even perhaps the Western world is based: “the problem of a hungry world can be resolved only if the food of the owners and those who are provided for ceases to appear to them as their inalienable property.” Instead, this property should be “recognized as a gift they have received for which thanks must be given and to which others have a right.” In other words, and despite the accusation that many raised for the lack of Lévinas’ structural critique, here he is proposing a radical revision of the regimen of inalienable private

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455 Cohen, Religion/Religion, 158/136. This is further extended in 1.2.3.
456 Lévinas, “Judaïsme et révolution”/“Judaism and Revolution,” 77/133.
457 Ibid., 76/132.
458 The symbol of Egypt was already a turning point for both of Lévinas’ forerunners. See Cohen Religion/Religion, 145/125 and Rosenzweig Stern/Star, III 51/319. Further explored in 2.3. and 1.3.3.
459 Lévinas, “Judaïsme et révolution”/“Judaism and Revolution,” 77/133.
460 Ibid.
property. And by this revision is not reduced to a simple of change of property of cultural knowledge, eschatology, or morality but of material property itself. The structural critique of Lévinas is made against an empire that, concerned with the safe liberty of accumulation, fails to heed the ethical responsibility of redistribution.

Lévinas reflects briefly in the possibilities of the Self to acknowledge the problem. But to what extent is the final aim of the Self (security) guaranteed if this is revised? In the dominion of the Self, within his eco-nomia, he believes himself as the “first inhabitant” and his guarantee of defense is an “ontology which is reduces the other to the same, promotes freedom—the freedom that is the identification of the same, not allowing itself to be alienated by the other...Western philosophy has most often been an ontology” from the negative to receive anything from the other to the ‘ontological imperialism’ of phenomenology. In contraposition to ontology as first philosophy, Lévinas believes that replacing ethics for ontology offers a more accurate window of analysis. The fear of being robbed can only be understood by acknowledging that the Self knows the content of dispossession because he was the thief in the previous stage. The property was not just given, but was stolen as well. There is another that precedes his ownership—not only truth—and “signaling of this pre-original past in the present would not again be an ontological relation” but an ethical structure. Religiously speaking, before Christianity there was a previous pact. Socially speaking, before the master there was another, struggling for her principles, who will forced into enslavement. Unlike his contemporary, Jean-Paul Sartre, Lévinas maintains that Judaism does not emerge as a

461 Dussel, a central figure in the Lévinasian heritage, according to my fourth chapter, accuses Lévinas of lacking a structural critique. See Enrique Dussel, “Lo Político en Lévinas (Hacia una Filosofía Política Crítica),” Signos 9 (2003), 111-132.
462 The superb work of Howard Caygill points out this position of Lévinas but he limits the possibility of the alliance against it to an alliance among “beings.” See Howard Caygill, Lévinas and the Political (London: Routledge University Press, 2002), 196.
463 Lévinas, Totalité et infini/Totality and Infinity/Totality and Infinity, 32-33/42-43.
consequence to the “allergy” of anti-Semitism. Since the other precedes the Self coming from an origin that is beyond the Self’s possibility of full comprehension when under his temptation, the other cannot be traced by “a linear regressive movement, a retrospective back along the temporal series toward a very remote past…cannot be recuperated by memory and history”; the Self is unable to thematize, to take control over the other.

If by chance, the Self, despite the limitations of ontology, discovers that he is not the first on Earth, there is no possibility of going beyond this point within the realm of ontology. Still limited by ontological primacy of his philosophy he asks in freedom, “[w]hat have I done to be from the start to debt?” He is not able to understand why the destitute other still has the ethical resistance which obsesses him, and that takes him hostage by her demands. The capability of a Self, trapped by the violent ontology, in taking “responsibility for the other can not have begun in my commitment, in my decision.” Lévinas believes that this responsibility does not emerge from a decision made within the realm of ontology. Thus, “the unlimited responsibility in which I find myself comes from the hither side of my freedom, from a ‘prior to every memory,’ an ‘ulterior to every accomplishment,’ from the non-present par excellence, the non-original, the anarchical, prior or beyond essence.” The Self is condemned to see for its safe liberty of accumulation, failing to heed the ethical responsibility of redistribution.

2.2.3. Condemnation of Barbarism

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466 Lévinas, Autrement qu’être/Otherwise than Being, 23/10.
467 Ibid., 139/87.
468 Ibid., 24/10.
469 Ibid.
470 As shown in 1.3.2., Rosenzweig argues that the Self cannot escape his ontology since if he were able to do it he would cease to be himself. See Rosenzweig Stern/Star, 86/1 101.
Lévinas concludes by returning to *Pesahim 118b*. Rabbi, in the name of Rabbi Ishmael, comments on the opulence of the social Self: “There are three hundred and sixty-five streets in the city of Rome; in each one there are three hundred and sixty five stories; and in each story there is enough to feed the whole world.” According to Lévinas, we can call this entity, “Rome or the fraternal West.” This collective, and at the same time individual Self, with just “one story would have enough to feed the entire World!” But it is temptation that leads this empire to an internal logic that worships security and calculation of individual profit and accumulation. “Rome suffocating beneath what human needs! Stone towers, ruled by numbers that echo one another and no doubt by more mathematics than these numbers reveal.” Economic planification, a sign in totalitarian enterprises, is the cause and not the consequence of what will soon become the egotistic barbarism. According to Lévinas, this is “a petrified mathematics. In the bulk of those walls, a science blinded by the rules it has dictated…an economy of wealth of pure accumulation.”

What is this criminal Rome, this “city heaped with riches, a tiny fraction of which would suffice to feed the entire world?” It is the imperialist ideology of the “Greco-Roman order…[that] was to become modern humanity.” But the accusation is not limited to the Greco-Roman that was the base of modern humanity, or even to the Western European world, that follows its model. Rome also appears “in the guise of a monstrous city of countless skyscrapers, the rabbinic doctor’s futuristic nightmare of the Western world in its twentieth-century American realization.” All these systems have a common center in the search for safety that is brought by “a pilling up, amassing, unending totalization of objects and money that mark the rhythm and essential structure of the

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472 Ibid., 116-117/101.
473 Ibid., 122/107.
474 Ibid.
475 Ibid., 122-123/107.
476 Ibid., 111/97.
477 Ibid., 122/107.
478 Ibid., 112/96.
perseverance of being in its being. Its concrete modes: stock-piling and banks. Rome is the empire that survives by liberating itself from responsibility while counting its resources. This can be called Rome, the West, Europe, or in contemporary terms, America.

Lévinas concludes with “a condemnation of Rome, of a certain Rome, a certain political and ethical model.” This is a political model in which the other is not acknowledged; a political model of temptations of security and the egotistic defense of the irresponsibility of freedom. He even submits, “a prayer asking for the dispersion of a collectivity destined to violence by the kind of society it is and fond of war.” According to Lévinas, only one possible path can be taken: “The struggle against Rome is the preservation of the chance to regenerate humanity.” The struggle against the Self is the only chance to dream of a future peace. It is not relevant what name the Self takes (Rome, Europe, or America). “The I is identical in its very alterations.” This empire, in antiquity, medieval times, and modernity, believes itself as the powerful lord of the world. It accepts the real-politics of ontology as a path to secure its property and cover the traces of its cultural, eschatological, and moral reification of the enchanted provincial thought. This empire requires the death of the other (the murder of the alterity in the other or the alterity itself) as the only guarantee of his safety. This empire is barbaric as far as “every civilization that accepts being—with the tragic despair it contains and the crimes it justifies—merits the name ‘barbarian’. This new barbarian, the fetishistic center that believes in gold as its new God, becomes “a threat and agonizing grins of

479 Ibid., 123/107.
480 It is important to repeat that this is the moment of the radical geopolitical turn of Lévinas which is lost by commentators of this same lecture since they focus on Lévinas’ supposed Zionism. In their readings, Lévinas look for “fraternal bond of love between beings.” But as we have demonstrated, he is looking for “bond among others.” See Caygill, Lévinas and the Political, 196.
482 Ibid., 115/102.
483 Ibid., 119/104.
484 Lévinas, Totalité et infini/Totality and Infinity, 23/24.
486 Lévinas, De l’evasion, 98/73. Although in 1934 Lévinas understands that the idealism of the West refuses to accept being, after the Holocaust, when the Christian West is described as the enemy, the center becomes barbaric.
violence, vice’s delirium and laughter, the mythology and bloody barbarity of the idols.\textsuperscript{487} In times of a regenerated humanity, the empire will request to be incorporated into the Messianic kingdom, but it will be rejected. After all, according to Lévinas, this “pure assimilation” is just a “facile virtue of the West, [an] hypocritical pretext of the colonizers.”\textsuperscript{488}

2.3  Hebraic Barbarism

2.3.1.  The Last Temptation: Marxism

The first section identifies the barbaric Ego with the modern Western Christian world symbolized by Rome and ending in colonialism of the alterity. Now, I explore the identity of the destitute other that precedes the Self and whose rejection of the temptation radically challenges the empire of the same. I argue that Judaism, following Rosenzweig, is seen by Lévinas as a universal paradigmatic other that confronts the designs of the Ego.\textsuperscript{489} Nevertheless, to explore accurately this construction, I consider it critical to contextualize the intellectual framework of this concern. It is indisputable that modern critiques of the social, moral, and economic consequences of imperial designs cannot be explained without the contributions of socialist schools in general, and Eastern and Western Marxist trends in particular. Furthermore, Jewish engagement with this alternative seems to be nothing but remarkable taking into account the multiple lines of thinking that include from Moses Hess to Leon Trotsky and from Ferdinand Lasalle to Leon Blum.\textsuperscript{490} Lévinas himself acknowledges that early in his life he “didn’t remain indifferent to the temptations of the Leninist

\textsuperscript{487} Lévinas, \textit{A l’heure des nations/The Hour of the Nations}, 9/1.
\textsuperscript{488} Ibid., 74/106. It is important to notice that two authors who explore Lévinas and the political focus in the early political critique calling this a ‘community of Masters’ based in the Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism. See Howard Caygil, \textit{Lévinas and the Political}, 40 and Nelson Maldonado Torres, \textit{Against War}, 20-23. I believe that my reading on barbaric civilization goes beyond this community as it presents an alternative to the barbaric community of the brave ones.
\textsuperscript{489} This perspective of Judaism as an alternative path that confronts totality can be seen in Rosenzweig, \textit{Stern/Star}, III, 48-96/317-355. This further explored in 1.3.1/2/3.
\textsuperscript{490} See 3.3.
revolution, to the new world which was about to come. But without the engagement of a militant.” Lévinas thus establishes his youthful sympathy for the early socialist revolution, while needing to clarify that he was not an activist. While Christianity may have ceased to be a temptation for Jews, a radical socialist revolution remains as an alternative temptation. This is true, as we will see, even after Auschwitz (but not after the Gulag).

In a post-war context, specifically during the late 1960s in Paris, the damnés (whether the original proletariat or other dispossessed collectives in alternative socialist, anarchist, or existentialist perspectives) are seen as the universal class capable of bringing the redemption of humankind, the new humanity, the world to come. While in the first section of this chapter we have traced some elective affinities between Western Marxism and Lévinas (especially in terms of reification), now Lévinas’ proposal is seen to take a different route. According to Lévinas, Marxist readings are still trapped into the realm of ontology. He takes advantage of the revision of Marxist trends in the midst of the discussion post-1968 to distinguish between two different sources for the critique of imperialism: Marxist Humanism and Jewish Humanism. According to Lévinas “in 1968, I had the feeling that all values were being contested as bourgeois—this was quite impressive—all except for one: the other. Nobody ever said that the right of the other man—despite all liberation of the

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491 Ibid.
492 The reasons for this development can be found throughout our first chapter; for the German context, see Michael Löwy, Redemption and Utopia: Jewish Libertarian thought in Central Europe: A Study in Elective Affinity and the French case in Yair Auron, Les juifs d’extrême-gauche en mai 68: une génération révolutionnaire marquée par la Shoah (Paris: Albin Michel, 1996). This will be one of the third chapter’s key topics.
493 This is not the first time Lévinas explores Marxism as being at the limits of Western thought yet still within it. In particular, the article Quelques réflexions sur la philosophie de l’hitlerisme, in Ésprit, 2-11.26 (1934), 199-208. Translated in Reflection on the Philosophy of Hitlerism, trans. Sean Hand, Critical Inquiry 17, (1990) 62-71. Nevertheless, I opted to use the reading of Baba Metzia 83a/83b instead of this article as our intention is to unfold the mature, post-war Lévinas.
494 See the conception of the extension of Humanism to Marxism in the post-Stalinist reconfiguration of the PCF in Roger Garaudy, Humanisme Marxiste (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1957). Taking into account Garaudy’s posterior conversion to Islam and his known endorsement of Holocaust-deniers, it would be extremely interesting to retrace his current humanism vis-à-vis those heirs of Lévinas (Benny Lévy, Alain Finkielkraut and Bernard-Henry Lévy) I explore in the third chapter. For the over-representation of Jews and the Jewish theme of the revolt of 1968, consult Auron, Les juifs d’extrême-gauche en mai 68: une génération révolutionnaire marquée par la Shoah, 116-144.
spontaneous ego... remained unpronounceable.” Following Cohen and Rosenzweig, Lévinas distinguishes Marxism within the framework of pretended universal philosophies that attempt to defend the right of us. In its opposition, Judaism stands as an ethical optics defending the rights of the others. “In Jewish thought” according to Lévinas, “I encountered the fact that ethics is not a simple region of being.”

Let me briefly explain the difference between the two revolutions that place Marxism at the limit yet still within Western proposals. While discussing the rights of the workers in his 1968 interpretation of Baba-Metzia 83a-83b, Lévinas reflects, “Marxist humanism, the one which continues to say that ‘man is the supreme good for man’ and in order that man be the supreme good for man he must be truly man and which asks itself ‘how could man, the friend of man, in specific circumstances, have become the enemy of man?’ Marxism departs from a benevolent anthropology of the human being—the Ego—(the only option, apparently, for the future redemption of humankind led by men). Following this anthropology, the school has tried to understand the reasons that follow the primitive accumulation from the history of the sexual division of labor until capitalism (which a vast majority of Western and Eastern Marxists find in imperialism its last stage of development). But the positive anthropology of the Ego is contradicted by human drives that result in the accumulation and alienation achieved at different stages of history (capitalism in particular). What Marxism does not ask itself is how man has become the enemy of man, despite departing from a benevolent anthropology. Marxism asks the dispossessed to take consciousness of the current situation and to break the chains of their alienation without understanding that it is trapped by a contradictory anthropological conception, which blocks any

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495 Lévinas, “Interview with Salomon Malka,” in Is it Righteous to Be?, 99. This was originally published in Malka, Lire Lévinas (Paris: Cerf, 1984), 112.
496 See 1.2.3 and 2.4.
497 Lévinas, “Philosophie, justice et amour”/“Philosophy, Justice, and Love,” 122/166.
possible liberation. By defending the rights of the us, of the dispossessed, who will become Egos themselves after taking consciousness, it fosters an allergic reaction (violent in the influential alliance of Existentialism and Marxism) that reproduces the dominion of the Ego and its attempt to eradicate alterity. If the source of the change is the group of dispossessed Egos whose struggle is for their own rights, then the world will still be guided by the egoism of the Ego, even after the achievement of socialism. What is necessary is to break with the inclusive project of empowerment that dialectically comprehends all of the actors and eradicates exteriority, either by assimilation or by extermination.

A practical example of this dominion of the Ego in Marxism can be found in the extreme risks of Stalinism that Lévinas combats so vehemently in several of his works. But this reading of Marxism will be especially carried over in this Talmudic lecture. Soon after May 1968, Lévinas rejects the solidarity between Judaism and the mostly Marxist-oriented students and workers. In the colloque following the events of the French May, Lévinas reflects that those who defended stateless Jew (ger toshav) Daniel Cohn-Bendit, one of the leaders of the revolt, with the slogan “We are all German Jews” in Paris, are guilty of reproducing the limitations of Marxism—namely, that the only possibility of engaging with otherness is when her suffering is assimilable to a common suffering of the us, of the selves, of the egos. The only possibility for the Ego (even under the sign of protest) is the self-reflecting process that makes the alterity part of the same. In contrast to this reading, “German Jews in 1933 were foreigners to the course of history and to the world. Jews, in other words, point to that which is the most fragile and most persecuted in the world.”

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500 For further exploration of the role of the Jews and the Jew in the events of 1968 in the interviews conducted by Albert Memmi in L’Arche and translated into English in the following source: Albert Memmi, “Jewish Students and the Paris Rebellion. A Conversation with Albert Memmi,” Midstream v. xix, n6 (June/July 1968), 28-36. I will comment on this problem in the third and fifth chapter of my dissertation.


502 Ibid.
enemy, however the former are “more persecuted than the proletariat itself, which is exploited but not persecuted. A race cursed, not by its genes but through its destiny and misfortune, and probably through its books.”503 What seems to be at stake here is the replacement of the assimilation of the sameness of the Selfhood by the sameness of the otherness by those who are not necessarily the representatives of the extreme suffering and, the moment when they take consciousness, have become guided by the desires of empowerment of the Ego. They are condemned for their “books”. In Cohen’s understanding, Jews are condemned for the principle that rises from the sources and guides their struggle.504

2.2.3.2. Responsibility & Temptation Rejection

Whereas the Marxist critique needs to assimilate the struggle of the other into the sameness of the otherness becoming selfhood, Judaism, out of its sources, offers the alternative of acknowledging the suffering of the other in her difference. In contraposition to the Marxist humanism, “the Mishna places itself, which is typical of Jewish humanism” in the following statement: “the man whose rights must be defended is in the first place the other man; it is not initially myself. It is not the concept ‘man’ which is at the basis of humanism, it is the other man.”505 While the sources acknowledge the other as the starting point, in Lévinas this other is represented out of its history, by the Jewish people. What makes the difference with Marxism is that, on principle (according to its “books” or “sources”), the other is concerned with the primacy of the rights of other others and not with her own rights. This is another humanism outside Being whose

503 Ibid.
504 See 1.2.2.
concern for ontology (the realm of the Self) is preceded by its concern for ethics (the realm of the other).

Jews are persecuted because of this principle, which, in a Cohenian-Lévinas sense means that they are persecuted because of their “sources” or “books.” Lévinas contends, “the Torah…demands that clash, in the final analysis with the pure ontology of the world.”

Furthermore, “[t]he Torah demands, in opposition to the natural perseverance of each being in his or her own being (a fundamental ontological law), care for the stranger, the widow, the orphan, a preoccupation with the other person. A reversal of the order of things!” Once again adapting Cohen against the West, Lévinas understands a linear reading of Jewish thought arguing that the “rabbinic tradition and [the] biblical text agree…humanity is not defined by liberty…but by responsibility prior to all initiative. Man answers for more than his freely chosen act. He is hostage of the universe…He is member of a society of unlimited responsibility.”

Judaism, now understood as the “anarchical Hebrew,” is defined as a “religion for adults” in which the relationship with transcendence is being found in the unlimited responsibility toward the destitute other. “This is why, in the dialogue between God and Cain—Am I am my brother’s keeper?—rabbinical commentary does not regard the question as a case of simple insolence.” Indifference for the suffering of the other becomes the contradiction itself of Jewish ethics. What Cohen called stoicism, Lévinas refers to as Western imperialism.

Lévinas not only recovers the struggle against indifference of Cohen, but also find the solution, the creation of a new mind, in a Cohenian exilic prophet, Ezekiel: “We are familiar with the admirable passage from Ezekiel in which man’s responsibility extends to the actions of the neighbor.” In
this reading, “there is a subordination of every possible relationship between God and man—
redemption, revelation, creation—to the instruction of society in which justice, instead of remaining
an aspiration of individual piety, is strong enough to extend to all and be realized.” By returning to
a Cohenian Ezekiel, Lévinas retrieves Rosenzweig three stages as a path toward the creation of a just
society. According to Lévinas, this “is perhaps this state of mind that we normally call Jewish
Messianism.”

2.2.3.3. Duality & Struggle

Jewish Messianism is no more than a quest to create a just world confronting the egotistic
self-preservation of the barbaric empire. Judaism, out of its sources, defends the other and as a
consequence becomes this other. As in Cohen and Rosenzweig, there is an intimate connection
between the simultaneity of Judaism as extreme otherness and the primacy accorded to the right of
the other in Judaism. In this 1968 conversation with his audience, he said:

[S]omeone here has said—I liked the expression very much—Judaism or responsibility for
the entire universe, and consequently, a universally persecuted Judaism. To bear
responsibility for everything and everyone is to be responsible despite oneself. To be
responsible despite oneself is to be persecuted. Only the persecuted must answer for
everyone, even for his persecutor.

Destitution implies the permanent concern to be for the other as another. The social other is
constituted by those who suffer because of their option to have a choice for the other. Persecution

513 Ibid.
514 See 1.3.3.
follows this option of primacy of the right of the destitute. While Marxist humanism promises a social break with the forms of organization while reproducing the same ontological premises, Jewish humanism establishes itself as an *epistemological break* in its defense of any *politics of identity*, since the one to defend is not a destitute Self but the destitute other. The persecution of Judaism should be understood not only by the primacy of the right of the other but as a consequence of its responsibility for the actions of others, including the Self.

According to Lévinas, returning to the reading of *Pesahim 118b*, this Jewish position carries harsh consequences. Rome, the criminal empire, has “reduced Israel to a herd, in which the brave are delivered up to death—throats cut like calves without masters, reduced to anonymous flesh.”

The persecution is double: it means both responsibility for the others and the suffering of harassment as others that follows this choice. This illuminates the significance of the eternal enmity that Rosenzweig explains in his work between Christianity and Judaism (*Self, Same, or Greek and other, Alterity or Hebrew in Lévinas*). Two entities collide in this framework. On the one hand, we encounter the tyrannical Ego who, ignoring the responsibility for the other, defends his right of security through the assimilation of otherness and appropriation of knowledge. This is true even of the revolutionary Self, as in Marxism, typified by the 1968 revolt, which reduces the other into the sameness of the other from a non-extreme otherness that not only eradicates the extreme specificity but is tempted with the empowerment of the Self’s property. Alternatively, we encounter the other who assumes her responsibility toward the other out of the primacy of ethics. It is the right of the Self, the empire of ontology, against the right for the others who are others themselves. In this way, Lévinas follows the counter-Hegelian and counter-Zionist critique of land possession in Rosenzweig.

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518 This eternal enmity can be seen textually in Rosenzweig, *Star/Stern*, III, 199-202/436-439.
519 Rosenzweig, *Star/Stern*, III 51/319. Further explored in 1.3.2.
Ego’s economy, but rather ethics as first philosophy, a non-place, a *utopia* that becomes a *spiritual optics* to see reality in the service of the dispossessed.520

But, how is this struggle carried out? Early in his work, Lévinas seems to follow Rosenzweig’s understanding that the “Jewish people…remain on the margins of the world political history, from which it has had the moral privilege of being victims.”521 However, a major change took place between the first and second halves of the twentieth century. Lévinas’ writings are “dominated by the presentiment and the memory of the Nazi Horror.”522 Lévinas compels us to change the center of this Jewish resistance. Before, the synagogue was the center of eternal life of Judaism’s resistance against the tyrannical powers of the Self (as demonstrated in Rosenzweig’s ideal sociological analysis). Now, Lévinas claims that we shall “no[t] escape into isolation. Watch out for private worship! Beware of dreams in an empty synagogue!”523 The goal becomes not simply being witness to the capability of redemption, but in a post-Holocaust context and in confronting new dangers against Judaism, “[i]t is impossible to remain silent. There is an obligation to speak. And if politics, arising from everywhere, falsifies the original intention of the discourse, there is an obligation to cry out in protest.”524 If Judaism was previously a communitarian witness of the possibility of redemption outside history, according to Lévinas, Judaism should be an active protester against tyranny and imperialism. It is true that there is mistrust and even condemnation of politics as it is represented by Rome (i.e. Self, Europe, empire, America). But in this moment, Lévinas returns to an active Jewish prophetic-Messianic task that resembles what Rosenzweig abandoned in Cohen’s proposal. At the same time, Lévinas preserves Rosenzweig’s aim—the

contradiction of the self-liquidating process preserving Jewish particularity beyond the future redemption.

2.2.3.4. Hebraic Barbarism

The synthesis between an active participation (Cohen) and a strong defense of separation (Rosenzweig) is represented by the confrontation from the other against the tyrannical power of the Ego. What results is the disruption of the powers of the Ego from the self-acknowledged other. This confrontation disrupts the self-reflective process that, as we have seen, is a primordial aspect of the Ego on which the sublimation of the alterity depends. According to Lévinas, there is an alternative source from which to think the relation with otherness that does not intend to eradicate its specificity. While reflecting on the title of his second major work of (Greek) philosophy, Lévinas comments on this alternative source; “the ignorance and openness, an indifference to essence, is designated in the title of this book by the barbarous expression ‘otherwise than being.’” For Lévinas, “the very difference between me and the other is non-indifference, is the one-for-the-other. The one-for-the-other is the very signifyigness of signification.” The acknowledgment of the difference of the other and the primacy of her right is the possibility of engagement that destroys indifference against the specificity of the alterity. Understanding the specificity of alterity without attempting to incorporate her in a process of self-reflection opens the door for thinking in a relationship of one (which is actually another) for-the-other. This is not conceivable within the ontological limits of imperial thought (Greece, Rome, Europe, the West, and America); the Hebraic

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525 See 2.2.1.
527 Ibid.
barbarism signifies the possibility of thinking otherwise. This is the departure of Lévinas’ counter-narrative: he will re-appropriate positively the term barbarism.\textsuperscript{528}

The opportunity for a new thinking that takes ethics as a first philosophy and disrupts the purity of the imperial design, emerges out of the sources of those (Jewish) persecuted peoples: “How such a research can be undertaken without introducing some barbarism into the language of philosophy[?]”\textsuperscript{529} Despite the Derridian critique, Lévinas is not abandoning spatiality (i.e. exteriority),\textsuperscript{530} but rather goes further, calling it barbarism: how “we will not have ventured to recall the beyond essence if this history of the West did not bear, in its margins, the trace of events carrying another signification, and if the victims of the triumphs which entitle the eras of history could be separate from its meaning.”\textsuperscript{531} By mixing barbarism into Greek thinking, through a process of infiltration, Lévinas protests against the integral nature of European thinking and thus takes responsibility for the faults of the Self. This protest gives birth to a positive counter-narrative of the term barbarism.\textsuperscript{532}

Is Lévinas’ barbarism trying to rescue Greek thought? Rosenzweig already showed us that when the Self acknowledges the other, he abandons what makes him a Self.\textsuperscript{533} Barbaric thinking is not an ad-hoc addition to an established and otherwise healthy corpus in order to perfect the latter. It is the essential disruption against a vicious construction that, like Cohen’s description of ethics vis-à-vis religion or Rosenzweig’s critique of Hegelian State, is unable to see the particularity of the other.

\textsuperscript{528} This clear and specific location of the other in Lévinas attempts to confront certain charitable readings that extend the possibility of otherness beyond the specific historical connotation that Lévinas offer them. One of these examples is for example, John Llewelyn, “Am I obsessed by Bobby? (Humanism of the Other Animal), Re-reading Lévinas, Robert Bernasconi and Simon Critchley ed. (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 234-245.

\textsuperscript{529} Ibid. The emphasis is added.


\textsuperscript{531} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{532} By positive counter-narrative I mean not only the re-appropriation of imperial language but also the replacement of its content by an anti-imperial stand.

\textsuperscript{533} See Rosenzweig, Star/Stern, I, 101/86.
that is subsumed along the path of the spirit’s unfolding in history. Or, the application of universal rules of morality that, as we have seen, were reified to support the imperial designs. It is in this context that Lévinas believes that the Hebrew is the source of barbarism that permits the acknowledgment of the otherness, the primacy of her right. In this context, Lévinas considers “whether the apparent and so-called ‘non-thought’ ‘representations’ of the Bible do not hold more possibilities than the philosophy that ‘rationalizes them.”  

Only when the meaning of the margins of the West are revealed, is that the Ego will be disrupted and recuperated a transcendence that, taking into account the commonality of ontology from Parmenides until Heidegger never held. In other words, by recuperating its transcendence will philosophy be otherwise than ontology (and by then, otherwise than philosophy). The transcendence is only found in the moment in which the ethical other is encountered. Ethics, now, will be seen as a “first philosophy” prior to any political stance (i.e. prior to Greek egotistic thinking). It will be a “spiritual optics,” the “anarchical” moment through which the other can be engaged in her specificity without reducing her into the structure of a totality. Thus is where from the barbaric it is possible to conceive of a relationship that precedes European thought (i.e. the safety of the Ego protected by the right in a liberal state). This relationship, as we will see soon, is the previous commitment to the other (represented by the unrepeatable and specific figure of the face), to the stranger, whose presence persecutes the Ego, takes him hostage, demands him to be responsible, from/of her powerlessness and destitution. This other is the one robbed by the Ego who is in turn unable, within the realm of ontology, to acknowledge a previous commitment. It is the one whose “ethical resistance” makes it impossible to kill her since the debt will exist no matter

535 Lévinas, Totalité et infini/Totality and Infinity. 76-7/78.
how much blood the Self spills. This is the height of the destitute that is impossible to be reached by
the Self.\textsuperscript{536}

It is only when this previous relationship is admitted and the Self assumes his “condition of
being hostage that there can be in the world pity, compassion, pardon, and proximity.”\textsuperscript{537} It is only
when the Self is condemned and the latter disappears that the preferential option is possible. In
other words, it is only when the debt is acknowledged that there is a room for a relation that does
not attempt to reduce the other to the same. Out of the Hebrew, the barbaric disruption is possible.
The Hebrew constitutes the resistance against the empire, the “community of the brave ones…
[who] may well call to mind the community of Israel.”\textsuperscript{538} The responsibility for distribution is
contrasted to the liberty of accumulation and the “struggle against Rome” is “the elevation of that
reason.”\textsuperscript{539}

2.3.3.5. Revising Judaism from the East

With this construction, Lévinas expands on the reading of his forerunners including, perhaps
against the conventional readings of the former, the historical experience into the sources for Jewish
disruption. For Cohen, it is Judaism, in virtue of its sources, which is able to offer a religion of
reason as the base for the engagement with the other. In this way, Judaism becomes a new, pure Self
because of its potentiality to be responsible for the other.\textsuperscript{540} According to Rosenzweig, Judaism out
of not only its sources but also its ideal sociology is able to teach how the monologue of the Self
turns into a dialogue, and the latter into a community of others. The blood community of others

\textsuperscript{536} All these topics are the more commonly cited motifs of Lévinas’ thought and are found throughout his Greek Work.
I am presenting them as a corollary and not as the opening of his proposal to let the politics of his Hebrew writings to
guide the ethical system of his Greek project.
\textsuperscript{537} Lévinas, \textit{Autrement qu’être/Otherwise than Being}, 66/37.
\textsuperscript{538} Lévinas, “\textit{Les nations et la présence d’Israel}” / “The Nations and the Presence of Israel,” 119/104.
\textsuperscript{539} Ibid.
becomes responsible for the other.  

Lévinas goes further drawing not only the sources (responsible for the other) and the sociology (the communal disruption of the center) but it is also the experience of Jewish history. In his words, there should be “attention given to the necessities of history, which never lie.” It is true that Lévinas himself acknowledges his “lack of a philosophy of history.” This is, paradoxically, what makes him continue the line of thought of Cohen and Rosenzweig and construct from it the source of protest against the tyranny of the self and morality in engaging with the otherness. Lévinas posits, “[t]he Jew is perhaps one who—because of the inhuman history he has undergone—understands the superhuman demands of morality.” It is the historical experience from the memory of Egypt to Auschwitz that leads the sociological construction of a Jewish community that reads the sources as a barbaric defense of the otherness, of the right of alterity. It is in this context that we can understand the role of Jewish suffering over other experiences:

Among the millions of Human beings who encountered misery and death, the Jews alone experienced a total dereliction. The suffering common to them as to all the victims of the war received its unique meaning from racial persecution which is absolute, since it paralyzes, by virtue of its very intention, any flight, from the outset refuses any conversion, forbids any self-abandonment, any apostasy in the etymological sense of the term; and consequently touches the very innocence of the being recalled to its ultimate identity. Once again Israel found itself at the heart of the religious history of the world...Jewish people...remain on the margins of the world political history, from which it has had the moral privilege of being victims...living in the ghettos and mellahs.

To the literary sources and sociology, Lévinas adds the power of historical memory in a counter-narrative that is at the same time counter-history. The Jews have been victims of extreme racialization and this is not an a-historical, ideal portrayal. The historical participation will not be reduced to an idealized religious history of the world in the fashion of Rosenzweig. Lévinas claims that in order to fully

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541 See 1.3.2.
542 Lévinas, “Mépris de la thora comme idolatrie”/“Contempt for the Torah as Idolatry,” 76/64.
543 Lévinas, “Being for the Other” in Is it Righteous to Be?, 120
544 Lévinas, “Vieux comme le monde” in Quatre Lectures talmudiques, 174. Translated in “As Old as the World” in Nine Talmudic Readings, 82.
545 The revision of the relationship of Lévinas with history can be found in the following collective volume: Natalie Frogneux and Françoise Mies ed, Emmanuel Lévinas et l'histoire (Paris: Namur, 1998).
546 Lévinas, “Une religion d’adultes/”A Religion for Adults, 26/11-12.
understand the potentiality of the claim of Jewish task, history should be analyzed: “This is nothing utopian, please believe me. In the Jewish communities of the villages that Hitler exterminated in Eastern Europe, some men and women were so radically separated from evil…that was enough to guarantee their purity.” Lévinas proposes to locate the purity of judgment and experience in the barbaric. If the infiltration of the Greek by the Hebrew is to take place, it will be as witness of victimhood. The purity of the barbaric is expressed for a unity that Lévinas recovers in part from Rosenzweig. As we have seen, for Cohen the model of Judaism can be found in Eastern Europe; for his student, it was in the idealization of the Eastern Jew (as a connection between Macedonian and Polish Jews). Lévinas develops the idea, understanding that the victims should be found in the natural connection between the ghettos and mellahs. The major difference between the previous two accounts and Lévinas’ is that of the experience of the Eastern Jew whose historicity Lévinas recuperates. The purity of the testimony is product of history, and does not reduce itself to a pure religious history, but claims defiantly not to be ideal or utopian.

The transition between the ideal sociology of Rosenzweig to the historical counter-narrative in Lévinas may be traced through what might be called a biblio-/bio-graphic exploration of Lévinas. While Rosenzweig constructed his conception of the Eastern Jew through his visits during the First War World, and his subsequent pedagogical aim was to attract upper middle class Jews to his project, Lévinas was by himself an Eastern European Jew teaching to Maghrebi Jews during his tenure at the ENIO. The two last textual references referring to the interconnection of suffering were published then during his times directing the school. The first of them, in 1957, was published in Tioumliline under the title Une religion d’adultes and later on as one of the principal articles of Difficile.

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547 Lévinas, “Vieux comme le monde”/”As Old as the World,” 170-174/79-82.
548 See 1.3.1-3.
549 This is what the historians on the conception of the Ostjuden in Germany, Ascheim just to mention the author we employed in our first chapter, are unable to grasp. The discussion on the Ostjuden, romantic as it was, opened a slot for the Eastern him/herself to follow and at the same time disrupt the discourse on them. In other words, to pass from the discourse on the Eastern to the discourse of the Eastern.
Liberte, and the second during his simultaneous teaching at the communitarian and academic level as an interpretation to Sanhedrin 36b-37 at the 1966 colloque and published later in Quatre Lectures Talmudiques.550

Lévinas reveals in a later interview how it was “my activity at the Alliance [that] kept me in contact with the Jewish ordeal, bringing me ceaselessly back to the concrete social and political problems concerned it everywhere.”551 This Jewish ordeal is of course the Holocaust that annihilated most of his Lithuanian family to whom he dedicates, in Hebrew, his second Greek work.552 But it is also the suffering of his students, Maghrebi Jews, trapped between the rise of Muslim decolonial thinking and the values of the Enlightenment that not only the colonizer but also the Alliance was promoting. Lévinas reviews both sides of the problem. On the one hand, he shows the consequences of counter Occidental decolonialisms: “The saraband of innumerable and equivalent cultures, each justifying itself in its own context, creates a world which is, to be sure, de-Occidentalized, but also disoriented.”553 But it also makes of the historical program of his own institution (though having a different opinion of his own work) the focus of critique: “All the Jews of the Mediterranean are educated in these French schools of the Alliance—even sometimes to the detriment of their own traditions, traditions which were later rediscovered in new synthesis.”554

While for many other Maghrébies the new synthesis can be understood as Islam and socialism or nationalist decolonial thinking and the enlightened values of freedom, Lévinas seems to suggest an alternative synthesis for his students. This synthesis is the construction of, let me coin a term, a pan-Hebraic Barbarism out of the non-utopian, historically overlapped Eastern experiences of the ghettos and mellahs. It is no coincidence that during this period Lévinas made an

551 Malka, Emmanuel Lévinas. His Life and Legacy, 39.
552 Lévinas, Autrement qu’être/Otherwise than Being, 5/5.
extraordinary effort to render this construction feasible. As a Lithuanian Jew, he not only donned Sephardic costumes that would upset an Ashkenazi shomer-mitzvot, just as he did not effectively leave his post until the first Moroccan director of the ENIO was appointed in 1979, but he was also considered by many around the ENIO to be “a Moroccan Jew” like each one of them. This common solidarity among the Eastern Jews was made possible during the simultaneity of post-Holocaust years and the process of decolonization. Both Eastern Judaisms were vanished from their worlds in the name of a political project that in general excluded Judaism from its dominion (i.e. from the National-Socialism of Hitler to the Nationalist Socialism of the decolonial movements in North Africa).

While “Western Jewish thought is bathed in a Christian atmosphere,” the pan-Eastern Hebrew Barbaric thought arises from the common suffering of the ghettos and mellahs. Lévinas is following Rosenzweig’s comparison between the dignified Eastern Jew and the Western philistine. This is a turning point for the project. From one perspective, it can be said that Lévinas is following the construction of the Eastern Jew in order to establish the ideal Hebrew; and, if this is true, he is following Cohen and Rosenzweig. From another, this counter-narrative is built upon factual history and not an idealized construction of the otherness. Furthermore, it is written by the same Eastern actors. In this way, he departs ways from his forerunners. Lévinas builds his counter-narrative as an Eastern Jew living in the West. It is especially important to take note that after the Holocaust the re-influx of immigrants in the French Jewish community was pan-Eastern and the creation of a

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555 Keeper of the law. See adoption of ‘Moroccan costumes’ in Malka, Emmanuel Lévinas, His Life and Legacy, 91-2.
556 Despite not being legal to hold a permanent university appointment and a directorship of a private institution, Lévinas did not left the ENIO until David Serfaty was appointed. See Ibid., 103.
557 See the identification of Lévinas as a Moroccan by the students and the general community in Ibid. 86.
558 This common solidarity will be further extended when two out of three founding members of the Institut d'études lévinassiennes were North African Jews (Algerian and Egyptian Jews) and the other built his career about his emptiness as a descendent of Eastern Polish Jews. All of them will follow Lévinas’ interest in barbarism and one of them, pied-noir Bernard-Henry Lévy, entitled his most celebrated book La Barbarie à visage humain. See chapter 3.1 and 3.4.2.
560 See 1.3.1
*Vilna on the Seine* with mostly Maghrebi Jews following Lithuanian style studies started to be the commonality of French Jewry making of this pan-Eastern Barbaric Judaism a model for Western Jews.\(^{561}\) Lévinas follows this path, in the understanding that once the commonality has been constructed, its model serves Judaism as a whole. The pan-Eastern Judaism becomes Judaism itself at the moment in which Lévinas distinguishes that some categories of thought can be “essential to Western being, perhaps to Eastern being as well, but rejected by Jewish being.”\(^{562}\) The unity of Judaism as a whole through the historical experience of the ghettos and mellahs (but presented at the end as an all-embracing project) will be the post-Holocaust rewriting of Jewish history for Lévinas.

While the construction of identity is being made from the combination of the Eastern Jew, the theoretical guidance will be disproportionately Eastern European in general and fruit of the *Mitnagedic* trend of thought in particular (thus contradicting the idealization of the excesses of Hasidism in other Jewish proposals such as Buber’s, which Lévinas critiques in several of his writings).\(^{563}\) One of the major examples for this theoretical construction is the frequent reference to Rabbi Chayyim of Volozhiner, one of the icons of eighteenth and early nineteenth century Jewish Talmudic ethics who also applied the same hermeneutical direction to his mystic readings. This is particularly important since Lévinas “proudly takes credit for being the first to write about Chaim of Volozhin in French.”\(^{564}\) In one of these references, Lévinas writes that in the former’s writings, “[we] are...quite far from the anthropology of the West, quite far from its insistence upon the perseverance in being” Judaism, represented by the Eastern, believes that “to be human is to suffer for the other, and even within one’s own suffering, to suffer for the suffering my suffering imposes

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564 Ibid., 91.
upon the other.” The philosophy of this “paradoxical anthropology” is the one “animating the small book of Chaim of Volozhin, Nefesh Ha’haim, in which the human appears as a rupture of being and perseverance in Being, and only as a result of this rupture, as a relation with God.”565 The source of this Eastern counter-narrative is still unbalanced European.

2.2.3.6. Barbaric Eastern Apologetics

This defense of the disruption of the Ego by a pan-Eastern Hebraism can be read, problematically, as an apologetic discourse. Lévinas does not seem to have any problem acknowledging it: “The Jewish reading is anything but unbiased.”566 Lévinas, however, qualifies what he intends by ‘apologetic’, that is “a biased reader means, not the sterility of dogmatic prejudices, but the possibilities and risks of a thought transcending the given.”567 Biased thinking denotes, following Cohen’s approach, the possibility of reading and writing with the anticipated idea, the political project already as a guide. This is beyond the present “historical alternatives.”568 In Lévinas’ this project is the possibility to think from barbarism beyond ontology. Counter-narrative, in this case, overlaps with apologetics. In a Talmudic reading presented in between the rejection of temptations and the proposal of a Jewish revolution, Lévinas reflects whether or not all text “contain[s] a hint of an apology? Why not? I wonder whether there has ever been a discourse in the world that was not

565 Lévinas, “Le domages causés par le feu”/”Damages Caused by Fire,” 167/188.
567 Ibid.
568 Taking into account that Lévinas builds this disposed type in confrontation to Marxism, it is important to see how he overcomes the proposal of renewed left-Hegelians such as Marcuse and his analysis of potentialities within the “historical alternatives.” See Herbert Marcuse, One Dimensional Man (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 54-56.
apologetic…I think it is a little like that that one tries to be Jewish, that is like that that one merits being called a human being.  

This biased thinking, either apologetics or counter-narrative, becomes the channel through which the victim can express its resistance: “The suffering of anti-Semitic persecution can only be told in the language of the victim. It is conveyed through signs that are not interchangeable”  

Here, once again, we find the simultaneity of Judaism as both source for rights of the others and as other herself. This time, it is through apologetic thinking. In both cases, the latter permits the discovery of the rights of the other, the source for her persecution, and the possibility of creating an own reading of own Jewish history. But in this point the reader can argue whether or not the creation of an own narrative does not place Jewish discourse as a result of an inner concern for their own provincial discourse. Is not the creating of an own narrative the call for empowerment of the other that does not follow the primacy of the concern for the other that Lévinas anticipates that Judaism holds? In Lévinas, the history and suffering of Judaism, because of her extreme persecution (in both senses, the historical harassment and the defense of the otherness despite herself), should be seen as universal:

The exodus from Egypt –original past—does not remain a memory dominating the time of persons and their finite duration. It punctuates the time of the total history of humanity, right up to the point of its eschatological denouement. The liberation from the Egyptian yoke is, from this perspective, the dominant event of Judaism and of the human. Its influence extends even to the Days of the Messiah. The Israelites, in their Egyptian enslavement touched the depths of the human condition. Their deliverance anticipated the salvation of the humanity itself. The past of their memory carries the future within it. This would be the structure of history, and the foundation of the sages’ position…. Judaism and humanity as a whole (when thinking of Judaism, one must always catch sight of humanity as a whole in it, just as it is appropriate to anticipate in Abraham the father of many nations) open themselves to a future more—or otherwise—significant than slavery and emancipation from slavery…a history beyond the one that is compounded of memories and could be contained therein. A history overflowing memory, and, in this sense,

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569 Lévinas, “Vieux como Le monde” in Quatre Lectures talmudiques, 175. Translated in “As Old as the World” in Nine Talmudic Lectures, 82.

unimaginable. A history, as yet entirely novel, that has not yet happened to any particular nation. The exodus cannot be forgotten, it remains an irreducible event.\(^{571}\)

According to Lévinas (following Cohen), Judaism anticipates not only *suffering* but also the *liberation* of humankind. The connection between the textual *defense of the other out of Jewish sources* and the historical reflection of *Judaism as extreme otherness* is what will offer the possibility of a sociological construction of Judaism that will disrupt the dominion of ontology. In Lévinas’ own words, in the first place, “[t]he Jew is free qua enfranchised: his memory is immediately compassion for all the enslaved or all the wretched of the earth, and a special flair for that wretchedness that the wretched themselves are prone to forget.”\(^{572}\) The barbaric Jew becomes the model because of its history beyond its historicity: “In Israel’s destiny, human universality transpires and is being accomplished…the love for Israel may be the original tenderness for the other, the compassion and mercy in which loving kindness arises.”\(^{573}\) The Barbaric Jew emerges as the responsible one in order to confront Rome. However, Jews are the model as far as they hold an elective affinity with the “wretched of the earth.” These dispossessed in the post-war Parisian circuits who, since at least Frantz Fanon, have been identified with Third World colonized. The barbaric counter-narrative is not only Jewish, but it is going to be (problematically) Hebraic.\(^{574}\)

### 2.4 Building the pan-Barbaric front

#### 2.4.1 De-Colonialism out of the Hebrew

This affinity between Jews and the *other* barbarians may seem to be just a prescriptive, decontextualized proposal in current mainstream interpretations of Lévinas. They, in general,

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\(^{571}\) Lévinas, “Au-delá souvenir” in *À l’heure des nations*, 94. Translated in “Beyond Memory” in *The Hour of the Nations*, 81.

\(^{572}\) Ibid., 91/78.


\(^{574}\) See Fanon, *Damnes de la Terre/The Wretched of the Earth*. 
indicate his resistance to understand the other beyond the Jew.\textsuperscript{575} A brief exploration of the development of Lévinas’ work on the other other (i.e. third party) between the 1930s and 1970s, however, shows the need to go beyond these readings in order to understand the horizons of Lévinas’ project. During the interwar, still within a Eurocentric framework, Lévinas encourages the alliance between Christianity and Judaism to defeat the paganism of totalitarianism. In this way, no option beyond Europe is considered.\textsuperscript{576} In the early post-war period as well as during the time of political decolonization, he opens a place for the non-European while pointing out Christian complicity with Jewish suffering. Instead of forming an alliance with the periphery, however, Lévinas declares his fear for the “under-developed \textit{Afro-Asiatic masses}” that were foreign to the common core of values.\textsuperscript{577} Between 1961 and 1972, in his major philosophical works, Lévinas follows this fear. The other other is as a source for the disruption of the possible fraternity between the Self and the other (Christianity and Judaism). In this context, the third appears with her competitive demands and the Self needs to leave the realm of ethics and apply \textit{liberal positive justice} to attend the multiple claims. Writing in a context of epistemological decolonization, however, Lévinas’ alterity is opened to exteriority first and much clearer to barbarism later.\textsuperscript{578} In 1986, more than ten years after this openness to consider the Jews barbaric, Lévinas gathers the voices of the third parties (formerly under-developed and disruptive of the fraternity) into a common pan-barbaric counter-narrative headed by the Hebrew.\textsuperscript{579}

\textsuperscript{575} While the superb historical chronology that Caygill offers has all the potential to engage with this problem, he focuses all the last chapters of his work (post-1970s) on Lévinas’ relation to Israel. However, he does not pay attention to the alliance with Egypt and Ethiopia. This alliance makes impossible the association of the rabbinical ‘community of Israel’ with the secular Zionist ‘State of Israel.’

\textsuperscript{576} Lévinas, ‘l’actualite de Maimonides” \textit{Paix et Droit} (1935), 39-41.


\textsuperscript{578} Lévinas, \textit{Autrement qu’être/Otherwise than Being}, 248-249/159-160.

In the fourth chapter, I will suggest that Lévinas revised some of his previous writing emphasizing already existent decolonial insight and this led him to call for a pan-barbaric and anti-imperial project. This transition, I will contend, begins in the 1970s through his conversation with a “sympathetic group of Latin-Americans” (Lévinas’ own words) calling for a barbaric philosophy and concludes in the 1980s when Lévinas answered the challenge presented by some members of this group.\textsuperscript{580} In 1973, Dussel remarks that he has been able to elaborate a “barbaric philosophy, a philosophy that emerges from the non-being” after “a personal meeting that I maintained with Lévinas” in 1972.\textsuperscript{581} In 1974, only a year after this publication, Lévinas calls for the introduction of “barbarism in the language of philosophy” as the only path to recover transcendence.\textsuperscript{582} A few years later, the same intellectual, Dussel, challenges Lévinas, asking if “the other (autrui) could be an Indian, an African, or an Asiatic.”\textsuperscript{583} Lévinas’ answer includes Egypt and Ethiopia into the barbaric community. Furthermore, he declares himself “happy, even proud, when I heard echoes of my work in this group…of sympathetic Latin-Americans.” For Lévinas, this was “a fundamental approval. It means that other people have also seen ‘the same thing.’”\textsuperscript{584}

We will leave for the fourth chapter the exploration of the reasons and limits of this same thing that both were able to visualize. For now, Lévinas seems to accept the challenge and join the Hebrew to the common front of others. However, in contraposition to other decolonial theories, Lévinas does not depart from the historical reading of oppression of decolonial thinkers (Latino-Americans, Asians, or Africans) but from the counter-narrative of the Hebraic sources. Drawing from Rashi’s interpretation of the our keystone (\textit{Pesahim 118b}) Lévinas reflects “there is a rabbinic tradition that understands Egypt and Cush as being included in the ‘community of Israel,’ already saved in

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[580]{Lévinas, “Philosophie, justice et amour”/”Philosophy, Justice, and Love” 37/179.}
\footnotetext[581]{Dussel, \textit{Latin-American, Dependencia y Liberación}, 125.}
\footnotetext[582]{Lévinas, \textit{Autrement qu’être/Otherwise than Being}, 273/178}
\footnotetext[583]{Ibid., 8.}
\footnotetext[584]{Ibid.}
\end{footnotes}
[the] battle of the Angel Gabriel, and admitted into the Messianic order.”

This new community is the new humanity: “It is the entire new humanity of redemption that is protected by the anger directed toward the wild beast of Rome.” Far from being exclusive, Egypt and Cush represent all humanity outside the Empire and Israel. Whereas Egypt is an easily located historical actor as the traditional ambiguous neighbor of the Jew, Cush represents “doubtless countries similar to it” that comprehend “between a third and a fourth of mankind.” Reading decolonial theory from the standpoint of the Hebrew seeks to establish commonality in present values and not just in the history of suffering.

This counter-narrative of a pan-barbaric front is not a new multiculturalism that arises from such assimilationist ideologies as National Socialism, Liberalism, or Marxism. This pluralism, in Lévinas’ words, is not “a numerical multiplicity,” but rather is the insistence of independent “attitudes...with regard to the other.” Lévinas escapes from Jewish exclusion to, problematically, lead the history of the other others from this Hebraic barbarism. Ethiopia and Egypt are included in the community of Israel, not because of common suffering, but rather as part of the communal construction of social values. The pan-barbaric community of the brave ones is “assessed according to whether or not their national solidarity is open to the other, to the stranger...” and they create a new “fraternity” that Lévinas affirms, asking whether this “is not according to the Bible, a synonym of humanity?” What constitutes the common front is not, paraphrasing Marxist terms, the common chains, but rather the responsibility for not enchaining the other. The counter-narrative of the barbaric community of the brave ones does not need to redeem history; it instead creates a new humanity, as responsible with the other as it is violent with the Self. Lévinas, in this way, recovers

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586 Ibid.
587 Ibid., 114/99.
588 Lévinas, Totalité et infini/Totality and Infinity, 125/120.
the new responsible Self, which Cohen had proposed.\textsuperscript{590} As such, the pan-barbaric front emerges, representing “the entire new humanity…that is protected by the anger directed toward the wild beast of Rome.”\textsuperscript{591} Nevertheless, what do these communities represent for Lévinas?

### 2.4.2. The Neighbor (from Egypt to the Arab)

The first community that will be assessed is Egypt, which can be understood, in the Talmudic writings, as the neighbor of Israel, the other empire, and later on “the Arab” or “The Muslim,” that holds a long history of relations with the people of Israel.\textsuperscript{592} Taking into account the centrality of Israel in religious and universal history, and Egypt’s relationship with it, this prototype is considered not only “an essential point of universal history, but the very crux of Holy history.”\textsuperscript{593} Lévinas follows the text, understanding the wish of this third party in establishing an alliance with the community of brave barbarians to secure its place in the struggle for the new world’s arrival. In the Talmudic text, prayed for is that “Egypt will bring a gift to the Messiah in the future. He thought he should not accept it, coming from them, but the Holy One, Blessed be He, will say to the Messiah: ‘Accept it from them; [after all] they took in our children in Egypt.’”\textsuperscript{594} The community of the brave ones (represented by its new leader, the Messiah), however, is suspicious and hesitant to accept this alliance. Egypt as a prototype seems to be placed in an ambiguous position.

On the one hand, it represents slavery: “The Messiah, to whom Egypt, or the ‘Egyptian’ presents a gift cannot forget the servitude and wants to reject the sign of alliance presented to

\textsuperscript{590} Cohen, \textit{Religion/Religion}, 226/194. See 1.2.4.
\textsuperscript{591} Lévinas, “Les nations et la présence d’Israel”/“The Nations and the Presence of Israel,” 112/97
\textsuperscript{592} It is important to note that Lévinas is using a French translation (and not the original in Aramaic). This particular work translates \textit{Mitzraim} as Egypt but does not translate \textit{Cush} as Ethiopia.
\textsuperscript{593}Lévinas, “Les nations et la présence d’Israel”/“The Nations and the Presence of Israel,” 113/97.
\textsuperscript{594} Ibid., 107/92.
him.” To rephrase, the community represented by the messenger of God remembers past (or current?) rivalry hoping to avoid the association with those who enslaved the people of Israel. Egypt is, with no doubt the “country of servitude.” Yet, Egypt represents more than the contextual struggle. It is also the shelter and the possibility of socio-political integration. It is “the place where Abraham and Jacob found refuge in time of famine; where Joseph was able to assume universal and political economic responsibilities at the very core of Holy History.” Furthermore, the weight of the slavery is not only ameliorated by the good periods of shelter. Even in the darkest of the moments, “at the hour of exterminating cruelty, Pharaoh’s daughter saved Moses from the waters.” In final terms, the nation that offered shelter, as well as the possibility of integration with the stranger, and even in the darkest of the moments, some of its authorities helped Jewish history to be born.

Based on the possibility of shelter and (despite the anti-assimilationist tendency of Lévinas) integration, the community (through the Messiah) is forced to re-evaluate its position: “God requires him to accept the gift, reminding him of the shelter offered Israel by the country of Egypt. Shelter will become a place of slavery—but first a place offered to the stranger.” The principle that guides the prototype of Egypt makes the “eternal to accept Egypt’s homage. The Bible renders that foreseeable in Deuteronomy 23:8 one belongs to the Messianic order when one has been able to admit others among one’s own.” Once again, following Cohen’s readings, Egypt is accepted. In keeping with Lévinas, some may believe that the simple tolerance for the stranger (instead of an active defense of her rights) is not enough to engage with the other. That said, “God alone knows

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595 Ibid., 113/97.
596 Ibid., 113/97.
597 Ibid., 113/97.
598 Ibid., 113/97.
599 Whether or not ‘Germany’ (original shelter and integration that turn into extreme suffering opening the door for the returning to freedom in Israel) could follow the same path is an interrogation that should be explored later.
601 Ibid., 113/98.
how much love that tolerance demands. It is both impressive and beautiful that, in the relation between Israel and the nations, this should count for so much in Jewish thought. To shelter in one's own land or home, to tolerate the presence of the landless and homeless. The result is that “the Messiah obeys the order of the lord. He accepts the gift from Egypt. But on his own, he was going to refuse! No peace without superhuman pardon!”

This understanding of the possible alliance of Jews and the neighbor was written in 1987. This, then, occurs eight years after the treaty between Israel and Egypt that paradoxically or not was sponsored by the same center Lévinas identifies as the Self that should be dispersed, which can in turn demonstrate the failure of Lévinas' understanding (and coincidentally or not during the Palestinian uprising known as Intifada). By then, in 1979, Lévinas published a text on Jewish-Arab relations in *Les Temps Modernes* named “*Politique après,*” fulfilling a non-allergic request of Jean-Paul Sartre. In the text, Lévinas is reproducing the same tension and the same resolution that we find in the Talmudic reading asking whether Egypt as ally of Israel is limited to utopian religious history. This is a diasporic perspective of Cohen and Rosenzweig. Lévinas limits the enmity to a contextual, historical problem that does not integrally define the relationship: “the origin of the conflict between Jews and Arabs dates back to Zionism. It has been acute since the creation of the state of Israel.”

As it happened during the period of slavery, the enmity is located in time and space but does not comprehend the historical (religious) relationship as such. Contrary to an analysis of real-politics, the relationship between Israel and Egypt holds “spatio-temporal, psychological, and moral particulars…[that] explode the pre-fabricated categories of sociology and political science.”

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602 Ibid., 114/98.
603 Ibid., 113-114/97-98.
605 Ibid.
Lévinas claims not to “remain prisoner of outmoded sociological categories,” understanding that the enmity is just a black period in a relationship that has an alternative goal. “The Jew,” according to Lévinas, “does not need to be a ‘prophet or the son of a prophet’ to wish and hope for a reconciliation with old friends; to foresee it, above and beyond becoming…a fraternal community.” Lévinas thinks of Egypt as representative of the Arabs (explicitly including Palestinians) and hopes for a reconciliation of the basis of a historical commonality that goes beyond the biblical period of slavery and current state of war. The objective is to build a fraternal community between one and the other. It is not by chance that in both texts (the 1987 Talmudic reading and the 1979 article), Lévinas is using similar terms translated into English as “community” (collectivite in 1987 and communauté in 1979) to refer to this future alliance against the wild beast. For Lévinas, they are not just neighbors. They, as a community, create another reading of history in which “the suggestion that peace is a concept which goes beyond purely political thought” beyond Rome. The community is formed and now they are coming after the Empire.

2.4.3 Beyond the Border (the Black…or the Afro-Asiatic)

While the first ideal model of the third party is well known in the history of the relationships between Judaism and Christianity, Lévinas also traces other others who seem to be foreign to this encounter. In an early article published in Revue Arche in 1961, entitled “La pensée juive aujourd’hui,” Lévinas points out three events that force the relocation of Jewish thought today. While the first is anti-Semitism and the second, Zionism, the third problem is of particular importance for us here. According to Lévinas, one of the three most crucial factors that force us to redirect Jewish thought is “the arrival on the historical scene of those underdeveloped Afro-Asiatic masses who are strangers

606 Ibid., 222/189.
607 Ibid. 226-228/193-195.
to the Sacred History that forms the heart of the Judaic-Christian world.”608 The alliance between Judaism and Egypt is based in not only an ethical commonality but also a long history of relationship that proves Egypt’s solidarity. The alliance with Ethiopia (Black, African, the Afro-Asiatic masses or the Third World as such), however, is based in the supposed lack of contact with Israel.

Lévinas (problematically) defines the prototype of Ethiopia as a “country of black men with nothing to reproach itself for nor anything to congratulate itself for.”609 While the Egyptian has a long history of relationship with the stranger (Israel), the relationship with Cush is, in Lévinas’ narrative, almost unnoticeable: “According to the Bible, at least, it is never the theatre of important events…. In Holy history as well as in universal history—without an active role, a bit marginal. Neither friendly nor hostile to the message of Israel.”610 These “marginal” peoples occupy between “a third or a fourth of mankind” and their “silence and neutrality [is] a natural goodwill of the noble savage.”611 While Egypt navigates between the care for the stranger and their enslavement or state of war against them, “Cush, whose hands remained clean, is welcomed under the auspices of a fortiori argument in which the peoples who do not have a complicated history are assigned with ease, within the corruption of civilization, a philosophy of history.”612 Basing his reading in Psalm 68:32, “Cush shall hasten to stretch out her hands unto God,” Lévinas trusts in the effort of the clean and simple prototype to engage in the Israelite alliance. In addition, by Cush, Lévinas means not only Ethiopia or Africa, but also “Cush and doubtless countries similar to it!” that compose the Afro-Asiatic masses.613

610 Ibid., 114/99.
611 Ibid.
612 Ibid.
613 Ibid.
This reading of Lévinas may be surprising for two reasons. First, in the French context, Ethiopia was seen as the homeland of the black community or humanity itself since the early post-war.\(^{614}\) In the second place, only a year before the lecture, Ethiopian Jews (Beta-Israel or Falasha Jews) were replaced to Israel after they fled the oppression of their homeland.\(^{615}\) Ethiopia seemed to be nothing but an excluded participant in world affairs in both the French and the Jewish context. Lévinas, however, decides to follow the Talmudic understanding, reducing the world to the Mediterranean, and to the principle of responsibility. In this way, he reproduces the conception of Blacks (or Third World inhabitants) as people with “no history.”\(^{616}\) To this, we need to add the surprising fact that he seems to be pleased with the Egyptian-Jewish re-encounter, yet directs his attacks against the empire that sponsored the treaty. The two readings of Lévinas in the context of his counter-narrative require further explanation. We will proceed with this reading according to his two audiences: ex-Marxist Jews and decolonial barbarians.\(^{617}\)


\(^{616}\) The development of the interpretation of the colonial inhabitants as people with no history can be consulted in Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People with no History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). It is important to consult Wolf instead of other similar writings since his framework permits the inclusion of pre-modern accounts.

\(^{617}\) As we will see later this rejects easy explanations of some scholars who saw Lévinas a “mere theological justification of the State of Israel.” See George Salemohamed, “Lévinas: From ethics to Political Theology” in *Economy and Society*, V21 N2 (1992), 93-106.
CHAPTER III: LÉVINAS’ CIVILIZATIONAL BARBARIISM: IS MARXISM ALL WE NEED?

Force is the midway of every old society pregnant with a new one…. [Of] the Christian colonial system, M. Howitt, a man who makes a specialty of Christianity, says: “the barbarities and desperate outrages of the so-called Christian race throughout every region of the world … are not to be paralleled by those of any other race.”

The capitalist society faces a dilemma: either an advance to socialism or a reversion to barbarism….what does a ‘reversion to barbarism’ mean at the present stage of European Civilization?…at this moment, once glance around us will show what reversion to barbarism is bourgeois society… the triumph of imperialism leads to the destruction of culture…if the period of world wars which has just begun is allowing to take its course to its logical end.

[T]here is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another. A historical materialist therefore dissociates himself from it as far as possible. He regards it as his task to brush history against the grain.

Of course! For me the famous phrase of Rosa Luxemburg: “Socialism or Barbarism” is a reality. Today it is seen a continuous hardening in the anti-Arab and anti-African racism in the extreme right and the bourgeoisie. I thought that with the triumph of socialism in Europe the danger of fascism was going to be rejected. This is why I became a Trotskyite.

What is Barbarism? Barbarism, I said, is capital and nothing but capital; it is capital exacerbated and unlimited…..What is the Gulag? The Enlightenment minus tolerance. What is the five-year plan? Bourgeois economicism plus police and terror…. For us in the West, the barbarism to come will have the most tragic of all faces: the human face of ‘socialism’…we can see on

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the horizon a confused joint rule, a strange Siren with capital for a body and a Marxist head; a new kind of Roman Pax.\textsuperscript{622}

3.1. Introduction

3.1.1. Barbarism in Lévinas’ ex Marxist followers

While in the first part I contend that the orthodox reading can explain Lévinas’ discomfort with the term, it is in this second section where I show that Lévinas’ solution for the problem should be explained by a heterodox exploration. To rearticulate my intention, I will look at lines of thought besides a narrow conception of Jewish thought to trace the simultaneous source and audience of Lévinas’ double deployment of the term. In this chapter, I analyze Lévinas’ first type of barbarism, the civilizational. I contended that this barbarism was a non-Jewish Jewish Marxist, anti-imperialist resource and, once it had been incorporated by Lévinas, it became a resource allowing passage of radical Eastern Jews from a \textit{Westernized Marxist Humanism} to a \textit{Hebraic Barbaric Humanism}. The followers of Lévinas, however, remained trapped into a Western framework of analysis. By reproducing the same limits of ontological thinking, they only put forward the negative perception of the term and were unable to positively reclaim their barbarism and identify their project with alternatives emerging from other \textit{wretched of earth}. In other words, their heritage is limited.\textsuperscript{623}

Just a few years ago, however, the post-Marxist Lévinasian heritage seemed to be in good health. In the year 2000, three self-appointed heirs of Lévinas established the Parisian \textit{Institut d'études lévinassiennes} and its extension in Jerusalem, the \textit{Majon Lelimudei-Lévinas}. The founding members of the institute, all of them former \textit{extrême gauche} Eastern Jewish philosophers who belonged to the generation of 1968, seemed to have left, through Lévinas’ guidance, the \textit{Marxist Humanism} that subsumed the other into the sameness for a \textit{Hebraic Humanism} that struggles for the universality of


\textsuperscript{623} In 2.2.3 and 2.2.4., I developed the interconnection between the pan-Eastern project vis-à-vis the generation of 1968 and the Jewish identification with other barbarians in relation to decolonial thinking.
the particularity. This Hebraic Humanism is particularly relevant for Lévinas’ pan-Eastern Jewish project when we analyze the fragile origins and the subsequent empowerment of the three founder members.

Benny Lévy was an Egyptian Jew with close family ties with the persecuted Communist Party in Cairo who led the Maoist Gauche prolétarienne (GP) in the late 1960s. He secured shelter in France after a special request was made on his behalf by Jean-Paul Sartre when Lévy was making him reconsider his views on Judaism. Finally, Lévy returned to Orthodox Judaism fleeing from Paris and establishing himself in Strasbourg. The latter, ironically, is the same border city that Lévinas chose fifty years before to attend university and engage the universal values of the assimilationist French culture. Alain Finkielkraut is a historian of ideas of Polish descent who, after belonging to the GP, searched tirelessly for lost Eastern socialist alternatives within the framework of minority nationalisms. Renouncing this quest, he built his media career as one of the most vocal public intellectuals, departing from his understanding of the fragility and emptiness of his melancholic post-Holocaust identity (le Juif imaginaire) divorced from the organic world of Eastern Jewry. It would appear that Finkielkraut replaced in Lévinasianism the non-utopian Eastern location he had tried to locate in Marxism. Finally, Bernard-Henry Lévy (better known as BHL) is a pied-noir who fled Algeria as an infant at the dawn of the decolonizing discourse. He had a more humble position during the struggles of the 1960s and was soon disillusioned with Marxist

624 Information on the Institut d'études lévinassiennes, activities, general debates, and publications can be read in the following official website: http://www.Lévinas.fr/default.asp. In particular, refer to the opening conversations at http://www.Lévinas.fr/institut/institut.asp.
625 See reference to the construction of a pan-Eastern Jewish project in 2.2.
627 On Benny Lévy’s returning to Judaism read Judith Friedlander, Vilna on the Seine: Jewish Intellectuals in France (New Heaven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), 124-139. After this return, Lévy settled in Jerusalem and led the Israeli section of the institute until his death in 2003.
629 See on Alain Finkielkraut’s imperfect returning in Friedlander, Vilna on the Seine, 92-104.
alternatives. BHL, along with other peers of the 1968 generation, founded the polemical reactionary nouveaux philosophes in late 1970s. It is no coincidence that Lévinas praised and supported BHL’s amateur philo-biblical explorations in his last Talmudic lectures. Under the direction of the three philosophers L’institut d’études lévinassiennes seemed to accomplish one of Lévinas’ goals—namely, the construction of a pan-Eastern Hebraic Humanist project in opposition to a pro-Western Marxist Humanistic liberation.

The problem of barbarism is as central to the students as it was in the teacher. These points to the historical and conceptual accuracy of what could have been a heterodox elective affinity. An exploration of the employment of the term demonstrates the continuity between the works of Lévinas and his followers. However, it also shows the limitations of this heritage. The three disciples only follow one side of Lévinas’ conception of barbarism. They do extend the discourse on civilizational barbarism, yet they leave the Hebraic barbarism outside their program. For example, Benny Lévy in his work Entre Juif—subtitled Etude Lévinassienne, to avoid any confusion—offers a reflection on the particularities of Auschwitz following Lévinas’ centralization of extreme suffering in the Jewish experience. In the tradition of his predecessor, Lévy interprets the Holocaust within Lévinas’ non-utopian sacred history. He asks, “[w]hat makes the Holocaust unique?...Barbarism? One only need read the Ashkenazim slihot to see what happened in Worms and Mainz during the Crusades” to understand the continuous barbarism of the West that was taken over during the Second War World.

Following this lead, Finkielkraut, considered by some scholars as the secular disciple of Lévinas, follows an open debate in France to see in the colonial situation that Lévinas calls “imperialism,” the

632 See 2.2.3.1 and also Lévinas, “Judaïsme et révolution”/“Judaism and Revolution” 11-53/94-119.
633 Benny Lévy, Etre juif: etude lévinassienne (Lagresse: Verdier, 2004), 92. This work has not been translated in English.
rise of the “obtuse civilization” also called “barbarian Europe.” Finally, and more explicit than before, BHL writes in *La barbarie a visage humain*:

> What is Barbarism? Barbarism, I said, is capital and nothing but capital; it is capital exacerbated and unlimited…. What is the Gulag? The Enlightenment minus tolerance. What is the five year plan? Bourgeois economicism plus police and terror…. For us in the West, the barbarism to come will have the most tragic of all faces: the human face of socialism…we can see on the horizon a confused joint rule, a strange Siren with capital for a body and a Marxist head; a new kind of Roman Pax.”

The pan-Eastern Jewish Humanism that confronts fascism, Imperialism, and Marxist Humanism finds its echo in Lévinas’ disciples, but its engagement with the teacher’s counter-narrative in barbarism is limited and partial. The only accepted barbarism is the civilizational, which was originally taken from Marxist archives. If read through Lévinas’ understanding, this is still within the limits of Western thinking. As I hope to demonstrate, there is a long line of Marxist (Jews) identifying imperialist and capitalist Europe as barbarian. The trend spans from Karl Marx to Rosa Luxemburg to Walter Benjamin and was particularly influential during the development of Lévinas’ civilizational barbarism in post-war Paris. The heirs follow Lévinas but are unable to escape from the negative limits of Marxism and positively engage in a barbaric Hebraic proposal.

Nevertheless, a question precedes the analysis of the limitations of the heirs. If Lévinas locates Marxism at the limit but still within ontological discourse, why does he employ Marxist vocabulary to confront the West? Even though the intentionality of Lévinas is important in this chapter, I avoid stopping in this subjective analysis to understand the (limited) conceptual elective affinity between Marxism and Lévinas that made the passage of Lévy, Finkielkraut, and BHL a possible trajectory. This interest in this interrelation leads us to the exploration of three problems. The first is the extent to which Lévinas’ appropriation of Marxism can explain the elective affinity

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between his work and the above-mentioned (ex)Marxist Eastern Jewish thinkers. The second is whether or not this partial mobilization made by the founders of the institute can be explained by the limitations of the origin of the term within a Marxist conception of European class struggle. And the last examines the extent to which there is a relationship between the elective affinity and the concept of barbarism that permits to explore, as I will show later in this chapter, the possibilities and limits of an alternative Jewish project that emerges from the locus where the discourses on civilizational barbarism were created (i.e. Western Europe).

This chapter represents an exploration of these interrelated problems, one in which I will contend that through the concept of barbarism it is possible to re-evaluate the conceptual and historical relationship between Lévinas and Marxism. The latter is not going to be enough for Lévinas, but I hope to demonstrate a radical (Jewish) Jewish project will drink from the waters of (non-Jewish) Jewish scientific socialism even when there is a complete and programmatic opposition to it. This dialogue, however, can also be highly problematic. Lévinas makes use of the negative discourse on civilizational barbarism to strengthen his critique that, at the point of finding an alternative heritage as we have seen in the last chapter, parts ways with Marxism, building the positive Hebraic barbarism. Alternatively, his disciples are unable to cross that bridge remaining in/within the Marxist heritage on barbarism (even when, paradoxically, they intended to attack Marxism with it in a much more jealous and crude form than his teacher). Lévinas’ mobilization of the discourse on civilizational barbarism will demonstrate what his critique owes to Marxism. Furthermore, it will also illustrate the indebtedness of any radical Jewish project to the radicalism of the heterodox Jews. But it also alerts us to the trap that it results for Lévinas’ followers and the need to build the barbaric beyond the limitations of dialectical materialism.

3.2. Road Map

636 See 2.3.
The chapter will be divided in three sections. In the first, I will develop a socio-historical reading of Lévinas’ historical reflections to find the place of the Marxist (muted into the German-French hybrid of *Israelite Marxism*) within his texts on barbarism. The basic texts that will be used were written between the early post-war (starting in 1953) and the already mentioned dialogue with Marxism in 1969. This will enable a transition backwards from our previous chapter (primarily covering the span of 1964 to 1987), demonstrating the existence of a Lévinasian dialogue with Marxism after the Holocaust but before the student uprising. The central text will be Lévinas’ *Ethique et esprit* that will be supplemented by his entry of Judaism in the *Encyclopedia Universalis* and the aforementioned Talmudic lecture on *Judaïsme et révolution*. In the second section, I will make use of sociocultural theory to explore the textual affinities between Israelite Marxism and Lévinasianism in civilizational barbarism. In it, I will draw from the texts of the non-Jewish Jews themselves. In the final part, I will socio-historically trace the textual heritage of Lévinas’ civilizational barbarism. I will do so by showing the permanent concern with the negative barbarism in post-war France and the adoption of the term by one of Lévinas’ heirs, BHL, who is unable to barbarically re-appropriate the term positively.

The general argument will be as follows: Lévinas identifies the adversary of his pan-Eastern Jewish project in non-Jewish Jewish Western Marxism. By demonstrating the Western origin of liberal and social radical movements, he discredits *Israelite Marxism* finding a place for it within ontological or civilizational barbarism. However, the latter discourse (i.e. civilizational barbarism) was taken from the (extended) Israelite Marxist tradition itself which if read, the concept of barbarism holds striking similarities to Lévinas’ proposal. Both projects confront civilization through an inversion of the barbaric accusation. Now the barbaric is not the underdeveloped world, but Europe itself (e.g. Christianity, the Greek, or the US). Furthermore, both identify *fetishistic Rome* as

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637 Ibid.
the enemy and draw from sacred Jewish history to understand the path toward liberation; they return to the sources, recognizing the need of rescuing the silenced history of the vanquished, and finally, find that the major Jewish problem in the twentieth century is the ontological assimilation to, and annihilation from, the totalitarian system.638

*Civilizational barbarism* is predominantly a pan-Jewish tool (Jewish Jew as represented by Lévinasian thinking and non-Jewish Jewish as represented by Marxism) that serves to confront the internal Western project of assimilation (and annihilation).639 While Lévinas’ attack on Marxism uncovers his intended audience (i.e. the Eastern Jewry that engages *Western Israelite Marxism* instead of *pan-Eastern Hebraism*), Lévinas’ use of Israelite Marxism reveals not only Marxist influence in alternative Jewish projects, but also the straightforward transition from a Marxist to a Lévinasian background in the founders of the *Institut/Majon*. The anti-Marxist stance taken by Lévinas’ heirs is impossible to comprehend without an engagement with the elective affinity between the two movements, as well as the limitations that Marxism seems to hold from a Lévinasian perspective. This limitation is the impossibility of Marxism to go beyond civilizational barbarism. In other words, the resources of *civilizational barbarism* may be enough when thinking from the center, but a *barbaric Hebraism* à la Lévinas is only possible when reading outside the limitations of assimilationist thinking.640

### 3.2 Lévinas, Israelites & Civilizational Barbarism

#### 3.2.1 Placing the Israelite

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638 This reproduces the temptations developed in 2.2.2.  
639 In the nineteenth and early twentieth century civilizational barbarism is predominantly a pan-Jewish tool. Fortunately afterwards other colonized peoples made use of this tool. See 4.3.1.  
640 The understanding of Marxism as the last assimilationist temptation is going to be further discussed in the fifth chapter when we critically revise the project and its limitations.
Let me open this chapter by exploring the origin and place of non-rabbinical radical Jews in Lévinas’ thinking. Nearly ten years before the publication of his first major philosophical works and Talmudic lectures, Lévinas wrote *Ethique et esprit* (1953). In this essay, the reader can recognize the beginnings of an incipient post-Holocaustic ethical framework formulated as a response to the changes that French Jews had confronted since emancipation. He contends that it is possible to trace Jewish particularity prior to 1791. Jews, he observes, “conceived of morality in a very vigorous way, feeling themselves attached to it as though to an inalienable heritage.” But far from changing this moral attitude, Lévinas believes that it is possible to trace continuities between the pre- and post-emancipation stages: “Even in the 19th century, when Judaism entered the community of Western nations, it still claimed it as a *raison d’être*. It was convinced that it survived in order to preserve the teaching of the prophets in its purity.”

Lévinas’ historical reading, however, reveals a major change that institutional Judaism was undergoing at the time. According to the author, the French official (i.e. consistorial) religious institutions confronted new challenges of assimilation. They were adapting to the presumably secular environment destabilizing the traditional core from where their morality arose; “[s]eparated more and more from the rabbinical tradition and its exegeses, the morality offered in the Western temples no longer contained a message to justify the messenger. It more and more resembled the generous but general formula of the European moral conscience.” The consistorial system, led by notable Jews, progressively adapted to the post-revolutionary situation. Finally, after the fall of Bonaparte, they found in their assimilation to the Israelite status a lucrative source of profit from the

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642 Ibid. A classic work on the situation of the Jewish community, the problems of the emancipatory discourse, and the challenges to the Jewish community after emancipation can be found in Arthur Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968). Particularly pertinent to our reading are the chapters concerning the state of the Jewish community prior to emancipation (1-16), the discourse of emancipation (17-36), as well as the revolution and early post-emancipatory stages (37-66).
643 The consistorial organization dated from 1808 following Napoleon’s Sanhedrin of 1806 and established itself as the official umbrella organization of the Jewish community until at least the Second World War.
644 Ibid., 17/5.
system, becoming “state Israelites” under both empires and republics. However, in this context, there were Jews who, in the margins of the directorship of these institutions but with rising professional, social, and intellectual opportunities, aimed to “bring peoples to a prophetic morality.”

These marginal Jews, “unable to justify the messenger,” progressively started to find alternative paths to fulfill what seemed to be a call influenced by the prophetic spirit. Yet, after years of consistorial directorship and access to incipient humanist intellectual circles, their discourse seemed to be far away from both Jewish sources and official confessional institutionalism. “Perhaps from that age on[]” Lévinas reflects understanding the nineteenth century only the origin of a practice that extended until the days he is writing, “the Jewish presence manifested itself more in the Israelite’s participation in liberal and social movements—in the struggle for civil rights or true social justice—than in the sermons to be heard in emancipated synagogues.” In Lévinas’ view, the emancipated French Israelite community witnessed the emergence of two collective lines of radical Jewish thought that he interconnects: first, those who opted for an international liberal struggle for civil rights beyond geopolitical republican borders; and second, those who engaged in a radical supranational class struggle for social justice against the rising bourgeois capitalism.

The first of these groups (i.e. the liberal) includes Israelites who supported the republicans in 1848, defended the Jewish contribution to society against the rise of anti-Semitic philology and history in the following years, and defied the pre-eminence of the consistory organization extending

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645 The early consistorial challenges and the interconnection between the consistory and French politics can be seen in Pierre Birnbaum, The Jews of the Republic: A Political History of State Jews in France from Gambetta to Vichy (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996). The initial biographical chapters (7-53) add a striking perspective to the more systematic orientation of the second and third parts which are central for our argument (57-196).
646 Lévinas, “Ethique et spirit”/“Ethics and Spirit,” 18/5.
647 Ibid.
648 For Jewish reactions to both the republican and incipient anarchist circles, read Birnbaum, The Jews of the Republic, 243-283.
the Israelite actions beyond the borders of France founding the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* in 1860.\(^{649}\) For the rest of the century, and until the interwar period, this group would be progressively incorporated into the institutional consistorial Judaism. In tune with the age of imperialism in general and the French *mission civilisatrice* in particular, the institutional Judaism were set to co-opt the internationalism of the liberal trend.\(^{650}\) The second of these groups (i.e. the radical) engaged in the struggle for social justice within socialist and anarchist organizations in open defiance of the major theorists of these trends who showed different degree of anti-Semitism (i.e. Pierre Proudhon, Alphonse Toussenel and even Charles Fourier).\(^{651}\) It finds an early starting point in the 1830s with the Jewish participation in Saint-Simonian circles; it is then extended in the radical factions of the revolution of 1848, including a relevant role in the commune of 1871. Following the Dreyfuss Affair and during the immigrant influxes from Germany and the East, the trend ascended the ranks of the Socialist Party even boasting the first socialist prime minister of the country in the interwar period. He was followed by another Jewish politician of radical extraction who engaged with the first steps of the decolonization process in Indochina and the Maghreb.\(^{652}\)

As we have seen in Lévinas’ recount, these trends are the result of French Israelite institutionalism’s failure to offer a *prophetic rabbinical spirit* within the institution. Lévinas’ critique of

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\(^{649}\) It is of critical importance to compare the rise in Western and Central Europe between the Damascus and the Mortara cases with regard to rising Jewish responses within liberal and socialist circles. See the influence of the Mortara case in and beyond Italy in David Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1997).


\(^{651}\) Not coincidently this line in general and Fourier in particular will be the single most important influence in the Marxist development of the conception of barbarism. See 3.3.2.

\(^{652}\) Leon Blum took office under the banner of the socialist-communist-radical *Front populaire* in the same period that, on the other side of the border, Germany was approving the racial Nuremberg Laws. This was continued in the post-war era, when another Jewish politician of radical extraction, Pierre Mendes-France, became a socially active prime minister. He not only led the withdrawal from colonial locations (Indochina and the early Maghreb), but also held a heterodox position in the colony that divided French public discourse (Algeria). At the end, he also supported the student uprising of 1968 being an exception case among his peers. There is a variety of texts that cover this line of thought either as such or with focus to particular periods of the same. See a good general description in William B. Cohen and Irwin M. Wall “French Communism and the Jews” Frances Malino and Bernard Wassertein ed. *The Jews in Modern France* (Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press), 81-102 and complement with the reading of early participation in Graetz, *The Jews in the nineteenth century France*, 110-142.
the institutions (and presumable support for the liberal and radical trends) following their collaboration during the war, may be surprising. At the time, he had a rising role in the reconstruction of this community in high pedagogical positions. Nevertheless, reading *Ethics and Spirit* through the lens of his subsequent pan-Eastern project is illuminating. While recuperating from the Holocaust, the native Israelites who still directed the official institutions were confronting two ethnic collectives. The first was composed of the remnants of the Eastern Jewry that survived the genocide. They were discriminated against and forbidden full participation in the bourgeois Israeli society before the war. During the occupation they excelled in the resistance within both the Yiddish section of the Main-d’œuvre immigrée (MOI) of the Parti communiste français (PCF) and other small heterodox cells such as *L’Affiche Rouge* (AF) (symbol and model for some of the Jewish generation of 1968, such as the founders of the *Institut*). They were targeted by the occupation and the collaborationist regime as the latter privileged the safety of native Israelites above the foreign Jews. The second group consisted of the accommodated North African traditionalist Jews who were starting to flee from the soon-to-be independent Maghreb seeking their cultural motherland. Ten years later, the Maghrebian community comprised at least half of the entire French Jewry.

In this context, Lévinas blames *Western institutional Judaism* for the liberation of the prophetic spirit without anchor in the rabbinical sources. Lévinas holds the notable native French Jewry

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655 See the above mentioned influence in Auron, *Les juifs d’extrême-gauche en mai 68: une génération révolutionnaire marquée par la Shoah*, 145-162

656 See the particular fate of the foreign Jews (i.e. stateless German and Eastern Jews) in Susan Zucotti, *The Holocaust, the French, and the Jews* (New York: Basic Books, 1993). Even though all the work is relevant the first chapters follow the special path of destitution of alien Jews that helps to explain the cold reality of numbers. While representing less than half of the entire French population, alien Jews comprised the 80% of the total of deportees to the camps.

responsible for this neglect and exonerates both the Eastern immigrants of strong socialist persuasion and the merchant acculturated (albeit traditionalist) North African bourgeois pied-noir Jews. By identifying the source of modern Jewish limitation (i.e. the loss of the rabbinical) in the West, he aims to show Eastern immigrants how liberal and radical thinking arises from the very same Western Israelite institutionalism that had excluded them. Neither Republican liberalism nor Radicalism (whether Marxist-Leninist, Trotskyite, Stalinist, Guevarist, Maoist, anarchist or even existentialist), is a step forward but rather represents a return to the emancipated Western Israelite “bathed in Christianity.” It is not freedom but enslavement. The extent to which liberal and radical thinking still holds this amorphous Jewish spirit is Lévinas’ focus in the article.

At first Lévinas accepts that the above-mentioned liberals and radicals still carried the ethical message of Judaism. In this way, he acknowledges that they are the source of the creation of the universal through Jewish particularity confronting the Western World. In his own words, the activists “unwittingly joined the divine tradition of intransigent justice which expiates blasphemy in advance. With these rebels, Judaism, which had scarcely been absorbed into the surrounding world, already opposed it on one level.” Lévinas, however, follows this praise with a harsh critique. While carrying the ethical message they became “denigrators of [the] tradition.” Rejecting the sources and antagonizing the institutions in their struggle, this trend “found itself deprived of its own language. Having nothing but will, it turned to a borrowed system of thought to understand itself.” By borrowing an alternative system that was developed from Iona to Jena or extending it

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659 Lévinas, “Ethique et esprit”/“Ethics and Spirit,” 18/5.
660 Ibid., 18/6.
661 Ibid., 18/5-6.
from Parmenides to Heidegger (with a stop in Voltaire), they trapped themselves by the limits of Western thought.\(^{662}\)

As we have seen when discussing the role of the center and its extension in Marxism reproducing ontology, Western thought can be defined as the ego’s attempt to subsume the difference into the kingdom of the sameness. Both trends (The Western liberal and radical) attempted to make Judaism (which is actually the other represented by the ideal Eastern) the same through either liberal republican equality or socialist overcoming of class difference. This stands in direct opposition to the primacy of the defense of the right of the other that arises from the literary sources (Cohen) read in the eternal community (Rosenzweig) within the context of non-utopian sacred history (Lévinas).\(^{663}\) Therefore, while the spirit of either liberalism or liberation without the sources is being trapped by Western thought, making use of the sources in this context offers the possibility of interpreting sacred history and creates a disruption of the center. In this way, Lévinas follows Cohen and Rosenzweig finding in responsibility and not in liberation the center of his proposal. Despite the inability of history to judge humanity, the Western Israelite—regardless of his/her relationship to emancipatory, liberal republican or social radical trends—witnesses, along with the rest of the enlightened world that struggles for freedom, “the Hitlerian adventure, the fragility of their works.”\(^{664}\)

3.2.2. The Israelite & Barbarism

The Western Israelite seems to be responsible for reproducing the Occidental limitations incorporating the other into the same through either liberal or liberationist proposals. This is true from the liberal Alliance’s civilizing mission to the radical Marxist’s authentic emancipation and is the case

\(^{662}\) We have already seen the role of Iona to Jena in Rosenzweig (1.3.4.) and Parmenides to Heidegger in Lévinas (1.2.) The particular stop in Voltaire will be given a role to French discourse in the problem. We wil return to this in 4.4.

\(^{663}\) See 1.2., 1.3 and 2.2.

\(^{664}\) Lévinas, “Ethique et esprit”/”Ethics and Spirit,” 17/5.
within the context of not only the resistant to modernity “Catholicism of the South,” but also to the adaptable “Catholicism of the North” that is extended to pure “Protestantism.” This explains his/her limitation and failure. In this section, I will explain how Lévinas employs the term barbarism to confront the limitation and failure of these trends.

Let me depart this analysis exploring the accuracy of Lévinas’ reading. The historian may ask if this narrative of history, the Western cause for the failure of liberal and liberationist proposals, is accurate. In other words, he or she could challenge the placement of the responsibility for the loss of the sources and the adoption of a “foreign language” in the post-emancipatory French context (post-1791). A priori, the reading seems decontextualized. After all the influx of stateless German, Eastern and (increasingly) North African immigrants demonstrates in France the existence of emancipatory, liberal, and radical trends beyond and very different from this French origin. Even though Lévinas follows Cohen and Rosenzweig in the use of sociological ideal constructions, his historical reading, as I contended in the last chapter, is not completely historical revisionism. Even though a more complex explanation, which transcends a facile Western to Eastern trajectory, is needed to explain the unfolding of the liberal and radical trends, the origin of these trends in France is not counter-historical.

Let me start with the analysis of the liberal trends. Following the French Napoleonic invasion, liberal values (equality, liberty, and fraternity, along with security returning to the temptations of the last chapter) were brought to Central Europe. It is true that such factors as the restoration, the late unification of Germany, and the perpetuation of the multi-ethnic Austro-Hungarian Empire postponed the Jewish possibility of achieving legal and social assimilation. However, an extended line of liberal thinking divorced from the sources was going to emerge mostly

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in the second half of the nineteenth century along with (legally or socially) forced conversion.  
Therefore, we return to this post-Napoleonic context in which emancipatory, liberal (and even romantic nationalist!) strands of thought are to be found among Jews. This era following the defeat of Napoleon witnesses a long line of liberal thinking. Some examples include an ample reform movement, the appearance of a strong historicist movement in the *Wissenschaft des Judentum* (Science of Judaism), the creation of a branch of the Alliance, and the increasing inclusion of Jews in politics (finding its epicenter in the Weimar republic which constitution was drafted by one of these liberal Jews, Hugo Preuss). If the role of France was not prominent enough throughout the nineteenth century, let us not forget its role during the last decades of the century. It was during the development of the public debate over the Dreyfus Affair in Paris that an *Israelite-like Jew* (originally from the very royal Jewry of Hungary) elaborated political Zionism from Central Europe ignoring alternative socialisms of both East (i.e. Ahad Aham) and West (i.e. Bernard Lazare).  
Even though the extension of these enlightened liberal trends to the East was irregular because some of the less opened societies, we can demonstrate with the education of Lévinas himself in early twentieth century Talmudic Kovno, the existence of bourgeois-assimilated class with liberal values.  

Lévinas was attentive to the extension of the Israelite heritage in Central Europe and alerts of its dangers only a few years after *Ethics and Spirit* in his entry on Judaism for the *Encyclopedia Universalis*. Using one scholarly case as an example for the whole tradition, Lévinas understands that “the lucid work of the Science of Judaism, which reduces the miracles of the Revelation or the

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666 See the relevance and context in the emergence of the origins of the Haskala arising as a distinctive subculture in the late eighteenth and early twenty centuries in David Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry 1780-184* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 33-78 It may be important to point out that, from a Lévinasian perspective, neither Moses Mendelshon nor Salomon Maimon (both thinkers who preceded, by a few years, the development in German language), can be seen as completely belonging to this school as they were still supporting their work with Jewish sources.

667 See the second part of the work of Sorkin. Ibid., 107-171.

668 Even those scholars who emphasize Lévinas’ Talmudic surroundings during his childhood, they also assert that liberalism was his natural context of upbringing. One example is Marie-Anne Lescourret, *Emmanuel Lévinas*, 19-50.
national genius to a series of influences, loses its spiritual significance.” Reducing the text to a merely profane history limits the understanding that “the world denotes a set of significations based on which the shadows of the Divine is cast beyond all theology and dogmatics over the deserts of barbarity.” The use of the term barbarity is not coincidental but acknowledges Lévinas’ early concern for a historical reading that is only able to understand Judaism as a historical people within profane history. Judaism, the hesitant anti-royal prophet would say, became a people like any other people. In contraposition, Lévinas attempts to incorporate sacred history in the radicality of the un-emancipated Jewish tradition. Making an innovation in the Western conception of barbarism, he is going to acknowledge the barbaric character of Judaism twenty years after.

Yet, the idea of Judaism as a barbaric force was incipiently starting to appear then. The Science of Judaism aimed to bring Judaism into conversation with other (Western) peoples through its reduction to profane history. In other words, they made possible the incorporation of Judaism into the kingdom of the sameness. By contrast, Lévinas contends that the conservation of the particularity is what offers the possibility of a bond in correlation. According to him, in the same text, it is the reading of the sources of “the traumatic experience of my slavery in Egypt” that “constitutes my very humanity, a fact that immediately allies to the workers, the wretched, the persecuted peoples of the world.” The equality is not achieved within a Western community, but among those vanquished by the West, those wretched from the earth, an alternative community that is going to become in the early 1970s the barbaric and in the late 1980s the anti-imperial barbaric community of the brave ones. By replacing Judaism within sacred history, Lévinas not only rejects the assimilation of his people into the sameness, but also finds an alternative partner for Judaism unable to be understood

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669 Lévinas, “Judaisme” in Difficile liberté, 43. The translation can be found in “Judaism” in Difficult Freedom, 25.
671 See 3.2.
672 However, it was not going to be developed until his encounter with decolonial thinkers. For further elaboration, turn to the fourth chapter.
by liberalism. Liberal thinking is going to be discarded as a possibility. Liberalism will not be all what is needed.

Those who did understand this new solidity were the collective fighting for social struggle (i.e. the second school of Israelites). Let me analyze Lévinas’ reading of this second trend. While liberalism is attacked by Barbaric Hebraism, those who understand the above-mentioned alliance, the other trend of the denigrators of the tradition, are going to be attacked by Barbaric Civilization. This other trend of atheists and rebels was even more extended than the liberal throughout Central and Eastern Europe. In this case, the French influence is even more marked than before. The early incorporation of Jewish-born German intellectuals to the Saint-Simonians (such as Heinrich Heine) in the first part of the century led to the over-representation of philo-Franco Jews in utopian, unionist, and finally scientific socialism (Moses Hess, Ferdinand Lassalle, and Karl Marx respectively). Since then, Marxist left-Hegelianism was the rule. It included, for example, figures of the Socialist Democratic Party (Edouard Bernstein), the principal fighters for socialist republics bringing Eastern flavor by identity or sources of the struggle (Rosa Luxemburg and Gustav Landauer) and the major critics of bourgeois society before WWII (the first generation of the Frankfurt School spanning Max Horkheimer to Walter Benjamin).674

This line would be even more racialized when traveling East. To the emergence of a Jewish nationalism in the pre-Herzelian Zionist movement (Chovevei Tzion), we should add the Jewish socialist working party (Bund) and the over-representation of Jews in the leadership of the Bolshevik Revolution (from Lenin’s political operator Jacob Sverdlov to the leader of the Red army and failed successor Leon Trotsky among innumerable members even during the Stalinist period).675

Paradoxically or not the extension of the radical Jewry to the East resulted in the racialization of

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674 See the long-term specificity of radical German Jewry in the critical account of Robert Wistrich, _Socialism and the Jews_ (East Brunswick/Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1982), 15-172.
French Jewish socialism with the immigration from the East (either German refuges or Eastern European dispossessed) throughout the twentieth century. The radical Israelite divorced from the sources emerged in France during the emancipation and extended to Central and East Europe only to return to Paris as a boomerang in the first half of the twentieth century.

Using Marxism as exemplary of the entire tradition, Lévinas criticizes this movement as well. At first, he acknowledges the overlapping: “we recognize in Judaism, as in certain aspirations of the left, a defender of the human person.”676 In our last chapter, we demonstrated how Marxism attempts to reduce the other to the sameness. Lévinas completes his description, showing how a Marxist reduction of the Jewish problem to an “exclusively social cause” prevents the trend from understanding the specificity of Judaism and calls for its disappearance.677 Jews, according to Lévinas, “are more persecuted than the proletariat, which is exploited but not persecuted.”678 The non-economical description of Jewish suffering attempts to avoid the reduction of the Jewish people to an entity that will not have reason of being after the exploitation is overcame. The Jews are not an allergic reaction to persecution. It is not by coincidence that Sartre finishes his celebrated work calling for a socialist revolution.679 What makes Judaism different from the proletariat is that its pre-existence and the suffering caused was not for simple allergy but resulted from Jewish solidarity with the stranger.680 Lévinas, following this reflection, asks, “to what degree this revolution will be fatal to [a] Judaism [that] is at the service of older, more delicates values than those at the disposal of socialism.”681 Those Jews engaged in radical left politics forget that, returning to Ethics and Spirit, “the antiquity of the message, the existence of a Moses or an Isaiah, in an age when Greece still

677 Ibid., 43/114.
678 Ibid., 41/113.
680 See 2.3.
681 Ibid., 44/115.
wallowed in barbarism, set the imagination racing.” The problem is not the defense of the vanquished, but its identification and the procedure of the alliance. This old message (and with this, Lévinas follows Cohen and Rosenzweig) permits the full acknowledgment of the other in her specificity. And it is not a coincidence that once again barbarism makes its appearance in the critique. A priori the use of the term barbarism is simple to explain. Lévinas understands that when the center was barbaric, the Jew already had something to offer (the defense of the other without assimilationist social reduction).

However, we can ask, is it not still the case that conceptually the Hebrew can offer what is still a limitation for the Greek? For Cohen, the Jew was able to offer a religion of reason; for Rosenzweig, it was eternal life in community welcoming redemption; and, for Lévinas, he noted the sacred history that led to the disruption of the center. Therefore, Ethics and Spirit is a text that blurs contexts and is not only a historical reading but also a contemporary critique, as in Cohen’s Messianic vision, that points toward the future. The Western Israelite (now Marxist) still tries to incorporate the Jew into the sameness ignoring the sources, the Hebrew holds an ethical message from sacred history, and the Greek has always been barbaric in his attempts to violently incorporate the other into the sameness from Parmenides to Heidegger. In other words, the Greek is still submerged in civilizational barbarism and the Israelite Jew is tempted by it. The Jew/Hebrew, as we have seen, is not more tempted after the Holocaust. Returning to our last chapter, “every civilization that accepts being—with the tragic despair it contains and the crimes it justifies—merits the name ‘barbarian.’” The civilization that falls into ‘fetishism,’ into “mythology and bloody barbarity of the idols,” is the Greek or the West. Lévinas, in his last works, will identify it with Rome or America. Barbarism becomes a resource that shows not only the criminality of the empire, but also

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682 Lévinas, “Ethique et Esprit”/Ethics and Spirit,” 18/5.
683 See 2.2.1.
684 De l’Évasion/On Escape, 98/73.
685 Lévinas, Heures/Time, 8/xii.
the limitation of liberal and radical non-rabbinical Jewish confrontation with it. Neither the empire nor the protesters should be able to tempt Jews.686

3.2.3. Marxist Israelism

Exploring the problem of barbarism in a deeper way may bring, however, some surprises. The civilizational barbarism that Lévinas employs to differentiate himself from the second trend (the Israelite Marxist) has been, for more than one hundred and fifty years, a Jewish Marxist construction. Paradoxically or not, Lévinas is mobilizing the Israelite Marxist archives to demonstrate the inadequacy of (the extended) Israelite Marxism.687 Let me explain this apparently contradictory assertion. There is a long line of Marxist Jews who understood the need to confront liberal civilization by denouncing its barbaric cruelty. We will examine the textual evidence in the next section, but first I will take the opportunity to anticipate the conclusion. Surprisingly or not, Lévinas agrees with Marx that Rome is recreated in the modern fetishistic barbaric imperialism. Following the master, Rosa Luxemburg utilizes Jewish sacred history to choose socialism over barbarism, thereby identifying Jews within the victims. Heterodox as it is, Walter Benjamin also extends this line demonstrating how the documents of civilization are documents of barbarism as they were written with the blood of the vanquished (a necrology for Lévinas). In what will become a strong Lévinasian motif in the readings on barbarism of the last chapter, Benjamin asks to read history against the grain endeavoring to recuperate the forgotten (barbaric-to be in Lévinas) voices. Finally, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno understand that the problem of modernity exactly as Lévinas has, chiefly the assimilation of the difference by Western society and the barbaric eradication of its difference presenting the possibility for, for the Frankfurters, an atheistic use of Jewish sources.

686 See 2.2. 3.
687 I am fully aware that the term Israelite should be used in the French context. Yet this line of thought emerges from France, was extended beyond the territory, and was then returned to France as a major source of thought between the late nineteenth century and the post-war period. As such, I will take this liberty and call the line, ‘Israelite Marxist.’ In 3.3.1., the Deutscher-Lévinas symbiosis will further strengthen and clarify this usage.
Lévinas’ work discredits the Israelite Jews through a critique of Marxism. He accomplishes this through the adoption of a longstanding Jewish-Marxist position regarding the barbarism of civilization that involves the accusation against Roman cruelty, the use of sacred history, the place of Jews as victims, the identification of Western monuments by the unknown blood shed of those vanquished for its constructions, and the limitations of the promise of assimilation that led to annihilation of both Jews and Judaism. Hence, the questions that remain are, one, what is the relationship of Lévinas to this tradition of Marxist Jews and, two, how should the simultaneous critique of Israeliite Marxism and the adoption of a Marxist Jewish vocabulary be read? In the next sections, we will explore paths to answer these questions understanding that the use of the conception of barbarism acknowledges both the need to go beyond Marxism and the impossibility of the existence of a Jewish project of defense of the vanquished without an engagement with Israeliite Marxism. Lévinas’ 1969 comparison between Jewish Marxism and Jewish humanism was not a coincidence. Rather, it represents a central component for understanding both Lévinas’ sources and the reasons that made former Marxists feel comfortable within the Lévinasian project.

3.3. Marxist Civilizational Barbarism

3.3.1. Learning from the Marxist heretic non-Jewish Jew

Let me start by revising the relationship between the non-Jewish Jew and the Jewish Jew as a door to explore the relationship between Marxism and Lévinas. As America was expanding its influence in Western Europe during the early Cold War period, the World Jewish Congress was also in process of expansion through the sponsorship of Jewish cultural and intellectual activities in Western Europe. In Paris, the Congress began to sponsor the colloques in which Lévinas presented his Talmudic Lectures, and in London, they supported a Week of the Jewish book. In this context, Polish-born Isaac Deutscher presented his now widely-read lecture “the non-Jewish Jew,” published
in an anthology soon before the events of 1968 and translated immediately into French. The text and author would be widely cited by the members of the generation in general and by relevant Eastern (Magrhebi and Polish) actors of the revolt. The French welcoming of Deutscher’s work should be seen as part of a general debate in the post-war regarding Jewish identity that includes such figures as Jean-Paul Sartre, Richard Marinstreas, Albert Memmi, and Robert Misrahi. However, what the text offers is a pride of Jewish radicality instead of an alternative to an empty authenticity, a Zionism as the only path toward liberation or a returning to a decontextualized neo-bundism. Yet in limiting the discussion to the problem of Jewish identity, we may be loosing an important feature of the proposal.

Deutscher, a former Chaver Yeshiva and now critical Trotskyist, opens his article (perhaps contradicting Lévinas’ assertion of the relationship between Marxists and Jewish sources) with a midrash. It recounts a “story of Rabbi Meir, the great saint and sage, the pillar of Mosaic orthodoxy, and co-author of the Mishnah, who took lessons in theology from a heretic, Elisha ben Abiyuha called Akher (The Stranger).” The allegorical story occurs during Shabbat when ben Abiyuha was riding a donkey and Rabbi Meir, aware of the prohibition of riding on the sacred day, was walking by his side. When they reached the limit that is permitted to walk during Shabbat, the

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688 The original translation can be seen in Isaac Deutscher, Essais sur le problème juif (Paris: Payot, 1969) and the influence in the work of Bensaid, particularly in Auron, Les Juifs D’Extreme Gauche en Mai 68, 249 and in Lévy in Barbarism with a Human Face, 145.

689 For example, Daniel Bensaid was the only Maghrebi Jewish member of the Trotskyist Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR) politburo. This was integrated by ten Eastern (and stateless Germans) Jews, one non-Jew, and Bensaid. The ethnic composition of this body alone proves that a pan-Eastern Jewish communion is not a decontextualization in Lévinas.


691 Naturally, for Lévinas’ delight, there is no reference to the source of this Midrash indicating that a common practice in rabbinical circles (b’shem-hombro or the acknowledgment of the other’s words as a pre-condition of messianic redemption) is not followed.

692 Deutscher, “The non-Jewish Jew” in The non-Jewish Jew and other essays, 25
heretic told his student that it was time to part ways. While Rabbi Meir was advised to return to the Jewish community, the heretic went “beyond the boundaries of Jewry.”

A question is left in Deutscher’s writings: “why… did Rabbi Meir, that leading light of orthodoxy, take his lesson from the heretic?”

According to Deutscher, the long line of “heretic Jews” who “transcend Jewry belong to a Jewish tradition.”

Inviting the reader to join the reflection on heterodoxy, Deutscher writes, “you may, if you like, see Akher as a prototype of those great revolutionaries of modern thought: Spinoza, Heine, Marx, Rosa Luxemburg, [and] Trotsky.” They belong to a Jewish tradition comprehended in the Hebrew sources. Yet they capture (as Lévinas already pointed out) the spirit of some Jewish discourses without acknowledging their origin within the Hebrew. In the words of Lévinas (and betraying the historically located meaning of the term), they are Israelite Jews. According to them, the center is not the source but the message and the praxis of critical inquiry and human liberation that this message embodies.

Judaism, as it was presented to them, seems to be “too constrained or narrow” to serve as a basis of identity formation and social change. But, from then on, those Jews who remained within the limits of the Jewish tradition (i.e. the Rabbis Meir) understood the potentiality of the wisdom of the heretics. This, I will argue, could explain Lévinas’ adoption of an Israelite Marxist conception of barbarism to attack Western Christianity for its imperialism.

While Lévinas may be right that the conception of human liberation of the non-Jewish Jew is linked to the Western project of assimilation, it is also one of the first Jewish confrontations against imperialism. And, once again, the Rabbis Meir could have learned this stance from the multiple Akherim. This opposition was going to be extensively developed in an English text written in the

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693 Ibid., 26.
694 Ibid.
695 Ibid., 27.
696 Ibid., 26.
697 Ibid.

same year Lévinas was publishing his proposal on barbarism in *Otherwise than Being* (1974). In the *Ordeal of Civility*, John Cuddihy understands that the radicality of these heretics (at least in modernity) can be understood as a result of the *cultural shock* that they suffered due to the failure of their integration into Western society. The examples that Cuddihy takes as test-cases are going to be particularly interesting for us as he finds this behavior in a nineteenth-century Prussian-born Jew, an early twentieth-century Austrian Jew, and a post-war French Jew who was a contemporary and rival of Lévinas.\(^{698}\) This makes the natural connection between pre-war German and post-war French Jewish heretics clear, thus underscoring the previous link between the French Israelite and the German liberal Jew of the nineteenth century.\(^{699}\)

Why, according to Cuddihy, was there an over-representation of Jews in radical movements or ideas in those contexts (from Marx to Lévi-Strauss)? The phenomenon can be explained by the clash between “what Jews expected from emancipation and what Europe had promised its Jews.”\(^{700}\) According to the author, “civility” in the West arises where there is a “face to face” encounter between strangers in which the ritual “interchange of gifts” permit each one to acknowledge the other. While Jews expected “the ratification of Jewish emancipation in social emancipation, in face to face social contact with the Gentile, [it] never occurred.”\(^{701}\) Civility becomes a source of practical rejection to assimilation. Those intellectuals who attempted to cross the bridge and obtain recognition were trapped in between cultures: “unable to turn back, unable completely to acculturate, caught between ‘his own’ whom he had left behind and the Gentile ‘host culture’ where

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\(^{698}\) Lévinas’ critique of Lévi-Strauss will be developed in the next chapter based on “La Signification et le Sens” in *Humanisme de l’autre homme* (Paris: Fata Morgana, 1972).


\(^{700}\) Ibid., 3.

\(^{701}\) Ibid.
he felt ill at ease and alienated, intellectual Jews and Jewish intellectuals experienced cultural shame.”

It is in this context (now going beyond Cuddihy) that these Jews would develop an alternative conception of barbarism. Barbarism, according to these authors, would not be seen as a consequence of traditional peripheral under-development, but rather as a consequence of central modern development. Barbarism is civilization and not the culture of the other. In other words, they returned the accusation to the center as a mode of defense against the cultural shock. This heretical understanding of Judaism would be intimately associated with this revision of the term barbarism as a response to identity anxieties.

3.3.2. An Intellectual Genealogy

The construction of barbarism in the non-Jewish Jewish Marxist tradition (extended Israeliite if we follow our reading of Lévinas and akherim if we follow the heretic Deutscher) should be seen as the replacement of the accusation of barbarism into the center that was limiting Jewish integration. It is, as in Lévinas, a confrontation with the project of assimilation. In Lévinasian terms, the reconstruction of the concept of barbarism is a response to the limitations of the temptations of assimilation emerging from the Egos’ fear of responsibility and rejection of proximity. The non-Jewish Jew acknowledged the limitation of this assimilation and protested because of its inadequacy. This was a new temptation of protest. Lévinas, instead, rejected both temptations all together. But

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702 Ibid., 4. It is important to note that the problem I pointed out in the first section of the introduction was incipiently developed by Cuddihy.

703 It is of chief importance to notice that the agreement with Cuddihy does not extend itself beyond this point. According to the authors, these intellectuals knew “how Jews looked to goyim” (6) and engaged in a double task: “on the one hand, they have ‘designs’ on their Jewish audience, which they wish to change, enlighten or reform. But on the other, they constitute an elaborate effort of apologetics, addressed to the ‘Gentile of good will’ and designed to reinterpret, excuse or explain to him otherwise questionable public ‘look’ of emancipating Jews.” (4) In this context, the message toward the Jews was of shame: “Jews and Jewish intellectuals experienced cultural shame and awkwardness, guilt, and guilt of shame. The focus of his [sic] concern, often acknowledged, was the public behavior of his fellow Jews, the Ostjuden.” (4) What stands as the primary difference between the project of Barbaric Hebraism and the non-Jewish Jew, following the reading of Cuddihy, is the role of the other within the Jewish community. In other words, when many of the non-Jewish Jews, besides their contextual problems, despise the Eastern Jews as uncivilized, the project of barbaric Hebraism took the Eastern Jew as its ideal model.
for both schools, an alternative path to Western peoples is possible. Barbarism, according to the non-Jewish Jew and the first definition of Lévinas, is the replacement of the accusation of retrograde cruelty to the Western capitalist world.

The first author who would start to develop this concept was the founder of scientific socialism. Karl Marx, orphan from the Jewish sources that were employed by his ancestors (rabbinical authorities from both sides of his parents), would find in the ethnological work of Lewis Morgan and the utopian socialist proposal of Charles Fourier, his sources to start developing a radically new conception of barbarism. Morgan’s work was going to be particularly influential for the late Marx and the work of his long-time partner Frederick Engels. However, it is the Marxist line that follows the work of Fourier, which will interest us the most. It is not surprising that we find a French radical source for the development of an Israelite Jewish trend beyond France in a context in which the Israelite Jew was forced to formally leave Judaism. Let me briefly summarize Fourier’s proposal on barbarism in order to understand the continuities and discontinuities in Marx’s Jewish turn in the reinterpretation of barbarism.\textsuperscript{704}

In contrast to other authors such as Lewis Morgan who studied other non-Western societies looking for barbaric traces, Charles Fourier was among the first to suggest that the history of Europe itself could be seen as a result of barbarism.\textsuperscript{705} According to this utopian socialist, the history of the world is divided into seven stages according to a complex analysis of societal organization, sexual roles, and economic development. Barbarism is the fourth stage in the evolution of humankind (following Terrestrial Paradise, Savagery, and Patriarchate) and before Civilization (which is going to be replaced after a period of decadence by the ideal society). The characteristics of

\textsuperscript{704} Two articles were very helpful in tracing the development of the concept within the Marxist tradition even though I complemented their already superb effort with further research of primary sources; see Michael Lowy, “Modern Barbarism: notes on the fiftieth anniversaries of Auschwitz and Hiroshima” in \textit{Monthly Review} (September, 1995). n/a and John Bellamy Foster and Brett Clark,” Empire of Barbarism,” in \textit{Monthly Review} (December, 2004), 1-15. Both of them (and especially Brazilian-French sociologist of knowledge) can be understood as the guide and spirit of this chapter.

\textsuperscript{705} See Lewis Morgan, \textit{Ancient society; or, Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilization} (New York: Holt, 1877).
barbarism are large-scale conquest, domination of the leaders over the population, harsh sexual oppression, furious treatment of the enemy through enslavement, and the development of middle-size industry. The final development should be seen as the key turning point in the passage from barbarism to civilization. In this latter stage, industry develops on a larger scale escalating class conflict and colonialism even more than before.\footnote{Charles Fourier, \textit{Théorie des quatre mouvements et des destinées générales: Prospectus et annonce de la découverte} (Leipzig: s/n, 1808). Translated in \textit{The Theory of the Four Movements} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).}

In this context, according to Fourier, during the stage called civilization, “our ships circumnavigate the globe only to initiate Barbarians and Savages into our vices, our excesses, and our crimes…causing Civilization to retrograde toward barbarism.”\footnote{Ibid., 276/222.} Fourier laments the intensity of this colonial aggression toward these barbaric and savage populations. In this way, Fourier replaces cruelty into Western imperialism but still understands the other peoples as retrograde populations, as barbaric. The West is cruel and was barbaric but there is a separation between the cruelty of the center and the poor barbarism of the periphery. What is the position of Judaism in this debate? In Fourier the Jew is not a Herderian 	extit{Asiatic of Europe}, a Hegelian population \textit{sublated}, or part of a Kantian vacuous system of morality. The Jew is seen as \textit{advanced} to the extent that she shares with the British one of the most important features of civilization: commercial parasitism. Fourier, well before Werner Sombart, follows the conception of Jews as advanced and maintains a strong opposition to their emancipation because of the potential threat that such a parasitical commercial group could represent to the “civil structures.”\footnote{Ibid., 222-255/234-260.}

Marx’s conception of barbarism closely follows Fourier’s, but also offers a radical turning point for it. In the early propagandistic work, \textit{The Communist Manifesto} of 1848, Marx and Engels followed the utopian socialist denouncement of the new bourgeois society that, transforming the previous feudal stage, had “established new classes, new conditions of oppression… [and] simplified
class antagonism...into two great hostile camps."\textsuperscript{709} What made the bourgeois society grow was colonialism. More explicitly, it was "the discovery of America, the rounding of the Cape... The East Indian and Chinese markets...trade with the colonies, the increase in the means of exchange and in commodities generally, [that] gave commerce, navigation, and industry, and impulse never known before."\textsuperscript{710} Up to this point, Marx and Engels follow Fourier's conception of barbarism as a previous stage that finds its aggressive end in the colonial enterprise: "the bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilization."\textsuperscript{711}

Five years later, in his journalist writings on the British rule of India, Marx challenges the straightforward materialist-dialectical reading of history. He understands that the political conqueror can be culturally conquered: "Arabs, Turks, Tartars, Moguls, who had successively overrun India, soon became Hinduized, the barbarian conqueror being, by an eternal law of history, conquered themselves by the superior civilization of their subjects."\textsuperscript{712} Some may argue that this reading only applies when the colonized are materially and culturally superior to the colonizer. However, and now passing into the major late work of Marx (\textit{The Capital}), this same rule applies to Western civilization (Christianity and capitalism) becoming barbaric when conquering other peoples:

The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-sins, signalized the rosy dawn of the ear of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief phenomena of the primitive accumulation...the different moment of primitive accumulation distribute themselves now, more or less, in a chronological order, particularly over Spain, Portugal, Holland, France and England...[this is] brute force, e.g. the colonial system.... Force is the midway of every old society pregnant with a new one...of the Christian colonial system, M. Howitt, a man who makes a specialty of Christianity, says: "the

\textsuperscript{710} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{711} Ibid., 6/206.
\textsuperscript{712} Marx, "The Future Results of the British Rule in India", in \textit{Karl Marx on Colonialism and Modernization}, Shlomo Avineri ed. (Garden City: New York, 1968), 126.
barbarities and desperate outrages of the so-called Christian race throughout every region of the world, and upon every people they have been able to subdue, are not to be paralleled by those of any other race, however fierce, however untaught, and however reckless of mercy of shame, in any age of earth.”

The critique of political economy leads Marx in his later years to consider the actions perpetrated by Christian civilization to peripheral peoples instead of considering peripheral peoples themselves as barbaric. Extending this reading of the West as barbaric, Marx understands that the same level of barbarism can be seen in the metropolis, demonstrating how colonialism leads civilization to barbarism. In the *Economic and Philosophical manuscripts of 1844*, Marx protests against the “crudest modes (and instruments) of human labor” that were forgotten and reappear in capitalism. An example of this is “the tread-mill used by Roman slaves [that] has become the mode of production and mode of existence of many English workers.” This return to previous techniques is re-taken in the speech on *Wages* three years later in which he observes that the treadmill has reappeared “again within civilization. Barbarism reappears, but created in the lap of civilization itself and belonging to it; hence leprous barbarism, barbarism as leprosy of civilization.” Thanks to Marx’s contribution, we can see that Western society is intimately related to Rome in its paradoxical, barbaric character. Any relation to Lévinas’ conception of Rome as the wild beast is not a pure coincidence. Rabbi Meir may be learning once again from *Akheber*.

Before Marx, barbarians were the under-developed others. Now, it is a characteristic of the West. In this way, the only escape from the barbarism of the West is revolution:

The profound hypocrisy and barbarism of bourgeois civilization is unveiled before our eyes, turning from its home, where it assumes respectable forms, to the colonies, where it goes naked. They are the defenders of propriety, but did any revolutionary party ever originated

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715 Ibid., *Wages*, 322/74.
agrarian revolution like those in Bengal, Madras and Bombay? The bourgeois period of history has to create the material basis for a new world—when a great social revolution shall master.\footnote{Ibid., 336/86-7.}

While Marx, going beyond the utopian socialists, represents a radical turning point in the development of the concept of barbarism, the Jew seems a priori but only a priori to remain in the same place. In the context of the discussion over emancipation, the Jews are seen as an advanced, parasitic group of this modern civilization. The key writing, which develops Marx’s conception of Judaism, is his response to Bruno Bauer, titled \textit{On the Jewish Question}, drafted on his honeymoon just as he was to be assimilated into his new Protestant family. In the second part of the text, Marx understands that civilization/modernity/capitalism itself became Jewish: “The Jew has emancipated himself in a Jewish way not only by acquiring financial power but also because, without him, money has become a world power, and the practical Jewish spirit has become the practical spirit of Christian nations. The Jews have emancipated themselves insofar as the Christians have become Jews.”\footnote{Marx, “Zur Judenfrage” in \textit{Marx/Engels Gesamtausgabe} (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1982), 165. Translated in “On the Jewish Question” in \textit{Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society} Lloyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Guddat trans. and eds. (New York: Anchor Books, 1967), 244.} Modernity, according to Marx was the secularization of “the God of the Jews” who became “the God of the world. The bill of exchange is the Jew’s actual God.”\footnote{Ibid., 166/246.} Judaism is not assimilating itself but has assimilated modernity. Judaism “reaches its height with the perfection of civil society.”\footnote{Ibid., 167/247.} While “Christianity arose out of Judaism” in the past, in modernity, “it has again dissolved into Judaism.”\footnote{Ibid., 168/247.}

A careful reading of the first part, however, reveals a tension in Marx’s work. The founder of scientific socialism recommends Jews to understand that given the Christian theological framework of the state and that they should not pursue emancipation since “political emancipation is not
human emancipation.” In other words, they should recognize that “the state evangelizes” them when proposing this limited emancipation. The same Marx who in the next pages will denounce modernity as Jewish here understands the limitations of practical Jewish political emancipation and advises against accepting limitative emancipation. The tension here concerns assimilation. The Jew is both modern and pre-modern. However, she is never the “Shabbat Jew” or barbarian since the latter was already placed in the West. This is the origin of barbaric civilization divorced from barbaric Hebraism.

In conclusion, Marx represents a clear turn in the conceptions of Barbarism and the place of the Jew in comparison to the proposal of Fourier. On the one hand, the utopian socialist accuses the West of cruelty because of its actions over barbaric peoples. On the other hand, the scientific socialist is going to understand that this cruelty is what makes the center retrograde barbaric. This is a consequence of colonial occupation and is extended in the metropolis by the conditions of the proletarian. This empire is Rome, in both the metropolis and the colony. On the one hand, for Fourier, the Jew is a commercial parasite that should not be offered emancipation; on the other, there is, for Marx, a tension between the Jew as symbol of parasitic modernity and the Jew as limited by the liberal conception of assimilation.

In the next stage of the development of our concept within the heretical tradition, the problem of barbarism as a description of the West will rise to a central place. It is Rosa Luxemburg who makes the dichotomy *Socialism or Barbarism* one of the crucial components of Marxist theory. Luxemburg not only rediscovers, after more than half a century, the concept of barbarism in the tradition, but also finds a place for the Jews among the victims of this barbarism. The context of

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721 Ibid., 148/225.
722 Ibid., 150/227.
Luxemburg’s recovering of Marx’s conception of barbarism is her orthodox confrontation against the reformed leadership of the Social-Democrat party and the Second International.  

As we explained above, Marx started to revise his conception of barbarism through a reconceptualization of his philosophy of history. Following this example, Luxemburg, in her article “The Crisis in German Social Democracy,” criticizes the role of the party in revising the conception of history held by the Social Democrats. According to the latter, there is a determinate and inflexible path of history leading toward the final socialist stage. In distinction to this deterministic reading of historical materialism, Rosa Luxemburg explains that “socialism will not fall as manna from heaven.” Luxemburg finds in the party the responsibility to awaken consciousness (which will also cause her proposal to clash with the Leninist conception of vanguard). She urges the leadership of Social Democracy to engage in the “long chain of powerful struggles” which will make the proletariat “become instead of a powerless victim of history, its conscious guide.” In other words, as Luxemburg contends, what will engender socialism is not passivity in anticipation of class conflict, but rather the awakening of class-consciousness and subsequent class struggle.

If the current economic conditions do not necessarily lead to socialism, one could wonder where they are going to lead in the absence of class-consciousness. Her answer is clear: barbarism. According to Luxemburg, the “capitalist society faces a dilemma: either an advance to socialism or a reversion to barbarism.” Placing herself within a Marxist intellectual trajectory, she asks, “what does a ‘reversion to barbarism’ mean at the present stage of European Civilization?” Barbarism means the regressive destruction of culture that we find in imperial Europe: “at this moment, once glance around us will show what reversion to barbarism is bourgeoisie society…the triumph of

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725 Ibid., 30/333.
726 Ibid., 31/334.
727 Ibid.
imperialism leads to the destruction of culture...if the period of world wars which has just begun is allow[ed] to take its course to its logical end.”

Therefore, socialist forces should confront the situation and make a decision. They will wait for socialism to come and suffer “the triumph of imperialism and the destruction of all culture,” or they will acknowledge the situation and fight for “the victory of socialism, that is, the conscious struggle of the international proletariat.”

More than two years later, and shortly before being murdered by the forces that were starting to annihilate culture and create the “eruption of barbarism” in Europe, Luxemburg energetically demanded a choice between Socialism and Barbarism. As such, she made clear that “the future of culture and humanity depends on whether the proletariat throws the sword of revolutionary struggle.”

This struggle for socialism is, according to Luxemburg, what a thinker such as Lévinas would even call sacred history. Citing Marx’s work, Class Struggle in France (another Israelite link for the German non-Jewish Jew), Luxemburg writes, “[t]he present generation is like the Jews who are led by Moses through the wilderness. Not only must it conquer a new world; it must go under to make way for those who are equal to a new world…. We are truly like the Jews whom Moses led through the desert…we are not lost.”

Citing Marx, the Jews become the anti-barbaric model in Luxemburg. Unfortunately, the same model is not utilized with respect to contemporary Jews. In a letter written in parallel to the article, Luxemburg protests to a Jewish friend: “Why do you come with your particular Jewish sorrows? I feel equally close to the wretched victims of the rubber plantations in Putumayo, or the Negroes in Africa…I have no separate corner in my heart for the ghetto: I feel at home in the entire world wherever there are clouds and birds and human tears.”

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728 Ibid., 32/335.
729 Ibid., 31/334.
730 Ibid.
731 Ibid., 34/335.
How should the position of Luxemburg in the development of the conception of barbarism be understood? In the first place, she follows Marx in understanding the inherent regressive barbarism of capitalist imperialism. At the same time, she goes beyond the founding father, making the alternative between barbarism and socialism the central aspect of her proposal. In the same text, and now naturally connected, the Jew appears as a model for liberation (so conceived by reference to an obscure quote by Marx). This can be read as the adoption of a Hegelian model which limits the entire Jewish contribution to antiquity. Nevertheless, it also can be read as the model to engage a socialist history based on Jewish (non-utopian!) sacred history. This final reading is complemented by the last quote. Even though it is usually understood as Luxemburg’s complete disassociation from Judaism, this is not the case when seen through the lens of the development of the concept of barbarism through the non-Jewish Jews. Luxemburg is placing the sorrows for the ghetto next to the human tears of other oppressed groups. Jews went from representing civilization in Fourier to becoming both pre-modern and modern in Marx, to being just another victim of barbarism for Luxemburg. Jews are not seen within barbaric civilization but among the sufferers who, though not necessary integral parts of the proletariat, are wretched victims of capitalist barbarism. Judaism is, historically, the model, and now part of the oppressed who should take consciousness of the need of their liberation.

We find the third stage of the development of the concept of barbarism, in terms of the non-Jewish Jew, in the collaborative work of those engaged in the Frankfurt School. Even though they have developed conceptions of barbarism throughout all their work, I am going to focus most on those texts that were written during the last years of the Second War World, in the fragile French, or safe American, exile.733

733 In this section, my primary focus is on Walter Benjamin and Max Horkeimer/Theodor Adorno. However, several of the Frankfurters have developed the problem of civility and barbarism, most notably, Norbert Elias, The Civilizing Process (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).
The first of the texts I introduce is perhaps the most over-cited text of Walter Benjamin in the American academy, one that is rarely appreciated in its context and seldom viewed as a continuation of Luxemburg’s critique. The text is found in thesis number seven of the essay known as “The Concept of History” or “Theses in the Philosophy of History.” Following Luxemburg, Benjamin presents the problem of civilizational barbarism in the revision of his Marxist philosophy of history. While the temperamental Luxemburg accuses Social Democrats of expecting *mana from heaven*, the ironic Benjamin criticizes the pretension of the “puppet called ‘historical materialism’” that wins a priori. Indeed, Benjamin associates this critique with the ideas of the (Luxemburgist) “Spartacist Group” which “have been objectionable to Social Democrats.” Benjamin’s introduction of barbarism goes beyond this critique of social-democratic triumphal inertia. He rejects all historicist approaches (not just the Marxist) since they inevitably “sympathize with the victors.” Reading history as a succession of events, achieving the final goal makes “all [the] rulers…the heirs of those who conquered before them.” In his anti-historicist approach, Benjamin centralizes his critique in his notion of dialectical materialism. He reflects that the “empathy with the victor invariably benefits the rulers. Historical materialists know what that means. Whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate.”

Marx already demonstrated the connection between Christian civilization and cruel barbarism. Luxemburg asserts that if barbarism arises with its culture, this automatically represents the destruction of any liberationist culture. Benjamin, writing by the end of the Second War World, takes the existence of a barbaric civilizing culture for granted. Following this reading of history,

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735 Ibid., 257/263.
736 Ibid., 254/260.
737 Ibid., 252/256.
738 Ibid.
739 Ibid.
Benjamin understands that according to “traditional practice” or “historicism,” “the spoils are carried along in the procession” of the conquerors…. They are called cultural treasures.\textsuperscript{740} Benjamin alerts that these ‘cultural treasures’ “owe their existence not only to the efforts of the great minds and talents who have created them, but also to the anonymous toil of their contemporaries.”\textsuperscript{741} In other words, what is considered civilization has only been built upon the work of the anonymously vanquished. It is in this context, and in permanent conversation with a Marxist philosophy of history, that he declares:

\textit{[T]here is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another. A historical materialist therefore dissociates himself from it as far as possible. He regards it as his task to brush history against the grain.}\textsuperscript{742}

In this portion of the text, Benjamin offers two conceptions that would prove to be deeply influential in post-war intellectual debates. First, the documents of civilization cannot be composed without the cruelty of the barbaric civilization. Second, if we seek an alternative, we will need to read history against the grain. By doing so, and thereby discovering the forgotten sources of the vanquished that are not understood as documents, is where Benjamin is going to find a place for Judaism. These two elements (i.e. the cruelty of the center that forgets the vanquished who help construct the monuments and the need of discovering the sources of the vanquished) can be seen not only as closely related to Lévinas’ proposal but also firmly within a Marxist line of reasoning. Marx conceptualized Jews as both prototypes of modernity and also as modernity’s victims. Luxemburg understood Jews as both victims (among other victims) and as representing a historically

\textsuperscript{740} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{741} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{742} Ibid.
situated model for liberation. Benjamin is going to follow his proposal to read history against the grain as he formulates his understanding of Judaism.

Benjamin finishes his essay, mentioning Jews for the first and only time in the text. Against the procession of documents of civilization/barbarism, there is an alternative heritage that those vanquished pose: “like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a weak Messianic power to which the past has a claim.” Jews, according to Benjamin, “were prohibited from investigating the future. The Torah prayers instruct them in remembrance however.” A new, alternative philosophy of history emerges. This philosophy of history, in contrast to the illuminist ones, does not intend to create a Messianic future of “homogenous, empty time.” Benjamin writes that there is no preparation for the future since “for every second of time was the strait gate through which the Messiah might enter.” This Messianism is the alternative to the triumphal march of history.

Benjamin continues the work of Luxemburg and he finishes by equating barbarism and civilization, understanding that all cultural products are products of the above-mentioned dichotomy and also finding in the vanquished Jew the alternative. The radical difference of the Jew is going to be found in what Lévinas calls the height of dispossession and Marx terms the struggle that follows the consciousness (i.e. that there is nothing to lose but ones’ chains). In Benjamin, there is a return to lost Jewish conceptions struggling for a place within the contradictions and limitations of dialectical materialism and the struggle for class-consciousness.

If in Benjamin’s work Judaism is seen as the alternative to civilizational barbarism, in Horkheimer and Adorno’s texts the Jewish experience is the prism through which it is possible to

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743 Ibid., 252/254.
744 Ibid., 261/264.
745 Ibid.
746 Ibid.
747 The conceptual overlap between the contemporaries, Benjamin and Rosenzweig, cannot be seen as a pure coincidence.
reflect on the reversion to this barbarism. *Dialect of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, was written “from America” where the critical theorists were in exile and “the book is shaped by the social conditions in which it was written.” The role of barbarism in the argument is central from the early pages of the work. The critical theorists attempt “nothing less than to explain why humanity, instead of entering a truly human state, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism.” While the first chapter of the work (“The Concept of the Enlightenment”) aims to uncover the conditions that this new barbarism follows, the fifth section (entitled “Elements of Anti-Semitism: Limits of Enlightenment”) “engages with the reversion of enlightened civilization to barbarism in reality.”

In other words, while the first chapter traces the development of scientific and social thought, and how it betrayed the “project of liberation” and sank “into barbarism,” the fourth explains, through the Jewish case, how this “barbaric irrationalism” took place in history. Jewish history, therefore, becomes the test case to prove the limitations of the Enlightenment.

According to Horkheimer and Adorno, modernity promised liberation. To rephrase, and to being developing the aforementioned first essay of the work, a priori “the Enlightenment’s program was the disenchantment of the world.” The project’s aim was to acquire the necessary knowledge to avoid any dependence on external forces to “establish man as the master of nature.” However, this quest for knowledge was also one for possession, “which is power, [and] knows no limits.” In the attempt to gain control over all nature, it reduced everything to a formula and excluded what was not calculable. In other words, it “amputates the incommensurable,” what cannot be reduced to

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748 Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialect of Enlightenment*, xii-xiii (this is the preface to the English edition and not a translation).
749 Ibid., 11/xix.
750 Ibid.
751 Ibid.
753 Ibid.
754 Ibid., 14/2.
755 Ibid., 17-18/5-6.
unity.\textsuperscript{756} Or, in a more hybrid explanation between Horkheimer/Adorno and Lévinas, after the process of assimilation of the alterity to the same (i.e. the attempt to secure ownership of the otherness), it found necessary to discard what was not identical, what resisted to be incorporated into the totality.

“Bourgeois society, the product of modernity, is ruled by equivalence” and what was not possible to reduce to an equation (to be included into the system of totality) is first looked with “suspicion” and later “exterminated.”\textsuperscript{757} The reproduction of the system is guided by the possibility of possession, the reduction of everything to countability and the simultaneous domination of the known and exclusion of the foreign.\textsuperscript{758} The myth of modernity—the promise of permanent progress and equality of people—is based on this structure of assimilation and exclusion of these foreign elements. In conclusion, and “paradoxically” what attempted to be the disenchantment, became not only a new enchantment but also a “fraud.” This fraud leaves the “rational organization in the hands of the utterly enlightened” the civilized capitalist “as they steer society toward barbarism.”\textsuperscript{759}

A rationalization that permits the repression and the regression to barbarism will be the context in which Horkheimer and Adorno will explore their contextual threat, that of fascism. They follow and extend an orthodox Marxist interpretation: fascism as the logical extension of the barbarities of the Christian race, capitalist liberalism, or enlightened values. In their own words:

Enlightenment throughout the liberalistic period has always sympathized with social coercion…. The horde a term which doubtless is t be found the Hitler Youth Organization, is not a \textit{relapse into the old barbarism} but the triumph of repressive egalité, the degeneration of the equality of rights into the wrong inflicted by equals. The fake myth of fascism reveals itself... blind to its victims...that has been the trajectory of European civilization.\textsuperscript{760}

\textsuperscript{756} Ibid., 21/9.
\textsuperscript{757} Ibid., 16/4.
\textsuperscript{758} Ibid., 20-21/8-9.
\textsuperscript{759} Ibid., 27/15.
\textsuperscript{760} Ibid., 21/9.
Once again, as in Marx, the European Christian and National-Socialist civilization will be seen as committing barbaric outrages that are an integral part of its development. The Jews are mentioned once and again throughout the diverse essays but they found their center in the fifth (Elements of anti-Semitism: Limits of the Enlightenment).\footnote{Horkheimer and Adorno, “Elemente des Antisemitismus”/“Elements of Anti-Semitism” in Dialektik/Dialectic, 199-244/137-172. The other works consulted are Horkheimer “The Jews and Europe” in Eduardo Mendienta ed., The Frankfurt School on Religion (New York: Routledge, 2005), 225-241 and Adorno, Authoritarian Personality (New York: Harper, 1950).} In the essay, they follow their analysis of National-Socialist ideology to explore the limits of the barbaric European civilization. The Jew, in this context, becomes as in Marx, the witness and suffered subject of the Enlightenment’s limits. This was written, as they explicitly mention, by the context of not only the Holocaust but also, in America, by the bipolar, racial society that the US government will reinforce after the war with the incorporation of Jews into the white and Western model.\footnote{See Brodkin, How Jews became White Folks and What that Says about Race in America.} Fully aware of the racial problem in the US, the critical theorists write:

> Race today is the self-assertion of the bourgeoisie individual, integrated into the barbaric collective. The harmonious society to which the liberal Jews declared their allegiance has finally granted to them in the form of a national community. They believed that only anti-Semitism disfigured this order, which in reality cannot exist without disfiguring human beings. The persecution of the Jews, like any persecution, cannot be separated from that order.\footnote{Horkheimer and Adorno, “Elemente des Antisemitismus”/“Elements of Anti-Semitism,” in Dialektik/Dialectic, 201/139.}

The European internal racialization, however, is weighted differently according to its context. Jews and only Jews become the witness case for the racialization that makes possible the reification of the system. Horkheimer and Adorno contend that according to fascism “the blacks must be kept in their place, but the Jews wiped from the face of earth...in the image of the Jew which the racial nationalist holds up before the world they express their own essence.”\footnote{Ibid., 199/137.} In other words, it is “in the
face of the Jews,” and only in their face, that “the harmony of the nation is established.” The conceptual overlap with Lévinas is clear; it is not only that the center of modernity is the barbaric assimilation of the otherness but also that the Jews become the witness case to understand the limits of the barbaric Enlightenment. Yet far from being a novel idea, Horkheimer and Adorno are just following a line in Marxist theory. As contemporaries of Benjamin, they will also identify with the first commandments (the prohibition of making images and pronouncing the name) as an alternative against the totalitarian fascism to come. Their use of Jewish sources will not achieve Benjamin’s level of engagement, but the centrality of the Jew to describe the limits of Western civilization is one of the more important contributions of Horkheimer and Adorno. The latter will even achieve the point in which Jewish experience means a turning point for human creativity: “writing poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric.”

3.3.3. Elective Affinity: A pan-Jewish response to modernity

In the first part of the last chapter, I showed Lévinas’ critique of Western thinking (the temptations) can be easily related to a Marxist critique to capitalism. Now, the concept of barbarism permits us to further extend this relation. Marx’s attack against the egotistic and fetishistic cruelty of barbaric Rome in its project of primitive accumulation can be seen in parallel with Lévinas’ accusation of the wild fetishistic barbaric Rome that made a cult of the liberty of accumulation. Congruously, both Lévinas and Luxemburg make use of Jewish sacred history that identifies the Jewish people as a victim in order to confront the regression of the West into barbarism. In the third place, Benjamin believes that any document of civilization is a document of the barbarism

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765 Ibid., 214/152.
767 Lévinas, A l’heure des nations/The Hour of the Nations, 9/1. Further explored in 2.2.2.
768 Lévinas, “Au-delà souvenir” in A l’heure des nations, 94. Translated in “Beyond Memory” in The Hour of the Nations, 81. Further explored in 2.2.3.6.
perpetrated by the oppressive power and Lévinas understands that Western history is a eulogy and necrology unable to relate to those who built, with blood and suffering, the institutions of the West. Furthermore, when Benjamin calls for a reading of history against the grain in order to recuperate erased and silenced voices, Lévinas asks to include barbarism into the language of philosophy reclaiming the disruption of the center from these sources. In either case, both are Jewish readings. Finally, Horkheimer and Adorno coincide with Lévinas in understanding that the central problem of the West is the process of assimilation and the analysis of Jewish extreme racialization and the recovering of Jewish sources demonstrates Western limitations. This relation is especially sensitive when these last three thinkers, all close to the Second War World, were able to start developing an interest in Jewish sources which still remained within the limits of Israelite Marxism.

While the Judaism of the non-Jewish Jews seems to be an explicit alternative to the barbarism of the Western World, the recuperation of the sources adds a new turn to the struggle. It would be erroneous, however, to read the recovery of Benjamin and (to a lesser extent) Adorno/Horkheimer as exceptions within the tradition of radical Jews. The Jews writing in late 1940s were exemplary of rather than exceptions to this particular trend of radical Judaism of Central Europe. Writing in Paris, and as a contemporary of Lévinas, the Brazilian sociologist of knowledge, Michael Lowy, in his work *Redemption et Utopie: Le judaïsme libertaire en Europe centrale*, contends that there was a hidden elective affinity in a group of radical intelligentsia including Jews from the turn of the century to the rise of National Socialism. Having briefly commented on his work in the introduction to this dissertation, I will expand those initial remarks. Lowy’s primary question is “what could there be in common between Jewish Messianism and twentieth-century libertarian

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769 Lévinas, *Autrement qu’être /Otherwise than Being*, 273/178. Further explored in 2.2.3.4.
770 Lévinas, “La tentation de la tentation”/“Temptation of Temptations,” 76/34. Further explored in 2.2.2.
771 Lowy, *Redemption and Utopia: Jewish Libertarian thought in Central Europe. A Study in Elective Affinity*. This was already a central part in our methodological discussion. See point f. of the introduction.
utopias”?

By examining the existence of two contradictory tendencies in Jewish Messianism—restorative and utopian—Lowy argues that there is an elective affinity between the biblical/rabbinical understanding of the ‘polysemic’ term *Tikkun Olam* and the libertarian tendencies of these Jewish thinkers. In other words, Lowy attempts to trace “a subterranean network of correspondences” between Jewish religious Messianism and the revolutionary proposals that “aspired to a radically other world, to the kingdom of God on earth, to a kingdom of the spirit, a kingdom of freedom, a kingdom of peace. An egalitarian community, libertarian socialism, anti-authoritarian rebellion and a permanent revolution of the spirit.”

What is particularly compelling in Lowy’s argument is the possibility of merging what he calls “two poles” of the same process. According to Lowy, those “religious Jews with anarchist tendencies,” “the assimilated libertarian,” and also those who cross the boundaries of the schools, should be read together. Among them Lowy includes the figures of the contemporaries Rosenzweig and Benjamin. The author contends that these trends are not necessarily contradictory. In this particular moment, in which the quantity of Jews in the academic environment made the rise of a Jewish intelligentsia possible for the first time, the latter rebelled against the civility of their surrounding “bourgeois world.” In this context, “as for the others, the majority of Jewish intellectuals of German cultural background, only two solutions were possible within the framework of neo-romanticism: either a return to their own historical roots, to their own cultural or ancestral religion; or adherence to a universal romantic utopia.” While some of these Jews took only one of these paths, others traveled both at the same time. Both poles, in this context, were the result of not only the same critique but also the same source of construction without differentiating between

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72 Ibid., 14.
73 Ibid., 2-3. It is no coincidence that Auron, probably the most solid author in the analysis of the Jewish identity of the 1968 generation, understands that the banner of ‘tikkun olam’ was very sensitive to the generation. Indeed, a brief English summary of his work is entitled: *Tikkun Olam: the phenomenon of the Jewish radicals in France during the 1960s and ’70s* (Jerusalem: Institute of the World Jewish Congress, 2000).
74 Ibid., 34.
‘Jewish Jews’ and ‘non-Jewish Jews.’ In other words, Rosenzweig, Lukacs and Benjamin—the Jewish Jew, the non-Jewish Jew and the Messianic unclassifiable Marxist—are integral parts of the same project of the rejection of bourgeois civility and the quest for a liberated world in responsibility for the other. The completion of Lowy’s work coincides with the rise of National Socialism. But the passing of a few years will demonstrate the return of some of these Jews to the alternative of the barbarism of civilization. The critique of the destruction of the un-assimilable is the direct consequence of the permanent quest for assimilation.

Current scholarship takes for granted that some of the 1968 activists (Maoist, Trotskyist, and anarchist) turned to the Lithuanian Talmudic legacy led by Emmanuel Lévinas looking for a post-Holocaust identity after the failure of the radical liberationist project. However, the conceptual connections between Marxist non-Jewish Jews and the Jewish Jews are found before the Holocaust in Weimar Germany. The question is to what extent the conversation among Lévinas, Lévy, Finkielkraut, and BHL reproduces this pre-war affinity. In other words, I am asking whether or not this search for Jewish sources, and the defense of the vanquished, is an overlapping amongst Jewish radical trends that the Holocaust was unable to break. I contend that we can interpret Lévinas’ adoption of Marxist civilizational barbarism and the subsequent absorption of ex-Marxist Jews as an integral part of this affinity. It is true, one may argue, that there are radical conceptual differences between Lévinas and Marxism. Lévinas still holds clear disagreements with those Jews who, still persuaded by a Hegelian philosophy of history, see Judaism as “a movement of ideas incorporated (perhaps) into Christianity, ‘suppressed’ and ‘preserved’.” In other words, he might have a different perspective of those whose perspective of the world does not acknowledge the correlation

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775 This is the general thesis that can be seen in the two outstanding works consulted throughout this chapter, those of Auron and Friedlander.

between center and periphery and attempts to incorporate the other into the same. Even though it is true that closer to the war, Jews were able to confront, still within left-wing Hegelianism this limitation, is possible to read this problem as endemic obstacle of Marxism. But far from disrupting the general affinity, this may be the reason to explain the limitation in the heir’s adoption of Lévinas’ program: “while they [the post-1968 Jewish radicals now Lévinasians] acknowledge their debt to Lévinas, the philosopher’s students rarely adopt their mentor’s complete program.” The heritage of Lévinas may help us to reflect on the limitations of this relationship between the Lithuanian-French philosopher and Marxism.

3.4 Civilizational Barbarism and the Rising Elective Affinities

3.4.1. From Israelite to Jew

In this section, I show that Lévinas’ use of civilizational barbarism was developed in conversation with a generation of radical Jews nourished by this Marxist anti-imperial and anti-capitalistic conception of barbarism. The introduction of Lévinas to the problem should not be traced just in his personal readings of Marxism, but in the extension of the use of the term barbarism in the radical Jewish, Eastern intellectual milieu of post-war France. It is in this context that the ex-Marxist founders of the institute are going to reframe the conception of barbarism following Lévinas but will remain trapped by the limits of the Marxist conception of the term. As a consequence, the self-appointed heirs of Lévinas fail to escape their own past and reincorporate barbarism as an option for an exterior Judaism. In Lévinas’ words, they stopped in the way between a Marxist and a Jewish revolutionary humanism.

In this first part of the section, I will draw a picture of the post-war radical Jewry and in the next show how, in this context, the term barbarism was recovered. For a long time, interpretations

77 It is clear that Lévinas is aware of the writings of different Marxist trends in general and he is, in some of his texts, particularly attentive to the work of Ernst Bloch. However, I insist that it is the social acceptance of the Marxist definition of the term more than Lévinas’ specific Marxist readings what led him to adopt the concept.
of Lévinas and the contextual have held a common denominator. All of them quote Lévinas’ essay, *Signature*, in which the philosopher acknowledges that his post post-1945 life and work were “dominated by the presentiment and the memory of the Nazi horror.” What some of these interpreters omit is that Lévinas was not the only one living under the pressure of this memory. Post-war Paris as a whole (Lévinas included) was dominated by the memory of Nazi occupation and, not long after, deportations and genocide. Even after twenty years, in May 1968, it is easy to recognize the immense role that the Holocaust played in public debate. For example, those supporters of the revolt elaborated a new sense of identity through the slogan that Lévinas criticizes in his aforementioned Talmudic reading of 1969. Under the banner “We are all German Jews” they made a clear connection between the now-exiled leader of the rebellion (Daniel Cohn-Bendit, of German-Jewish descent and born stateless) and the luck of German Jews during the war. This relevance of the Holocaust in public debate also explains the slogans of reactionary groups such as *Occident* that coined the slogan “Cohn-Bendit to Dachau.” This permanent memory was even followed by the police’s anti-Semitic remarks and the student’s counter-attack identifying the repressive forces with the German elite troops (“CRS-SS!”). This confrontation made possible the student’s identification with the counter-memory of the occupation, hitherto held by the resistance. This in turn gave rise a new radical Jew who, through an identification with the heretic Jew, will recover the term barbarism in post-war France.

The late 1960s witness the rise of a militant Jew who defined him/herself through his/her political activism. According to sociological studies, the rise of a militant Jew seems to appear in 1967. These studies identify the Six Days War following the change of French foreign policy to a “pro-Arab” stance as the events which prompted Jews to engage in politics, either supporting the State of Israel or defending the Palestinians, *the Jews of the time*. These analysts understand that during

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that process the Israelite radicals became Jews identifying their struggle with Judaism.\textsuperscript{781} I would further suggest, however, that there is a line of radical Jew who blurs this distinction between Israelite and Jewish. The Jewish resistance, whose memory was carried until 1968, features a Jew that is not classifiable as just an Israelite. There was anti-barbaric (i.e. anti-imperial) project of those destitute Jews (including Eastern Jews and stateless German Jews) that made the struggle for Judaism and socialism an identifiably Jewish project from the times of the resistance to the late 1960s.\textsuperscript{782}

During the time Lévinas was writing \textit{Ethics and Spirit} in the early 1950s, the militant Jew was not defined (despite the sociological studies) according to his position regarding Israel, but rather according to his post-war political stance. If any group enjoyed some prestige in the years following the defeat of the occupation, it was the resistance against fascism. This is illustrated by the political persuasion of the members composing the first post-war assembly, almost three quarters of whom were part of the resistance or were POWS.\textsuperscript{783} Even though this Jewish participation in the resistance is too diverse to be easily classifiable, it can be seen as existing within two poles. Defining one extreme was a minority, consisting mostly of natives and republicans, who followed the national republican crusade of Charles De Gaulle and founded organizations such as the OJC. One the other side was a majority of Eastern Jews who struggled within, or related to, the PCF in such organizations as the Yiddish section of the already mentioned MOI along with other multiple cells. It is not surprising that the same trends that Lévinas explores in nineteenth-century France (the liberal republican and the Marxist radical) are present when he is writing \textit{Ethics and Spirit}. To argue that Lévinas is reflecting on the nineteenth century to cover a more provocative critique of post-war Jewry may be too adventurous. But by tracing the existence of the same trends in the nineteenth and

\textsuperscript{782} Ibid., 72.
\textsuperscript{783} Paul Clay Sourm, \textit{Intellectuals and Decolonization in France} (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 1977), 36.
twentieth century suggests that Lévinas is not only writing a historical reflection but also a contextual critique.784

These two factions (the liberal and the radical) were going to dispute the model of disporic institutional Judaism to come before the 1967 debate over Zionism and the 1968 debate concerning revolution. The emancipatory-liberal trend founded the Conseil Representatif des Juifs de France (CRIF) during the war. This was an attempt to gather most of the existing Jewish institutions under one umbrella. After the Holocaust, this institution was starting to redefine Jewish relations vis-à-vis institutional Judaism. After a few problematic early years it was able to start “the transition from Jewish Frenchman (Francaise Israelite) to the French Jew (Juif francais) of plural identity” modifying its by-laws “in [the] early 1950s to make it incumbent upon the organization to work on behalf of the Jewish people as well as in defense of other political causes not falling under its direct authority, which led to the alienation of Jewish communists.”785 By excluding communist Jews, they excluded most of the anti-barbaric Jewish resistance against the occupation.

In opposition, the Jewish communists extended their prestige reframing their organizations and extending their founding myths. They carried this enterprise not only against the CRIF but also in open defiance against the PCF that never recognized the foreign element in the struggle against the occupation. In opposition to the Jewish liberal centers, they founded organizations such as the Mouvement Contre le Racisme et l’Antisémitisme et pour le Paix (MRAP) which replaced the Communist Mouvement National contre le Racisme (MNCR). This can be seen as an attempt to identify the Jewish struggle as an integral part of their agendas.786 They also disagreed with the policies of the orthodox and still Stalinist Communist Party’s resistance myths. These were to become deeply influential in

784 To see historiographical problems of how to consider Jewish resistance and the magnitude of the latter refer to Lucien Lazare, Rescue as Resistance. How Jewish Organizations Fought the Holocaust in France (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).
786 See Auron, Les juifs d’extrême-gauche en mai 68, 150-156.
the children who survived the Holocaust who would rebel against the republic just a few years later in 1968. One of these examples was the model of resistance offered by *L’Affiche Rouge*, one of the first underground organizations to combat the occupation in Paris itself despite the directives of the Communist Party. Their members, imprisoned in 1944, were identified as a terrorist group by the occupation authorities. More than half of their members were Jewish and one of its most celebrated members and symbol, Marcel Rayman, declared in front of the German judges in Paris during his trial: “As a Jew I saw no other way except to take arms and fight against you.” As is obvious, Rayman’s identification of his struggle with Judaism confronts the Israelite nature of the radicals Jews struggling in the resistance. He will be identified by a (controversial) member of the 1968 generation (who extended his revolutionary impetus to the struggle in North Africa and Latin America rejecting even the bourgeois limitations of the uprising) as “the absolute Jew, saint, and sanctified.” The radical Jew as a Jew does not wait until the Six Day War to appear as a Jew and this early identification is recovered by the Jewish students of 1968.

As we have seen in the second section of the previous chapter, Lévinas builds the *Barbaric Jewish humanism* in distinction to this generation (i.e. the radical self-identified Jew of 1968). This should not be a surprise as the generation of 1968 seems to be the heir of the post-1791 (though the 1940s resistance) situation. Lévinas’ critique in the 1950s of the radical Israelis becomes in 1969 a critique against the Marxist Jews. The Jewish students, mostly of Eastern extraction, including Eastern European, German stateless and North African Jews—who have been *enfants de la guerre* and *enfants des rescapé*—are the object of Lévinas’ critique as heirs of the radical movements starting in early nineteenth century and the middle of the twentieth. Following not only the prestige but the post-war continuation of Eastern Jewish radicalism in the communist and other far left-wing groups, it is not surprising that a good number of the leaders of a variety of radical tendencies that only

787 Ibid.
788 Ibid.
fifteen years after these changes revolt in the Latin Quartier of Paris, followed the founding myth of
the Communist resistance (especially since those Jews had an earlier break with Moscow and the
PCF before the disagreement around the events in North Africa and Eastern Europe in the 1950s
and 1960s).

As examples of the Jewish character of or over-representation in the student movement, the
politburo of the Trotskyist Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR) was composed by eleven Jews from
a total of twelve members and the leadership of the extreme Maoist group La Gauche Proletarianne
(GP) was headed by two Jews. It is no coincidence that the first incorporated Jew of Algerian
parents (the already mentioned Ben-Said) to the other ten Eastern-(stateless) Central Jews and the
second have a partner leadership between one Polish and one Egyptian Jew (the latter being Benny
Lévy, head of the Lévinasian Institute in Jerusalem). Lévinas’ confrontation with Marxist humanism
in the context of 1968 is a dialogue with the Israelite Jew, now Eastern radical Jew, disputing the role
of Eastern Judaism. The acknowledged Jewish dimensions of the revolt as an anti-liberal movement
after the Holocaust have been researched. The scholarship indicates that this move was a permanent
search for a post-Holocaust identity. To this we should add that this identity is pursued by stateless
and Eastern Jews. Clearly, they were those pan-Eastern Jews idealized in Lévinas’ project. 789

Lévinas writes Ethics and Spirit in between the perspectives of the Marxist-influenced Israelite
that struggled beyond France and in the resistance, and the movement of 1968. It is in this context
that he will clearly write in the text: “One cannot, in fact be a Jew instinctively; one cannot be a Jew
without knowing it [i.e. Judaism]…. [V]iolence…lies[s], in large part, in the poetic delirium and
enthusiasm displayed when we merely offer our mouths to the muse who speaks through us…in the
passion—call it love—that wounds our side with a perfidious arrow.” 790 Lévinas, once the war is over
and paganism seems to be defeated, attempts to reject this identification of Jews with what he

789 Ibid., 93.
considers an empty militancy that is trapped in Western (Marxist) thinking; in the violence and the empire of ontology.\textsuperscript{791} By demonstrating the Western Israelite origin of the position, the Lévinas of the 1950s follows his pan-Eastern model of Judaism leaving it free from non-Talmudic readings. In other words, presenting \textit{Ethics and Spirit} (1953) and \textit{Judaism and Revolution} (1969) together demonstrates the Western ethos of the revolutionary Jews who were stateless Germans, sons and daughters of survivors of the Holocaust in East Europe, or displaced by decolonization in North Africa. Reading together both texts shows that the Eastern Marxist Jew was Lévinas’ target. Lévinas’ appropriation of \textit{civilizational barbarism} makes the programmatic differences between Lévinasianism and Marxism part of an internal disagreement within a Jewish project. This is the final elective affinity between the non-Jewish Jew and the Jewish Jew. In this way, we can say that he is practicing a counter-narrative, not only of the Western barbaric imperialism but also the non-Jewish Jewish anti-imperial barbarism.\textsuperscript{792}

3.4.2. Extending Barbarism to post-War France

The Jews who enrolled in the resistance were dissidents of the Communist Party in the 1950s and would nourish the generation of 1968. They were far from being alone in their critique of Communism. The left-wing resistance to Soviet orthodoxy have been growing after the death of Stalin in 1953 and the twentieth Congress of the \textit{PCUS} in 1956, the controversial positions in the decolonizing struggles in 1950s and the rivalry against the alternative paths to Socialism—from Tito’s Yugoslavia to Alexander Dubcek’s ‘socialism with a Human Face’—that led to the invasion of Czechoslovakia in January of 1968 (only four months before the events of May). This left-wing opposition to the USSR was structured well before the 1974 publication of the Aleksandr

\textsuperscript{791} This is one of the reasons our analysis begins after the Second World War, and that the already cited “Philosophy of Hitlerism,” as well as Lévinas’ struggle against paganism, do not play a critical role in our analysis.
\textsuperscript{792} The idealization of rational Eastern Judaism can explain Lévinas’ attack against Hasidim and his departure from an agreement he could have had with another philo-Eastern Jewish philosopher of (in his case symmetrical) dialogue such as Martin Buber. See “Le pharisen est absent”//“The Pharisee is Absent” in \textit{Difficile liberté/Difficult Freedom}, 46-48/27-29.
Solzhenitsyn’s *The Gulag Archipelago* that was deeply influential not only amongst the generation of former communists, but also to Lévinas himself as many of his writings attest. This previous dissent has a close tie with the development of an alternative to Eastern Marxism that was previously led by thinkers such as Luxemburg and the Frankfurt School.

In this context, there were movements in France and outside France that brought the identification of barbarism with civilization to the post-war counter-communist setting. Current scholars find three theoretical influences in the generation of the post-war New Left in France. The challenges to the Communist hegemony emerged from existentialism (Jean-Paul Sartre), the far-left anti-bureaucracy (Cornelius Castoriadis and Claude Lefort), and Marxist revisionism (Henry Lefebvre). To this I would add the emergence of a decolonial opposition in France and its colonies (Aimé Césaire, Leopld Senghor, and Frantz Fanon among others). It is not a coincidence that three of the four schools find a place in their analysis for the reproduction of the Marxist legacy on barbarism of civilization. Sartre does it in the debate over the humanism of the phenomenological heritage of existentialism that makes Heidegger self-identifying as an anti-humanist barbarian. Castoriadis and Lefort early after the war founded the now mythical journal titled *Socialisme ou Barbarie* which, influenced by the generation of 1968, only follows Sartre’s ideas. Finally, Césaire writes in his major theoretical work: “There is a law of progressive dehumanization in accordance with which henceforth on the

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794 We followed this line in 3.3.2.
agenda of the bourgeoisie, there is—there can be—nothing but violence, corruption, and barbarism.”

This is also extended outside France in the Anglo-Saxon world where Hannah Arendt links the emergence of totalitarian barbarism (i.e. Nazism and Stalinism) with both anti-Semitism and imperialism, and George Steiner identifies Nazism as the eruption of barbarism within civilization. It is not a coincidence that both of them had a deep connection with French Culture. But the extension of the concept of barbarism need not be left for non-Jews in France and Jews outside Western Europe. It is in early 1952 that Claude Lévi-Strauss, the same French model brought by Cuddihy a few pages above, put forward in UNESCO his revision of European development in what will became a major topic within the structuralist critique. In this context, linking the conception of barbarism to civilization, he declares, “the barbarian is first and foremost a man who believes in barbarism.”

Finally, as the extension of the same conception of barbarism from the pre-World War II German non-Jewish Jew to France in the 1950s and especially 1960s may be problematic, we find a member of the 1968-generation declaring the following:

“Of course! For me the famous phrase of Rosa Luxemburg: “Socialism or Barbarism” is a reality. Today it is seen a continuous hardening in the anti-Arab and anti-African racism in the extreme right and the bourgeoisie. I thought that with the triumph of socialism in Europe, the danger of fascism was going to be excluded. This is the reason of why I become a Trotskyist.”

Lévinas aims his pan-Eastern Hebraism that confronts the civilizational barbarism with to this generation who has been nourished by the Marxist anti-imperial and anti-capitalistic conception of

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798 The work of Aimé Césaire and his role in bringing the colonial and European barbarism (i.e. the Holocaust) to this conversation is going to be developed in our next chapter. See the original text in Aimé Césaire, *Discours sur le colonialism* (Paris: Presence Africane, 1955).

799 See for example Hannah Arendt, *The origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harvest Books, 1973) and George Steiner, “To Civilize our Gentlemen” in *George Steiner: A Reader* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), 30. Steiner was born in Paris and Arendt worked for years prior to and during the French capital’s occupation.


801 Auron, *Les juifs d'extrême-gauche en mai 68*, 181. This is my own translation.
barbarism. It is not strange, therefore, that he was nourished by this conception, or that he tried to use this conception to turn the Westernized radicals into easternized radicals. It is the conceptual overlapping that we can trace in the reading of barbarism in the context of Jewish confrontation with fascism, capitalism and orthodox Marxism, that will make the transition from heterodox Marxism (Maoism, Trotskyism, or Guevarism) to Lévinasianism a not-so-complex path for members of the generation of 1968. It is in this context that the founders of the institute are going to reframe the conception of barbarism from this common Marxist-Lévinasian elective affinity. In the following section, I will analyze the extent in which Lévinas’ self-appointed heirs were able to follow his proposal in barbarism.

3.4.3 Civilizational Barbarism in Lévinas’ Heirs

A clear examples of the use of the term barbarism in one of Lévinas’ heirs who belongs to this generation can be found in the work of BHL’s *La barbarie a visage humain* published in 1977, three years after Lévinas’ positive call of barbarism. To digress for a moment, Lévinas’ influence on BHL is not only conceptual or contextual and does not need reach the turning of the century to be acknowledged. It is the same BHL that only two years later in his second book, *Le Testament de Dieu*, acknowledged, “the distinguished philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas” showed him “the way to Monotheism” understanding for the latter “a concrete ethics, a celebration of Law, a pledge on the Universal.”802 In the text itself, BHL acknowledges, explicitly and implicitly, a deep influence of Lévinas’ texts making of his phrase, “as pointed out by Lévinas again,” a repetitive statement in his work that shows a long-time influence by the thinker.803 Naturally, this impact should not surprise us because it is integral part of the Marxist-Lévinasian elective affinity. In this last section, I will show that BHL employs the term barbarism following the Marxist tradition and Lévinas’ adoption. But he

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803 Ibid., 137/142.
is unable to find a place to positively re-appropriate the term barbarism within his proposal. As a consequence, and despite some of clear Lévinasian motifs, BHL only advances a few lines from those Marxist Jews who used the term barbarism to criticize Western civilization and, later, orthodox Communism. This is true despite his intention to overcome Marxism. In conclusion, I contend that from a Lévinasian perspective, this adoption of the term barbarism is incomplete.

*Barbarism with a Human Face* is published almost ten years after the events of 1968 which included not only the May revolt in the streets of Paris, but also the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia which put a bloody end to Dubcek’s socialism with a Human Face as it had done before with comparable attempts in Hungary and Poland. BHL, far from escaping from his Marxist background, calls himself a “bastard” of an unholy alliance.\(^{804}\) He demands a continuation of the critique against Marxism in order to “consummate the parricide and take the final step which separates us from the supreme privilege...to go to the end of the road begun thirty years ago by the critique of Stalinism [and] continued in 1968 by the obliteration of Leninism.”\(^{805}\) There is a need to “close off” this past and consummate “a break with Marxism.”\(^{806}\) Why is this break needed? Marxism, as Lévinas had written twenty-five years earlier in his *Ethics* and *Spirit*, is only the perpetuation of the Enlightenment’s values such as, BHL would say, the optimist “conception of history” and the myth of “permanent inclusion” (or assimilation) of the otherness.

According to BHL, the Marxist problem is the optimistic conception of progress. The optimism of history renders impossible the analysis of “Stalin’s crimes” as more than “deviations”; even “Hitler [was]...thought of as ‘blunder’ of the bourgeoisie, a fatal and almost happy mistake.”\(^{807}\) All tensions lead to the final triumph of the revolution and the presumably more just society even, Lévinas would say, when they are just utilized as a theodicy (and Benjamin an automatic game). The

\(^{804}\) Lévy, Barbarisme/Barbarism, 9/ix.
\(^{805}\) Ibid., 85-6/68.
\(^{806}\) Ibid., 86/68.
\(^{807}\) Ibid., 87/69.
Marxist conception of history follows the characteristics of enlightenment justifying with optimism 
“the horrors of barbarism.”  808 Marxism, however, enacts a double standard. On the one hand, in 
“judging and criticizing the principles of liberalism,” Marxists claim that “the Declaration of the 
Rights of Man” should be “judged by the standards of the massacre of the Indians.” 809 That said, 
“Marxism-Leninism” holds “a mysterious impunity.” “Socialism is the sinister reality embodied in 
the Gulag…not because it has distorted, caricatured, or betrayed” Marxism “but because it is 
faithful, excessively faithful to the very idea of progress as it has been produced in the West.” 810 In 
other words, “[t]he soviet camps are Marxist, as Auschwitz was Nazi.” 811 

This “Marxist tradition” follows the characteristics of the Enlightenment, justifying with its 
optimism directed to the future “the horrors of barbarism,” but being immune to criticisms. 812 In 
this way, and now following Lévinas in making use of Marxist conceptions to discredit Marxism, 
BHL asserts that Marxism “is the most serious and coarsest caricature of optimism, a summary of its 
impostures, and an encyclopedia of lies…. [It] is perpetuating the long line of the old optimism… 
everything about socialism seems to have been said when you have talked about Ricardo.” 813 As 
anyone familiar with Marxian literature can understand, Marx believed that religion was the 
“encyclopedic compendium of mankind” in the  Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right. 814 BHL 
understands that Marxism is “the encyclopedia of lies” and that the “new barbarism” presented by 
Marxism “needed a religion, some kind of social bond. And indeed, it seems that the consecrated 
texts of materialism have fulfilled the old function, and the capital represents modern canon law.

808 Ibid., 134/112.
809 Ibid., 134/112.
810 Ibid., 152/128.
811 Ibid., 161/137.
812 Ibid., 134-112.
813 Ibid., 86-91/68-80.
Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Law” Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society, 250.
Marxism is the religion of our time.”

This is true from the texts of Marx to, parodying Marx’s critique of left-Hegelianism in *The German Ideology*, the new-left ideologues of “Saint Gilles” (Deluze) and “Saint Felix” (Guttardi).

In opposition to the school of rabbinical diasporism, however, BHL does not see that the game within exclusion and inclusion is what characterizes Western thinking from Parmenides to Heidegger. While Lévinas finds continuity between the Greek and the modern in the reduction of otherness, BHL abandons this interconnection. According to the disciple, the “Greek polis… established its legitimacy… on the basis of fundamental and primeval exclusion…” placing in “a golden age or a barbarism… everything it rejected.”

But a turning point is going to be placed in modernity since “with capitalism that there appears a type of social bond based on inclusion rather than exclusion… it even goes so far as to endeavor to include its rebels.” “Capital,” BHL believes, “has no more barbarians “condemned to marginality.” For BHL the forces of assimilation and exclusion are not linked and there are no barbarians in modernity. Here, BHL follows a clear Marxist path understanding that in modernity, the excluded is completely included within the system, and there is no alternative location from where knowledge can be generated. The included other (as oppressed as she might be) is fully reduced to the system. Here is the moment in which BHL looses the possibility of understanding the potentiality of the reclamation of barbarism for those outside the Christian West (those who have been condemned to marginality or extermination by modernity). For BHL, the eradication of the barbarism of the outsider does not offer the vanquished the possibility to reclaim their identity.

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817 Lévy *Barbarisme/Barbarism*, 123/102.
818 Ibid., 123/102.
819 Ibid., 124/103.
In a strongly Marxist-influenced move, BHL replaces the barbarism in the Western world in general and the three projects that follow the Enlightenment (capitalism, fascism, and especially socialism) in particular:

The horror is here. Close to us: the daily spectacle of industrial desolation; the memory of the Nazi holocaust and the fantastic death instinct whose madness shattered the world; above all the news we hear from the East, the land of our illusions, the home of socialism. We can never repeat often enough that fascism and Stalinism will no doubt have the same historical significance for modern times as the upheaval of 17989 had for the classical age. Yes. Capitalism is the end of history, and to this end, unfortunately, we are experiencing and will continue to experience only bloody and barbarous resolutions...barbarism...is the name I have given to the end of history.... As far as I am concerned the game is over. For us the West, the barbarism to come will have the most tragic of all faces: the human face of a “socialism” that will take on itself all the flaws and excesses of industrial society...we can see on the horizon a confused joint rule, a strange political Siren with capital for a body and a Marxist head; a new kinds of Pax Romana; a dual hegemony whose first symptoms can already be detected.820

The game is over: “socialism or capitalism? The question no longer means very much when the worst is possible.”821 This strange siren signals the end of history and the triumph of capital with socialist human justification of the barbaric oppression. BHL offers a pessimistic extension. But this is not an extension of Lévinas (who will claim the possible existence of an alternative project instrumented from the barbaric location). It is an extension of the socialist perspective that understands itself as part of the problem but is unable to find a solution in exteriority. BHL remains trapped in the West. This position is not necessarily new within Marxist thinking. Before the critique of the Frankfurt School in the 1940s and the rise of BHL and his partner Andre Glucksman in late 1970s,822 Leon Trotsky himself has made this critique of the Soviet Union as part of the cruel, barbaric project. In distinction to Kautsky and Lenin who believed that the Soviet Union was

820 Ibid., 144 and 178/106 and 152.
821 Ibid., 219/191.
capitalism and socialism respectively, the connection between Stalinism, fascism, and barbarism is made by this non-Jewish Jew:

The march of the events has succeeds in demonstrating that the delay of the socialist revolution engenders the indubitable phenomena of barbarism—chronic unemployment, pauperization of the petty bourgeois, fascism, and finally wars of extermination which does not open up a new road. What social and political forms can the new ‘barbarism’ take? If we admit theoretically that humankind should not be able to elevate itself to ‘socialism’? We have the possibility of expressing ourselves on this subject more concretely than Marx. Fascism, on the one hand, degeneration of the Soviet state on the other outlines the social and political forms of a neo-barbarism. 823

While for BHL this would be a coming proletarian barbarism of the unholy alliance between fascism and Stalinism, for Trotsky it represents the neo-barbarism of fascism and the degeneration of the Soviet State. 824 BHL does not follow Lévinas but a long tradition within Marxism and advances a few steps more to characterize not only communist experiences, but socialist theory too, as cruel barbaric. Yet the split between Greek and Modern, and the absence of barbarians in his interpretation of the last stage, does not allow him to understand Lévinas’ radicality fully. If the founder of the Lévinasian Institute is a Lévinasian, he is a bad one. Lévinas’ re-adoption of barbarism to characterize the modern double game between exclusion and inclusion is not understood by the self-appointed heirs. Civilizational barbarism is the only discourse that the founders of the Institute, now unbelievers of liberationist discourses, can offer. The question that this analysis leaves us is with concerns who was able to fully comprehend Lévinas’ proposal and, at that, re-appropriate barbarism from exteriority. In other words, who will re-appropriate barbarism, understanding the interconnection between and the Greek and the modern? I will contend, in my next chapter, that the heritage (and forerunners) of Lévinas’ barbarism—to phrase it differently, its elective affinity—should be found in decolonial theory.

824 Ibid., 219/191.
CHAPTER IV: LÉVINAS’ HEBRAIC BARBARISM: IS DECOLONIALISM ALL WE NEED

Barbarian
this is the word that sustains me…
the unheard cries of revolt.  

[T]here is a very interesting attempt in South America to return to the spirit of the people... I am very happy, even proud, when I heard echoes of my work in this group. It is a fundamental approval. It means that other people have also seen ‘the same thing.’  

The real overcoming of the [ontological and dialectical] tradition...is found in the philosophy of Lévinas.... [O]ur overcoming will consist in re-thinking the discourse from

826 Lévinas, Entre Nous/“Philosophy, Justice and Love,” 37/179.
Latin America... I have been able to formulate this [project] departing from a personal dialogue that I maintained with the philosopher in Paris and Louvain in 1972.... What we intend to achieve, as I expressed in a European university at the beginning of 1972, is precisely a ‘Barbaric Philosophy,’ a philosophy that emerges from the dominated ‘non-being.’

After fifteen whole years of exposure to Western culture, of which ten were filled with conscious rejection of Africa, must I now accept this self-evident truth, that all these ancient and monotonous melodies move me far more deeply than all the great music of Europe?.... Yes, I suppose I am an incurable barbarian!

Border thinking is the notion I am introducing.... To describe ‘reality’ in both sides of the borders is not the problem. The problem is to do it from its exteriority (in Lévinas’ sense).... The Amerindian and the African Diaspora in the early modern period; the Holocaust as closing European modernity and the crisis of civilizing mission, are, in my understanding, at the root of colonial and imperial histories.... This process is creating the conditions for a ‘barbaric theorizing’: theorizing from/of the Third World (the expression used metaphorically here) for the (First/Third) entire planet...the self-restitution of barbarism as a theoretical locus.

4.1 Introduction
4.1.1. The Other Heritage

In the previous chapters, I described Lévinas’ two-pronged deployment of barbarism. The first, entitled civilizational barbarism, is the product of both the orthodox adaptation of Cohen’s and Rosenzweig’s systems and the heterodox conversation between this Judaic project and non-Jewish Jews represented by Marxism. The heirs of this trend, however, are unable to cross into the positive re-appropriation of the term. Hebraic barbarism, the second prong, results from the interconnection between the same counter-narrative and a line of decolonial Judaizers that become both an audience and a challenge for Lévinas. The decolonial thinkers, in conversation with Lévinas, are able to put forward the positive side of the project ignored by the Eurocentric ex-Marxist Jews. Lévinas, on his part, finds an alternative and provocative answer to a long-term concern of Jewish thought.

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829 Mignolo, Local Histories/Global Designs, 18, 29, 98, and 309-10.
830 This is the conclusion arrived in the last chapter. See 3.4.
This chapter examines the role of the heterodox encounter between Lévinas and the decolonizers in the development of the counter-narrative on barbarism. Initially, Lévinas calls for the positive disruption of philosophy by the language of barbarism at the margins of the West in 1974. This barbarism subsequently exceeds the Jewish solitude and engages in an anti-imperial and pan-barbaric alliance among Jews, Arabs and, representing the rest of the world, Blacks in 1986.

This development, I contend in this chapter, was not accidental but rather can be understood by tracing Lévinas’ conversations during this time. Perhaps the most provocative of Lévinas’ encounters was the dialogue he maintained with a group of decolonial Latin American intellectuals in 1971 and 1972, the years preceding the initial call for barbarism. Lévinas’ conversation partners reflect on the discussion of the barbaric character of their proposals that took place in this setting.

Dussel, one of the organizers of the interaction, even acknowledges departing from the Lithuanian-Jewish thinker to build his barbaric philosophy. Dussel’s work, America Latina, Dependencia y Liberación, was published in 1973, the year that follows the meetings and the year that precedes Lévinas’ positive counter-narrative on barbarism. Only two years later, Dussel engaged Arabs and Black intellectuals in a tri-continental meeting. In this new context, Dussel asks Lévinas to acknowledge that his new partners of conversation (as well as the Native) were also part of this collective alterity.

Lévinas responds by including the Arab and the Black (the latter as the representative of all the others) in his interpretation of Pesahim 118b. Ironically (or not), he does not include the Native, closer to Latin American concerns.

In this chapter, I explore the reasons for the elective affinity between Lévinas and this group of decolonial thinkers, and the limitations of a common counter-narrative. I contend that the affinity

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831 Lévinas, Autrement qu'être, ou Otherwise than Being, 273/178.
was not accidental. Lévinas engaged in a decolonial debate throughout the years preceding his encounter with this sympathetic group of Third World intellectuals. The simultaneous reading of his texts and his audiences reveals the decolonial stand of Lévinas’ counter-narrative. This position, despite being at a provocative center of Lévinas’ Greek and Hebrew works, has not been explored by scholars beyond Latino/a philosophy. The heritage of Lévinas’ Hebraic barbarism, I maintain, is not to be found in his self-appointed apostles who can only sustain a negative perspective on barbarism. The heirs of Lévinas’ positive re-appropriation of barbarism are to be found in this decolonial trend that will recover a five hundred year long bond between Jews and other alterities. In other words, the pan-barbaric front better fits the political project of a third party than the ambitions of a broadly conceived post-Holocaustic Jewish thought.836

In this study, I examine two central issues: one, the re-appropriation of the concept of barbarism and two, the response of its audience. First, I trace the emergence of the concept of Hebraic barbarism and its re-appropriation as a counter-narrative from the exteriority of the system. Second, I analyze the possibility of Lévinas’ audience to engage with this legacy of decolonial barbarism. This double task mirrors my previous chapter and marks the unity of the second part of my work. In the third chapter, I explored the emergence of the term barbarism and the limitations of its audience to engage fully with the project. Yet while in the last chapter the re-appropriation focused on the negative civilizational barbarism and its audience of ex-Marxist Jews, at this juncture, the re-appropriation focuses on positive Hebraic barbarism and its audience of decolonial theorists. I

contend, however, that Lévinas becomes as influenced by these decolonial thinkers as the latter were by his works. As a result, Lévinas’ decolonial heritage should be understood as a dialogical partnership that arises from this affinity with other non-Western traditions.

In this chapter I aim to reinsert Lévinas (and rabbinical diasporism) within a line of thought that reclaims the return to exterior heritages that have been simultaneously subsumed as the same and the wholly other by ontological imperialism, namely decolonial thinking and its counter-narratives. I will reflect upon why these thinkers, in the context of the decolonization of epistemologies, feel so at ease with extending the Jewish critique of modernity when the mainstream Jewish thought has been geopolitically located in the center (i.e. Europe and, today, the United States).837 Some decolonial trends, by acknowledging themselves as the natural continuation of Jewish criticism of modernity out of its (Cohenian) sources, (Rosenzweignian) sociology, and (Lévinasian) sacred history, reinsert the Jew within the decolonial debate. Paradoxically, the former Marxist Jews (the intended audience) fail to engage the Hebraic barbarism, yet there is another group that welcomes this positive re-appropriation. Decolonial thinkers, disenchanted by the non-Jewish Jewish heritage (namely Marxism), find an alternative in the exteriority of the Jewish Jew. In other words, they reinforce the past kinship with the dialectical negativity of the non-Jewish Jew for the positive exteriority of the Jewish Jew. In this chapter, I seek to revise this elective affinity between Jewish thought and Third World thinking.838

4.1.2. Road Map

837 This is especially true after the transformation of American Jewry in France and in the dominant diaspora, the US after the Second War World. See Brodkin, How Jews Became White Folks and the current place of Lévinas’ heritage in those ‘communitarian thinkers’ that Tariq Ramadan well portrays in ‘Critique des (nouveaux) intellectuels communautaires’ Ouma (2004), n/a.
838 After 1968, real socialism was put aside when models such as Cuba, Algeria, and China started to have more relevance in the Latin American collective imaginary.
I develop in this section the elective affinity between Lévinas and decolonialism in three sections. In the first, entitled *Lévinas and Decolonial Epistemologies*, I explore the conceptual context of the encounter of Lévinas and the Latin American thinkers in general, and Dussel in particular. Departing from the reflections on the aforementioned meetings, I will trace the historical stand of Lévinas in decolonial theory, and the limitations of one of his inheritors, namely Alain Finkielkraut, to engage in Lévinas’ position. In the section proceeding, entitled *Occidentalism and the Jew*, I will depart from the silences of the above-mentioned founder of the *Institut* to ask why and how a Jew could become a source for the racialization of Latino/a-Caribbean (and barbaric in general) philosophy. Through a revision of Walter Mignolo’s *Occidental theory* I will trace the common racialization of alterities since early modernity in general and the radical place of pre-Holocaust and post-Holocaust Jewish exteriority within the Latino/a-Caribbean *border gnosis* in particular. Finally, in my third section, entitled *Re-appropriation of Barbarism*, I will depart from this new location of the Jew and trace the genealogy of the re-appropriation of the term within a Judeo-Latino/a-Caribbean framework. I will show that the Jew has always been present within the anti-colonial discourse. And, in the simultaneous context of epistemological decolonizational and post-Holocaustic reflection, this Jewish presence has been recovered. In this context, I will unfold the re-appropriation of the term *barbarism* in early post-war decolonialists (especially in the work of Aimé Césaire extended into Albert Memmi) and explain the collective imaginary that preceded and set the table for the barbaric encounter between Lévinas and Dussel. As such, Lévinas will seem easily reinstated with his unintended audience: decolonial theorists and their counter-narrative practices.

4.2 Decolonial Epistemologies And Lévinas

4.2.1. Recovering the Barbaric Bond
Lévinas met a group of young Latin American intellectuals in Paris and Louvain in 1971 and 1972. These were the years preceding his inclusion of “some barbarism in the language of philosophy” in the final pages of *Autrement qu’être*, published in 1974. At this time, and since the early 1950s, the Sorbonne and the Université catholique were centers of study of radical Latin Americans. These students were starting to develop highly original projects such as Liberation Theology in the context of the liberationist revolutions (from Algeria to Cuba via Vietnam), world-wide student movements (from Berkeley to Mexico DF via Paris), and the uncovering of the dependent underdevelopment imposed by neocolonialism in the Third World (i.e. theory of dependency) in the 1960s and early 1970s. In generating these projects, they were extending the tradition of Black Caribbean and African intellectuals. The latter had been elaborating radical decolonial epistemologies during or following their studies at the center of liberal and emancipatory revolutions. While the pioneers developed a counter-narrative of barbaric negritude in the incipient desperation of the interwar and early post-war periods, the Latin Americans aimed to build a pan-barbaric project following the tri-continental movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

It was during the aforementioned encounters between Lévinas and this group of Latin American intellectuals that an unintended barbaric elective affinity was born—or, as I will contend in this chapter, recovered. Lévinas remembers the commonalities that arose from this encounter in an interview published ten years later in 1983, only three year before his call for a barbaric pan-

840 To see role of the two places in the theoretical development of the leaders of the movement see Christian Smith, *The Emergence of Liberation Theology: Radical Religion and Social Movement Theory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 87.
841 This collaborative (African/Diasporic African) movement is today analyzed in the under the title of ‘Africana Studies.’ For a general background see Lewis Gordon, *An Introduction to Africana Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
Israelism in his interpretation of *Pesahim 118b* in 1986. In the interview, he reflects: “there is a very interesting attempt in South America to return to the spirit of the people... I am very happy, proud even, when I heard echoes of my work in this group. It is a fundamental approval. It means that other people have also seen ‘the same thing’.”

Naturally, the first question that a Lévinas’ reader could ask is what is the *same thing* that was visible for both sides? Going beyond this commonality, the reader can also reflect on the interest of each side in encountering each other. Coming from the position of the Latin American intellectuals, the reader could ask why they were interested in following a Jewish-European philosopher in the context of the epistemological decolonization that followed the post-modern turn after 1968. In other words, why was it necessary to find the source in a Jewish philosopher who hardly left the European continent and never, as far as his biographers document, set a foot in Latin America if his intention was to recover the spirit of the people (*el pueblo*) and to defend the primacy of the right of the dispossessed (*el pobre*) who lived thousands of miles away? But doubts may also arise from Lévinas’ point of view. In 1983, he claimed to be *proud* of his influence on Latin American intellectuals. Nevertheless, he also recognized that the “radicalism of the questioning” of this “sympathetic group of South Americans working out a ‘liberation philosophy’” could have arisen from the “great influence of Heidegger.” Was the late Lévinas proud of being the bridge between Third World thinkers and the scholar of *unforgivable* national-socialist philosophy?

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843 For the interpretation of Pesahim 118b, please see the whole of the second chapter, in particular, sections 2.1 and 2.2.3.


846 See the development of the concept of the “preferential option for the poor” and definition of “poor” in the book that set the agenda since early 1970s for a Liberation Theology: Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995), 156. I thank Ruben Dri, my first teacher on Liberation Theology, and Gustavo for unforgettable presencial and phone conversations throughout the years.

847 See the interview conducted in 1983 *Entre Nous*/“Philosophy, Justice and Love,” 37/179.

I explore answers to the aforementioned questions throughout this chapter. What is unquestionable, however, is the existence of this elective affinity between Lévinas and the decolonial thinkers. After the meeting with these intellectuals, Lévinas changed his fear for the Afro-Asiatic masses of the early 1950s for (a still limited) alliance of non-imperial other others in 1986 (Egypt and Cush). In addition, and even more important for this work, he would call for the introduction of a disruptive “barbarism in the language of philosophy” in 1974 following the barbaric meetings of 1971-2 and the proposal made by one of these Latin Americans, Dussel, in 1973. Dussel, for his part, acknowledged the deep influence of Lévinas in his project and writes in America Latina, Dependency, and Liberation:

The real overcoming of the [ontological and dialectical] tradition...is found in the philosophy of Lévinas.... [O]ur overcoming will consist in re-thinking the discourse from Latin America.... I have been able to formulate this [project] departing from a personal dialogue that I maintained with the philosopher in Paris and Louvain in 1972...what we intend, as I expressed in a European university at the beginning of 1972, is precisely a ‘barbaric philosophy,’ a philosophy that emerges from the dominated ‘non-being.’ And since we find ourselves beyond the European totality, modern and dominant, this is a philosophy of the future, global, postmodern and of liberation.

Dussel published his work in Buenos Aires in 1973, pointing out the barbaric character of a project proposed in a European university in 1972. Latin America, Dependency, and Liberation was published exactly between the encounters of Paris and Louvain of 1971 and 1972 and the disruptive barbarism of Lévinas’ Otherwise than Being of 1974. This relation did not pass without notice for Lévinas. “I knew Enrique Dussel,” reflected Lévinas ten years later. He “used to quote me a lot, and...is now

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849 Please see the comments regarding the fear of the ‘Afro-Asiatic Masses’ in 2.4.
850 It should be pointed out that Dussel writes this work in 1973, years before the term ‘post-modern’ become popular in the Northern hemisphere (Jean Francoise Lyotard’s La Condition Postmodern was not going to be published until 1979). Dussel then coins the term ‘trans-modern’ to differentiate his de-colonial project from the other post-modern project. See the discussion in Enrique Dussel, “World-System and Trans-modernity” in Nepantla: Views from the South 3.2. (2002), 223-224.
much closer to political even geopolitical thought."852 This reflection was made by a geopolitical thinker, Lévinas, who only three years after that interview condemned capitalist imperialism ("Rome, the West or America") in favor of a fraternal barbaric community of the brave ones ("also called Israel") that welcomes the alliance from the non-imperial other others (Egypt and Cush).

It can be argued, however, that Lévinas' writings are metaphorical. As such it is imperative to ask whether we betraying the writer by analyzing him contextually. Let me practice an even closer contextual reading of the text to see whether or not an allegoric interpretation is a possibility. Lévinas interprets Pesahim 118b in the context of the extension of the neo-conservative economy that followed the Washington consensus in the West and during the hopes of peaceful international coexistence with the introduction of the perestroika in the USSR. In moments of weakness of the socialist alternative, Lévinas does not support the triumphant free world, but rather condemns its structural egotism and calls for the defeat of the rising uni-polar empire. By wielding a dated Marxist discourse—of capitalist egotism and regression—in a moment of socialism’s weakness, he replaces the Cold War confrontation with a decolonial re-appropriation of otherness (Hebraic barbarism).

Can we read Lévinas’ counter-narrative as a response to geopolitical problems? In general, Lévinas does not fear requesting his reader to limit his or her analysis when his writings are allegorical. In previous Talmudic lectures (the interpretation of Yoma 10a for example), he requests that his listeners not interpret that particular text contextually. In the same way, had the Pesahim 118b been written allegorically, and not for geopolitical interpretation, Lévinas would surely have advised the reader, just as he did with Yoma 10a.854 The Lithuanian-French philosopher, however, maintains a prudent silence regarding the metaphorical directions of his attack on “America,” a location that quite clearly is not a textual reference in Pesahim 118b (the Talmudic sages though wise were not

853 This is the summary of Lévinas’ barbarisms as explained in second chapter.
prophets). There was no need to include the attack on the United States (or even European imperialism) if Lévinas was not making a contextual political critique.

This geopolitical horizon, however, is not exhausted in his reflections on the egotistic empire, but it can also be explored on the common barbaric front. Besides Israel, Lévinas finds two models of anti-Imperialism. They are, first, Egypt, the Arab, who years before signed a treaty of peace with Israel and to which Lévinas refers in his essay Politics After. Lévinas, in this way, recovers the model of socialist pan-Arabism that for years led the anti-Zionist project in the context of fear of the extension of the Indo-Aryan Iranian Islamic Revolution. The second model was Cush or Ethiopia. By then it was anything but a location without history. Ethiopia was seen as the mythical homeland of not only Black but also human history. This reading was introduced by a line of decolonial authors that range from the aforementioned literary negritude revolution of Aimé Césaire’s and Leopold Senghor’s proud barbaric negritude in the early post-war years to the radical anthropological revision of Chéikh Anta Diop’s Civilisation ou Barbarie culminating in the 1980s. For Lévinas, the Arab and the Black are welcome in the barbaric community of brave ones vis-à-vis the exclusion of the empire. In this context, Lévinas seems to be not only as geopolitical and radical as Dussel but he also appears fully aware of the relevance of Egypt and Ethiopia in decolonial thinking. He remembers the pan-Arabic socialist leadership after the Iranian Revolution and finds Ethiopia a (problematic) generic commonality of all other peoples. In both cases, this is the first step toward building a counter-narrative that condemns the egotistic empire (Rome or America) and

855 See the comments on Politique après/Political After in 2.4.2.
857 This is one of Lévinas’ limits, follows the Eastern idealization of Cohen and Rosenzweig as the latter description of Islam.
calls for its dispersion. The two ideal types seem to be necessary partners to complete the redemptive job. Lévinas, here, does not seem to have anything to envy in the geopolitical Dussel.858

Lévinas’ and Dussel’s elective affinity on geopolitical radicalism is clear as early as the 1970s. Both of them published reflections on the barbaric character of their proposals in the context of the rise of the decolonial epistemologies and after meeting twice in two years. An intellectual historian may be eager to know which side coined the term. For this work, the question is not necessarily relevant as we consider both voices (Jewish and Latin American) as integral part of an elective affinity that lead to a common decolonial counter-narrative. The latter is a geopolitical project that had been developing paths of re-appropriation of racial constructions such as barbarism since early modernity. As we will see before them, Césaire and Memmi also shared this re-appropriation of barbarism. Both Lévinas and Dussel are integral parts of a common school. As has been shown, there is a seed of the use of the term barbarism in the early 1950s Lévinas. Through this replacement, Lévinas follows a line in Jewish thought that showed its discomfort in using the term barbarism to qualify Judaism or a history from Jewish sources.859 In this chapter I will show that Dussel also follows a long-term tradition of the dispossessed in the Americas who re-appropriated accusations in general—and the term barbarism, in particular—since early modern Peru to post-war colonial France.860

The rise of the barbaric geopolitical enterprise of both philosophical projects (Lévinas’ and Dussel’s) is not only simultaneous but also intimately related. There is an understanding of, in Lévinas’ words, a common thing that both were able to visualize. I will suggest that this commonality is, in the first place, a common experience of the temptations and limitations of totalitarian and

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858 It is important to note that Lévinas himself in early 1980s was clearly demonstrating the existence of Persia as a separate ideal type that is not included in the Arab Middle Eastern World. See Lévinas, “Qui joue le dernier”/“Who Plays Last,” 71-86/53-67

859 This is one of the major conclusions of the first chapter. See introduction 2.1.

860 We will see the unfolding of this line in 4.4.
imperialist assimilation; and, in the second place, it is the possibility of generating an alternative exterior space from where a social theory can be constructed. This space comprises the values of those discarded traditions and the non-utopian height of the dispossessed other. Both elements, the temptation from the system and the rediscovery of exteriority, were present not only in both lines of thought, but also in the interconnection between Jewish and Latin American thinking since the sixteenth century to the French context of the early 1970s.  

This elective affinity between Lévinas and Third World discourses reinserts Lévinas’ counter-narrative as a voice within a decolonial project. Nevertheless, the Lithuanian intellectual was not new to decolonial theory when he encountered Dussel. The prophet of spatial and epistemological exteriority who attacks the imperialism of the ontology after the assimilation attempt that ends with the extermination of his people, is obviously not new within decolonial discourses. In spite of this clear description, Lévinas’ association with decolonial theory is anything but openly accepted. This is true as if Lévinas had not lived in post-war France, or during the national liberation movements of decolonization that changed the face of Parisian politics, or even during the rise of the tri-continental politics of those stripped of their alterity. The decontextualization of the imperialism of ontology and disruptive barbarism limits orthodox engagements with Lévinas’ legacy and interpretation. Lévinas achieved his mature thinking when the French empire (and with it his role at the ENIO) was being challenged. His counter-narrative should be seen as a reflection of the exterior values of the discarded Jewish tradition, the principles of the ghettos and the mellahs (from both sides of the

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861 See 2.3.
862 One of the few major scholars working with Lévinas in a political sense is Howard Caygill who almost reduces the late Lévinas and the Third World to his silence over Palestinians. I believe that is extremely important, not to mention necessary, for an account of a Jewish philosopher and offers the limits of his thought, but does not explain Lévinas’ engagement with the Third World or the interest of the decolonial Latino-Americans. See Caygill, Lévinas and the Political, 154-198. In the same line it is important to mention an extreme case of the same line in a George Salemohamed “Of an Ethics that Cannot be Used,”120-130 and George Salemohamed, “Lévinas: From ethics to Political Theology”, 192-206.
Mediterranean). This interest in building an idealized *Eastern* should be read as the historically necessary bond between alternative locations of knowledge: East and South.  

4.2.2. Departing from a Ninivean Jerusalem

However, and it may be surprising to note, what Lévinas and Dussel shared was not limited to the experience of totalitarianism or the need to recover exterior traditions. Early in his career, before engaging with Lévinas’ counter-narrative, Dussel understood that an analysis of exteriority should depart from the Jewish experience as reflected from its sources (the *Hebrew* for Lévinas, the *Semitic* for Dussel). Both proposals find in the Jewish people the path to confront the Greek (epistemological ontology or the empire). This places early Dussel, presumably to Lévinas’ delight, dangerously within a pan-Hebraic project despite the Christian supersessionism that critics very close to Dussel see in his early work. I have already shown in the second chapter how Lévinas finds the exteriority in Judaism. Out of the experience of the ghettos and mellahs, Lévinas is able to recover the principle of hospitality and social justice from rabbinical Judaism. However, a brief explanation shows how Dussel, as a paradigmatic figure in Latin American thought, departed from the *Semitic* as well. This commonality might explain that the *same thing* that both visualized was not only the barbaric formality, but also the content; chiefly, the role of the Jew within this construction.

Dussel spent two years working as a laborer in Israel a full decade prior to meeting with Lévinas. He rediscovered the “millenary Semitic suffering” upon his return to Israel following a short academic trip to Europe “from the East.” Passing through the homeland of philosophy, the

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863 See the construction of the pan-Eastern project developed from his years at the ENIO combining the non-utopian memories of the ghettos and mellahs in the second chapter, section 2.3.3.

864 It is fair to point out that the Hebrew is rabbinical and the Semitic seems to be biblical. Nevertheless, as some critics point out, the Semitic is the source that is treated with the most sympathy in Dussel’s work. See Maldonado-Torres, *Against War*, 166-167.


866 See 2.3.
Greek became foreign to him as he simply represented “the dignity of free nobles…the impossibility of slave emancipation.” In contrast, Dussel contends that “to reconstruct Latin-American philosophy it would be necessary to destroy the Greek myth.” To comprehend the culture of Latin America, a poor people humiliated, colonized, and dependent, “it was necessary to depart from Jerusalem and not from Athens.” In other words, Jerusalem, in Dussel’s eyes, represented “the dignity of work, the possibility of the revolution of the poor.” Naturally, this Jerusalem was not contextual, as his labor was done alongside Arab Palestinians excluded by the State of Israel. The ideal but non-utopian Judaism nourished both rabbinical diasporism and decolonial Latin American thought. Starting from this point, terms that will become Lévinasian, such as avodah (work as service to the community and not as labor) and panim-al panim (the metaphysical and dialogical face to face relationship with the alterity, not necessarily illeity), will displace the Greek context of relations of production and source of thinking (economy and ontology). This will occur during the discovery of Latin American exteriority from the incipient pre-Lévinas historical stage (El Humanismo Semita, 1969–) to the mature normative Lévinasian period (Filosofía de Liberación, 1977–) to the later meta-normative post-Lévinasian writings (La Ética de la Liberación, 1998–).

This discovery of the pan-Hebraic (Semitic) orientation of the pre-Lévinas Dussel does not undermine the radical influence of the Jewish philosopher to the Latin American thinker. But it may explain the reason for this a priori elective affinity that Lévinas encountered in Dussel’s group. The Latin-American philosopher acknowledges the influence of Lévinas in his new book published in

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867 See the biographical exploration of Dussel in “Autopercepción Intelectual de un Processor Historico”, 17.
868 Ibid.
869 Ibid.
870 Ibid.
871 It is interesting to note that most of them were Arab Christians and years later, the same community built its own liberation theology. See Naim Ateek, Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1989).
872 I argue in this chapter that the three works can be seen as keystone of Dussel. Complete bibliographical information follows: El Humanismo Semita (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1969), Filosofía de Liberación (Mexico: Edícol, 1977) [the only work of the three translated in English as Philosophy of Liberation (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1985) and La Ética de la Liberación en la Edad de la Globalización y la Exclusión (Madrid: Trotta, 1998).
1975, following their meetings in 1971–2, his barbaric philosophy of 1973, and Lévinas’ call for the introduction of barbarism in 1974. The title of Dussel’s previous work called attention to a Latin American Marxist sociological school of thought (the Dependency Theory), which was deeply influential in Liberation Theology and, later, to the decolonization of knowledge. However, soon after the meeting Dussel began to build alternative sources for his Liberation Philosophy from the writings of the Lithuanian-Jewish thinker.\textsuperscript{873} The title of his next book was going to be more than explicit: \textit{Liberación Latino-Americana y Emmanuel Lévinas}.\textsuperscript{874} In the first lines of his work, Dussel acknowledges (once again) the role of Lévinas in the development of his thought: “When I read for the first time the work of Emmanuel Lévinas \textit{Totality and Infinity}, it produced in my spirit a subversive overthrowing of all that I had learned until then.”\textsuperscript{875} Returning to the aforementioned meeting, Dussel further explained that in “talking personally with Lévinas in Paris at the beginning of 1971 [he] was able to corroborate the grade of similitude of [their] thinking with the French philosopher.”\textsuperscript{876}

By 1975, Dussel had already returned and was teaching at the University of Cuyo in his hometown of Mendoza, Argentina. He was forced into exile soon after this last publication. He fled the country after an anti-communist organization, self-appointed defender of the Western and Christian values, destroyed his dwelling. This neo-Fascist movement was only the beginning of the

\textsuperscript{873} See the major works in socio-economical dependency theory in Theotonio Dos Santos, \textit{La Crisis del Desarrolismo y la Nueva Dependencia} (Lima: Moncloa-Campodonico, 1969) and Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faleto, \textit{Dependência e desenvolvimento na América Latina: ensaio de interpretação sociológica} (Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1970) and the further development of this line of thought in the development of the conception of a ‘coloniality of power’ within the debate on ‘coloniality of knowledge’ in Aníbal Quijano, “Colonialidad del Poder, Euro-centrismo y America Latina” in Edgardo Lander, \textit{La Colonialidad del Saber: Eurocentrismo y Ciencias Sociales. Perspectivas Latinoamericanas} (Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2000), 201-246. It is crucial to understand the relation between these socio-economical analyses and the decolonization of knowledge in Latin America from Gutierrez’s liberation theology to Dussel’s liberation philosophy and latter trans-modernity.

\textsuperscript{874} Enrique Dussel and Daniel E. Guillot, \textit{Liberación Latinoamericana y Emmanuel Lévinas} (Buenos Aires: Bonum, 1975). I would like to point out how in my private conversations with Dussel in 2004 and 2005, he insisted that ‘Jerusalem’ was an original locus of barbarism. I thank Enrique for staying for hours (even after midnight!) discussing his work with me at Berkely, San Antonio, and Amherst.

\textsuperscript{875} Enrique Dussel, “Para una Fundamentación Filosófica de la Liberación Latinoamericana” in \textit{Liberación Latinoamericana y Emmanuel Lévinas} (Buenos Aires: Bonum, 1975), 8. I am indebted to Walter Mignolo for his suggestion of turning to the translation of “desquiciada repulsión” for “subversive overthrowing.”

\textsuperscript{876} Ibid.
bloody military dictatorship that took over in defense of pure Christian values. This was after being part of a series of US-endorsed *coup d’états*, in Latin America in general and in the Southern cone in particular, the overthrow of Salvador Allende in the neighboring Chile being the most conspicuous case. The United States—from the Monroe Doctrine in 1823 to the invasion of Grenada and Nicaragua in 1983 and 1989 (via the occupation of Cuba from 1898 until 1959 and its later embargo)—claimed neocolonial economic and political rights over the entire continent. It became, in the words of a known US president, “the big stick” for the American continent.

In 1976, one year after fleeing from his homeland and in the context of the precariousness of the exile, Dussel continued to encounter alternative voices. Referred to here is not the Jew in European Paris and Louvain, but rather African and Asian voices in Dar-es-Saalam, Tanzania, in a tri-continental meeting of intellectuals. In this new setting, *Jerusalem on the Seine* (or “Ninive/Yavne in the Seine”) was not going to be enough. Although Dussel acknowledged what Lévinas provoked in him; and, in the barbaric community, he also notices “the radical rupture that in that time was already produced” with Lévinas. Dussel remembered that the Lithuanian Jew reduced the consequences of ontology to the experience of European Judaism: “He told me that the major political experiences of his generations were the presence of Stalin and Hitler—two de-humanizing totalities, fruit of the Euro-Hegelian modernity.” However, Dussel consternated, indicated to Lévinas “that the experience of not only my generation but also that of the last half millennia had been the ego of European modernity, the conquistador ego, colonialist, imperialist in its culture and the oppressor of the peoples of the periphery.”

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877 Ibid.
879 Dussel, “Autopercepción Intelectual,” 23. It is important to notice that Mendoza is a border city next to the Andes in the frontier between Argentina and Chile.
881 Ibid.
882 Ibid.
going to exclude the Jewish people from those colonized, he contends that the consequences of the conquistador’s ego could not be restricted to the Jewish experience. In a process in which Jews were becoming white through the new center of power and its reading of the Holocaust, the experiences of other voices outside of Europe needed to be included. It was not necessarily a refutation of Jerusalem of a Jerusalemite in Nineveh, but of the power of Paris or Washington in the interpretation of this legacy.883

Twenty-five years later, Dussel returns to this same conversation in a later article in which he recalls asking Lévinas in 1972, “what about the fifteen million Indians slaughtered during the conquest of America and the thirteen millions Africans who were made slaves, aren’t they the other you’re speaking about?”884 According to the 1975 account Lévinas “could do nothing less than accept that he never thought that the Other (Autrui) could be an Indian, an African, or an Asiatic.”885 And, in that later article, Lévinas answered: “that’s something for you to think about.”886

This became a turning point for Dussel, who sees his project of encountering the barbaric as the overcoming of Eurocentric limits:

If Lévinas, as a Jewish thinker, was able to find in his existential experience the ability to criticize European thinking in its totality...he did not suffer Europe in its totality and his point of support was Europe itself. But we ourselves, Latin-Americans, Africans, Asiatic, the world of the periphery, have suffered European oppression and our point of support is a history external to Europe. Our center is positive itself, even when the learned world have considered it barbaric.887

Even though Dussel acknowledges Lévinas’ influence, their relationship was not unidirectional. It is clear that Lévinas was regarded as the teacher. We have already seen how Lévinas’ acknowledgment

887 Ibid.
of barbarism follows that of Dussel. In 1986, ten years after Dussel’s attempt in *Philosophy of Liberation* to overcome Lévinas because of his inability to include other others, Lévinas writes the aforementioned interpretation of *Pesahim 118b* in which the Arab and the Black (though curiously not the “Indian,” as Latin America seems to be foreign to the Mediterranean or Biblical metaphor) become part of his pan-Hebraic barbarism. This shows both Lévinas’ concern for the question raised by Dussel and perhaps the limitations of the rabbinical answer to this problem. Nevertheless, a suspicious reader can ask how one could assume a text written ten years after a challenge would be an answer.

If *Pesahim 118b* is an answer to Dussel, it would not be the first time Lévinas takes a prudent amount of time to answer his critics. Several interpreters have pointed out that Lévinas took ten years to answer Jacques Derrida’s objection to *Totality and Infinity*. While the original work was published in 1961, Derrida made his critique in 1964, and it was not answered by Lévinas until 1974 in *Otherwise than Being*. At the same time, it can be argued that Lévinas, who immediately followed the common barbaric re-appropriation, does not answer a critique made between 1972 and 1976 until 1986. What is both provocative and surprising here is that Lévinas answers his other Jewish student (Derrida) with the Greek texts and to a decolonial thinker (Dussel) with the Hebrew texts. It is as if the location of powerlessness could be better found in a Southern decolonialist than in an Eastern post-Marxist Jew. Through presenting this answer in *Pesahim 118b*, Lévinas’ counter-narrative can be easily relocated within a decolonial debate. Nevertheless, Lévinas’ engagement with decolonial theory precedes his encounters with Dussel. I will contend in the next section that the inclusion of barbarism and the common front can well relate to this conversation. However, by the 1960s

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888 Refer to the extended biblical metaphor in 4.3.2.
890 See the description of Third Party in the Greek works in 2.4.1.
Lévinas presented an increasing interest in decolonial discourses, which will lead to this link between Lévinas and Dussel. This makes his final inclusion of the pan-barbaric front in his Jewish writings part of an integral and coherent project which exploded (but was not initiated) during his encounter with the group of Latin American thinkers. Lévinas was becoming a decolonial thinker before Dussel, but he was challenged after this encounter to overcome the Eurocentric insights of his readings.

4.2.3. A Decolonial orientation

In this last section I reinserted Lévinas’ counter-narrative into a decolonial discussion that began with his encounters with the sympathetic group of Latin Americans. In that context, it was suggested that the barbaric qualifications of his philosophy could be read through the questions posed after this encounter. In this way, I conclude that according to the Hebrew and, in some moments, to the Greek, Lévinas places himself within a decolonial discussion. Decolonialism, however, can be seen as a permanent concern of his whole of his thought. In this section, I show that this decolonial interest was an integral part of his discourse before the early 1970s and that the encounter with Latin-Americans was a vehicle to channel this orientation. Furthermore, I explain that this decolonial stand is not only clear in his parochial work, but can also be explicitly traced to his Greek, and presumably universal, writings.891

In the same year of Lévinas’ last encounter with the decolonial group, 1972, he republished an article entitled “La signification et le sens” as part of the work Humanisme de l’autre homme. According to American interpreters, in this essay Lévinas takes a position regarding the long-term debate on humanism between Ernest Cassirer and Heidegger. However, a textual analysis reveals

891 In this way, I disagree with Maldondo-Torres who suggests that Dussel will be better served by Fanon than by Lévinas in order to build his project. See Against War, 179.
that Lévinas seems to be as interested (or probably even more interested) in discussing the relativist philosophies (i.e. Maurice Merleau-Ponty) and anthropologies (i.e. Claude Lévi-Strauss) as he is discussing the aforementioned topics. The reflection on relativist approaches (from existentialism to structuralism) clearly influenced by the debate, and seems to be a more timely topic of discussion than the general questions posed by the Neo-Kantian or the phenomenologist positions of the famous 1929 meeting of Davos.892

Lévinas’ text was originally written in the context of the general Parisian critique against orthodox communism, developed by diverse dissidents (Castoriadis, Sartre, and Césaire among others) in the early 1960s.893 The essay was written only five years after the final fall of Stalinism in 1956 and during the heated Algerian national liberation.894 It was also republished three years after the disenchantment of socialism in 1968 and during Lévinas’ encounters with decolonial theorists.895 The latter group was attracted to Lévinas’ project as a way to acknowledge the limits of Marxism, to think from the exteriority of the system. In this context, Lévinas writes, “the impossibility of basing the univocal signification of being on materialism…does not, however, compromise the ideal of unity that is the force of the truth and the hope of understanding among people.”896 The hope for the final unification of humankind (as Cohen would say) and of comprehension among cultures is not abandoned, even after the fall of a materialist interpretation of history that tempted revolutionary Jews (including the young Lévinas). There is another hope after the fall the Marxist utopia that subsumes all the others into the kingdom of collective Self.897

893 See 3.4.1.
894 See the fall of Communism and, later, Marxism in France as a key to understanding Lévinas’ approach to former-Maoist, young, Jewish intellectuals in the third chapter, in specific, 3.4.
895 Emmanuel Lévinas, “La signification et le sens” in Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale 69 (1964), 125-156 and in Humanisme d l’autre homme (Monpellier: Fata Morgana, 1972), 17-63. I will cite from the last publication.
896 Ibid., 36/22.
897 See 2.3.1.
Let me explore where the hope for unity lies after the fall of the orthodox materialist interpretations. By renewing the aim of the materialist project, the structural relativist philosophies promised, “the unity of being…would consist simply in the fact that men, in the penetrability of cultures, understand one another.” But the revalorization of indigenous cultures led to the need of engaging these cultures in order to understand the other without falsifying his or her culture. In other words, to attempt an understanding without mediation, “this penetrability could not be made by the intervention of a common language that, independent of cultures, would translate the proper, ideal articulations of significations, making these individual languages completely useless at all.”

The importance of the understanding was the revalorization of the culture of the other and not its imperial subjugation into one’s culture. In conclusion, these anthropological philosophies proclaim, “in fact it is possible for a Frenchmen to learn Chinese and pass from one culture to another without an intermediary Esperanto that would falsify both languages it mediated.”

Lévinas, though, points out an intrinsic problem that this proposal entails. It is true that the Frenchman could learn Chinese. However, the reason he would do so is not clear. Framing the problem as a question, we ask along with Lévinas why a Frenchman should learn the Chinese language instead of trying to colonize the Chinese people (or to invent a false, universalist means of communication). According to the long-time director of the ENIO, the new philosophy “eventually leaves out the need for an orientation that in fact leads a Frenchman to learn Chinese instead of claiming it is barbaric,” and thus would “lead him to prefer words to war.” Once again, Lévinas finds the limits of neo- or pro-Marxist interpretations in their confusing anthropology. Lévinas is clearly asking why the colonial Frenchmen, the ego, would prefer Ethics to imperial ontology. These

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898 Ibid. 35/23.
899 Ibid.
900 Ibid.
901 Ibid.
902 See the revision of Marxist anthropology in 2.3.1. In this way, Marx reiterates his critique as the limit of European thought.
questions can easily be historically situated. Since the end of World War II until the early 1960s (when Lévinas publishes the article for the first time) France had been trying to save its empire through diverse juridical reorganizations (from departmentalization to the Union Française), alternating paternal and brotherly policies. After the war in Indochina, during the independence movements in the Maghreb in general and the struggles in Algeria in particular, a metropolitan decolonial voice would ask what would make a decrepit imperial power offer to form an alliance with a former colonial and to what extent the colonized can trust the bona fide of the empire.903

This is especially true when this imperialism has been, for at least two hundred years, invested by a mission civilisatrice that sustained that the reduction of the culture of the other was both a benefit to her and a duty to humanity. Lévinas is asking why the colonizer would engage with the other as another and make the effort to understand her in her language instead of reducing the colonized to the neocolonial economic sphere (i.e. asserting her barbarism as a path to monopolize civilization and to make the barbaric aspire to be tempted by the same).904 Which is to say, Lévinas contends that there lacks exploration as to why the Frenchman would prefer words to war or difference to assimilation (or, politically speaking, departmentalization to repression). The relativist philosophies and anthropologies that attempt to place Being as coming after but related to materialism (and more related to his critique on extended Marxism than the one on Heideggerianism) do not seem to be able to offer this orientation.905

This is where the relativist philosophies fail. In the context of these philosophies, “the world created by this saraband of countless equivalent cultures, each one justifying itself in its own context,

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903 See the development of this final attempt to save the empire throughout in Raymond Betts, France and Decolonization (London: MacMillian, 1991).
904 It is not surprising that Lévinas titled the preceding section, Signification economique.  
905 Here, once again, the struggle seems to be within the theories of liberation as differentiated from Marxism . This is, according to our reading, and most of the philosophical engagement with Lévinas, as important as his critique of Heidegger.
is certainly de-Occidentalized; however, it is also disoriented.”\textsuperscript{906} What is at stake in Lévinas’ reading of decolonialism? Let me analyze the text. First, the problem is not the de-Occidentalization, but is rather the disorientation that rises or is created by the saraband of equivalent cultures. Second, he is criticizing the real intentions of the metropolis to engage in proximity with the former colony and the possible complicity of the still-European relativist trends in allowing this to happen. By not asking about the orientation, Lévinas reflects, they are forgetting to analyze the motives that are behind this new attitude of the Self. Lévinas is presenting a critique from within the decolonial accounts, directed and suspicious of the center; in his own words, \textit{the Frenchman}. He needs to look for an orientation that will make relating to the barbaric in her own language possible.

In the first place, Lévinas claims that the discovery of the other already holds an orientation, and accuses the philosophies of relativism of ignoring that previous to the ethical encounter with the other that already had an orientation. They act “as if the equivalence of cultures and the discovery of their multiplicity and recognition of their riches were not themselves the effects of an orientation and an ambiguous sense in which humanity stands.”\textsuperscript{907} This orientation arises in the previous commitment to the other, the acknowledgment of the other who was there before the Ego. In his words, “The cultural signification” should emerge “in a dialogue with that which signifies of itself: with others.”\textsuperscript{908} The orientation is the one that follows the acknowledgment of the above-mentioned usurpation, as there the Ego recognizes not only the previous existence of the alterity but also a relation with the other. In other words (but with a different meaning to mainstream interpretation), ethics precedes ontology. Even though the ego is not inclined to accept this orientation, Lévinas will patiently show him the path.\textsuperscript{909}

\textsuperscript{906}Lévinas, “La signification”/“Signification,” 46/37.
\textsuperscript{907} Ibid., 57/38.
\textsuperscript{908} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{909} See the last section “La trace”/“The Trace,” 57-63/33-44.
Lévinas warns, however, that the lack of orientation cannot be reduced only to the Frenchman who needs to learn Chinese. This is in fact also true for the lack of orientation of the latter regarding the others. In a context of Maoist trends (that included the future founders of the Lévinasian institute, as has been shown in the third chapter), what the Chinese orientation is in relation to other others is not just a theoretical question. This is an integral part of Lévinas’ project to convert the Israelites into Jews.\footnote{See 3.1. and 3.4.} According to Lévinas, the world “has lost univocality,” and there is a lack of orientation of the dialogue among the other others.\footnote{Ibid., 36/24.} “The absurdity” of the situation, according to Lévinas is not the “multiplicity of voices” who try to relate with each other despite their different languages (as is the interpretation of some of his followers) but rather an isolation without common orientation: “absurdity does not lie in a non-sense but in the isolation of countless significations, the absence of a sense that Orients them.”\footnote{Ibid.} In other words, the lack of orientation is not reduced to the relation between the ego and the other. It is also a concern within the other side (the Chinese—or Maoist Jews as they were called—with the Native, the African, the Asiatic, and the other Jews). A few years later, this orientation would be offered in his interpretation of \textit{Pesahim} 118b: an anti-imperial common front; in other words, a pan-Hebraic barbaric front against Rome.

By 1986, the common barbaric front will march to Rome to destroy the empire. The article, a text written before the encounter with the decolonialists, is an early step in this march that will reach its finality with the construction of a counter-narrative of barbaric redemptions. Between the 1960s and the early 1970s, Lévinas reflects, “what is lacking is the sense of senses, the Rome to which all roads lead, the symphony where all the senses become song, the Song of Songs.”\footnote{Ibid.} The reference to both the Song of Songs and Rome are not fortuitous; what will unify the other others in...
the 1960s and 1970s is the path toward Rome. Then, in the 1980s, completing his thought, Rome will still be the path: the pan-barbaric will take the road toward Rome to condemn, destroy, and disperse the empire. *The symphony is the counter-violence* supported by decolonial thinkers who were deeply influenced by the French context of late 1950s.914 The Song of Songs was already employed by Rosenzweig as the example of community revelation. This is the moment of understanding of the truth prior to the redemptive (as per Lévinas) destruction of the other. Creation (the time of monologue) is the action of the ego in solitude. Revelation (the time of dialogue) is the gathering of the community of the brave ones in their path toward Rome. Redemption (the time of the final conversation) is the destruction of Rome and the regeneration of humanity. This is the final gathering in the community of others.915

The article is a transition toward the Messianic end, toward Rome. The objective is to destroy an egotistic empire that piles up wealth in complete ignorance of the suffering of the exteriority: the poor, the widow, the orphan, and—perhaps the most important character in Lévinas’ reading *Pesahim 118b*—the barbaric, the foreign. The path to Rome becomes the barbaric option for the empire destruction. The “absurdity,” according to Lévinas, does not lie in “decolonization” and its multiple voices but “in multiplicity within pure indifference,” in “isolation.”916 The barbaric pan-Hebraic project seems to combat indifference and isolation with a common orientation leading to Rome. In other words, it is an orientation that leads to the condemnation and dispersion of the empire. Its destruction is the orientation.

### 4.2.3. The Misleading (ex-Marxist) Jewish Heritage

914 See the reconsideration of violence within decolonial thinking in, namely, Fanon, “De la violence”/”Concerning Violence” in *Damnes/Wretched*, 29-79/35-106.

915 See a conception of the redemption of Rosenzweig as signifying community in 1.3.2/3. Not coincidently, the same idea is presented in the Lévinasian work by Dussel, *Filosofía de Liberación*, 56-78.

As discussed at the beginning of the last section, the decolonial stand of *Signification and Sense* is not reflected by the American interpreters of Lévinas. One could argue that it is necessary to engage wholly with the historical context of Lévinas’ writings to do so and wonder whether or not his North American philosophical readers are able to embrace this task. Nevertheless, far from being an exception, the American reading does not at least reject the decolonial stand of Lévinas. It merely overlooks the relevance of his contribution to this area. However, this is not the case of the French interpretation in which Lévinas’ “secular disciple,” Alain Finkielkraut, attacks the decolonial stand and ignores the contribution made by Lévinas in barbaric decolonialism.\footnote{The conception of Finkielkraut as the ‘secular disciple’ of Lévinas was put forward by the scholar who popularizes his work in North America through recurring translations. See Friedlander, *Vilna on the Seine*, 92-95.}

As we have seen in the last section of the third chapter, one of the founders of the Lévinasian Institute, BHL, acknowledges the major influence of Lévinas in his work. However, he is unable to fully engage with the decolonial Lévinas. For BHL, barbarism is merely the violence of totalitarianism and never an exterior space from which an alternative can be built.\footnote{See 3.4.2.} Following this trend, a second founder of the institute, Finkielkraut, is not only trapped by the same narrative, but even goes a few steps forward (or perhaps better said in an illuministic reading, a few steps backward) in interpreting the decolonial stand as only the product of barbarism. In other words, barbarism returns as the pejorative interpretation of unenlightened and underdeveloped peoples and not, as Lévinas proposes, the space for alternative thinking or for exteriority.

Finkielkraut publishes *La Défaite de la Pensee* in 1987, only a year after Lévinas’ pan-barbaric project of *Pesahim 118b*. In it, Finkielkraut seems to completely ignore Lévinas’ position on decolonialism, from the ideas of orientation in *Signification and Sense* in the 1960s to the barbarism of *Otherwise than Being* in the 1970s and again to the final anti-imperialism of *Pesahim 118b* in the 1980s. Finkielkraut’s work is composed of six essays, and I would like to focus my attention in “Vers une
société pluri-culturelle.” By the end of this text, Finkielkraut concludes his analysis with a paragraph that could well astonish readers of the later Lévinas. This is especially true when just a single year separates the Talmudic reading and Finkielkraut’s work:

In a world deserted by transcendence, fanatics no longer evoke the name of God to justify barbaric customs; they call on identity politics instead. Unable to appeal to heaven, they defend their beliefs with history and difference. God is dead, but the Volkgeist lives on, even though the idea of the rights of man came into existence precisely to challenge the authority of traditions deeply entrenched in the soil of the Old Continent. It was at the expense of their culture that European individuals gained, one by one, all their rights. In the end it is the critique of tradition that constitutes the spiritual foundation of Europe, a fact the philosophy of decolonization has let us forget by persuading us that the individual is nothing more than a cultural phenomenon.  

According to Finkielkraut the universal renouncement of its own culture, the withdrawal from tradition, and the discontinuity of history permitted the European Enlightenment to acquire its civilized stand. The West is the model that fosters the full development of rights. That said, from a Lévinasian perspective, as proposed in the last three chapters, one wonders the extent to which it is possible to trace the continuity from Parmenides to Heidegger (namely, Aristotle, Sepulveda, Voltaire, and Hegel), if there indeed has been a turning point in the Enlightenment that leaves behind the tradition of ontology, which subsumes the other into the sameness and looks for the totalitarian unity that (since Rosenzweig at least) Jewish thought was confronting. Furthermore, is this concept of civilization equal to the acquisition of individual rights, more so than the description of the egocentric, tempting quest for security masked by the liberty (of accumulation) proposed by the Enlightenment? And finally, according to Lévinas, if the possible influence of Heidegger (an influence that he himself might recognize in his early days) was not interrupting his appreciation for the connection between his work and those of the decolonial voices, why does Finkielkraut insist


920 It should be pointed out that the impossibility to see the continuity between the Greek, the Christian, and the Modern was what limited Bernard-Henry Lévi as well. See 3.4.3.
that any relation between a social engagement with those colonized and dispossessed should be necessarily related to the *Volksgeist*? Especially since the “philosophy of decolonization evokes the ideas of German Romanticism.”

According to Finkielkraut, decolonial voices are barbaric, just as were the Germanic people during the destruction of Rome (or as Jews were during the rise of Hitler in Paris). They are an integral part of the barbarian project that Lévinas was promoting during the fifteen years preceding Finkielkraut’s writings. For the teacher promoting an attack against the empire, barbarism becomes the possibility of exterior alliances for the destruction of ontology. For the student protecting the empire, barbarism is the uncivilized perception of the world that links exteriority with Nazism and tradition (exactly the use of barbarism that Lévinas deplores, understanding it as the French imperial call for war). Ontology, still the presumable enemy, resides in a quite imaginative and remarkable new alliance (and we should credit Finkielkraut for his originality). This coalition merges the autochthonous ideologies of “Third World activists struggling against the supremacy of the West” that are infiltrating the center and “those who oppose the ‘invasion’ of Europe by inhabitants of the developing nations” and want to “preserve Europe’s cultural differences.” Naturally this incoherent and unholy alliance between decolonialism and European xenophobia must ignore the level of asymmetry understood as the cultural and economic dispossession offered by Lévinas. The location from where the idea develops is important in order to differentiate the ethical resistance of the other, the decolonial non-being, and the egotistic and ontological preservation of the Self [xenophobia and the *Volksgeist* (as we will see in the next paragraph) defending itself from the French universal values].

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921 Ibid., 64.
922 Ibid., 90.
For Finkielkraut the model to follow is far from exteriority (i.e. the disposed space from where an alternative to the totality can be thought). His ideal type reproduces the discourse of the best epochs of the *mission civilisatrice*, the universal France during “a century, when nationalism reigned, [and] France—to its credit and originality—refused to accept the idea that the spirit had ethnic roots.”924 In opposition, “the country’s loyalty to universalistic principles earned the admiration… [and] has attracted foreigners chased from their homes by the hateful stupidity of the Volksgeist.”925 The model, according to Finkielkraut, was our philosopher, “Emmanuel Lévinas, for example, who left Lithuania in 1923, and chose to study in Strasbourg.”926 Naturally, Finkielkraut does not mention that Lévinas later moved to study phenomenology, studying with the barbaric German Jew Edmond Husserl and finding (the barbaric and German) Heidegger in Freiburg. Furthermore, it is strange that the idealist rivalry between French universalism and the German provincialism is not revised after Vichy or Algiers. Naturally, we cannot even mention the Lévinasian critique on the temptation of assimilation into the sameness, which the Enlightenment proposed to the Israelite in the metropolis, demonstrating that the universal was not as universal as the ethnic.

However, Finkielkraut keeps insisting on the universality of the center: “to be really French means something beyond France.”927 In this moment it is important to return to his own biography (a Frenchman who descended from Polish Jews) to fully understand his proposal when he writes, “not long ago Witold Gombrowicz…used the case of France as a corrective to Poles, who, fascinated by their ‘Polishness,’ were themselves trying to become the best examples possible of their collective history.”928 Finkielkraut brings an anti-Nationalist Polish writer into the discussion, a

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924 Ibid., 102.  
925 Ibid.  
926 Ibid.  
927 Ibid.  
928 Ibid. See his basic biography in Judith Friedlander, *Vilna on the Seine*, 124-139 and 3.1.1.
man who studied in France and was hesitant to write in Polish, as an example of the universality of France. Therefore, the problem of the lack of universality is not only reduced to Third World thinkers (a major proportion of them immigrants) and xenophobes (of German romanticism), but also to a case of the land of his parents, Poland, which is anti-Russian in its nationalistic impetus. It seems that, for Finkielkraut, the universe is not universal; only liberal (and imperial) France is. Finkielkraut should, without doubt, be praised for his provocative originality and his mastery of theories of worldwide complot against pure, universal, and charitable (colonial and egocentric) liberal thinking.

Naturally, he forgets not only the cruelty of French colonialism in Indochina and Algeria, but also, as he writes in his classic work *Le Juif Imaginarie* how French Jews—to mention a case very dear to him—passionately excluded and persecuted Polish Jews (Finkielkraut’s own family) due to their alien origin. Indeed, in the split between the universal Israelite and the religious Jews (the former being the formidable, universal French and the latter being the underdeveloped, particularistic Polish), the universality of the French is not contested. Unfortunately, the universe is not as universal as the Finkielkraut’s France. This is especially true when the generation of his Polish parents living in France was sent before the French Jews to concentration camps during the war. Naturally, the French Jews “were Dreyfusards” but their universality, even with the extended nature of the alliance that protected Jews outside France, finished at the door of their Israelite home or consistorial discourse.

Being consistent with his cultural neo-imperialist approach, Finkielkraut finishes his article by extending his discourse into to dangerous spheres. Nowadays, according to the author, there is a danger; the fanatic barbarians have crossed the limits of the city. “[I]t is undeniable that the presence

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929 See 3.2.1.
in Europe of a growing number of immigrants from the Third World poses a new set of problems. Their problem is their rage. The immigrants cannot be received as Finkielkraut’s parents were received (with open arms during the persecution of their own community?) and they cannot have the same sense of gratitude for France as their parents had (when they were sent to the concentration camps prior to the French Jews by Vichy authorities?). This is because of the weight of colonial history: “Driven from their homes by poverty and traumatized by the humiliation of colonialism, these people cannot feel the same kind of attraction and gratitude for the country taking them in that most refuges from Eastern Europe experienced early in the country.”

Does this mean, though, that they cannot be accommodated into European society? Is Finkielkraut purporting a xenophobic stance? Taking into account the open benevolence of the assimilationist Enlightenment, to reject the welcome is unacceptable: “as far as it is concerned, the spirit of modern Europe accommodates itself very well to the existence of ethnic or religious communities.” However, to do so, these communities should follow the rules of the French-generated universal Enlightenment. They should erase their communal identification and internal solidarity. They can be accommodated “on the condition that they conform to the model of a nation comprised of free and equal individuals. This demand carries along with the rejection of practices—including those whose roots go deep in history—that reject the basic rights of human beings.” In other words, Lévinas’ presumable heir is asking his readers to reduce the other to the totality of the same, to assimilate into the system. The German Jews took this same path before the Holocaust. The secular disciple breaks a long line of identification with the barbaric alien, which was followed by Cohen, Rosenzweig, and Lévinas. Finkielkraut finishes by being anti-Lévinasian. In the next section, I will consider options for recovering this link between the Jew and the other.

932 Ibid.
933 Ibid.
934 Ibid.
4.3. Occidentalism and the Jew

4.3.1. The Silenced Occidental Connection

Finkielkraut continues developing his approach to decolonialism and the place of barbarism ten years later, in another collection of essays published under the title, *L’Humanite perdue*. In the first essay, “Qui est mon semblable,” he returns to his concern for civilizational barbarism (as opposed to Third World underdeveloped barbarism) and with the same enlightened aim. His point of departure is, once again, Lévinas. Finkielkraut extends the concept of unified humankind, as explained by twentieth-century Jewish thought from Cohen to his teacher: “An incredible message, an astounding revelation...led Emmanuel Lévinas to say, ‘Monotheism...is, perhaps, a gift from on high that makes it possible to see man’s similarity to man beneath the continuing diversity of individual historical traditions.”935 This human common denominator permits him to develop a critique of the genealogy of the term *barbarism* from late antiquity to current developments, justifying the enlightened cultural colonialism presented before.936

In his narrative of the archaeology of the term from Paul of Tarsus to Claude Lévi-Strauss, Finkielkraut finds a turning point in the year 1550 when, according to him, the term *barbarism* radically changed in European conscience.937 Regrettably, the later location of knowledge, the European mind, is the only conscience active and capable of thinking. Finkielkraut recounts that after fifty years of a confrontation, “face to face” with “strange, unknown people,” the Spaniards ask[ed] themselves if the creatures of “exotic aspect” “deserve to be called men.”938 Moreover, they ask whether those identified as ‘Indians’ “are capable of reason;” whether or not “they have a soul”

936 This re-evaluation of the problem of barbarism through the unified humankind was present in the project since Hermann Cohen. See 1.2.2.
937 In the introduction, I have shown that the debate actually follows the recovery of Aristotle made centuries before by Aquinas. See point e of the introduction.
938 Ibid., 22/11
and if they must save the natives through instructing “them in the ways of Christianity.” But, most importantly, they wonder if they convert the Indians and “they become Christians, do they have the right to claim them as property?” Naturally, an attentive reader of Lévinas can be confused by Finkielkraut’s use of the term *face to face*. For the teacher it involves a dialogue in proximity that acknowledges the irreducibility of the *other* to the *same*. This is hardly the case with the violent conquest that attempted, as Dussel explained in the same period, to do exactly the contrary: to reduce the different to the same system and justifying the burglary that follows the temptation of property. Or, as the long tradition that begins with David Ricardo and finishes in the liberation theologians through Marx, would have called it, primitive accumulation.

As indicated by Finkielkraut, the turning point in the definition of the concept of barbarism takes place in the now celebrated debate in the courts of Sevilla, between Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda and Bartolomé de las Casas, in the middle of the sixteenth century. Although Sepulveda justifies the inhumanity of the barbarian natives, as I have shown in the introduction, Bartolomé de las Casas defends their humanity (and their right to conversion to the same system). Sepulveda, armed with the Aristotelian concept of barbarism as explained in the *Politics* he has just translated, writes that according to him the natives “do not have written law; only a few barbaric customs. The natives do not even recognize the right to own private property, which makes them natural slaves. And if they reject the iron rule of their legitimate master, the law commands that they be made to obey the force of weapons.” In opposition, Bartolomé de las Casas, known as “the great gatherer of Indian Tears,” not only denounces the violence against the natives but also describes them, on the same

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939 Ibid.
940 Ibid.
941 For further analysis of the conquest of America as the reduction of the other to the same, and the conquistador’s rejection to the face-to-face encounter, in the alternative heritage of Finkielkraut in Enrique Dussel, *1492. Eclipse of “the other” and the myth of modernity* (New York: Continuum, 1995) published originally as 1492. *El Encubrimiento del Otro: Hacia el Origen del mito de la Modernidad* (La Paz: Plural Editores, 1994). The book is based upon the lectures Dussel delivered in Frankfurt as a commemoration of the five hundred year anniversary of the “uncovering” of the Americas.
Aristotelian grounds, as “having well-established customs and a disciplined way of life.”\textsuperscript{943} Naturally, there is no critique of what makes someone’s customs well-established, which then in turn leads to the understanding that only Europeans were civilized. This notwithstanding, de las Casas becomes a source of inspiration for a long line of radical thinkers in Latin American up to twentieth-century liberation theologians.\textsuperscript{944} According to Finkielkraut, Sepulveda was the never proclaimed winner of the debate, but he was honoured as the leading voice in policy making.\textsuperscript{945} De Las Casas, however, was successful at leaving an intellectual heritage after him since he:

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\text{[S]ucceeded in changing the meaning of the word barbarism…. The confrontation with the Americas inspired a new and great European concept barbarian Europe when he writes: 'we consider people barbarian when they do not have a system of writing or a scholarly language. But the people of the Indies could treat us as barbarians, since we do not understand their language.'}\textsuperscript{946}
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The reader could argue that this barbarism is the same negative civilizational barbarism as in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century socialist Jewish thought that we located in the previous chapter. In favor of this argument, we can mention that both de las Casas and Marx understand the barbarism of Europe as being connected with colonialism from within the European tradition. To add, both projects attempt to subsume the other into the project of the same (Christianity or Marxism). In other words, the two assimilationist projects (sixteenth-century Christian and the nineteenth to twentieth century non-Jewish Jew) are part of the same internal project of protest, and both use barbarism as a discursive means. However, the civilizational barbarism of de las Casas, according to Finkielkraut’s interpretation, is a logical, symmetrical argument and does not have the weight that the socialists (also utopian but especially scientific Jews) want to put to the “barbarous

\textsuperscript{943} Ibid., 25/14.
\textsuperscript{944} Bartolomé de Las Casas is until today a major figure in Liberation Theology. See the webpage of the Center Bartolomé de las Casas in Cusco, Peru: \url{http://www.cbc.org.pe}. Read also Gutierrez, \textit{La Casas: In Search of the Poor of Jesus Christ} (Maryknoll: New York, 1992).
\textsuperscript{945} Regarding the influence of Aristotle on the construction of otherness in the Americas, see the classic Lewis Hanke, \textit{Aristotle and the American Indians} (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970).
\textsuperscript{946} Ibid., 27/16.
actions of the Christian race” (as Marx would say). On the one hand, in de las Casas there is an attempt to implode the term barbarism from the inside, stripping the term of real significance. If each side could call the other barbarian, then the term itself is empty of any derogatory content. It stops being used as a justification for the assimilation of the other into the same as it implodes the conquistador asymmetrical relationship. On the other hand, the socialists attempt—as they are accustomed in a post-Feuerbachian stage of left-Hegelianism—to turn the concept upside down. They make Europe responsible for barbarism, not as an equal term but because of its cruelty.

A connection can clearly be made between radical central European Christians (seventeenth century Spanish) and radical European Jews (nineteenth century German) in their rejection of the normal use of the term barbarism. However, they subvert the concept differently. The Christian strips it from its power. The European connection between those who argue over the definition of barbarism cannot be fully developed. Both write as integral parts of European thought in defense of the vanquished and in favor of subversion of the term. That said, they practice a different type of subversion of the barbaric issue, and any attempt at connection needs to acknowledge this difference. Although the explicit connection that Finkielkraut seems to make cannot be carried over, there is an alternative, subversive link unexplored by Finkielkraut, to whom the only capable direction of thinking is the European. I do not refer to the connection between those who protest against the suffering, but rather to the link among the sufferers themselves. In other words, the connection is not between the German Jew and the Western Christian, but between those silenced (the Merinos, Natives, and Blacks).

Let me trace this explosive connection, which is silenced in the text of Finkielkraut. In his redefinition of barbarism, Jews appear in the beginning (in Paul’s proposal of a non-exclusive form of love for all humankind as expressed in the nondifferentiation between “Greek and barbarian”)

947 See 3.3.
and at the end (the already mentioned position of Lévi-Strauss). But the voice of the Jew is completely silenced from the first century until the twentieth. From Paul to Lévi-Strauss it seems that the Jew is unable to present a stand on barbarism. The obvious question that follows this reflection is what was happening with the Jew in this period that occupies no less than one thousand, eight hundred years? In addition, was the Jewish preoccupation with barbarism (from Marx to Lévi-Strauss and from Cohen to Lévinas) a sudden concern or does it stem from a long-term interest that Finkielkraut fails to analyze?

I contend that what Finkielkraut overlooks is the voice of the Jew, persecuted as a non-European, which is intimately connected with the persecution of other non-Europeans. One does not need to wait until Voltaire to analyze the categorization of Jews as a barbaric people since this perspective appears in early modernity. When the problem of barbarism arose as a central concern for the protesters of imperialism, Jews were speaking the language of the subversive, disposed of as they were co-racialized along with the Natives. The Spanish purity of blood policy implicates, as I will show, the Jew as an impure and barbaric non-European, unable to leave her Jewishness behind. In the sixteenth century, the Jew was racialized with—and intimately related to—the Native in two contexts, namely the metropolis and the colony. Yet, Finkielkraut is unable to reveal this connection since the modern non-European Jew (as with all non-Europeans) lacks the ability to speak by him-or herself. The only ones able to disrupt barbarism are the non-barbaric (central) European protesters against imperial cruelty. As we have said, the connection in the subversion of barbarism should not be placed in the conversation between (central) European voices, but in the encounter of those who are outside Europe (the center) who can create a barbaric indigenous project. This original conversation is acknowledged by the decolonial heirs of Lévinas and explains the elective

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948 We should remember that in the introduction, the barbarism of the Jew was incorporated by Voltaire in his philosophical dictionary of 1764. See point e. of the introduction.
affinity between the Eastern and Southern philosophers. Finkielkraut is right that a turning point in the definition of barbarism was the sixteenth century. By missing the place of the Jew since early modernity, however, he is unable to trace what makes his teacher and the decolonial thinkers visualize the same thing.

4.3.2. The Historical Emergence of the Elective Affinity

What is the role of the Jew in the sixteenth century and to what extent can a bond of five hundred years shared between the other and the Jew explain about the sympathy between Lévinas and the group of Latin America intellectuals? I will suggest that “the thing” which both were able to visualize was the colonial difference. This was a term coined by another Latin American intellectual who was writing his dissertation at the École des Hautes Etudes during the period that Lévinas was meeting with the sympathetic Latin American group in Paris.949 Walter Mignolo finishes his doctoral work in the same year that Lévinas calls for the introduction of positive barbarism into the language of philosophy (1974). Mignolo, years later and from his current position in American scholarship, calls for a barbaric theorizing that emerges from the “exteriority (in Lévinas’ sense).”950 I will contend that the sense of community between the Jew and the Latin American is explained by the difference between the decolonial stand of the students of Occidentalism (such as Mignolo) and the researchers of Orientalism (from Said to subaltern studies). The latter and major trend in post-colonial studies departs from its analysis of modernity in the eighteenth century, basing their experiences on British politics and French imperialistic culture. Racial constructions are only built

949 By the acknowledgment of the colonial difference, Mignolo understands the “classification of the planet in the modern/colonial imaginary, by enacting coloniality of power, energy and a machinery to transform differences into values.” Mignolo, Local Histories/Global Designs, 13.
950 Ibid., 18.
through rare science in the next century. Starting modernity from this latter date, however, places the Jew within Europe and within the historical memory of common racialization, which culminates with the Holocaust and later erases its station in the colonization. In contraposition, Mignolo finds the origin of modernity in the moment that colonialism appears in the context of a neo-diasporic world emerging from the multiple expulsions from Europe and posterior racialization of peoples, including the Jews. Mignolo places the beginning of colonial modernity in the sixteenth century as the moment in which:

Christianity established itself as intolerant to Judaism and Islam as well as to the ‘idolatry’ of the Amerindians … with the expulsion of Jews and Moors and the discovery of America, the first global design of the modern/colonial world system and, consequently, the anchor of Occidentalism and the coloniality of power drawing the external borders as the colonial difference, which became reconverted and resemantized in the late eighteen and early nineteenth centuries with the expansion of Britain and France to Asia and Africa.

Current trends of post-colonial studies acknowledge the late 1970s work of Said’s Orientalism as a “Messianic arrival” or “canonical event.” That said, the creation of the otherness in the Orient (that follows modern racialization in the French and British context after the eighteenth century) is only a second stage in the racialization of peoples that started in the sixteenth century. Departing from this later stage undermines the significance of coloniality for Jewish counter-narratives as it does not place the Jew within the racialized in the colonial context. I should clarify, however, that Said is not to be blamed for this limitation. Arendt, an expert in the relations between anti-Semitism and imperialism, also misses this point. Said, at a later date, acknowledges that “Orientalism and modern anti-Semitism have common roots.” Nevertheless, by starting the period of racialization

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951 A clear understanding of the limits of this trend can be found in the historical recollection of modernity made by Leela Gandhi’s work. According to Gandhi, the origins could be found in the Renaissance but it is not until the eighteen century that modernity begins. See Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*, 34-41 and 45-49.
at a later date, he fails to identify the common foundation and the introduction of Jewish counter-narratives in post-colonial studies. Current scholarship, critically expanding and challenging the work of Said, has examined this gap, exploring “what the link is between them” since “Orientalism has always been not only about the Muslims but also about the Jews.” I argue that it is Mignolo’s conception of this early modernity that is going to explain the origins of this common source. Saidian Orientalism, the creation of an otherness in the Orient, provokes a revolution in the studies of otherness in late 1970s in North America. However, this is only a second stage that follows Occidentalism in the creation of the Americas and the simultaneous racialization of Native Americans, Jews, Arabs, and soon Africans. It is in this context that the barbaric community was born.

The Jews, in a colonial context, are not just one case more in the racialization schema. In the sixteenth century, Jews (going beyond Mignolo’s work for a paragraph) became the universal model of otherness, as the natives in the Americas were identified as such: “from the beginning of European expansion Judaism was employed in the decipherment of religion, and Jewish ancestry was used as a likely explanation for the peoples Europeans encountered.” This places the Jews in the center of the colonial imaginary since the sixteenth century. It is true that the Jews were not the only candidates to explain the origin of these (in Finkielkraut’s terms) strange creatures. However, “they were among the first, and the discourse suggesting Israelite origins ran the longest and had the

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958 I am very fortunate to have an ongoing discussion with Prof. Kalmar about the subject. While he holds that Occidentalism and Orientalism are simultaneous creations, on this respect I return to the writings of Dussel and Mignolo to understand from where the Spaniards obtain the resources (the primitive accumulation) to reproduce their world dominion and the defeat of the ‘moor.’ In other words, the creation of Orientalism that follows the confrontation after the re-conquest is impossible to understand without the material and ideological resources offered by a previous Occidentalism. For this reason, I stand with one of my Latino teachers on this subject with the intention of my other teacher (Kalmar) in looking closely the construction of the Jew within colonial discourse.
959 Parfitt, “The Use of the Jew in Colonial Discourse” in Kalmar and Penslar ed. *Orientalism and the Jews*, 51-67. It is necessary to point out that this text was published within a school that attempts to extend Said. I believe that Oriental/Occidental studies in the future will be more fruitful.
Far from being a localized temporally, this discourse has been extended beyond the limits of—let me purposefully use Rosenzweig’s terminology here—an *époque*. The “idea of Jewish origins for the indigenous peoples of the Americas was the dominant discourse for much of the four hundred years between 1500 and 1900.” And it had the same consequences, regarding the space and imperial power that was in charge of making this identification, as it started with the “Spanish historians” and was to be later encountered “in British, French and North American accounts.” Not surprisingly, one of the supporters of this theory was Bartolomé de las Casas himself. The Jewishness (or better explained, the biblical Israelism) of the natives proved both their humanity and the need for their conversion (or the reduction of the others to the same). The defense of the indigenous peoples within the discourse on the Jews becomes—paradoxically—part of the totalitarian Christian project. All others are the same and are analyzed within the same system that only acknowledges salvation through Christianity.

The utilization of biblical accounts by the colonial power to explain the origin of the Natives follows a geopolitical structure (colonial knowledge that after political decolonization became coloniality of knowledge) that began in the sixteenth century and continues today. Indeed, far from being fully abandoned, we can see Lévinas’ limits on the recognition of the multiplicity of otherness that Dussel was requesting (as well as the sameness of otherness in Ethiopia) as a consequence of this Eurocentric perspective of world communities. Now returning to Mignolo, the conquistador developed “a division of the world in Asia/Shem, Africa/Ham and Europe/Japhet.” In contrast, with the “discovering” of America there was a problem: “Noah did not have four

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960 Ibid., 53.
961 Ibid.
962 Ibid.
964 The relation between ‘coloniality of power’ and ‘coloniality of knowledge’ (the possibility of coercion that is legitimized by the limitation of both a way of thinking and also the location of thought) can be seen throughout the work of Mignolo. See especially 17-22.
sons.” In this context, America started to be considered “the daughter and the inheritor of Europe.” In the Americas, for the first time in modernity, another continent was seen as the same and not as something that was an other. While Africa and Asia were going to be incorporated into the same system, America was incorporated as the prospective ego of the same. While its inhabitants were pre-Christian subjects (i.e. Israelites), America was designated to become the inheritor of Europe. Naturally, America, to have a purely Christian future, should be Judenrein (through conversion, expulsion, or simple genocide). Once again, we see how the Latin American writers follow the Lévinasian understanding of the intimate connection between the liberal and fascist through their common reading of the imperialist treatment of the barbaric. It is clear now how the genocide and forced conversion of Natives in the Americas is intimately related to the construction of the idea of the Jew since the beginning of Christianity. An idolatrous-free continent meant a Judenrein kingdom.

If the overlapping of the image of the Jew and the Native is not enough to explain this affinity, we can return to the Iberian Peninsula to see what happened with the actual Jews. In the context of the world’s Judaization of new populations and the attempt to reduce them to the same system, the Jews in Europe (and soon after in the New World) were suffering the limits of this promised assimilation. Following different attempts at assimilation in the one hundred years that preceded the re-conquest, Jews were forced to decide between conversion and expulsion in 1492. Though, in the transition from a theological to a racial understanding of peoples, New Christians (or conversos) were viewed with suspicion by the authorities. Current scholarship has shown that most of the new Christians were sincere Christians; still, the very modern (not medieval) bureaucratic machine of the Inquisition made use of this nomenclature as a means of social control, imposing

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966 Ibid.
967 See the reflections of Lévinas regarding the problem in 2.2.2.
laws of purity of blood persecuting, limiting assimilation, and even torturing and killing New Christians.\textsuperscript{969} This was perhaps the first modern, systematic racialization in a metropolitan parallel to the racialization of Natives in the colonies. Any connection of this action and the protective racializing self in Lévinas is not a pure coincidence. The Marrano, the Jew who converted and returned to Judaism secretly, is a consequence of the persecution and not the other way around.\textsuperscript{970} The desperation at being persecuted because of inescapable ancestry is the beginning of the racialization that will reach one of its apexes in the Holocaust. Jews (or Natives in this case) were a threat to the Christian (later \textit{Volk}) purity due to their existence and not their actions. This inescapable persecution is what, in Mignolo’s narrative, will make this Jew the forerunner of current Native Guatemalan. Mignolo, in the context of the theorization of border knowledge writes:

While the expulsion of the Moors demarcated the exterior of what would be a new commercial circuit and while the Mediterranean become the frontier, the expulsion of the Jews determined one of the inner borders of the emerging system. The converso instead opened up the borderland, the place in which neither the exterior nor the interior frontiers apply, although they were the necessary conditions for borderlands. The converso will never be at peace with himself or herself, nor will he or she be trustworthy from the point of view of the state. The converso was not so much a hybrid as it was a place of fear and passing, of lying and terror…. To be considered or to consider oneself a Jew, a Moor, or a Christian was clear. To be a converso was to navigate the ambiguous waters of the undecided. At the time, the borderland was not a comfortable position to be in. Today the borderland is the place of a desired epistemological potential…and the ‘discomfort’ generated by Rigoberta Menchu.\textsuperscript{971}

The Jew has this double role as the \textit{interior border} and the \textit{in-within position}. In South American accounts, Jews appear as the first peoples who are unable to escape their heritage, as they were included as the same (the limit of the interior border) \textit{and} as the radical difference that should be exterminated (the in-between). Lévinas agrees with Mignolo, acknowledging the epistemological

\textsuperscript{969} See for example the radical revision of the problem in Benzion Netanyahu, \textit{The Origins of the Inquisition in the Fifteen Century} (New York: Random House, 1995), 975-980. This is cited in Mignolo, \textit{Local Histories/Global Designs}, 29.

\textsuperscript{970} Netanyahu, \textit{The Marranos of Spain: From the Late 14th to the early sixteenth century} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 1-4.

\textsuperscript{971} Mignolo, \textit{Local Histories/Global Designs}, 29.
potential of writing from the ghettos and mellahs. According to Mignolo, it is the uncomfortable position of the Jew that will explain the epistemological potential that is carried by the current Native. This is, for Mignolo, \textit{border gnosis}. We are not considering the word as originating from “hybrid,” but as Mignolo states, “from the exteriority (in Lévinas’ sense).” For Mignolo, the inner “epistemological privilege” of those within in the border equalizes what is the Hebrew ethical resistance of the disposed dispossessed in Lévinas. In reading Mignolo, we find this epistemological advantage from the dispossessed who live “in the borders” such as “Afro-Americans, Amerindians, Arabs, Jews, Chicanos and others.” This is the forgotten link of the readers of Lévinas and the current post-Saidian interpreters. Starting from a later development of racialization and modernity, they are unable to engage with the simultaneous racialization between the Jew and the other others. Indeed, they are unable to see the Jews’ in between-ness.

We have found a clear link in the racialization of Jews and Latin Americans in the sixteenth century. But is this historical explanation enough to warrant discussion of a community in the twentieth century that will make the Latin American philosophers feel attached to a post-Holocaust philosopher? The Holocaust itself, its foreboding of which influenced all the work of Lévinas, is the key to explain the persistence of the same bond in the post-Holocaust context and the extension of modernity from the sixteenth to (at least) the twentieth century. Lévinas’ \textit{Eastern sensibility} and his survival of the Holocaust are what make Lévinas, and not Cohen or Rosenzweig, the source for the Latin Americans. And they are what make Lévinas acknowledge the barbaric character of his proposal. As Mignolo holds, at “the end of the nineteenth century…purity of blood was no longer measured in terms of religion but of the color of people’s skin, and began to be used to distinguish

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
  \bibitem{2} See 2.3.5.
  \bibitem{3} Mignolo, \textit{Local Histories/Global Designs}, 18.
  \bibitem{4} Ibid., 157.
  \bibitem{5} See point b. of the introduction.
\end{thebibliography}
the Aryan ‘race’ from other ‘races.’” In the nineteenth century, the stratification of race was not a novelty, it just took a new form. The existence of a pseudoscience of races is an innovation in the racialization of peoples (though the racialization itself is only a second stage of aforementioned process). The major concern of post-colonial theory is this racialization: “If Marxist thinking could be described as having class as its core, postcolonial theorizing could be described as having race at its core.”

Even though Mignolo is highly critical of the term post-colonialism to describe the entire school of thought, I will use it in order to explain a paradoxical problem. If post-colonial theory has race in its core and the Jew was racialized in both early modernity (Spanish empire) and in the twentieth century (pseudoscience culminating in Nazism), how is it that Jews are not seen as a central concern of post-colonial theory?

Whether or not this is an influence of a Palestinian Said, the whitening of Judaism in the context of emergence of post-colonial theory in the Americas, or some other reason will concern us in a later study. Mignolo once again helps us to recover the decolonial exteriority of Judaism in writing that “the Amerindian and the African diaspora in the early modern period; the Holocaust, as the denouement of European modernity and a crisis of the civilizing mission, are, in my understanding, at the root of colonial and imperial histories.” For Mignolo, “the subaltern reason is what arises as a response to the need of rethinking and re-conceptualizing the stories that have been told and the conceptualization that has been put into place to divide the world between Christians and pagans, civilized and barbarians.”

As an example of this subaltern, barbaric reasoning (in opposition to the critical stances of some other European thinkers), he selects, in contrast to the second generation of the school of Frankfurt (namely Jurgen Habermas),

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976 Ibid., 31.
977 Ibid., 98.
979 Mignolo, Local Histories/Global Designs, 98.
980 Ibid.
“Horkheimer’s critical take on the notion of theory and its connection between critical theory and oppression, as was the case with the Jews in Germany, 450 years after their expulsion from Spain at the beginning of the modern/colonial world system and the colonial difference.” The Jews in post-Occidentalist accounts are part of the barbaric people. But what makes them part of the barbaric theoretical constructions? In the next chapter it will be shown that the Jew shares with the other others not only racialization but the re-appropriation of the accusations. The barbaric simultaneous re-appropriation in Lévinas and Dussel is the recovering of a five hundred year bond.

4.4. Re-appropriation Toward Barbarism

4.4.1. Reclaiming Identities

Mignolo’s barbaric proposal on the interrelation of racialization and anti-Semitism in a post-Occidental setting is not reduced to his writings on Lévinas’ exteriority or Horkheimer’s sensitivity to theory as oppression. In his work he acknowledges that the two courses he co-taught on Modernity, Latin America, and Coloniality between 1997 and 1998 were important in the analysis of “the Latin-American argument.” The co-instructor of the course was another expert in Andean anthropology, Irene Silverblatt. The coincidental similarities between Horkheimer and Silverblatt (model of and colleague to Mignolo, respectively) should be pointed out. Both of them are theoretically sophisticated Jewish social scientists of Marxist persuasion, born in the center of the generation of knowledge (pre-war Germany and the post-war United States). And, in both cases, their work takes a negative stance. Horkheimer attempts to make a critique of the Enlightenment in order to explain European barbarism. Silverblatt attempts to make a critique of modern racial bureaucracy in order to read counter-historically and explain the alternative barbarism that was

981 Ibid., 146.
982 Ibid., 127.
rising. She explores the location of this barbaric locus in the inquisitorial documents, following Benjamin’s Spivakian motif of reading history against the grain.983

One of the most interesting features of Silverblatt’s work is the omnipresence of the Jew in uncovering this locus, in the context of Native re-appropriation of uncivilized nature. For Horkheimer, it was in “the face of the Jew” that “the harmony” of the European “national community is automatically established.”984 For Silverblatt, it is in the presence of the Jew that the other recovers her barbarism through a common counter-narrative. In her work, Modern Inquisitions: Peru and Colonial Origins of the Civilized World, Silverblatt acknowledges the importance of the classes taught with Mignolo in developing this comprehensive examination, which goes beyond the ethnographic case analysis.985 According to Silverblatt, in the seventeenth century the quest for Catholic purity by the modern and bureaucratic Inquisitorial machinery from the beginning of modernity raised multiple interactions in the construction of otherness (and its reaction). Her focus in the work is on “three interacting confusions: the ‘Jewish problem,’ the ‘woman/witchcraft problem,’ and the ‘Indian problem.’”986 According to Silverblatt, the interrelation of cases reveals the interest in “racial profiling” on the part of “those supporters of the purity-of-blood” who are convinced that “conversion could not erase the stains of the heretical past.”987 In other words, of those who—once they have eradicated the difference that is incorporated into the same system as the other—block the participation of the other in civilization by perpetuating her supposed barbarism.

983 See the original call to read against the grain in Benjamin, “Thesis on the Philosophy of History,” 256 and the adaptation within decolonial studies in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Subaltern Studies: De-constructing Historiography” ii Selected Subaltern Studies ed. Ranahit Guha and Spivak (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 25. It is important to notice the intimate connection between the Jewish thinker and the decolonial theorist once again.
984 The Jew, in this context, represents the ontological alien. Horkheimer and Adorno, in “Elements of anti-Semitism: Limits of Enlightenment,” 152.
985 Silverblatt, Modern Inquisitions, xii.
986 Ibid., 25.
987 Ibid.
Following a close study of the inquisitorial records, Silverblatt reveals how any religious alternative to Spanish Catholicism, any presumable “idolatrous behavior, was often paired with political dissension, even revolt” in the two hundred years following the arrival of the colonial power. In Silverblatt’s readings, the idolatrous Indians are seen as potential revolutionaries: “it was the idolatrous who tended to leave their state-mandated reducciones (settlements) to be closer to their Gods’…[;] it was the idolatrous who would promote disrespect for their officials.” The problem is not necessarily their fleeing, but the purpose of their escape: to join the anti-Christian forces. In Silverblatt’s words, “it was the Indian angered by colonial practices that will join the infidel’s ranks…it was the infidels who were fighting the wars of the frontier…[:] Idolatry (like Judaism) breathed sedition.” Jews were seen in this context not only as the image (as we have seen before) that could explain the unknown nature of the natives, but also as the potential allies of those colonized. It is known that the myth of Jewish conspiracy will be a central motif in the second stage of modernity. Indeed, the national-socialist ideology cannot be explained without it.

However, the original connection between racialization and this theory can be found in the sixteenth century. The Jews who had been “controlling interest in the Calvinist and recently independent from Spain Dutch West Indies Company,” and those “crypto-Jews” who were a rising community in the center of the viceroyalty (Lima) were the potential alliance for the revolutionary dispossessed: “New Christians were plotting with the potentially subversive groups within the colony (Indios and Negros).” New Christians were able to ally themselves with the enemies within “because of their remarkable ability to conspire in secret languages.” This use of secret language (not as barbaric as the impossibility of speaking, but rather barbaric as the reduction to the same

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988 Ibid., 183.
989 Ibid.
990 Ibid.
991 This is the major thesis of Cohn, The Myth of Jewish Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Wise of Zion, 17-39.
992 Silverblatt, Modern Inquisitions, 143.
993 Ibid., 143.
foreign language) has its origins in the connection made by the colonial powers themselves: the Inquisition seems to be trapped into its own narrative creating a community between Jews and other others.994 In this way, the Spaniards comprehended all struggle as a combat between “Old Christians against New Christians.” More specifically, in Silverblatt’s words, the combat was between “los católicos” and the “nación hebra.”995 Once again, Judaism becomes the source for the universalization of otherness, including Indians and Blacks.996

This alliance was reflected in two counter-narratives of re-appropriations of identity in the Andean context: the Indians who became Judaizer Indians and the women accused of witchcraft who became Judaizer witches. In a different context, we could identify them as the orphan and the widow in the account of rabbinical diasporism. In both cases, they were also resident aliens in their own territories. Let me start with the second of these cases. In the context of the translation of witchcraft from the metropolis to the colony as a religious, ethnic, and especially sexual control of the population, Spaniards accused women who were not following established social patterns (e.g. who were single, old, or with absent or murdered husbands) of witchery. In this context, they were considered a “weak point in a divinely ordained patriarchal society” and “the point of entry” of the devil, “of Satan.”997 This presumably subversive existence is what makes them Jews: “In tribunal eyes,” according to Silverblatt, “witches had joined hidden Jews as culprits in the subversion of Peru’s moral fabric and political stability.”998 Silverblatt points out cases in which these witches, during their interrogations, were accused of invoking the “Mountains of Zion,” “the seven tribes of

994 This identification of Judaism with a secret language will be further explored by Sander Gilman. See Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986). Gilman is especially relevant since he builds the narrative starting from well before the eighteenth century. This is an exception in current Jewish readings of the phenomenon.
995 Silverblatt, Modern Inquisitions, 143.
996 Ibid.
997 Ibid., 167.
998 Ibid., 163.
Israel,” or the “Tables of Moses” in their sorcery.999 In several cases (and despite the torture) the accused women rejected the accusations. In several others, however, they accepted and proudly called themselves Judaizer witches.1000

Silverblatt asks herself, “how do we explain the fact that some indigenous women in the seventeenth century confessed to being” witches and Jews?1001 She argues that in a context of powerlessness, the suspicion about women led them “to exercise new powers, because of their diabolic pacts.”1002 In this way, they become “a symbolic force capable of intervening on behalf of the Indian commoner as a witch in a colonial indigenous society…the witch becomes the spokesperson for and the defender of the normative standards of village life.”1003 These women, in the new context, were fulfilling a new role by taking advantage of the accusation of the colonizer, putting them in a place where they were able to take revenge “on Spaniards and their nonsensical beliefs and assumptions.”1004 These women saw themselves in a somewhat unexpected role that they never had in the patriarchal communities prior to the arrival of the colonizer. Paradoxically or not, with a double burden and in spite of the suffering, “now, in the colonial times, indigenous women could become priestesses to their ayllus’s gods. The peculiar constraints on women in colonial institutions led them to hold positions in native religious organizations largely prohibited prior to the conquest.”1005 Far from ending their rebellion in the re-absorption of the accusation, they formed new rituals, and in the end, some of them escaped to the mountains (La Puna) and created anti-colonial female communities outside the control of the empire.1006 In the Native witches, explicitly associated with Jewry as the general denomination of idolatry, we can see one of the earliest modern

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999 Ibid., 167.
1000 Ibid.
1001 Ibid.
1002 Ibid., 181.
1003 Ibid., 187.
1004 Ibid., 190.
1005 Ibid., 198.
1006 Ibid., 206-208.
counter-narratives and re-appropriations of accusations that subverted the colonial structure. The widows and foreign residents recover power through their association with Judaism.\textsuperscript{1007}

A parallel case took place with the Native elite who reabsorbed the accusations of “Indianhood.” It is clear that the diversity of groups and the complex social and political relations of the inhabitants of the Western Indies were simplified by the colonizers, who created a collective, racial denomination for all groups they encountered. In the context of the seventeenth-century viceroyalty, the Native elite, as with the witches, started to reabsorb the accusations by reconstructing their pasts and becoming Indians. According to Silverblatt, this counter-historical counter-narrative was able to cross hierarchical boundaries in order to create an anti-colonial stand for a community that did not exist as such prior to the colonization: “Indianism galvanized allegiances across lines of gender and privilege…and it called to the curacas and peasants by appealing to a sense of justice, to a longstanding ethic of obligation.”\textsuperscript{1008} This common obligation was related to common ancestors that could hardly be identified by their prior-to-conquest identity in which different groups understood themselves as created by different Gods: now a unified Indian identity would be claimed. With regard to one of these discourses, the reason for Native suffering is epistemological colonization: “The reason why Indians are dying is because they no longer adore their malquis [ancestors] and guacas like their elders formerly did, which is why there used to be so many ‘Indians’ [who] had more fields and clothing and who lived in greater tranquility.”\textsuperscript{1009} This was clearly a counter-narrative, as the pan-Indian religion as such did not exist before the conquest. However, in the positive re-appropriation of the racialist generalization made by the Spaniards, the “Indian suffering” is monotheistic fetishism. “[B]ecause they adore the guacas of the Spanish

\textsuperscript{1007} I would like to thank Prof. Teresa Berger, my first dissertation adviser, for supporting an independent reading of the subject, as well as Prof. Silverblatt for being interested in talking to me about my project at that time (Jewish liberation theology and Indianhood).

\textsuperscript{1008} Ibid., 196.

\textsuperscript{1009} Ibid.
people—nothing more than a few painted and gilded sticks—[the] ‘Indians’ keep on dying and losing their lands. The Spaniards’ gods don’t give ‘Indians’ anything. ‘Indians’ because [they] are ‘Indians’ should adore [our] guacas and ancestors.”

At the same moment that this counter-narrative of reaffirmation of the Indian-ness was taking place in the Spanish Viceroyalty (in the second and third decade of the seventeenth century), the Jewish converts, an anxious and desired epistemological stand, took a new life in Amsterdam. For the first time since 1492, the former Spaniards (now know as the Portuguese Nation) were enjoying the possibility of openly professing their religion. In Dutch Calvinist Holland, which had recently obtained its independence from Spain, the Jewish community reconnected with a tradition that had been hidden or forgotten for the previous hundred and fifty years. In the context of the rediscovery of their Judaism after being accused of being Judaizers, Antonio de Montezinos (a Marrano, also known as Aaron Lévy) arrived in Amsterdam in the early seventeenth century. Montezinos announced his discovery: he had found the lost tribe of Reuben in an inhospitable area of the Andes! According to Montezinos’ account, this community resided beyond the mythical river Sambation. When they knew he was Jewish as well they greeted him in the name of the patriarchs, and they recited the *Sh’ma Israel* for him. Montezinos, still shocked by the revelation, was caught returning from his journey by the Inquisition. During his captivity, one day he was prayed, “Blessed be the name of Lord, that has not made me an idolater, a barbarian, a black, moor, or an Indian; but as he named Indians, he was angry with himself and said, the Hebrews are Indians.”

After being released by the Inquisition, he traveled to the free Dutch lands and was instrumental in the creation of a major debate in Amsterdam on the relations between Jews and Natives. Not unexpectedly, some had doubts about the veracity of his story, but his story was

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1010 Ibid.
1011 See the account as told by Menashe ben-Israel, a Rabbi descendent of *marranos* who took over this topic. Menashe ben-Israel, *The Hope of Israel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 106.
welcomed by a community that only forty years later would rejoice with the arrival of the messiah, Shabbatai Tzvi.\textsuperscript{1012} It is not necessarily relevant what position was taken on the veracity of Montezinos’s story since the existence or the invention of the tribe will equally demonstrate the role of Judaism or Indianhood in the re-appropriation of identities by either Indians or Jews. On the one hand, let us suppose that the self-identified Israelite tribe did exist. In this case, the tribe can be considered as part of the Native re-appropriation of the identity given by the colonizer (as with the Indianhood). Only a century later, several tribes in Africa would identify themselves as Jewish. But perhaps even more importantly, the debate that surrounded Montezinos’s account shows the Marrano community’s clear interest in counter-narrative that constructs Jewish and Indian identities. In this moment, they were rediscovering their own Judaism after the years of the Inquisition, and a community that existed in insulation could prove that recovery of identity was possible. Perhaps this was the possibility of hermetic survival that made them to act so zealously with Spinoza. Alternatively, perhaps this was the model present in Rosenzweig’s construction of the eternal hermetic community out of Sephardic sociology.

In both cases, the story of Montezinos’ re-appropriation of Jewish identity places the alliance between Natives and Jews beyond the complot theories of the empire. Several Jews, guided by the same Messianic fervor that only twenty years later would support a Messiah, trusted in the Native-Jewish common bond. In the Americas, this tradition was extended when some nationalist (and not particularly philo-Semitic) thinkers, such as Ricardo Rojas extended the Jewish heritage of the Natives from the Andes Reubenites to the Mesoamerican Chapanecas.\textsuperscript{1013} Jews and Natives, asorphans of their traditions, not only simultaneously recovered subversive identities, but also held elective affinities during the recovery. Both re-appropriations of identities (the Witch and the Indian,}

\textsuperscript{1012} Not in vain, Arendt will consider this fact as the return of Jews to the political arena. The question is whether or not this return has its sources in the Jewish/Indian counter-narrative.
\textsuperscript{1013} See Feierstein, \textit{Historia de los Judíos Argentinos}, 20-21.
the orphan and the widow) were made in a context in which the Jew was also re-appropriating the identity he was accused of prophesizing; both of them were linked to subversive Judaism. This was the first modern step toward the re-appropriation of barbarism that included the Jew within the barbaric. In early modernity, the other re-appropriated its identity and a few centuries later, this re-appropriation would find a common denominator in the appropriation of barbarism itself. This re-appropriation of barbarism will help us to reinsert Jewish voices within a decolonial counter-narrative.

4.4.2. Positive Barbarism

As we have seen, the term *barbarian* was installed in debates concerning the identity of all the others, including the Jews, since the early sixteenth century. Following Marc Ferro’s explanation of decolonial discourses, the protest (and re-appropriation of these identities) was simultaneous with the racialization. The barbarians were particularly active in re-appropriating accusations in the seventeenth century. In the period following, eighteenth century Enlightenment, the racial situation was not only far from altered, it was instead emphasized. It is unnecessary to return to the practical difficulties of Jews during the French revolution. But it is in the late eighteenth century that a deeply influential luminary of the enlightened movement that will transform into the French Revolution reflects on the nature of peoples. François-Marie Arouet (better known as Voltaire) writes in his *Dictionarie philosophique* an article on the “Jews.” In this piece he declares that this “nation is only an ignorant and barbarous people who have long united the most sordid avarice with the most detestable superstition and the most invincible hatred for every people by whom they are tolerated and enriched.” Accusations of Jewish anti-humanitarian barbarism (from cannibalism to

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1014 See 4.3.1.
blood thirst) cross into the nineteenth century and are apparent in such German thinkers as Frederich William Ghilliany, not to mention Kant’s and Hegel’s claims of the barbaric character of the Jewish people. Naturally, the Jews were not alone as targets of the barbaric description. Both Kant and Hegel also described the Black in similar conditions and that latter explain that they were living in a stage of “barbarism, and he remains in this state to the present day.”1017 It is impossible to understand the character of the discourse in modernity without referring to the barbarism of the Jewish character among other barbaric characters.

In the post-independence setting that was supposedly inspired by the French Revolution (from the Haitian revolution in late eighteenth century to the South American independence of the first half of the nineteenth century), the dichotomy between civilization and barbarism was extended by all British-, French- or American-influenced, but formally independent, nations. During this time, Israelites in France were promised that they would be received as human beings. However, in the Dreyfus Affair in France and the Hitlerian adventures in Germany they witness, in Lévinas’ words, “the fragility of their works.”1018 In the Americas, the same civilizational path was being taken. Political leaders in Latin America, now returning to Mignolo, “appointed themselves as leaders of a civilizing mission in their own country, thus opening the door for a long history of intellectual colonialism.”1019 Since then, the generation of knowledge from the Americas was predominantly (though not exclusively) a repetition of cultural productions of Europe in general and France in particular. This is why, much like today in the case of North American universities, the most skilful students of the colonized assimilationists saw Paris as the necessary step toward the development of their civility.

1018 See 3.2.3.
1019 Mignolo, Local Histories/Global Designs, 55.
It is in this context that Martinique-born Césaire arrived in France in the period between the two world wars. Even though the American-Caribbean black community in France basked somewhat in Haiti’s reputation, perhaps the first successful barbaric (non-Creole) revolution in the Americas, Martinique was a colony that had gone through different waves of colonizers (Spanish, English, and French) and was among the first of the colonies that—in order to be kept under the French wing—was to be declared a department in 1946. Césaire arrived in Paris and while attending the most prestigious institutes of higher learning was a key member of the movement of self-affirmation of Black identity known as *Negritude*. He led this movement not only in Paris (foundining *L'Étudiant Noir* with Senegalese Léopold Sédar Senghor and Guyanan Léon Damas), but also in Martinique (foundining *Tropiques*, with some Martinique intellectuals such as Aristide Maugée and René Ménil). After returning to his homeland and taking a teaching position, he was elected first mayor of Port au Prince and later Martinique’s Communist Deputy of the new department and sent back to Paris. We remember how Mignolo recognized three genocides (the Amerindian, the Black, and the Jewish) as the basis of modern colonialism. In this context, the previous link between the Native and the Jew will be renewed in the Black elective affinity, with Jewish suffering in the re-appropriation of a new identity: the barbaric.

Only a few years before leaving the Communist Party and (not strangely) the same year Lévinas writes *Ethics and Spirit*, Césaire publishes *Discours sur le colonialisme*. Criticizing the same assimilation to sameness and making Sartre and Lévinas look alike, Césaire writes that the colonizer attempts to present himself as magnanimous and “give an immediate proof of [his]…superiority by concluding that no one should be exterminated. Within, the Negroes are sure that they will not be lynched, the Jews that they will not feed bonfires.” This interconnection between the assimilation dangers of the Jew and the other that traveled from the Andes to Mesoamerica to the Caribbean

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1020 See 4.3.2.
seems to find renewal in a post-Holocaust Paris that was particularly attentive to Sartre’s reading of Jewishness. This affinity, however, far from being an accident, permeates the most original of Caribbean thinking. Writing at the same time as his teacher Césaire, Frantz Fanon reflects in his *Peau noire, masques blancs*: “It was my philosophy professor, a native of the Antilles, who one day reminded me of the fact that whenever you hear anyone abuse the Jews, pay attention, because he is talking about you.” The universality is not, in Mignolo’s words, achieved through the creation of imperial designs out of a local history, but after the overlapping of interconnected border histories: “And I found that he was universally right…. I realized that he meant, quite simply, an anti-Semite is inevitably anti-Negro…. In sum, what others have described in the case of the Jew applies perfectible in that of the Negro. In Caribbean thought, as took place in Mignolo (the acknowledgment of Jewish desperation, from the fear of the Marrano, is being renewed through the limitation of a German thinker during the fall of the Weimar Republic), the bond with the figure of the Jew formed by barbarians in the Americas identifying their own suffering with the Jewish suffering during the Holocaust.

Returning to Césaire, the problem of overlapping, not necessarily with Sartre but with Lévinas, arises with those who attempt to promote the assimilation of the otherness to sameness: “it is easy to blame Hitler,” Césaire argues when one can find the same project in Baudelaire and Renan “before Hitler was born.” Those who supported the civilizational movement, surprised by the rise of fascism, consider themselves as victims of the totalitarian regimes. However, “they hide the truth from themselves, that it is barbarism…. Before they were its victims, they were its accomplices…. They tolerated that Nazism before it was inflicted on them, that they had absolved it, shut their eyes to it, legitimated it, because until [they suffered, it had] them, it had been applied to

1022 Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* / Black Skin, White Masks, 167-168/182-183
1023 Ibid.
1024 Césaire, *Discourse/Discours*, 44/46.
non-Europeans.” Including the Jews among those non-Europeans, Césaire refuses to accept “Hitlerism” as a return to paganism. On the contrary, it “reveals to the very distinguished, very humanistic, very Christian bourgeoisie of the twentieth century, that without his being aware of it, he has a Hitler inside him.” The Jew, as in the seventeenth century, becomes a central figure to the commonality of suffering in history within the barbaric; “the bourgeoisie as a class, is condemned to take responsibility for all the barbarism of history, the tortures of the Middle Ages and the Inquisition.”

The use of the term barbarism as synonymous with civilizational barbarism is not strange, taking into account his formerly belonging to the PCF. In this way, according to Césaire, while “the idea of the barbaric Negro is a European invention,” the work that should be done is to demonstrate how “colonization works to decivilize the colonizer, to brutalize him in the true sense of the word.” In other words, how “the colonizer, who in order to ease his conscience gets into the habit of seeing the other man as an animal, accustoms himself to treating him as an animal, and tends objectively to transform himself into an animal. It is the boomerang effect of colonization.” In this way, not surprisingly agreeing once again with Lévinas’ assimilation of Europe and the Americas, Césaire finds a new (in Lévinas’ terms) “barbaric wild beast” in the West: “I make no secret my opinion that at the present time the barbarism of Western Europe has reached an incredibly high level, being only surpassed—far surpassed it is true—by the barbarism of the United States.”

Césaire calls attention to what, in their quest for the dehumanizing “civilizational” process, “has destroyed: the wonderful Indian civilizations—and neither Detering nor Royal Dutch nor Standard Oil will ever console me for the Aztecs and the Incas…. These were communal societies,

1025 Ibid.
1026 Ibid.
1027 Ibid.
1028 Ibid., 18/20.
1029 Ibid., 11/13.
1030 Ibid., 16/18.
1031 Ibid., 24/26.
never societies for the few.”\textsuperscript{1032} These societies “were not only ante-capitalistic...but also anti-capitalistic.... Before the arrival of the French in their country, the Vietnamese were a people of an old culture, exquisite and refined...and the Negros? Let us talk...about the bronzes of Bening? Shango Sculpture.... It will give us a change from all the sensationally bad art that dominates many European capitals.”\textsuperscript{1033} Still a member of the Communist Party, Césaire already links the Jew with the community of outsiders and Christian Europe and America with the wild beast. Only the latter is barbaric. In other words, following the Marxist understanding (as does Lévinas early in his writings), Césaire returns the accusation of barbarism to civilization. In this way, it is not strange that the only path in the early 1950s is the socialist revolution: “salvation...is a matter of the Revolution—the one which, until such a time as there is a classless society, will substitute the narrow tyranny of a dehumanized bourgeoisie, for the preponderance of the only class that still has a universal mission.”

Not surprisingly, this struggle is still class-based. This class in particular has its universal mission “because it suffers in its flesh from all the wrongs of history, from all the universal wrong: the proletariat.”\textsuperscript{1034}

In 1956, however, after the Soviet invasion of Hungary, Césaire leaves the PCF. In an interview conducted eight years later (exactly the same year Lévinas was publishing his lecture on temptations), Césaire explains his decision: “I criticized the Communist for forgetting our Negro Characteristics.... Marx is right[;] what we need to complete Marx...the blacks are....doubly proletarianized and alienated.”\textsuperscript{1035} It is in this context, returning to his Negritude readings of power that he makes his point clear: “we are blacks..., and blacks have a history, a history that contains certain cultural elements of great value.... The blacks were not born yesterday...because there have been beautiful and important black civilizations..... We asserted [from the days of Negritude] that

\textsuperscript{1032} Ibid., 20/22.
\textsuperscript{1033} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1034} Ibid., 59/61.
\textsuperscript{1035} Ibid., 75/79.
our Negro heritage was worthy of respect, and that this heritage was not relegated to the past, that these values were values that could still make an important contribution to the world.”\textsuperscript{1036} In his renouncing of the Communist Party, and in this interview, Césaire was going to write in the best language he knew, \textit{poetry} \textit{a call for barbarism}, replacing civilizational barbarism for the indigenous barbarism. This is the origin of the counter-narrative on barbarism. In his poem, “Barbare,” Césaire writes the following:

\begin{verbatim}
Barbarism
This is the word which sustains me
and strikes against my carcass of brass
upon which the moon under the bracework of rust devours
the barbaric bones
of the cowardly prowling beasts of falsehood

Barbarism
abrupt in Speech
and our faces beautiful like the true operative power
of negation

Barbarism
dead mean [men] coursing through the veins of the earth
and occasionally drawing close enough to smash their heads
against the walls of our ears
the unheard cries of revolt
circling with musical beat and tone

Barbarism
the single article
barbaric the tapaya
barbaric the white amphisbaena
barbaric I the spitting viper
who from my stinking flesh awake
suddenly a flying gecko
suddenly a fringed gecko
clinging so tightly to the vital roots of your strength
that to forget me you will have to throw to the dogs the hairy flesh of your chests.\textsuperscript{1037}
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{1036} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1037} Césaire, “Babare/Barbarism,” 81(f)/80(e).
Césaire, the same thinker who reproduced the placement of the Jew within those vanquished, is now proposing to reclaim barbarism as a locus of knowledge. Some Latin American authors followed the call for decolonizing extra-European barbarism. But Césaire was far from being the only thinker re-appropriating barbarism. The Maghreb, during the rising of decolonial movements, was also creating a counter-narrative through barbarism. Tunisian Jewish writer Albert Memmi was one of them. In his late work, Memmi portrays the Jew as the natural hybrid between the colonizer and the colonized. This description follows his early semi-autobiographical work, *La statue de sel*, written during his studies in Paris. This novel recounts the story of Alexandre Mordechai Beneliouche, “a native in a colonial country, a Jew in anti-Semitic universe, and African in a world dominated by Europe.” This is the story of a man tempted by the assimilationist culture of French universalism who discovers the limitations of this assimilation as an African Jew. The departure point of the story overlaps not only with his own biography, but also with Césaire’s: blinded by the possibility of becoming an enlightened Frenchman, the character aims to study in Paris, rejects the Jewish-Maghrebi practices (fundamental in Lévinas’ counter-narrative), and defines these “pauper” social structures as “barbarous.”

With the passing of time, Beneliouche starts developing an understanding of the limitations of his ambitions (i.e. to become a French philosophy professor) because of his Jewish African-ness. A complete new world opens for him when, during this process of reflection, he is invited to join a decolonial nationalist group by an Arab classmate. The purpose of the group was to create a “Native-African only” youth movement. His classmate trusted that the still Westernized pan-Arabic Marxist framework would overcome the differences between Arabs and Jews, and would

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1039 Refer to the conundrum of the Jew as described in the portrayal of both the colonizer and the colonized in Memmi, *Portrait/The Colonizer*, 22-25 and 159/13-15 and 122.
1040 Memmi, *La Statue de Sel/The Pillar of Salt*, 89/96.
1041 Ibid., 120/134.
1042 Ibid., 221/263.
create a single Tunisian youth movement. At the beginning, Memmi was suspicious of the group, as he learnt from experience that a Jew was “alien in the eyes of Europeans, but it had not yet occurred to me to make a move toward the Muslims.” His friend, however, insisted that new Muslim nationalist program was inclusive of those peoples who have been living in Tunisia for generations. In other words, they “would like to have Jews too, so as to express the aspirations of the whole Tunisian nation.” Benelouche showed enthusiasm at the beginning, but after exchanging opinions with a Jewish friend (who was soon after killed in a mellah pogrom) he withdrew from the group. The moment of his counter-narrative, as it was with Césaire’s discourses on colonialism, had not yet arrived.

Memmi and Césaire follow parallel paths. Both of them are fascinated by (universal) French culture and later consider Marxist nationalism as an alternative that will favor both the development of the country and justice for its people. During the “French stage,” their own people, as in the case of Memmi, are called barbaric; during the “Marxist stage,” it is the empire, as in the case of Césaire, that is going to be categorized as barbaric. Both cases, however, follow these two stages with a barbaric third one. Much like in the seventeenth century, the racialized Native and Jew re-appropriate the term barbarism as a locus of knowledge. We have seen above how Césaire rediscovers the potential of barbarism with, for example, “the musical beat and tones.” Likewise, Silverblatt explained the role of women in the creation of this counter-narrative. Rediscovery of barbarism as a locus of knowledge, as per Benelouche, is going to combine the subversion of music and women. It is soon after he categorized his people as barbaric that Benelouche finds himself looking for his Berber-Jewish mother. At that time, his mother was recreating those practices that Memmi considered barbaric: dancing to Jewish Maghrebi music within her community with music played by African Blacks. Memmi, disturbed by his mother’s barbaric surroundings, abruptly leaves

1043 Ibid., 222/264.
1044 Ibid., 222/264.
the place. He goes to visit an enlightened friend who was practicing classic European music. Listening to his friend play but still remembering the sound of the African-Jewish music, he reflects:

> After fifteen whole years of exposure to Western culture, of which ten were filled with conscious rejection of Africa, must I now accept this self-evident truth, that all these ancient and monotonous melodies move me far more deeply than all the great music of Europe?...Yes, I suppose I am incurable barbarian.\(^{1045}\)

By the middle of the 1960s, the barbaric counter-narrative was created by the elective affinity between Césaire’s barbaric counter-narrative on the Jew and Memmi’s barbaric counter-narrative of the Jew. It is not surprising, therefore, that soon after this encounter Lévinas and Dussel were able to see the same thing. This is especially true where aware of the work of Memmi.\(^{1046}\) Historically, Jews have been part of the rhetorics of the underside’s re-appropriation of identities since the sixteenth century and rediscovered their barbarism in conversation since then. The table was set for the meeting in Paris and Louvain, where the Latin American thinkers will find in the Hebrew guidance of Lévinas the source to build an exterior barbarism. The only difference is that this time the encounter is not with a Marrano, such as Montezinos or a non-Jewish Jew, such as Memmi, who supports Israel as the only option for a Jewish life. It is not only Jewishness but also Judaism;\(^{1047}\) Lévinas represents the return to traditional Jewish sources within a decolonial framework. Lévinas’ project, in this way, draws from the barbaric sources of Judaism to build a barbaric philosophy.

\(^{1045}\) Ibid., 145/165.

\(^{1046}\) Both authors are aware of the work and position of Memmi. See Lévinas, “Judaïsme et révolution”/“Judaism and Revolution,” 17/97-8 and Dussel, El Humanismo Semita, 43.

\(^{1047}\) This is the most important conclusion of his quest for Jewish Liberation. See Memmi, La liberation du Juif (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 241-281. Translated in The Liberation of the Jew (New York: Orion Press, 1973), 280-303.
5.1. Introduction

5.1.1. The Counter-Narrative Revised

In this dissertation, I have explored the constitution of a barbaric counter-narrative out of the Jewish sources and its contextual elective affinities with new allies. The alliance between the Jews and other others not only explains Lévinas’ barbarisms but also becomes the source for a new barbaric front. The goal of this community is the destruction of the egotistic empire and the construction of a regenerated humanity. This community stands in opposition to the empire in its refusal to reduce the alterity into the same. In other words, the barbaric community is created in correlation. In this chapter, however, I contend that the school of rabbinical diasporism is unable to totally achieve this desired goal.

Lévinas’ barbaric community of the brave ones stands opposed to the empire as far as the other communities struggle under the banner of a single people: the community of Israel. Whereas rabbinical diasporism fails to fully engage with its own proposal, its heterodox heirs extend the goal and are able to draw the conditions for a barbaric conversation that does not absorb alterities. The decolonial heirs sustain that the specific conversation in correlation can only be achieved if there is a self-critical stand preceding the intercultural encounter. It is only when there is an acknowledgment of the tradition’s own historical limitations that there is room to recognize the value of the

1048 The concept of ‘correlation’ was developed throughout the first part of the dissertation and I will make it more explicit in the next section of this chapter. By correlation, I mean an intimate partnership that does not require the absorption or assimilation of the partner to accomplish its mission.
collaboration of the other traditions in their specificity. Here, in this chapter, I show how the heirs are able to point out the reason behind the limitations of rabbinical diasporism, explore the consequences of this boundary, and pave the way toward an intercultural barbaric conversation in correlation. My final goal in practicing this critique is constructive: I aim to complete the rabbinical diasporism’s heterodox path to acknowledgment of its barbarism through conversation with other others.  

This normative critique of my previous descriptive proposal requires a careful revision of the path that led to this last chapter. After all, we need to identify why and how rabbinical diasporism has been unable to achieve a *barbaric dialogue in correlation* when from the very beginning this seemed to be its goal. This dissertation is divided into three parts. In the first, I orthodoxly analyzed a particular trend of modern Jewish thought (i.e. rabbinical diasporism). This trend reformulates the concept of barbarism, aiming at one goal, namely to strip the West of a longstanding tool of disempowerment of non-Western traditions. In this initial stage, represented by Cohen, there is a replacement of the term by a Talmudic non-equivalent to demonstrate that the Jewish people are not barbaric. The next, represented by Rosenzweig, follows Cohen’s understanding that the Jewish people are not barbaric; the Jews being an eternal people who live outside history and are one of the paths (*the eternal life*) toward redemption. The term barbarism, subsequently, is recovered to qualify those who leave the non-barbaric community and engage in Western values.

Lévinas represents the culmination of this trend with his bifurcated deployment of barbarisms. At first, he extends Rosenzweig’s use of the term contending that those Jews who leave the community to engage with the West are barbaric because the West—from Rome to Europe to America—are barbaric (i.e. a cruel community unable to acknowledge its responsibility in the cultural and economical reduction of the otherness). The identification of the Empire with

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1049 This construction of a ‘decolonial correlative conversation’ follows the proposal of Enrique Dussel. See 5.2.2.

1050 For further development, consult the first chapter, especially 1.2.3. and 1.3.1.
barbarism seems to be closure of the concept. A decolonially-influenced Lévinas, however, returns in a virtuous circle of critique to the original problem of Cohen (the identification of Judaism with irrational barbarism). In this moment, he introduces the radicality of his heterodox conversation partners and, instead of rejecting or replacing the concept, he positively re-appropriates it. As such, he creates a counter-narrative on barbarism that cannot be explained by simply and orthodoxy analyzing Lévinas within Jewish thought. Cohen and Rosenzweig, narrating the East from a Jewish (understood as Western) location of knowledge, would have been unable to achieve this step. Consequently, in Lévinas’ counter-narrative, Jews are the barbaric force working towards a just society; the community of Israel (including other others) being the source of human regeneration. The Jew becomes not only a barbarian, but the leader of this barbaric front. Indeed, the other is welcomed as part of the community of Israel as a pre-condition of the struggle. Jewish thought, I assert, positively recovers the term barbarism in conversation with decolonial theory. I will soon show, however, that this re-appropriation is not yet complete.1051

In the second part of this dissertation, I explore Lévinas through his heterodox audiences to explain why the author chooses these two particular definitions of barbarism. Earlier, in the third chapter, I show that the first definition of barbarism (civilizational barbarism) is a long-term position among Marxist non-Jewish Jews. From Marx to Benjamin, and parallely from Trotsky to 1968 Maoists, this tradition has been reversing the term yet leaving its negativity intact. Lévinas, in conversation with these trends, employs the term. After 1968, a group of former Maoists/Trotskyites becomes Lévinasian. The heirs follow Lévinas, but are unable (as in the Eurocentric tradition that includes both Cohen and Marx) to cross to a positive re-appropriation of the term barbarism, remaining within the generally negative stance.1052 In the second part (chapter four), we trace this positive re-appropriation to a long-time Judeo-Occidental co-colonization and ethical

1051 For further development, consult the second chapter, especially 2.2.2. and 2.3.4.
1052 For further development, consult the third chapter, especially 3.4.2.
resistance. Shown is how since the sixteenth century, Jews have been present in decolonial discourses and are a key image for the resistant counter-narratives of the colonized. This affinity was reclaimed following the power of the Holocaustic imaginary, deeply influential in Lévinas. Decolonial thinkers, in their engagement with Lévinas, follow previous encounters appropriating the term barbarism to qualify their exterior thinking. It is by virtue of these conversations that Lévinas sets aside his earlier fear for the Afro-Asiatic Masses (according to the Hebrew) and the Third Party (according to the Greek). Lévinas, subsequently, creates a barbaric community under the already mentioned problematic banner of the community of Israel. The final goal of Lévinas cannot be explained without exploring his heterodox encounter with decolonialists.

The third part of this dissertation, this fifth chapter, establishes an internal critique of the monolithic character of the community of the brave ones through the eyes of its audiences. In other words, I challenge the first part of my work with my second. I contend that decolonialism helped Jewish thought to re-appropriate the term barbarism. This change, however, needs to be extended further to pass from an apologetic to a critical barbarism. I argue that the lack of a self-critical stand of the barbarian leads to the reproduction of a sublation of otherness. To rephrase more vividly, Lévinas, as all followers of the school of rabbinical diasporism, can only accept dialogues that do not reduce the alterity to the same. To add, what was critiqued from Marxism, the school at the limit of Western thinking was a sublation of the other into the sameness of otherness. Therefore, it is perplexing that in the moment of liberation, other others are reduced to being part of the community of Israel. Theoretically, it can be argued that Lévinas’ reduction is not historical but, rather, ethical (metaphysical, as explained since Cohen). In this way, all peripheral communities are identified as the barbaric community of the brave ones who, out of a principle of solidarity with the

1053 For further development, consult the fourth chapter, especially 4.2.1.
1054 For further development, consult the second chapter, especially 2.4.1.
1055 See 1.2.2.
stranger, defeat the empire. This identification should be enough for Lévinas as he can both put forward a common front as well as preserve the correlative relationship. Lévinas insists, however, in the Jewish character of the other others. Indeed, he goes as far as to bring text (Pesahim 118b) and certify it with its almost normative interpretation (that of Rashi) to justify the character of this geopolitical reduction.1056

In this chapter, I argue that this is not a contradiction in Lévinas’ thought but a continuation of the limitations of his forerunners. The Lithuanian Talmudic interpreter re-appropriated the term barbarism in conversation with decolonialists, yet remains within the limits of rabbinical diasporism. The aforementioned tension between liberation and reduction of the other is, as I shall depict, a limitation of rabbinical diasporism and a consequence of the uncritical recovery of its tradition. The very barbarians who recover the tradition apologetically—and not critically—reproduce their own self-congratulatory counter-narrative. This construction leads to the portrayal of an ideal or utopian community as result of its own apologetic proposal, a community without need of further modification. Consequently, the contribution of other alterities to the tradition becomes superfluous. A superfluity of the other who is incorporated only under the lead of the new barbarian is not strange to Western thought, given that the assimilation of the alterity has been the standard. I will trace an alternative relationship in decolonial theory, pointing out how the audiences of Lévinas (not solely post-colonialists, but also Marxists who have been deeply influential for post-colonialists) are able to identify the consequences of this practice. My aim is constructive; I hope to pave the way, solidifying the final correlative engagement of rabbinical diasporism in the project of critical barbarism proposed by decolonial theorists.

5.1.2. Road Map

1056 For further development, consult the second chapter, in particular, 2.4.1.
This chapter proceeds in two parts. In the first, I show the limitations of rabbinical diasporism through the theoretical framework of the project of its Latino decolonial heir, Dussel. His trans-modernity sheds light into the reasons for the limitations of Jewish thought. More specifically, I contend that rabbinical diasporism misses a crucial component of the construction of the barbaric, as it does not practice a historical self-critical approach to the weaknesses of its own past and sources through the eyes of the vanquished. As a result, it is only able to elaborate an apologetic discourse that does not take into account the possible original collaboration of the other barbarians. In the second, I follow this lack of historical critique by revising two other derived problems. I contend that the trends that anticipate and follow Lévinas’ encounter with Marxism and decolonialism can help rabbinical diasporism to recognize the limitation of its proposal. They can alert the possible utopianism and Orientalism of the trend. My conclusion highlights that what can solve this problem and help to develop a critical barbarism are multiple levels of historical awareness.

5.2. Barbaric Conversation Models

5.2.1. Limitations of Rabbinical Diasporism

In the first part of this work, I traced a particular line of Jewish thought entitled rabbinical diasporism. Here, I examine the limitations of its model of conversation. To restate, I evaluate the extent in which the members of the school of rabbinical diasporism are able to offer a model of conversation that does not reduce the other barbarian into the same. As we have seen above, Cohen describes a relationship that does not subsume its components into the system. He calls this relationship correlation. Cohen employs this formulation to describe—to mention a central example—the metaphysical relationship between the divinity and the human being. They are related through
rationality and sanctity but do not merge. In Cohen’s work, though, this correlation is not necessarily applied within a dialogue of the social sphere.\textsuperscript{1057}

To expand, a priori the figures of \textit{ger toshav} and \textit{nocri} might be the source for a correlative dialogue between the Jew and the other. The stranger is not required to become part of Israel, but does live or pray within the community. This acknowledgment of the specificity of the other in correlation, however, is limited by the narrative that prescribes her just treatment. At the beginning, as at the end of history, the diversity of the social sphere entwines into a unique people. It is only thanks to the common origin (\textit{Ben-Noah}) and the common future (\textit{a unified humankind}) that the other is accepted as an-other. \textit{In other words, the relation in separation (correlation) depends on original and future merging.}\textsuperscript{1058} This final dissolution of diversity is particularly represented by Cohen’s calls for Protestant-Jewish symbiosis (even when it is overtly Jewish), Catholic’s imitation of Judaism, and the \textit{development} of the Eastern Jew into a Western Jew.\textsuperscript{1059} In all these cases, the redemptive future precludes this dissolution of particularities. Indeed, the final uniting includes a role for the central powers, which cannot find a place in a \textit{barbaric} project. For this reason, in Cohen’s system there is neither a conversation in correlation within the barbaric nor an extension of the correlation within the social world. This is unfortunate as Cohen seems to be the thinker within the line of rabbinical diaspormism that has the highest regard for the content of alternative others in general and, for example, Islam in particular.\textsuperscript{1060}

The extension of the correlation into the social sphere, however, becomes the task of Cohen’s heir. I will take a few paragraphs to explore Rosenzweig’s proposal, as he is the only one of the three intellectuals who does not put forward a final dissolution of alterities at the end of his project. For Cohen’s student, the locus of correlation is inversed: it is not applied to the \textit{metaphysical}

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\textsuperscript{1057} For further development, consult the first chapter, especially 1.2.2.  
\textsuperscript{1058} For further development, consult the first chapter, especially 1.2.3.  
\textsuperscript{1059} For further development, consult the first chapter, especially 1.2.5.  
\textsuperscript{1060} This is not a topic that has been extensively developed. See Cohen, \textit{Religion/Religion}, 33/29.
level, but instead to the *social*. Let me explain the first un-correlation and the second correlation. For the author of the *The Star*, the correlation between the divinity and the human being is more problematic if it is analyzed through Cohen’s correlation. In the allegory of *Song of Songs*, for example, the locations of the man/God and the woman/people of Israel are interchangeable and the relationship is a permanent seeking of the imperfect merging. For this reason, a merging does take place on a metaphysical level.\(^{1061}\) Rosenzweig, however, does extend the correlation to social relationships. Correlation becomes the relationship that describes the dialogue between his two major social constructions, Judaism and Christianity. Both of them seem to have the same objective, chiefly the escape from time in order to achieve redemption. According to this reading, they are partners, yet they take alternative paths. The *eternal community* welcomes the other in community, creating a symphony of voices without subsuming the otherness into the same. The *perpetual way* finds the violent conquest and sublation of the other as the only path toward its personal salvation. In this shared redemptive path toward, the fire is *never* consumed by the rays, and the rays *never* become the fire. One represents peace while the other, violence. *They do not merge and this becomes the social model of conversation in correlation.*\(^{1062}\)

The relationship between the two traditions can be understood, as the already mentioned interpreter writes, not as “mutuality, but always one of absolute difference.”\(^{1063}\) This dialogue between the traditions does not rise as a continuous support for each other’s way. On the contrary, it is a “dialogue in judgment” preventing each social configuration from becoming too extreme in their respective paths.\(^{1064}\) In other words, the critique of the other helps each tradition to limit the extremism of its *nature*. In Rosenzweig’s vocabulary, they prevent the other tradition to succumb

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\(^{1061}\) For further development, consult the first chapter, especially 1.3.3.

\(^{1062}\) For further development, consult the first chapter, especially 1.3.5.


\(^{1064}\) Ibid.
into its “dangers.” The correlative relationship guarantees separation, the very existence of the dialogue and, perhaps more importantly, the critique of each other’s limits and hazards. This relationship of external judgment, which preceded the self-critical stance, can be extremely harsh as racialization (for example, but not reduced to, anti-Semitism) is accepted if it helps to develop the partnership. But the simultaneity of separation, dialogue, and internal critique demands that the reader consider it as an option to explain the simultaneous conversation and critique within the barbaric community of the brave ones.

I contend, however, that there are four clear reasons why Rosenzweig’s project does not serve as a conversation of alterities in correlation. One, the dialogical model presupposes the exclusion of a *conversation in multiplicity*. Rosenzweig excludes other traditions with a pejorative idealization of their doctrines. Contradicting Cohen, Rosenzweig offers harsh comments on Islam and other non-Western traditions, discarding any possibility of saving characteristics of these alterities. This exclusion demonstrates the clear Eurocentric perception of Rosenzweig’s dialogical model. He is unable to see the fruitful challenge that *competitive demands* (as a late Lévinas would say) embody. Since the dialogue presupposes the exclusion of conversations outside the Judeo-Christian partnership, the dialogical model of judgment cannot explain a front with the barbaric. It is possible to argue that an interpreter could easily replace Christianity by another partner, but the dual perception of the dialogue limits the possibility of accepting that others could have a share in an already fixed perception of truth. In other words, there is a need to have third parties that ought to be evangelized.

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1065 The exploration of such dangers can be read in Rosenzweig, *Stern/Star*, 183-189/424-431.

1066 For further development, consult the first chapter, especially 1.3.5.

1067 Current scholarship has debated this issue. For an attempt to make a more general social theory from the confessional historical models, see Gibbs, *Correlations in Rosenzweig and Lévinas*, 129-154. The opposite path (the denouncement of Rosenzweig’s clear determination of Judaism and Christianity) is taken by Anijdar, *The Jew, The Arab: A History of the Enemy*, 87-98.
In the second instance, which is intimately related to the first, the static de-historicization of Israel and the liberator-conquistador conception of powerful Christianity do not adjust to the origin of a community of the brave ones in correlation. A barbaric community—Lévinas’ counter-narrative, for example—is built upon a returning to history that attempts to redeem the barbarian of non-utopian history (but not necessarily history itself). In the pan-barbaric community of the brave ones, it is not only Israel that finds a home within the barbaric; the redemptive potential is also re-inserted in the anti-imperial struggle. The conversation takes place within a historical Israel that shares a path of redemption with those vanquished by the conquistador and not with the conquistador. This situation rules out the separation between fire and rays in Rosenzweig. The fire (those vanquished communities that share a principle of hospitality) takes over the duty of becoming the liberating (but ironically anti-imperial) rays. If, in Rosenzweig’s model, imperialism is a necessary partner, in Lévinas’, the possibility of the barbaric redemption lies in anti-imperialism. Rosenzweig, therefore, can be read as a previous negative stance of what will become the positive re-appropriation of Lévinas.

Three, the barbaric community is achieved through a common front unable to be achieved by Rosenzweig. The dialogical model in contention prevents this common partnership. I would argue that the reason for this impossible, unified struggle lies in the inexistence of a common enemy. In Rosenzweig’s work, the pagan is the enemy of the Christian. The perpetual path leads to conversion of the pagan (the exterior or the one inside himself depending on the Church) as a condition for redemption. On the contrary, the pagan does not prevent the Jew from achieving redemption. While for Cohen the struggle against paganism (polytheism and pantheism) was the special mission of the Jewish people, Rosenzweig’s de-politicization of the Jew leaves the eternal community without enemies besides Christianity (that is, at the same time, the necessary partner).

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1068 For further development, consult the first chapter, especially, 1.3.2/3 and 1.3.5.
1069 This reading of Rosenzweig was pointed out by Moses in System and Revelation. The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig, 152.
This simultaneity between enmity and partnership makes a common front in correlation with the barbarian simply unnecessary. In Lévinas’ project, this common enemy, the path to Rome and Rome itself, is the clear complement to the common principle. The barbaric communities are accepted in the common front in order to defeat the empire. In Rosenzweig, there is no empire to defeat but, as some critics contend, the complete revelation depends on its “liberatory” character.\footnote{See Pollock, “From Nation State to World Empire: Franz Rosenzweig’s Redemptive Imperialism,” 332-353.}

Finally, Rosenzweig loses what Lévinas is able to recover from Cohen: the relevance of the protest against material asymmetry in the dialogue with and beyond Judaism. For Rosenzweig, the Jew suffers for the hatred of the Christian. This hatred causes the suffering of the Jew and her persecution. This destitution, however, is not material and it is even encouraged by Rosenzweig as it helps to the normal development of the Christian path to redemption. Rosenzweig disrupts totality but does not seem particularly concerned with the material consequences of a double-pathed Spirit realizing itself in history. In Lévinas, as in Cohen, the problem of the Self is both the material reduction of Israel and the hunger of all humankind. The leadership of the sources in Cohen or the Israelite community of the brave ones in Lévinas concerns the accumulation of resources, which causes anger beyond the Judeo-Christian relationship in Europe that. This places Judaism within a community of sufferers and protesters beyond the West. In turn, this further exemplifies the Eurocentric limit of the post-Hegelian Judeo-Christian dialogue in contention to explain in entirety Lévinas’ project.

To conclude, Rosenzweig does extend the concept of dialogue in correlation to the social sphere, which becomes a turning point for rabbinical diasporic dialogues with the Self, but not with the other. The exclusive dialogue, the de-historicization of the barbaric, the superfluity of the common front, and the
lack of acknowledgment of material asymmetry rule him out as a possible theoretical framework of a correlative barbaric project.\textsuperscript{1071}

To the surprise of the readers, however, Lévinas’ counter-narrative is also unsuccessful in fully extending the concept of dialogue in correlation into his project. Lévinas does extend the dialogue into conversation and creates a common front, establishing a clear partisan option in separation between the community of the brave ones and the empire. Let me explain more fully what Lévinas does successfully achieve. Lévinas places the conversation of the community of Israel with two other ideal types (Egypt and Cush), understanding the diversity within the third party. It is possible to trace Lévinas’ acknowledgement of the multiplicity of others throughout his work. From the Greek moment in which he recognizes the need to apply justice instead of ethics to the context of competitive demands, Lévinas goes beyond the dialogical two-party structure. Instead, he takes on an acknowledgment of a conversational framework of social interrelation with the alterity. Lévinas, too, goes well beyond acknowledging the existence of other others; in a Hebraic moment, he joins them in confrontation with the empire. In Lévinas’ project, the interrelation is not reduced to a conversation, but it is extended to the building of a setting that leads to a pan-barbaric common front. Instead of trying to find a partnership with the empire, he replaces the Jew within the barbaric and calls for the confrontation, defeat, and condemnation of the egotistic Self. In this way, Lévinas presents a clear separation from the center, showing the necessity for the creation of a front of those vanquished from the West.\textsuperscript{1072}

The conformation of this front, however, is what makes his proposal problematic. The pan-barbarism conforms once the other others are accepted into the community of Israel. According to Rashi’s interpretation of the sugia, Mitzraim (not yet Egypt) and Cush are welcomed into the community of Israel as a pre-condition to the struggle against the egotistic empire and the welcoming of redemption.

\textsuperscript{1071} This is further explored in Moses, System and Revelation. The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig, 282.
\textsuperscript{1072} For further development, consult the second chapter, especially 2.4.
As such, the pan-barbaric front of Lévinas is challenging the basic understanding of a conversation in correlation (a relation whose components are never subsumed into the same). This is not, however, a Western sublation. It has already been pointed out that the Hegelian sublation results in the overcoming of peoples in the triumphal march of the Spirit through history. This is why Lévinas rejects history as the common denominator that creates the common front. It is the principle of hospitality itself that leads to historical suffering and not historical suffering that leads to the pan-barbaric front. At the same time, Lévinas reproduces Rosenzweignian and Western conceptions of otherness, reading Cush as an ideal type with no history. We need to remember, however, that in Lévinas, history is not what justifies the peoples but rather their principle of hospitality. It is a slight modification from Western conceptions, but still strips certain peoples (according to his comment, three-fourths of the world’s population) of their past. In Lévinas’ counter-narrative conception of conversation, therefore, there is a double limit. The pan-barbaric front is constructed so far as the banner of the community of Israel, and some peoples that compose this front are stripped of their past. Some have dubious pasts (Egypt) and others are just tabula rasa waiting to be incorporated into the people of Israel (Cush).  

In conclusion, rabbinical diasporism does offer a clear path toward a conversation, but this counter-narrative is still incomplete. The last stage of the school follows previous limitations and is unable to engage in a conversation without the final absorption of the otherness into the community of Israel. In Cohen, the common past and future of humankind make it impossible to translate the correlation into the social sphere. In Rosenzweig, the dialogue of correlation is established but is unable to go beyond the Eurocentric Judeo-Christian framework. In Lévinas, the conversation among the others is established, but under conditions where, in the struggle against the empire, the other barbarians join the community of the brave ones represented by the community of Israel. Therefore, another

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1073 Ibid.
conversational pattern should be employed to overcome this limitation. I am looking for such a path, one that not only refrains from this reduction, but also explains why it is a rabbinical diasporic practice.

5.2.2. The Transmodern Alternative

The model of intercultural conversation, as brought to Lévinas by rabbinical diasporism, does not lead to a pan-barbaric front in correlation. There are, naturally, diverse elements in the tradition that lead to a relation within the underside. Some of these examples are Cohen’s concern for the material welfare of the foreign, Rosenzweig’s attack on totality, and Lévinas’ proposal of a barbaric common front. However, Cohen’s restriction of correlation to the non-social sphere, Rosenzweig’s limit of dialogue to European Judeo-Christianity, and Lévinas’ reduction of the barbaric into the community of Israel show that the school of rabbinic diasporism fails to embody this conversation in correlation.

In this section, I intend to replace the model by a decolonial transmodern counter-narrative. I contend that the latter not only offers a framework for a barbaric conversation in correlation but also identifies how and why rabbinical diasporism is unable to achieve the proposed aim. I have set my sights on recreating the historical and heterodox elective affinity between rabbinical diasporism and decolonial theory to help the former overcome its conceptual limitations. I will trace this alternative conversation in correlation in Enrique Dussel’s work. In the last chapter, Dussel was placed as the natural heir and partner of Lévinas’ exterior barbarism. I will explore here the potential decolonial Jewish conversation, illuminating how the heterodox heir can help re-evaluate the limitations of his forerunner. Far from being an attempt in revisionist history of ideas, I will take advantage of the common root shown above to reintroduce both a trans-modern model into

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1074 For further development, consult the fourth chapter, especially 4.2
rabbinical diasporism and rabbinical diasporism (that still needs to undergo an internal critique) as an option within the trans-modern barbaric front. I contend, therefore, that the heterodoxy can become the revolutionary norm.

Throughout his prolific career, Dussel has been developing alternatives to understanding conversations among the barbaric traditions. In this section, I will point out the barbaric conversational structure he proposes in a late article entitled “Transmodernidad e Interculturalidad,” published in 2003. In this essay, Dussel explains that the development of a barbaric, trans-modern, and intercultural conversation is intimately related to the internal process that each tradition develops prior to engaging in this conversation. It is only when each one of the traditions is able to practice an internal critique from its sources that this conversation in correlation take place. In other words, the trans-cultural barbaric conversation is not among “the apologist,” but among the “creative critics of their own culture (intellectuals).” I will write a three-paragraph introduction to evaluate what Dussel’s program offers and follow this summary with systematic commentary of this model. I will sum up the analysis in the next section with remarks as to the limitations of rabbinical diasporism.

I contend that Dussel’s model sheds light into the reasons that precede the failure of rabbinic diasporic models of conversation in correlation, yet it can also be seen as a logical continuation of it. The sources are the basis for the rescue of the forgotten (barbaric-to-be) tradition in Cohen’s writings. We have seen how Rosenzweig adds to the sources of the ideal sociology (of the barbaric-to-be people) and how Lévinas adds to the sources of a non-utopian (barbaric) historical people who judge history. Dussel further extends this trend departing from a critical stand of not only the history that is judged, but also the history of the barbarians who judge it. The critique of the center and the affirmation of the tradition, in Dussel’s thinking, will not be sufficient to recover a

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1076 Ibid., 97. Note that in the reference to intellectuals, Dussel is using a Gramscian conception of intellectualism that includes all men who are influential in communication with other ones.
barbaric tradition. The ideal, presented as the counter-model, should also undergo an internal critique of the ideal values that are extracted from history, sources, and sociology. Dussel argues that the theoretically subsumed traditions were not only reduced because of external conquests but also due to internal weaknesses. By analyzing the limits of the tradition and the critical stands, it took in the moments before and during its reduction, the construction of the barbaric alternative is attentive to the reason that led it to be qualified as barbarian. As a consequence, the recovered values (that arise from the sources, sociology, and history) are analyzed in their context to show which of them should be recovered as an alternative to the West and which should be left out as they could lead to the tradition’s political defeat.1077

This model overcomes the limitations of the ontological attempt to reduce the others to the same. In opposition to Western thought, as understood by Lévinas, this reading aims to recover a tradition that was, according to imperial designs, sublated. But it also recognizes the importance of the historical critique to understand what led the tradition to be reduced by the empire. This internal critique replaces the only apologetic affirmation of the identity. The lack of this negative step leads to a self-congratulatory program that does not find it necessary to seek for new allies to confront its historical suffering. Politics of identity and the evangelization of other barbarians arise from the ideal character of this community. Indeed, in this context there is no reason to make room for a contribution of the other’s specificity to the new community. Other barbarians can only be complementary when the tradition acknowledges that by itself, it has been unable to confront the empire and it will be unable to be the only source for human regeneration. This internal critique offers the possibility to see what should be modified in the tradition, to confront its subsumption. At the same time, it set the stage for an intercultural conversation. The latter offers the tradition additional global reasons to explain the community’s fall, but also the tools to make a stronger common case in front of the empire. This cultural

1077 Ibid., 72-75.
conversation, which acknowledges the necessity of all the voices, can only be achieved when the community recognizes its internal limits from a self-critical stance. Otherwise, there would be no ethical or political grounds for the restraint of evangelization of the other to achieve the perfect and utopian community lead by the perfect barbarian.\textsuperscript{1078}

I contend that this new self-critical contextual level of analysis is absent from the school of rabbinical diasporism. The sublation of the other in the broadly conceived community of Israel and the stripping of the other’s history is a consequence of the lack of this self-critical contextual stand. Dussel still departs from clear Lévinasian motifs and vocabulary. Nevertheless, in an implicit understanding of the limits of rabbinical diasporism in engaging with a conversation in correlation, Dussel does not draw from Lévinas an example of an intellectual proposal of this conversation. Instead, he turns to a Maghrebi Muslim scholar (Mohammed Abed Al-Yabri) and a Native Latin American activist (Rigoberta Menchú) to explore the practical implications of this new level of critical barbarism. In other words, I contend that following Dussel is necessary to go beyond the limits of the proposal of rabbinical diasporism and critically engage with the historical recovery of the barbarian. While Dussel does not use Lévinas as an example, the permanent reproduction of his framework make us think that this is a proposal made by a Latino scholar who incorporates, without subsumption, Jewish, Maghrebian, and Native voices into his framework. For this reason, his proposal becomes, by itself, a theoretical attempt of the practical conversation he is proposing.\textsuperscript{1079}

After noting the most remarkable points of Dussel’s proposal, let me explain the model in detail. For strategic reasons I divide the conversational structure in three steps: namely, (1) The Internal Affirmation of a Barbaric Tradition; (2) The Internal Contextual Critiques within a Barbaric Tradition:

\textsuperscript{1078} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1079} Ibid., 76-77. The two major texts Dussel draws from are Mohamed Abed al-Jabri, Introduction à la critique de la raison arabe (Pairs: La Découverte, 1995) and Rigoberta Menchú, Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me Nació la Conciencia (Mexico: Siglo XXI, 1985).
Historical, Contemporary, and Communitarian; and, (3) The Transmodern Conversation among Barbaric forces. Dussel contends that there is an intimate relationship between the structure of *internal idealization* and the limits of *external conversation*. I zero in on how the Latino decolonizer is able to build a conversation in correlation through the internal contextual critiques of the tradition. Rabbinical diasporism, as represented by the project that culminates in Lévinas, does not pursue this level of internal critique. This reason, I will show, can be seen as the source for rabbinical diasporism’s limits to extend their conception of social correlation into correlative conversations among the barbarians.

The first step in the process is the “affirmation” of the value of the barbaric traditions. The “decolonization,” according to Dussel, starts with a cultural affirmation of what has been “negated” by the West. In other words, to “effectively decolonize themselves,” these cultures should revalorize “the structure of values that has been excluded, scorned, negated, ignored, but never annihilated.”

This affirmation of the “negated exteriority” in “resistance” for the Lévinasian Dussel, does not assume itself as a replacement of a Western monopolistic worldview. On the contrary, it acknowledges before all its levels of “asymmetry from the point of view of the economical, political, scientific, technological, and militaristic conditions.” To rephrase, it is assumed that because of the attempt of historical sublation of these cultures into the system, they were negated as exteriority and comprehended as the same. In the same system, they were seen as powerless underdeveloped peoples. Dussel, not surprisingly repeating a Lévinasian motif, calls for a revalorization of “the values” of these cultures with “unsuspected richness.” The path to do so is an alternative study of the values from its own documents (as an implicit reference not only to the Hadith or the popular Native narratives, but also to the Jewish oral Law *torah shebeal-peh*).

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1080 I am not following the structure explicitly built by Dussel, but rather the content of his proposal. For his own structure, see Dussel, “Trans-modernidad e Interculturalidad,” 74.
1081 Ibid., 71.
1082 Ibid.
1083 Ibid.
1084 Ibid., 76.
Those intellectuals who attempt to engage in this process do not take the tradition as mere “object of study” as “Western scholars.” These barbarian intellectuals “re-read the classics” finding “hidden insights” imperceptible to “professionals.”\(^{1085}\) The Lévinasian motifs clearly repeat themselves. Just to point out a handful of elemental overlaps, Dussel seems to be following Lévinas in the accusation against the imperialism of the center that attempted to sublate exteriority, the richness of the negated exterior barbaric traditions, and the unprofessional recovery of the forgotten documents.\(^{1086}\) Nevertheless, Dussel does not find Lévinas to be a good example for his construction. As we mentioned above he explores al-Yabri and Menchu’s revalorization of the Cordobesa and Mayan traditions of the twelfth and pre-sixteenth centuries, respectively. Naturally, the question that remains is the reason for this absence. I argue that Dussel does not employ one of his most influential teachers because rabbinical diasporism is unable to cross to the second step of the construction of transmodern barbaric conversations. It is not a coincidence that Dussel contended years before that “Lévinas never thought that the other could be an Asiatic, an African, or a Native.”\(^{1087}\)

According to Dussel, this revalorization of the historical values of the discarded tradition is not “ingenuous and apologist” but “critical.”\(^{1088}\) The traditional values that are recovered are those that rise in the moments in which the tradition is self-critical. By pointing out these moments of critical reflection, the tradition itself (and not an exterior center) contributes by explaining the internal forces that lead to their marginalization as exteriority. In other words, the recovery of critical values, in this first stage, replaces not the center but the center’s reading of the vanquished traditions. The a-

\(^{1085}\) Ibid., 78.

\(^{1086}\) The accusation against the imperialism at the center, and the richness of the tradition are explored in 2.2. and 2.3. The unprofessionalism of his Talmudic readings can be read in the beginning of many of his lectures in which he humbly excuses himself for not being a professional in the area. See, for example, Lévinas, “Vieux comme le monde” in Quatre lectures talmudiques, 153-154. Translated in Emmanuel Lévinas, “As Old as the World” in Nine Talmudic Readings, 71-72.

\(^{1087}\) This was explored in 4.2.

\(^{1088}\) Dussel, “Trans-modernidad e Interculturalidad,” 75.
historical exploration of the wealth of the tradition does not result in a weighty critique, but rather a self-congratulating *apology* of the system as an a-historical alternative. On the contrary, it is the critical approach to their history and the recovery of *self-critical moments* that create a barbaric tradition, which will be able to appreciate the contribution of other others. This awakens, I will later suggest, what is asleep in rabbincal diasporism. The critical affirmation of one’s own tradition requires *a contextual critique of the ideal sources*. This contextual critique is first employed to demonstrate the historical limitations of the ideal critical theoretical framework that was erased in the accounts of their tradition. As was explained earlier, it will explore the internal reasons for the fall of the ideal as a way to analyze the limits and possibilities of this ideal rather than the possibilities of a contextual re-edition of lost values.\(^\text{1089}\)

This contextual critique, however, is not restricted to an historical analysis of the limitations of the ideal. It is a contextual critique of not only the model, but also *the reception of this model by the scholar him or herself*. In a context of epistemological hegemony of “Western critique,” the colonized intellectual may feel these critical theoretical frameworks inescapable. The barbaric scholar has a double register with an internal understanding of tradition and access to Western tools of analysis. The first contextual critique invited the scholar to explore *the possibilities and limits of the ideal in its context*. The second invites acknowledgement of the limitations of the engagement with this *ideal by the contemporary location knowledge of the intellectual him/herself*. Dussel explains that Western means of analysis, after years of cultural coloniality, are unavoidable. Instead of accepting the “imposition of Western frameworks” to understand the traditions, there should be a selective use of “Western critical tools” to understand the ideal and its limitations.\(^\text{1090}\)

The two levels of contextual critique (the historical and the contemporary) thus interconnect. It is only through acceptance of the contextual reality of the scholar that the past can be thought of

\(^{1089}\) Ibid.

\(^{1090}\) Ibid., 76.
critically and the tradition recovered with its limits. Once again, the models are not those enrolled in rabbinical diasporism. Dussel draws once again from Al-Yabri and Menchu. Both activist-writers make use of the best of the post-1968 French tradition to “de-construct” history. The Magrhebi scholar researches the abandonment of Averroism for Avecinianism and the Native for the Mayan’s fatal passivity during the conquest and establishment of national bourgeoisie independence. They conclude that the ideals that are recovered hold limitations and are unable to achieve liberation from the powerful colonizer (at least not) by themselves.\(^{1091}\)

This interconnection of the two levels of contextual acknowledgment is what permits the differentiation of this project from any utopianism. The mission is not to recover an ideal community, but a historical tradition taking into account the hermeneutical limitations for such a recovery. The affirmation of the \textit{ideal past} is followed shortly by a \textit{critical analysis} of its limitations and the acknowledgment of the use of hybrid sources to interpret these limitations. Whereas the first critical level permits to acknowledge the past context of people’s ideal, the second requires an acceptance of the scholar’s contextual location of knowledge. The combination of both leads to a third contextual critique that combines the collectivity of the first and the contemporary nature of the second.

The community, as obvious as it can be, is neither a fossil that should be revived nor a completely subsumed people. It is neither static nor vanished. It is a community that has led, having been in contact with Western modernity, a materially resources-less alternative that “has imperceptible evolved in contact with modernity.”\(^{1092}\) The community, as does the scholar, lives \textit{in between} tradition and modernity, but has evolved next to it (without being completely included despite or because of imperial designs). A return to the ideal past is not desirable since for some reason the ideal was weak enough to be subsumed. But it is not possible as there is an

\(^{1091}\) Ibid.
\(^{1092}\) Ibid., 75.
acknowledgment of the role of modernity in the process of recovery. Furthermore, the rejection of
the West as such is not a possibility either since, as the second critique has shown, it is impossible to
avoid engagement with the Western critique. Finally, the only possibility to recover the values of the
community, Dussel clarifies in the third critique, is the acknowledgement that the deficiencies of the
past should be corrected and the Western influence admitted to negate the center and think to create
an alternative to Western modernity. This is a trans-modern (“not after but beyond”) project.1093

In Dussel's construction, these three contextual critiques determine the possible conversation
that the intellectuals of each community can have within the common front. A conversation among
apologists of the traditions would be just a reproduction of independent and isolated politics of
identity. Or, in Lévinas’ own words it would be a saraband of cultures without orientation.1094 In its place,
a conversation among the self-reflective intellectuals departs from the triple contextual “critical
suppositions.”1095 This trans-modern context is especially necessary to a modern period. The
difference with previous stages is that since the sixteenth century there has been a “world-system of
economy” that creates a general umbrella of causes for the fall of traditions. In this way, the
traditions together can “consult a world-historical interpretation…more global to understand the
role of each tradition.”1096 As a consequence, the particular causes of the fall of the tradition can be
understood in this more global framework. The internal and external critiques seem to be necessary.
The internal creates cohesion and the external constitutes the common front without subsuming the
aforementioned collectivity. The lack of a previous internal critique, however, leads to apologetic
movements that, living in the ideal, do not fear subsumption of the other into their projects. On the

1093 Ibid., 79.
1095 Ibid.
other hand, the absence of this conversation creates self-sabotaging, isolated communities unable to acknowledge the role of totality in their marginalization.\textsuperscript{1097}

In Dussel’s project there is a conversation among “the critics of the periphery…an intercultural dialogue South-South before starting a dialogue South-North.”\textsuperscript{1098} The dialogue, \textit{South-South}, globally re-edits the dialogue, \textit{East-East}, which Lévinas proposed years before.\textsuperscript{1099} This trans-modern conversation can only take place after the community discovered its values and limitations and engaged in the search of commonalities in \textit{correlation} with the \textit{other} barbaric southern communities. By this fourth stage, sublation is unlikely as the community has undergone a “mature hermeneutical method” of “cultural resistance” (an extension of Lévinas’ ethical resistance) of its own tradition before engaging with the global barbaric conversation. According to Dussel, this project is not post-modern as the “creative effort does not depart from modern interiority but from its border.”\textsuperscript{1100} The task for the barbaric is to create these “networks of discussion” among the critical scholars of the tradition, making these conversations a “weapon of liberation” to destroy, from the “multi-focality of each culture,” the pretension of the “Euro-American universality.”\textsuperscript{1101} This is the only way, according to Dussel, the barbarian can answer the question of whether or not it “is possible to think philosophically and creatively from the colonial…and exterior peoples.”\textsuperscript{1102}

\textbf{5.2.3. A Trans-modern Revision of Rabbinical Diasporism}

The constant references to Lévinas’ motifs place the proposal of trans-modern barbaric conversation as being a \textit{natural extension} of the counter-narrative of rabbinical diasporism. This supposed heterodox extension, I urge, goes beyond the school of thought by explaining the reasons

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{1097} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1098} Ibid. 81.
\textsuperscript{1099} For further development, of the Eastern character of Lévinas’ project, consult chapter two, especially in 2.2.3.6.
\textsuperscript{1100} Dussel, “Trans-modernity e Inter-culturality,” 92.
\textsuperscript{1101} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1102} Ibid.
\end{footnotesize}
for rabbinical diasporism’s final reduction of other barbarians into the community of Israel. Let me refine where the problem of rabbinical diasporism lies by analyzing it through the trans-modern framework.

The first step of Dussel’s model, the *internal affirmation* of the barbaric tradition, is also a starting point for the school of rabbinical diasporism. Cohen revalorizes the ideal prophetic tradition that not only replaces the understanding of the (barbaric-to-be) other, but it also the source for the emergence of the new Self. This parallel modernity, according to Cohen, will primarily be Jewish.\(^{1103}\) In its place, Rosenzweig rescues the value of the Jewish community in eternity as the only path to acknowledge the other without passing over his or her specificity. Judaism becomes, as a consequence, a necessary step for world redemption. Paradoxically this limits the possible contribution of others besides Christianity, but the Jewish tradition is revalorized.\(^{1104}\) Lévinas rescues the anarchical, barbaric Hebrew as a clear alternative to the imperial Self. The Hebrew takes an *option for the other* and becomes another barbarian. Its suffering follows her ethical choice. Consequently, as only Jews had a complete ethical choice and suffered a total annihilation, they become the leaders of the barbaric community. The sources, sociology, and non-utopian Jewish history, are recovered to offer other content for the counter-narrative and affirm a tradition that has been categorized as barbaric.\(^{1105}\) The first step of Dussel’s work, with no objection, is followed by Cohen, Rosenzweig, and Lévinas.

The problem arises when we analyze the second step, the *contextual critique*. As mentioned above, this critique is divided into three levels of acknowledgment: the critical contexts of the source community, the intellectual, and the present collective. Let me begin with a close analysis of the first level of critique. Cohen portrays an ideal tradition that is taken over by the prophetic school he

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\(^{1103}\) For further development, consult chapter one especially 1.2.5.
\(^{1104}\) For further development, consult chapter one, especially, 1.3.2. and 1.3.4.
\(^{1105}\) For further development, consult chapter two, especially 2.3.
considers the ideal. In this way, he is tracing the self-critical moments of the tradition, as prescribed by Dussel. This recovery of the tradition, however, does not confront the historical and theoretical limitations of the ideal. Cohen, as a straightforward counter-Spinozinst, sees the fall of the structure in which the ideal lies (the social state) as a liberation of the universal potentialities of Judaism. To restate, instead of acknowledging the internal, historical reasons for the disempowerment of Judaism, he places the Jew as the true source of modernity. The state ought to fall in order for cosmopolitan idealism can arise. Judaism has nothing to reproach itself. This is strange when this fall, in times of either Babylon or Rome, followed fratricidal struggles and scandalizing social inequalities. The ideal for the new Self (that replaces the ideal situation of the other) is placed in exilic Ezekiel and not in the social prophets. This clearly shows that the socially critical moment of the tradition that explains its fall is lost. Cohen’s apologetic Jewish universalism, stripped from its correlative sociability, is a natural consequence. This increasingly asocial and a-critical universalism becomes the source of the final subsumption of the alterities, as the others need to become more Jewish (or the Eastern, more rational). This is to say, it is clear that the lack of contextual critique of the source leads to the impossibility of conversations in the critique. In Rosenzweig, the situation is even more evident. The eternal community lives a-historically developing ideal social practices. The contextual situation that leads to either the escape from history or the generation of the sociological rules is not thought through. The community, in the isolation of survival, lives in fear of the dangers of internal extremism but with an ontological—racial?—limitation to recognize what led them to this situation and the problems of its sociology. The problem is not only limited to the reading of the past. The eternal essence of the community of blood limits any possibility to transcend the current Judeo-Christian framework of analysis. In

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1106 It is not a coincidence that the fall to Babylon and Rome followed fratricidal struggles between Israel (already destroyed,) Judah, and two members of the Hassmonean family.

1107 For further development, consult chapter one, especially 1.2.4-6.
Rosenzweig’s conversation, there is no subsumption of the other alterities to the same. There lies a prior problem: no conversations outside the current dual paths to truth within Europe are possible. The issue is not the subsumption but the direct lack of possible conversation with other barbarians. The Jews should enjoy their pacifistic, eternal life as their duty, even accepting anti-Semitism and violent conquest of other others. As a consequence, the clear relation between Christian anti-Semitism and Christian imperial racism of other peoples is not explored and both of them are preserved. The only dialogue, limited to two conversation partners, is made in apologetic enmity. The conversation outside or inside the West, taking into account the idealistic portrayal of his tradition, is impossible.\textsuperscript{1108}

We thus arrive at Lévinas’ counter-narrative of the pan-barbaric front. In Lévinas, there is a return to non-utopian history of the Jewish community. More specifically, it is acknowledged that their history of marginalization is a consequence of the ethical stand that arose from the sources. The limitation in Lévinas, however, occurs in the critical engagement with the origins of these rabbinical sources that led to the ethical position, which finishes with the historical assimilation to totality. In other words, the origins of these rules and the actual historical application of them are not explored. Lévinas follows the limitations of both Cohen and Rosenzweig. The imaginative proposal of Jewish empowerment becomes a self-congratulatory confrontation of the centuries of imperial oppression. But there is no acknowledgment of the prior role of Judaism in the loss of Jewish power. Jews, according to Lévinas, have been defeated because of their principles (or the lack of them) and not because of the internal problems. This is particularly relevant when the fratricide struggle among the two kingdoms and within the Hassmonean dynasty leads to the Assyrian,

\textsuperscript{1108} For further development, consult chapter one, especially 1.3.2-5.
Babylonian, and Roman invasions. This is the origin of the diasporic—and later rabbinical—Judaism.\footnote{1109}

\textit{Judaism, according to rabbinical diasporism, is just an ideal that looses (or ought to loose) its historicity before trying to return to history.} As such, the recovery of the tradition is merely \textit{apologetic}. Lévinas’ counter-narrative, as a consequence, arises as a self-congratulatory, barbaric, and anarchical Hebrew that stands in clear opposition to the center.\footnote{1110} The final incorporation of the other into the community of Israel is a direct consequence of the uncritical stand in Jewish history that becomes apologetic thinking. If the community has nothing to reproach itself, it stands as the ideal barbarian that should be imitated by the multiplicity of alterities. Cohen, Rosenzweig, and Lévinas, as shown, fail to acknowledge the first level of contextual development the critical recovery of self-introspection of one’s own tradition. Consequently, the conversation will not have any room (as in Rosenzweig) or will become universal or barbaric sublation of the others into a Jewish-like modern community or the community of Israel (Cohen and Lévinas, respectively).\footnote{1111}

I maintain that this is the level that does not allow barbaric diasporism to engage in a conversation in correlation. The other two levels can be, a priori, accommodated to rabbinical diasporism, but the lack of a self-critical stand will limit possible conversation. Let us explore here these other levels. First, as has been shown, there is a clear acknowledgment of the contextual level of the author in the three thinkers. Cohen consciously writes within a critical, Neo-Kantian framework; Rosenzweig struggles throughout his entire book with Hegel’s system of philosophy of history; meanwhile, Lévinas acknowledges following a Husserlian and Heideggerian

\footnote{1109} It is important to notice that the first diaspora can be located in the Assyrian conquest, Ezekiel—the model of the diasporic prophet—emerge in the Babylonic \textit{galut}, the leadership of the rabbinical school rise after the destruction of the Temple by the Romans and its most significant texts were to written in Babylon itself or in the rest of the diaspora.\footnote{1110} For further development, consult chapter two, especially 2.2.3, 2.3.4, and 2.4.2.\footnote{1111} It is true that they comment on certain strands of their own tradition. For example, Cohen reviews political Zionism, Rosenzweig bourgeois German Jewry, and Lévinas Hasidism. Nevertheless, any of them critiques the original fall of the community prior to the eighteenth century.
phenomenological method in his early work and struggles against it in the post-war.\textsuperscript{1112} Similarly, we have shown that the three thinkers also engage with a clear sociopolitical and contextual stand that complements their theoretical enterprises: Cohen struggles for the admission of Polish Jews to Germany,\textsuperscript{1113} Rosenzweig replaces ideal Judaism beyond the bourgeois German context that encouraged war,\textsuperscript{1114} and Lévinas’ counter-narrative can be thought of as a decolonial project, bringing together a pan-Eastern Jewish project and acknowledging a similarity with Southern liberationists.\textsuperscript{1115} Therefore, the second level of contextual criticism, a priori, does not present a problem as the thinkers acknowledge their context in both the theoretical and political level. I will show in the next sections that a more attentive reading show that the engagement with this level is limited.

The third level, the contextual acknowledgment of the present of the people, does not present further complications in either Cohen or Lévinas. Cohen not only proclaims the modernity of the Central European Jews, but also shows the potential of non-Central Jews in becoming modern. In this way, the ethical community moves forward in their Messianic impetus.\textsuperscript{1116} In Lévinas, the Messianic impetus of the community also moves forward, although as a confrontation to the Kantian perpetual peace and not in its favor. The future community is not going to be formed by the complete humankind but only by those vanquished who will be nourished once the resources of the center are liberated.\textsuperscript{1117} In Rosenzweig, the situation is more difficult. Israel stays out of history as a community as it did in the past. In this way, there is no acknowledgment of the actual

\textsuperscript{1112} This is not a point we pointed out as the three authors do follow Dussel's construction. In Cohen’s critical Neo-Kantianism see Andrea Poma, The Critical Philosophy of Hermann Cohen in Rosenzweig’s confrontation to Hegelianism see Michael Mack, German Idealism and the Jew, 125-154, and for Lévinas’ phenomenological method, Adriaan Peperzak, To the Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Lévinas (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1993).
\textsuperscript{1113} For further development, consult chapter one, especially, 1.2.5.
\textsuperscript{1114} For further development, consult chapter one, especially 1.3.1/2.
\textsuperscript{1115} For further development, consult chapter two, especially 2.3.5.
\textsuperscript{1116} For further development, consult chapter one, especially 1.2.5.
\textsuperscript{1117} For further development, consult chapter two, especially 2.4.
life of the people but their eternal sociological re-enactment. In conclusion, a priori the general problem of rabbinical diasporism (what all the authors share) is the lack of acknowledgement of the first historical level. In the next section, however, I will show how the other levels of contextual acknowledgment are not complete either.

5.3 Un-correlative Consequences

5.3.1. Lessons from the First Audience: Utopianism

5.3.1.1. What is Religious Utopianism?

As I made clear above, the proposal of conversation in correlation fails due to the lack of internal critique of the sources. Instead of creating a critical tradition, the last stage of rabbinical diasporism develops an apologetic ideal community that does not find necessary to preserve the pan-barbaric character of the alliance. Therefore, it reduces the allies to the community of Israel. This subsumption of the other becomes the major problem for the model. In this section, I contend that two interrelated problems arise because of this limited model: utopianism and Orientalism. Both can be traced by employing the theoretical frameworks of Lévinas’ conversational partners (i.e. Marxism and decolonialism). In this section, I demonstrate how Horkheimer and Said can alert rabbinical diasporism on the consequences of both the uncritical re-reading of sources and the sublation of the other.

Commencing this particular part is a discussion concerning the utopian nature of rabbinical diasporism. I assert that the lack of acknowledgment of the contextual origin of the sources (the reason that precedes the affirmative creation of an apologetic tradition) also leads to utopianism. The latter will be described as the creation of an a-historical ideal model that, paradoxically and involuntary, reproduces of the same system that the tradition is attacking. I will start the discussion

\[1118\] For further development, consult chapter one, especially 1.3.1-3.
on utopianism, setting its foundation within the Marxian conception of religious ideology and extending it to the Marxist readings of Engels and Horkheimer.

Marx’s transition from liberal thinking to dialectical materialism can be traced in his 1840’s attacks against the left-Hegelian school in general, and Bauer and Feuerbach in particular. The confrontation with Bauer was crucial in explaining Marx’s position regarding Judaism and barbarism in the third chapter.\(^{1119}\) It is critical to point out some of Marx’s most important critiques of the author of *The Essence of Christianity*, as the Marxist conception of religious alienation arises from this encounter. In this particular text, Feuerbach re-evaluates the origin of the Hegelian secularized God (the Spirit) that is in charge of sublating the peoples in history. According to the left-wing Hegelian the idea (or God), is a creation of a human being who simultaneously tries to find a defense against the *threatening nature* and the meaning of his or her life beyond materiality. The idea (the Spirit or God) is a projected perfect construction brought into objectivity by the human being. He or she, unable to recognize his or her own participation in the creation of the ideal, *submits* him or herself as an object of the subject created. In other words, when he or she does not recognize that *theology is actually anthropology*, he or she becomes alienated, not recognizing his or her work in the idea that he or she created. Therefore, he or she follows this ideal law as if it were external and objective construction.\(^{1120}\)

Marx contends that Feuerbach’s proposal is unable to carry out the final *revolutionary* implications of his own position, as it does not go far enough along in the process of critique. One of the most salient texts in which Marx puts forward his critique is entitled “Thesis on Feuerbach.” In the sixth thesis, Marx argues that Feuerbach, along with the rest of the old materialists, is unable to understand is that the creation of the ideal (spirit or God) “is not the abstraction inhering in each

\(^{1119}\) For further development, consult chapter three, especially 3.3.2.

individual” but “the ensemble of social relationships.” Feuerbach, by reducing the ideal religious essence into ideal human essence, does not realize that this religious process is not “self-contained and abstracted from the social process” but a social product that reproduces and legitimates a particular social model of production. The analysis of “theology as anthropology” is the path toward the realization that “religion does not make man, but man makes religion.” Only the passage from anthropology to (what Marx later would call) the critique of political economy clearly describes how and why (a very Western deity-centered) religion appears. Alienation, for Marx, is the impossibility to acknowledge human relations of production as the origin of the ideal. Dialectical materialism, in contraposition to old materialism, starts from the “real historical man,” the one involved in relation of production and uncovers all idealism of the left-wing Hegelians. The latter, only able to “interpret the world” through the critique of the anthropological origin of religion. He or she (this real historical person) aims instead to “change it” with the critique of political economy as reflected in religion.

This active attack against the idealism of religion is further explored in the critique against the master of knowledge and not his acolyte. In Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right/Law, Marx contends, “the criticism of religion is the premise of all criticism.” The state and society “produce religion” as a way to project into objectivity the rules of a particular mode of production. Religion, in this way, is an “inverted consciousness of the world” and a “consolation and justification” of the suffering that the accumulation of the means of production by one class carried. It is true, he agrees with Feuerbach, that the “basis of irreligious criticism is: Man makes religion, religion does

1122 Ibid.
1123 Ibid.
1124 This project is going to be carried over in the summit of Marx’s work, The Capital. See Marx, Des Kapital/The Capital
1126 Ibid., 7/250.
1127 Ibid.
not make man…but man is not an abstract being squatting outside of the world.” 1128 While religion offers only an “illusory happiness,” Marx’s method leads to a “real happiness” just as before he argued that Jews should not pursue an “incomplete” but rather an “authentic liberation.” 1129 Religion is the result of a “false consciousness” that makes impossible for the historical human to see that the ideal is actually a result of the forces of production in which he participates. Unsurprisingly, Marx recognizes that religion is not only an “opium” also but the expression of “real suffering” of those vanquished by history. 1130 However, the achievement of the real happiness does not arise from this “protest against real suffering” but the partaking of the class-consciousness that disenchant the idealism that reproduces the system. 1131 This same idealism makes the inexorable march of the (socially created) Spirit the very reason for the sublation of the dispossessed peoples and their description as barbarians. It is the confrontation with human alienation, from which religious alienation is just its “aroma,” upon which the full emancipation of humanity depends. 1132

Several of its followers further carry this criticism of religion as the primary alienation to be confronted. Marx along with Frederick Engels already engaged, in *The German Ideology*, the critique of those intellectuals who built an alternative model without acknowledging the socioeconomic structure that led to alienation and liberation. He mocked their theories, referring to them as saintly *old materialists* or the *prophets of true socialism*. He includes, among others major critiques on “Saint Bruno” (Bauer) and “Saint Max” (Striner) and minor comments on the followers of Claude of Saint-Simon and Francoise Fourier. At this stage, they are more interested in critiquing those old materialist perspectives than debating those who find refuge in pre- or post-capitalist religious

1128 Ibid.
1130 Marx, “Zur kritik der hegelschen rechtsphilosophie,”/“Toward a Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right” 7-8/250.
1131 Ibid.
1132 Ibid.
models extrapolated from the social conditions.\footnote{1133 Marx and Frederick Engels, \textit{Deutsche Ideologie} (London: Lawrence \& Wishart, 1938). Translated in \textit{The German Ideology}, C.J. Arthur trans. (New York: International Publishers, 1970).} The critique on the utopianism of these models is further carried in two stages. In the first, the co-author of \textit{The German Ideology}, Engels, will directly confront historical materialism with idealist utopian projects. He will not be, however, interested in following Marxist premises and attack the utopianism of religious projects. Horkheimer, less than a century later, returns to the original Marx (as if the non-Jewish Jewish tradition of Marxist Jews should be re-emphasized) and finds, in the critique of the religious models of alternative societies, the source to criticize the alienation of a system in which religion is its \textit{aroma}.

Even though the critique I will offer will be largely rooted in Horkheimer, it is helpful to see the continuities and ruptures of the Engelian critique on idealist utopianism. Engels’ critique is particularly clear in his article “Socialism, Utopian and Scientific.”\footnote{1134 Engels, “Entwicklung des Sozialismus von der Utopie zur Wissenschaft” in Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels–\textit{Werke} (Berlin: Dietz Verlag Auflage 1973), 194, 177-228. Translated in \textit{Socialism. Utopian and Scientific} Edward Aveling trans. (New York: International Publishers, 1935).} According to Marx’s partner, utopianism is practiced by religious proposals and communist theories of the sixteenth and eighteenth/nineteenth centuries respectively. While previous bourgeoisie theories (including Bauer and Feuerbach) limited the claim for “equality to political rights,” they protested the distribution of resources and extended the claim for equality “to the social conditions of the individuals.”\footnote{1135 Ibid., 191/34.} As an extension of bourgeoisie thinking, it claimed that suffering in the world was not a result of “social conflict” or “class antagonism” but of a “misunderstanding of reason.”\footnote{1136 Ibid.} It was the goodwill of the benevolent anthropology of the human being, appealing to good reason and a just conception of society, what was going to transform a history previously understood as a “crude, violent, and irrational” set of events.\footnote{1137 Ibid. This comment is particularly relevant and may show the anthropological ambiguity of Marxism as explained in 2.3.1.} These trends constructed “new and more perfect social systems...the
more completely worked out in detail, the more they could not avoid drifting off into pure fantasies.”

The utopian thinkers, drawing from rational fantasy without taking into account the conditions for its development, presented themselves not as partisan representatives of the powerless in society, but as goodwill reformers that would bring “universal comfort.” The problem, Engels points out, is not only the lack of a historical and critical reading of the path toward accomplishment of the idealized project. It is more the absence of a critique over the ideals that led the struggle: “truth, reason and justice are again [temporally] conditioned.” The guiding principles of the idealized project (such as reason and justice) were not universal and objective, but instead a “reproduction of a particular mode of production.” In this way, according to Engels, these non-partisan utopian communist projects reproduced the alienation that subsumed the dispossessed in history. Even though Engels does not have room for a critique of religious utopian movements, he brilliantly explores the relationship between critics of the system and alienation.

Horkheimer departs from this same critique but returns to the Marxist motif of religious criticism as the premise of all criticism. For this reason, his focus will not be in communist theories of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, but in religious utopianisms of the sixteenth century. Horkheimer, in the “Beginnings of the Bourgeoisie of History,” analyzes “the great utopias” of Catholics Thomas Moro and Tommasso de Campanella who were “the expression of the desperate classes that has to bear the costs of the transition” between medieval and modern modes of production. Horkheimer practices a double return to Marx. We will see how the criticism of religion will be his departing point to analyze utopianism. However, he also understands that religion

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1138 Ibid., 193/36.
1139 Ibid., 194/38.
1140 Ibid., 200/44.
1141 Ibid.
can be the expression and protest of popular suffering. In his own words, it can be “the cry” of the disposed people or the “vessel that preserved the demands for justice in the face of actual misery.”¹¹⁴³ This understanding of religion as protest stands in opposition to the modern instrumental rationalization of it as means for political legitimation, in Horkheimer’s explanations, in Maquiavelli,¹¹⁴⁴ Hobbes,¹¹⁴⁵ and Hegel.¹¹⁴⁶ The mission of their utopian protesters was universalistic: they hoped to “achieve a holy community on earth that would replace the laws of free competition with the commandments of Christ.”¹¹⁴⁷

By returning to Marx, Horkheimer goes beyond Engels’ portrayal of utopianism; human beings, according to the idealist alienation, are anthropologically benevolent and aspire to replace with the rational common love of Christ (or humanity, for Engels) the egotistic structure that displaces the dispossessed. The eradication of evil lies in the acknowledgment of this rational commonality in Catholic humankind in the sixteenth century and common, industrial, universal reason in the nineteenth. From the very beginning, the perception of the goal for modern utopian projects seems to be the same: the sublation of all humanity under a single ideal project. The creation of the ideal model, as it was in Engels, is idealized “without consideration of the historical circumstances.”¹¹⁴⁸ They “believe that they can establish a new society simply on the grounds of free, rational, human resolution.” However, these projects are a “dreamland of historically bound fantasy.”¹¹⁴⁹ They are unable to acknowledge that the guidelines of this society (either the conquest of an island or the universal monarchy) arise from a particular context and “creates this society out of desires that are shaped by the specific social situation.”¹¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, they do not realize that

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¹¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 204-205/334-335.
¹¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 205-206/335-363.
¹¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 250/373.
¹¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 240/366.
¹¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 241/367.
¹¹⁴⁹ Ibid.
¹¹⁵⁰ Ibid.
the society created is also historical and contains within it “the material conditions for its
development, existence and decline.” Consequently, the problematic absence of this historical
critical analysis is doubled as it pertains the future project and the system that they attempt to
overcome. In the first place, and as pointed out by Dussel, they are unable to recognize the historical
implications of the recovery of sources that by themselves bring an historical dimension, with its
limitations, to their project. But by also thinking of these projects with an interpretation of sources
that arise within the current status quo, they portray these values and interpretations (such as the
concept of freedom and justice) as eternal.

The problem for the utopians is that only the current system actually exists. Therefore, by
merely imagining an ideal future, and with it various concepts arising from this system, reduced are
the very real possibilities to what is already in place. It is only thus an “unrealistic consolation” or an
“opium” that allows the system to reproduce itself. Utopianism, as a consequence, brings the
worst of both worlds: their ideal is not only unrealizable, but involuntarily reproduces the same
maxims being combated, and with no offer of consolation. These theories are alienated as a result
for the impossibility to see that context and sources result from the relations of production. For
Moro and Campanella, there is either a reproduction of the explosion of scientific progress to
control nature, or utter uniformity of the social totality disallowing room for dissidence. To this,
they add a heavenly portrayal of medieval ages, without understanding that the pre-modern seeds are
what led to the growth of their contemporary injustice, along with those of the previous mode of
production. To add, this utopianism is also counter-conducive. Horkheimer contends that they
not only reproduce what exists, but bring forth those incipient elements not fully matured. In this

1151 Ibid. In an important remark that is not included in our analysis, Horkheimer offers a dialectical reading of good/evil
showing how the creation of a system always includes the seeds of the other. Taking into account that this led to a
subsumption of all the alternatives into the system, and that it only provides an opportunity to take a negative stand, I
will refrain from using this conclusion in our work. I expect to engage in a critique concerning these points in future
work.
1152 Ibid., 243/368.
1153 Ibid., 243-244/368-369.
context, he traces the influence of these utopian thinkers with regard to the development of work rationalization that was not yet completely developed. It both presents the status quo as the only realistic option as well as idealizes a past that led to the very problem, scarcely offering even a passive consolation. Helpful to our study here will be to delve into the incipient practices and ideas confronted by the next generation of utopians.

Horkheimer does clarify that these utopian proposals should not be wholly rejected. There are two aspects of the project: “the critique of what is and the representation of what should be.”\textsuperscript{1154} What ought to be rescued is the first step in which the utopian thinkers clearly understand “the suffering of human beings forced by society into an inhuman inexistence” of, following rabbinical diasporism, sublation.\textsuperscript{1155} This directly confronts, as Horkheimer argues explicitly, idealist Hegelianism, who’s “Spirit, manifesting, developing and perfecting its power...is not only problematic, it is frightening.”\textsuperscript{1156} It should be acknowledged “as a fact” that “history has realized a better society out of an inferior one...but it is also a fact that the course of history passes over the suffering and misery of individuals” and peoples.\textsuperscript{1157} This critique is what the utopian religious intellectuals propose, years before the crystallization of the project in Hegel. Although their critique should be resuscitated, their offerings are highly problematic as they finish reproducing the same system they are attacking. Horkheimer, with his critique of Hegel and pre-Hegelian utopians, is attacking both utopian Catholic and idealist Protestant proposals. He challenges the former for producing suffering and the subsequent for creating “images” of a future that reproduces the system. Horkheimer, as we have explained in the third chapter, insists upon a ban of images of the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{1154} Ibid., 245/371.
\textsuperscript{1155} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1156} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1157} Ibid., 247/373.
\end{flushleft}
future to confront the system’s perpetuation. It is the Jewish ban of images that alone will provide the chance to escape the system.¹¹⁵⁸

In sum, according to Marxist thought, a group of men of goodwill who confront misery and injustice by creating ideal, decontextualized, and unrealizable models brings utopian thinking forth. These models of flawlessness are depicted without critique of the abstract concepts guiding the struggle. Consequently, the lack of historical analysis of the possibility to implement the sources is not just un-conducive, but also finishes supporting the reproduction of the only realistic status quo. The utopian project, consequently, acts as a mere consolation. It is a path to understand, accept, and reproduce the system that brings suffering. Let me trace the extent to which the school of rabbinical diasporism follows the path of utopian thinking.

5.3.1.2. Rabbinical Diasporism and Utopian Thinking

A reading of the implicit problems of utopianism makes clear the limitations of rabbinical diasporism, in its conversation model but in terms of the project itself. The problematic root, however, is the same: the absence of historical critique. Let me start with an analysis of Cohen’s limitations. Cohen unfolds an ideal out of the sources but hardly attends to the social context of the origin of these sources. He implicitly admits the existence of multiple interpretations, not unexpectedly. Yet the only ones who will represent the tradition are those incorporated into the discourse that becomes the ideal. Therefore, the critic should reflect on what contradictions are being brought forth by the incorporation of sources arising as uncontaminated from past tensions. For example, Horkheimer announced that the “hell of the medieval times” became the “Catholic utopian paradise

¹¹⁵⁸ For further development, consult chapter three, especially 3.3.2.
in modernity.”1159 Is, therefore, the hell of rabbinical exile under constant persecution the paradise of modern rabbinical diasporism? To what extent does Cohen find a paradise in the constant persecution that made the barbaric (i.e. unlikely seen as a ger toshav) Maimonides flee from Cordoba and lived under the threat of persecution all his life? It is true that Cohen’s illuminism will never admit a return to the past. The construction of the ideal Judaism he defends, however, is based on the sources that were written in a context of retreat from tradition, seen as both a protest as well as a mere utopian consolation for past suffering.

There is a second tier in this problem of contextualization. Cohen scarcely admits that his system is contextual; on the contrary, it is atemporal, formal, and ideal. As such, he is unable to question why his interpretation of the sources matches so well with Western and German concepts. Let me explain the consequences of this move. It is true that Cohen’s Jewish reading of modernity serves to subvert the political understanding of the foreigner within a nation state and a community of nations. But the conception of a nation state and a community of nations are not contested. It is still Germany and the European (i.e. Kantian in this case) model of unified humankind that Cohen seems to have in mind without even acknowledging it. In other words, his critical idealism is still within German idealism despite the Jewish origin of its sources. Borrowing a reflection from Engels’ critique, it is the general reason looking for general comfort and not an awareness of conflict guiding the struggle for social justice. Any apparent contradiction ought to be solved by good-natured and rational human beings who just need to acknowledge their misinterpretations. If people understand, they will behave differently beyond personal interest.

Beyond Engels, from Horkheimer’s point of view, the lack of critical acknowledgment of the context of production of the project (or interpretation of the sources) results in the reproduction of the very same relations, as I demonstrated, which he tried to confront. By creating this more

human option, even if that option is justified with alternative sources, the system is reproduced. Given that Cohen’s reading of history is progressive, he not only reproduces the same conditions, but also encourages the full development of modern elements that are (or were) not yet present. One of the examples is the complete subsumption of otherness in the Messianic, unified humankind. Cohen’s project is utopic, after his lack of critical engagement with the contexts of production and reception.

From the above explanation of the utopian character of Cohen’s proposal, I proceed onto a critique of Rosenzweig’s project. Cohen’s student presents the Jewish community as an ideal that resists being included into political history and as being on a non-violent (or pacifist) path toward redemption. This is a community of dispossessed deciding, without taking into account social and economic conditions, to craft a pure and ideal society outside the political egotism of the unfolding Christian modernity. For those who have read Moro’s classic text (Horkheimer’s model), the sociological construction of a community apart from other communities, finds its echo in Rosenzweig’s proposal.1160 These highly organized societies follow a community of belief and ritual in order to escape external contamination. Naturally, Horkheimer would say, without acknowledging that all new society brings with itself the two sides of the coin. It is true that Moro imagined the community and Rosenzweig, as we described, saw it in Uskub and Warsaw. Rosenzweig, however, was not very knowledgeable of Yiddish or Ladino. He probably idealized the sociology of a community in the same way that Moro fantasized his. Following Horkeimer, the results of this type of idealization are clear: by not taking into account the conditions of construction of these societies (the sociological sources), the ideal community is unrealizable. Rosenzweig, perhaps aware of this, never tried to create a shtetl with his students, primarily middle-class Frankfurters. His pedagogy is not

nearly as radical as is his system. The creation of an unrealizable idea in the latter, presents once again the current status quo as the only possibility.

The problem is not reduced to the false hopes of the German context, but the consolation and justification of suffering of Rosenzweig’s model. Let us imagine a Jew from Warsaw or Uskub reading his system (probably translated into Arabic, Serbian, or Russian more so than Polish or Macedonian). He or she may think that Rosenzweig naturalizes not solely the model of eternal community, but also the causes for the group’s suffering. Anti-Semitism, for example, as a model of relations among communities, is presented as an eternal, necessary, and immutable antagonism in the dialogue between the two ideal types. This hatred, however, has gone through diverse stages and several of these Eastern Jewries confronted Islam and not Christianity as the hegemonic power. The naturalization of a particular contextual development that responds to defined tensions of particular societies becomes a simple consolation for daily suffering. Utopian projects, Horkheimer would say, are religious vessels that contain the cry that arises from the material consequences of this hatred. But the naturalization of this hatred as necessary and eternal not only offers consolation, but justification for the inevitability of this suffering.

We arrive therefore at the counter-narrative of Lévinas. The Lithuanian thinker does include history into his analysis acknowledging the need of a contextual critique of his project. The problem, however, lies in his limited inclusion of history. Let me explain myself with Lévinas’ use of historically situated problems in two key Talmudic lectures: 1969’s Shabbat 86-87 and 1986’s Pesahim 118b. In the first, he distinguishes a Jewish revolution, and in the second, a pan-barbaric community of Israel. The Marxist revolution is contextually situated after the 1968 (paradoxically anarchist or heterodox, Maoist/Trotsky-like) model. The concept of Jewish revolution of the same lecture and the latter’s imperial conquest and decolonial subversion are presented, however, as eternal. He insists, indeed, that the suffering might be historically situated but the project of liberation and the
alliances with others resides beside historical action. It is not what the community does, but what principles the community holds. By refraining from asking after the origin of this common principle, Lévinas brings into objectivity ideas of solidarity, revolution, and rebellion that arise from particular contexts. It is not unexpected then, that in the last lecture the only possible triumph against the empire is the use of the same militaristic force used by the center to colonize the barbarian (Israel, Egypt, Cush, or the Mayan). Without acknowledging it, Lévinas could be re-reproducing the identical system he tries to confront.

Lévinas also differentiates himself from Cohen and Rosenzweig in yet another interrelated realm, namely that he is the only one who portrays a distinctive Jewish triumph at the end of history. In Cohen’s writings, Jews are the source and the means, but the end lies beyond Judaism. In Rosenzweig, the end preserves Judaism, but does not represent its triumph; instead, the end depicts the Johanine Church’s final conquest. Lévinas is the only of the three intellectuals to present clearly a Jewish community defeating the enemy. The question, however, concerns the extent to which this theologically oriented community (after all, God is active in advising Israel in Pesahim 118b) is not a mere consolation for contextual problems. This could be a consolation of Jewish suffering in Europe as it presents a revenge against the Holocaust perpetrators, which makes this suffering “useful.” But it could also be, as I will show in the next section, the suffering that Jews inflict upon others while presenting themselves as allies. This is not in vain—in 1986, Jews were not particularly allies of Egypt or Ethiopia, but were more likely central figures in the United States and Israel. Lévinas, therefore, might be using a theologically oriented framework to explain the hopes of present

sufferers. Not to mention, of course, that the model guarantees consolation is a community of purity that reproduces the same problem that Rosenzweig held.1162

In review of this section, I would like to conclude that rabbinical diasporism does fall into utopianism. Whereas in the previous section, I evidenced the inability to wholly engage in conversation with the other because of the lack of historical critique, I now show that it is utopian in its lack of historical engagement with a context of production and reception of the sources (understanding the latter to be literary, sociological, and historical documents). The heterodox elective affinity shows the inadequacies of the orthodoxy.

5.3.2. Lessons from the second Audience: Orientalism

5.3.2.1 Orientalism in/on Judaism

Above, we have seen how the reduction of other peoples to the community of Israel becomes a problem for the last stage of rabbinical diasporism. I showed, through the framework of trans-modern decolonial theory, that the reason of this reduction is the uncritical return to an a-historical idealization of the tradition. This apologetic element disrupts the possibility of a conversation in correlation. This has a two-fold consequence: first, those who preceded Lévinas’ Marxist heirs, show the utopian character of rabbinical diasporism, following the limited acknowledgment of the context of production and reception of the sources; second, those who followed the post-colonial critique developed in the Caribbean/Latino context between the 1950s and 1970s point out the Orientalist character of the tradition. At present, I will explain how a second generation of post-colonial critics, the hybrid intellectuals who trace the ideological construction of discourses of irreducible otherness in the West, help to demonstrate the second consequence of the lack of self-critique in rabbinical diasporism. That is, its Orientalism.

1162 This position is further expanded by Howard Caygill. See Caygill, Lévinas and the Political, 195-197.
Decolonial thinking, as was shown in the fourth chapter, dates from the beginning of colonialism. In other words, the resistance to imperialism is simultaneous with its implementation.\footnote{For further development, consult the fourth chapter, especially 4.3. and 4.4.} What is known as the field of post-colonial studies is only a second and more scholarly stage following this five hundred year social struggle. As was mentioned in the introduction, the “Messianic event” for this trend is the publication of Orientalism in 1978.\footnote{See the comments on the messianic character in Gandhi, Postcolonial Theory: A Critical introduction, 106.} Said, the book’s author and the influential founder of the school of thought, finds in French (or French-speaking) historical events (i.e. Napoleon’s expedition to Egypt), textual evidence (i.e. Françoise Flaubert), and theory (i.e. from the post-modernism of Foucault to the decolonialism of Fanon), the theoretical and factual information to build his work. As many critics have shown, we can trace multiple (and sometimes contradictory) definitions of Orientalism in Said’s text.\footnote{Ajaz Ahmad, In Theory: Nations, Classes, Literature (London: Verso, 1994), 223. [first edition 1978].} Taking into account that this is not a study on Said, but of the theoretical framework helping us to understand the limitations of rabbinical diasporism, I will employ the more strict (in his words, the more “historical and material”) definition.\footnote{Said, Orientalism, 3.} For Said, Orientalism can be defined as the “Western style of dominating, rejecting and having authority over the Orient.”\footnote{Ibid.} Said shows how from the eighteenth century onwards, Europe (and subsequently America) has defined itself in opposition to a created representation of the East. The intellectual discourse that “represents and speaks” for the Orient, created a “body of theory” crucial in developing the cultural hegemony of the West, nourishing the more strict political and economic expansion. Said defines this Orientalism as “the corporate institution of dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, [and] ruling over it.”\footnote{Ibid., 7.}
Perhaps for those reasons mentioned in the introduction, Jews only appear at random. A closer look at the original text with its revisions, however, leads to a double relevance of the Jew. On the one hand, Said acknowledges that anti-Semitism is “a branch of Orientalism.”1169 On the other, from Karl Marx to Benjamin Disraeli to Bernard Lewis, Said traces a line of (diverse) Jewish Orientalists.1170 He finishes by pointing out the role of Israel in the reproduction of discourses in the context of American neo-Orientalism.1171 It is, however, in his work, The Question of Palestine, published just a few months after the original version of Orientalism, that the Jew will become a main character. In this book, the aforementioned line of Orientalist Jews will be complemented with a critique on Zionist discourses. According to Said, the rise of Jewish nationalist discourse “coincided with the period of unparallel territorial acquisition in Africa and Asia.”1172 The context gives a reason for the link, but its target is more suggestive: “Zionism appealed to a European audience for whom the classification of overseas territory into various uneven classes was canonical and natural.”1173

The connection between imperialism and Zionism may not be reducible to context and audience, but does serve as the content of this discourse. By using nineteenth-century Western conceptions of land, Zionism cannot be regarded as a project of “national liberation” but rather as an “agent” of imperialism. Yet the practical engagement with imperial policies is nourished by an ideological conception of otherness, justifying conquest to overcome the supposed emptiness and unproductiveness of the land. In this regard, Jews also follow European Orientalism: “Zionism can easily be accommodated to several varieties of Western (as opposed to Eastern) thought, principal among them the idea that the East is degraded, that it needs reconstruction according to enlightened

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1169 Ibid., 27-8.
1170 This is not to say that the line is explicit in Said. I argue that it is possible to reconstruct Said’s position regarding the discourse of the Jew following the different Jewish cases he presents in his work.
1171 Ibid., 7.
1173 Ibid.
Western notions about politics.”1174 In this case in particular, the local other, “the Arabs[,] were seen as synonymous with everything degraded, fearsome, irrational, and brutal.”1175 This directly opposes the “humanitarianism” of Jewish institutions. Therefore, the combination between Orientalism and the politics of land has evoked inevitable imperialism: “Zionism saw Palestine as the European imperialist, as an empty territory paradoxically filled with ignoble or perhaps dispensable natives.”1176 Zionism sees itself as the avant-garde of the European cultural imperialism, presenting itself as a “redemptive Occidental movement, [which] confronted the Orient in the Orient.” Interestingly, this is what leads the victims of Zionist enterprises—“the Arabs Palestinians in the hands of Zionism”—to share a place with other barbaric peoples; “those black, yellow, and brown people who were described as inferior and subhuman by nineteenth century imperialism.”1177

Jews, according to Said, were enrolled in this permanent reproduction of Orientalism. Rabbinical diasporism, however, includes the Eastern as a key actor (and not only as subject) in its projects and is, by nature, diasporic and non-Zionist. For this reason, Said’s Orientalism does not fully explain the non-Zionist, philo-Eastern Orientalism of Jews. The latter can, however, be explicited by the modification that was made to Said’s proposals by his critics. This portrayal of a line of some of the more radical Jewish thinkers as Orientalists, according to Ivan Kalmar, misses an important point. For Kalmar, “Orientalism is not only about Arabs but also about Jews,” and a number of Jewish Orientalists (including Disraeli, as well as those Jews erecting synagogues from Budapest to St. Petersburg to Philadelphia) reabsorbed the accusation showing “Semitic” or “Oriental” pride.1178 Even more relevant, is that Kalmar traces this development within Jewish philosophy itself. However, the representative of this Orientalism—Martin Buber—will be placed

1174 Ibid., 65.
1175 Ibid. 88.
1176 Ibid., 81.
1177 Ibid., 69.
1178 Ibid.
outside of, but intimately related to, rabbinical diasporism. It would be helpful to remember that Buber was excluded from our analysis for two simple reasons: he does not find the center of Judaism in the oral law, and because he was a decisive, cultural Zionist. Let us analyze the text that makes Kalmar conclude that Buber was an “Orientalist imperialist” by considering, paradoxically, “the Jew as Oriental.”

By revisiting Buber’s proposal, I will elaborate on Kalmar’s position. In an early text entitled *The Spirit of the Orient and Judaism*, Buber credits Western Orientalists who “were aware of the fact that the Orient is a single unit.” At certain times, he reflects, “the Oriental was looked upon as representing a primitive stage of development.” That said, he ironizes understanding this *primitiveness* with “perfecteness: The Oriental and Occidental World distinguish themselves by their dichotomic essences. The Orient has “motor sensibilities” and the “Occident sensorial.” While “the Occidental’s comprehension of his sensations originates the world[,] the Oriental’s comprehension of the world originates in his sensations.” While the Occident “progress[es] step by step from the world appearance to its truth,” the Oriental “carries this truth.” As we can clearly see from Rosenzweig’s partner-to-be, the Jews are identified as being amongst those who “carry,” and not who “progress toward the truth.” The Jews, for Buber, are the “Orient’s latecomers.” The Jews, far from being “unoriginal and unproductive,” are particularly tied to the gathering of diverse elements into the tradition. In other words, the Jews are the hybrid, subsuming the other’s insights within the Oriental. As a consequence, they become the representative of the Orient “of all the Orientals.”

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1179 Ibid., 313-314.
1181 Ibid., 11/57.
1182 Ibid., 14/59.
1183 Ibid., 18/61.
1184 Ibid.
Buber writes, “the Jew is the most obvious antithesis of the Greek.” This confrontation between Athens and Jerusalem is classic; while the Greek tries to “master the world,” the Jew wants to “perfect it.” For the Greek, “the world exists and for the Jew it should be ‘perfected’ “For the Greeks the deed is in the world; for the Jew the world is in the deed. Currently, however, there is no symmetry between one and the other.\footnote{Ibid., 31/69.} “The soul of Asia is being murdered”; the reason being, simply, imperialism: “The external power of Europe,” practices the “subjugation of India, the self-Europeanization of Japan, the debilitation of Persia, and lastly, the ravaging of China.”\footnote{Ibid., 46/77.} According to Buber, in this manner disagreeing with a more combative Lévinas, “Europe must dare to promote a new Era, in which the Orient will be preserved,” and they will recognize each other in “fruitful reciprocity.”\footnote{Ibid., 47/78.} The solution for this is the return to a “timeless passageway between Orient and Occident.” This is represented by “Palestine’s importance for the world…. Today Jerusalem is the gateway of the nations…the salvation of the nations.”\footnote{Ibid.}

For Kalmar, replacing the Jew within the Oriental is part of a Zionist project that can be defined as “Orientalist imperialism in the now classic sense of Edward Said’s work.”\footnote{Kalmar, “Jewish Orientalism” in Jewish Studies at the Turn of the Twentieth Century, Volume II: Judaism from the Renaissance to the Modern Times Judit Targarona Borras and Angel Saenz-Badillos eds. (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 315. This is not to say that Buber was only an imperialist; this is just one aspect of his proposal.} This construction of the Jew as the Oriental makes “Buber and those like him…not think themselves as Occidental colonialists, but rather as Orientals coming home to the East.”\footnote{Ibid., 314.} We remember that Buber was left out of our analysis because of his Zionism and lack of interest in the rabbinical turn of the school. I will contend that neither Cohen nor Rosenzweig follow this path, although Lévinas seems to combine the problems of the rabbinical diasporic thinkers with Buber’s more complex Orientalism.
5.3.2.2. Rabbinical Diasporism and Orientalism

I suggest that a combination of Said’s and Kalmar’s arguments can explain a degree of Orientalism in rabbinical diasporism. Right from the outset, I should point out that neither Cohen nor Rosenzweig were Zionists. Therefore, the creation of a determinate Orientalization of the Eastern that directly justifies Jewish colonial expansionism is not part of the discussion in this pre-Lévinasian stage. Naturally, they could have been contextually nourished by Zionism, but the lack of expansion of the movement in the first half of the century in Germany makes it unlikely. To add, in Rosenzweig, there is no possibility of Jewish spatial expansion, and in Cohen, there seems to be more of a concern with the inclusion of the other in the center, than the center’s expansion into the terrains of the other. Cohen and Rosenzweig, however, put forward another Orientalization of the other in the Eastern Jew. As a consequence, I argue, they practice a level of Jewish Orientalism as a crucial element of their projects.

For Cohen, the Eastern Jew is noble and learned, but not yet Western. In other words, she is ideally unselfish and saintly; a ger toshav, but never barbaric. Despite this idealism, she ought to become a Westerner for two reasons: first, because only Westerners can work toward a unified humankind and, second, because she becomes (paradoxically in a Kantian framework) the perfect means for the West to show its rationality. It is by accepting this solidarity with the stranger, that the manifestation of rationality can be shown. This idealization of the saintly Easterner marks the a-historical Polish or Russian Jew as a figure that is able to be civilized but whose characteristics ought to be changed through assimilation. To rephrase, this places Cohen in a long-term, liberal Western trend of those who have attempted to civilize the barbarian, idealizing her. This interconnection
seems to be what Lévinas’ counter-narrative is combating. This is the paradox of the work of Cohen. On the one hand, he encourages the reform of the barbaric-like Jew which is problematic for the anti-assimilationist correlation he seem to propose but it passes the test of Orientalism. He praises, on the other, the idealized qualities of the Eastern presenting her as a model but striping the Eastern Jew of any concrete historical existence. This places Cohen within a non-Zionist, philo-Orientalist discourse.

The case of Rosenzweig is more complicated as the idealization of the East becomes the model for Judaism. In other words, Judaism is solely Eastern, and is immutable. It is a blood community and those who leave, are barbaric. This model, however, is extrapolated from historical reality and is shown as ritualistically static. In this way, Rosenzweig follows his teacher by stripping the Eastern Jew from any concrete historical existence. They are just an ideal whose static nature (from Cohen’s saint people to Rosenzweig’s blood community) makes the system theoretically possible and practically unviable. Despite this strong Orientalization of the Eastern Jew, Rosenzweig does not follow the model of his partner, Buber. In the first place, this Easternization of Judaism does not conclude in a cultural project with ramifications in political empowerment. It is, on the contrary, a sociological project of political (or apolitical, pacifist) disempowerment. Both Cohen and Rosenzweig create an ideal of the East in the context of their anti-Zionism. The teacher reproduces a liberal agenda that supports assimilation of the other; meanwhile, the student preserves the other by making him immutable and radically different from the Westerner, decontextualizing her from any politics. The Easterner in Rosenzweig is the wholly and immutable other. This is Orientalism yet with more utopian than clearly political expansionist goals.

We arrive at the end to the case of Lévinas. From the very preface of his work Said protests against radical thinkers, such as Marx himself, who advocate allowing intellectuals of the center to be
supporters of those whose identities reside in the periphery (in the Third or Fourth world). As we have shown before, it is the Eastern character of Lévinas, the only of our three Jewish philosophers who was born outside the center, which allowed him to understand the provocation of the re-appropriation of barbarism. At the same time, it is possible to see Orientalist tendencies in two areas of Lévinas’ proposal: his pan-Eastern project and his pan-barbaric front. In the first place, he creates a pan-Eastern project that includes his students and former Marxists, subsuming this model to one provincial location of knowledge. As I have shown, the characteristics of the Easterner are based on Eastern Europeans. The question is, what are the limits in creating the other part of the self’s project? At the same time, he follows a North African Jew in re-appropriating barbarism, which may moderate his Orientalist tone. The second problem is the existence of a community of the brave ones in 1986 that presupposes that the community of Israel will lead the community of others when contemporary Israel (both the state and the people) was clearly aligned with the empire he defines as the enemy. In other words, I reflect on the extent to which the line of rabbinical diasporism, by trying to replace Judaism within the other side, does not reproduce, perhaps involuntary, the same limitations of Buber’s proposal. Furthermore, in a different work we could investigate why rabbinical diasporism was unable to be completely followed by Eastern Jews.

In conclusion, the three members of the school of rabbinical diasporism show certain levels of Orientalism in their discourse. Cohen strips the Eastern from concrete historical existence and idealizes her sainthood. Rosenzweig idealizes a life of an immutable Easterner and makes of it a model for an immutable, non-political community outside of history. Finally, Lévinas subsumes Eastern identities into one (before doing the same with the barbarians), undermining the historical developments of these communities. What recurs in each one of these Orientalist proposals is the

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1191 Said, Orientalism, xiii. This quote is taken from Marx’s critique against the pure-proletariat in The Eighteen of Brumary of Louis Bonaparte.
ignorance of the historical circumstances of the peoples seen as Eastern in order to put forward a Hebraic project. As a consequence, the lack of awareness of the historical leads rabbinical diasporism to fall into un-correlative conversations, utopianism, and Orientalism.
Conclusion

The departure point of this dissertation was the acknowledgment and exploration of the interrelation between Jewish thought and decolonial voices. In that opportunity, I pointed out two limitations for this encounter. The first was the Saidian imprint of the field of post-colonial studies. I explained that post-colonial studies admit the discourse on the racialization the Jew without much inconvenient. The problem, however, is that when there is an exploration of the discourse of the Jew, it is invariably placed within the Orientalist or colonizer side (from Moses Hess to Bernard Lewis via Golda Meir) even when the discourse develops post-colonial theory and is written from a colonized himself (i.e. Albert Memmi). The dissociation between the discourse on and of the Jew challenges the encounter between Jewish and decolonial voices. The second limit is the current development of textual studies in Jewish thought themselves. I explained that they reproduce a limitation that Sander Gilman sees in diverse writings on Judaism. The Jew is either a triumphant cosmopolitan or a complete dispossessed. The Jew’s European essence is immutable, and whose suffering is intra-European. This is why scholars in Jewish philosophy only pair Jewish with Western thinking, attempting to fill the gap between Athens and Jerusalem. And, at the same time, recognizing the Holocaust trauma (or presentiment) in some of these authors.

My analysis of Lévinas’ barbaric encounter with Third World thinking aims at overcoming these two challenges. The re-appropriation of the term barbarism in the context of the reconsideration of the value of the own sources became the opportunity for this conversation. In the first place, I explored the adaptations of a longstanding Jewish discomfort with the term. I argued that a progressively created counter-narrative in which Jewish thinkers took over the concept of the empire to re-value their own tradition followed this discomfort. This trend concludes in a counter-narrative that shows another Jew, a self-appointed barbarian, as neither triumphantly cosmopolitan nor powerlessly dispossessed. On the contrary, it creates an ethnic and apologetic
stand vis-à-vis the West through the simultaneous usurpation of the contradictions of the central canon and the recovery of the sources discarded. It shows the acknowledgment of the historical dispossession and the will to confront the reasons that led to the fall. The novelty is not necessarily the counter-narrative, but rather the simultaneous re-appropriation of the Western canon in the service of a decolonial Jewish project in the context of this counter-narrative. Barbarism stands as the usurped Greek concept given to a rabbinical interpretation of Judaism as an anti-imperial content.

I contended, in the second part of this work, that this counter-narrative holds elective affinities with other trends that became audiences and conversant partners of this school of thought. These trends follow the content of old and new barbarisms. I explained how this project resonated with both intended audiences (Eastern Marxist Jews who were disappointed with Marxism) as well as unintended ones (decolonial Latinos). The first audience leaves a (non-Jewish Jewish) Marxist revolution for a Jewish revolution. By doing so, they create a distinctive Jewish discourse in the center. They are, however, unable to positively re-appropriate the concept of barbarism disregarding this positive Jewish content that rabbinical diasporism attached to it. The intended audience finishes reproducing the same cosmopolitan system that Lévinas confronted. The second audience offers a novel aspect. I posit that Jews and those dispossessed in Latin America (Latinos, Natives, and Afro-Caribbeans) have been interrelatedly building re-appropriations of concepts and counter-narratives for a period of five hundred years and that explains the unexplored weight of Jewish thought in Latino border gnosis. Latinos, in conversation with Lévinas, re-appropriate their barbarism. This directly confronts the limitations mentioned in the opening chapter. First, the Jew is a decisively decolonial voice, encouraging the work of those from the Third World. Next, the interconnection between Third World and Jewish thinking indicates that the Jew hybridizes herself in conversation with alternative spaces of knowledge. In other words, rabbinical
diasporism can be seen as a decolonial movement that is neither cosmopolitan triumphant nor intra-European, completely dispossessed when it is contrasted with its non-Western conversation partners. It is through the conversations on the re-appropriation of barbarism that this new reading can take place.

In the third part of my work, I introduced the limitations of this barbaric encounter. The decolonial nature of rabbinical diasporism is limited by its lack of historical awareness. The historical awareness of prior failures permits the barbaric traditions to understand that the model that overcomes the current dispossession is not an apologetic re-edition of an idealized past. It is necessary to understand the reason of the past failure to acknowledge the helpfulness of other barbarians to build an alternative project. This lack of historical acknowledgement is the reason for the apologetical construction of barbaric Judaism that reproduces the un-correlative understanding of otherness limiting, in this way, Jewish conversation within the underside. This lack of historical awareness does not hinder itself with regard to the problems of conversations but rather with the problem itself. Through a critique of utopianism and Orientalism, I made clear how the lack of historical awareness of the context of production and reception of source and the permanent a-historical creation of otherness led to the reproduction of the limitations of the same project they are combating.

This last step makes the dissertation return full-circle to the introduction. We departed from Said’s lack of inclusion of the discourse on the Jew and Gilman’s polar descriptions. We finished by highlighting how the Jew overcomes these limitations with an apologetic project. It is now time to engage with the other barbarians rising historical consciousness of the project to develop a further conceptual community.

The conclusion of this dissertation follows from this body. There is a historical encounter that clearly places Jewish thought within the underside. To fully overcome Said’s and Gilman’s
arguments, however, this historical encounter should also be conceptual, which paradoxically or not, requires an historical awareness of prior failures of the tradition, the context of production and reception of sources, and the actual life of the other. In this dissertation, I showed the historical, elective affinity of the counter-narratives. It is crucial to advance a conceptual revision of the barbaric content of rabbinical diasporism. I contend that in order to fully engage with the potential of Jewish thought, it is necessary to overcome historical naïveté, opening the location from which learning from other barbarians is possible. In other words, the reading of Jewish sources for a disruptive project should not be done in dialogue with Rome (in its manifestations in Europe or America) but in conversation with the multiple historical and conceptual partners of Jewish thought. In Lévinas’ words, denoted are Egypt and Ethiopia. Only when there is a clear historical awareness will Jews find their historical and conceptual place within a decolonial framework. The barbarians will then march together toward Rome…

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1192 Nelson Maldonado-Torres posits the need to return to a phenomenology to build this barbarian project. My work tries to complement his, showing that a Jewish project must acknowledge a critical historical dimension before the return to a decolonial, phenomenological proposal. See Maldonado-Torres, *Against War*, 235-254.


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