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Introduction

The paradigm of a "new class" originated in socialist Eastern Europe among dissidents and other regime critics as a way to describe the ensconced stratum of managers, technocrats, and ideologues who controlled the levers of power. The rhetorical irony of the phrase depended on the implied contrast with an "old class" as well as the good old class theory of the orthodox Marxism that once served as the established dogma of half the world. The history of class struggle, which had been history altogether, had culminated in the victory of a proletarian class that in turn had ushered in—or was well on its way to ushering in—a classless society. Or so the grand narrative went. To talk of a "new class," then, conjured up the unquestionable epistemology of class analysis, while simultaneously challenging the notional outcome: instead of the end of the state and classlessness, one was stuck with police states and a new class that, while eminently cooler than the Bolsheviks of yore, still exercised a dictatorship (of the not-proletariat) while skimming off the benefits of unequal power. The phrase turned Marxism against Marxism during those decades when the fall of the Berlin Wall was not even imaginable.

Migrating across the Atlantic, the term took on a new meaning in the last third of the twentieth century as a designator of the rise of a new post-industrial professional class, the cohort of the student movement after 1968 on its trajectory into social, cultural, and political power. At stake was the gradual displacement (if not disappearance) of the old markers of class distinction and the alternative privileging of sets of linguistic and intellectual capacities, combined with the assumption that greater intelligence implied a *de facto* natural claim on greater power: meritocracy means that the smarter should rule. Yet this trope just reiterated, in a new context, the problem of intellectuals and power, a curious echoing of East European rhetoric. As the best and brightest claimed power in order to rule better and with greater radiance, their critics came to dub them a "new class" in order to draw attention to their sanctimonious aspirations to pursue their own interests by remaking society in their own image. Paradoxically, the conservative critique of the new class could make the "Marxist" move of pointing out how universalist claims masked particularist interests. What ensued was a decades-long conflict between, on the one hand, advocates of more enlightened and ever more expansive administration of society, and, on the other, proponents of reduced state oversight, defenders of society against the state, and the deregulated market against the long reach of political power. The political wrangling of our current

is concretely bound to one's place in the social order—or to the vision of a new order. There is always the task of reorganizing one's self internally but this is part of the ritual of life (like sleep) and one should make as little noise about it as possible. All talk about inwardness is suspicious.

I hate Christianity; the Jew by retreating into his Jewishness continues the farce and plays her game. As long as there is a Christian world the Jew is not innocent in his religion. And the Torah on our doors [= the mezuzah] is a curse upon our children like in the time of the Pharaoh.¹⁰ The "sacrifice" is not to God but to the Moloch. Only in simplicity is their blessedness but today simplicity is self-deception we must be scheming and conspiring; we must be complicated—not in theological dialectics—but in revolutionary action. I am just a stupid woman, I can't make a revolution; but we must at least plant the seeds.

Write to me dear one how you are + you must be cheerful even "alone in Jerusalem"; it is not a question of "feeling" but of "service" cheerfulness should be like prayer, fast and feast.

Mother bought me a lovely pair of red shoes. I must come to Zürich to look like Folie Bergère.

Be blessed my dearest, my wonderful being. I embrace you—

S AΩ¹¹

[The following is originally in German:] Dearest Jacques, Susan is very pretty and good. With God's help you'll have many children; when Susan holds Madeleine¹² in her arms, she is even more beautiful. We speak a lot about you and Ribesien + Co.,¹³ love you very much, and truly miss you. Heartfelt kisses, Mirjam

10. Susan Taubes is here of course suggesting an analogy between the mezuzah located on the doorpost and the lamb's blood smeared on the Israelites' doorposts to avoid their first-born being killed, in the Passover story.

11. As a designation of the unity of end and beginning, the intertwining Greek letters alpha and omega are frequently found at the end of Susan's letters to Jacob. The use of a formula with partly Gnostic resonance in a play with religious symbols signals a private, mutually erudite understanding, hence an intimate love-language.

12. Madeleine was the daughter of Jacob Taubes's sister Mirjam Dreyfuss; née Taubes and Armand Dreyfuss.

13. Reference unclear.

*Between the Philosophy of Religion
and Cultural History:
Susan Taubes on the Birth of Tragedy and
the Negative Theology of Modernity**

Sigrid Weigel

The caesura of tragedy, more precisely tragedy as the scene of a caesura upon which an interruption occurs in the relation between divine grounds and human will, stands at the center of Susan Taubes's confrontation with tragedy. Moving beyond an explication of generic history, she analyzed the "Nature of Tragedy" (1953) as a phenomenon emerging from a cultural-historical threshold situation, illuminating tragedy's origins in the framework of her approach to ritual, religion, and philosophy. In respect to the history of theory, these reflections are located at a transition point between religious and cultural history. Her argument that tragedy maintains a dangerous balance between the extreme poles of nihilism and hope,¹ brings two categories into play that very clearly do not stem from the register of antique tragedy itself, rather illuminating the historical-philosophical context serving as a foundation for her work on tragedy. Namely, nihilism and hope tie her interest in tragedy with her writing on negative theology as a new religion within modernity, with Simone Weil, Franz Kafka, Martin Heidegger, and gnosis here having the leading roles. By negative theology, Susan Taubes means a new religious experience that emerged in the twentieth century from a transformation of atheism. Mostly written in the first decade after the end of World War II, her most important texts are stamped by recent historical catastrophes and reflect

* Translated from German by Joel Golb.

1. Susan A. Taubes, "The Nature of Tragedy," *The Review of Metaphysics* 7 (December 1953): 195.

the intellectual impact of Nietzsche's dictum "God is dead." In circumstances defined by an absent God, she is especially interested in a thought where experiences of strangeness and hopes for salvation combine. The focus is here above all on the German philosophical tradition in its role as "smuggled theology"² and the position of non-confessionally bound Jewish intellectuals in the twentieth century, their linguistic and conceptual figures being examined in view of traces of Gnostic motifs and ties to early Gnostic movements. In this manner her work reveals a correspondence between two transitional scenes: starting from a specific dialectic of secularization that arrives at a negative theology under the sign of an absent God, philosophical reflections thus taking on the character of a new religion, she looks back historically at transitional constellations whose manifestations—as in tragedy and gnosis—emerged from negotiations between myth, religion, and philosophy. In that for Susan Taubes religio-philosophical reflections on modernity's negative theology represent the conditions for a cultural theory of tragedy, her reading of traditional religio-historical, philosophical, and literary traces itself moves between Jerusalem and Athens.

The Scene of Tragedy: Between Ritual, Religion, and Philosophy

In the essay "The Nature of Tragedy" Susan Taubes offered a theory of tragedy as a distinct presentation of life "that stands over and against ritual, religion and philosophy."³ In contrast to an approach based on generic history, she situates tragedy on the threshold between divine order and philosophy, more precisely where "a moment of pause, tension and reflection slips in between the divine counsel and the human deed."⁴ Her work is tied, as indicated, to Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*, but also to British classical philology (Jane Harrison, Gilbert Murray) and American literary criticism and theory (Francis Fergusson, Kenneth Burke); but the theoretical significance of her study goes beyond such sources in that she develops a cultural-historical reading of the tragic that has passed through the school of religious philosophy—comparable in this way to the later projects of Peter Szondi and Klaus Heinrich.

2. Susan Taubes, "The Gnostic Foundations of Heidegger's Nihilism," *The Journal of Religion* 34 (July 1954): 155.

3. S. Taubes, "The Nature of Tragedy," p. 193.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 198.

To be sure Susan Taubes's perspective differs from Szondi's *Versuch über das Tragische* (1961), with its philosophical-historical orientation, in that her return to tragedy's origins involves emphasizing an opposition between philosophy and tragedy. At the same time, the difference between her approach and Heinrich's readings of antique tragic constellations is more directly grounded in an explicit renunciation of psychoanalytic interpretive models, which play a central role in his work.⁵ Because of the inheritance of ritual and myth and the continued presence of moments of divine order within tragedy, Susan Taubes locates it outside a sphere describable in human psychological categories, which she understands in terms of personal characteristics. She thus declines

to interpret the divine powers in the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles or Shakespeare, as allegorical symbols for psychological realities. In the beginning the oracle sounds from a realm beyond the human psyche; divine purpose remains distinct from human will. Choice by tragic irony falls into the pattern of fate, but fate does not thereby become the source of choice, nor choice of fate. The powers behind man's destiny and man's personal motives belong to two distinct and independent orders that cross and interplay to yield a single dramatic action.⁶

Within this perspective, tragedy as the locus of a conflict-laden opposition between two different orders is placed at the point of transition, or rather is itself described as the scenario of a cultural-historical transition, as the onset of an interruption in the relation of divine order and human will. We have no direct indication that Susan Taubes was interested in Walter Benjamin, whose work was in fact little known at this time. But she could have become familiar with some of his theorems and texts during a stay in Jerusalem in 1949–50—Jacob Taubes was then teaching sociology of religion under Gershom Scholem at the Hebrew University. In any case the basic dialectic figure in which she situates tragedy evokes the topos of the caesura as Benjamin cites it from Hölderlin in "Goethes Wahlverwandtschaften." In Susan Taubes's theory of tragedy, the caesura occurs when non-religious justification emerges on the scene: when human decision⁷

5. E.g., Klaus Heinrich, *Floß der Medusa: 3 Studien zur Faszinationsgeschichte* (Basel: Stroemfeld, 1995).

6. S. Taubes, "The Nature of Tragedy," p. 196.

7. Playing a central role in Benjamin's thinking, the decision here as well is an essential sign of human action addressing the divine order. Cf. Erich Auerbach, *Dante als*

and reflection appear where previously the rule of the gods' laws determined events; this would seem to represent an inverse configuration, as it were, to Benjamin's arrival of a "beyond of poetry" that "breaks off" the poet's word within a secularized culture.

Describing the origin of tragedy, this dialectic constellation is described by Taubes in an alteration of competing perspectives—between "a rational point of view" and "a religious perspective."⁸ For not only a reading of tragedy is at issue here. Rather, this is itself described as a drama unfolding between differing sign systems, hence as a drama of readings: "Human action tends to become tragic whenever the 'time is out of joint,' the oracles grow obscure and even treacherous; human action becomes tragic whenever the divine order loses coherence so that man, *misreading the signs of heaven*, becomes the instrument of his own destruction."⁹ Within the history of theater, Taubes sees above all antique Greek and Elizabethan theater as corresponding to the tragic model in their unfolding on stages in which the border between the divine-demonic and human spheres has become porous.

Methodologically the configuration of Taubes's theory of tragedy can be located in the realm of cultural theory in that she discusses the tragic in relation to various symbolic forms and registers from the cultural history of knowledge: ritual, religion, philosophy. Tragedy is thus first examined in its position facing ritual on the one hand, religion on the other hand—this in view of both the concept of the hero and the problem of transgression. While in each case we find an exploration of both commonalities and differences, the relation of philosophy to tragedy is also addressed in passing. Ritual and tragedy, for instance, are tied together through an experience of the demonic, the gods' destructive aspect; together both oppose the approach taken by religion, for which the numinous sphere takes the form of a personal God.

It is the case that this way of approaching the birth of tragedy is by no means new. What is remarkable, however, is the manner in which Susan Taubes renders it structurally dense, in order to sharpen its import in terms of her own basic orientation. And it is striking that she, in particular, is not interested in the intersection between epic, myth, and tragedy, but rather

Dichter der irdischen Welt (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001), p. 7, who describes the decision as a specific feature of tragedy.

8. S. Taubes, "The Nature of Tragedy," pp. 196, 205.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 195 (my emphasis).

in stressing tragedy's religious-historical genesis—with rite here playing an important role as an archaic or pre-religious form. Hence although, she indicates, the use of ritual models as a basis for tragic form has already often been analyzed, the most important question has not been addressed: "what it is that converts the *agon*, *anagnorisis*, *threnos* and *peripeteia* into specifically *tragic* categories?"¹⁰ In this way precisely the break with the ritual spell tied to the emergence of tragedy becomes an important moment: the exit from ritual's magic circle, opening up the moment of reflection in concepts of human action and founding the caesura referred to above.

Hence Susan Taubes connects the tragic *agon* to the endowment of reality, reflection, and decision with a strictly human significance—to the emergence of human beings as self-reflective and autonomous agents on the stage of a divine plan. The appearance of the subject is here described as tragedy's primal scene. Similarly to what Szondi argues in his *Versuch über das Tragische*, for Taubes the subject is suited for tragic status from the beginning. For as a neutral arena for the confrontation of conflicting powers, tragedy admits neither a solution nor a reconciliation. Instead, in the ideal tragic situation the three moments of action, suffering, and knowledge are inseparably bound, with each in fact emerging from the other. Tragic heroes gain their insight precisely from the suffering that necessarily produces their actions. At the same time, the position of tragedy at the transitional locus between myth and reason renders it philosophically suspect. Although, in Taubes's view, tragedy indeed represents the advent of reflective consciousness in the archaic world (or: a reflection of that world's crisis), at the same time it keeps a foot in the old order: "The philosopher emerges to wage war against the tragic poets."¹¹ On the other hand, Taubes explicates the relation between tragedy and religion contrastively, in terms of the motif of the human struggle against divine injustice as presented in Greek tragedy—Aeschylus's *Prometheus*—and the Hebrew Bible—the book of Job. Where for Taubes Job represents a passive form of suffering, inflicted on him as a test, Prometheus places himself on a neutral stage against the gods: "there is no ultimate court of appeal; the combatants face each other in an open arena bounded only by an impersonal power of fatality."¹² To be sure, tragedy and religion are linked through their view of human beings as agents of evil and through

10. *Ibid.*, p. 197.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 200.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 202f.

the theme of their transgression of the divine order; but this transgression is interpreted by religion as a sin while in tragedy it is manifest in the model of heroic action. In violating the law of the gods, tragic heroes not only set themselves against established order but, beyond this, reflect with their action on a contradiction in the cosmic order itself: "The hero may be driven to break the law in one sphere in order to fulfil it in another."¹³ We can here think, for instance, of Antigone, who in her breach of Creon's law evokes that of the subterranean gods, the order of the *daimon*.

Now for Taubes, the question of how the tragic hero's downfall can become a source of aesthetic and ethical pleasure cannot be separated from a specific tragic interpretation of transgression; that is, it cannot be answered in strictly poetological terms. In face of a one-dimensional understanding of transgression by an either purely religious or purely rational consciousness, in Taubes's perspective tragedy opens something like a third position that reflects on each of these delimitations. In light of more recent research,¹⁴ we could say that it opens a scene of negotiations between and upon philosophy and religion. To this extent in tragedy evil receives trans-ethical significance. Taubes describes this as a cognitive-theoretical surplus. Where religion and philosophy both stand for the universal validity of a certain rule (in the one case divine creation and revelation, in the other case truth), precisely because of its overstepping of the border between the human and divine, tragedy enjoys a wider-ranging cognitive possibility:

Both religion and philosophy are grounded on the faith in the universality of a single principle, whether an ultimate rationality or an omnipotent god. They tend to suppress any independent sphere of being which defies either reason or divine nature, and tend therefore to explain evil as a negative attribute, a privation in man's reason or will. . . . Tragedy shows that he who transgresses the line that separates man from the gods gains a profounder insight into their relation.¹⁵

We might say that in the tragic, what is thus at stake is gaining an insight won qua transgression, but at the price of suffering, hence as it were along

13. *Ibid.*, p. 203.

14. See for example Renate Schlesier, "Maskierte Texte: Religiöse Anspielung und Verheimlichung in der griechischen Tragödie," in *Mimesis, Bild und Schrift: Ähnlichkeit und Entstellung im Verhältnis der Künste*, ed. Birgit R. Erdle and Sigrid Weigel (Cologne: Böhlau, 1996), pp. 221–38.

15. S. Taubes, "The Nature of Tragedy," pp. 203f.

a ritual path—but nevertheless through rational decision. As a straddle between the borders of the divine and human, the hero of tragedy stands for a knowledge that equally reflects the knowledge of religion and philosophy, but that can only be gained at the price of the hero's destruction. Just as tragedy offers no solution, it offers no victory by one of the struggling spheres—in its structure, any victory is suspended. At the same time, what is at play here is not an annulment of religion but—to speak with Benjamin—a science of thresholds, which is to say specific insights only made possible through conflict. Susan Taubes thus describes tragedy as a cultural-historical stage possessing cognitive-historical prominence and that emerged from the conflict between religion and philosophy.

In this manner, what becomes characteristic for tragedy is a nearly paradoxical constellation or precarious balance that appears to explain its strong fascination—relevant here is Benjamin's reference to the tragic word as an "edge of decision." This balance maintains tragedy's openness to readings from the perspective of contemporary conflicts. Taubes locates such readings of "the tragic play" as balanced "perilously between the extreme poles of hope and nihilism."¹⁶ But where in the tragic model hope and nihilism maintain a balance, with hope emerging precisely out of negativity and furnishing tragic action with meaning, value, and dignity, in the "drama of the self on modernity" articulated by the language of gnosis nihilism seems to have kept the upper hand. For with God's death, the conditions for a tragic constellation or *agon* have also vanished. Susan Taubes declined to take the psychoanalytic path, which had in a sense given the subject back a part of his tragedy and thus might be considered its heir.

Negative Theology: God's Absence as Religion of Modernity

In her essay "The Absent God" (1955), Susan Taubes explores a way of thinking, typifying modernism, in which the experience of God's absence has found expression as a negative theology. As in other essays, she here uses Nietzsche to supply her cue: when the philosopher "announced that God is dead," she explains, "he planted the seed for a new kind of atheism which has become a major theme of European thinkers in our century."¹⁷ As an example for a "most uncompromising formulation," for such a new, religious atheism, she makes use of the writing of Simone Weil, whom she

16. *Ibid.*, p. 195.

17. Susan Anna Taubes, *...*

terms a "French philosopher-mystic-saint." She first describes this negative theology—or, in her formulation, "religious atheism"—as follows:

Atheism, which used to be a charge leveled against skeptics, unbelievers, or simply the indifferent, has come to mean a *religious* experience of the death of God. The godlessness of the world in all its strata and categories becomes, paradoxically and by a dialectic of negation, the signature of God and yields a mystical atheism, a theology of divine absence and nonbeing, of divine impotence, divine nonintervention, and divine indifference.¹⁸

This passage encapsulates some of the leitmotifs from other religious-philosophical texts that Taubes published in the 1950s. She paid special attention to those paradoxical conceptual figures grounded in the religious investment of divine absence; and she focused with equal intensity on a dialectic of negation in the philosophy of modernity—this a good decade before Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* (1966). For Taubes, Simone Weil was an important example of such negative theology: literally an example, since, as she indicates in "The Case of Simone Weil," an essay appearing four years after "The Absent God," "recent analyses have traced similar patterns in the writings of Kafka, Heidegger and the dialectical theology of Barth and Brunner."¹⁹

This list of authors makes clear that Susan Taubes's discussion of religious atheism does not unfold within the canon of Jewish tradition—although the experience of non-confessionally-anchored Jewish intellectuals plays no unimportant role in her analysis. In the second of her essays on Weil, she thus proposes a proximity between Weil and Kafka, and this in connection with a discussion of Weil's love of tradition, popular culture, and myth, and their derivation from the experiences of a person lacking her own tradition:

Through the study of the past she remedied in herself the uprooted homelessness she found in the modern masses. In Simone Weil, as in Kafka,

18. Ibid.

19. Susan Taubes, "The Case of Simone Weil," typescript, published as "The Riddle of Simone Weil" in *Exodus* 1 (1959): 55–71 (German: "Das Rätsel um Simone Weil," in *Der Pfahl: Jahrbuch aus dem Niemandsland zwischen Kunst und Wissenschaft*, trans. Birgit Leib [Munich: Matthes & Seitz, 1995], pp. 205–20). "The Case of Simone Weil" is a typescript without indication of place or year but published in 1959 as "The Riddle of Simone Weil" in the journal *Exodus*. Page numbers for subsequent citations refer to the typescript.

we see the configuration of a double estrangement to which the Jews may be predisposed in contemporary civilization. For she was born outside of the Church as a Jew, and at the same time stood outside of Judaism and this not by an act of revolt, but simply by circumstance.²⁰

Hence in the linkage of authors as different as Kafka and Weil, what is at play is the experience of a "double estrangement"—an experience of some importance for Jews in the twentieth century, and that has paradigmatic status for the culture of modernity. Kafka and Weil are thus understood as representatives of a way of thinking also significant for German philosophers—without either a "German-Jewish" or "Christian-Jewish" discourse emerging from such ties in Taubes's writing. Instead of the problematic hyphen prevailing in such discourse,²¹ we find a study of the communicating channels existing between, on the one hand, the specific constellation of Jews both outside of religious tradition and, on the other hand, the hidden theological traces within German philosophy. For: "Nietzsche once remarked that German philosophy is a smuggled theology." This is the approach taken in her discussion of "The Gnostic Foundations of Heidegger's Nihilism," which appeared in *The Journal of Religion* in 1954.²² The title defines the perspective in which Taubes investigates the concealed connections between Jewish experience and German philosophy. And in the continuation of the above-cited passage from "The Case of Simone Weil" considering similar patterns of writing and thinking in Kafka, Heidegger, Barth, and Brunner, Gnosticism is directly introduced as a common point of reference:

These writers do not merely revive an ancient heresy, rather they render the contemporary reality in gnostic terms. The gnostic language lends itself to contemporary experience because it responds to the same problem: how can man caught body and soul in the wheels of an oppressive, inhumane and dehumanizing system, reserve an inalienable point of inwardness, a spark of absolute selfhood invulnerable to the forces of demoralization, delusion and tyranny.²³

20. Ibid., pp. 17f.

21. On the hyphen's significance, see Jean-François Lyotard and Eberhard Gruber, *Ein Bindestrich zwischen 'Jüdischem und Christlichem'* (Düsseldorf: Parerga, 1995).

22. S. Taubes, "The Gnostic Foundations," p. 155.

23. S. Taubes, "The Case of Simone Weil," pp. 6f.

This thesis can be considered the thread uniting all the philosophical texts of Susan Taubes: the twentieth-century experience of an absent God is given expression in the form of a masked or negative theology, or a religious atheism, its conceptual figures corresponding to those of the historical Gnostic movement. Within this constellation, the differences between Jewish and Christian discourse recede before traces of masked theological signification, for the most part unificatory by nature, within central philosophical topoi of modernism, for example negation, nothingness, nihilism, absence, and paradox. A range of scholarship serves as a starting point for Taubes's reflections: the interpretation of Gnosticism in the work of Rudolf Bultmann²⁴ and Hans Jonas, but also contemporary French research such as that of Simone Petrement (1947) and Henri-Charles Puech (1945). She clearly attributes great importance to Hans Jonas's study *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist* (1934), with its reformulation of gnosticism in terms of Heideggerian existentialism.²⁵ We thus read in her essay in Heidegger that:

It is one of Jonas' major contributions toward the understanding of negative theology that he traces the origin of the progressive tendency toward conceiving god through negative attributes, to the negativism of the gnosis. The negativity of the gnostic god serves to undermine totally the positive empirical reality of the world and its claim to any value or validity. . . . All interest is introverted in the contemplation of the negative acosmic self. The fullness of the god is finally emptiness. The emphasis is on an emotional relation to this emptiness.²⁶

As a follow-up to Jonas,²⁷ in Taubes's Heidegger article absolute concepts from existential philosophy such as self, anxiety, "thrownness," and

24. Taubes cites Rudolf Bultmann, "Die Bedeutung der neuerschlossenen mandäischen und manichäischen Quellen für das Verständnis des Johannesevangeliums," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 24 (1925), and Rudolf Bultmann, *Das Urchristentum im Rahmen der antiken Religionen* (Zürich: Artemis, 1949).

25. See Hans Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, vol. 1, *Die mythologische Gnosis* (1934; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964).

26. S. Taubes, "The Gnostic Foundations," pp. 159, 160.

27. In Jonas's *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, the catalogue describing the "logos of Gnosticism" contains the following topoi (with quotation marks used where they are used with the original German terms: (1) the "strange" (*Das Fremde*); (2) the "beyond" (*Jenseits*), the "outside" (*Außerhalb*), "this world" and "that world" (*diese Welt, jene Welt*); (3) "worlds" (*Welten*) and "eons" (*Äonen*); (4) the world-enclosure (*das Weltgehäuse*), living (*Wohnen*); (5) "light" (*Licht*) and "darkness" (*Finsternis*); (6) "mixing"

strangeness organize a discussion of the relationship between Heidegger's thought and the so-called drama of the gnostic self. Above all strangeness represents the linkage between modernism and Gnosticism. It stands at the center of the leitmotifs "that run through all the various Gnostic systems and speculations. The first great symbol of the gnosis is 'Strangeness.' The 'Strange God' of Marcion corresponds to the 'Strange Life,' the exile of Mandaean Literature. 'Strangeness' is a complex dialectical concept."²⁸ We can here see that while Taubes' explication of negative theology is grounded in a reading of Gnosticism via existentialist concepts, her perspective is different from Jonas's in an important respect: she is more strongly interested in the correspondences between the historical context of Heidegger's thinking and the historical Gnostic movements; and in this way she renders Jonas's own expansion of transmitted sources into a "basic state of gnosis"²⁹ and brings it back together with specific cultural-historical situations.

As above all the second part of her Heidegger essay shows, Taubes's study is not only based on a consideration of Heidegger's writing, especially *Sein und Zeit*, *Holzwege*, and *Was ist Metaphysik?* but also a study of the historical Gnostic movement. In that context she discusses the delimitation of Gnostic concepts from the cosmological thinking of Greek philosophy and stoicism. The latter's cosmological "optimism" and Gnosticism, Taubes indicates, stood in extreme opposition:

In all its variations and sects spanning the eastern part of the Roman Empire, running from the mystery religions through early Christianity to the Mandaean sects east of the Jordan, one motif prevails: man is not "at home" in the cosmos. The *logos* of the gnosis is "not of this world." The Gospel of John as well as parts of the Pauline epistles give abundant

(*die Mischung*); (7) "fragmentation" (*die Zersplitterung*), unity (*Einheit*) and multiplicity (*Vielfheit*); (8) "falling" (*Fall*), "sinking" (*Sinken*), "capture" (*Gefangennahme*); (9) "thrownness" (*das Geworfensein*); (10) angst (*Angst*), erring (*Irren*), homesickness (*Heimweh*); (11) stupefaction (*Betäubung*), sleep (*Schlaf*), drunkenness (*Trunkenheit*); (12) to become cut off (*abgeschnitten werden*); (14) the world's noise (*der Lärm der Welt*); (15) the "call from outside" (*der Ruf von außerhalb*); (16) the "strange man" (*der fremde Mann*); (17) the content of the "call"; (18) the answer to the "call"; (19) collecting one's self (*sich-selbst-Sammeln*) (Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, pp. 94ff.). It would be interesting to explore the rhetorical politics of the citation within this catalogue, i.e., the distinction between concepts set in quotation marks and those lacking such punctuation.

28. S. Taubes, "The Gnostic Foundations," p. 158.

29. Christoph Marksches, *Die Gnosis* (Munich: Beck, 2001), p. 27.

evidence to this deep estrangement of man from the cosmos. The equation $\kappa\acute{o}\sigma\mu\omicron\varsigma = \sigma\kappa\acute{o}\tau\omicron\varsigma$, "world = darkness," formulates the gnostic pathos. Here cosmos stands for all empirical and psychic reality.³⁰

The Marcionic, Mandianic, and Manichean Gnosticism³¹ in which Taubes was so strongly interested comprised a religio-historical movement in which Jewish Gnostic sects had contact with early Christian movements. She was most concerned, not with the controversy about the movement's authentically Jewish or Christian origins, but with the phenomenon of transitional constellations—in this respect coming very close to the recent research that interprets Gnosticism as historically a type of experiment.³²

In this way Susan Taubes's specific contribution to a theory of modernity is her identification and illumination of a correspondence: between, on the one hand, a post-assimilatory, post-confessional or secularized culture in which loci of Jewish and non-Jewish thinkers can *no longer* be clearly distinguished; and, on the other hand, a transitional historical moment in which antique Judaism and early Christianity together largely formed a fused culture, because the programs of Jewish and early Christian Gnostic heresy were *not yet* polarized. In light of this research alignment, it appears that Susan Taubes's theory of modernity emerges as, in Benjamin's sense,

30. S. Taubes, "The Gnostic Foundations," p. 158.

31. Marcion (85–160), founder of an early Christian gnostic sect, was expelled from Rome's Christian congregation in 144; his counter-church would last into the sixth century. As a "philologist of biblical texts" he radicalized the "Pauline antithesis of law and gospel" (Markschies, *Gnosis*, pp. 87f.). Marcion is clearly one of the most fascinating figures for research on Gnosticism; see for instance Adolf von Harnack's Christianizing appropriation of the movement in his *Buch Marcion: das Evangelium vom fremden Gott* (1923), where Harnack argues for a programmatic rejection of Jewish sources, above all the Hebrew Bible (Adolf von Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott: Eine Monographie zur Geschichte der Grundlegung der katholischen Kirche* [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1996] p. 217). With its name derived from the Aramaic *manda*, perception, the Mandianic Jewish-Gnostic sect was located east of the Jordan River. Manichaeism was a late-antique Gnostic movement founded by the Persian Mani (216–17); it would have significance in the Roman Empire until the fourth century—among other things for Augustine's intellectual formation.

32. Markschies describes the historical Gnostic movement as an "experimental phase of Christian theology" (Markschies, *Gnosis*, p. 90), a "phase of abrupt change in the history of Christianity" (*ibid.*, pp. 116f.), and as a "transformational process": "The second century must thus be understood as a sort of laboratory in which, in very different corners of the empire, experiments were arranged by very different individuals with very different gifts, so as to see how to arrive at a Christian theology capable of competing in antiquity's ideological market" (*ibid.*, p. 117).

a dialectic image, with the pre- and post-history of philosophy and religion coming together in a single formation. For Taubes, negative theology represents a vanishing point for a range of philosophical reflections regarding the "death of God," in which religiously homeless twentieth-century intellectuals with Jewish and Christian backgrounds meet, aligning themselves with a tradition of "smuggled theology" characteristic of German philosophy. The figure Taubes thus discovers within the dialectic of secularization is clearly significant. For if we postulate a continued topicality of Gnosticism, then, in the words of Christoph Markschies, "the thesis of an increasing secularization of society in the modern age would need to be very thoroughly scrutinized."³³

Mainly conceived in the 1950s, Susan Taubes's work likewise reflects a specific historical-theoretical context: that of a critique of civilization, formulated against the backdrop of the recent war and Holocaust, that still seemed capable of being conveyed as a description of alienation, homelessness, and imprisonment in an age of technological-scientific progress. Her argumentative approach is comparable to that of Adorno's, with its interplay of civilization-critique and a "thinking after Auschwitz"; it is also in accord with the relatively abstract ideas concerning Nazi annihilationary policies prevalent in the 1950s. This was the general framework for Taubes's focus on Simone Weil as the chief figure in an ensemble of modern Gnostics. Hence in "The Absent God," in the course of a discussion of the slavery-topos in Weil's writing, we find numerous references to the Holocaust—more precisely, to Weil's theme of the "senseless suffering of the concentration camps." Taubes here underscores that Weil's concept of "affliction" needs to be distinguished from "simple suffering." For Weil, she indicates, the slave

emerges as the model of affliction in a technological society whose blind mechanism makes both heroism and martyrdom meaningless as human possibilities and which finds its image in the impotent victim, in the industrial worker, or in the prisoner in a concentration camp, who suffers not as a man in the hands of men but as a thing battered around by impersonal forces. It is a world in which man as such, man as an autonomous person and source of action, has no being; personality and organism crumble in a calculus of forces.³⁴

33. Markschies, *Gnosis*, p. 119.

34. S. Taubes, *The Absent God*.

In Taubes's reading of Weil, then, slaves are "the model of affliction" in that they lack the status of autonomous agents, thus falling into an apersonal status blocking any path towards martyrdom or heroism. In this reading, Weil's mysticism emerges as a historical continuation and intensification of Nietzsche's postulate "God is dead," with God's present absence, perceived as absolute, having been preceded, Taubes argues, by a number of revolutions of consciousness. These extend from the historical critique of sacred Christian history to the twentieth century's moral catastrophe; each "voiced its particular challenge to Christianity." They include (1) the scientific revolution and the resulting conceptual predominance of blind mechanical process; (2) the empirical scrutiny of religious tradition, relativizing dogma; and (3) the progressive undermining of belief through both Marxism and psychoanalysis, which elevated religious symbols into fictions—producing the inverse reaction of a widespread contemporary religious hunger.

Where in Taubes's Heidegger article the correspondences between nihilism and gnosticism are determined above all by strangeness and nothingness, in the Weil article this role is taken by the concept of affliction and the pathos of a non-existing God, both framed, as indicated, by recent historical experience. In modernity, a vanished divine order has been replaced by a religious atheism or nihilism, defined by Taubes as a negative theology. This serves as the axis of her cultural theory of modernism.

*The Place of Susan Taubes in the Philosophy of Religion*³⁵

Together, "The Gnostic Foundations of Heidegger's Nihilism" (1954) and "The Absent God" (1955) form a significant constellation in Susan Taubes's work. On the one hand, they appear to be the only publications whose author is designated as Susan *Anima* Taubes (the tragedy essay as "Susan A. Taubes"); on the other hand, they announce her decision to change her dissertation project from a study of the theological elements in Heidegger's philosophy, as announced in an identically worded author's notice accompanying both articles in the highly respected *Journal of Religion*, to the work she would actually complete a year later under the title

35. I am grateful to Susan Taubes's son Ethan Taubes and daughter Tania Taubes for all information about Susan Taubes's writing going beyond the published work. As agreed on with Tania and Ethan Taubes, together with Christina Pareigis I take care of the editing and publication of Susan Taubes's scholarly estate at the Susan Taubes Archive in the Center for Literary Research, Berlin.

"The Absent God: A Study of Simone Weil," with the crossed out subtitle "On the Religious Use of Tyranny" still being decipherable on the title page.

The Ph.D. thesis was submitted by the twenty-eight year old at Harvard in 1956—Taubes had studied at Harvard Divinity School and Radcliffe College as a Josiah Royce Fellow from 1953 to 1955. Following completion of her work in philosophy at Bryn Mawr, with a B.A. received in 1951, she had continued her work at University of Rochester, attending lectures delivered by the historian of religion Arthur D. Nock³⁶ and by both Isaiah Berlin and Herbert Marcuse.³⁷ Most of her essays appeared in the years between her B.A. and Ph.D. Alongside those mentioned, there was also a Hebrew-language article with the title (in translation) "A Critical Discussion of Camus' 'L'Homme révolté,'" published in *Yiun: Philosophical Journal of the Hebrew University*, and her discussion of "The Nature of Tragedy" in the *Review of Metaphysics*. The Camus article was evidently written during the first half of 1952, which she spent in Paris for a study visit as a Bryn Mawr European Fellow, while Jacob Taubes stayed in Jerusalem where he taught sociology of religion under Gershom Scholem at the start of the 1950s; the tragedy essay was written in Rochester after her return to the States. But importantly in our context, Susan Taubes's study sojourns in Paris also took place in the same period—as is made clear in both several of her letters to Jacob Taubes during the early 1950s and the *Journal of Religion* author's notice, stating identically in 1954 and 1955 that, along with the award of the B.A., she received a Bryn Mawr European Fellowship, "which enabled her to study in Paris and Jerusalem."

On the basis of this information, we can presume that Taubes's familiarity with Simone Weil's work was grounded in her stays in Paris in 1952 and afterward, Weil's posthumous publications having just appeared then in France: starting in 1949 with *L'Enracinement*, continuing in 1950 with *Attente de Dieu* and *La Connaissance surnaturelle*, followed by five additional books ending in 1953 with the two-volume *Cahiers*. The speedy dissemination of Weil's work is apparent in the English-language

36. See the remarks on Susan A. Taubes in note 33 of the introduction to Jacob Taubes, *Vom Kult zur Kultur: Bausteine einer Kritik der historischen Vernunft: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*, ed. Aleida Assmann et al. (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1996), p. 32.

37. The Susan Taubes Archive contains two papers written for a seminar taught by Isaiah Berlin on "Concepts and Categories of the Human Sciences" at Harvard and one for a course on "Marxist Ideology" taught by Herbert Marcuse.

publication of her writing in the United States in 1951 and 1952. In the same year that Susan Taubes's first text on Weil appeared, Ingeborg Bachmann published her own essay on the French author, assessing her writing as an "attestation of pure mysticism."³⁸ In this light, it would seem more probable that Jacob Taubes learned of Weil's work from his wife, and less probable that things transpired as he recounted:

I was at Scholem's and he got terribly excited about a lady whose name I hadn't yet heard of, and he as well until four weeks before, namely Simone Weil. And he cursed like a trooper, explaining while cursing that he'd thrown Simone Weil's books, the first publications in France then, into the garbage. And as he recounted this about the woman, *eieija*, I went over to the garbage bin and pulled out the stuff.³⁹

However doubtful the accuracy, through the symbolism of an image from memory this anecdote is of real value, since it points to a primal scene in a later conflict between Taubes and Scholem: that over the sharpness of difference between Jewish and Christian messianism; it appears that the work of Susan Taubes helped lay the scholarly foundations for this conflict. As Thomas Macho explains in his discussion of Simone Weil's influence on both Jacob and Susan Taubes, it was precisely the aspect of inwardness in Weil's writing that negatively fascinated Scholem. This is spelled out in a letter he wrote to Georg Lichtheim in 1950:

What draws me to this very gifted unfortunate maiden is the abhorrent scent of inwardness, which perhaps here more than in other so much more well-ordered texts makes clear why I find Christianity so completely unbearable.... There of course the deception of pure inwardness—God protect us from it—proceeds at a truly great tempo, and I can only say: happy are the Jews, who very decisively did not abandon themselves to it in world history.⁴⁰

It is well known that one of the main points of attack in Jacob Taubes's polemic against Scholem is that for him inwardness is far more than a mere

38. Ingeborg Bachmann, *Werke*, ed. Christine Koschel, Inge von Weidenbaum, and Clemens Münster (Munich: Piper, 1978), 4:147.

39. Jacob Taubes, "Gespräch mit Peter Sloterdijk," January 1987, unpublished typescript, cited in Thomas Macho, "Der intellektuelle Bruch zwischen Scholem und Taubes," in *Gershom Scholem: Literatur und Rhetorik*, ed. Stéphane Mosès and Sigrid Weigel (Cologne: Böhlau, 2000), pp. 148f.

40. Gershom Scholem, *Briefe*, ed. Thomas Sparr (Munich: Beck, 1995), 2:16f.

idiosyncrasy, rather representing, particularly from a religio-historical perspective, a watershed between Judaism and Christianity.⁴¹ In a talk Jacob Taubes delivered—against resistance—on "Messianism and Its Price" at the World Jewish Congress in Jerusalem in 1979, he used Scholem's *Eranos* Talk of 1959, *Zum Verständnis der messianischen Idee im Judentum*, to criticize Scholem's method of dividing "the messianic cake"⁴² between Judaism and Christianity. In this text, Scholem had tied a fundamental difference between the two religions to different concepts of salvation: in the Jewish case, a salvation that "takes place in the public sphere, on the stage of history and in the medium of the community"; in the Christian case "the reinterpretation of the prophetic promises of the Bible into a realm of inwardness."⁴³ In support of his own thesis that "such a static opposition between Jewish and Christian salvational ideas" obscures the inner dynamic of the messianic idea, Jacob Taubes offers the example of a historical situation in which messianic hope was disappointed:

Imagine the dialectic in a group's messianic experience at the moment when the prophesying of salvation is not fulfilled. The "world" does not fall apart, but the hope for salvation crumbles. If, however, the messianic community does not totter due to inner certainty; then the messianic experience has to turn inward, salvation has to be understood as an event occurring in the spiritual sphere, which is mirrored in the human soul. Interiorization is no dividing line between "Judaism" and "Christianity" but typifies a crisis within Jewish eschatology itself—in Pauline Christianity as much as in the seventeenth-century Sabbatian movement. How else can salvation be defined, after the Messiah has not, in fact, redeemed the external world, than as a displacement into interiority?⁴⁴

This description of a maintenance of messianism in face of the real-historical disappointment of salvational hopes, and the ensuing necessary interiorization, appears to apply perfectly to Simone Weil's position—and to correspond closely to Susan Taubes's own description of that position two decades earlier. For in "The Case of Simone Weil," she emphasizes that Weil cannot embrace either the Christian concept of a sacred history

41. See, in that respect, Sigrid Weigel, *Entstellte Ähnlichkeit: Walter Benjamins theoretische Schreibweise* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer-Taschenbuch, 1997), pp. 72f. and Macho, "Zum Streit zwischen Taubes und Scholem."

42. J. Taubes, *Vom Kult zur Kultur*, p. 44.

43. Gershom Scholem, *Judaica* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1963), 1:7f.

44. J. Taubes, *Vom Kult zur Kultur*.

or the Jewish concept of a holy people, the time of salvation's arrival rather having meaning for the individual soul alone. Susan Taubes thus directly situates Weil's mystic atheism, emerging from the specific experience of her age, beyond the traditional, rigid conflict

between belief in a Messiah who is expected to come and establish the kingdom of God at the end of time, and faith in the messiah who has already redeemed the world and who will return to rule the world at the end of time. The difference between Jewish and Christian messianism becomes insignificant since Simone Weil rejects the belief in redemption as a temporal event, as a fact accomplished or to be accomplished at a specific historical moment once and for all.⁴⁵

In these comments from the late 1950s, Weil's mysticism is defined as, precisely a response to the concrete historical experiences of her time. And the meaning of the polemic Jacob Taubes formulated twenty years later against Scholem's postwar dogma of a strict opposition between Jewish and Christian messianism only emerges against the template of this historical reading: as the critique of an approach that inadequately considers the experience of recent events in the reflection on religio-historical certainties.

The personal and thematic constellation outlined above can be examined from various angles. Regarding the intellectual relation between the couple Susan and Jacob Taubes, it is remarkable that at the same time that Susan was producing her work on Weil, Jacob defined the "everlasting conflict between the principle of law and the principle of love" as an "indissoluble difference" between Christianity and Judaism—this a schema clearly in debt to Scholem.⁴⁶ But at the same time, there is a clear proximity between Susan Taubes's writing from the 1950s, Jacob Taubes's preceding dissertation on occidental eschatology,⁴⁷ and his later work from the 1960s to the 1980s—above all in respect to Gnosticism, in both his fascination with the "prince of the world" and his discussion of Marcion. Here Jacob Taubes's Heidegger essay of 1975 and his Marcion essay of 1984 are of special interest.⁴⁸

45. Susan Taubes, "The Case of Simone Weil," p. 12.

46. See Jacob Taubes, "Die Streitfrage zwischen Judentum und Christentum: Ein Blick auf ihre unauflösliche Differenz" [1953] in *Vom Kult zur Kultur*, pp. 85–98.

47. Jacob Taubes, *Die Abendländische Eschatologie* (Bern: A. Francke, 1947).

48. Cf. Taubes, *Vom Kult zur Kultur*.

For her part, as a philosopher of religion Susan Taubes appears to have disappeared from the academic scene soon after the studies of Weil. After the Ph.D. thesis, she worked at Harvard as a research assistant under Paul Oppenheim, then moved to Columbia and Barnard as an Associate in Religion, teaching there into 1963, became a University Associate in the University Seminars on the Theory of Literature in 1967 and worked as a curator at the same university's Bush Collection. She edited anthologies of African myth and Native American stories in this context. But afterward we only find a short reading of Genet's *The Blacks* published under the title "On Going to One's Own Funeral" in *Columbia Daily Spectator*; this appeared in 1961.⁴⁹

In contrast, a biographical event produced a major piece of imaginative literature: the 1969 novel *Divorcing*. Shortly after its publication Susan Taubes committed suicide. The novel is itself narrated from the autobiographical perspective of a dead person, Sophie Blind. Its representational mode alternates between dream and mnemonic images, fantastic and satirical scenarios, and highly realistic scenarios from the everyday life of a female intellectual;⁵⁰ at numerous points it corresponds to the life history of its author.⁵¹

It may be the case that Susan Taubes's own early experience of expulsion, forming the index for her studies in philosophy and religious history, may have sharpened her sense of modernity's negative theology. In any event, the gesture of her writing is less characterized by the historicizing perspective than through an unpronounced actualization. It is here not easy to say what her own attitude is toward the conceptual figures she describes—both negative theology and the unspoken traces of citations of Gnostic heresy. Possibly her insight into what she points to in her Heidegger essay as a necessary approach for a knowledge contaminated by

49. See Susan Taubes, "On Going to One's Own Funeral" (review of Genet's *The Blacks*) in *The Supplement, Columbia Daily Spectator*, October 27, 1961, pp. 1 and 5 (revised as "The White Mask Falls," *Tulane Drama Review* 7 [1963]: 85–92).

50. See Sigrid Weigel, "Susan Taubes und Hannah Arendt: Zwei jüdische Intellektuelle zwischen Literatur und Philosophie, zwischen Europa und USA," in *Jüdische Intellektuelle im 20. Jahrhundert: Literatur- und kulturgeschichtliche Studien*, ed. Ariane Huml and Monika Rappenecker (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), pp. 133–49.

51. A granddaughter of the Chief Rabbi of Budapest, Judit Zsuzsanna Feldmann, was born in 1928 and emigrated to America in 1939 together with her father, a psychoanalyst. During her studies in the United States she met the five-years-older Jacob Taubes, a Vienna-born philosopher and rabbi who had moved to Zurich in 1936; she married him in 1949 at the age of twenty-one.

Gnosticism also applies to herself: "The gnosis, the 'knowledge' which contains the teaching of the way of redemption, is in itself a step in the drama of redemption. The knowledge (gnosis) is not objective; it is not simply the narrative of a spectator *about* redemption; it forms an inner constitutive moment in the process of redemption."⁵² Such an approach has nothing to do with empathy. This is especially clear in the remarkable manner Susan Taubes succeeds, in her description of Weil's texts, in tying a lucid critique of the universalization of historical experience to an open-minded explication of Weil's critique of Judaism. At the end of "The Absent God," in the context of a discussion of the social implications and political effects of Weil's negative theology, she thus comments:

The purity of Simone Weil's experience of the Cross and her genuine desire for identification with the injured and the oppressed render her religion of suffering all the more tragic. For her mystical atheism offers a religion to the afflicted only at the price of blindfolding one's self to the fact of those who profit from their affliction and consequently serving their ends.⁵³

Weil's observation on the price of mystic atheism in a totalitarian age is criticized by her as a transformation of negative theology into a type of negative theodicy. Through this theodicy, a historically determined impotence is misjudged in that it is presented as a characteristic of God's created beings: "but is not Simone Weil in her way also guilty of projecting the impotence and the hopelessness of a particular human society into the divine being?"⁵⁴ But considered from a human perspective, this comprises an attack on human justice.

Despite this clear critique of the way Weil's mysticism is caught up in the violent dynamic of history, in her second Weil essay Susan Taubes tries to loosen a resistance to Weil's writing that had been manifest in Jewish intellectual circles by clarifying Weil's antagonism to the Hebrew Bible and some principles of Judaism, for instance the idea of a tribal God and that of chosenness, together with Weil's radical critique of Christianity's spiritualization of the Hebrew God. In this respect, she situated Weil's texts historically through recourse to, among other things, the traces of Gnostic tradition apparent in them:

52. S. Taubes, "The Gnostic Foundations," p. 160.

53. S. Taubes, "The Absent God," p. 15.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

Whether we agree with Simone Weil's interpretation or not, the fact [is] that we would search in vain for a spirit of grace and equity in the Old Testament chronicles of the Wars of Yahweh. And are we to reproach Simone Weil for an almost incredible naïveté in applying the yardstick of a highly evolved spiritual consciousness to a primitive text, when this text serves in fact as the liturgy of the Jewish community, and its symbols persist in Jewish religious thought?⁵⁵

A decade after the end of the war, this very far-reaching acceptance of Weil's critique of what Susan Taubes understood to be central dogmas of Jewish orthodoxy would not have been particularly relished in Jewish intellectual circles. Arguably, it attests to a remarkable intellectual independence on the part of a twenty-eight year old. In distinction to the understanding she shows for Weil's position, her assessment of the political meaning of Weil's "religion of suffering"—with which, as Taubes puts it, she made herself guilty in her own way—is much more direct. The concept of the tragic applied in this context—in the reference to Weil's "religion of suffering" as "all the more tragic"—is again related to Taubes's own reflections on the tragic. Since Susan Taubes ascribes meaning and dignity to tragic action, we may assume that, despite the political misjudgment and what was bound up with it, she would have granted the status of historical action to Weil's effort to hold on to the idea of salvation vis-à-vis the historical experience of her time.

55. S. Taubes, "The Case of Simone Weil," pp. 8f.