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*Revelation and Dialogue in Franz Rosenzweig*

« ...C'est précisément parce que le Tu est absolument autre que le Je, qu'il y a, de l'un à l'autre, dialogue. C'est peut-être là le paradoxal message de toute la philosophie du dialogue ou une façon de définir l'esprit par la transcendance, c'est-à-dire par la socialité, par la relation immédiate à l'autre. » [... It is precisely because the *You* is absolutely other than the I that there is, between the one and the other, dialogue. There perhaps lies the paradoxical message of all philosophy of dialogue, or a way of defining spirit by transcendence, that is, by sociality, by the immediate relation to the other."]

This is the "paradoxical message" of the philosophy of dialogue, according to Emmanuel Levinas. - But how could a dialogue with an 'absolute other' ever be possible? Is it even conceivable to talk, to speak with an absolute Other?

Levinas often said that he was indebted first and foremost to Franz Rosenzweig when he developed such a conception of dialogue. In the following presentation, I shall first present some elements that confirm this statement, but then argue that Levinas went much further than Rosenzweig, in his understanding of dialogue and also in the conception of 'selfhood' which underlies this conception. He succeeded in presenting a new, remarkable interpretation of the old word of the Hebrew Bible: "Love thy neighbor as thyself". This interpretation is proper to him - and yet infinitely better appreciated once its indebtedness to Rosenzweig, also to other Jewish thinkers, amongst them Hermann Cohen, is brought out.