



Fig. 1—If the rock-bed and the river are constitute a disordered system, the cross-pressure of the rock and the water generates a pattern of *sound* the belongs to neither. If we conceive *work* as the equivalent of this sound in the human realm, then we would *locate* the aspect of *work* that has to do with *meaning (style)* between the *ego* and the *self*.

Numbers are held. Symbols hold. Calculations are made. Groups are distributive/share. Questions on how numbers and groups can form active compounds does *not* depend on mathematical abstraction. What we will discuss here is when the relation between *numbers* and *groups* simply are active, and when they work (and keep working). This alternation between work and alertness of it, is kept in the alternation between workdays and the Shabbat: 6 days and 1. In the Jewish prayer—standing prayer, or *Amidah*—there are 7 blessings for Shabbat, and 19 blessings for workdays.

Because the language used for the standing prayer is Hebrew, and Hebrew script (like Arabic writing) is used to *both count and say*—the signs used for writing are *both letters and numbers*—they constitute the intersection between *thought* and *extension*: ideas and steps. This relation is by no means given (as Spinoza clearly states). It can be laborious. And it can be metaphysical. In the *Amidah* it is laborious during the week. During the Shabbat it is metaphysical. In both cases it has a “tooth” in that it requires/features a kind of exertion: a kind of *work* and the *alertness* to it.

Metaphysical is here used in the sense of alertness to cause and its articulation: that is, beyond being mindful of work, the memory of it. *Tracking* work during weekdays. *Trailing* it during the Shabbat. In effect, the alternation between weekdays and the Shabbat enacts and conceives work into the world of *cause*: which it is why—to a praying Jew—praying is something *s/he holds* and *is held by*: it is a natural activity, like sound of a brook against the bedrock. It holds and is

held: if the flow of water and the piling bedrock are *spontaneous*, the sound yields a *pattern*. Disordered cross-pressure yielding a pattern.

In this conception, the *Amidah* is neither mystical nor national. It is metaphysical. Or, dedicated to the reception of human work into the world of cause. In the nationalist framework this awareness is weakened ([Hannah Arendt](#)): from the lack of intensity, it becomes expansive. In the mystical framework it is illusory: in the sense that it features a seamless Platonic system that is a world unto itself, and contains its own reality. In the [metaphysical conception](#) of the *Amidah*, the ritual framework of its performance—in structure and in act conjointly—it is *fictional*: it can and will be marked by reality.

Here, Jerusalem and the holy land is not only tied to its Middle Eastern location; but to *cities* generally, the land around them and to the operational structure of Jewish life. Though marginal as of today, this position on Judaism has been known as [Diasporism](#) and was a counterpoint to Zionism. The protagonists of Diasporism ranged from [Hasidism](#) to Jewish Socialism (the [International Jewish Working Bund](#)). Religious nationalism is a comparatively new thing. And secular nationalism rose with Theodor Herzl. The religious and secular nationalism has always been an unstable compound.

However, there is not reason why metaphysical Judaism—explored here—should not apply to present day Israel (as anywhere else in the world). From a Jewish vantage point it would be a blessing to the

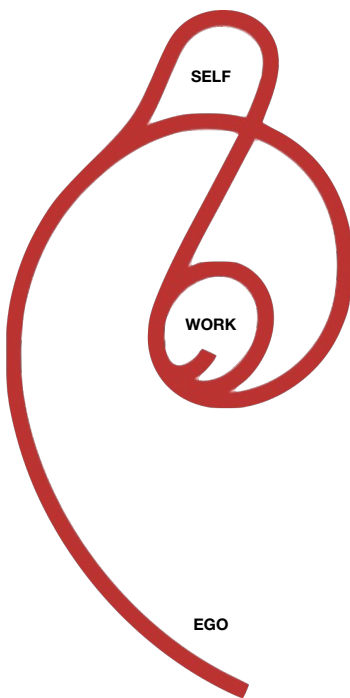


Fig. 2—work as a semiotic exchange between ego and self. Exchange within/beyond the sign.

earth. From an antisemitic vantage point a threat. Without due consideration of this context, it would be meaningless to embark on the present exercise, which is to analyse the structure and operation of the Amidah, as a design for the *immersion of human work* (with its creative capacity to form/shape) *into the world of cause...* Let us ask... is this Jewish strand unique to Judaism?

Bringing the concerns with *work* to the core of Judaism is consistent with its historical connection to both socialism, capitalism and nationalism: to focus on the three forms of political regime as E. Hobsbawm in [The age of extremes: the short twentieth century 1914-1991](#). The three share that they depart from *political* definitions of work (though the definitions differ): their relation to work in Judaism is paradoxical—to put it mildly—since the premise and end of Judaism is the *emancipation* of work. The liberation of work from slavery, and the freedom at work, is its *raison d'être*.

This is *how* and *why* it exists. The *Amidah* brings us to *what* it is that it *does*. The *Amidah* for the Shabbat contains three introductory blessings—or, [3 gates](#)—that it shares with the *Amidah* for weekdays. In addition to that, it contains 4 blessings: one of which is unique to the Shabbat. Here, the *Amidah* for week-days contains 4 X 4 blessings (which summed with the 3 gates gives 19). The grouping of the blessings is a key to what they do, and what can be claimed from them in regard of *work*. In the metaphysical understanding the *groups* faithfully follows the order of the *count*.

That is, we do *not* categorise them here in a different order than in which they appear in the *Amidah* (which other ways of grouping the blessing often do). In the consecutive groups of 4, the blessings alternate two by two, between the Human and the Divine vantage point: a secularly minded person could read it as communicative exchange between the *ego* and the *self*. With the result that there is an evolving exchange going on, with a beginning and an end: if we count the full round back and forth, there are two large exchanges (and within it, four turns in the exchange).

A In the first group of 2 X 2 the two initial blessings (blessings 1 and 2) feature a Human *vantage point*: a prayer for two related/similar matters... *discernment* and *repentance*. In blessings 3 and 4 we move to a Divine vantage point: the prayer asks for *pardon* and *salvation*. In the next 2 X 2 group, the first two blessings (5 and 6) depart from the Divine vantage point and ask for *health* and *seasonal* stability. The land. Then, in blessings 7 and 8, the vantage point is Human: one for the *gathering* of Jewish people, the next for *righteousness* and justice. These are *urban* blessings.

B In the third 2 X 2 group, the two first blessings (9 and 10) stay with the Human vantage point and asks for the obliteration of destructive *arrogance*, and then for the protection of the *righteous*. The next two blessings (11 and 12) are for the *building* of Jerusalem (*above*) and the *sprouting* of salvation: this is the province of the Divine vantage point. Then, in the next 2 X 2 group, the Divine vantage point remains: it asks for prayers to be *listened* to, and the divine *presence* (13 & 14). Then it shifts and concludes with the Human perspective: thanks *giving* & *peace* (15 & 16).

In the two paragraphs above, there are 2 full rounds of exchanges A and B—moving from the Human to the Divine vantage point and back (each full exchange contain 8 blessings, hence 16 in all). When saying the *Amidah* one takes 3 steps back along with a pitch, then come the 3 initial

blessing that are the same for the *Shabbat*, and after that the 16 blessings. Saying the prayer while following the steps of the exchange, manifests work at a different level than what is usual. It is a *semiotic labour of exchange* achieved by alternating between Human and Divine vantage points: a movement back and forth—or, up and down Jacob's ladder—which is not there during the *Shabbat*. It contemplates the weekday work.

Taking in human labour, that occurs in the *Amidah* as a 'semiotic machine', is an alternative to letting it go to waste: work is given to memory. That is, the bridge between the problem and its solution. With the memory of work the problem will not be discarded once the solution has

Exchange C [3 gates]	Exchange A	I—2 X 2	Human Vantage point (HVP)	1. <i>discernment</i>	SAME
				2. <i>repentance</i>	SIMILAR
			Divine Vantage point (DVP)	3. <i>pardon</i>	DIFFERENT
				4. <i>salvation</i>	OTHER
		II—2 X 2	DVP	5. <i>health</i>	SAME
				6. <i>seasons</i>	SIMILAR
			HVP	7. <i>gathering</i>	DIFFERENT
				8. <i>justice</i>	OTHER
	Exchange B	III—2 X 2	HVP	9. <i>against arrogance</i>	SAME
				10. <i>for protection</i>	SIMILAR
			DVP	11. <i>the city of cities</i>	DIFFERENT
				12. <i>sprouting salvation</i>	OTHER
		IIII—2 X 2	DVP	13. <i>hearing prayers</i>	SAME
				14. <i>Divine presence</i>	SIMILAR
			HVP	15. <i>thanks-giving</i>	DIFFERENT
				16. <i>peace</i>	OTHER

Fig. 3—The Amidah (standing prayer) for weekdays. The term 'vantage point' is used instead of 'viewpoint' in order to avoid subjectivation—and its public/private entanglements—and instead articulate *interests* of different kinds: here, the interests of the ego and of the self (if we accept that Human Being vs. God has a modern secular correlate in the relation between the Ego and the Self).

been *arrived* at. Instead there will be a knowledge of solutions that is *mindful* of their problems.