

The Existentialist Figure of Abraham in Ephraim Meir's Dialogical Interpretation of Franz Rosenzweig

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This paper will probe Franz Rosenzweig's idea of the 'Personal Standpoint', and how it pertains to the Existentialist character of the biblical Abraham in Meir's work "Jewish Existential Philosophers in Dialogue".

As part of Franz Rosenzweig's 'The New Thinking', he delineates, in the section on Philosophy and Religion, 'The Personal Standpoint'. Rosenzweig's building of the idea of the Personal Standpoint plays out in multiple additional areas where Rosenzweig speaks about the individual. One significant case in point includes that of the image of the biblical figure of Abraham.

I plan to address Ephraim Meir's dialogical reading of Rosenzweig's 'The New Thinking', and in particular the ways in which he deciphers Rosenzweig's idea of the individual in dialogue with the Other. In this way, we will be able to catch a glimpse into how the Personal Standpoint of the New Thinking plays out in Meir's dialogical ethics.

As an example of this, I will analyse in particular the image of the biblical character of Abraham, according to Meir's comparative interpretation of Rosenzweig and Soren Kierkegaard. According to this reading, we will examine how Religious Existentialist ideas of Soren Kierkegaard came to fruition in Rosenzweig, and then were read by Meir through his dialogical lens.

This discussion allows for an enhanced understanding of the move from Religious Existentialism, to Dialogical Jewish thought. This necessarily includes an appreciation of the concepts at root of Religious Existentialism in particular Kierkegaard's Teleological Suspension of the Ethical and the ways in which, for Meir, the relation to the Other would be compromised if such a position were to be idealised in Jewish Thought. His Levinasian move therefore, to place ethics at the root of thinking, in a sense, hints at a development of Meir's own New Thinking, wherein the Personal Standpoint is critical in the conceptual place between Existentialism and Dialogic Philosophy.