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Alterität im Denken Hermann Cohens? Eine Nachlese

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Abstract (English)

This thesis considers whether a concept of alterity can be found in the thinking of Hermann Cohen. In order to answer this question, two of his main works are examined, the Ethics of Pure Will and the Religion of Reason from the Sources of Judaism. Although both works regard alterity from different points of view, the reflection on the notion of the Other stands in the center of Cohen's philosophical system. In the idea of the Nebenmensch a priori, Cohen is the first one to demonstrate that the notion of the Other functions as the origin for the formation of the I. Here, the indefinite Other is concretized as the Other. In his Ethics of Pure Will, Cohen thus presents a first approach towards a concept of alterity which finds further expressions in his philosophy of religion. There, the focus lies on the notion of man in his concrete ethical existence, and the Nebenmensch is turned into the fellow human being, the Mitmensch. By examining Cohen's theory of compassion with regard to Lévinas' concept of responsibility, it is demonstrated how the moral self can only be constituted via the infra-ethical relationship with the Other. The recognition of one's own ethical responsibility, which results from the emergence and discovery of the other human being as Mitmensch, corresponds to one's own existence as an ethical being. The question whether a notion of alterity can be detected in the work of Cohen is not answered with a definite yes or no. Rather, my aim is to allow an encounter of Cohen's philosophy with Lévinas' thinking.