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In this thesis, I examine the oeuvre of the American Rabbi and thinker Irving (Yitz) Greenberg. I argue that Greenberg’s writings consist of two main independent bodies of work: his post-Holocaust thought and his postmodern theology. Though each component stands as an autonomous unit of theological rendering, in many ways the second component builds upon the first. Therefore, in this thesis I advance three central arguments:

1. In the first argument, I contend that Greenberg’s post-Holocaust thought establishes a unique position in the environs of Holocaust theology. The novelty of Greenberg’s position is reflected in its resistance to easy categorization. The postmodern motifs and radical anti-theodic rhetoric of Greenberg are an anomaly for an Orthodox thinker. Greenberg’s concepts of ‘moment faith’ and ‘voluntary covenant’ (hereafter: VC) reflect a postmodern tendency towards deconstructing absolutes, while his emphasis on *tzelem Elokim* and the ethics of power reflect a more melioristic and pragmatic influence. I argue that the cogent postmodern motifs dictating Greenberg’s initial response of rupture and disillusionment are eventually tempered by the subterranean influence of American progressivism and the ideas of classic American pragmatism. This varied influence on Greenberg’s thinking facilitates the emergence of a post-Holocaust theology that elicits postmodern and pragmatic themes decades before they had become commonplace in post-Holocaust thought.

2. The second argument of this thesis is that despite scholars and Greenberg himself describing his current Jewish theology as postmodern, Greenberg’s thought is instead analogous to classic American pragmatism and shares ideas and themes of its early protagonists such as Peirce, James, and Dewey. Greenberg is, indeed, a religious pluralist and this is a cardinal tenant of his thought and one of the central corollaries to his post-Holocaust theology. However, this fact is not contingent on his thought being postmodern as he often suggests. Some core ideas of pragmatism – fallibilism (the idea that absolute knowledge about anything is impossible and that any belief or truth must be processed by humans and may be mistaken), anti-foundationalism (or as I argue: tempered anti-foundationalism which is the idea that there is no absolute metaphysical certainty about reality or no certain justification for abstract truth-statements other than what “works” on the ground), and meliorism (the idea that progress is possible through human effort) – are appropriated by Greenberg in his ‘postmodern’ religious theology.

3. In the final argument of this thesis, I marry the previous two claims by maintaining that an inextricable link exists between Greenberg’s early post-Holocaust thought and his later postmodern theology. My contention is that Greenberg’s post-Holocaust thought had a direct and unequivocal effect on his subsequent ‘postmodern/pragmatist’ Jewish covenantal theology. The anti-structuralist postmodern tendencies inherent to Greenberg’s thought find their expression in the paradigm of shattering and moment faith. Pragmatic trends, including meliorism, fallibilism, and pluralism, form the basis from which epistemological and ontological shattering consonant with postmodernism can be integrated and reformulated into pre-existing religious structures and motifs that render a more pragmatist Jewish theology.

In **Chapter 1**, I outline constructs and schemas used by second-generation writers (i.e., writers with no living memory of the Holocaust who reflect on and analyze the first generation of post-Holocaust thought) which is then used to assess first-generation theologians who experienced the Holocaust directly or indirectly and devoted their lives to its study. Furthermore, I raise the question of Greenberg’s position and placement within the existing structures and question whether Greenberg’s contribution is given enough credit. I also analyze the works of thinkers such as Steven Katz, Gershon Greenberg, Zachary Braiterman, and Eliezer Schweid and address a more contemporary analysis by Moshe Shner. Each thinker posits a system of categorization for first-generation responses whilst adding their own novel perspective and ideas. By presenting their thinking in this thesis, I point out that there is a conspicuous absence of Greenberg’s thought among some second-generation writers and argue that the novelty and radicality of Greenberg’s position as an Orthodox thinker, in regards to historicism and theodicy, was undervalued (especially in regard to the impact he had on other more esteemed first-generation thinkers such as Fackenheim and others). In **Chapter 2**, I address the work of first-generation Holocaust theologians with particular emphasis on the American context that situates Greenberg within that oeuvre and illustrates the novelty of his thought. Furthermore, I describe the varying responses to the two counter-points of radical theology and classic theodicy, and I argue that – to one degree or another – each thinker is responding within this framework. I then show how Greenberg’s thought is atypical within this landscape. The unique genre Greenberg presents, which eschews both radical theology and traditional theodicy (and that advances a historicist reading of Judaism that belies classic anti-historicist motifs), lays the groundwork for a pioneering Jewish theology that refuses full resolutions and defies easy answers in a post-Holocaust reality. Greenberg’s thought is what I term a “critical Jewish Theology.” In **Chapter 3**, I unpack Greenberg’s post-Holocaust thought by addressing its central themes and ideas such as ‘VC’ and ‘moment faith,’ ‘tzelem Elohim,’ and ‘the third era in Jewish history.’ Each area of thought is explained and critically analyzed. Simultaneously, I give particular attention to the overt anti-theodic, postmodern, and pragmatic motifs of Greenberg’s thought. In Chapter 3, I buttress the second contention of this thesis that Greenberg’s postmodern thought shares more in common with American pragmatism than it does Continental postmodernism. In **Chapter 4**, I move to the second section of this thesis, which addresses Greenberg’s postmodern thought and begins to analyze the origins, definitions, and working principles of pragmatism, neo-pragmatism, and postmodernism as a means of contextualizing Greenberg’s thought within the framework of these groupings. Furthermore, I highlight the roles modernity and the Holocaust play within the origins of postmodernism, and I advance an in-depth comparison between pragmatism, neo-pragmatism, and postmodernism. In **Chapter 5**, I provide historical and sociological contextualization to the abstract definitive I set out in Chapter 4 by emphasizing how the idiosyncratic experience of war shaped both philosophical schools of thought and – by corollary – Greenberg’s personal experience in the way it dictates his philosophic response**.** In Chapter 5, I argue there is an analogous rupture in thought on the heels of war for both the American and European contexts, though I contend that the American experience of the Civil War differed substantially from the European experience in the Second World War. In Chapter 5, I explore the experience of the Holocaust in the American purview by illustrating the influence of pragmatic principles such as meliorism and progressivism in the almost submissive reception survivors initially received.The Americanization of the Holocaust that – on many accounts – stifled a narrative of destruction and victimhood, favored a narrative imbued with progress and triumph, and ignored survivors. In this thesis, I argue that Greenberg’s exit from American Jewish life in 1961 to Israel (for a fellowship) precipitated his encounter with the Holocaust and led him to an existential crisis: an experience that could only happen outside of Greenberg’s American progressive purview. When Greenberg returned to the U.S., he underwent a process of integration and closure that included marrying postmodern rupture and pragmatic meliorism. In **Chapters 6 and 7**, I state the main contention of section two: that Greenberg’s later theology is more analogous to classic American pragmatism than it is to continental postmodernism. In order to verify this statement, I explore the central themes of Greenberg’s contemporary theology and highlight postmodern motifs that are present in his work such as deconstruction, rupture, discontent with modernity, and the ‘decentred self.’ Then, I outline the many pragmatist themes that feature in Greenberg’s theology such as fallibilism, soft pluralism, ethics of power, and meliorism. I argue that the thought of classic pragmatists such as James and Dewey was imbibed by Greenberg in his early intellectual life and – in a very real sense – serves as a panacea in Greenberg’s theology against the resultant nihilism, relativism, and demise typically associated with continental postmodernism. In **Chapter 8**,Iadvance the third section of this thesis wherein an exploration of its final contention is undertaken. The axiomatic relationship between Greenberg’s post-Holocaust and postmodern thought is explicated through an analysis of the three central pillars of his philosophy: *tzelem Elokim*, the triumph of life, and covenant. In exploring each component, it becomes evident that Greenberg’s thought morphs through both postmodern and pragmatic themes, and elicits a constructive, yet pluralist, Jewish theology that is colored – though not paralyzed – by post-Holocaust rupture. In the **Conclusion**,I summarize the arguments proffered throughout the thesis by highlighting its main claims as they are allied to the novelty of Greenberg’s post-Holocaust thought and the contention that he is a pragmatist rather than a postmodern Jewish theologian. In addition, attention is drawn to other important contributions Greenberg has made such as his understated influence on Emil Fackenheim and Wiesel which indubitably influenced the field at a larger level.

This extensive analysis is the first of its kind to cover *both* elements of Greenberg’s theological edifice by proffering a substantive nexus underpinning their theological constructs. My far-reaching conclusions in this thesis include the contention that Greenberg’s current thought cannot be divorced from his early post-Holocaust thought, and that – equally – his post-Holocaust thought cannot be understood as outside his proclivity towards postmodern/pragmatic trends in philosophy (which lend it a novelty in that particular oeuvre). Finally, and perhaps most profoundly, Greenberg’s journey – his sudden exposure to the horrors of the Holocaust, the rupture elicited from the encounter, the theological shattering and the search for religious meaning and reconstruction in a post-Holocaust/ postmodern era – is a journey mirrored by American Jewry writ large. Greenberg’s personal experience is tempered by the two central historical events of the Holocaust and the modern state of Israel; his subsequent philosophical renderings, his wrestling with Orthodoxy’s stricture, dogmas, and monolithic faith, as well as his interfaith and intrafaith activism, stood – and continues to stand – as a mirror into which American Orthodoxy must reflect on if it is to offer an authentic expression of Judaism for the future.