Monotheism and Tolerance

Recovering a Religion of Reason

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1 Monotheism, Tolerance, and Pluralism

THE CURRENT IMPASSE

The contemporary values of tolerance and pluralism, so often the object of unhesitating praise, nevertheless pose significant challenges for religious life, at least as it is commonly understood by many major religious traditions. If the religious adherent cedes too much to these principles then she compromises the very foundations of the grand tradition she has inherited or adopted. Yet the dangers of not recognizing these principles, as the news daily attests, leads to endless violence and misery. The present world-historical situation suggests that this problem is particularly acute in regard to the Abrahamic-monotheistic religions, i.e., Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The structural antagonism and hostility toward the Other[1] which thrives unrestrained in the more extreme strands of these traditions cannot stand unchallenged if we seek to live in peaceful societies. And yet, calls for tolerance and pluralism either go unheeded or only further exacerbate the situation, given that those who make them fail to take into account the contours of the symbolic or discursive structure shared by the Abrahamic religions.[2]

Indeed as the calls for tolerance and pluralism, usually made by secularists and religious liberals, grow stronger in the public arena, one cannot help but notice the growing backlash against them. While I certainly do not wish to claim that the dramatic surge in fundamentalist movements is solely a negative reaction to the increased prominence of the principles of tolerance and pluralism in public life, it is nevertheless no mere coin-

cidence that this phenomenon is manifesting itself with such distressing intensity at the same time as these principles receive increasing emphasis in public life. There is clearly a link between the prominence of tolerance and pluralism in the public sphere and the strong reaffirmations, by more and more religious movements, of the truth and authority of accounts of revelation which seem inimical to these principles.

Are more conservative, traditionalistic conceptions of the monotheistic worldview simply incommensurable with the principles of tolerance and pluralism? When religious traditions find themselves in tension with these principles, to what degree, if at all, should they change in order to accommodate them? Indeed, is the discourse surrounding tolerance and pluralism adequately nuanced to address the complexities of religious life? Or does it possess blind spots and prejudices that make it problematic? These vitally important questions must be addressed. And while it would undoubtedly be beneficial, given our present world-historical situation, if monotheistic religions could find more fruitful ways of dealing with Others than hostility (whether implicit or explicit), which all too frequently emerges in situations involving diversity, this does not justify an unqualified celebration of the principles of tolerance or pluralism. Indeed, secularists and religious liberals haranguing fundamentalists and conservative traditionalists to adopt the principles of tolerance and pluralism, or chastising them for their failure to do so, will not accomplish the reforms they desire. If monotheistic religions are going to constructively deal with their predisposition to agonistic relationships with the Other, and thus to intolerance, then such measures must originate and find their basis within these traditions themselves.[3]

One attempt to ameliorate violent intolerance from within a specific monotheistic tradition—or rather, a particular religious-philosophical tradition of such attempts—can be found in the works of Moses Mendelssohn, Immanuel Kant, and Hermann Cohen. These figures attempt to reconfigure the moments of the discursive structure shared by the Abrahamic monotheisms, so as to ameliorate the monotheistic intolerance which is directed toward the Other without vitiating the monotheistic structure itself. Unlike so many of their contemporaries, and unlike so much secular philosophy and liberal theology (Jewish and Christian) at present, regarding religious tolerance and pluralism, these thinkers of what I call the 'religion of reason trajectory' preserve the basic structure of the monotheistic worldview, including such notions as election and world-historic mission, while still accounting for the social and political aspects—which necessarily involve living and interacting with the Other—of modern existence. As such, their efforts are not only strikingly different from alternative approaches to this vexing problem, but they are also more promising.

Ironically, while Kant—by far the most famous and influential of these three figures—is included in this study, he takes on a rather marginal status within the religion of reason trajectory. Kant is of course the only non-Jewish thinker in this trajectory, and his work is most important as a transition between Mendelssohn and Cohen, as well as for the ways in which it deviates from, and therefore highlights, the shared project of these other thinkers. The attempt to reconfigure and rationalize the basic structure of the monotheistic worldview is, at its core, a project of Diaspora Judaism. Mendelssohn and Cohen lived and worked out their philosophies of religion, of monotheism, as disenfranchised minorities—as Jews in Christian Germany. Both Mendelssohn and Cohen suffered significant discrimination as a result of their Jewish religious commitment and ethnicity. In the times and places in which they wrote, it was essentially taken as self-evident that Christianity was a religion of universality, while Judaism was a religion of sheer particularity.[4] Judaism was cast as a mere ethnicity and a body of laws, a 'religion' lacking spirit.

In this context, perhaps because of the need to defend Judaism and critique the self-satisfied Christian culture of their day, Mendelssohn and Cohen thought more deeply than their Christian peers about the dialectic between particularity and universality at the heart of the monotheistic religions. As a result, while their bodies of work are in constant conversation with, and deeply indebted to, Western (and therefore Christian) philosophy, they philosophize about religion differently than their Christian contemporaries. They recognize the particularity of the religious tradition out of which they philosophize but insist that, despite its particularity, it nevertheless maintains universal significance. In this manner, they are able to create a more nuanced, socially acceptable, and even productive form of religious intolerance—i.e., a way of life that refuses to compromise the truths central to one's religion, without doing violence to the Other on a physical or conceptual level.

To be sure, for many years, in part because of the nature of the situation in which Mendelssohn and Cohen wrote, their work has been dismissed by Jews and non-Jews as mere apologetics, as a failed attempt at dialogue with a German culture that would never accept them. However, I contend that this is not only a misunderstanding of their project, but also that perhaps it was their difficult social and political situations which made them particularly sensitive to the complexities of religious intolerance. Since even 'secularist' discussions in the Enlightenment tacitly presumed the universalism of Christianity, any Emancipation for the Jews required the forfeiture of their particularity. Yet, while both Mendelssohn and Cohen were very much public intellectuals, they refused to compromise their particularity—their Jewishness—even though this carried a cost in their personal

lives. Both not only maintained their particularity, but both also insisted that this particularity held universal significance. As Jews in a Christian world, they did not have the luxury of dismissing those with whom they disagreed, even on ultimate matters. However, contrary to the Christian 'universalism' regnant in their respective times, neither Mendelssohn nor Cohen was willing to denigrate the Other even when the Other contended that their truths views were false, anachronistic, and even insidious. As such, their thought provides important resources for our own tumultuous time, when obligations to honor God and neighbor so often seem to be at cross purposes.

The works of the religion of reason trajectory are relevant beyond Judaism, or at least this is the wager of this book, because, as several scholarly works (which I will discuss shortly) argue, the Abrahamic monotheisms share certain basic features (what I call their 'discursive structure') which is itself grounded on a tense dialectic between particularity and universality. Violence that is associated with religious (or at least monotheistic) intolerance is bound up with this dialectic. This is not to suggest that all monotheistic communities are violent as a result of engaging in this dialectic, but rather, when monotheistic communities do embrace violence on religious grounds it tends to be rooted in this dialectic. What is of interest in this trajectory of thought that culminates in the work of Cohen, is that it translates this dialectic between particularity and universality into an ethical monotheism grounded in responsibility for Others. The strength of this strategy, especially as it unfolds in Cohen's work, is that it resists the liberal and secularist desire to undermine this dialectic in the name of tolerance and pluralism, while simultaneously privileging ethical responsibility for the Other. For this reason, Cohen's conception of monotheism provides a responsible foundation for modern Jewish thought. But no less importantly, it deserves the attention of Christian and Islamic philosophers and theologians, in that it offers powerful resources for mitigating the violence that can arise from monotheistic intolerance without forfeiting the very structures constitutive of the monotheistic worldview. That being said, while the religion of reason trajectory engages with the discursive structure shared by the three Abrahamic monotheisms, it is nevertheless deeply rooted in European philosophy and the European Enlightenment. Thus the extent to which it might translate to Islam, if at all, is beyond my scholarly capacities to assess.

In this chapter, I will address the context in which I seek to incorporate or resuscitate the thinkers of the religion of reason trajectory. I will begin the discussion by providing rudimentary definitions of the principles of tolerance and pluralism which are drawn from recent philosophical discussions. Next, I will uncover the structural moments constitutive of the

monotheistic worldview, laying bear its inherent agonism with the Other and hence its tension with the principles of tolerance and pluralism. I will then discuss the work of John Hick and Jürgen Habermas, two prominent contemporary thinkers who represent significantly different but highly influential approaches to ameliorating the tension between monotheism and tolerance and/or pluralism. The failure of these thinkers to adequately address this problem, despite their rigorous attempts, will further illuminate the nature of the tension between monotheism and the principles of tolerance and pluralism. By highlighting this impasse, I hope to establish that we have much to learn from this strand of thinkers coming out of the German-Jewish Enlightenment—namely, that they offer alternative ways of thinking about monotheism that remain distinctly modern. Such pioneering efforts cannot be ignored in this time of crisis, when monotheistic intolerance and violence are rampant.

Tolerance and Pluralism

Though the principles of tolerance and pluralism, as I have noted, receive high praise in the current intellectual climate, what they actually entail, and especially their costs, are often not considered in much depth. Indeed, religiously liberal and secular-minded theorists have been too quick to champion these values without critically thinking through their costs. In order to genuinely appreciate why tolerance and pluralism are problematic for the Abrahamic monotheisms, it is important to consider these principles with some care, rather than offer glib trivializations. Fortunately, tolerance (or toleration)[5] and pluralism have become significant objects of philosophical inquiry in the past few decades. This scholarship will help to clarify the implications of these principles.

Philosophers often define ‘tolerance’ as a principle which claims that more good arises on a societal or even a moral level in not acting rather than acting on one’s moral disapproval regarding the actions,[6] beliefs, and practices of the Other, so long as the Other does not directly obstruct the well-being of oneself or other Others.[7] Thomas Scanlon explains, “Tolerance requires us to accept people and permit their practices even when we strongly disapprove of them. Tolerance thus involves an attitude that is intermediate between wholehearted acceptance and unrestrained opposition.”[8] As philosophers such as Jay Newman, Nick Fotion, and Gerard Elfstrom elaborate, tolerance involves a hierarchy in beliefs, in that one considers one’s own conceptions or practices to be more true, ethical, or valuable in some sense than those which are held or performed by the Other.[9] However, historian Perez Zagorin points out, philosophical definitions of tolerance such as these neglect not only the historical evolution of the word but also its

most common usage, which not only pertains to religion but is essentially "equivalent to the condition of religious freedom."[10] Now, while Zagorin's point is well taken, for our purposes the two conceptions need not be in competition.

If we concede that religious tolerance entails religious freedom, we are nevertheless left with the question of how precisely tolerance relates to religious freedom.[11] Historically, where coexistence between monotheistic religious communities has been achieved prior to and for much of modernity—and indeed, it remains prominent today—it has most often been on the basis of tolerance-as-restraint. That is, one may very well have little or no respect for the beliefs and practices of the Other, in fact, one may find much that is wrong with them, but still refrain from actively inhibiting the Other's pursuit of what is entailed by her own conception of human flourishing. However, at least historically, there have been clear limits to this restraint which were often derived from theological and political concerns rather than philosophical ones. Monotheistic religions have shown themselves grudgingly amenable to tolerance-as-restraint in this vein, usually when there was one dominant monotheistic religion tolerating other, smaller monotheistic communities, and there was little danger of these smaller communities exerting significant influence in the public sphere.

It is important to clarify, however, that for tolerance-as-restraint to count as genuine tolerance, and not a mere concession to political necessity or pragmatic opportunism, one must not work for or intend to work for in some future, however distant, the eventual elimination of the otherness of the Other, simply seeing the Other qua Other as having a merely temporary existence. That is, even if one ascribes little to no worth to their beliefs and practices, one must not actively intend for her otherness to be eliminated.

However, with the rise of democracies, the privatization of religion in modernity and so on, tolerance has come to increasingly take on connotations of respect which is owed to the beliefs and practices of the Other even if one disagrees with her on doctrinal matters. This particularly modern form of tolerance, what I term tolerance-as-respect, demands that the Other be recognized as a fellow citizen whose beliefs and practices must be recognized as politically—if not epistemologically or metaphysically—worthwhile, or at least worthy of a fair hearing.[12]

'Pluralism' is a position which rejects the privileging of any one value or worldview over all others because it places inherent value in the diversity of perspectives. Pluralism goes further than tolerance in that it rejects the hierarchal privileging of one's own position over the Other's as morally and politically problematic. As David O. Wong points out, the pluralist fuses "moral relativism" with "one or more ethical premises."[13] Underlying this

skeptical egalitarianism is the view that human beings are radically finite, historically and culturally situated beings who lack any capacity to climb above their own contingency in regard to truths and values. By forfeiting the accessibility of any comprehensive truth, pluralists, as their name suggests, place inherent value in the diversity of worldviews.[14]

Tolerance and pluralism, despite their differences, are both predicated upon a profound regard for the Other. They involve curtailing either the ramifications of one's beliefs (tolerance), or acknowledging the limits of one's entire worldview (pluralism), as an implication of the recognition of the Other. At their foundations then, both tolerance and pluralism privilege a symmetrical relationship between the self and Other and demand that her otherness not only be suffered, but respected as such (though there is some variance as to how much one must respect it). Intolerance, then, is the unwillingness to suffer the otherness of the Other, the unwillingness to limit the implications of one's worldview in order to make room for the Other and her worldview. And while 'intolerance' is often used as a pejorative term, it has no negative valence in this study. To be sure, there are problematic forms of intolerance, but that need not mean that all forms of intolerance are problematic as such. In fact, there are various forms of intolerance, and we have been too quick to paint all points of view which do not privilege the symmetrical relationship with the Other with the same tarnished brush.

Regardless of whether tolerance and pluralism are worthy of the praise they so often receive in our current political and intellectual climate, they are by no means easily achieved. As individuals enmeshed in disparate, incompatible, and often mutually antagonistic worldviews are regularly brought into contact with each other in an increasingly globalized world, tolerance and pluralism are frequently invoked as the solution to the tensions which inevitably arise. It is imperative to think carefully regarding what degree and in what capacity entrenched and intractable worldviews, like those of the Abrahamic monotheisms, which offer a comprehensive vision of the universe and human existence, can reconcile themselves with these principles, if at all.

Monotheism

In recent years a variety of scholars have written about an agonism toward the Other that is inherent in the Abrahamic monotheisms.[15] Unfortunately, these scholars operate independently from one another and rarely refer to one another, much less make use of one another's work. In this section, I will bring together their disparate insights and synthesize them with each other and my own suggestions, in order to generate a more

expansive understanding of this agonism and the structure that underlies it.[16] I will use Martin Jaffee's article, "One God, One Revelation, One People: On the Symbolic Structure of Elective Monotheism,"[17] particularly his account of the "discursive structure" common to the Abrahamic or what he terms "elective-monotheisms,"[18] as a framework by which to incorporate and synthesize these reflections. This structure is an attempt to elucidate the agonistic logic which underlies many if not most sects and groups within Judaism, Christianity, and Islam from which the tension with the modern values of tolerance and pluralism emerges. To be sure, this is an ahistorical and essentialist model—whose purity probably few if any empirical iterations have fully embodied—but I bring it forward for the purpose of highlighting the fundamental tension between the modern values of tolerance and pluralism and the logic underlying monotheistic religions. This will provide a framework in which to explore the innovations of the thinkers of the religion of reason trajectory: Mendelssohn, Kant, and Cohen.

For the purposes of this work, I take as axiomatic Jaffee's claim that "Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are equally rich, historical embodiments of a single structure of discourse that underlies the historically developed symbol systems specific to each community."[19] That is, while the Abrahamic monotheisms—i.e., Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—have different symbolic systems and historical traditions, they share a common discursive structure, one whose metaphysical underpinnings and structural moments manifest an agonism toward the Other, or at least the otherness of the Other. This discursive structure and its metaphysical underpinnings follow a logic that is rooted in a tense dynamic between particularity and universality, wherein a particular community is imbued with universal significance, and as a result is brought into conflict with all other particular communities, which lack this universal significance. I term this logic 'scriptural universalism.'[20]

According to Jaffee the discursive structure shared by Abrahamic monotheisms consists of four schematic points or moments.[21] The first moment occurs when the universal and transcendent Creator God makes itself manifest to a particular human community, what Jaffee terms the "Recipient Community," in an act of revelation. Second, this particular community which has been chosen or elected by God, in turn, gives itself over in obedience to the Creator's love and will. The Creator's love is bestowed at the price of a collective endeavor which God entrusts to the community, and which the community willingly agrees to undertake. The third moment constitutes the 'lived time' of history, the gap between the original revelatory event and the community's successful completion of the task for which God unified the community in the first place. And finally,

there is the eschatological conclusion, when the community fulfills its mission, which brings about the "reconciliation of the human order with the divine love and will."[22]

In the moment of revelation, the universal God of creation becomes manifest to a particular community through an act of revelation. Though not discussed at length in Jaffee's essay, this is a significant moment for understanding the logic of scriptural universalism and its tension with the principles of pluralism and tolerance. Egyptologist and cultural historian Jan Assmann in particular has written extensively on the intolerant nature of revelation in monotheism. Assmann has famously characterized monotheistic religions as "counter-religions" (*Gegenreligionen*), in that simultaneous with their claims to truth, they reveal "a counterpart, that they oppose" (*ein Gegenüber, das sie bekämpfen*).[23] That is, monotheistic religions have "an emphatic concept of truth [*emphatischer Wahrheitsbegriff*]. They all rest on a distinction [*Unterscheidung*] between true and false religion, and proclaim on this basis a truth which is not compatible with other truths, but rather relegate all other traditional or concurring truths to the sphere of the false [*Bereich des Falschen*]."[24] Ultimately, Assmann claims that revelation is the source from which monotheistic religions draw this antagonistic energy.[25]

However, Assmann's insights leave some unanswered questions. What is the nature of this notion of 'truth' which is operative in revelation?[26] And why does the revelation of this truth in and of itself generate antagonistic energy? To be sure, the event of the universal God of creation becoming manifest in an act of self-revelation and giving information to a particular community would qualitatively distinguish and privilege this community above all others. But would this qualitative distinction, or election, by itself be sufficient to entail the violent antagonism of which Assmann speaks? Why would it not merely privilege the group in question? Why must it also entail hostility toward those who are outside the community? I mean to suggest that Assmann's account is not sufficiently foundational to understand the origins of this antagonism toward the Other. To understand this, we must go beyond the moments of the discursive structure shared by the Abrahamic monotheisms and approach the metaphysical foundation that underpins the monotheistic worldview as a whole.

The antagonistic energy that permeates revelation in the monotheistic worldview is ultimately rooted in a condition which is prior to revelation. This prior condition is, in fact, a metaphysical foundation, a conception of reality and human nature which anchors all the moments that comprise the discursive structure common to the Abrahamic monotheisms. It is this particular metaphysical conception of reality, this 'truth,' which is manifested in revelation but also makes revelation itself necessary, that is, requires

the formation of a particular monotheistic community which sets itself in opposition to all Others. This foundation is also what necessitates the community's historical mission, which will conclude in the eschatological fulfillment of this mission. It is important to extend beyond the researches of both Jaffee and Assmann in order to explore the metaphysical paradigm which both situates the discursive structure of elective monotheisms, and serves as the ultimate ground of their antagonistic intolerance toward the Other. This foundational aspect of the monotheistic *Weltanschauung* has been carefully explored by Moshe Halbertal and Avishai Margalit in their book *Idolatry*.[27]

As Halbertal and Margalit point out, the metaphysical paradigm operative in the monotheistic worldview is fundamentally teleological: God created the world and everything in it, including human beings, with an express purpose in mind. In order to understand God's purpose for human beings, however, it is important to bear in mind that the word 'purpose' itself is significantly ambiguous when it comes to human existence. On the one hand, there are *defined* purposes, which correlate roughly to the roles a person might play in life, which are specific in nature and more or less assessable in terms of success or failure. An example of a defined purpose might be 'to become a practicing attorney in the state of Arizona.' There are fairly clear criteria by which one can assess whether someone has succeeded in this regard. On the other hand, there are undefined purposes, which pertain to that which underlies all the specific roles that a person might play, i.e., the attribute of the human as such. *Undefined* purposes involve issues of lifestyle, such as 'to live a good life,' where what constitutes success and failure is harder to ascertain than with defined ones, in that the criteria appear to be more relative. These are much harder to assess as they generally involve judgments of value where the criteria are more personally or culturally specific.[28]

Abrahamic monotheisms are premised upon the belief that the ultimate undefined purpose—the underlying attribute of the human as such—which is considered by monotheistic religions to be unquestionably more significant than defined purposes, is actually metaphysically or ontologically defined. By means of revelation—the giving of holy texts filled with laws, doctrines, and commandments—monotheistic religions seek to provide an account of the definitive, paradigmatic way that human beings ought to live their lives. That is, revelation discloses that this ultimate undefined purpose is in fact defined, and that it is to be fulfilled through following specific laws, rituals, norms, doctrines, etc. Monotheistic religions view revelation as the event of God providing the members of the community in question with the means by which to discern what this underlying, metaphysical account of the human as such is—or to use our own

terms, the divinely ordained human *telos*—and more importantly, how to harmonize themselves with it. Those outside the community lack this vital knowledge, both of the specific nature of the undefined purpose which has been rendered defined, and how to go about realizing it.

While some antagonistic energy is generated in the distinction between the elected community and those outside of it as a result of revelation disclosing the universal human *telos,* i.e., that the ultimate undefined purpose is in fact defined and that the means of realizing it are quite specific, this energy grows more intense in the moment that follows revelation in the discursive structure of Abrahamic monotheisms. All human beings outside the elected community, i.e., those not privy to its revelation, lack access to what revelation discloses, namely, the prescribed beliefs, norms, laws, codes, etc., which render the undefined purpose determinate and defined. Thus, those outside of the elected community are now seen to be rooted in error, in a state of disharmony with the metaphysical order of the cosmos. The result of this is that the person living without revelation fails to live according to her own "dominant purpose," her own inherent *telos* as a human being.[29] While Halbertal and Margalit claim that all religions attempt to transform the ultimate undefined purpose into a defined one, the research of cultural historians such as Assmann and Jaffee suggests that this process carries a particularly antagonistic charge in monotheistic religions.

The antagonistic energy generated in revelation continues to foment in the transition from revelation to the next structural moment, the formation of the elected community by means of the mission entrusted to it by God. Bearing in mind the metaphysical doctrine of the universal human *telos* underlying the structural moments of monotheism, it is a mistake to think of the elected (monotheistic) community as either purely particularistic or purely universal. Literary critic Regina Schwartz highlights this ambiguity when she writes, "Monotheism is a myth that grounds particular identity in universal transcendence."[30] That is, the doctrine of the universal metaphysical *telos* of humanity has been disclosed to a particular community by the universal God in the form of revelation, and thus, only members of this specific community, as opposed to all others, can realize this *telos.* In scriptural universalism a dialectic of particularity and universality is in play whose importance cannot be overestimated.

Recent defenders of monotheism, such as Lenn Goodman,[31] Erich Zenger,[32] and Jürgen Werbick,[33] highlight the universality of the monotheistic God: The monotheistic God is the God of the universe and consequently of *all* human beings. However, they fail to take note of the important point which Jaffee makes: "Elective monotheism . . . is not primarily about God as he is in himself or in relationship to the created order of na-

ture. It is much more about God as he is in relationship to historical human communities—a relationship characterized by the opposition of love and hate."[34] To be sure, the transcendent God as the creator of the universe is the God of all human beings, and as such is a universal figure. However, in and of itself, this does not entail that the principle of equality characterizes God's relationships with humanity. In fact, the identity that this God demands the elected community constitute is not inclusive in its universality but rather agonistic in its particularity.[35] While the mission which has been entrusted to the community by God carries universal significance—as the very fate of the world may hang in the balance—there is by no means an inclusive attitude toward those outside the community.[36] The mission entrusted to the community consists in restoring the human world to the way God wants it to be, i.e., life according to the laws and statutes in the revealed texts which alone bring one into accord with the universal human *telos.* Those who do not recognize the holy canon and live by its teachings, therefore, are not simply out of sync with the metaphysical order of the cosmos (i.e., in error), but are failing to live according to God's will (i.e., in sin). Since Abrahamic monotheisms link the metaphysical conception of the human *telos* with God's will, as Margalit points out, for these religions "error and evil should not be distinguished."[37] In short, the Other, she who stands outside the elected community, is not only alienated from her own *telos* but is also an obstruction to God's plan. She is God's enemy, worthy of hatred.[38]

Now that the community has been "galvanized" by its reception of revelation, it engages in a "redemptive historical career, a struggle to make manifest throughout the human world the reality of the Creator's self-disclosure and to transform the human order in correspondence to the Creator's love and will."[39] However, in order to bring about this eschatological redemption, as Assmann's research in particular has shown, all other conceptions of the human *telos,* the divine, and the nature of existence must be radically negated. That is, other cultures and religions and their attempts to render the undefined purpose of human existence determinate must be shown to consist of falsehood and lies, and thus to be negated and opposed. As a result the Abrahamic monotheisms, which are predicated upon this radical distinction between true and false religion, are permeated with moral and political significance. Or in the words of Assmann, "Monotheism is in its core political theology."[40]

History, the third moment of the discursive structure of Abrahamic monotheisms, is the 'lived time' in which members of the community actually encounter Others. It is the time in which this conflict with the Other is carried out. As Jaffee explicates:

> History is the stage of the community's struggle to be worthy of its call. First, it struggles with its own internal resistance to the Creator's call, seeking to purge itself of flaws that it shares with humanity as a whole. This is the struggle to embody obedience and faith both individually and collectively. Second, but no less important, it struggles against the resistance to its mandate of the humanity beyond the community.[41]

This quote reveals that in the phase of history, the community's identity is constructed by the community defining itself against Others who stand both inside and outside of it. This struggle for identity has great importance for the Abrahamic-monotheistic worldview during the time in which the world remains unredeemed. It is this elected community alone that serves as the vital link between the human world and God, and thus, it is of the utmost importance that the community be worthy of its God-given task. Jaffee points out how the situation is made even more volatile because, "Within historical time, the Creator's presence and love are coterminous with the borders of the recipient community, nurturing it in its battle against the Other, the negation of the recipient community, and the enemy of the Creator."[42] In this passage, the word 'battle' can be a bit misleading, in that the mission of the elected community is to simultaneously preserve the purity of the divine message *against* the Other as well as to bring the message *to* the Other *for* the Other. However, 'battle' is ultimately appropriate, because according to the monotheistic worldview there will always be resistance to the message by the Other within history, and thus struggle with the Other in some form or other is inevitable.[43]

In order to understand the significance of the structural moment of history, the moment in which the actual mission or task of the elected community is carried out, the 'lived time' as it were, in which monotheistic communities encounter the Other, it is necessary to recapitulate the first three moments of the discursive structure of the Abrahamic monotheisms in terms of the dialectic of particularity and universality mentioned earlier. Monotheistic intolerance involves a tense and dynamic relationship between particularism and universalism. In revelation, the one true God of the universe, i.e., the *universal* God, reveals itself and a set of doctrines containing *universal* significance to a *particular* community. These doctrines contain universal significance in that they reveal the universal *telos* which is normative for all of humanity, and the particular ways in which human beings fulfill it. The implication of this act of revelation is that a particular community alone grasps, and thus can fulfill, the universal human *telos* ordained by the universal God. All other peoples and communities, as a result of their lack of access to this revealed knowledge, fail to live in accordance with this universal *telos,* and thus are estranged from the universal

God. That is, according to the Abrahamic monotheisms, a *particular* people is elected, and thus imbued with *universal* significance, through being entrusted with a task to bring to the rest of the world the knowledge of its *universal* significance that was revealed to it in its *particularity.* Until that happens, however, there is a tense relationship between those inside the elected community and those outside of it. Those outside the community are not simply those who need to receive the doctrine of revelation, but also those who oppose God by not living according to God's will.

The phase that Jaffee calls the "Historical Drama,"[44] namely, the struggle between the elected community and idolaters, reveals that the discursive structure of the elective monotheisms allows for a range of different modes of expressing their universally significant message. We know from history that Abrahamic monotheisms have embraced such modalities of promulgating their message as bearing witness, proselytizing, and forced conversion. And to be sure, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are internally multifaceted and incredibly diverse, and each of these religious traditions has gone through many different stages of development. With this in mind, it is helpful to think of these modalities as a range of options that monotheistic religions have open to them that are commensurable with their discursive structures. Thus, even if certain traditions have historically tended to favor specific modalities over others, there is no necessary connection between a particular tradition and a particular modality that must be assumed at the outset.

All three modalities evince intolerance toward the Other, in that they are all rooted in overcoming the otherness of the Other. Bearing witness, or serving as a 'light to the nations' by means of the conduct and way of life of the members of a community, is the least intrusive and confrontational of the modalities of promulgation. While there are many forms of proselytizing, the forms under discussion here are the more aggressive sorts, which are bound up with power imbalances such that there are clear financial and political benefits for converting. This tactic involves a subtle, albeit very real, violence against the otherness of the Other, in that it presents coercive incentives for conversion that are rooted in disproportionate power.[45] Forced conversion, which often takes place alongside conquest or conflict, is more explicitly violent toward the Other. Thus, while all three are strictly speaking 'intolerant' insofar as all of them involve a community that works in some fashion to break down the otherness of the Other, it is important to point out that the latter two modalities involve violent forms of intolerance, whereas the bearing-witness modality is non-violent.

Given that I am privileging the work of two Jews who lived in the Diaspora and were themselves victims of aggressive proselytizing by Christians,[46] it should not be surprising that the method of promulgation I

will champion here is that of bearing witness.[47] While Mendelssohn lived and wrote in the eighteenth century and Cohen in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, both were very much shaped by the so-called 'Emancipation of the Jews.' While this historical situation is obviously unique, it is also clear that the emancipation process reveals social and political processes, as well as philosophical and theological challenges, that apply more broadly. I want to be quite explicit, however, that by no means do I want to suggest that only Judaism has the capacity to bear witness, while Christianity and Islam rely on violent forms of promulgation. Such a claim is not only false, but it undermines my own argument. It is the wager of this book that the strategy laid out by the religion of reason trajectory of thinkers should be accessible to, or open to appropriation by, the other Abrahamic monotheisms.

However, before we get to philosophical projects of Mendelssohn, Kant, and Cohen, it is important to realize that whether violent or not, there is a very real intolerance in the discursive structure shared by the Abrahamic monotheisms. Thus, we need to return to the model laid out by Jaffee and in particular its final moment, the *eschaton.* Here, the intolerant foundations of the monotheistic worldview can be seen with utmost clarity. The struggle between the elected human community and all other human communities ends, and the gap between human beings and God is healed. However, this reconciliation between God and humanity means one of two things, neither of which is savory from a tolerant or pluralist perspective. Either the Other is incorporated into the elected community, throwing off her old, corrupt and idolatrous ways, converting to the true way of life, and serving the universal God of creation properly, or the Other is simply annihilated physically and spiritually.[48] Either way, the Other as such ceases to exist.

Hick and Habermas

John Hick and Jürgen Habermas, two preeminent thinkers regarding issues of intercultural and inter-religious discourse who nonetheless operate in significantly different philosophical idioms, both attempt to ameliorate the tension between Abrahamic monotheism and the principles of tolerance and pluralism. Whereas Hick attempts to provide a metaphysical account of religious pluralism, Habermas attempts to domesticate the violent and intolerant tendencies of monotheistic religions through recourse to his post-metaphysical account of communicative rationality and the epistemic processes of modernity. Despite the vast differences of approach between Hick and Habermas, both positions end up with remarkably similar results vis-à-vis the discursive structure shared by the elective

monotheisms. Neither the philosophical-theological approach of Hick nor the secular, discourse-oriented approach of Habermas can envision a solution to the problem of monotheistic intolerance without repudiating the discursive structure of the elective monotheisms. Simply put, the solutions proffered by Hick and Habermas require nothing less than that monotheistic religions be stripped of their discursive structure.

Despite the fact that Hick and Habermas fail to present solutions that speak to the Abrahamic monotheisms qua elective monotheisms, it is nevertheless extremely useful to explore their approaches. Not only are their respective positions highly influential for many subsequent approaches—religious and secular—to the issue of religious tolerance and/or pluralism, but more importantly, their thought best illuminates the vexed nature of the problem of monotheistic intolerance where they fail to address this issue adequately. Ultimately, despite their significant differences, both thinkers prioritize the symmetrical relationship with the Other such that one's own beliefs and practices cannot take priority, at least not in any straightforward sense, over the beliefs and practices (i.e., the otherness) of the Other. Given that both Hick and Habermas demand equal regard for the beliefs and practices of the Other, they categorically reject any sort of unilateral vision that marginalizes the Other and her otherness. In contrast, on a foundational level the monotheistic religions are inherently bound up with an ambiguity often verging on agonism toward the Other herself, and which maintains a hostility (whether implicit or explicit) toward the otherness of the Other. As a result of this shared stress on symmetrical relations between the self and the Other, neither Hick nor Habermas is able to provide a framework in which the moments of the discursive structure of the elective monotheism can be sustained. This disconnect with the monotheistic worldview is illustrative of a certain foundational incommensurability between the modern principles of tolerance and pluralism and the discursive structure of the elective monotheisms.

Hick, who writes as a theologian within the Christian tradition as well as a philosopher of religion, thematizes the epistemic issues surrounding religious pluralism, providing a framework in which all religions are seen as possessing (at least potentially) equal value. Hick's project largely consists in working out a transcendental metaphysical scheme that seeks to elucidate the conditions under which religious diversity and equality between religious traditions regarding access to salvation and transcendence become plausible without impugning the realism of religious claims, at least not entirely, in the process.[49] That is, Hick attempts to provide the conditions for the intelligibility of religious diversity without reducing it to mere psychological projection or other naturalistic reductions. A main impetus for Hick's work is to undermine the agonism of competing reli-

gious claims for truth, including the agonism in the heart of the elective monotheisms. My concern is not with the philosophical tenability of Hick's attempt to provide an account of the conditions for the intelligibility of religious diversity without reductionism, a task which has already garnered a great deal of attention, much of it critical.[50] Rather, my concern lies with the relationship of Hick's thought to the discursive structure shared by the Abrahamic monotheisms.

Hick is clearly concerned with the agonistic tendency of the elective monotheistic religions, and indeed, his theology vigorously attempts to counteract the tendency of monotheistic religions to regard the beliefs, actions, and practices of the Other as inferior to their own. Without sacrificing the monotheistic idea that God deserves primary recognition,[51] Hick struggles to show how the otherness of the Other is also a form of recognition of God, and indeed an equally valid one. However, there are two ways Hick can pursue this agenda. As a Christian theologian he can work within the discursive structure of the elective monotheisms, or he can make a case that Christianity no longer needs this framework. Hick chooses the latter. My task here is not to impugn this choice on philosophical grounds but merely to show the implications of such a choice.

Hick, the philosopher *and* Christian, is willing to forsake the structural moments of election, history/historical mission, and *eschaton*—in addition to transfiguring revelation beyond recognition—for the sake of a symmetrical relationship with the Other. In order to do justice to the veridical capacities of the religious traditions of the Other and the experiences to which they attest, Hick devises his 'pluralist hypothesis.' According to this hypothesis God, or rather "The Eternal One"[52]—the pluralistic expression for the divine that Hick prefers—operates roughly along the lines of the Kantian categories of *Noumenon* and *Phenomenon*. That is, Hick distinguishes between the Eternal One as it exists in-itself and as it exists for-us. Thus, while the Eternal One (in-itself) genuinely exists, the particular shape or "the concrete form" in which the Eternal One (for-us) manifests itself to human consciousness, is shaped and determined "by cultural factors." Therefore, Hick claims, "different human awarenesses of the Eternal One represent different culturally conditioned perceptions of the same infinite divine reality."[53] This metaphysical 'hypothesis' about the divine and human perception of it, allows Hick to make the counter-intuitive claim that "Yahweh and Shiva are not rival gods, or rival claimants to be the one and only God, but rather two different concrete historical *personae* in terms of which the ultimate divine Reality is present and responded to by different large historical communities within different strands of the human story."[54]

Hick's philosophy of religious pluralism is predicated upon a notion

of religion and religiosity which eschews notions of revelation that privilege intellectual and doctrinal content, preferring more experiential ones instead. Rather than the divine disclosing itself to one 'elected' community and providing it with laws, norms, and doctrines necessary for living in accordance with the universal human *telos,* which engenders a world-historical mission, Hick argues that contact with the divine is much more universal. The divine manifests itself in religious experience, which has a transformative effect on human beings, regardless of the religio-cultural tradition through which this contact is mediated. Hick posits, "For our human commerce with God does not consist only or even mainly in our holding certain beliefs, but above all in experiencing the reality of God as the lord in whose presence one is."[55] While there are numerous traditions which differ widely regarding their conceptions of the divine and even differ about what this experience of the divine calls us as human beings to do, Hick claims that there is an underlying continuity across religions and religious experience. This continuity or constant that Hick finds "manifestly taking place—and taking place, so far as human observation can tell, to much the same extent" across all the major extant religious traditions—is "the transformation of human existence from self-centeredness to Reality-centeredness."[56] As a result, different religious traditions are merely "alternative soteriological 'spaces,'" with no tradition possessing any inherent superiority to any other.[57]

The religious pluralism of Hick's framework, which results not only in the inability to find criteria to assess a particular religion but also in the inappropriateness of any endeavor to find such criteria, has ramifications that transcend the epistemological/existential status of the divine vis-à-vis the human. Hick's thought has significant implications for what Halbertal and Margalit have termed the 'undefined purpose' of the human being, which becomes the divinely ordained human *telos* in monotheistic religions. Hick is attempting to undercut monotheistic intolerance at its root by removing the agonistic elements from the divinely ordained human *telos.* To briefly review, Halbertal and Margalit argue that all religions attempt to render the undefined purpose of the human fixed and determinate through prescribed laws, beliefs, mores, and codes.[58] And I have extended this point by claiming that cultural historians like Jaffee and Assmann have shown that the rendering of the undefined purpose defined and determinate in Abrahamic monotheistic religions is particularly antagonistic toward rival understandings of the human *telos,* given that these religions understand that their laws, beliefs, mores, and codes were disclosed by the universal God to a particular community. As a result, monotheistic religions tend to view the claims of other religions as not merely error, but as that which leads one away from God, i.e., as sin. Hick tries to circumvent this agonism

by claiming that such an attitude toward the religion of the Other is unwarranted and erroneous. His argument rests on the premise that these different, apparently conflicting conceptions of the universal human *telos* are in fact not in competition with each other, but are rather equally viable alternatives for fostering "the transition from self-centeredness to Reality-Centeredness."[59] Hick's position implies that the doctrines of all religions (or at least what he will often vaguely refer to as all 'great religions') foster the fulfillment of a common universal human *telos,* which is certainly a claim that would be quite precarious to bear out through empirical and comparative research across traditions. As Keith Ward points out, Hick attempts to steer the reader away from such concerns about particularity through talk about religion and transcendence in only the vaguest and most abstract terms.[60]

While Hick argues that he has good theological grounds for his pluralist hypothesis, given that all religious traditions account for the infinite or mysterious nature of God/the divine, which defies our finite attempts to grasp and understand it,[61] such a position does great violence to the discursive structure shared by the elective monotheisms. The pluralist hypothesis eradicates the tense dynamic between universality and particularity which is at the heart of scriptural universalism, the logic by which the structural moments of revelation, election, history/historical mission, and *eschaton* unfold. By rendering revelation universal, election and the world-historic mission become not only unnecessary but wrongheaded, and the notion of the *eschaton* becomes mere mythology. According to Hick, Christians "can revere Christ as the one through whom we have found salvation, without having to deny other points of reported saving contact between God and man. We can recommend the way of Christian faith without having to discommend other ways of faith."[62] It is imperative to notice that while ostensibly operating out of an explicitly Christian, and therefore monotheistic framework, Hick has undermined or transfigured every moment constitutive of the basic structure shared by the Abrahamic monotheisms. Hick is able to reconcile Christianity with pluralism only by entirely shedding the discursive structure of the elective monotheisms, a move which he clearly does not view as problematic. Nevertheless, it should hardly be any surprise that Hick has raised the ire of many conservative Christian theologians, including Pope Benedict XVI, who are not as willing to part with the foundations and structure of the monotheistic worldview.[63]

Habermas, operating in a very different tradition and philosophical idiom from Hick, works to rehabilitate the notion of rationality for contemporary thought after the attacks leveled at it by postmodernism. By grounding rationality in language—communicative rationality and linguistic competence—Habermas argues against notions of incommensu-

rable worldviews and language games in endless conflict. Rather, he seeks to provide a social theory in which disputes can be worked out through rational discussion, through the reaching of non-coerced consensuses, and where a decentering of the self takes place so that that it can take into account the Other's point of view. Habermas brings this set of concerns to the problem of monotheistic intolerance, particularly in constitutional democracies, in order to work out the necessary conditions for religious tolerance and pluralism.

Habermas's social theory grounds reason in the rationality inherent in the processes of human communication, which he terms 'communicative rationality.' Communicative rationality develops teleologically toward a rationalizing of the lifeworld, toward a society driven more and more by rationally achieved consensus, by mutual understanding—agreement based on reasons—rather than various forms of coercion or unquestioned authority. However, this process of the teleological development of communicative rationality and its hold on human beings and society is a historical-developmental one. This process develops toward forms of society premised around achieving a consensus freely reached by all the members of society who participate equally in this process of mutual understanding.[64] Reasons must be given, and the participants must be free from coercion in their acceptance or rejection of these reasons. As Habermas puts it, "Every consensus rests on an intersubjective recognition of criticizable validity claims." That is, consensuses depend on the productive power of argumentation, of the giving of reasons, and of "*mutual criticism*."[65] The consensus-reaching force of argumentation, of reason-giving, is not limited to people within a culture, but can, with great care and dedication, take place across cultures, fostering an international, inter-cultural community.[66]

Habermas propounds a "procedural notion of rationality,"[67] premised on the belief that there is the possibility for genuine dialogue across traditions and 'language games,' and that a mutually agreed upon 'truth' or understanding can be reached between very different parties. Habermas's social-political philosophy is predicated upon processes through which exclusionary traditions and narratives give way to the public sphere where everyone can participate in shaping the society. The public sphere is supposed to be a neutral territory where traditions and their hierarchies are systematically bracketed out, in order that, in the words of one critic, "all participants agree on *how* argumentation is to take place."[68]

Habermas's philosophical position is mostly in line with tolerance, albeit configured as tolerance-as-inclusion, whereby self and Other reach common ground and consensuses about such issues as community-formation by means of the giving of reasons and argument, in processes which are oriented by the rationality inherent in language. And yet, Habermas

nevertheless maintains a complex relationship with pluralism. On the one hand, Habermas critiques the fundamental assumptions of pluralism for precluding the possibility of reaching any sort of consensus on an *a priori* basis, positing as it does an implicit metaphysical fissure between the self and Other.[69] On the other hand, despite Habermas's disputes with pluralists such as Jean-François Lyotard, he insists that there are occasions when this principle is essential. When it comes to views of the lifeworld as a whole, what he terms 'metaphysics,' Habermas is convinced that there is no possibility for rational consensus, and thus the adoption of the value of pluralism is necessary.[70] As a result, questions such as whether there is a divinely ordained human *telos* and what the nature of this *telos* might be, if it exists, are beyond the pale of rational discussion, without hope of reaching a consensus. In such instances, where discussion and deliberation are ruled out, tolerance and pluralism are essential. Thus matters of ultimate concern, i.e., those matters which are most important to Abrahamic monotheisms, Habermas insists must be bracketed and placed beyond the pale of public discourse. For this reason, Habermas has been widely critiqued as being insensitive to religious concerns.

While Habermas's social theory maintains a complex relationship with tolerance and pluralism, to the degree that these principles exist in his thought, they are grounded upon his belief in the possibility of a "non-coercively unifying, consensus-building force of a discourse in which the participants overcome their at first subjectively biased views in favor of a rationally motivated agreement."[71] Tolerance and pluralism are essential to the degree that traditions and their narratives, religious or otherwise, continue to play essential roles in the lives of human beings, particularly in regards to conceptions of the good, conceptions which the public sphere must exclude and which procedural philosophy cannot articulate.[72]

In the last few decades, Habermas has begun to take religion more seriously in his writings and thought, even acknowledging religion as an important aspect of contemporary existence. It can provide consolation in the face of the existential crises that regularly beset human beings and for which philosophy, now deprived of any metaphysical claims, can no longer serve as a surrogate.[73] In the wake of 11 September 2001, Habermas has been especially concerned with the possibility of religious tolerance within the context of liberal constitutional democracies.[74] The conditions for the possibility of religious tolerance are intimately bound up with what Habermas terms "the epistemic conditions of modernity," especially differentiation, reflexivity, and decentration.[75] Differentiation is the separating out of three distinct spheres of value, namely science, morality, and art, which are all fused together in traditional religious-metaphysical worldviews. With this separation, each sphere now develops freely according to

its own inner logic, and each operates with its own special sort of validity claim (truth, rightness, and truthfulness). Reflexivity is the capacity to investigate validity claims without the coercion or constraints of dogmatism. And finally, decentration is a process of becoming less chauvinistic or self-centered in focus, by moving toward more universalistic and inclusivistic points of view. These conditions make possible a particular sort of self-critical posture in contemporary forms of religion, or what Habermas calls "modern faith." This posture allows these forms of religion to "stabilize the inclusive attitude that it assumes within a universe of discourse *delimited* by secular knowledge and *shared* with other religions."[76] In short, Habermas can only conceive of religions existing as productive members of modern, pluralist democratic societies if they severely curtail their prior exclusivist claims and dramatically revise their attitudes toward the Other. Habermas's so-called 'modern faiths' may claim descent from monotheistic traditions, but they no longer share the discursive structure of Abrahamic monotheisms—as this structure is incompatible with Habermas's epistemological conditions of modernity.

To see the degree to which these modern faiths are truncated and desiccated forms of elective monotheisms, one need only look to the 'religious-metaphysical worldview,' which Habermas largely equates with the pre-modern monotheisms.[77] In Habermas's paradigm of the evolution of communicative rationality, the religious-metaphysical worldview is an important midpoint between myth and modernity. While these monotheistic religions characterize a systematic advance over myth, for Habermas, they are deficient in all three of the epistemological conditions of modernity, in that their ultimate principles are not exposed to doubt or criticism,[78] they lack differentiation in regard to validity realms, and they are 'centered' vis-à-vis the Other as a result of being "immunized against dissonant experiences."[79] For our purposes, what is important is that they are utterly incommensurable with any sort of symmetrical relationship with the Other—the foundation of tolerance and pluralism—because, to use the language of our previous discussion of monotheism, they operate according to the logic of scriptural universalism.[80]

According to the overarching teleological scheme of Habermas's social thought, the historical stage of the 'religious-metaphysical worldview' is supposed to be sublated (*aufgehoben,* in a non-metaphysical sense) in modernity in a process that Habermas refers to as the "linguistification of the sacred." By this phrase Habermas means "the transfer of cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization from sacred foundations over to linguistic communication and action oriented to mutual understanding."[81] In modernity, religions are supposed to lose their traditional power: "In modern societies these [traditional and religious] forms of life . . . have been

subordinated to the universalism of law and morality."[82] The subordination of religion is possible, at least in part, because of what Habermas sees as the epoch-making collapse of metaphysics. The public, universal claims of religion are predicated upon theology, which is a metaphysical discourse that Habermas claims can no longer remain valid in this post-metaphysical era. As a result, religion is removed from the public sphere and limited to the private realm, given that it is rationally indefeasible in this post-metaphysical age.[83] However, given that the 'religious-metaphysical worldview' is dramatically reasserting itself against the demands of secular modernity, rather than quietly undergoing sublation, the tenability of Habermas's account is open to question. Obviously the accuracy of its descriptive level must now be seen as problematic. However, if the teleological movement he posits is coming undone, then one has very good reason to question the normative dimension of Habermas's thought at least regarding the domestication of religious authority, especially given that the conditions he considers to be necessary for a functional constitutional democratic society are being openly rejected by growing numbers of monotheists in such democratic societies. Since the descriptive level of Habermas's teleological account of societal development is bound up with the normative level of his argument, if the former fails so too the latter.[84]

In regard to the tension and hostility between monotheism and tolerance, neither the solution proffered by Hick nor by Habermas is suitable. Both thinkers require that Abrahamic-monotheistic religions denude themselves of their discursive structure. Yet without this structure, they are no longer Abrahamic monotheisms. Thus, their solution to monotheistic intolerance—to the agonism toward the Other in the heart of the monotheistic worldview—is to treat as valid religions that are monotheistic in name only, but whose content is something else.

Habermas, who explores the fundamentalist mindset in his recent writings, inadvertently provides us with a key for understanding why his and Hick's solutions were bound to be unsatisfactory or at least irrelevant to our current crisis. According to Habermas, fundamentalist movements arise in modernity, alongside modern forms of faith. In the face of the epistemic conditions of modernity, various forms of fundamentalism (of course, our concern is with monotheistic ones) attempt to reclaim the all-encompassing power of the religious-metaphysical worldview by simply ignoring those "modern conditions" whereby "an exclusive claim to truth by one faith can no longer be naively maintained."[85] As a result of its insufficient rigor, Habermas finds fundamentalism to constitute a "false answer" to the "epistemological situation" of the present, which calls for reflexivity and tolerance above all else.[86] That is, Habermas critiques the fundamentalist movements for their failure to embrace the linguistic-rational

changes instituted with modernity, which subsequently results in their inability to recognize the value of the principles of tolerance and pluralism. Habermas simply accepts these characteristically modern principles as valid. However, if examined, the origin of these principles reveal a complex and problematic relationship with monotheism that renders their rejection by fundamentalists more complex.

The modern principle of tolerance emerges slowly in Western Europe out of the context of a series of brutal religious wars and persecutions following the Reformation.[87] The violence which emerged, in no small part because of the agonistic, often violent disposition of Abrahamic monotheisms (in this case, sects of Christianity) toward the Other, is therefore the explicit backdrop in the two most foundational accounts of tolerance in the Western philosophical tradition, those of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Locke. Without wishing to digress too far into the history of the principle of tolerance, it will nevertheless be quite helpful to briefly explore Rousseau and Locke's respective accounts of tolerance—accounts from which the contemporary principles of tolerance and pluralism derive in some form or another—in order to highlight the tendency of modern thought to explicitly reject the discursive structure of Abrahamic monotheisms.

In book 4, chapter 8 of *On the Social Contract,*[88] Rousseau elucidates his account of religious tolerance. Rousseau, long before Assmann, recognizes the political implications of the monotheistic worldview. With astonishing insight into the logic of the monotheistic worldview, he states, "Those who distinguish between civil and theological intolerance are mistaken, in my opinion. The two intolerances are inseparable. It is impossible to live in peace with people one believes to be damned; to love them would be to hate God who punishes them; one must absolutely bring them back [to the fold] or torment them."[89] In response to this difficulty, Rousseau turns the traditional paradigm, where theology dictates politics, on its head, such that now politics determines theology. Rousseau drains the monotheistic worldview of all antagonistic energy with the following axiom. "Everything which destroys social unity is worthless. All institutions which put man in contradiction with himself are worthless."[90] Any theological endorsement of religious intolerance, whatever its theological merit, is unacceptable for Rousseau because it is politically problematic. Since theology has been subordinated to politics, religious truth is no longer sufficient grounds for an agonistic relationship with the Other. Thus, Rousseau states, "whoever dares to say, *no Salvation outside the Church,* has to be driven out the State."[91] Theological intolerance, once seen as a virtue,[92] is now transformed into a political vice, as being 'unsociable,' and thus worthy of punishment. In such an environment, the discursive structure of Abrahamic monotheisms has not been refuted on rational grounds but quite literally rendered illegal.

Locke, the other foundational thinker of religious tolerance in the Enlightenment, develops his account of tolerance most thoroughly in "A Letter Concerning Toleration."[93] Whereas Rousseau brings about tolerance through subordinating theology to politics, Locke prefers to make subtle but nonetheless significant innovations in the actual discursive structure shared by monotheisms. That is, Locke inserts two profound changes into the foundational structure of elective monotheism, thus altering its basic logic. Locke introduces a split between the civil and religious spheres, and enacts a separation between the individual and the collective. These changes bring about tremendous ramifications regarding the notion of toleration.[94] These divisions, which are heterogeneous to the monotheistic worldview, enable Locke to break the iron grip of religious intolerance and violence.

Whereas Rousseau continues to maintain a state religion, albeit an extremely thin one (in the hopes of minimizing conflict), Locke completely fissures the spheres of government and religion.[95] Early in "A Letter Concerning Toleration," Locke states, "I esteem it above all things necessary to distinguish exactly the business of civil government from that of religion, and to settle the just bounds that lie between the one and the other."[96] In the discursive structure of the worldview of elective monotheisms, the boundary between the individual and the community as well as between the public and the private is quite blurry. Locke, however, now fortifies these divisions and makes them foundational in modern, liberal society. The government of a nation is concerned with the civil interest, i.e., the physical and material interest, of its people and nothing more. The religious sphere is exclusively limited to the "care of souls," which requires only "the inward and full persuasion of the mind."[97] As a result, government and religion are neatly cordoned off from one another. By means of this fissure between civil and religious society, Locke drains the intolerance inherent in monotheistic religions of political force. Locke seeks to achieve tolerance by depriving religious intolerance and disapproval of all physical, economic, and political power, because the realm of this intolerance is limited to principles which can only be legitimately disseminated through non-coercive persuasion. Government is likewise to have no say in the realm of religion, thus limiting its reach solely to the sphere of civil society. The government, now denuded of any religious affiliation, is to embrace strict neutrality regarding the religious lives of its citizens or subjects, and religion in turn is made apolitical.[98]

From its inception with Rousseau and Locke, it is striking that the modern notion of tolerance—from which the contemporary principles of tolerance and pluralism derive—is antithetical to, or at least in significant tension with, the discursive structure of the Abrahamic monotheisms. Neither foundational account of tolerance is willing to deal with the dis-

cursive structure of the Abrahamic monotheistic worldview on its own terms. While I do not wish to delve into questions of the ways in which, and the extent to which, Hick or Habermas is indebted to Rousseau or Locke, it is nevertheless instructive to see that the modern principles of tolerance and pluralism only emerged by means of their rejection of the discursive structure of Abrahamic monotheisms. I by no means wish to suggest that this is the *only* way to secure the conditions for tolerance and pluralism, but only that this is how these principles have been primarily secured in modernity.

While Habermas is certainly correct to critique fundamentalist movements for their shortcomings regarding communicative rationality, he nevertheless misses the larger point to which these movements, at least in part, seem to be responding. Since tolerance and pluralism are fundamentally modern values emerging with the Enlightenment—values which begin only where the discursive structure of Abrahamic monotheisms has been repudiated—solutions such as those of Hick and Habermas, which trade heavily on these principles, force religions *not* rooted in the values of the Enlightenment to face a terrible dilemma. Either the religious person can accept the principles of tolerance and/or pluralism which are incompatible with her religious tradition as it understands itself, but which the philosophy of religious pluralism or the epistemological conditions of modernity warrant; or the religious person can affirm a robust account of her religion, i.e., an account which preserves the discursive structure intact. There is no option to have both a robust account of faith and the acceptance of tolerance and/or pluralism. The thinkers of the religion of reason trajectory, i.e., Moses Mendelssohn, Immanuel Kant, and Hermann Cohen, however, propose an alternate approach to the problem of monotheistic intolerance, wherein the discursive structure shared by the Abrahamic monotheisms is not rejected but rather reconfigured to accord with tolerance and/or rigorous ethical responsibility for the Other. Notions such as election and the asymmetry of the monotheistic worldview are not rejected *tout court,* but rather are retrieved in Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment idioms. This occurs in such a way, in the philosophies of these thinkers, that the discursive structure of the monotheistic worldview and Enlightenment thinking are brought into contact with one another and mutually transformed. As a result, these thinkers avoid the dilemma plaguing contemporary thought on monotheistic intolerance.