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Recent years have witnessed many actions, often violent and xenophobic, explicitly rooted in monotheistic intolerance. Perhaps, then, it should not be surprising that many secular-minded critics view monotheistic religions as not much more than intractable problems for democratic societies. Indeed, for such critics, the respective ages and histories of these traditions are not to be esteemed. Rather, these religions are simply primitive, and so they require domestication (or annihilation) by liberal values. Looking around the world today, one often wonders if it is even possible for modern sensibilities to be reconciled, or even to coexist, with the Abrahamic monotheisms and their non-rational notions of election and revelation?¹

Jan Assmann is perhaps the most prominent secularist critic of monotheism in Europe today. Assmann has enjoyed a rather remarkable career as a prolific Egyptologist, cultural historian, and theorist of memory. His recent work as a critic of monotheism is predicated upon his (in) famous notion of the "Mosaic distinction" (*die Mosaische Unterscheidung*). The Mosaic distinction, which Assmann claims serves as the structural foundation of the Abrahamic monotheisms, is a radical notion of truth that sets itself in opposition to other belief systems or notions of truth; the monotheisms are "counter-religions," defining themselves by opposing others.² The Mosaic distinction manifests itself by declaring other religions as false and idolatrous, coding their adherents not only as delusional but also as sinful and wicked. The locus classicus—though not origin—of the Mosaic distinction, according to Assmann, is the Hebrew Bible.³ This claim has brought his work not uncontroversially into the ambit of Jewish studies.⁴ While critics have charged Assmann with antisemitism, his work continues to be widely read and influential, at least in part, because it captures a certain secularist, cosmopolitan sensibility quite pervasive in the academy. In this chapter I will explore his work on monotheism both because it merits careful study in and of itself and because ironically much of its evidence is quite similar to that used by Hermann Cohen (1842-1918) in his arguments about the ethical nature of monotheism. Yet although both Assmann and Cohen emphasize the role of textuality in the development of monotheism, Assmann finds it to be the source of violence toward outsiders, while Cohen believes it provides the means for overcoming violence and hostility toward the other. By juxtaposing Cohen's work with Assmann's, I seek to problematize the univocally negative valence that Assmann ascribes to the Mosaic distinction.

Assmann: The Mosaic Distinction and Scripture

Jan Assmann is no mere advocate of religious tolerance; he seeks to extirpate the very causes of religious intolerance in the monotheistic traditions. Where many political theorists seek to ground tolerance on a political basis, in mutual recognition or in the demand to view one's self from the eyes of the other, Assmann thinks religious and thus political tolerance requires a metaphysical grounding. He states, "All religions are equally removed from the truth, which we never possess, and for which we can only strive."⁵ On this basis, or with this end in sight, Assmann seeks to bring to light and thus treat the historical moments in which the confluence of belief in the absolute truth of holy texts and the hatred of the nonbeliever emerges. When Assmann claims that "[t]he capacity to historicize and relativize one's own position is the

precondition of all true tolerance,"⁶ he does not mean this only in a political sense, in terms of what is required for coexistence or political legitimacy. He is also providing a clue about the inner turmoil of the West. This turmoil stems from the legacy of the Abrahamic monotheisms, which find themselves at odds with this egalitarian metaphysical foundation and the sensibilities that derive therefrom.

The monotheisms are not merely one iteration of some abstract category "religion," but rather they bring something new with them into the world, something that is dangerous and ultimately incompatible with modernity. The "world-altering innovation" that monotheism introduces according to Assmann is, as I have already mentioned, the Mosaic distinction, namely, "the distinction between true and false in religion that underlies more specific distinctions such as Jews and Gentiles, Christians and pagans, Muslims and unbelievers."⁷ More specifically, the intolerance of monotheistic religions has its root in their negative and antagonistic notion of truth. The monotheisms, that is, the Abrahamic religions, in Assmann's view are rooted in "an emphatic concept of truth. They all rest on a distinction between true and false religion, proclaiming a truth that does not stand in a complementary relationship to other truths, but consigns all traditional or rival truths to the realm of falsehood."⁸ Assmann claims that for the neighboring religions of the Ancient Near East, religion served as a "common ground," a site of "intercultural translatability" serving as a basis for different cultural groups to meet and peacefully interact, rather than a barrier that inhibited it.⁹ This notion of translatability is not tolerance in the modern sense, because this ancient polytheistic religious consciousness did not really conceive of religious difference as we do. To be sure, there was violence among the ancient poly theisms, but it was not driven by theological ideas. The Gods worshipped by different cultures were not metaphysically distinct-X in one culture was the same God, named Y in another. For example, an ancient Hittite prayer to a sun goddess goes as follows: "O Sun-goddess of Arinna, queen of all countries! In the Hatti country you bear the name of the Sun-goddess of Arinna; but in the land which you made the cedar land you bear the name Hebat."¹⁰ This interchangeability evinces an egalitarian sensibility, which Assmann takes as a profound ecumenism and cosmopolitanism. Indeed, according to Assmann, this interchangeability creates the capacity to see leaders of other tribes as trustworthy treaty partners. All could know the gods on whom each party swore.

Assmann's claim, quite provocative especially for those who associate the monotheistic religions (or at least their favored ones) with love, is that the Mosaic distinction not only stymies the traditional function of religion as a "medium of communication" in the ancient world, but also invents a new form of hatred.¹¹ Indeed, in his controversial interview with *Der Spiegel* in late 2006, Assmann brushes aside the notion that the Hebrew Bible brought any innovations in morality other than making, "morality the chief concern of God." This could do nothing to stop violence, for investing one's moral beliefs with God's imprimatur is "a very effective step towards violent conflict [Gewaltbekämpfung]."¹² Despite our tendency to laud the biblical texts as high-minded and ethical, Assmann insists that we must acknowledge that the monotheistic religions "brought a new form of hatred into the world: hatred for pagans, heretics, idolators and their temples, rites, and gods."¹³ Where religion once served as a site to encounter the other as a worshipper of the same gods (just with different names and rites), now it becomes a source of not only estrangement but hostility.

Assmann argues that the Mosaic distinction derives its negative and negating energy from a new innovation in the very concept of truth: faith. Assmann claims that there are four sorts of truth. There are truths of experience (such as the fact that all human beings are mortal), mathematical truths, historical truths, and truths in the service of life (such as human rights). It is not clear in what sense these truths are linked or even comparable. Regardless, Assmann claims that the "Mosaic distinction introduces a new type of truth, the absolute, revealed, metaphysical, or fideistic truth."¹⁴ The Mosaic distinction, Assmann argues, is inextricably bound up with faith. Assmann explains, "Faith in this new sense means holding something to be true that, even though I cannot establish its veracity on scientific grounds, nonetheless raises a claim to truth of the highest authority." Indeed where knowledge is relative and open to testing and revision, faith "irrefutable, and revealed" is not critical, testable, and therefore absolute and unsurpassable.¹⁵ This final aspect of Assmann's notion of faith sounds a bit like a caricature of contemporary Protestant fundamentalists rather than how ancient Israelites, much less Jews-with their notion of ongoing revelation in the Oral Torah-have thought about and experienced God. However, if we read this in the most charitable light, presumably he is speaking about the revealed foundation of a body of texts that are authoritatively absolute and that present a mode of knowing that is not rooted in this-worldly processes. As we will see, it is precisely to this fifth notion of truth central to Assmann's critique of monotheism that Cohen presents an alternative.

Assmann's objection to faith is quite different from many common objections to monotheist beliefs, such as those in the name of science. Assmann thinks that if we can understand the nature of faith as a type of truth, we can understand why the Mosaic distinction not only inhibits fair consideration of the beliefs and practices of other religions and cultures, but also necessarily inhibits respect for them. It is this notion of "faith" that is bound up with the monotheistic revolution and that Assmann seeks to uncover and elucidate in his cultural-psychotherapeutic reading of the biblical text.

However, in order to understand "faith," we must understand not only its connection with the scriptural text, but also the development of the Hebrew Bible itself. In *Moses the Egyptian* (1997), Assmann posits that Exodus embodies the Mosaic distinction in a narrative form. In *The Price of Monotheism* (2010), this more simplistic view is replaced by the claim that there are two different religious sensibilities in the biblical text. Assmann explains, "[T]wo religions are not just placed side by side in the Hebrew Bible. Rather, they stand opposed to each other in a relationship of tension, since one envisions what the other negates."¹⁶ The priestly dimension of the Israelite religion is for Assmann a polytheistic remnant and is ultimately to be annihilated by the austere, world-defying Deuteronomic/ prophetic form of monotheism. Within the biblical text itself, the two offset one another and uneasily coexist, with monotheistic redactions negating the more polytheistic moments. Only later are pure forms of monotheism achieved in rabbinic Judaism and patristic Christianity.¹⁷

Assmann finds the depiction of violence against idolators, whether Israelite or gentile, to be highly significant for understanding the biblical text. Rejecting any insinuation that the massacres of idolatrous peoples depicted in the Bible have historical merit, Assmann suggests that these narratives are but a "cultural semantics" highlighting this tension by which the pre-monotheistic priestly order gives way to the monotheistic, that is, Deuteronomic/prophetic order. Indeed, because the Pentateuch was redacted and edited during the reign of King Josiah in

the seventh century BCE-a period of marked religious reform-Assmann claims that the violence in the various books is a cipher for the tension between the two competing forms of religiosity. This transition from pre-monotheistic to monotheistic, from priestly and cultic to legal and text-bound must be understood, Assmann insists, "in the sense of a revolution and not as an evolution."¹⁸

Assmann's increasing sophistication in regard to monotheism, the Hebrew Bible, and memory can be seen in a shift in his emphasis on Exodus to Deuteronomy and Josiah's Reform. In turning to Deuteronomy and the historical circumstances around its creation, Assmann is able to highlight a cluster of historical and textual disruptions and transitions that support not simply the notion of the Mosaic distinction but also its connection to the medium of textuality.¹⁹ Indeed, as Assmann reads the Bible, the decisive time in biblical history is around the year 622 BCE, when there was a reprieve from Assyrian pressure and King Josiah ruled Judah.²⁰ Deuteronomy, which Assmann rather brilliantly reads as a "traumatized text,"²¹ now becomes the fateful link in his hermeneutical strategy of uncovering the origins of not only the Mosaic distinction but also related concepts such as radical forms of memory, intolerant notions of identity, and the cultural semantics of violence, in the biblical text itself. The traumatic backdrop of Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History (as well as the redactions and insertions in the rest of the Bible-such as the story of the golden calf), is "the annihilation of the Northern Kingdom by the Assyrians, the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, and the Babylonian captivity."²² Assmann reads Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History as an attempt to come to grips with this catastrophe by invoking the twin sins of having forgotten the transcendent Law and, concomitantly, having committed the gravest of sins, worshipping foreign gods.²³ Indeed, Assmann claims that the "biblical texts, then, are concerned not just with remembering and forgetting, but also with guilt and trauma, in other words, with all the themes of Freudian analysis."²⁴ This "history," which is suddenly remembered/ invented, is the neurotic response of a culture trying to come to grips with national calamity.

However, this psycho-dynamic inherent in the Deuteronomic text plays itself out in "political theology." That is, Deuteronomy, a "codification of revealed Law, framed by a recapitulation of the Exodus Story," radically transforms the religious and political landscape of Judea.²⁵ According to Deuteronomistic theology, Assmann argues, the Judean king, now in a state of vassalage to a foreign power, is conceived primarily as a religious figure, the keeper of "a political alliance with God" such that his "legitimacy depends on the strength of his obedience to the law."²⁶ Scripture now re-creates the world in which the Israelites and subsequent monotheists-will inhabit. As Assmann puts it:

Deuteronomy describes and codifies this transition from a tradition of living to one of learning, as the shift from a direct witness and living memory of the generation in the wilderness to the cultural memory of Israel that is built upon an elaborate memory technique. In this transition Israel constructs itself as a community of learning and remembering. This aspect of Jewish identity, one that has been absolutely central to the present day, took shape as early as the Babylonian captivity. Here religion changes from a matter of cultic purity to one of learning and education. The ideal of the literate priests of the *goy kadosh*, the "holy nation," and *mamlechet kohanim*, the "kingdom of priests,"

has its counterpart in the deuteronomistic ideal of the "wise and understanding people" { 'am hakham ve-navon } referred to in Deuteronomy 4:6.²⁷

Assmann argues that the traumatized history marks a shift in the very foundations of the religiosity of the Israelites. As it appears in these texts, and indeed in later strands of Judaism, the Mosaic distinction is purely internal and has to do with making sense of history, dealing with a terrible trauma, and taking certain neurotic steps to prevent a recurrence of such events. These steps involve the prioritization of a holy text, and memory, once primarily rooted in cultic ritual, now first and foremost bound to the history with God, to the "revelation of the Covenant and Law," that is, Torah. The ramifications of this transformation can hardly be overestimated, as the "Covenant and Law" are themselves rooted in transcendence and do not reflect earthly existence. This marks a sharp and irreparable break with the cultic nature of the priestly religion, which is akin to the religions of the Ancient Near East, religions that find holiness thoroughly intertwined and inseparable from this-worldly life. The transformation entailed by the prioritization of revealed texts filled with statutes and ordinances from a transcendent law-giver is so radical that "[b]y obeying these laws the people live as strangers on earth."²⁸ Henceforth the ways of this world, which will always be associated with the religiosity of the polytheistic religions of the Ancient Near East, can only be seen as idolatrous temptations.

For Assmann, it is by no means coincidental that Deuteronomy, this most fateful of books, also contains detailed instructions for the massacre of the Canaanites. While this rhetoric is dangerous, in that it can be and has been used in certain historical situations to promote actual violence, Assmann thinks its original meaning is metaphorical. Assmann suggests that in its depths, in Deuteronomy and indeed in the Mosaic distinction itself "lies the pathos of conversion." "Canaan," Assmann claims, "is just a cipher for one's own past and that of one's neighbor who did not yet undergo the same metamorphosis," and it highlights the great fear of all converts, "the fear of relapse." The "pronounced anti-Canaanism of Deuteronomy" is nothing else than the "resolve to exterminate the pagan within."²⁹ Indeed, the traumatized nature of Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History must be borne in mind here. The destruction of the Northern Kingdom and the fall of Judea are believed to be linked to chasing false gods, becoming like non-Jews by following their false religions.

While Assmann has faced charges of antisemitism, his frequent conflation of the Hebrew Bible—the site of trauma and the Mosaic distinction—and subsequent Judaism has in recent years taken an unexpected turn.³⁰ According to Assmann, for the Jews (as for the Israelites depicted in the Hebrew Bible) the Mosaic distinction has always been about one's self, about "exterminating the pagan within."³¹ Thus the depictions of the Israelites massacring the Canaanites in the Bible are really metaphorical accounts of the internalization of the Mosaic distinction, of the need to reject the world that surrounds them in order to remain committed to their religion and culture. Indeed, the Jewish refusal to assimilate to the customs of the larger cultures in which they dwell is an example of how the Mosaic distinction might manifest itself.

Assmann finds the Jewish tendency to look inward and to distinguish oneself from surrounding cultures to be a much less dangerous manifestation of the Mosaic distinction than the Christian and Muslim varieties.³² In contrast to Christianity and Islam, "Judaism is a culture of difference."

³³ Whereas Judaism internalizes the Mosaic distinction foregoing any expectation of universal

transformations until the eschaton, Christianity and Islam often externalize this distinction, seeking to convert the world here and now.³⁴ While Assmann acknowledges that Christianity "initiated the implementation of violence in the name of truth" in his *Der Spiegel* interview, he clearly implicates Islam as, at least at present, the most dangerous of the monotheisms: "Islam is the most radical form of monotheism," in light of its "uncompromising demand" to have "the kingdom of God replace the states of this world."³⁵

Even if Assmann is less critical of Judaism than the other monotheisms, he is nevertheless devoted to "curing" the West of the cultural neurosis of the Mosaic distinction in all its varieties. After all, the Mosaic distinction is itself a product of, and response to, a historical trauma. One of its most troubling legacies is the sort of identity it cultivates, an identity incompatible with modern egalitarianism and cosmopolitanism. Grounding one's authority in texts with transcendent origins, notions of truth that reject all competing truths as false, and the depictions of violence to pagans all go hand in hand; they each foster a closure toward the other, both within and without. So even if one is only killing the pagan within oneself, one is closing oneself off to one's neighbor who is "pagan," insofar as she is not grounded in the transcendent sources of authority that one venerates. The result is that cosmopolitanism and the sharing in the lives and sufferings of others is stymied; one is devoted only to the grand history and the commitments of one's ancestors who lived and died—often as martyrs—for these transcendent laws. The Mosaic distinction creates communal boundaries through memory. These limit our sympathies and loyalties not merely to our contemporary coreligionists (and not others), but to our ancestors (and not those of others) as well. We will have let them die for nothing if we do not honor the laws, histories, and above all the truth around which they structured their lives and for which they very often gave their lives.

While Assmann concedes that Deuteronomy is a remarkable and indeed epoch-making text and that the Mosaic distinction has been a central feature of Western civilization, he contends that its legacy must be sublimated as we enter a globalized age that requires an egalitarian form of cosmopolitanism.³⁶ Assmann's great hope is that we can overcome the need for such a distinction, realizing that just as "there is no single human language," so too there is no single correct or proper religion. That is, "although there will always be an irreducible plurality of human religions, there is only one common human capacity for religion and one common search for universal truth."³⁷ All human beings have some sense of the search for truth, and we should be open and accepting, overcoming this need to negate. We must weaken communal boundaries and identities rooted in transcendence, so that we can be open to the needs and experiences of the other. By dragging the often culturally unconscious features of the Mosaic distinction into the light, by exposing its chauvinistic tendencies, Assmann hopes he can help us break its yoke and open up a freer future, one that is bound to the fruits of this world. Only by rejecting the Mosaic distinction and acknowledging that our religion is just one of many, not to be privileged over any other, can we embrace the other as a fellow citizen-inhabitant on this earth and as a fellow partner in dialogue, rather than as one who dwells in untruth and is thus not merely our enemy but God's as well. To be sure, it would be hasty to conclude that Assmann calls for the abolition of the monotheisms. Rather, he is more likely calling for their rehabilitation. Of course, this would involve nothing short of the extirpation of the Mosaic distinction that constitutes their foundations.

Cohen: Reasoning within Tradition

Hermann Cohen, the most prominent figure of late nineteenth- and early twentieth- century German-Jewish thought, recognizes that aspect of monotheism that Assmann names the Mosaic distinction. However, he takes a very different view of it. Since Assmann thinks monotheistic traditions are caught up in, and unable to escape from, their traumatic inceptions, the key to revising or healing them requires that one step outside the particular tradition (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) and revise them by importing external sensibilities (e.g., pluralism, cosmopolitanism). Without this step, the monotheisms will always be animated by an enemy-oriented political theology as a result of their foundations in the Mosaic distinction. In contrast, Cohen argues that while monotheistic traditions and the Mosaic distinction may initially manifest itself in the negation of other religions, as the idea of monotheism-and thus the Mosaic distinction itself-develops rationally within the monotheistic traditions, not only is the humanity of the other emphasized but so is the need to take responsibility for her. Since Cohen views Judaism as the "the primary origin" for Christianity and Islam, these traditions also possess the capacity to rationalize themselves.³⁸ In short, for Cohen, as monotheistic traditions rationally progress, their early one-sided emphasis on the falsity of other traditions over the needs and concerns-the very humanity of the other is corrected within and by the tradition itself. Through immanent critique and rationalization, hostility is replaced by ethical concern.

In order to appreciate the differences between Assmann and Cohen, we must first appreciate their overlapping areas of interest with regard to the Hebrew Bible. Cohen agrees with Assmann that Deuteronomy and the prophets are indicative of the "monotheistic" mind-set. And there is agreement between Cohen and Assmann that this mind-set is characterized, at least in part, by its opposition to idolatry. And while he uses a different idiom, Cohen also emphasizes the transition to a text-based religion from one oriented around cultic practices. However, where Assmann tends to view this transition as the entrance of a new form of hatred into the world, Cohen reads it as a transition to ethical reasoning.

While Assmann and Cohen focus their attention on similar books of the Bible, their methodologies differ significantly. Assmann is clearly a child of modern biblical studies. For Assmann, the biblical texts are historical and cultural documents edited and stitched together for a variety of political and ideological purposes. While Cohen accepts and is even willing to utilize the findings of higher criticism, he is unwilling to privilege them. Cohen does incorporate elements of the documentary hypothesis-that the Bible is a patchwork of different sources stitched together by a redactor at some later point in time-into his larger methodology. For Cohen, the biblical texts were redacted in such a way that preserves the coherence and development of their rational content. However, to recognize this development within the Bible, it is imperative that one approach the literary sources with the proper philosophical/hermeneutical methodology. In this vein he has a rather famous hermeneutical statement: "[I]f I am referred to the literary sources [of Judaism], those sources remain mute and blind if I do not approach them with a concept, which I myself lay out as a foundation in order to be instructed by them and not simply guided by their authority."³⁹ The "concept" Cohen is speaking of involves the belief or assumption that the texts themselves possess a lawfulness or coherence in their developmental structure such that their ideas can be deepened and refined as part of a historical process of interpretation. Processes of knowing, in which revision and deepening occur, is tied to

Cohen's notion of reason where the future is clearly the center of gravity; meaning is always in the process of being developed rather than being fixed. Cohen finds biblical texts evincing processes of reason insofar as the deliberate juxtaposition of newer textual strata next to older allows for continual reinterpretation of older ideas by newer ones, as well as when later commentaries reflect back upon and interpret these texts, bringing greater harmony between their various strata. As a tradition progresses, its interpreters get deeper and more encompassing views of it and thus are able to better unify the different strands of tradition by minimizing or winnowing out those strands that are less compatible with the developing whole.

Perhaps the most prominent example of this process of refinement and rationalization in the sources of Judaism is the ways in which Deuteronomy reinterprets and indeed demythologizes Exodus.⁴⁰ Cohen writes, "The books of Moses contain a double form that has always been recognized by the tradition, insofar as it has designated the fifth book 'a Repetition of the Torah (תּוֹרָה)'. Through this repetition, it seems, the naïveté is broken." That is, this repetition reflects back upon and reinterprets "that which the preceding books have rendered in a naïve exposition."⁴¹ On this reading, Exodus characterizes revelation in a naïve manner that is problematic for the sensibilities of the authors of Deuteronomy. Not only is there "the danger of a material conception of God" in Exodus's depiction of the Sinai event, that is, God literally descending to the mountaintop, but there are also problems in the ways the people of Israel and Moses are depicted.⁴² Deuteronomy, so Cohen argues, clarifies that the Jewish people are not privileged in themselves but rather this "nationality" is chosen, elected for the "world-historical purpose of establishing and strengthening of monotheism."⁴³ Similarly, if the Sinai event is understood as a veritable theophany, then Moses must, as is the case in Exodus, exist as a spiritual mediator between God and the people. However, within the retelling of the Sinai event in Deuteronomy, Moses ceases to be a mediator and instead is cast as "the teacher of monotheism."⁴⁴ Most decisively of all, Cohen reads lines in Deuteronomy such as "The Eternal made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, who are all of us here alive this day" (Deuteronomy 5:3)⁴⁵ as an indication of a shift in emphasis from the historical moment of Sinai, "the fact [of] Sinai" to its spiritual and intellectual "content."⁴⁶ It is not the historical event that matters so much as what was disclosed by that event. Harmonizing earlier and later textual strata requires a universal concept grounded in reason through which the two can be synthesized. In this manner, the Jewish tradition maintains a continuity of revelation even as discrete ancient texts are reconciled with later textual strata. Later sensibilities, however, do not reject or dismiss earlier notions such as the structure of being a counter-religion- for example, Israel's pointed opposition to the idolatry of Egypt or the neighboring Canaanites-but they expand and deepen what idolatry signifies.

It is no coincidence that like Assmann, Cohen pays special attention to the inner connection between Exodus and Deuteronomy. Indeed, both Assmann and Cohen attribute decisive significance to the Deuteronomistic tradition. However, whereas Assmann sees Deuteronomy as using the Exodus story to provide a narrative frame in which to inscribe the laws proclaimed by the transcendent will, Cohen, in sharp contrast, finds Deuteronomy to be a sloughing off all that is miraculous and otherworldly, raising "opposition to the alleged origin of the monotheistic teaching in heaven."⁴⁷ Assmann sees Deuteronomy and the shift to textuality as radically emphasizing God's transcendent will and thus as antagonistic to rational discussion and communication. Unlike Assmann, Cohen thinks Deuteronomy represents the departure from an

inscrutable divine will that is to be known only through revealed texts. Cohen sees this demonstrated in Deuteronomy's presentation of Moses as a teacher of monotheism, such that revelation is now-at least in principle-universally accessible in that it is fundamentally rational. If Assmann highlights Deuteronomy's curses for forgetting the law as reason for obedience, Cohen points to Deuteronomy 4:6, "For this is your wisdom and understanding in the sight of the peoples, that, when they hear all these statutes, shall say: Surely, this great nation is a wise and understanding people."⁴⁸ As pointed out earlier, Assmann also cites this verse in order to emphasize the transition from cultic to textual spirituality, but for Assmann wisdom and learning are equated with mastery of the scriptural text qua embodiment of the divine will (rather than mastery of cultic practices).⁴⁹ For Cohen, on the contrary, Deuteronomy 4:6 is indicative that the Hebrew Bible, revelation, is ultimately accessible to all: universal in that it is fundamentally rational.⁵⁰

Cohen is able to avoid Assmann's emphases on Deuteronomy's curses for transgressing or forgetting the laws because he demonstrates, beginning with Deuteronomy's recapitulation of Exodus, that the Jewish tradition is ongoing and self-reflective. As the tradition evolves, so too does the lens for reading the sources of the tradition. If Assmann understands Deuteronomy as bound up with a traumatized past, Cohen emphasizes Deuteronomy's relationships with later works in the Jewish literary tradition as it evolves. The transformations that Deuteronomy enacts, its emphasis on the covenant and piety over political shrewdness, allows later generations beginning with the prophets to highlight the ethical resources of these texts at the expense of what may have been of primary concern to the authors of Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic Historian. Cohen understands his work as a continuation and deepening of that of Maimonides, whose work he understands to be a "subsequent continuation of the meaning of prophetic monotheism."⁵¹ Exodus then is reread through Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy is reread through the prophets and the psalms, all of which is subsequently reinterpreted in the work Maimonides, who in turn is reread and reinterpreted by Cohen, whose hermeneutic seeks to maximize the ethical potentialities in the tradition. No one moment or source is decisive, since it is the ongoing, progressively developing process that is central. Where Assmann thinks that Judaism, or any monotheism rooted in Scriptures, is fundamentally grounded in the scriptural texts qua textual embodiment of the commands of a God whose will is irreducible to reason, Cohen reads the Scriptures as containing the seeds of ideas that are deepened and further developed and refined by later works in the Jewish textual tradition. Cohen undercuts the distinction between revelation and reason by showing that revelation is a historical process through which a cluster of ideas develop and become increasingly harmonized. And, revelation, now defined as rational, develops toward universality.

Indeed, Cohen's methodology is predicated upon the embodiment of reason within historical traditions. Thus, historical processes of critique and rethinking within a tradition are required for ideas to refine themselves in history. Where Assmann finds the meaning of the biblical texts fixed in the past, Cohen believes that all particular traditions possess some connection to universal reason and are able, or at least possess the potential, to increasingly bring themselves in line with it as they develop in history. In this manner, Cohen finds a link between universal reason and the particularity of Judaism. Indeed, pace Assmann, for Cohen the key to reforming and rationalizing one's tradition is not to subordinate the elements of particularity to some abstract universal standpoint, but to preserve the dialectical correlation between the particular

and the universal without subordinating one side to the other. We see this dialectical process in Cohen's methodology in *Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism* (1919), where he correlates the particularity of the Jewish people with the universality of reason, a dynamic that animates the Jewish literary sources. That is, while these "literary sources" are the "true sources for the workings of the spirit, of a national spirit,"⁵² a reason universal in scope is nevertheless "able to wrestle its way into the history of the particular people."⁵³ The particularity of Judaism, its national literature, is rooted in a universal idea, that of the unique God, monotheism. In the *Religion of Reason*, Cohen applies the particular sources of Judaism in conjunction with the universal idea of reason (God) in such a way that the tradition is revisable and refinable. Implicit in this view is the capacity for other traditions to follow suit.⁵⁴

In fact, the idea of the unique God is the primary origin, or *Ur sprung*, namely, the lawfulness according to which the national literature of the Jewish people develops. As a result, "[e]verything that comes forth from the spirit of Israel comes forth just as much from the unique God as it does from the national spirit."⁵⁵ Judaism represents the working out of the idea of God, of monotheism, in history. Of course, this adequate correlation of the particular and universal is achieved only in the ideal of Judaism, which Cohen, the consummate philosopher, seeks to elaborate. As for the sources of Judaism themselves, from which Cohen seeks to harmonize and bring forth this idealized correlation, which has always existed in *potentia*, they also bear witness to the many false starts and attempted corrections and overcompensations of a textual tradition struggling to revise and reinterpret itself and its sources with their greatest ethical potentialities in mind. This series of false starts potentially includes Cohen himself, whose messianic optimism seems highly problematic in our post- Holocaust age. Of course, this does not make it impossible for later scholars to embrace elements of his methodology, even if they do not accept all of his conclusions.

Assmann argues that the Mosaic distinction fosters an antagonistic attitude toward the other and the other's religion and an identity that is incompatible with modern needs. Cohen, however, views the agonistic nature of the monotheisms as part of the "conceptual wrestling" of the monotheistic idea into actuality, generating an ethical future over the long arc of history. It is ethical in its foundations, not some neurotic response to a historical trauma. The Mosaic distinction is part of a contradiction bound up with the sources of the Abrahamic monotheisms but which the sources of Judaism explicitly attempt to resolve-and which the sources of the other monotheisms could potentially solve.⁵⁶ This process goes well beyond the mere internalization of the Mosaic distinction that Assmann mentions. Rather, Cohen thinks the monotheisms possess the resources for bringing the logic of the Mosaic distinction to their rational fulfillment, which has an ethical expression.⁵⁷

In Cohen's thought, the Mosaic distinction is the result of the tension generated by a cluster of, at least initially, conflicting concepts bound up with the idea of monotheism. On the one hand, the Jews introduce the idea of the unique God, whose most significant fruit is the universal idea of humanity, through which the inherent dignity of all human beings is recognized. Indeed, this idea founds genuine ethics, where the difference between "is" and "ought" is preserved in contrast to merely empirical or eudemonistic conceptions of morality. The idea of humanity is an ideal that is yet to be actualized-as history is a cruel affair full of bloodshed, poverty, and unjust suffering. Indeed, because of the disparity between the ideal and the actuality. Cohen thinks that the Jews,

in giving birth to this idea of God/humanity, are obligated, or to use monotheistic parlance, elected by its very logic, to bear witness to it for the rest of the world. That is, they are entrusted with embodying this idea in history. On the other hand, to genuinely bear witness to this idea, Jews must radically oppose and negate other conceptions of the divine as idolatry. Since these other conceptions of the divine do not promote the universal idea of humanity, they must be eliminated. At this juncture, the contradiction at the heart of monotheism's antagonistic relationship with idolatry becomes clear.

The contradiction is the following. Monotheism, whose rationality brings forth the idea of humanity, the genuine ground of ethics, requires for its emergence and development the destruction of poly theism, which conflicts with morality. As Cohen puts it, monotheism "cannot permit any tolerance of polytheism. Idolatry has to be destroyed absolutely."⁵⁸ Early Jewish texts speak of killing or harming the idolator. However as Cohen reads the rational development within the Jewish sources, it ceases to be coherent to promulgate the idea of God, the ground of ethics, through violence to the other. That is, harming the other for her beliefs cannot stand; it undermines the monotheistic idea, which it is ironically seeking to protect. Soon the Jewish sources themselves argue that one must not hate the idolator as her error and sin do not diminish her humanity.

In order to understand this contradiction and its solution we must grasp Cohen's conception of the self. For Cohen, the self is always unfinished, always being created. In this process, sin serves as the condition for the possibility of freedom and therefore ethics in that it makes atonement possible. Sin, as the prerequisite for repentance and atoning, is the occasion for freely turning away from sin, for rising above the guilt that we accrue for falling short of the moral ideal.⁵⁹ In this process of sinning and atoning, in the act of teshuvah, in the "capacity to turn away from [one's] previous way of life," one gains autonomy.⁶⁰ To hate the idolator is thus to fail to understand the possibility of redemption of sin. Hatred is incompatible with true knowledge of God, because it fails to see that the sinner is capable of repenting and transforming herself. To be sure, even though idolatry is the worst sort of sin and must be opposed, the idolator must not be hated because "all hatred is vain and wanton. All hatred is nothing but illusion."⁶¹ That is, deeper than any sin is the possibility of teshuvah, of reorienting one's life according to the ethical ideal contained in monotheism. Idolatry, at its deepest foundations then, is nothing but the result of the lack of knowledge of the true God, the ground of being and ethics, which is tantamount to the failure to understand that the self can always transform and reorient itself through repentance. Idolatry, then, can only be overcome through repentance, not through violence. One cannot be compelled to repent but must do so freely, once one genuinely recognizes the "ought." Or, in Cohen's parlance, no one can be coerced into knowing and loving God. Since adequate knowledge of God is key for properly orienting one's self regarding ethics, the repentance and the rejection of idolatry can only be taught, not coerced.

While human beings have the capacity to be rational, reason itself is historical; there is no predetermined path of this development. Cohen finds Western culture, rooted in both pantheistic Greek philosophy and irrational forms of Christianity, failing to recognize the ideal of humanity and as a result failing to recognize human dignity.⁶² Due to these bastions of immorality, moral reason and its austere demands have not sufficiently penetrated into existing culture. The Jews, then, oppose idolatry by testifying to the ethical ideal; the Jews, as a landless people, not only

implicitly critique nationalism but they testify to the reality of the ethical amidst the swirling forces of materialism and empiricism, that "the ought" endures in a world that repeatedly fails to recognize it.

The Jews, as suffering servants, testify to an emphatic notion of truth that runs contrary to other truths but without effacing the humanity of the other who chases after false gods or ideals. Only by willingly taking suffering upon him or herself, by serving as a "sacrificial victim who exposes himself to suffering because of his knowledge of the irreplaceable value of this suffering for the historical welfare of mankind," can the Jew oppose the idolatry of the other without effacing the other's humanity.⁶³ By willingly undergoing suffering, by existing as a diasporic people without a home and suffering oppression, the Jew discloses an order higher than eudemonism—that order which Cohen thinks has reigned throughout history—testifying to the "ethical conception of history" that refuses to recognize the equation of might with right.⁶⁴ In this way, the Jews show that monotheism need not be untranslatable, as Assmann avers. Indeed, only such testimony can bring the idolator to relinquish idols on her own by recognizing the truth of the idea of God and reorienting her life around it. Cohen's philosophy does not advocate the conversion of the gentiles, and thus the explicit negation of the other's religion. Rather, as the idea of monotheism develops in history, what is negated is not other religions so much as articulations of other religions that fall short of the ethical ideal, that fail to recognize humanity as such, and instead privilege particularism for particularism's sake.

Cohen's account of the suffering servant offers an important opportunity to explore the limitations of Assmann's account of the ethical potential of the monotheistic religions. In *The Price of Monotheism*, Assmann critiques martyrdom, claiming that monotheistic martyrdom is part and parcel of the same violent intolerance that leads to murder and persecution of the other. Martyrdom is "a refusal to accept a religion known to be false, a concomitant willingness to die rather than yield an inch on this point—then, the problem of 'monotheism and violence' can be seen to have as much to do with enduring violence as with perpetrating it."⁶⁵ It is not about bearing witness to the truth for the sake of the other, but rather it is a refusal and rejection of the other, her religion and culture, at all costs, even if that means one's own life. According to Assmann, it is only a question of a differential of power whether one is to go from enduring to inflicting violence. To shift from suffering to persecution in the name of religion, then, requires no qualitative change, just an alteration of the direction of violence. At the root of martyrdom and religious persecution alike is the Mosaic distinction.⁶⁶

However, Cohen's account of the suffering servant takes issue with the presuppositions at play in Assmann's account of the Mosaic distinction. Cohen's account of Deuteronomy asserts that revelation is ultimately rational and universal; otherwise the Jewish tradition collapses into a heap of incommensurable strands. It is not something only for Jews or that must be accepted on the authority of the "fact" of the Sinai event. Rather, through subsequent interpretations of the event within the Jewish textual tradition, revelation is not so much about God's authority as the way in which the conceptual content of the idea "God" unfolds into a universal ethics. This ethics is open and discernible to all, even if cultural forces such as the ever-present paradigm of "might makes right" obscures it. By forsaking might and security, by martyring themselves, the Jews suffer not because they refuse to relinquish their privileged truth that the other lacks. Jewish martyrdom is not about seeking to preserve the Jew's "spiritual" advantage over the other.

Rather, Jews suffer, so Cohen claims, in order to draw the other's attention to the truth as she too can comprehend it.⁶⁷

To understand the nuances of Cohen's position on the suffering servant, we must understand how Cohen's position supplies an alternative to Assmann's sense of cosmopolitanism. Indeed, in Cohen's thought, rationality and universality ultimately trump the particularities pertaining to ethnicity and tradition. In his reading of the development of the idea of messianism in the Jewish sources, Cohen (rather controversially) claims that national limitations become superfluous, "and the 'people of Israel' becomes the 'remnant of Israel'."⁶⁸ Not all members of the empirical Jewish community are part of this ideal "remnant"; perhaps more significantly, those who are not empirically Jewish can belong to it. Judaism has long recognized the "pious of the nations of the world" as possessing religious status in Judaism, and thus they too "have their fully entitled share in this messianic suffering."⁶⁹ That is, to the degree that other individuals or other traditions have rationalized themselves and embrace this suffering on behalf of the ideal of humanity, they count as much as Jews-indeed, they even count as Jews.

Cohen's position is incompatible with Assmann's notion of cosmopolitanism where "secular" reason is imported into specific religious traditions from the outside in order to historicize and relativize them and thereby bring them into line with a cosmopolitan community where all are equal in their particularity. Cohen believes that rational beings will converge on the ethical ideal of humanity, rather than simply on the limits of what a particular tradition can know. Thus he presents the possibility of an overlapping consensus of sorts in the figure of the suffering servant, an ideal remnant suffering for the other. This "righteous remnant" is by no means constituted by ethnic Jews but rather all those who strive to resist the barbarous forces at play in history, who recognize the dignity of humanity, of all human beings. This resistance is nothing less than testifying to God, to the ethical ideal of humanity, regardless of one's religious tradition. In short, Cohen creates the conditions for an ethical cosmopolitanism that is not rooted in a self-reflective awareness of one's particularity but rather that emerges across traditions in the universality of the shared ideal of humanity.

Conclusion

Monotheistic religious traditions today are faced with the formidable challenges raised by religious pluralism in epistemological, ethical, and political dimensions. Of course there are more and less "rational" ways of responding to these challenges. The question is whether secular-minded theorists who suppose they know the essence of specific traditions are on solid ground when they say that the only way to make those traditions amenable to contemporary social mores is to import some heterogeneous explanatory framework and thus disrupt and undercut their traditional sensibilities. Assmann's temptation to reform the monotheisms leads him to essentialize them with his overly simplistic notion of the Mosaic distinction. In contrast, Cohen highlights the ethical potentiality of religious traditions by attending to their historicity. By reading this historicity in light of a teleological thrust toward universality, Cohen not only harmonizes the various strands of the Jewish tradition but he also harmonizes the peoples of various cultures without rendering them identical to one another. Cohen's thought undercuts Assmann's claim that religious tolerance in a pluralist world is best served by subordinating religious traditions as such to contemporary cosmopolitan sensibilities. Rather, as Cohen shows,

cosmopolitan sensibilities can be found within particular religious traditions if only one treats them as living, developing organisms rather than ossified structures frozen in the clutches of a traumatic past.

Notes

I would like to thank Martin Kavka, Randi Rashkover, and Eliza Siavet for their considerable editorial help with this chapter.

1. See Robert Erlewine, *Monotheism and Tolerance: Recovering a Religion of Reason* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2010), 3-28, for a discussion of the tensions between modern, liberal sensibilities and those of the Abrahamic monotheisms. Also discussed are the problematic attempts by philosophers of religion such as John Hick and political philosophers such as Jiirgen Habermas to render monotheisms more amenable to liberal sensibilities.

2. Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: Tile Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (London: Harvard University Press, 1997), 3.

3. For an extended discussion of the origin of the Mosaic distinction with Pharoah Akhenaten in the Amarna period, see Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian*, 23-55. To be sure, he discusses Akhenaten and monotheism in many of his works.

4. For a nice account of Assmann and his relevance to Jewish studies, see Eliza Siavet, "A Matter of Distinction: On Recent Work by Jan Assmann," *AJS Review* 34, no. 2 (2010): 385-93.

5. Jan Assmann, "Eine neue Form der Gewalt," *Der Spiegel* 52 (22.12.2006): 119. Cf. Jan Assmann, *Of God and Gods: Egypt, Israel, and the Rise of Monotheism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), 140.

6. Jan Assmann, *The Price of Monotheism*, trans. Robert Savage (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. 2010), 16.

7. Assmann. *Moses the Egyptian*, 1. While the monotheistic religions may have introduced this concept. other conceptual frameworks can adopt them as well. "Once the distinction is drawn. there is no end of reentries or subdistinctions."

8. Assmann, *Price of Monotheism*, 3

9. Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian*, 3.

10. *Instruction for King Merikare*, 136-37 cited in Assmann. *Of God and Gods*, 57.

11. Assmann, *Price of Monotheism*, 16.

12. Assmann, "Eine neue Form der Gewalt," 118.

13. Assmann, *Price of Monotheism*, 16.

14. Ibid., 15.

15. Ibid. • 15.

16. Ibid., 9; Note, *The Price of Monotheism* is a translation of Jan Assmann, *Die Mosaische Unterscheidung: oder der Preis des Monotheismus* (München: Carl Hanser Verlag: 2003). Thus, this work is chronologically closer to *Moses the Egyptian* than *Of God and Gods* and other works.

17. Ibid., 10; such a claim is surely an oversimplification. The work of Daniel Boyarin and Michael Fishbane has done much to show that the elements of polytheism are alive and well in rabbinic discourse. Indeed, Peter Schafer critiques Assmann on this point in particular, by quite correctly pointing out, "Der Kampf zwischen dem monotheistischen Anspruch und seinen Gegenkriiften spielt sich gerade auch innerhalb des Judentums ab, nicht nur zwischen dem Judentum und anderen Religionen" ("Geschichte und Gedachtnisgeschichte: Jan Assmanns 'Mosaische Unterscheidung,' in *Memoria-Wege jiidischen Errinerns: Festschrift fiir Michael Brocke zum 65. Geburtstag* [Berlin: Metropol, 2005], 13). As we will see, Assmann's more recent work brings him quite close to Schafer on this point, at least when it comes to the Jewish manifestation of the Mosaic distinction.

18. Assmann, *Price of Monotheism*, 11 .

19. As I mentioned earlier, in *Moses the Egyptian*, Assmann claims that Exodus is the narrative embodiment of the Mosaic distinction. To be sure, its origins go deeper, first appearing with the Amarna period in Egypt. In his later work, Assmann becomes less interested in the idea of the counter-religion itself and more interested in the ways the counter-religion I the Mosaic distinction is bound up with the medium of textuality.

20. Assmann, *Of God and Gods*, 96-97.

21. Assmann, "Monotheism, Memory, and Trauma," in *Religion and Cultural Memory: Ten Studies*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 55.

22. Ibid., 55.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid., 55-56.

25. Assmann, *Of God and Gods*, 96.

26. Ibid.

27. Assmann, "Invisible Religion and Cultural Memory," in *Religion and Cultural Memory*, 19

28. Assmann, "Five Stages on the Road to Canon: Tradition and Written Culture in Ancient Israel and Early Judaism," in *Religion and Cultural Memory*, 53; Assmann argues and explores in numerous works, that the first bona fide monotheist was the Pharaoh Akhenaten, whose legacy was essentially erased, only to be rediscovered much later. What is decisive about the Western monotheisms, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, is that they were able to combine the Mosaic distinction with textuality, which turned out to be a world-altering transformation in a way that Akhenaten's attempt at religious reform was not. As Assmann puts it in *The Price of Monotheism*, "I suspect that the monotheistic idea could not have established itself in any other form than that of a written tradition. The monotheistic idea can only guarantee longevity as a textual corpus, not as an institutionalized religion, at least not in absolute strictness, purity, and consequentiality. This form of 'institutionalization through the written word' never eventuated in Egypt and was first realized in Israel" (35).

29. Assmann, *Of God and Gods*, 124.

30. Perhaps his work often elicits charges of antisemitism because he not only locates the fateful link of the Mosaic distinction with textuality in the Deuteronomic tradition in the Hebrew Bible, but he also emphasizes a need to overcome monotheism or to spiritualize it. This is all too reminiscent of traditional Christian rhetoric of the anachronistic nature of Judaism or the rhetoric around Judaism in Enlightenment discourse where Judaism served as the counterpoint to modernity. On this latter point, see Jonathan Hess, *Germans, Jews, and the Claims of Modernity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002). 6. The other, more obvious reason is Assmann's problematic elaboration and development of Freud's theory of antisemitism. For an important and stinging critique of this, which Assmann, to his credit, has attempted to take to heart in his writings, see Peter Schäfer. "Das jüdische Monopol: Jan Assmann und der Monotheismus," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. August 11, 2004. and his later article, "Geschichte und Gedächtnisgeschichte: Jan Assmanns 'Mosaische Unterscheidung,'" 19-39.

31. Assmann, *Of God and Gods*, 124; cf. Assmann, "Monotheism, Memory, and Trauma," 55.

32. Here I want to qualify my agreement with Schäfer's reading of Assmann. Schäfer asserts that for Assmann, "das Judentum, dessen monotheistischer Hass geschichtsmächtig wurde und das 'Haft, Konflikt und den Begriff der Sünde in die Welt gebracht (hat)'-Christentum und Islam kommen bei ihm so gut wie gar nicht vor" ("Geschichte und Gedächtnisgeschichte," 35). This is certainly true in regard to Assmann's ill-conceived effort to revive Freud's theory of the origins of antisemitism. Assmann, fortunately (and, most likely, in no small part due to Schäfer's criticisms), has largely abandoned this aspect of his work. When it comes to the historical account of the three Abrahamic monotheisms, Assmann is at great pains to distinguish Judaism from Christianity and Islam in regard to violence.

33. Assmann, *Price of Monotheism*, 17; in *Of God and Gods*, Assmann writes, "[It] is important to stress the fact that among the three so-called Abrahamic religions, Judaism is the only one that has never turned the implications of violence and intolerance into historical reality because it has relegated the final universalizing of truth to eschatology and not to history" (111).

34. Assmann, *Price of Monotheism*, 17, 119.

35. Jan Assmann, "Eine neue Form der Gewalt," 119.

36. For a nice account and critique of this notion of identity that Assmann champions, see Eric L. Santner, *On the Psychotheology of Everyday Life: Reflections on Freud and Rosenzweig* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 3-8.

37. Assmann, *Of God and Gods*, 140.

38. Hermann Cohen, *Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums*, Zweite Auflage, (Koln: Joseph Melzer Verlag), translated by Simon Kaplan as *Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta: Scholars Press: 1995), 8. In this chapter, I will primarily focus on Judaism, since that is the tradition Cohen explicitly operates from. However, presumably Cohen would claim that one could operate similarly from within other monotheistic traditions. To be sure, historically, Cohen is quite critical of Christianity, which he views as a distortion of the reason of monotheism. However, he does believe it possesses the capacities to be rationalized and finds much in the German Protestant tradition that lends itself to this capacity, although he also finds much that obstructs this as well. However, for the sake of this piece, we will not explore his critique of Christianity. For a further account of Cohen's critique of Christianity, see Robert Erlewine, *Monotheism and Tolerance*, 157-65.

39. Cohen, *Religion of Reason*, 4.

40. See Eliezer Schweid, "Hermann Cohen's Biblical Exegesis," in 'Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums' Tradition und Ursprungsdenken in Hermann Cohen's Spätwerk: Internationale Konferenz in Zürich 1998, ed. Helmut Holzhey, Gabriel Motzkin, and Hartwig Wiedebach (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2001), 353-79.

41. Cohen, *Religion of Reason*, n

42. *Ibid.*, 73-

43. *Ibid.*, 74.

44. *Ibid.*, 76.

45. *Ibid.*, 77-78.

46. *Ibid.*, 78.

47. *Ibid.*, 82.

48. *Ibid.*, 78.

49. Assmann, "Invisible Religion and Cultural Memory," in *Religion and Cultural Memory*, 19.

50. Cohen, *Religion of Reason*, 83.

51. Hermann Cohen, "Religion und Sittlichkeit," in *Jüdische Schriften*, ed. Bruno Strauss (Berlin: C. A. Schwetschke, 1924), 3: 133.

52. Cohen, *Religion of Reason*, 24.

53. *Ibid.*, 8.

54. In Erlewine, *Monotheism and Tolerance*, 138-42, I argue that Cohen's work is not as overtly congenial to this emulation as many of his commentators suggest. In fact, I argue that he is explicitly Judeo-centric. Nevertheless, even if Cohen's work evinces a hostility to Christianity and privileges Judaism, it possesses the potential to be read more ecumenically and thus to serve as a resource for the rationalization of other religious traditions. See note 38.

55. Cohen, *Religion of Reason*, 24.

56. I think it is safe to say that Cohen would argue that while the other monotheisms have inherited this contradiction, he is certainly skeptical that they have solved it (at least he is skeptical Christianity has). See note 38.

57. Of course, the term "Mosaic distinction" is Assmann's, not Cohen's.

58. Cohen, *Religion of Reason*, 52.

59. *Ibid.*, 93.

60. For a remarkably in-depth discussion of the role of teshuvah in Cohen's thought, see Michael Zank, *The Idea of Atonement in the Philosophy of Hermann Cohen* (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2000), esp. 134-51. However, the entire book can be seen as a prolonged meditation upon this theme, since Zank, quite correctly in my opinion, sees atonement as the center of gravity of Cohen's philosophy of religion.

61. Cohen, *Religion of Reason*, 453.

62. Cohen's relationship to Greek philosophy and culture is too complex to explore here.

63. Cohen, *Religion of Reason*, 286.

64. *Ibid.*, 265; Cohen was an opponent of Zionism because he felt it compromised the unique mission of the Jews. He saw Zionism, at bottom, as just another form of nationalism..

65. Assmann. *Price of Monotheism*, 21-

66. To be sure, Assmann also explores the idea that the Mosaic distinction arouses the hatred of those excluded for those doing the excluding. I will not engage this aspect of Assmann's thought here.

67. For an extended discussion of the rationalist foundations of Cohen's account of bearing witness. see Erlewine, *Monotheism and Tolerance*, 131-76.

68. Cohen. *Religion of Reason*, 260.

69. *Ibid.*, 268.