

THE DIALECTICS OF THE  
TALMUD AND THE KABBALAH

André Lalande's classic *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie* thus criticises the term "dialectics":

"This word has been interpreted in so many different ways that it can be employed usefully only when the precise meaning attributed to it is specified. Even with this reservation there is yet reason to be on guard against the inappropriate association which might thus arise."

This wise caution, which is without doubt more valid today than when originally formulated, has been present throughout the course of our reflections upon the subject which we have been asked to treat.

The pragmatic and assuredly contestable definition which seems best to fulfill the requirements of the subject at hand has a vague Hegelian air which we beg the reader not to consider an adherence to Hegel or to his followers whatever be the

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degree of their fidelity to the doctrine of the founder of the school. By dialectics we mean not only the intellectual but in certain cases, also the allegedly suprarational steps which within Judaism (which is polymorphous) confront the given facts, the fundamental ideas whether complementary or contradictory which impose themselves with equal authority upon the conscience of the believer. Dialectics, in this sense, tend to synthesize these fundamental data reducing to a minimum the destruction of the components.

This definition, if one can call it such, will not take on its own meaning, and perhaps will not allow one to excuse its awkwardness, unless we succeed first of all in limiting and characterizing the ideological field in which the defined is applied.

We have been asked to reflect upon Judaism, a form of religiousness born of an experience which had transformed (this is the aim of the Mosaic revelation) an ancient tribal divinity (Yahweh in the terminology of Biblical critique) into a God who may not have been universal but was at least unique for his people (Israel, later the Jewish nation) and whose destiny he rules sovereignly and upon whom he imposes his law. What seems to set this belief apart from the others known in the Ancient Orient is the abolition of myth. The God of Israel manifests himself by intervening in history, but at one and the same time, he transcends the world and history because he is not implicated in any theogony and has no association with any being comparable to him. Hence, from the beginning, we are in the presence of a god who is simultaneously immanent and transcendent. This represents the first tension. This god is immanent in that he is a legislator; he bestows upon his people a rule of life (the Torah, a word rather poorly rendered by "Law") the written form of which, virtually *ne varietur*, was established at the latest by the end of the fifth century before the Christian era, and which, with regard to the religious consciousness of Judaism, forms a block in which dogmatic, moral, juridical and also narrative elements are invested with unquestionable authority. Yet, if more closely examined, the casuist and not abstractly normative character of the ritual and juridical texts logically implies the existence, from the beginning, of an *oral tradition* which envelops, completes and unceasingly adjusts the legislation committed to

written form. Here therefore is a second dialectical pair in the very heart of the daily life of the community of the chosen people: written law and oral tradition.

A third situation, generator of dialectics, is the result of certain ideological factors, undoubtedly successive according to the diachronic view of events, but simultaneously active on a level beyond which one must try to understand Judaism as it actually exists, by discarding the extinct branches, such as Hellenistic Judaism and the sect of the Dead Sea (Qumrân) despite their phenomenological or historic significance, notably for the origins of Christianity. According to the common belief of Judaism there was from the beginning a particular link, a "covenant" between Yahweh and the chosen people. Through fault of the latter this covenant was frequently broken without ever being definitively abolished but its integral re-establishment is a hope, hence a situation which must become operative in the future. Since a relatively ancient period the religion of Israel has thus required an eschatology whose principal aim, and, on the other hand, united aims are the restoration of the dispersed people to its country of origin, Palestine, and the intervention of a personality bordering on the natural and the super-rational, the anointed king (the Messiah), issue of the line of David. But to this belief another will be added, that of a general resurrection of the dead, accompanied by a universal judgement (we are simplifying, let it be understood) and followed by a state of happiness for the good and of damnation for the evil which is difficult to describe in conceptual terms. A state which is defined by the terminology of post-Biblical Judaism as the "century" or "world to come." From the point of view of faith, the relationship between these two realities, the Messianic and national restoration of a terrestrial order, and the final aims of a supernatural essence are not easily specified (to say the least) for the believer who is obliged to hold both ends of the rope in this field as well as in many others.

In this way an outline, however summary and incomplete, can be drawn of the oppositions whose *reductio* puts in motion Jewish thought, whether oriented towards theory or practice, according to the needs and also the pressure of certain historic and socio-economic determinisms.

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The terms theory and practice are convenient because they speak to the spirit of the contemporary Westerner whose life is based on a Greco-Roman tradition no matter how incessantly it is remodelled. To transplant these terms purely and simply into the ideological milieu which concerns us here would only create confusion and misunderstanding. Consequently some efforts are called for in order to have at least a general concept of the categories peculiar to the Jewish mentality as they have been elaborated in post-Biblical Judaism and particularly in that branch surviving today which sprang from the Pharisaism of the neo-Testamentary period, also called rabbinical Judaism. This last adjective derives from the word *rabbi*, "(my) master," a term which designates the "specialists" of the Scriptures and of the oral tradition, the "Doctors of Law" if one wishes. In point of fact, even before the advent of Christianity, the study of the Law (Torah) had become the center of the religious life of Judaism. Such a study is theoretic and practical in the sense that it is centered first of all on memorizing, by constantly repeating not only the Bible but also the oral tradition, then on discussing the texts and the traditions which seem to diverge, on determining the acceptable interpretations, and finally on establishing some rules of behavior applicable to the details of daily life by means of a constant effort to adjust to concrete situations. The rabbi, ritualist and jurist at the same time, is also a spiritual guide: one of his duties is to keep alive the Messianic hopes in the midst of hostile, pagan, then Christian and later still Moslem environments. Thereon stem the two major aspects of rabbinical teaching always based on the Scriptures, by means of more and more refined dialectics; the way to proceed, norms of behavior, positive law (*halakah*, literally step) and homily in its broadest sense (*haggadah* or *aggadah*, literally scriptural statement), which include not only moral and religious instruction in the literal sense, but also polemics against all foreign religions and erratic doctrines, metaphysic and mystic speculation on the creation and the invisible world, very prudently and parsimoniously disclosed but dealt with most frequently by means of allusions or pretermissions, and even folklore. During and after the second century of the Christian era there arose the necessity of systematizing the legislative material. Among the

compilations of that time, approximately in the period between the years 120 and 240 A.D., the principal and most authoritative was the *Mishnah* which became in its turn basic teaching material, developed and adapted for centuries of scholastic activities and (both are one and inseparable) legal practice. Therefore its traditional basis was enormously increased. Most, if not the totality, of this material, was to be put in order and edited in later periods with the addition of a considerable amount of *haggadah*, and following processes differing considerably from our intellectual habits, in the schools of Palestine (the Talmud of Palestine, also improperly called “of Jerusalem”) around the fifth century, and in the schools of Babylon (Lower Mesopotamia) during the sixth and seventh centuries (Talmud of Babylon). The second compilation, more developed, ended by imposing itself everywhere and became the principal object of studies up to our days.

Therefore our first task is to examine, as concisely as possible, the attitude of Judaism towards the complementary or contrasting factors which are an integral part of its vital tissue.

We shall begin with the second of the above described dialectical pairs, written and oral law, since it is from this that Judaism has become that which it still is essentially today.

How shall we define the relationship between the revealed text (and specifically the “five books of Moses, the Pentateuch, the Torah, in the strict sense of the word”) and the oral tradition? Is the latter simply the commentary, the expansion, at most the adjustment of the first one or are we confronted with two distinct factors, clearly divergent at times, but complementary more often than not? Or in other words, is the *halakah* a direct derivation of the Scriptural data, rearranged if necessary but neither modified nor distorted in their obvious meaning, or is it to be considered as the fruit of long evolution, constituting a “tradition” for the conscience of the believer, based on elements which are Biblical and extra-Biblical at the same time?

By consent of Judaic orthodoxy itself, the first term of the alternative has to be rejected. The *halakah* does not coincide entirely with the Scriptural data, far from it. There are, according to a conception certified since the *Mishnah*, some *halakoth* (plural of *halakah*) disclosed to Moses on Mount Sinai which are not to be found in the Holy Scripture but which have the

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force of law in the same way as the Biblical dispositions. Nevertheless, Rabbinism, like all other beliefs based on the Scriptures, followers of the Qumrân sects and Christians, ever since Saint Paul and the Gospels (we quote these two sources in the chronological order of their drafting), attempts to discover in the Scriptures some support for the law elaborated by the Doctors, as well as in favor of all the creations of the *haggadah*. It is a question of a perpetual renovation of the word of God, of making evident its actuality in every present, past or future situation, concerning events as well as behavior, history and ethics. But it is not this aspect of Jewish thought that concerns us here (also because this is not an aspect peculiar to Judaism). We shall consider instead the methods employed by Rabbinism in the construction of an harmonious legal system, an ideal which has never been achieved but has been pursued incessantly, in which perfect accord between Scripture and Tradition would be reached. At this point intervene the dialectical processes of Biblical exegesis and elaboration of the law “the rules (literally “the measures”) by means of which the Torah is interpreted;” in Hebrew this interpretation is called *midrash*, “scrutiny, investigation;” the same word also designates (in the plural *midrashim*) some extra-Talmudic compilations, based more on the *haggadah* than on the *halakah*, which interpret the holy books under the form of commentary or of homilies connected with the liturgical lessons of the solemn days of the Jewish calendar. After having been practiced for a long time, these rules were formulated concisely in a list of seven terms attributed to Hillel, a teacher who lived in the first century B.C., then in a list of thirteen terms attributed to Rabbi Ismael, a master who was put to death by the Romans after the rebellion of Bar Kochba was crushed in 135 A.D., not to mention the thirty-two rules of the haggadic exegesis in which the above are included but which were codified much later despite their fictitious attribution to a master of the second century after Christ, Rabbi Eliezer, son of Rabbi Joseph of Galilee. It is not possible here to enter into technical details (see the bibliography at the end of the article). Let us simply say that such a method is applicable when considering the various aspects of a problem, when comparing real or apparent analogies, in order to bring out their characteristics and consequently the

common or differing juridic statutes. The dialectic step proceeds from particular to particular whether the reasoning works *a fortiori* or by analogy. It is not possible to reduce these methods of argumentation to the deductive syllogism, to the search for a middle term, on which Aristotelian logic is based even if it has been attempted. If at all costs one wants to find external models or sources for it, it would be much more advisable to turn to the processes utilized by Greek rhetoric or Stoic logic.

Whatever its origins and modes of utilization may be, the legal dialectic of the rabbis is submitted to an absolute rule which limits its range, and blocks, theoretically at least, the way to any excess and abuse which could be detrimental to the collective discipline and the social conformity of the group for which the written and oral laws are equally valid. The rabbinic exegesis "does not invent, but only justifies a law which derives its value from tradition; and it is an accepted principle that the foundations of a law cannot be laid by means of reasoning if this law is not already authoritative" (Bonsirven). In this way, for instance, a sanction for crimes cannot be based on reasoning. In other words, dialectics has a function of justification *a posteriori*; it does not create anything, or at least it should not do so, but there is no rule without exception. Such a restriction is particularly valid in ritual and spiritual matters. Exegesis and its processes have a wider range of freedom in the *Aggadab*, but this last has little authority as far as jurisprudence and ritual practice are concerned; on the other hand it is more open than the *Halakah* to ideological readaptations of any kind, mystical or rational.

Let us now return briefly to the first dialectic tension we mentioned above: God transcendent and immanent.

The Biblical God already was rendered transcendent by the almost total elimination of the myth, if we set aside some clichés which became purely literary, and were inherited from the ancient tradition of the civilizations of Canaan and the surrounding countries including Egypt and Mesopotamia. On the other hand he is still immanent since he discloses his will, chooses a nation consecrated to him, gives direction to the history of humanity, intervenes, even if sometimes in an incomprehensible way, in the individual destiny of man (this is the problem of the Book of Job and in a certain sense that of Ecclesiastes).

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The Talmudists in their turn will have to cope with the inevitable problems caused necessarily by this duality. "Wherever you find the supereminence (literally "the preponderant power") of the Holy One, blessed be his name, you will also find his gracious condescension (literally "his modesty")," they teach somewhere and they prove it by quoting from the three parts of the Scriptures; Pentateuch, Prophets and Hagiographa. And also in a more specific field than that of pious generalizations; considering the concrete character of their thought, rarely inclined towards abstractions, as reflected in their way of speaking and their style, when their mysticism wants to suggest a representation of divine transcendence which must not be one, it does so by putting into relief the paradox of dimensions so without measure that they become incommensurable, playing the role of intermediaries between the visible world and God, which is to say the components which make up the "stature" of the supreme Being.

God's immanence, his creative, revelatory and providential activity, on the other hand is crystallized in two conceptions peculiar to rabbinic thought and destined to functions of extreme importance in ulterior mysticism.

One conception is that of the attributes, opposed and complementary at the same time, of mercy and rigour. In creating the world, says the Haggadah, God became aware of the fact that his work could not possibly endure if produced only with one of these attributes. He was then obliged to associate them and their action is given rhythm by the behavior of free man, particularly by that of the chosen nation. Thus this conception opens on one hand upon free will and "Israelo-centrism," one of the indispensable keys to the understanding of Jewish thought and, on the other hand, on the two attitudes in opposition within the Divinity which correspond to those of sin and repentance in human behavior, while sin and repentance are in their turn peculiar modalities of a dialectic situation more fundamental for the interior of the human psyche; the search for equilibrium between the satisfaction of vital needs as required by the instinct of preservation and reproduction and the imperatives of the ethic ideal. The rabbinic language designates these two components of human nature by "evil instinct" and "good instinct."

The other conception is that of the "Presence" (in Hebrew

*Shekinah* literally means “residence,” hence “immanence” if one restores to this term its full etymologic value in Latin). This notion was already very complex in the ancient rabbinic literature and became even more so in the medieval Jewish mysticism. God is present in a mysterious way in the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle of the desert and of the Temple of Jerusalem. On the other hand his Presence dwells permanently next to the last vestige of the Temple, the “Wailing Wall” (called “the western wall” in Hebrew), while at the same time sharing the successive exiles of the dispersed people of Israel. But we could also say that the Presence had quitted the earthly paradise because of the original sin and came back only at the time of the Revelation on Mount Sinai.

The eschatologic situation is also dialectic: Messianic redemption, national triumph, the defeat and submission of the Gentiles; in short, a particularism pushed to the extreme on one hand, and on the other, the universal judgement, the eternal life to which we can say that the totality of the chosen people has a right of priority, except for a limited number of hardened sinners or incorrigible heretics, but where also a place, modest to say the truth, is conceded to “the righteous ones of the world nations.”

Even if for didactic reasons Jewish history is divided into “Talmudic” and “post-Talmudic” periods, this does not mean that there is no ideological continuity between one and the other, just as the indubitable continuity must not mask the deep changes undergone in Jewish ideology since approximately the 10th century.

At that time, the most active part of Judaism lived under the rule of the Moslem empire. Now the contact of various religions and the penetration of Greek thought into the area of Islamic civilization brought forth among the Moslems, and consequently among the Jews, a theology conceived with a view to confronting rival theses, fighting the adversary on his own ground, justifying one’s personal beliefs by using criteria commonly recognized as rational, demonstrating with the same criteria the absurdity of the adversary’s positions. In the course of its development, which we need not retrace here, the speculative theology of Judaism

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made every effort to purify the notion of God by eliminating, by means of allegoric exegesis, the anthropomorphisms of the Bible and the *Haggadah* (including the materiality of retribution in the world to come) and also by suppressing the conceptual multiplicity within the divinity by means of various theories of attributes, which were tried one after the other. It also searched for rational motivations of the juridic and ritual rules of the religious law. It presumed to correct Greco-Arabic philosophy on a point which is very essential. It upheld the free and creative act of a personal God against the theory of the world's preceding necessarily from the supreme Being. But it did not isolate itself in a remote intellectualism which kept the masses from the ultimate beatitude: a purely spiritual state excluding all corporeity. It is clear that such a *Weltanschauung* could not easily be in accord with the specificity of the religious fact, the consciousness of the election of Israel and the incomparable value that the living faith of the Jew attributed to complying with and studying the revealed Law. At most the intellectualism threatened to lead to a break (whether this possibility came about or not is another question) with religious practice which had no intrinsic value once its allegoric meaning was understood, and to a gap between religious truth and philosophic truth.

To that dissolving intellectualism (or susceptible to becoming the same) was opposed the Jewish mysticism of the Middle Ages, commonly called "Kabbalah." It is therefore necessary, before even explaining the meaning of this term, to avoid a possible misunderstanding: the Kabbalah, is not in its essence a reaction against the real or apparent rationalism of some Jewish thinkers; it will become so *par la bande*, after its own virtualities will have been developed.

What then is the Kabbalah?

The word in itself simply means "tradition," and originally had no esoteric connotation. If Jewish esoterists appropriated it, it is because they claimed to be the depositaries of a doctrinal transmission reserved for initiates, and that this transmission went back, through "meta-historic" links, (that is to say through links that in the eyes of the historian are either forged or imaginary) to the ancient Sages of Israel, i.e. to the Biblical

Patriarchs and even to the first man, or that such transmission originated in some revelation, we could say “an internal experience” by which profited this or that perfectly historic personage who can be situated with certainty in time and space.

What counts, is the content of this tradition (it is useless to say that there is not one Tradition, but as many speculative complexes as there were creative spirits in the field of theosophic thought, and there were very many, either identified with personalities or anonymous, from the 12th century to our days).

The Kabbalah is fundamentally a meditation on the universe. This universe is divided in two parts, one visible, the other invisible, which are indissolubly linked as we shall see; at their head, a first Being whose features we must try to fix first of all.

The God of the Kabbalah is at the same time (paradoxical as it may seem) without any rupture of his absolute unity, the hidden god, the *Deus incognitus* of the gnosis and of more or less similar currents of thought, and the manifested, revealed God of traditional religion. There is more to it that changes the whole perspective. The gradual, hierarchized manifestation is first of all a suprarational order. Without losing his unity the Divinity unfolds (all images used to describe such a process are inadequate) in some aspects which the Kabbalists called *sefirot* (plural of *sefirah*), the rest of existing things, since ontologically as well as temporally, the intelligible world of medieval philosophy and the visible world are posterior in order of being. Thus since the very beginning, the relationship between the unknown God and his manifestations is a problem in itself. We find here, in a certain sense, the question of the passage from unity to multiplicity which has been closely examined very often but never solved.

Moreover, the Kabbalah restores the myth which was eliminated with great difficulties from the Biblical religion even if partially restored by post-Biblical Judaism and the two monotheistic religions which stem from it but that still plays no role in the mystery of the divinity. In Jewish theosophy the myth becomes part of the mystery because it endows the God manifested in the *sefirot* with an interior life which is dynamically linked with the chosen people. The dialectics of immanence and transcendence, and also of grace and rigour rebound in a new and particularly deep form; in both of them man is a determinant factor. Without

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man God cannot manifest himself and man's behavior with its fluctuations, obedience, sin, repentance and the corresponding sanctions, states of grace, individual punishments (sufferings) and collective punishments (national catastrophe, exile, dispersion), forgiveness (Messianic redemption and admission to the kingdom to come) raises up homologous variations within the divine life: rupture of harmony, represented among other symbols and quite daringly, by the conjugal agreement and its re-establishment. This very complex interaction of the divine and the human is expressed in the Kabbalah by means of a system of symbols (Jewish theosophy has many major symbolic tendencies which we need not discuss here) stemming from the Scriptures, the rabbinical tradition, the concrete acts of religious life without putting aside the philosophic conceptions commonly accepted and interpreted in different ways in medieval thought.

In short, the techniques of exegesis which were employed for the invention and the adjustment of symbols are those of the *Haggadah* with a distinct preference for the processes which were previously used with moderation: meanings ferreted out by exploiting the "etymologic" virtualities of the words of the holy language (also of the Aramaic language, since the ancient translations of the Bible into this language had for the Jewish conscience a semi-inspired character). Since in Hebrew the alphabetic symbols also represent numbers, still another process was employed: the terms were put in relation according to the numeric equivalence of their letters. On the other hand, the Kabbalah also borrows, more or less happily, from the *Haggadah*, some literary clichés and processes of composition, which are at the same time tested didactic and homiletic means for inculcating, at various levels of comprehension according to the capacities of the reader or of the listener, the truths which must be conveyed: parable, apologue, anecdote "slice of life," even a fanciful tale. The symbolic treasure of the Kabbalah receives also a substantial contribution from the documents of the archaic mysticism, notably from those texts that describe the divine "stature" and from the "Book of the Creation" where medieval theosophy could find aliment for its speculations on the plans of being linked by the law of universal sympathy and the above mentioned interaction. Stemming from the same source and conveniently read-

justed to an entirely new context, are the terminological borrowings, of which the principal is the term *sefira*, and images like that of the flame joined to the coals, symbol of the diversity of divine life in its continuity without rupture. Moreover, the very nature of the problems called for the usage of the completely different tradition of neo-Platonism which gave to the Kabbalah, by means of its representatives within Jewish philosophy and perhaps also by means of other sources which are not easily defined, the symbols of “flux” (emanation, flowing out) and of “light” (radiance, illumination, light colored by transparent matter which enables its diffusion, optical phenomena such as reverberation).

Thus furnished with tools, the Kabbalists contended with problems which could not but surge into their mental universe.

An outline, sketchy though it might be, of the methods of approaching the problems of the Kabbalah would surpass the framework of the present essay because of the number and complexity of the problems which even at an elementary level cannot be approached without resorting to a technical language which would be out of place here.

We shall have to be satisfied with a few rapidly indicated examples.

On the uppermost level it is a question of representing the passage from the unity of God unknown to the multiplicity of his manifestations, then to the dispersion of the visible world, from the transcendency of mystery closed within itself to the immanence of the personal God acting as creator, provider, revealer and redeemer. From this stem the perpetually renewed tentatives of the Kabbalists to discern in God and his *sefirot* some diversified aspects, without rupturing the unity in constant movement of proceeding away from their source, and of going back to it. This calls for the construction of flexible and dynamic ontological hierarchies, increasingly complex and for the use in some cases (for instance but not exclusively, in the famous “Book of Splendor”—*Zôhar*—a *corpus* of disparate writings) of a symbolic imagery of disconcerting exuberance.

The problem of evil, real (denied by Kabbalist philosophers), “subsistent,” considered at one and the same time with regard to sin and suffering. Without insisting on the dialectic, which

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has nothing of theosophic in itself, of sin, repentance, remission (it gives way, nonetheless, in the Kabbalah to the extension of this process to many successive if not continuous existences and therefore to the belief in the reincarnation of the soul), we underline in particular the speculative effort that was made to maintain evil under the control of a personal god, or more exactly, within the divine dominion. It gives way to the projection of the *sefirot* in the universe, of the continuous dialectic steps from grace to rigour, passing through a principle of balance, reduced according to need. Nevertheless it does not succeed in eliminating the representation of a strongly mythical character of an extra divine dominion of evil, with its very concrete hold on the present ontological situation, on the visible world and the terrestrial and extra-terrestrial destiny of man. From this state of things stems the necessity of a "reparation," or better a "restoration." Such a restoration could eventually lead to the descent of the righteous one and in particular of the expected Messiah into the abyss of evil in order to free the captive divine fragments (called "sparks" in Kabbalistic terminology). This alternation of descent and ascent conveys once again a dialectic reciprocating motion which is typologically close to the Gnostico-Manichean ideology, even if there is no direct historic filiation but only a recurrence of similar motives in very different contexts. It is historically and consequently socially more important that such a dialectic of evil and redemption was not confined to the irreality of theosophic dreams, but determined in various respects the religious attitude of Judaism since the end of the 16th century and constituted one of the major factors of the crisis provoked by the Messianic agitation about Sabbatai Zevi (who died in 1676), the repercussions of which will play their role in releasing opposed movements of a considerable incidence on yesterday's and even contemporary Judaism, such as Hassidism of Eastern Europe since the middle of the 18th century and the liberal reformism born in Germany in the first third of the 19th century before being transferred to the United States.

It would be rather artificial to put in opposition these two movements, as the two poles of Jewish ideology, just for the pleasure of antithesis. Next to them Judaism has more than one variety

of ritual conservatism, real or apparent, that does not exclude among its adepts a mysticism often cautious and discrete in its expression, as well as very different attitudes in regard to western culture, varying from total integration (religion set aside) to stubborn refusal. The picture would be incomplete, if not falsified if the national movement with its clearly political ends were not taken into account, sionism, secularized or not. If we take all these currents into account here it is because their analysis allows us to look once again at the dialectic situation which endures since its very origins in the Jewish conscience, no matter how it externalizes itself. The tension between universalism and particularism still exists because the latter even in political Sionism of a secularized nature cannot extirpate its religious roots.

Universalism and particularism are inseparable (it is needless to say once again) in the Jewish conscience. Another thing is to know or at least to try to understand, without apologetic or polemic intentions, how their synthesis is achieved, if it can be. We do not believe this possible. It is our opinion, based on knowledge of the texts, taking great care not to gloss over all the elements that could be contrary to a unilateral presentation of the data, and with the help of our personal and we dare say interior experience, that the Jews of today are still in a dialectic situation wavering between shunning the Gentile milieu and integrating with it although frankly considering it different but which nonetheless exerts an irresistible attraction due in part to its own values and also to the familiarization with it which has changed into loyalty and the desire to assimilate born of a long symbiosis.

### *Bibliographic Orientation*

The following indications are simply intended to guide the reader who would like to investigate more closely the questions that have been examined too rapidly in this article. Many of the works indicated contain detailed bibliographies.

A very general exposition of Judaism has been written by the author of this article, in *Encyclopédie Française*, tome XIX, part 2, Religion, Paris 1957, 19.48.8 - 19.48.13. Another outline that could be of use to the reader who is completely foreign to the subject is to be found in a more recent article of mine, *La pensée religieuse de Maimonide: unité*

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*ou dualité* which appeared in "Cahiers de Civilisations Médiévale," IX, 1966, pages 29-49.

In order to familiarize oneself with Rabbinical dialectics, the reader of French can make use of the study by Joseph Bonsirven, *Exégèse Rabbinique et Exégèse Paulinienne*, Paris, 1939, the first part of which summarizes, perhaps without great originality but very clearly, some works by Jewish scholars that are too technical and difficult to be read without special preparation. On the *Midrash*, see the excellent article with the same title, by Renée, in "Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible," t. V, columns 1263-1280. A book, now old but made accessible to contemporary readers in its English translation (we advise that it be read after the above mentioned works), is *The Student's Guide through the Talmud* by S. C. Chajes translated from the Hebrew by J. Schachter, second edition, New York 1960.

A long monograph dedicated to the meaning of the Law as central concept in the conscience of Judaism (which unfortunately remained unfinished especially in regard to the Kabbalah) by Isaac Heinemann, has been adapted from Hebrew in an abbreviated form by Charles Touati: *La loi dans la pensée Juive*, Paris, 1962.

There is no up to date work of synthesis embracing all aspects of medieval Jewish theology. The best manual is beyond doubt the one by Julius Guttman which first appeared in German, *Die Philosophie des Judentums*, Munich, 1933 but it leaves aside mysticism. The text and the bibliography of the two translations of this work, one in Hebrew, published in 1951, the other in English entitled *Philosophies of Judaism*, London, 1964 have been brought up to date only incompletely and occasionally. The rather elementary work we published in 1947 with the editions J. Vrin: *Introduction à la Pensée Juive du Moyen Age* in the series "Études de Philosophie Médiévale," t. XXXV, contains a chapter on the Kabbalah but the book is too cursory and too surpassed not to call for a completely revised second edition.

The study of Jewish mysticism was completely renovated less than half a century ago by the works of Gershom G. Scholem and of his direct and indirect pupils. The reader unfamiliar with the subject should start with the great work of synthesis by this master, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, the last English edition of which appeared in New York in 1954; a French translation, unfortunately not very satisfactory, done from the second English edition of 1946 has been published (Paris, 1950) under the title: *Les Grands Courants de la Mystique Juive*; the German edition is entitled *Die jüdische Mystik*, Zurich, 1955. The first century of the medieval Kabbalah has been more specifically dealt with and yet in a way directly accessible to the cultivated reader, in his volume: *Ursprung und Anfänge der Kabbalah*, Berlin, 1962. An accep-

table French translation of this work appeared in 1966 in the Editions Montaigne (Aubier): *Les Origines de la Kabbale*. Also within the range of a non-specialist reader is the collection of studies by the same author, generally the result of lectures delivered at the "Eranos" meetings at Ascona, dealing with particular themes. So far two volumes of this work have appeared.

*Zur Kabbala und ihrer Symbolik*, Zurich, 1960, and *Von der mystischen Gestalt der Gottheit*, 1962. We do not recommend the French translation of the first volume, *La Kabbale et sa symbolique*, Paris, Payot, 1966, a deplorably bad work, but there is an English version of the same collection, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, London, 1965. A synthesis, rather brief of course, but clear and easy to read, has been written by Kurt Hruby, *Eléments de spiritualité juive* in a collective volume "La Mystique et les mystiques" (Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 1966, pages 157-256). Lastly, one can follow the studies made in this discipline (the most valid contributions are published in Hebrew) in the collective reports we publish in *La Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* (the most recent edition is *Recherches récentes sur l'ésotérisme juif*, in the fascicules of July-September 1963, pages 30-86, October-December, pages 191-212, January-March 1964, pages 49-78).

We end this outline with a recent book, always brilliant and sometimes profound by André Neher, *Le Puits de l'Exil, la théologie dialectique du Maharal de Prague*, Paris, 1966, whose subjective and apologetic character we must underline so that it be used prudently.