Thinking within the *Lehrhaus* Collective: Franz Rosenzweig on Jewish Thought and the Everyday

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How are we to understand the relationship between philosophy and Jewish thought? At first glance, Franz Rosenzweig appears hopelessly unable to make up his mind about how to answer this question and thus about how his thought might contribute to a volume like this one. To his close friends and first readers in 1919, he insists his *Star of Redemption* is a "Jewish book," and nearly breaks off friendships with those who don't find the book's Jewishness readily apparent.[1] But he opens his 1925 essay "The New Thinking" by backtracking, explaining that the *Star*, "in general, is not a 'Jewish book,' at least not in the sense that buyers who were so angry with me, think of a Jewish book […] It is merely a system of philosophy" (Rosenzweig 1979b: 140).[2] After completing the *Star*, while beginning to formulate his thinking in terms of the healthy human understanding, Rosenzweig urges his audience – in a 1921 *Lehrhaus* course entitled *Anleitung zum jüdischen Denken* – "to summon the courage for Jewish thinking, thus for the use of the healthy human understanding" (Rosenzweig 1979d: 598).[3] But when Rudolf Hallo draws the conclusion that Rosenzweig's thought is Jewish, Rosenzweig again retorts impatiently on February 4, 1923:

> I believe just as little as you in the special Jewishness of the new philosophy. Where you get that, I don't know. […] You apparently don't know I already

1 See Rosenzweig's letters to Hans and Rudolf Ehrenberg from the summer of 1919, cp. Rosenzweig 1979, pp. 634–643. See also Rosenzweig's letters to Margrit and Eugen Rosenstock during the same summer, e.g., June 27, June 29, and July 1, 1919 (https://www.erhfund.org/gritli-not-chosen/).

2 All translations of Rosenzweig's quotes in the text are my own, unless otherwise stated.

3 Cass Fisher notes that it is in preparation for this course (i.e., late 1920-early 1921) at the *Lehrhaus*, that Rosenzweig begins to situate his thinking in reference to the healthy human understanding. Cf. Fisher 2016: 349–350.

> sketched out my philosophy in a … presentation where even the title is "philosophy of the healthy human understanding." (Rosenzweig 1979a: 888–889)

Does Rosenzweig's philosophy qualify as "Jewish thought" or not? Does his thinking according to the healthy human understanding stamp that thinking as Jewish or precisely as transcending the confines of Jewishness? In what follows, I will examine how Rosenzweig understands, presents, and practices a form of "Jewish thinking" during his *Lehrhaus* period. My hope is that by working through what led Rosenzweig into an apparent about-face regarding the Jewishness of his philosophy, we may arrive at a novel account of what "Jewish thought" can be.

On November 1, 1920, Rosenzweig writes to Margrit Rosenstock-Huessy about his plans for the second term at the *Lehrhaus* under his leadership: "As for […] my lecture [course], what does Eugen say to the title, 'Einführung in den Gebrauch des gesunden Menschenverstand (Auszug aus der gesamten Philosophie)'? In the first hour, I would then reveal: 'Auszug' here is not just extraction, but also – Exodus."[4] Notice first of all the movement Rosenzweig ascribes to the course he has planned: it will lead students *into* the use of the healthy human understanding and *out of* the realm of philosophy. Rosenzweig appears especially proud of his play on words: "Auszug" from philosophy is not just an extraction – i.e., a taking out (*Aus-ziehen*) – but an exodus: a redemptive liberation from slavery modeled on the movement of the ancient Israelites.

By the time the *Lehrhaus* term is advertised, Rosenzweig has changed the course's title – citing "external reasons"[5] – to *Anleitung zum jüdischen Denken*. But the course's first lesson makes clear that the new title does not entail a change in approach.[6] Rosenzweig opens the course by announcing that "we want ourselves to think here, to think Jewishly." He then immediately asks:

> "Is there Jewish thinking? Is thinking not something universally human? Certainly it *should* be. But has it been up to now? […] Philosophy was not uni-

4 Rosenzweig to Margrit Rosenstock-Huessy, November 1, 1920 (https://www.erhfund.org/gritli-not-chosen/).

5 See Rosenzweig to Margrit Rosenstock-Huessy, February 13, 1921 (https://www.erhfund.org/gritli-not-chosen/).

6 Indeed, Annemarie Mayer sums up Rosenzweig's "Anleitung" course as follows: "Jüdisches Denken verstand er als einen Auszug aus der gesamten Philosophie zugunsten des gesunden Menschenverstandes" (Mayer 1987: 59).

> versally-human. Universally human was, is, and will be the healthy human understanding." (Rosenzweig 1979d: 597)

Rosenzweig opens his course on Jewish thinking, we see, by introducing four categories of thought: Jewish thinking, universal human thinking, the healthy human understanding, and philosophy. He implies that the first three form a kind of set, against which stands philosophy, as if Jewish thinking itself were precisely universal human thinking according to the healthy human understanding.

Philosophy, unlike a Jewish or universal human thinking according to the healthy human understanding, Rosenzweig proceeds to explain, removes itself from actual life, to its own detriment, but also to the detriment of life itself. This is because living human beings depend on thinking in order to confront questions that arise in the course of life. Rosenzweig states that life "never has a good conscience so long as thinking turns its back on it. For as long as the healthiest human understanding is not yet *totally* healthy, it is still automatically disarmed by certain questions." (ibid) We'll have to see what kinds of questions Rosenzweig has in mind as "disarming" human understanding in the course of life. But the questions philosophy asks regarding the essence of things – what they "really" are – Rosenzweig claims, express philosophy's disdain for actual life, for they imply that actual things, actual persons, actual relationships must be left behind or transcended if we are to arrive at the truth about them. The healthy human understanding, to the contrary, seeks "to retie the torn threads between the everyday and the holiday, to turn away from the wrongful separation of actuality and ideal … . To reconcile life with thinking" (ibid: 598).

"Is this Jewish thinking?" Rosenzweig asks. He answers: "Yes. And the opposite to it? Greek thinking. Thinking about the 'really.'" In the lives and writings of Jewish thinkers across the ages, Rosenzweig claims, "Jewish thinking has waged a (mostly unsuccessful) struggle against the learned Greek, from Philo and Saadia to Cohen." Here Rosenzweig issues a challenge to his audience:

> "We seek […] to summon the courage for Jewish thinking, thus for the use of the healthy human understanding, at the risk that our *extraction* out of Greek philosophy will become an *exodus*. The courage thus to formulate thoughtfully what was self-evident to our ancestors so long as they did *not* philos-

> ophize (*only* so long). And what is also self-evident to us, so long as we just don't philosophize." (ibid)

Jewish thinkers across the centuries, Rosenzweig suggests here, are human beings within whom Jewish thinking and Greek thinking, healthy human understanding and philosophy, wage battle. And Rosenzweig seeks to awaken his audience to identify with such Jewish thinkers as their ancestors, thereby inspiring them with the courage to use the healthy human understanding and wage their own battle with their inner Greek. Unable to resist the play on words he spilled to Gritli beforehand, Rosenzweig suggests such a battle on behalf of the healthy human understanding against philosophy is nothing less than a reliving of the experience of liberation from slavery from the Jewish mythic past, now reconceived as a movement out of philosophy and into a realm of healthy thinking and living.

Rosenzweig stresses the link to tradition entailed by such Jewish thinking: in thinking according to the healthy human understanding, Rosenzweig urges his audience to "formulate thoughtfully what was self-evident to our ancestors" in those moments when they overcame the urge to philosophize. Note, finally, that Rosenzweig doesn't just call for the affirmation of life here. What should be self-evident must be "formulated thoughtfully": questions *do* arise in life, before which – recall – we risk being "disarmed" in life. Without the thoughtful expression of the healthy human understanding – of Jewish thinking – life is left defenseless, and subject to philosophy's response to such questions.

What exactly is the thinking according to the healthy human understanding which Rosenzweig identifies with Jewish thinking? As Rosenzweig was soon to spell out in detail in the 1921 *Das Büchlein vom gesunden und kranken Menschenverstand*, the healthy human understanding is a form of thinking that trusts in the linguistic conventions of interpersonal life – in the names for things we inherit from the past, in the reciprocal address between persons in the present, and in the language we share in pointing to a common future (cf. Pollock 2021). "Here you live from trust," Rosenzweig explains in the *Anleitung* course.

> You can only enter this chain, if you trust. Trust first in the tradition which you find; second, in your own need for speech; third, in the future – which can be the next moment – that there will be answer for you. But this is nothing other than totally everyday knowing. (Rosenzweig 1979d: 603)

Note that the trust which Rosenzweig urges as the key to the healthy human understanding is trust in forms of language which tie us together with others within time – through tradition to our past, in the interpersonal address of the present, and in hope for response in the face of the future (cf. Franks 2006).[7]

The *Büchlein* spells out extensively how Rosenzweig understands the opposition between healthy human understanding and philosophy. The healthy human understanding "trusts in the actual" (Rosenzweig 1991: 32), Rosenzweig reiterates here: it trusts the language one uses in everyday life, and trusts that when life produces experiences of wonder that make one pose questions, "he need only wait, only continue to live in order for the standstill of his wonder to resolve itself." (ibid: 29) The *Büchlein* explains the traditional philosophical quest to discover what things "really" are as an unhealthy – but perfectly understandable – response to a particularly fundamental source of wonder: the realization that the language we use in our day-to-day lives – to identify blocks of cheese we wish to purchase, to address persons we love, to declare someone's guilt or innocence in a court of law – has no evident foundation beyond our own commitment to the linguistic conventions of our community. In such moments we are driven to ask what innocence and guilt really are, who that person really is whom I think I love, and even – what the essence of cheese really is. The process in which such questions can arise is most easily seen in the case of court judgment. Rosenzweig imagines a judge, "instead of judging," getting

> caught in the net of the question, "Is there then something like a crime? […] Since indeed I myself first […] append to this most complex fact […] the designation of crime: is the act a crime? What is it really?" It is clear what drives him to such questions: knowledge of his own part in the designation of the act. In that he reflects on this his own part, the result, the naming of the crime, becomes uncertain. He believes […] he "could have" "also" not named it thus. He can "conceive" perhaps that at one time it will not be so called. The firmness of the designation, the trust in the name, begins to wobble. He now […] asks the desperate question-of-doubt about this action, which seeks something firm, something that remains, an "essence," […] the question: what is? (ibid: 45–46)

7 See also Hilary Putnam's introduction to the 1999 publication of Nahum Glatzer's translation of the "Little Book" into English, as *Understanding the Sick and the Healthy* (Putnam 1999: 3).

It is indeed unsettling to find no clear ground holding up our linguistic conventions beyond our own responsibility to uphold their use. The problem with philosophy, Rosenzweig explains in the *Büchlein*, is that it tries to overcome this inherent and unavoidable instability of human life by attempting to remove its elements from the context of our everyday, temporally grounded linguistic conventions, examining them, as Rosenzweig writes, "on the needlepoint [*Nadelspieß*] of the detemporalizing question 'what-is-that'" (ibid: 31) really, in the hopes of discovering a stable, substantial ground to support them. But such a divorce of thinking and knowing from actual life leads, according to Rosenzweig, not to a grasp of universal truth grounding life *absolutely*, but rather to skeptical paralysis: "acute *apoplexia philosophica*." (ibid: 57) There is no end to the what-is and why questions we can ask, and the very questioning itself threatens to enslave us.

The *Büchlein* suggests that the therapy required for such cases of skepticism entails re-instilling trust in our linguistic conventions, fragile as they may be, but at once recognizing in them forms of expression that are directed towards an ultimate condition of interhuman understanding. "Language doesn't […] want to be, it cannot at all be the essence of the world," Rosenzweig writes. "It is the seal of the human being." (ibid: 73) Immediately qualifying this evident instability of our quintessentially human linguistic practices, however, Rosenzweig asks:

> Only of the human being? Then the mistrust would be justified, which the sickened understanding brings over against the word. Yes, at one point the human being began to name. […] How many words cluster around one thing, and hardly two mean precisely the same, where even in the same language two people don't understand each other. Indeed, the word of the human being alone does nothing. Were there not certainty, that the beginning which the always-singular human being posits with his word, would be posited-forth up to the ultimate goal of a universal language. (ibid: 74)

The trust in the actual which the healthy human understanding assumes, Rosenzweig conveys here, is trust that the linguistic conventions to which we commit in our everyday interpersonal relationships unfold towards a "universal language," an ultimate form of shared communicability and mutual recognition. The healthy human understanding thus replaces philosophy's quest to find an essential, substantial, eternal grounding in the here and now

with a thoughtful trust in the temporal unfolding of our language-bound relationships towards the goal of comprehensive interpersonal understanding.

For reasons I will spell out shortly, I want to highlight how this account of the ultimate horizon of our linguistic practices in the *Büchlein* aligns both with what Rosenzweig had designated in the *Star* as "the ideal of perfect understanding which we represent under the language of humanity" (Rosenzweig 1996: 123), as well as with his assertion, in his *Jehuda HaLevi* postscript, that any act of translation presupposes the ultimate unity of all language and "the command resting upon it for all-human understanding" (Rosenzweig 1979g: 3). The act of translation, Rosenzweig argued there, should be directed towards the actualization of universal mutual understanding. But this process is to occur not in some independent universal language – he scoffs at Esperanto – but rather within each and every language: "one should translate so that the day of the harmony of languages comes, which can only grow within each individual language, and not in the empty space 'between' them." (ibid: 4)

What do such claims about translation have to do with a Jewish thinking which Rosenzweig has identified with the healthy human understanding? Just as translation advances towards the ideal of the ultimate language of humanity by working within a given individual language, so the healthy human understanding is a form of thinking which – while universally human – develops within the particular linguistic conventions of a given community. Trust in the names one has been taught by tradition to use to designate things, trust in the temporal unfolding of personal relationships through language, trust in a shared horizon of mutual understanding must develop as trust in the linguistic conventions of one's *own* community. I will return to this idea at the end of the essay

Rosenzweig does not identify healthy human understanding as "Jewish thinking" in the *Büchlein*. But we find him advocating for, and even practicing the thinking of the healthy human understanding *as Jewish thinking* throughout his time at the *Lehrhaus*. Indeed, almost immediately upon taking up its directorship Rosenzweig appears to have identified the *Lehrhaus* community as the context for thinking according to the healthy human understanding. In a well-known letter from August 1920, Rosenzweig tries to explain to his *Doktorvater*, Friedrich Meinecke, why he is no longer interested in an academic position. He describes how he now sees the pursuit of knowledge as something that must take place within the context of everyday life and not in a separate institution devoted to knowledge alone:

> The little, often very little "demands of the day," as they step out at me in my Frankfurt position – the wearisome, insignificant and yet necessary surrounding of myself with people and relationships – this and no longer the writing of books has become the beloved content of my life, really and with all the annoyances bound up with it. Knowing is for me no longer its own purpose. It has become a service for me. A service to *human beings* […] For me, not every question is worth asking. I am no longer filled by scientific curiosity and aesthetic hunger for stuff […]. I ask only yet where I *will be* asked – asked by *people*, not by scholars, not by "science." […] *Its* questions are no questions to me. But the questions of human beings have become that much more pressing to me. To stand up to them and to answer them as well as I know how – […] that is what I called "knowing as service." (Rosenzweig 1979a: 680–681)

In the same breath that Rosenzweig here rejects the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake – referring directly to academic scholarship but surely including philosophy in what he calls knowledge as "*Selbstzweck*" – he urgently affirms thinking in the context of everyday life. Recall that questions arise in the midst of life, and if they are not met with a thinking according to the healthy human understanding, the only answers they are liable to find are the life-transcending answers of philosophy. Rosenzweig thus commits himself to thinking in the service of life in the *Lehrhaus* context. The questions of the human beings surrounding him "have become that much more pressing," and it is these questions and these alone that, when posed to him, he seeks to answer. We know that this approach to answering not from on high but from on the same plane as questioners became the very principle of Rosenzweig's leadership at the *Lehrhaus*. Indeed, Rosenzweig once claimed the director of the school needed to approach teaching and learning as a common person, an "*am ha'aretz*," in order to ensure that the discourse at the *Lehrhaus* remain grounded in the everyday:

> *Am Ha'aratzus* had to be made pedagogically fruitful. This was the most noble task of the director. He himself had to be enough of an *Am Ha'aretz*, in order not to despise the pedagogical possibilities like an expert. He must have the inner readiness to transform himself at every moment from a teacher to a student, but also the reverse. So, being at once teacher and student among the teachers, and co-teacher and co-student among the students, he himself

> becomes not just the director, but the focal point of the Lehrhaus. (Rosenzweig 1979a: 913)[8]

I want briefly to note a few examples of how Rosenzweig's approach to Jewish thinking as healthy human understanding guided him, not only in his leadership, but also in his lectures and essays from the *Lehrhaus* period. In his famous open letter to Buber, "The Builders," Rosenzweig describes how a traditional Jewish life that long included theological questions and answers gradually became, over the course of the 19th century, *dependent* on the viability of answers to such questions.

> Would a Jew earlier have believed, if he wasn't asked, that he kept the law […] only for this reason, that it was imposed upon Israel by God at Sinai? Certainly, if one asked him, perhaps this reason would have forced itself to the front of his mind. […] Philosophers have always preferred this answer. [But] from Mendelssohn onwards our whole people has undergone the torture of all these truly painful questions, and the being-Jewish of each individual now danced on the needle-point of a Why [*Nadelspitze eines Warum*]. […] For the question-less ones living, this justifying-ground of the law was only one among others, and scarcely the strongest. (Rosenzweig 1979f: 703)

It is striking to note the parallels between the premises of Rosenzweig's discussion of Jewish life and thought here and those of his account of the healthy human understanding in general. Questions can and do arise in the midst of life. But philosophy responds to such questions both by isolating them from their living context and by making them the ultimate adjudicators of life's value and direction. In the *Büchlein*, recall, philosophy is said to set the objects of our everyday life "on the needlepoint [*Nadelspieß*] of the detemporalizing question 'what-is-that'" really. Using almost identical language, Rosenzweig here criticizes Jewish philosophers for making "being Jewish […] dance on the needlepoint [*Nadelspitze*] of a Why." When healthy, life lives on with questions – it doesn't make its unfolding in time dependent on the attainment of absolute answers in the here and now. Just as he does in the *Büchlein*, Rosenzweig thus rejects the philosophical demand to determine what is essential in Judaism:

8 Rosenzweig to E. Strauss, M. Buber, R. Koch, and E. Simon on July 17, 1923. On the model of the *Am-Haaretz* at the Lehrhaus (cf. Simon 1965: 399).

> Only where the condition of Jewish life was otherwise set in question, only there did past times set the border [between essentially and inessentially Jewish …]. Modernity made the answer constitutive, in that it made the putting-in-question permanent, here too [in the case of practice] as with the question of essence in the case of teaching. The future may no longer recognize that border. (ibid: 705–706)

Just as we would expect from a thinker committed to the healthy human understanding, Rosenzweig rejects determinations of what is essential for Jewish life, in learning and practice, and instead calls for living Jewish life as a whole.

Rosenzweig issues a similar call in his lecture "Bildung und kein Ende." Here he announces that the key to renewing Jewish life – just as it was the key to living thoughtfully according to the healthy human understanding – is precisely *trust*:

> Only readiness and nothing else can we bring over to the Jewish man in us. […] Nothing else but this simple decision to say once: "nothing Jewish is foreign to me." […] Trust is the word for the readiness, the readiness which doesn't ask after recipes, doesn't have between its teeth a […] "how can I do this." Trust doesn't worry about the day after tomorrow. It lives in the today, it goes with careless feet over the threshold, which leads from today into tomorrow. […] And just for this reason the whole belongs to him. (Rosenzweig 1979c: 499–500)

Rosenzweig's call to his *Lehrhaus* audience here is precisely the call of the healthy human understanding to trust in the everyday temporal context of life – here, Jewish life – not to be held up by the presumption that only with recipes, only in the answer to questions, can one find the ground upon which to go on.

Allow me, lastly, to note a text in which the struggle of Jewish against Greek thinking comes to the fore: "Apologetic Thinking," Rosenzweig's review of Max Brod's *Heidentum, Christentum, Judentum* and Leo Baeck's *Wesen des Judentums*. In a letter to Baeck in the wake of the essay, Rosenzweig writes on August 11, 1923 that "apologetic thinking … merely sets forward a method of everyday thinking into the scientific region" (Rosenzweig 1979a: 918). In the essay, Rosenzweig argues that Jewish thinking *about* Judaism – what Judaism is – only happens when Jewish thinkers are pushed to the border of Jewish life in response to attacks from without:

> One does not become a Jewish thinker in the undisturbed circle of Judaism. Here thinking would not become thinking about Judaism, which was just the most self-evident-of-all, more a Sein than a "tum," but rather a thinking *in* Judaism: learning. […] Anyone who was tasked with reflecting *on* Judaism had somehow, if not in his soul then at least intellectually, to be torn at the border of Judaism. (Rosenzweig 1979e: 679)

Rosenzweig's criticism of Brod and Baeck is precisely that, in meeting their adversaries at the border of Judaism, they allow their own depictions of Judaism to be determined by the questions their opponents pose. Here we meet, once again, the problematic question of essence:

> They let their theme be determined by the attacks. The theme is one's own essence. One could think that it would now come to its highest consciousness, but precisely the apologetic character of the thinking prevents that. Insofar as the thinker looks into his innermost, he indeed sees this innermost, but for this reason he is still far from seeing – himself. For he himself is not his innermost but is to the same extent also his outermost, and above all the bond that binds his innermost to his outermost, the street upon which both reciprocally mingle with one another. (ibid: 686)

Much as he claimed that 19th century orthodoxy found the answer to its Why question within the tradition – the empirical fact of the giving of the Torah at Sinai – but had isolated and elevated it from out of its traditional living context, so Rosenzweig suggests that Brod and Baeck answer the question of the essence of Judaism with what is indeed most "innermost" to them as Jews. But in doing so, they isolate what is thus innermost from its place within the whole living Jewish person. Instead of guiding their Jewish readers in an exodus out of the realm of philosophy and back into Jewish life, Baeck and Brod seek to answer the question of essence on its own ground.

I propose the texts we've reviewed from Rosenzweig's *Lehrhaus* period provide us with a rich account of Jewish thinking as healthy human understanding, an account which first occurs to Rosenzweig when he takes up the leadership of the *Lehrhaus* in the summer of 1920, which he first articulates in the *Anleitung zum jüdischen Denken* course in early 1921, and which he develops in practice and in writing throughout his *Lehrhaus* years. Nevertheless, as I noted at the beginning of my remarks, when Rudolf Hallo suggests Rosenzweig's thought be designated as "Jewish," he rejects such a designation

with the argument that he has formulated his thinking as "healthy human understanding"!

It is time to return, then, to the question with which we began: Is the form of thinking according to the healthy human understanding Rosenzweig advocates in the early 1920s "Jewish thinking," or is it a thinking that is "universally human"? The path we've taken through Rosenzweig's account of the healthy human understanding gives us components out of which we can offer an answer to this question. But I'd like to work towards this answer, first, by citing one last text of Rosenzweig's, a letter to Margrit Rosenstock-Huessy from February 13, 1921, written in the midst of the *Anleitung zum jüdischen Denken* course. "The headline 'Jewish thinking' was like a blow to the head for you," he writes, referring to the change in the course's title and Gritli's apparent reaction to it. He proceeds to remind her:

> Originally I had wanted to name it "Einführung in the use of the healthy human understanding," and for external reasons gave it up. Nevertheless, I can only do it before Jews. In the individual case before each human being. But by a greater audience, before the public, only before Jews. Because only there do I have the possibility of connection in common = experiences [*Erlebnisse*]. (In war I also had them a little before others.) It belongs to this kind of thought-leading [*Vordenken*], that one is also *Mitleber*. (The abolition of the Lecture Chair!) In any given case, I can always (eventually) be *Mitleber* for the individual person. For the community only if I belong to it. For this reason, I can only have an impact among Jews. There alone will my impact be immediately law-renewing. Whether elsewhere, that it not my business. Perhaps through you two.[9]

In this remarkable letter, Rosenzweig makes a basic distinction between thinking or philosophizing in relation to another individual, and doing so in the context of a collective. Rosenzweig suggests he can only lead a collective in the practice of the healthy human understanding – no matter how "universal" such thinking may be – if that collective is Jewish. Why? In order to guide a collective in such thinking, Rosenzweig claims he must share experiences with them which provide for the "possibility of connection in common." What does he have in mind here? I suggest Rosenzweig is referring to the very linguistic conventions, the trust in which is entailed by the healthy human understanding.

9 Rosenzweig to Margrit Rosenstock-Huessy, February 13, 1921 (https://www.erhfund.org/gritli-not-chosen/), emphasis added.

But just as the act of translation aspires to actualize the ideal of universal human understanding through the expansion of particular given languages and not "between them," so the linguistic conventions of the healthy human understanding – however universal they may be – are always the linguistic conventions of one's own community. Rosenzweig sees no reason to think that the kind of thinking he promotes within the Jewish community would *not* find an audience beyond the bounds of that community. Perhaps Gritli and Eugen, as individuals, will find something worthwhile in his account and carry it over into their Christian community. But this isn't Rosenzweig's concern. His concern is to teach those with whom he is a living companion – a "*Mitleber*." To the extent to which he shares a tradition of linguistic practices with his fellow German Jews, he abolishes the lecture chair and guides them in thinking (*Vordenken*) from out of their shared context of everyday life. Such thinking is "Jewish thinking," because it thoughtfully formulates responses to questions that arise in the context of Jewish collective life; because it draws upon a tradition of such thoughtful formulations given by Jewish ancestors; and because it guides questioners by way of such responses out of the enslavement to philosophical essences and back into a healthy but thoughtful collective life in time, lived in commitment to the linguistic conventions of Jewish life. But the horizon towards which such life according to Jewish linguistic conventions strives is the ideal of perfect mutual human understanding in a universal language towards which all other human communities also strive through their own respective linguistic practices and, in this sense, the healthy human understanding Rosenzweig advocates is indeed universally human.

Depending on how his interlocutors understand the "Jewishness" of his philosophy, Rosenzweig will thus at times have to affirm it and at times deny it. For his Jewish thinking is precisely the universal human thinking of the healthy human understanding.

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